

Feb 8, 2014 Listener

book, although she made this clear from the start. It appears, then, that McLeod wanted a different kind of book altogether – a book, as she puts it, that gave “both sides of the debate”.

But this is not the book that McCulloch was writing. Her book is an extremely well-written and often entertaining analysis of the abortion rights struggle and as such it gives a definitely colourful – if not chaotic, as McLeod would prefer – description of the key personalities and organisations in the various campaigns of the time. But the book is not one-sided, as the author carefully analyses and critiques the strengths and weaknesses of the pro-choice campaign strategies, as well as those of the opponents of reproductive rights for women.

Sadly, all this colour and life were ignored in the review.

ABORTION BOOK REVIEW

Before I start in on Rosemary McLeod's review of *Fighting to Choose* (Books, January 18), I declare I am firmly on the side of a woman's right to choose abortion. McLeod did not seem to understand that the author, Alison McCulloch, was taking this approach in the

McLeod seemed more interested in telling the reader what she was doing at the time.

Helen Wilson
(Mt Victoria, Wellington)

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ABORTION STIGMA Listener

In her review of Alison McCulloch's *Fighting to Choose: The Abortion Rights Struggle in New Zealand* (Books, January 18), Rosemary McLeod says she has yet to hear of an abortion being denied. Sadly, the Health and Disability Commissioner has heard. In 2004, a 29-year-old mother died shortly after giving birth to a stillborn baby by caesarean section. She had a serious heart condition and died while having emergency cardiac surgery, leaving behind a five-year old son, a partner and a grieving family.

The commissioner's report says, “The tragedy of this case is compounded by the fact that had Ms B been provided with full and timely information, she may have lived. It seems probable that had Ms B been fully informed about the options available to her, she would have chosen termination.” She was denied this choice by the medical specialists involved in her care, demonstrating the harsh reality of what McCulloch describes as the powerful cultural taboo against abortion that still exists. Yes, abortion is a common experience, but the stigma against it prevails.

Margaret Sparrow
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