

'Aging idiots' gloomy world forecast for grads

The current generation of young university graduates must head into a gloomy future with their eyes open, a sociologist said Wednesday.

The sociologist, Dr. Erving Goffman, who was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree at the opening session of the University of Manitoba convocation, had no glowing challenges or high hopes to offer graduates.

They will be thrust into a

world "somewhat governed by aging idiots" and determined by social forces no one seems to know much about, said Dr. Goffman, a University of Pennsylvania professor known for his books on social interaction.

"Not even today have we learned to make democracy safe for the world."

The Alberta-born professor swiftly delivered a series of wry observations on what he

saw as the iniquities of patriotism, pitfalls of Canadian nationalism, disadvantages of maintaining ethnic identity and the mystique of adulthood — "the funniest joke of all."

The rebellious students of the 1960s were right about the weakness of institutions and the adults who manned them, he said. But they didn't understand the "strength of these weak-

nesses" and rebellion ended not in a bag but in a boutique as dropouts of the '60s settled down to making a conventional living.

Not that the world was better off in the past — there never were any "good old days," he said. "Every generation has whistled in the dark."

"But these are remorseless more than your forbears you lessly informed times . . .

will have to forgo whistling," he said.

Even pursuit of social ambition as a goal is less possible as the prestige of class distinction fades and people are "socially left to fester," Dr. Goffman said.

"The only worlds left free to you to explore are those of the mind," he said, urging graduates to remain clear-headed and curious.

Dr. Goffman, who at one point halted his speech to

shoo away a photographer, refuses to grant interviews or to make copies of his speeches available to the press. He repeatedly referred to social sabotage perpetrated by mass media.

He told the graduating class their challenge will be to quietly and tolerantly make do in a less-than-desirable society.

"I hope your adventure won't be expropriated by the press."

Israel raps

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Hospital vote

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