

# A Few Words

*We were overwhelmed.* In our March issue we printed a rather ungainly questionnaire, a Readership Survey intended to provide information useful to our advertising sales. Answering the 25 questions and sorting out the 200-some multiple choices may have been a little more pleasant than tangling with the IRS's 1040 (Long Form). But not much. The IRS provides an envelope. We, however, took our readers through a short course in Origami, enabling them to produce a business reply envelope by ingenious folding of the printed page. To seal the bargain, they had to find for themselves those most elusive of household items, a stapler or a piece of tape.

Who would find the time and take the trouble? Well, thousands of you did. Little more than a week out of the printer's hands, barely time enough for early subscription arrivals but long before the start of newsstand sales, 3000 fully answered questionnaires had arrived. And they are still coming in.

Although we are a long way from totting up the Surveys, we will publish the numerical results when complete. For now, we'd like to share with you—with no attempt at censorship other than to show a representative variety—a few of the comments volunteered with first returns. It was the comments above all which were so heartening. From them we sense your feeling that you can speak to us, and an awareness that there are really people here trying to speak to you. It has always been our hope that through this necessary medium of committed journalism a human voice comes through.

Many of the comments focused on persistent questions—*Ramparts'* attitude towards advertising, our prices, editorial emphases. . . . These deserve response. In future issues we will print some of these comments and try to say a few words of our own about the questions that they pose.

In the headnote to the Survey, we wrote, "Thank you in advance for your response." But, thanks again. Once was not enough.

The Editors

# Reader Comments

Great magazine and improving. Recent articles are more straightforward and relevant than formerly. "The Passion of the Jews" was superlative.

Many of your articles are excellent and many times you miss the mark and just "beat your gums." I am not sure I will re-subscribe next December . . .

Because you guys are penniless as usual, I'll chip in an envelope and a stamp. After all, it costs me only 10¢—it would cost you 12¢ if I used your 1st class postal permit.

Am a charter subscriber—however, at times have *hated* the magazine—and seriously considered never reading it again—articles such as "Baba Ram Dass" were a real turn-off.

We have subscribed to your magazine since issue one. It is a constant antidote to the TV and big city newspaper "news" which gives no news. We are to be counted as real fans. Thanks for being.

On question 11, it's a bit difficult to answer for *unmarried* people with children!

The above answers represent my own life, as I'm the mover in subscribing. My husband sometimes reads the magazine, is a history buff, a deck hand, rides a bike, smokes everything available and coughs. . . . I like *Ramparts* and know it is important in our society.

Love your in-depth articles. Please don't let those who complain of dryness or who try to push you into being a left-wing wailing wall in glossy print keep you from stabbing deep into issues of moment.

Miss occasional humorous and satirical pieces.

Most enlightening—sometimes unspeakably vulgar—but think *Ramparts* should be in every school library.

I hate to be just a name on your sub list but time is the thing I have the very least of. You sustain me in a plastic world. I feel that 75% of the people I must deal with daily are robots, and such contact draws the life out of me. *Ramparts* helps put life back in. Keep publishing.

# QUILAPAYUN

**A concert in support of the Chilean people  
A concert for freedom, by those in exile**

**"...so that Chile may  
become Chile again."**

Sat. March 29, Berkeley \$2  
Berkeley Community Theatre, Allston & Grove, 8 p.m.

Sun. March 30, San Francisco \$2  
Longshoremen's Hall, 400 North Point, 8 p.m.

Tues. April 1, Los Angeles \$2.50  
Embassy Aud., 843 S. Grand, 7:45 p.m.

CHILE'S BEST MUSICIANS

Excellent magazine. I encourage my students and co-workers to read and buy it. The Dec 74/Jan 75 issue was excellent. Your material so far is reliable and compares favorably with *The New York Review of Books*.

Periodically you are unintelligible, but I'm working on that. Keep it coming.

My community is something of an intellectual desert. *Ramparts* helps to keep me alive. Thank you.

Well written. Although liberal and leftist, I find *Ramparts* very informative and quite fair as regards the Middle East debacle. My fundamental philosophy is ultra-conservative, but I appreciate your viewpoints and am always willing to "lend an ear" to opposing philosophy. Keep up the good work. We both oppose the "ruling elite." Terence McCarthy is great.

My more conservative friends poooh-pooed *Ramparts* back in '70-'71-'72. Now much of what you wrote about—Madame Chennault, for example—FBI—CIA—turns out to have really happened.

We enjoy the up-to-date, in-depth reporting on the grape and wine boycott. Please keep us posted. We've stopped buying Gallo wines. How about conditions on migrant workers in other parts of the U.S.

I am a charter subscriber and plan to continue. I enjoy *Ramparts* although I don't always agree. I do agree with the recent change in policy. It puts you in better position as a credible critic of the mainstream. For an establishment guy like me, *Ramparts* is my radical edge which helps me keep balance of perspective. Keep up the good work.

The workers at United Aircraft (an American company) in Longueuil, Quebec, have been on strike for 14 months. I thought I would mention this to you because it would be nice if someone outside of Quebec heard of it.

One thing I would like to see either as a separate feature or added to each article is a reference or further reading list.

Why no questions on drugs used other than liquor? I like your partisanship and see you as a forerunner of "advocacy journalism." However, I don't think you do enough poetry or philosophy or music.

As a Zionist, it is good to read a socialist magazine that takes a balanced, critical, non-sycophantic pro-Arab position on the Middle East. Your articles on Israel provide healthy criticism. I would like to see discussions about "what a radical can do" here and now in the U.S.

*Ramparts* has a wonderfully honest and questioning spirit that I dearly love. It's one of the few magazines I look forward to reading.

