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Retrogression on Abortions

President Nixon, in ordering limits on the freedom of military physicians to perform abortions, has pronounced abortion an "unacceptable form of population control." He says he cannot square abortion on demand with "my personal belief in the sanctity of human life, including the life of the yet unborn."

Without disputing the genuineness of the President's conviction, we believe that any actions at the Federal or state level to make it the basis for public policy would be both cruel and regressive. Issues affecting the "sanctity of human life" are far more involved in the Vietnam war than they are in the removal of legal obstacles to abortion.

The chief sufferers under laws making abortion a crime are always the poor—mothers and unwanted children alike condemned to deprivation and despair. Astonishing, indeed, is the President's assertion that America "will open its hearts and homes" to these unwanted children. He, more than most, has reason to be aware that the nationwide conservative revolt against the cost of welfare is centered on the tens of thousands of children born out of wedlock in welfare homes. To deny mothers in these homes the same freedom of choice as wealthier women on whether to have children or not have them is an act of inhumanity and social irresponsibility.