

fully investigated. Surely there is enough opportunity for anoxia in 'interventionist childbirth' to warrant the closest scrutiny?

Bearing this in mind, it is my belief that the Homebirth Movement should make a formal submission to the Health Dept. urging that the obstetric history of cot death babies be the subject of a very comprehensive study. Perhaps a statistically significant number of cot deaths could be compared to randomly selected 'normal' babies of similar birth weight and gestational age. Such a study should be relatively inexpensive and easy to effect. It would simply be a matter of collating information available on hospital files.

This issue really lies outside the scope of Homebirth. But in the absence of any other 'stropky' public pressure group it may never be fully aired without a bit of arm-twisting. The cot death support people are fully embroiled in the area of emotional support and the wholesale acquisition of monitors. On the other hand the medical authorities are understandably reluctant to turn the spotlight onto themselves.

It may well be that the fears I have expressed are groundless, however, unless we 'take up the cudgels' we may never know.

- Nigel H Costley (Nelson)

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TO ALL BRANCHES

Cont. from page 8.

This is the Christchurch Branch's reply to the letter circulated by the Nelson Branch containing their views on this years A.G.M. and the constitutional "problem".

It was agreed at the half-yearly meeting of the N.Z.H.B.A. in Wellington on November 3rd that a special meeting would be convened to discuss past and present constitutional problems with the aim of reaching a consensus decision on the kind of national structure which would suit all of us. This structure might well be something totally new and not previously considered by the Association. As stated in the minutes of this meeting we agreed -

1. It should be 'tacked on' to the Nelson Conference to save on travel costs - probably Friday evening from 7 p.m.
2. Number joining in discussion should be limited (no more than 2 per branch). Anyone welcome to listen.
3. An independant skilled facilitator should lead the discussion along the lines used at this half-yearly meeting. (See booklet 'Working in Groups').

As this was decided on unanimously and enthusiastically by all delegates present our branch feels most strongly that this meeting be held regardless of its affect on the planned A.G.M. The A.G.M. in itself does not require a great deal of planning and should it not be required then we have a time slot which no doubt would be easily used in some other way.

The Auckland group are enthusiastic about this meeting and hope as we do that a new approach with open minds will lead us to a solution to suit all. If we can drop the idea that it has to be the Constitution and the Incorporated Society that we have now, or nothing, maybe a new and suitable National Structure will emerge.

As in the minutes of November's meeting "It is important for branches to have done preparatory discussions, delegates to be very aware of their branch's views and for delegates to have no set position or line of action planned, important to be open to suggestions, compromise and a certain amount of sacrifice for the sake of unity".

Our branch strongly agrees with the above statement, our understanding of the Auckland group's views are that they are more than willing to look at new ideas for a National Structure so that we can be united Nationally again.

Once again as this meeting was agreed upon at the half-yearly meeting we feel most strongly that it must be held regardless of written views stated and sent to the Nelson Branch as requested, by the 25th February 1985. In fact we believe that whether or not this meeting be held is not a matter for the Nelson Branch to decide on.

The Christchurch Branch have discussed the constitutional question many times. We believe that it is possible to have a national structure which fulfils all the functions that our present one does, or is meant to, without the restrictions and cumbersome nature of the Inc. society.

In brief the problems with our present set-up, as we see it, are:

1. Having a President, Secretary and Treasurer geographically separated - or if all three were in one centre this would take away valuable 'people resources' from the local branch.
2. Paying levies to keep a structure going when this money would function better at a local level, or for a specific National project rather than supporting a bureaucratic structure.
3. Endless time spent on internal wrangling with the loss of valuable energy.

So far this year we have seen Auckland work in well with the rest of us, doing a fine job locally and keeping our National newsletter going. The idea that appeals to us is that individual branches take on functions for the National body such as the Newsletter, being in charge of lobbying the Government (which the Wellington group do now - being on the spot - with consultation of all groups along the way), communication between groups and so on.

