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ELSIE M. SIBTHORPE

## **4: Comments on the free prescribing of contraceptives**

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It is difficult to comment at this stage on the free prescribing of contraceptives, as the full implementation of the service has not yet taken place. There is no doubt that the announcement of a free contraceptive service was political and had not been worked out with the profession.

If prescription charges had been abolished, so that patients who are dependent on drugs for their well-being were supplied free, then the additional supply of free contraceptives would be a rational measure, but it seems unfair that those who are ill should have to pay, and fit persons get contraceptives free.

The actual costs of the pill or other contraceptive appliances are very small compared with the amount many people spend on tobacco or alcohol, but even so there are women who would refuse to pay, but who can be induced to accept a free service. As these women are usually those in the lower social scale, who tend to have large families, this is a good thing.

It is more important for married couples to be able to obtain contraceptive advice easily and from competent advisers than that it should be provided free. While many people can get all the help they need from their general practitioners, some doctors for personal reasons do not wish to be involved in a contraceptive service, and so the provision of special clinics is necessary.

For some years now certain London Boroughs in conjunction with the Family Planning Association have run a free contraceptive service, and there is no doubt that many young women have appreciated the ease and anonymity with which married and unmarried alike could obtain advice and supplies of pills, etc. However much we may deplore sexual intercourse outside marriage, it is much better to encourage a responsible attitude and provide contraception, rather than have to deal with an unwanted pregnancy.

JOHN HART

## **5: Family planning—a missionary responsibility**

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The days have long since gone when a missionary was somebody who only preached the gospel and taught the Bible. However, most missionaries today would agree that the real missionary job involves