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## *House of Representatives*

### Lord Nicholas Windsor Urges New Abolitionism

**Mr. SMITH of New Jersey**

Madame Speaker,

I rise tonight as former and incoming Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Human Rights Committee to ask my distinguished colleagues of the House to take a few moments to read a brilliant, incisive, extraordinarily well written defense of the child in the womb by Lord Nicholas Windsor of the UK, great grandson of King George V.

Calling the abortion of unborn children, “the single most grievous moral deficit in contemporary life,” he appeals to conscience and admonishes us to the “greatest solidarity and duty of care because they are the weakest and most dependent of our fellow humans.”

Lord Nicholas notes that “permissive abortion is a fact of life so deeply embedded and thoroughly normalized in our culture that - and this is the most insidious factor in that normalization - it has been rendered invisible to politics in Europe. Even mentioning it has become the first taboo of the culture.”

And how can that be?

Lord Nicholas faults, “determined campaigns of propaganda at the outset to harden consciences, and gradually to enforce a conformism that fears to question what is said to be a settled issue.”

Settled? Not here in the U.S. Madame Speaker, and hopefully not for long in Europe either.

On what he calls a “moral world turned upside down,” Lord Nicholas says, “the greatest irony may be that a broad consensus exists, in a highly rights-aware political establishment, in favor of one of the gravest and most egregious abuses of human rights that human society has ever tolerated. Didn't Europeans think they could never and must never kill again on an industrial scale? What a cruel deceit, then, that has led us to this mass killing of children...”

“This is the question of questions for Europe,” he writes, “the practice of abortion is a mortal wound in Europe's heart.”

And he goes on to persuasively advocate for a new “abolitionism” for Europe akin to the movement to abolish slavery. But he notes, ever mindful of the need to meet the needs of women: “The task for us is not merely to abolish. We must also creatively envisage new and compelling answers to the problems that give rise to this practice...”

A brilliant essay. A must read for those who treasure and promote human rights. And equally applicable to us—in the United States—which mourns, or will mourn someday, killing over 53 million children by abortion since 1973.

## **Lord Nicholas Windsor warns Europeans not to forget their most pressing moral issue: abortion.**

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At the close of the last century, as the reckoning was drawn up in Europe for the actions and reactions of the twentieth century, could we not have been forgiven for tending a little toward the view that we had, after everything, acquitted ourselves rather well? Hadn't we a long list of accomplishments to admire in the years after 1945? We had expunged Fascism, at immeasurable human cost, and we had made profound reparation for its effects. We had washed our hands of colonialism and vastly improved the material lot of the poor in our own countries. We had built robust democracies and welfare states and novel institutions in Europe to defuse nationalisms and guarantee peace among former belligerents. We had advanced the rights of women - indeed, the whole spectrum of rights. We had won the Cold War.

Much more could be added, I think. Poised just then before the new millennium, seeing what vast work had been done in our societies, mightn't it have seemed quite possible that the greatest moral cancers in our civilization had been at least contained and possibly eradicated? Hadn't history, at least this moral cycle of history, really reached an end?

In the decade since the turn of the millennium, the cultural mood has been less happy, for a variety of reasons. Even at its most confident, however, the West generally recognized that some work remained to be done. So, for example, the position of the poorest in the world, it is held, will gradually and continually improve if enough effort is made, not least by the developed world. For the mitigation of global warming and climate

change, political determination will suffice to alter the carbon-hungry lifestyles that cause the problem.

The point here is that moderate political activity is believed to be the sort of thing required to address these problems, and there is a reasonable degree of optimism that such political activity will be usefully brought to bear, without the need to resort to force.

A remaining category of problems still to be dealt with could be bundled together as "Rogue Regimes, the Taliban, and al-Qaeda." This category rightly causes public alarm and engenders calls for robust and, where necessary, lethal response. But these are not threats that appear existential and have not as yet provoked a real sense of public crisis. Neither have they brought about mass political action in the West. They are still, I believe, seen as problems that will ultimately be solved, or at least kept at bay, without huge social upheaval on our home soil and certainly with nothing like the warfare resorted to by previous generations.

Is it still possible then that we can point to anything of any real significance that had been overlooked, anything dangerous smuggled into this new phase of history that has caught us unawares? I would say that this is indeed the case, and I would like to focus especially on a matter and a practice that constitutes the single most grievous moral deficit in contemporary life: the abortion of our unborn children.

This is a historically unprecedented cascade of destruction wrought on individuals: on sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, future spouses and friends, mothers and fathers - destroyed in the form of those to whom we owe, quite simply and certainly, the greatest solidarity and duty of care because they are the weakest and most dependent of our fellow humans. All else that we concern ourselves with in the lives of human beings derives from the inescapable fact that first we must have

human lives with which to concern ourselves. By disregarding this self-evident fact of the debt owed immediately to the unborn - which is to be allowed to be born (and let us not forget that all of us might have suffered just the same fate before our birth) - humanity's deepest instincts are trampled and shattered.

