

Berkeley movement heavies who have gone to work in the factories, but for every one of them I will finger you five who shuffle around with manila folders under their arms eternally going to a meeting. If I tail along to a few meetings with you guys, then is it OK if I cop the food stamps?

And finally—how come white hippie children get judged differently from black folk. Malcolm hustled in the streets and justified it as a way of life. You never preached at him or at Seale nor at any black; are they nobler savages? Is theirs a romantic life while mine is a betrayal of my class? Why can't white people choose to be poor?

—BOB CRATCHIT

# Letters

[THE PILL CONTROVERSY]

EDITORS:

It was with dismay that we read in the February edition of *RAMPARTS* Frances Lang's article entitled "The Sickle Cell and the Pill." That article suggested that oral contraception provides exceptional risk to women with any of the sickle cell disorders, including sickle cell trait, sickle cell anemia and sickle cell-hemoglobin C disease. On the basis of our study of the available medical literature, we believe that the Pill does not provide additional

risk to women with the most common hemoglobin abnormality, sickle cell trait.

Attempting to demonstrate once more the corruption of capitalist medicine, Lang allowed political theory to dominate her medical judgment where she should have used political theory to inform that judgment. Lang extrapolated wholly inaccurate conclusions from two limited, mediocre medical papers and used extensive quotations from the "experts" who composed those papers. Readers with only this information will subsequently make incorrect health decisions in their own individual human situations. Such confusion among the people serves to strengthen the position of establishment medicine.

The racism of American medicine is witnessed by the significant lack of research into the various sickle cell disorders which afflict only black people. It is this lack of research that makes it impossible for us or for Frances Lang to make definitive statements about the use of the Pill by women with sickle cell trait, sickle cell anemia or sickle cell-hemoglobin C disease. Even so, some medical research on sickle cell and oral contraception has been published and we must consider this information carefully and critically.

a. The article fails to differentiate clearly between sickle cell trait (HbSA), sickle cell anemia or disease (HbSS) and sickle cell-hemoglobin C disease (HbSC). Women with the common sickle cell trait are led to make personal health decisions on the basis of questionable findings from women with the far more serious and rare sickle cell-hemoglobin C disease;

b. The article draws its main conclusions from two medical papers (*JAMA* 200:994, 1967 and *Conn Med* 35:231, 1971), reporting a total of three cases of possible complications to the Pill. Two of the three women involved had sickle cell-hemoglobin C disease and were particularly susceptible to the complications they experienced;

c. Lang omits the fact that all three women involved were taking high estrogen or sequential oral contraceptives. Most women taking the Pill today are (or should be) on low

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dose medication (0.05 mg estrogen per pill). The metabolic effects of high dose and sequential pills are not the same as the effects of low dose medication;

d. The article misrepresents the British studies on the risk of thromboembolism (blood clotting) in Pill users and grossly exaggerates the risk of masculinization of female fetuses carried by women who mistakenly continue oral contraception during pregnancy. Lang also makes misleading statements about the cancer-stimulating effects of diethylstilbestrol and implies that women taking the Pill receive this kind of estrogen. Diethylstilbestrol is not used in any brand of birth control pill;

e. Lang fails to place the risks of oral contraception in the context of existing health realities. The food we eat, the air we breathe, the cars we drive in, the cigarettes so many of us continue to smoke—all these individually provide terrifically greater dangers; for working people and the poor, medical care is so bad that the physical dangers of capitalist society are all the more extreme. To tell a working class or poor black woman that oral contraception provides “risk” belies a certain class conceit.

In all the work that we undertake, it is not sufficient to be “red,” it is also necessary to be “expert.” That this principle is not adhered to by all radical health workers is painfully obvious in many cities. In some community and youth clinics, middle class, supposedly “radical,” health workers dispense bad medicine to their working class and poor patients. Untrained, unsupervised, ego-tripping medical students use diagnostic techniques they are not familiar with; there is a lack of adequate testing facilities, sterility, records and so on. This kind of medicine does not instill confidence in our abilities among those whom we wish to serve. If our political aim is to serve the people and at the same time organize for social progress, bad medicine is bad politics. Correct political theory and human compassion, although essential, cannot eliminate the need for medical expertise which must be of the highest quality. We must know medicine better than our enemies and provide excellent,

not just adequate, health care to those who will never be served by capitalist medicine.

