

Home - Births Regarded As Almost Form Of Child Abuse

CHRISTCHURCH, Dec 13 (PA).—The increasing trend for babies to be delivered at home could amount to a form of child abuse as it robbed babies of the optimal chances of survival, a New Zealand-born professor of paediatrics, gynaecology, and obstetrics in the United States said in Christchurch today.

Professor S L James, who has been with the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Centre in New York since 1955, said in an interview that he was surprised at the numbers of New Zealand parents who were becoming attracted to the idea of home deliveries.

Overseas research, which would be applicable here, showed that about 10 percent of pregnancies regarded as "normal" developed difficulties requiring special care.

Important

"For this reason alone complications can't be foreseen and it is of the utmost importance to the mother and the child to have the baby

where optimum care can be given.

"To do otherwise is almost a form of child abuse and to opt out of this responsibility denies the new-born child the rights to a full and competitive life after birth," he said.

Professor James said he understood the popular reasons for some parents choosing to have a baby at home.

"The idea is to return to nature to see labour as normal, but the proponents of these ideas forget that in the 'good old days' when a baby was born at home there was a high rate of infant and maternal deaths and often life-long problems for the child."

Professor James said those

who belonged to "right to life" movements would be well advised to take a more active role in educating the public on the importance of hospital births for babies.

"Who is going to be the advocate for the foetus? If the parents abrogate their responsibility, then it must be taken over by the medical profession, which has the responsibility to educate them to show the potential hazards of home deliveries."

Professor James said that in advancing reasons against hospitals births of home deliveries cited the increasing impersonal attitudes of large hospitals.

"This is a factor which has to be reckoned with but hospitals in this country have made and are making special efforts to overcome these problems."

During the last two months Professor James has been visiting maternity units in Palmerston North, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, Dunedin, the Bay of Plenty, Hamilton, Auckland, and Christchurch on a James Wattie visiting professorship.