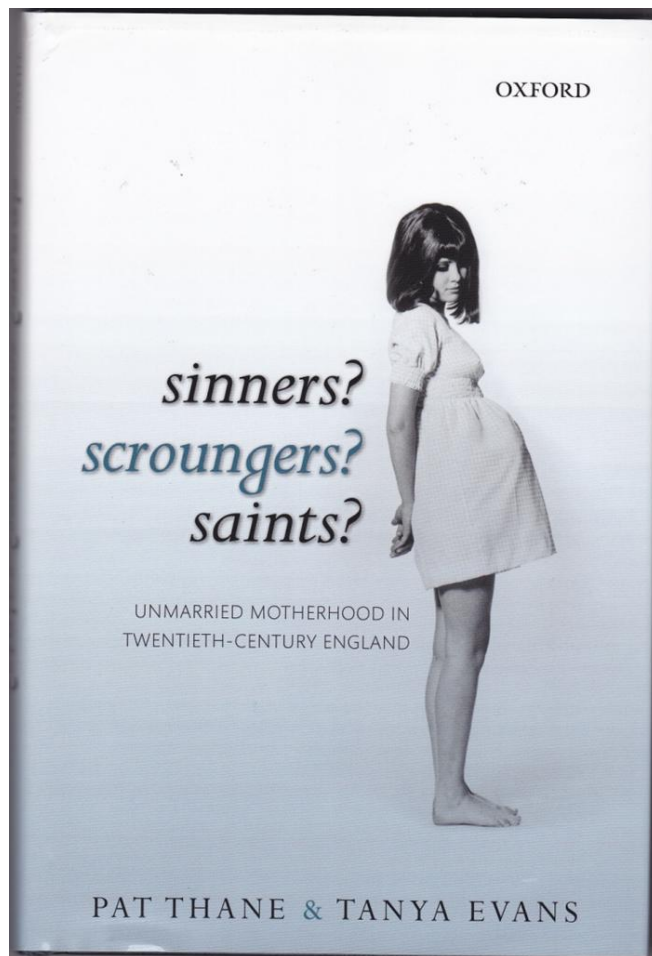


# ADOPTION IN 20TH CENTURY ENGLAND AND WALES

PAT THANE

KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON

# UNMARRIED MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN



# 'ILLEGITIMATE' BABIES MOST ADOPTED UNTIL 1970S

- NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE UNMARRIED MOTHER AND HER CHILD.
- FOUNDED 1918. NOW GINGERBREAD.
- OPPOSED ADOPTION WHEN MOTHERS COULD CARE FOR CHILDREN .CRITICAL OF ADOPTION PROCESSES
- SUPPORTED MOTHERS TO FIND HOMES, WORK (BOTH DIFFICULT), FOSTER CARE.
- SUPPORTED GRANDPARENTS HELPING DAUGHTERS AND CHILDREN

# **NCUMC's SUCCESSFUL MODEL OF ALTERNATIVE TO ADOPTION**

- REQUIRED INTENSIVE, EXPERT SOCIAL WORK (VOLUNTARY)**
- SOME LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOLLOWED THE MODEL BY 1930s E.G. BIRMINGHAM**
- NC WORKED CLOSELY WITH CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER WW2.**

# **AFTER 1945**

- **EXPANSION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENTS**
- **WORKED WITH VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS LIKE NCUMC**
- **INCREASING NUMBERS OF ADOPTIONS TO 1968.**
- **INCREASED 'ILLEGITIMATE' BIRTHS: 1951-5, 10.7 PER 1000 WOMEN AGED 15-44, E&W; 1961-5 ,19.1.**

# **RISING ADOPTIONS TO 1968**

## **REASONS?**

- **INCREASED 'ILLEGITIMACY'**
- **TIGHTER LAW AGAINST INFORMAL ADOPTION, SALE OF CHILDREN ETC.: MORE OFFICIAL ADOPTIONS**
- **MORE PRESSURE ON WOMEN TO HAVE BABIES ADOPTED, IN HOSPITALS AND MOTHER AND BABY HOMES**
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY: UNMARRIED MOTHERS 'UNFIT'**

# **RISING ADOPTIONS TO 1968**

## **REASONS?**

- **INCREASED 'ILLEGITIMACY'**
- **TIGHTER LAW AGAINST INFORMAL ADOPTION, SALE OF CHILDREN ETC.: MORE OFFICIAL ADOPTIONS**
- **MORE PRESSURE ON WOMEN TO HAVE BABIES ADOPTED, IN HOSPITALS AND MOTHER AND BABY HOMES**
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY: UNMARRIED MOTHERS 'UNFIT'**

# POSTWAR ADOPTIONS

- **OFTEN CALLOUSLY CONDUCTED. PAINFUL TO MOTHERS. OFTEN GIVEN NO OPTION IN MOTHER AND BABY HOMES, EVEN IF COMPETENT, UNLESS FAMILY OR THE FATHER SUPPORTED THEM.**
- **MOST ADOPTED CHILDREN 'ILLEGITIMATE', UNDER 12 MONTHS.**



# SUNDAY TIMES 1993

The second picture is a cartoon taken from The Sunday Times in 1993. This is the new face of single parenthood in the eyes of conservative politicians and many of the press - her face evil and licentious, her children, over-fed and parasitic.



# POST 1968 SITUATION

- **FEWER 'ILLEGITIMATE' BABIES FOR ADOPTION**
- **NOT REPLACED BY ADOPTION OF OLDER CHILDREN, THOUGH MANY IN CARE**
- **EMBEDDED RELUCTANCE TO ADOPT OLDER CHILDREN**
- **EXPORT OF OLDER CHILDREN FROM BARNARDO'S ETC TO COLONIES, LATE 19TH C TO C 1970.**

# AUSTRALIA

- **DIFFERENT PATTERN FROM UK**
- **UNTIL 1970S 'ILLEGITIMATE' BABIES ROUTINELY ADOPTED. NO ALTERNATIVE MODEL. PAINFUL FOR MOTHERS**
- **ADOPTION OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN INTO 'WHITE' FAMILIES**
- **ADOPTION OF EXPORTED BRITISH CHILDREN, NOT ALWAYS HAPPILY.**
- **GOVERNMENT APOLOGIES TO ALL 3 GROUPS.**

# AUSTRALIA- 2

- **CHANGE IN POLICY. AWAY FROM MASS ADOPTION. 10,000 CHILDREN ADOPTED 1971-2; 384 2010-11.**
- **OUTCOME? WORTH INVESTIGATING.**

# CONCLUSIONS

- **NCUMC EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THE IMPORTANCE OF INTENSIVE, SPECIALIZED SOCIAL WORK WITH FAMILIES, TO ASSESS AND SUPPORT THROUGH ADOPTION OR ALTERNATIVES**
- **HAS MOVE AWAY FROM SPECIALIZED SOCIAL WORK SINCE SEEBOHM REFORM, 1971,+ CUTS TO SERVICES, REDUCED CAPACITY TO SUPPORT CHILDREN, THEIR FAMILIES, INCLUDING GRANDPARENTS, AND ADOPTERS?**