—Donna Cherniak and Allan Feingold  
Co-editors-in-chief  
Birth Control Handbook

(For those interested in the medical details of the influence of oral contraception on sickle cell trait, sickle cell anemia and sickle cell-hemoglobin C disease, we have prepared an analysis of the available medical literature. For a copy of this paper, please write to:

P.O. Box 1000, station G,  
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Birth Control Handbook  
Montréal, 130, Québec)

*(Cherniak and Feingold have considerably distorted my argument. I did not attempt to make a definitive statement about the relationship among birth control pills, sickling disorders, and blood clots; instead I attempted to explore a medical dilemma about which little has been published but which has aroused the concern of physicians who specialize in sickle cell disorders. I clearly distinguish between the different effects of the pill on sickle cell anemia and sickle cell trait. I wrote, “Sickle cell trait may leave those who bear it entirely free of symptoms. . . . Physicians who interdict use of the pill in conjunction with sickle cell disease are generally uncertain about whether the sickle cell trait as well renders the pill particularly dangerous.”*

*Drs. Greenwald, Haynes and Dunn, whose medical papers I quoted, did write primarily of their experience with patients suffering from Hemoglobin C disease; however, Dr. Greenwald and other physicians with whom I spoke expressed concern about prescribing birth control pills to women with other sickle cell disorders as well.*

*Cherniak and Feingold express equal distress about my mention of the tendency for birth control pills to heighten the risk of thromboembolism in all women. The 1967 British study I quoted states that women taking oral contraceptives run a “slightly increased risk of developing blood clots.” Since publication of that study, much more evidence demonstrating this correlation has accumulated. Even Cherniak and Feingold, in their longer analysis of the Pill, write, “The risk of thromboem-*

*bolism is slightly increased. [But] the benefits of the Pill . . . when taken as directed, outweigh the dangers.”*

*It would seem that Cherniak and Feingold feel that black people need birth control so desperately that any dangers the Pill bears for them are insignificant in comparison. They also seem to believe that evidence about the possible danger of birth control pills should be withheld from blacks unless it is absolutely conclusive, implying that anything short of definitive information will only confuse them.*

*The “misleading statements” about the cancer-stimulating effects of diethylstilbestrol and the estrogen found in birth control pills were made by a physician testifying before the House Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee. He was asked, “To your knowledge, have any of the contraceptives on the market today been shown to be carcinogenic?” He replied, “Yes . . . because they had synthetic estrogen and . . . any estrogen of these strains will be carcinogenic.”*

*My attempt to report the dialogue and research, now being published in medical journals about oral contraceptives seriously challenges the belief that the benefits of the Pill far outweigh the dangers. It would seem that the dismay Cherniak and Feingold express about my article is based less on its alleged inaccuracy than on the fact that it was written at all.*

—Frances Lang)

[AUSTRALIA WANTS YOU]

EDITORS:

I have noted that you are now carrying an advertisement that “Australia Wants You!!!” As an immigrant of one year’s residence, I would like to warn any would-be immigrant from America of the current situation here.

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der" as the apathy of Australians is stultifying. There are some small pockets of awareness in Sydney and one or two other capital cities but even there information is difficult to obtain. Even the much-vaunted newspaper *The Australian* carries very little foreign news or even in-depth domestic news.

I have met many Americans who have immigrated but only one who intends to stay. If an immigrant comes with "assisted passage" from the government, he must repay the money if he leaves within two years. *In effect, Australia is still populating the continent with prisoners.*

—James Loughery  
Kalgoorlie, Western Australia

### CANDIDATES (from page 12)

by access to money and the U.S. bombing threat. If they make their concession first, by releasing the POWs before a coalition forms, our concession will never be made. But, once a coalition is formed, they would have to make their concession good because the POWs would then be a liability, a political basis for new U.S. attacks. The Nine Points call for this timetable: we stop supporting the Saigon regime, allowing it to collapse, at that point the process of coalition will begin along with a cease-fire, U.S. withdrawal and return of POWs.

That is the significance of their including a cessation of support for Saigon, as well as withdrawal of troops, as conditions for the POW release. So when the doves gloss over the question of economic aid as a purely humanitarian, politically incidental problem, they are placing a serious obstacle in the way of peace, and they are evading the demands of true withdrawal from Vietnam.

The one question of the seven not yet covered, question 5, though rather inconclusive is nevertheless illuminating on this point.

*5. Shall withdrawal of U.S. forces include withdrawal of any or all of the military equipment bases, supplies, and reserves now being transferred to the Saigon regime, or are these to be looked on as Vietnamese and therefore immune to withdrawal? If any of this material is to be withdrawn, what? How much?*

### CHISHOLM:

5. I believe that total immediate withdrawal of all U.S. manpower to be the imperative priority. The usage of residual equipment bases, supplies, etc., should be left open to negotiation only after that first priority has been achieved.

### HUMPHREY:

5. I have sponsored Senate Bill S2985 which would halt such giveaways of military materiel in Indochina not authorized by Congress.

### McGOVERN:

5. We should withdraw that portion of military equipment which costs less to transport than to replace.

### MUSKIE:

5. Although the United States would naturally withdraw much of the equipment its forces have been using in Vietnam, dismantling all bases built by the United States and withdrawing all American weapons would not be practicable. Nor would a commitment to do so serve any real purpose. It assumes that we and the North Vietnamese can settle all of the issues of the war between us. This issue would become academic in the context of a political settlement worked out by the Vietnamese themselves. As I have said, we should urge such a settlement.