I feel that your magazine is becoming less and less valuable to me. I feel you have allowed yourself to slip into the middle of the road.

I enjoy your leftist bias. It balances some of my more conservative reading. It also keeps me in touch with a side of socio-political life almost totally unrepresented in the area I'm stuck in (North Carolina).

Terence McCarthy is one of your finest assets.

We have been ardent supporters of *Ramparts* for many years—keep it up. Maybe we have lost some of our zeal and fervor for supporting causes for those less fortunate than ourselves. However, this is not the early sixties and we are no longer in our early 20s. *Ramparts* would do well to publish an occasional article (as it did in the past) on how we can cope with present day-to-day existence (forming food conspiracies and what have you).

As long as present standards are kept will continue to subscribe. As I can, I hope to contribute other funds to insure your existence. More Terence McCarthy!

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## Lowndes County, Alabama:

# The Great Fear Is Gone

*Once upon a time in a country called America, in a county called Lowndes, lived a man named Mr. Blackman. One day while walking by the courthouse, Mr. Blackman thought: "Us colored people been using our mouths to do two things—eating and saying yes suh. It's time we said NO. Yes, it's time we get in this mess."*

—from a comic book,  
"A Vote for the Lowndes County  
Freedom Organization is a  
Vote for Us," 1966.

The mess in Lowndes is not yet cleaned. The central Alabama county, where "black power" politics began almost a decade ago, is dirt-poor as it always was. Its population of black farmers and their families who live on the margins of the cotton fields and grazing pastures is still economically subservient to the small white minority in the sprawling farmhouses and the columned stately homes of Lowndesboro. The whites who still control the board of education and the county commissioners give blacks few benefits and little recognition, and that grudgingly. The schools are still segregated. But the more Lowndes stays the same, the more it changes. For although the sleepy villages and rolling farms may appear untouched by the movements that swirled through them in the Sixties, the atmosphere is profoundly new. The great fear is gone in Lowndes.

To outside agitators and observers who used to treat Lowndes as a living specimen of the problems and promises of southern civil rights organizing, the use of atmospheric as a measure of progress may seem naive, or cynical. We projected "power" in more tangible terms in those days. But the

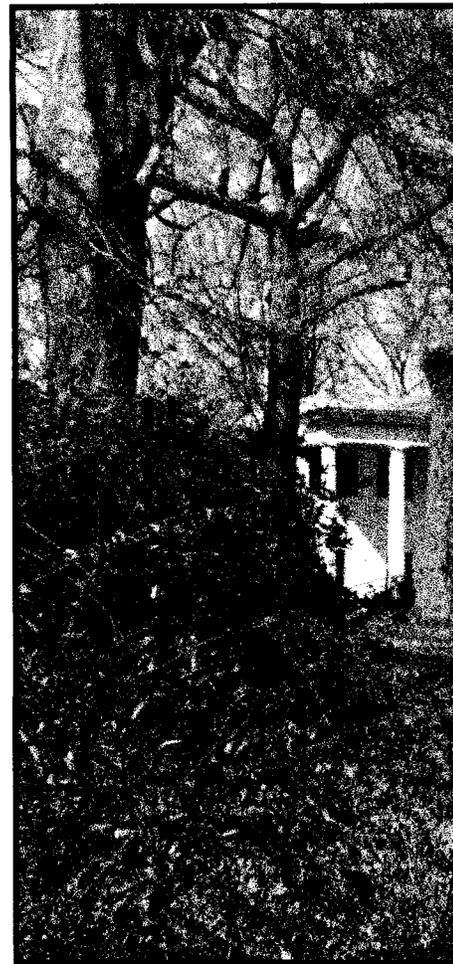
march to the commanding heights does not always proceed through plotted points; in Lowndes, a sense of freedom from fear is the base that supports both blacks and whites as they enter a long transition from the unreconstructed old order to a social design that is at best still sketchy.

The landmark event of this early period was the election in 1970—after several years of trying—of a black sheriff and two other black county officials: coroner and circuit court clerk. Of course, some folks in this slow and somnolent land will never see their elected officers from one term to the next, and never feel the direct effects of government. But the very fact of the election of black people in what was the center of southern white supremacy shattered the stability of the old system.

"It has made all the difference in the world," William Bradley, the black director of the local Head Start program, told me. Bradley, who is in his early fifties, grew up in Lowndes. "Do you know what it was like here before? It isn't anything like it was before John Hulett was elected sheriff. Blacks and whites agree on that."

"I do believe that the people have progressed," Mrs. Willie M. Strickland said with certainty. She was an energetic leader of the Lowndes County Christian Movement, and had once run unsuccessfully for the board of education.

*They're more understanding and not so fearful as they were. They're more self-confident. In the May [primary] election, one woman, who's illiterate, came to vote and the boss—the white man—went up to her and said, "I'm going to take you in now to vote." And she said,*



*"No. I'm going to go in myself. I don't need you to take me in." So they don't harass us bad like they used to—least you don't hear about it any more.*

Harassment, and worse, had been the way of life for blacks in Lowndes since anyone can remember, and before. The county is tucked in the middle of what was once the cotton kingdom of Alabama: it is the buckle on the fertile Black Belt, where (they say) the soil is so rich that a peg-legged man's got to run through it quick or he'll take root. Lowndes had more than its share of slaves to work those rich fields, and even after the Civil War they were kept in a state of *de facto* peonage from which they did not begin to emerge until the 1940s. John Cashin, a leader of the National Democratic Party of Alabama, the predominantly black alternative to the state's regular Democrats, told me that when the selective service agents went into the Black Belt counties just before World War II they found "black

by Andrew Kopkind

Photographs by Ray Jenkins

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