

Letters to the E

Nixon's Social Philosophy

To the Editor:

For anyone who is still in doubt about the social philosophy of the Nixon Administration, it may be quite revealing to compare two recent Administration decisions: the President's veto of legislation that would establish a broad national system of voluntary day-care facilities, including after-school facilities, for middle-class families as well as for the poor, and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's approval of the New York State Department of Social Services' "demonstration project" requiring welfare mothers with children over the age of six to accept public employment.

Taken together, where these decisions leave us is rather clear:

Middle-class mothers are to be discouraged from going to work, because, as Mr. Nixon said in his veto message, "good public policy requires that we enhance rather than diminish both parental authority and parental involvement with children—particularly in those decisive early years when social attitudes and a conscience are formed and religious and moral principles are first inculcated." But mothers living in poverty are to be required to place their children in day-care centers and go to work, or lose benefits under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. Only well-to-do mothers are to be free from the influence of "public policy" in choosing whether to go to work or not.

What, then, are the characteristics

of a social philosophy that could regard such inequalities as acceptable?

First, it is a philosophy that in significant ways views women and children not as individual human beings entitled to equal choices and opportunities based on their own personal qualities but simply as appendages to the men of different economic circumstances with whom their lives are, or have been, linked.

Second, it is a philosophy that sees nothing wrong with proclaiming as fundamental American "moral principles" benefits that do not apply to the poor and responsibilities that do not bind the rich.

Third, it is a philosophy that takes for granted that it is the proper business of Government to choose for its citizens "good" ways of living their lives—even when other ways would not injure anyone else—rather than to simply create conditions under which its citizens are free to make their own choices. [Editorial Dec. 30.]

A social philosophy with these characteristics plainly has no more in common with libertarian conservatism than with liberalism. Whether it adequately reflects the finer moral feelings of the American people deserves to be a major issue, in Congress right now and in the Presidential elections in 1972.

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