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Mr. Nixon's Intervention

President Nixon's dismaying interference in the legislative process of this state in an effort to force repeal of the abortion reform law was a blatant misuse of his high position. Perhaps the subject of that law should be a Federal concern, but in the President's own words, "this is a matter for state decision outside Federal jurisdiction." Yet he has proclaimed his strong opposition to the law at the very moment when the question of its retention or repeal is before the State Legislature.

What is equally hard to justify, Mr. Nixon chose to make his strange intervention by way of a letter to Cardinal Cooke, which the archdiocese was free to make public. Those pressing for repeal, he said, had his "admiration, sympathy and support." Historians should find it hard to locate a parallel instance of a President openly working through a particular church to influence the action of a state government.

This newspaper has opposed Governor Rockefeller's proposed modification of the present law—a law which President Nixon's own Commission on Population and the American Future recently extolled as a model for the nation. But the Governor deserves commendation for reaffirming his intention to veto outright repeal in spite of Mr. Nixon's obvious desire to the contrary. No Governor can afford to allow his Legislature and his own office to be openly pressured by a President in this way—not even when the President is playing for political advantage and the Governor is state campaign chairman for his re-election.