

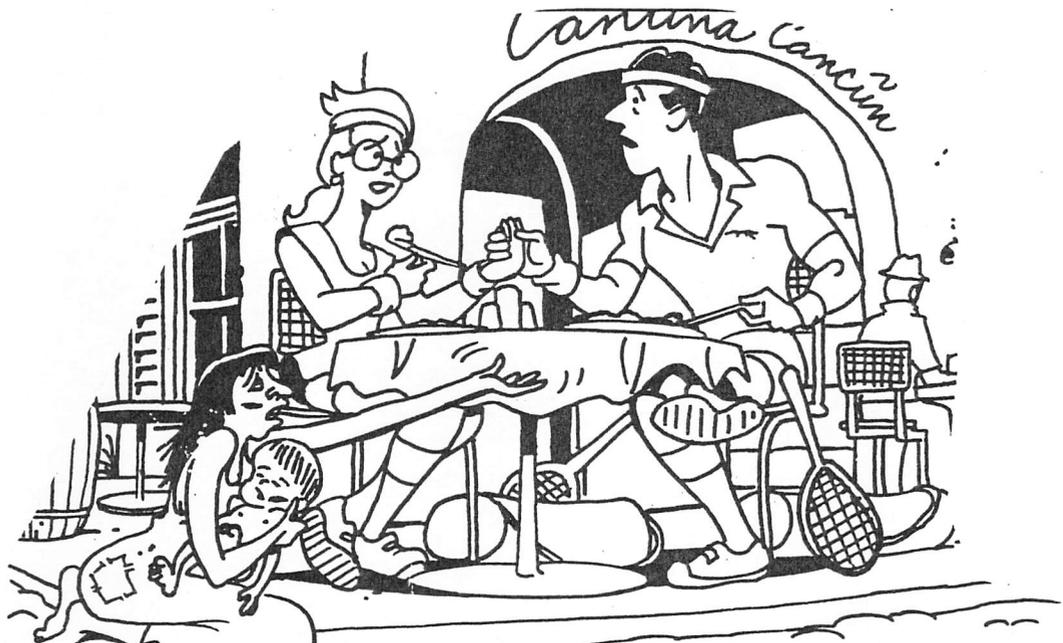
## DEAD ZONES

Japan has long been regarded as a master of technology, but there's one modern advance the country has yet to accept: the oral contraceptive pill. Since the '60s, successive governments have claimed either that the Pill has been insufficiently tested or that it would encourage promiscuity in women; instead, politicians have opted for legalized abortion, which has been available since 1948—resulting in one of the highest abortion rates in the developed world. Today, almost one of every two Japanese pregnancies is terminated, and cemeteries like this one, fifty miles outside of Tokyo, symbolize the result.

Each of these 13,000 statues represents a *mizuko*—an unborn child who died in the womb through miscarriage or abortion. Similar shrines are found all over the country; they are visited by mourners who dress

the statues in bibs and cover them with offerings like toys, rice, and children's shoes. Some of the larger cemeteries, particularly those affiliated with right-wing anti-abortion groups, are managed like small businesses, with hefty charges for statues, maintenance of the plots, and a newsletter that predicts dire misfortune for mothers who fail to appease the spirits of their lost children.

But the days of a Pill-less Japan—and profitable *mizuko* cemeteries—are almost certainly numbered. Pressure from women's groups has recently mounted, and this spring the country began once again to debate whether an oral contraceptive should be licensed. In the meantime, as one woman who was praying at this cemetery said: "As long as the Pill is not part of our culture, we shall remain the victims."



"Golly, I've never been faced with such a tough value conflict. Which do you think is worse—world hunger or high cholesterol?"