Surely the major function of the National body is public unity so that when we approach the Government to ask for changes in the Home Birth service, as we are at present, we do it as one group and do not give them a chance to reject our ideas on the grounds that we can't agree on what we want amongst ourselves.

This involves communication between branches, willingness to compromise at times, a yearly get-together (at least) to discuss policy and action, help and assistance from larger branches to close-by smaller branches, regional meetings etc. We may need a National spokesperson.

So far we have had few problems with reaching a united National policy- we seem to agree easily on what we want for an improved Home Birth service - all we have to do is convince the Government! We also seem to be able to agree on how to approach the Government most effectively. Surely this is the main point - we can still do all this with a new kind of national body.

We hope that this clarifies for other branches our views on this issue. We recommend that you read the Auckland branch's explanation of their stand at the last A.G.M. on this issue in the National newsletter of June 1984. p. 15-17. In a recent article we have read that Home Birth Australia have in fact set up a system with 11 distinct 'interest' areas run by different Home Birth groups - similiar to our suggestions.

we reel hopeful that a meeting of all groups, including auckland, held before the conference will solve this issue once and for all, so we can get on with the real work we have to do - protecting and improving the home Birth service, so that we and others in the future can choose the kind of birth experience we want, regardless of where we live in the knowledge that our valuable midwives are adequately recognised and rewarded.

Enthusiastically yours, (having very recently had another wonderful birth experience at home - a second daughter - Jessie).

Alison Locke

Alison Locke,
Co-ordinator
CH.CH. H.B. Assoc.

CONFERENCE 85 - A PROGRESS REPORT.

THE CONSTITUTION - THE FINAL SOLUTION: The discussion paper 'The Rules rule O.K.' that we circulated at the end of last year was intended to find, once and for all, where the various branches stand on the question of our Incorporated status.

The response that we have had leaves this branch in no doubt that the Association must be formally dissolved. Most submissions focused on the need for change, while Christchurch and Wellington opt strongly for disincorporation. We all know Auckland's position on this issue.

In our view, it is no longer a case of the rights and wrongs of having an Association. What is of more importance is the over-riding need for a coherent sense of purpose and unity in the Homebirth Movement. In order for this to occur, quite clearly, we must put the past behind us.

Recognising the inevitability of 'winding up' we propose holding the AGM on the friday night where a resolution dissolving the Association will be put and on the basis of what we have heard it would be overwhelmingly endorsed.

The reasons for this are: 1/ Begin the weekend by laying to rest the old era and issue in the new one.

2/ Put us all on an equal and united footing.

3/ Allow a substantial period (all Sunday if deemed necessary) to discuss and decide on the future of the Homebirth Movement. There is no way we could do such a momentous topic justice squeezed into the Friday night.

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In essence all we are doing is taking what was decided at the Mid-year conference one step further. The facilitated consensus will be run on the format that was agreed to but now it occupies pride of place on the Sunday.

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DIFFERENT PROPOSALS: We feel that it is up to the individual branches who have specific ideas on what our new organization should be to circulate their suggestions to the other branches. Christchurch has already done this. The delegates should know their branch's view of the various proposals. As you will see in the program there has been time set aside during the workshops for preliminary discussion related to our organization.

OTHER ISSUES: We must not let the question of our new organization, vital though it is, entirely overshadow all other issues. There are a host of 'hot issues' like political lobbying and public promotion. We feel that the best way to get our teeth into these subjects is to use the remit system where individual branches circulate their proposals to be widely discussed and thought through before the conference.

We must point out that individuals or branches are quite within their rights to try to keep the Association afloat. However, they must realize that the tide of opinion is very much against it.

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SO LET US PUT THE WRANGLES OF THE PAST BEHIND US AND WORKING FROM THE BASIS OF COMMON GROUND FIND A SYSTEM WE CAN ALL LIVE WITH.

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WE NEED YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS.

Yours sincerely,
Nigel Costley (Conference Coordinator).

Thanks to Wendy for the typing and Bruce for the Printing.