All the answers missed the intended point. The candidates deal with the residue of equipment still in U.S. hands next January 20. The question meant to point to the fact that arms, which even now are still American, are being given and transferred to the Saigon army and will be magically transformed into indigenous Vietnamese resources by the time the candidates' promise of withdrawal comes due. Of course it was a question that could not really be confronted because how could they answer? How far back does one draw the line? It was all American once, and that reveals the key point about a true withdrawal: It still is, that government which we called into being to serve us. We gave it its constitution and its political police, its bureaucracy and its corruption. Its leaders are our viceroys, its armies our mercenaries. Even though the last GI may ship out and President Thieu may be discarded, it stands as the corner-

stone of our intervention, the creature of our aggression, the fruit of genocide.

That is why we have a responsibility to cut off its support and undo its power. That is also why the most dovish candidates may balk at cutting off economic aid, because to do that is to deny its legitimacy, to renounce our control, to admit defeat.

At this writing the results of the offensive launched in early April are still undetermined. For radicals there is always a tendency, especially because they understand its illegitimacy, to dismiss the client government as weak, corrupt and doomed. Thus one

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may speculate that the issue of cutting off economic aid will be swept aside by the liberation armies. But speculation is not politics, and the political point at least must be made. Moreover, to take the passive attitude of a football fan exhilarated by a winning team would be callous and destructive. These are costly victories and the price of every victory is increased by the torpor of the anti-war movement at home. And, finally, the measures of victory may be far from clear. Eventually a new government may well be forced into being, but it will represent a complex resolution of victories and

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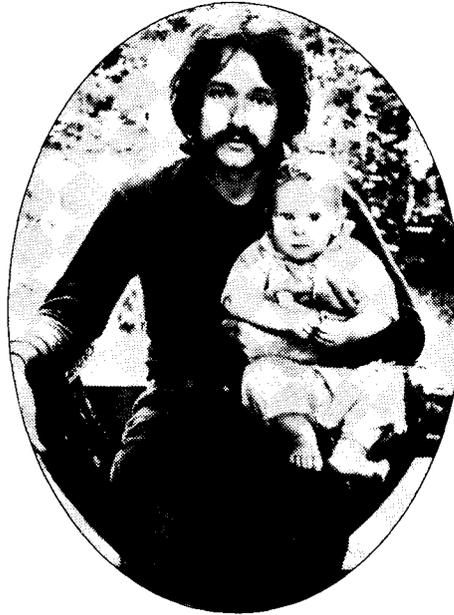
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# Buy This Baby.



Illustrated is Mr. Jesse Colin Young, of Point Reyes Station, Ca. In public life, Mr. Young is a singer and composer and musician, center of a musical quartet known as the Youngbloods.

Mr. Young has always been a model father. He has stayed close to home and cared devotedly for his wife, Suzi, son, Cheyenne (also pictured above, most emphatically not for sale), daughter, Juli, and group, Youngbloods. A family complete.

In late 1971-72, Jesse Colin Young startled family and friends with his decision: he wanted a new baby. A more-or-less conventional nine-month pregnancy ensued.

At last Mr. Young's third

baby has been born. It's round and flat with a Raccoon in the middle. He named the newborn *Together*.

Like any parent, J. C. Young was proud of his new baby. Like any proud parent, he treasured the admiration of others, words like, "a perfect mixture of bluesy rock and roll." — *Record World*

But Jesse Colin Young rested yet uneasy.

Critics fine, but what about the great unwashed: the public? Would the public cotton to *Together*, and buy his babe?

The news was slow, but at last word began to filter back to Point Reyes Station. The news was good.

Jesse's private prayer, to sell his third child, is being

answered.

Public scarfing up albums right well. As a good public should. Janet Maslin defined its attractions this way in *Rolling Stone*: "He can always make things sound rife with good times, sunlight, great big flowers (like the one on the cover), and hands on hips with minds rolling by. If Jesse has any troubles of his own (all signs point to No), he can leave them behind and make you forget yours too, all in one fell and joyful swoop."

Jesse Colin Young's *Together* is available now on Raccoon Records and tapes, distributed by Warner Bros. Records.

**Hot Tuna:**

**Jorma Kaukonen**, *guitars and lead vocals*

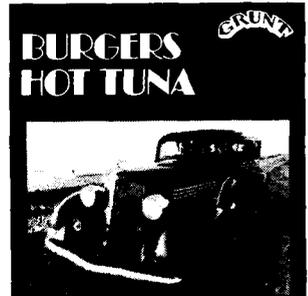
**Jack Casady**, *bass, vocals and eyebrow*

**Papa John Creach**, *violin and vocals*

**Sammy Piazza**, *drums, tympani, other percussion and vocals*

# Hot Tuna's new album

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