

Planned Parenthood's Dr. Guttmacher was quoted in the *Times* as saying it gave The Pill "a complete green light."

Dr. James L. Goddard, who in January, 1966, had succeeded George Larrick as Commissioner of the FDA, went before the television cameras and, despite determined, incisive questioning by Sander Vanocur, persisted in conveying to the *Today* audience a far more positive impression of the safety of The Pill than was warranted by the report of his own agency's advisory committee. A year later, Dr. Goddard brought his optimistic approach to a CBS television and radio audience. "Do you still think The Pill is safe?" Martin Agronsky asked on *Face the Nation*.

"Yes," the Commissioner replied. "I believe it is, provided it is taken under a physician's direction and careful consideration is given to all the factors in the medical history."

This was a standard reply—and a misleading one. But when reminded in persistent questioning that, for example, only 132 women had received Enovid for a maximum of 38 consecutive cycles before the FDA let it go on sale, Dr. Goddard implied strongly that the previous regime may have been negligent. "It was," he said, "my *impression* . . . that there were large-scale studies carried out. . . . Whether today, if the same problem came up de novo, I would make the same judgment that was made then, I can't say [my italics]." From then on, Dr. Goddard, who had inherited a mess when he became commissioner, took a hard line on The Pill. So has the man who succeeded him, Dr. Herbert L. Ley, Jr.

A serious case of non-reporting and mis-reporting was provided by events of April 4, 1967. In Atlanta, Commissioner Goddard, who was now taking a hard line, went into a veritable lions' den—a meeting of the American Association of Planned Parenthood Physicians—to warn that side effects of The Pill were "grossly under-reported." He said that the lack of adequate data was a "grave issue," that every doctor should report even the "subtlest experiences" in users, and that each patient should be told "carefully . . . about all the possible side effects The Pill may bring on, minor or major." Although the FDA widely distributed copies of the speech, most major news media ignored it.

On the same day, in London, Minister of Health Kenneth Robinson disclosed in Parliament that a then unreleased, preliminary report of the Medical Research Council would show "a slightly increased risk of clotting." But he went on to try to minimize the risk by comparing it favorably with the risks of pregnancy. He released mere bits of solid information. The net result was almost total confusion. While the *Daily Mail* was carrying a very large headline saying "Pill Clearance," the *Guardian* was saying, "Risk of Thrombosis." At the same time, the *Daily Telegraph* was so reassured that it said The Pill "must now be regarded as medically pretty safe" and "argument about it . . . transferred to other spheres." In an angry editorial, *Lancet*, the medical journal, said it did not blame the newspapers for the confusion, for they had had "to make what they could of a statement no one could evaluate," but Robinson, because he had disclosed the "alarming conclusion" of the Research Council without giving physicians prescribing The Pill "the facts needed to re-examine their decisions." It continued:

"The confusion generated by the inept handling of this situation has obscured the main message—mainly, that for the first time since oral contraceptives were introduced an authoritative inquiry has shown that they *do* carry an increased risk of thromboembolism."

The "main message" was nowhere in a *Time* cover story on The Pill dated April 7, 1967. The theme, "Freedom from Fear," carried a brisk, promotional, propagandistic tone. There is "no evidence that the pills cause clots that might travel to the lungs or develop in the brain," *Time* said. Eight months later—long enough for many readers to have forgotten that they had been promised "Freedom and Fear"—*Time* backed down. In a piece on December 29, 1967, headed "The Pill and Strokes," *Time* admitted that enough cases had been reported "to convince physicians that there is a cause-and-effect relationship."

On May 5, 1967, the preliminary report of the Medical Research Council to which the Minister of Health had alluded was released. *The New York Times* accorded it twelve printed lines. These were the lead paragraphs on wire service stories received in the United States: