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Politics Before Children

Citing Washington's "deep disappointment" in the alleged failure of Vietnamese Communists to show a genuine commitment to peace, the United States Government has insisted that the United Nations Children's Fund not use American money to help finance new programs for child aid in North Vietnam and Communist-held areas of the South. It is the American people who should be disappointed that their Government could stoop to put politics ahead of the welfare of children anywhere.

UNICEF has a long and honorable record of scrupulously nonpolitical assistance to children in more than 100 countries, including compassionate aid to both sides during the Nigerian civil war. It has supported child aid programs in South Vietnam since 1956 and has earmarked \$11.2 million for the South in the disputed new program that encompasses all of Indochina.

The United States Government, on the contrary, has a shameful history of neglect for child welfare in Vietnam, even in the South. It was only after the most intensive prodding from Congress and private citizens that the Administration agreed recently to step up its contribution to the South's war-destitute children—including thousands of illegitimate offspring of United States servicemen—to a meager \$7.2 million.

Fortunately, UNICEF has adequate resources and resolve to go ahead with its plan to help primary schools in North Vietnam and child health services in Communist-held areas of the South without official American support. Individual Americans can help by contributing directly to UNICEF's humanitarian effort.