

100,000 abortions a year

By JUDY DARCY
and DIANNE WEINRIB
Women's Liberation Movement

A CARAVAN OF BLACK HEARSEs from across Canada will arrive in Ottawa May 9. Driven by members of Women's Liberation Movement groups in cities from Vancouver to Ottawa, the arrival of the Abortion Caravan will culminate a three-month campaign around the right of all women to legalized abortion.

The caravan will bring a coffin symbolizing the women who have died from illegal abortion. This coffin will be placed, and with it the responsibility for the death of our sisters, at some appropriate place in Ottawa (perhaps the prime minister's doorstep, or that of the Minister of Health or Justice, or at the House of Commons).

Throughout the campaign and afterwards — until all abortion laws are repealed — the Women's Liberation Movement will speak of all the issues related to birth control and

abortion — the right of all women to control their own bodies.

A major factor that has kept women in their secondary roles has been women's lack of control over their bodies. They were tied to the vagaries of nature. The assumption behind the present abortion laws is that the function of women is to bear children, and that only in cases where great social evil will occur if a woman bears a child, can society allow her to terminate the pregnancy.

We say, on the contrary, that the function of women is not simply to bear and raise children. The ability of a woman to control her own reproductive processes is a necessary precondition if women are to throw off the bonds that have for so long stifled their full potential as human beings.

The ultimate freedom remains the right of all women to legalized abortion. Canadian women are still denied this right by prime minister Pierre Trudeau's "Just Society" laws — just laws forcing a woman to un-

controlled fertility with compulsory pregnancy and motherhood.

The ruling of the Roman Catholic church in 1869, that all abortion from the moment of conception was now murder, had far-reaching effects. The abortion and birth control laws passed in Canada in 1892, when women were not allowed to vote, echoed the rulings of the church. The dissemination of birth control methods and information was illegal and abortion could only be performed if continued pregnancy meant certain death for the mother.

The new abortion law, brought into effect in August 1969, includes a threat to the physical or mental health of the mother as an indication for therapeutic abortion. No attempt has been made in the law to define the word "health". Theoretically it allows the doctor considerable leeway in interpretation; but doctors are still cowed by conservative interpretations of the law.

The present laws have had the

effect of taking the edge off the attack women were beginning to mount to demand control over their bodies. Legal abortions have been made possible for some middle class and upper class women, for whom birth control information and methods are already more accessible than for working class women. There are few women who know the ropes or have the connections that they can convince doctors and psychiatrists to submit their cases to abortion boards for review. For the majority of women, the reforms have been meaningless, and the process is a degrading one even for those few who are helped.

The laws discriminate most against poor, working-class, and young single women. They force most women to seek out illegal abortionists to perform what is an extremely costly, although simple operation.

Good, illegal abortions performed by qualified doctors, can still only be afforded by a few middle and upper class women. Women with no access

Starred as male super supremacist

Tiger's reactionary stance showed

By GWEN MATHESON
English and Humanities Departments

Whether or not one agrees with the controversial theories of Lionel Tiger, one would have to admire the masterly production staged in Room S915 of the Hum. building last Thursday afternoon in which he starred in the role of one of the last of the overt male supremacists. (After all we don't have to believe in ghosts and witches to appreciate Macbeth and Hamlet.)

Playing, no doubt, on current anti-Americanization sentiments at York, the chairman introduced Tiger as one of a rare and therefore much-to-be-revered species, a genuine "Canadian sociologist" (presently teaching at Rutgers University, however).

After he had made an attack on an unfavorable review of his book (circulated in stencilled form by an unsympathetic group) and a joke or two to win over the audience, the impeccably-clad professor took a few deep breaths and launched into a brilliantly contrived rapid-fire, hour-long manipulation of sociological jargon and abstract generalities, the efficacy of which in reducing his listeners to a befuddled and bedazzled state of mental exhaustion would make any brain-washing expert sick with envy.

The general gist of this verbal display seems to have been that "egalitarian structures are difficult to attain because of biological factors," that "dominance is not capricious but systematic," that it is difficult to change the sex-based division of labor derived from man's heritage as a "hunting animal" and consequently the present construction of social systems.

What it all appears to boil down to when the steam and vapor of technical and sociological language has been dispersed is a notion both simple and silly (usually the case with such residues) — namely, that people — in this case women — do what they do because they like it. (And now we know why so many blacks have been bell boys and porters!)

This kind of reasoning is similar to that which was actually employed in a recent class at this university when it was argued that women make good clerks and elevator operators because they have more patience than men! (Lucky for the men! ...but it's running out, boys!)

It is perhaps to Professor Tiger's credit that he did not deal with "male bonding and the exclusion of females", the central theme of his book, *Men in Groups*. But a clue to this omission might be detected in one of his own statements in an article in *New York magazine* (July 7, 1969) that "men are rarely attractive and coherent when they argue the value of male exclusiveness."

