

thoroughly on the reasons for concern about the safety of The Pill. But its social and psychological importance conferred what Dr. David B. Clark, a University of Kentucky neurologist, has called "a diplomatic immunity." Over and above such "immunity," Dr. Herbert Ratner, editor of *Child and Family*,² has found plentiful evidence of affirmative "propaganda." In general, he said in an editorial last spring, "favorable findings of drug company subsidized physician promoters of The Pill and naive physicians have been encouraged, widely distributed, scientifically inflated, maximized and extolled, whereas unfavorable findings have either been ignored, suppressed, rationalized, minimized or ridiculed." The net result seen by Dr. Ratner "was that the real users of The Pill, the middle and upper classes of the U.S., were seduced away from well established and safe means of birth control."

Other possible effects of long-term use must be checked. Our studies have involved a number of tests varying from blood pressure to liver function, from blood-cell counts to cancer-detection smears. Thus far we have no indication of abnormality, but we continue regular examinations. When we finish in a few years, these studies will probably constitute one of the most thorough long-term observations of female physiology yet performed. The use of oral contraceptives by millions of women in recent years has led to wide publicity, and many ills occurring in users have been attributed to the "pills." Among them may be mentioned excessive hair growth and excessive loss of hair, insomnia and sleepiness, excessive bleeding and a tendency to blood clotting. When subjected to careful scrutiny, all of these conditions have been found to be unrelated to the use of the contraceptives.

Expert advice: conclusions on the safety of The Pill by Dr. Gregory Pincus, a pioneer in the creation of oral contraceptives, in *Ladies' Home Journal*, June, 1963.

The substance of the Clark-Ratner indictment once was turned against *The New York Times* by Gershon Rolnick, a reader in Brooklyn, who made a tally of stories on The Pill and found a far smaller emphasis on safety than on such aspects as the happiness of sexually liberated and always ready co-eds, secretaries, and housewives, the pronouncements of clerics, and the alleged therapeutic benefits. Replying, Turner Catledge, then executive editor, told Rolnick that the *Times* "has tried to inform its readers about all important aspects of the question of oral contraceptives. It intends to continue to report accurately on all newsworthy events." Well over a year after this exchange, in April, 1968, the *Times* disposed of the momentous report of the British Medical Research Council with a six-paragraph story on page 86, next to the ship arrivals. Four months earlier, on January 7, 1968, a *Times* specialist on The Pill, Jane E. Brody, pronounced it nothing less than the "perfect" contraceptive. This evaluation was made in the first sentence of her article. The second sentence made clear that by "perfect" she meant "foolproof." This is not the exclusive criterion for perfection; shooting the mother might also be a "foolproof" method of contraception.

Miss Brody's enthusiasm for The Pill was shared by Dr. John Rock, one of its principal developers, probably its leading proselytizer and a Roman Catholic, whose scientific illogic has been treated by the *Times* and other news media as seriously as his disputes with the Vatican. In the January, 1968, *Family Circle*, which about 7 million housewives carried home from supermar-

² This is "A Quarterly Survey on The Family" owned by the National Commission on Human Life Reproduction and Rhythm, Oak Park, Illinois.