

Letters to the Editor.

December 14, 1988.

Dear Sir,

Dr. Anthony Bourne's attack on Jocelyne Scutt's book "The Baby Machine" (Herald, 8/12/88) is a misguided and inaccurate interpretation of the feminist criticism of the new reproductive technologies.

Firstly, women who are critical of technologies such as IVF do not consist of an elite group of feminist academics and lawyers. There is a growing international network of women (with chapters in 25 different countries, including Bangladesh) who are critical of reproductive technologies because of their detrimental effects on the well-being and social position of women - the implications are both personal and global. It is a worldwide movement, Dr. Bourne.

Feminist critics are ***not*** "blasting" infertile women and condemning them to childlessness. We seek to disseminate the information that is riot presented by IVF doctors or the popular press (e.g., the real low success rates versus exaggerated claims of success). With more information about the risks, hopefully women will make better informed decisions about if and what infertility "treatment" they use. How does this motivation constitute a lack of compassion on the part of feminists? IVF should be abandoned - it may seriously endanger women's health and it offers false hopes of a child. A recent Commonwealth report on funding to IVF stated that there was no evidence that using IVF brings a greater chance of having a baby than using no infertility treatment at all.

Many of the adverse effects of IVF (risks from fertility drugs, higher rates of birth defects, miscarriage and caesarean sections, invasive surgery, emotional and psychological trauma) were first drawn attention to by feminists, who have carefully documented their investigations. Dr. Bourne agrees with the feminist criticisms, but launches an unfounded scathing attack on the feminists themselves. Perhaps this reflects his underlying dislike of feminists. He would do well to learn a lesson from feminist scholarship and write in a manner which uses substance and clear thinking.

Yours sincerely,

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