

majority of these hospitals are private houses converted, as far as the finances of the persons concerned permit, to the important purposes of a hospital. This arrangement can never be quite satisfactory. While it must be recognized that the system now in operation has been of much service to the community, its defects cannot longer be endured, and a complete and drastic change is called for.

The only solution of the problem which presents itself to the Commission is that private maternity hospitals which do not completely comply with regulations to be formulated as to building, staffing, equipment, &c., should be subjected to a process of gradual extinguishment, and that in their place efficiently equipped accommodation for maternity cases be provided by the Government or Hospital Boards, or by both in conjunction, for all classes of the community—rich, poor, and those of moderate means—the patients being required to pay for the service rendered in accordance with their financial ability. The cost of maintenance would be relatively reduced in proportion to the size of the institution, and even if some permanent loss were incurred it would be reasonable to view this as perhaps more justifiable than any loss incurred in other State enterprises. It has transpired that as matters now stand the Department of Health, by the great and increasing demand for this class of service, is practically forced into the position of issuing licenses for private maternity hospitals in cases where it is realized the buildings and equipment are not entirely suitable. The Commission points out that the issue and the continuance of a license by a Government Department induces a natural assumption by the public that the institution concerned is suitable and safe. If in fact many of these institutions are not suitable and safe, then this sense of security is a false one.

(G.) *Note as to Kelvin Private Maternity Hospital.*—It seems necessary to report upon this hospital at some length. At the inception of the inquiry it became evident that the unhappy events which had taken place at this hospital, and the rumours and gossip following, had engendered a strong feeling of hostility towards the hospital itself, the Matron, and the medical practitioners concerned. A suspicion, and perhaps more than a suspicion, was widely disseminated that there had been something in the nature of a conspiracy of silence between the Matron and the medical practitioners, or between the medical practitioners themselves, to conceal or suppress information which might be detrimental to one or other of them. It is but right to say emphatically that the Commission found not the slightest sign of any such conspiracy, or anything approaching it; nor any desire at any time, on the part of any person concerned, to conceal or suppress any material information. On the contrary, it appeared that, apart from such errors of judgment on the part of certain of the medical practitioners as have been before referred to, the conduct of affairs at this hospital during its period of trouble was strictly in accordance with the usual practice. A further suspicion was that one or more medical practitioners were financially interested in this hospital. There was no evidence indicating any ground for that suspicion.

That the Matron was active, alert, and keenly desirous of doing her full duty there was abundant evidence. Although submitted to ample cross-examination by counsel, nothing to the detriment of her reputation or reflecting upon her attention to her patients was elicited.

The departmental view of Kelvin Hospital is expressed in Assistant Inspector Miss Bagley's evidence as follows: "Kelvin is the largest, and I think as efficient a private hospital as there is in my district. It is conducted by a trained general nurse of very long experience, as well as being a trained midwife; and for general equipment it now compares favourably with any other licensed maternity hospital in my district."

Dr. Makgill and Dr. Hughes both spoke to the same effect. Matron Gibbons is in fact a general trained nurse holding the Auckland Hospital certificate, and holds, in addition, certificates for midwifery and mental nursing. She is one of the Board of Examiners of candidates for midwifery certificates. She has held a license for Kelvin Hospital since 1913, but in respect of the present premises since 1918. The record of this hospital from the 1st September, 1913, to the 5th November, 1923, shows that 1,247 maternity cases were admitted. Up to July, 1923, there had been three deaths (occurring prior to 1922, and from causes other