

Unwed Mothers

'You Can't Carry a Child And Feel Indifferent to It'

By BINA G. LUITEN

Spokane, Wash. — (NC) — Dottie said she felt "horrible" at the thought of giving up her unborn baby.

But a caseworker assured the unwed mother everything would be all right.

"By your mistake," the caseworker told her, "you are making somebody happy. Some couple somewhere is waiting for a baby."

Dottie resides at de Porres

Manor here, one of two homes for unwed mothers maintained by the Spokane diocesan Catholic Family Service. The other is St. Anne's Maternity Home.

Sister Mary John, director of St. Anne's Infants and Maternity Home, insisted there is no such thing as an unwanted child. "Our waiting list is always lengthy," she said.

She said visitors who come to see the newborns don't often give much thought to the mothers of the infants or why

they give them up. "There are many circumstances involved," she said, "and in most instances it isn't an easy thing to do."

"Scared is the first reaction the girls have," Dottie admitted. "They're scared when they find out they are pregnant; they're scared of the responsibility. They wonder if they should keep their babies or whether it's right to get married."

Most girls at both homes plan to relinquish their infants, but nearly all said they definitely oppose abortion.

"You can't carry a child and feel indifferent to it regardless of the circumstances," stated 18-year-old Sue.

"Society lumps us all together under one category — like

a bad disease," said Barb. "They think it will never happen to their own child; that their daughter is above it, it's that 'other girl' — they expect something like that from her."

"And then it hits nice families with nice girls and nice homes, with girls who are protected and loved at home; with girls who make mistakes," said the attractive 19-year-old. "You just don't understand it until it happens to you personally. You read about it and say, 'well that's not me — it doesn't affect me.'"

"All of us at St. Anne's have said exactly the same thing," she commented. The others nodded approval.

"We can't blame what happened to us on society," said Barb. "We've learned to share our problems with one another. We do a lot of growing up here. We find there are so many things we use to take for granted."

Barb, expecting her baby in April, is planning on relinquishing her rights to the child. "I can't be both mother and father to a baby. I don't have the right to gamble with any in-

dividual's future. I want it to have a good home. I want someone to adopt it," she said.

Barb, a friendly and bright young woman, plans to return to her hometown and go on to college.

Asked if it would be hard for her to return she replied: "I don't expect people to forget. All I can do is hope that people will like me as a person. If they dislike me, then they are doing it for just one reason — because I made a mistake."

"My parents wanted me to get married right away when I told them I was pregnant," said 18-year-old, Linda. "He would have married me. In fact he still visits me. But I don't feel that I'm old enough to get married. I don't think I could manage the responsibility."

Sally's parents plan to take her baby in as one of their own. She is the oldest of 10 children. "I'd have stayed at home to have the baby but my little brothers and sisters would not have understood," she said.

"I feel very badly because I have hurt my parents," she said softly.

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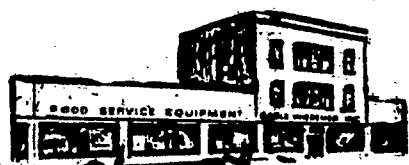
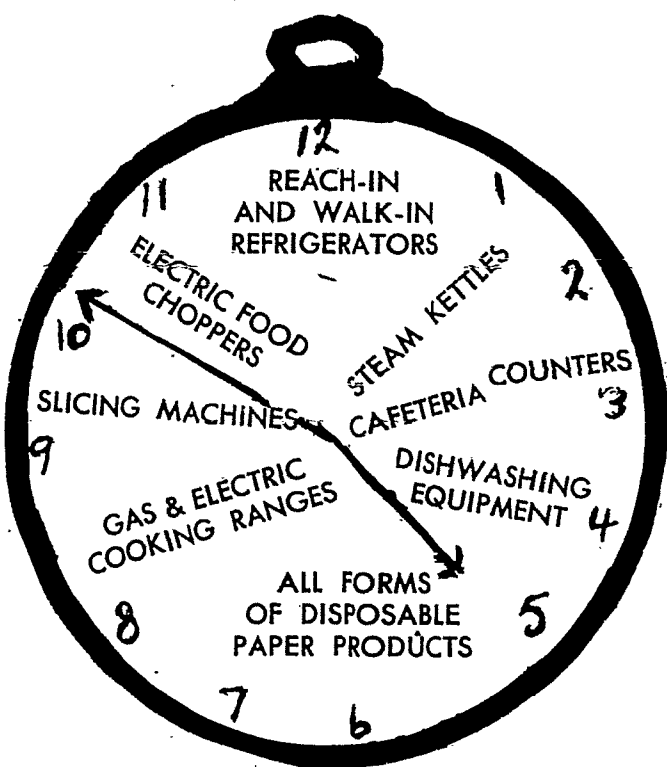
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