This was only an implausible glimmer in the eyes of the most radically progressive thinkers and activists a century ago. Today legal, permissive abortion is a fact of life so deeply embedded and thoroughly normalized in our culture that - and this is the most insidious factor in that normalization - it has been rendered invisible to politics in Europe. Even mentioning it has become the first taboo of the culture.

There are consciences in Europe, it must be stressed, that glow white-hot for justice and strive continuously for this darkest fact of our public life to appear in public debate as clearly as it does across the Atlantic in the United States. For most of our contemporaries, however, this is a matter that impinges little. The effectiveness of determined campaigns of propaganda at the outset to harden consciences, and gradually to enforce a conformism that fears to question what is said to be a settled issue, has worked wonderfully well.

And this enforcement of a new status quo succeeds so well due, surely, to benefits enjoyed as a result - benefits of an order that make acceptable even the killing of innocents, by their protectors, on a scale that freezes the imagination. How much then must depend on its remaining so, remaining beyond question? This is the nub of that ideological word choice. So much else can be chosen in a given life if the option to dispose of unwanted children is dependably available. So many intoxicating freedoms are newly established, if only abortion is never again denied to women and to men.

But what of the cost? As with the cost of previous great willful destructions of human life, of whole classes of human life, the fact that it must and will be borne is a certainty, whatever the nature and scale of it. Of course, in the first order of consequences, the price paid by the victims is not obscure: We must never forget that the heaviest price is paid by those whose lives are not to be lived.

In the second order of consequences, however, we must look closely at the hidden burden faced by those, especially mothers, who participate in these acts and the losses affecting present and future society. How will a society regard itself, or value its own distinctive culture, when it has placed this fearful act at its center - consciously approving, even celebrating, its own most egregious moral failing? Will it have the confidence simply to regenerate itself? To survive by producing the next generation of children in sufficient numbers?

I would like to emphasize that we must never mistake the secondary effects of this moral enormity for the primary, as this would surely be to instrumentalize the victims and fail again in our duty of respect toward them. It would be an absurdity such as if the real tragedy of the Shoah were felt first of all to lie in the social consequences. No, what we must first lament is the mass destruction of human beings who had first been deemed worthless. The fact in itself is what we must keep before our eyes, before and apart from our regard to anything that may derive from it.

We live in what is truly a moral world turned upside down, and the greatest irony may be that a broad consensus exists, in a highly rights-aware political establishment, in favor of one of the gravest and most egregious abuses of human rights that human society has ever tolerated. Didn't Europeans think they could never and must never kill again on an industrial scale? What a cruel deceit, then, that has led us to this mass killing of children, for a theoretical greater good, which in this case is

simply the wish not to be bound by a pregnancy unless it is fully and freely chosen and which, outside of that parameter, is declared, by fiat, to be null and void.

The sophistry is overwhelming: If I choose and desire my child, then ipso facto I have granted it the right to live, and it will live. But the inverse is equally the case, by means of nothing more or less than my choice: Caesar's thumb is up, or Caesar's thumb is down. And when it comes to exporting this idea, we do it with zeal and determination through such institutions as the United Nations and the European Union.

The granting to ourselves of the right wantonly to kill, each year, millions of our offspring at the beginning of their lives: This is the question of questions for Europe. The practice of abortion is a mortal wound in Europe's heart, in the center of Hellenic and Judeo-Christian culture.

Having so recklessly carried this poison out of the twentieth - the ugliest of all centuries - let us, for the sake of all that has been good and beautiful and true about the culture of the West, be clear that there is an urgent moral priority here. Call it a "New Abolitionism for Europe" - the word abolitionism emphasizing the continuity between the challenge faced now with the generational campaigns waged so clear-sightedly in late-nineteenth-century America to rid itself of the injustice of slavery. The abolitionists, I believe, exemplify the

courage and imagination required, even if they do not provide perfect templates for what we face now.

This is a task that calls for a broader approach to the safeguarding of life, as taught to us by those earlier struggles to apportion value where it previously had not been deemed to exist. We must re-enliven the valuing of life, and this cannot restrict itself to the question of abortion, despite its moral centrality. It must have regard to every threat to the integrity of human beings, at all stages of their being and in all circumstances.

The task for us is not merely to abolish. We must also creatively envisage new and compelling answers to the problems that give rise to this practice, when the easiest solutions may be destructive or distorting ones. And the goal is that human life, without any exception, may be as treasured and respected as the highest moral thought has perennially called for it to be, and as our consciences surely sound the echo.

*Author affiliation:*

Lord Nicholas Windsor studied theology at Oxford University and is patron of the Right to Life Charitable Trust and the Catholic National Library. Great-grandson of King George V of the United Kingdom, Windsor is the first blood member of the British royal family to be received into the Catholic Church since King Charles II on his deathbed in 1685.