Before starting into the main part of his talk Tiger had been clever enough to take the precaution of pointing out that he was making a distinction between analysis and recommendation, thereby avoiding any evaluation of his conclusions. It could be added here too that he avoids the terms "inferior" and "superior" by the clever trick of substituting "subservience" and "dominance", as Louis Feldhammer, writer of the above-mentioned review, observes (*Canadian Dimension*, Vol. 6).

During the discussion that followed when the audience had recovered enough to make a few comments, both hostile and approving, the professor lived up to his names in displaying a cat-like agility in evading,

avoiding, or in some way baffling most attempts to pin him down or to just find out what he meant. (It was obvious that he was well practised in this kind of exchange.)

Typical both of this skill and also of his emphasis on biology was a long discussion on the effects of menstruation given as "reply" to a quotation of his statement during an interview (*New York magazine*) that the Women's Liberation Movement "forces women to compete with men, and they can't. They're weaker: they don't form groups as men do; they don't work interdependently. Women function primarily in certain kinds of jobs — fashion, journalism, personnel, teaching, nursing."

Also typical of the biological emphasis was Tiger's statement, made in all seriousness and accompanied by a physical demonstration, that women can't throw as well as men can! (As one can plainly see, this is a real handicap in competing with men in the contemporary world — but, more seriously, when a few bricks and other missiles start flying the professor might change his mind!)

Tiger doesn't seem to have a great deal of sympathy for the career woman or the one who doesn't fit into the role of the majority of "her domestic sisters". He has referred to her in his writings as "the hunting woman", and he seems to regard her as something of a freak of nature as confirmed by his agreement with one young male supremacist in the audience that feminists and such types might well become bred out of existence due to the supposed fact that they have fewer children. Like most defenders, overt or otherwise, of the status quo, he overlooks the fact that it is perhaps the more intelligent and energetic "misfits" who rebel against false systems of oppression.

Perhaps one point of some value in Tiger's presentation was his opposition to extreme environmentalism

The Feminists to Lionel Tiger

(with apologies to William Blake)

**Tiger, Tiger, burning bright,
Telling us that ape is right,
When has mortal mind or eye
Witnessed such a silly lie?**

**When it hatched within your brain
Did you hope applause to gain?
Tell me if it's really true
The gods who made Friedan made you?**

**Tiger, Tiger, all uptight,
Trying to give the girls a fright,
Some day you'll be burning blue,
Tiger, Tiger, we'll get you!**

—Gwen Matheson

and over-emphasis on theories of "conditioning" that neglect innate or biological factors, although his detection of these tendencies in Marxist or U.S. liberal philosophies might be considered controversial. But in his own over-emphasis of the biological he is sometimes oddly reminiscent of the more extreme feminists who, taking the opposite point of view, deny any mind-body link and claim that there are no natural differences at all between men and women except the physical ones. There is an irrational element in both these extremes that suggests emotional sources.

Like many others who would keep woman's role limited, whether openly or by implication, Tiger uses the compensation technique of extreme glorification of the act of giving birth — as if a simple animal function were what gives woman her true "fulfillment" and ultimate value. (By that token, a female cat who can produce about 15 kittens in a year would be that much superior to a female human being.)

But as is usually the case with the male supremacist, this apparent over-valuation masks an underlying contempt for the female's reproductive role as compared with the male's, and Tiger perhaps gave himself away when in a discussion of the possibilities of polygamy he said that no more than one male is necessary to the impregnation of 50 females. (Again, by simple arithmetic, we can see how much more valuable that makes the one male than each member of his harem — at least, from the reproductive point of view.)

Also, like most of those who argue in his vein, Tiger seems to under-rate the fact that the rapid advances of science are beginning to free women from their age-old state of having their lives largely determined by biology. The tendencies of two million years and of countless ape-like or "hunting" ancestors might be reversed by a few busy hours in the scientists' laboratory. In spite of the fact that we live in the age of the "Population Bomb", Tiger can still take a rather dim view of the Pill, which might give a special significance to his introductory remarks that we could be entering a new version of the Middle Ages when common assumptions about biology will provide the common bonds which at that time were supplied by assumptions about religion. So it would seem that he welcomes a new Dark Age in which the priests of sociology will preach the limitations and defects of women just as did their spiritual forebears, the Church Fathers!

At the conclusion of the discussion and the whole Tiger production, a young lady who just happened (?) to be the last one allowed to comment and whom the feminists would probably label as an "Aunt Tom" put the "feminine" seal of approval on Tiger's theories by saying that she could see no threat to her sisters in any of them. If this wasn't a deliberate ploy then it was a demonstration of his power to convince many people.

To sum up, it must be admitted that because of Tiger's carefully calculated "value-free" stance and the avoidance of certain terms, we can't directly accuse him of anything more than a profound pessimism with regard to the purposes and aims of the Women's Liberation Movement. But this pose fails to conceal the basic underlying reactionary resistance to certain radical changes needed now in our society.

Still, one can't help but admire someone who still has the courage to champion a cause which already appears to be lost.