

WG-121



NATIONAL OFFICE:

175 CARLTON STREET,
TORONTO, ONTARIO.
M5A 2K3

Tel: (416) 922-2997

February 24, 1983.

Lucie Pepin,
President,
Canadian Advisory Council on the
Status of Women,
66 Slater Street,
18th Floor,
Ottawa, K1P 5H1



Dear Lucie Pepin,

We are enclosing a brief statement about the activities and pre-occupations of the Voice of Women and hope that your consultation with women's organizations will be a productive one. A longer history of VOW is enclosed for your files.

On a separate sheet we are sending a proposal for consideration of your council and if possible for the comments of the women present at the consultation. A copy goes with Nancy Jackman who is representing Voice of Women.

With kind regards.

Kay Macpherson

Kay Macpherson,
for Dorothy Smieciuch,
Coordinator.



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Voice of Women/La Voix des Femmes, was founded in 1960 when women across Canada determined to work together to stop the threat of nuclear war. VOW's purposes include:

- To unite women in concern for the future of the world.
- To help promote the mutual respect and cooperation among nations necessary for peaceful negotiations between world powers.
- To protest against war or the threat of war as the decisive method of exercising power.
- To appeal to all national leaders to cooperate in developing methods of negotiation.

During the past years, Voice of Women has presented many statements and briefs to government, and undertaken and organized delegations, exchanges of visits, conferences and actions aimed at promoting understanding amongst women of all nations including those of differing ideologies and beliefs.

At the present time VOW's main efforts are focussed on urging Canada to take initiatives to promote negotiations for disarmament and a ban on all forms of nuclear weapons. We are urging the Canadian government to refuse to test cruise missiles for the United States as concrete evidence of Canada's desire to stop the arms race.

VOW members collected 125,000 signatures and attended sessions and rallies at the time of the UN Special Session on Disarmament, presented briefs to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence and to Canada's Ambassador at the United Nations.

Members have been active in the Canada wide disarmament referendum and joined with other women's groups, churches, unions and many others in coalitions working for disarmament and peace.

VOW has also been part of continuing activities marking International Women's Day, Hiroshima, Remembrance, Mother's and UN Days.

Through the Survival Committee of the NAC Status of Women, we reach over 200 women's organizations. These are becoming increasingly aware of the need for women to be part of the decision making process when the fate of our world is at stake. The status of women and the progress of people towards peace and justice depends on our efforts to change the attitudes and methods of our patriarchal society and the ultimate threat of this society - violence and nuclear war.



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PROPOSAL

From Voice of Women to the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women

We believe that research done by the CACSW is the Council's most important contribution to the women of Canada. The information provided by this research can form a solid base for discussion, policy making and action.

Last May, when members of Voice of Women met with the Executive of the Council, a suggestion was made that women could contribute significantly to the techniques of conflict resolution and that their experience in family and community could well be used in the international arena.

With the current apprehension and concern over the increase of violence in our society and for the world wide threat of nuclear war, it becomes increasingly urgent that difference techniques and attitudes replace the dangers of negotiation by threats of force and the deterrent of nuclear weapons.

Until now, peace research, like war research, has been largely undertaken by men. Thus the approach to conflict and violence is from a male perspective. It is not difficult to connect the violence to women and children in the family with the threats of force and violence in the same patriarchal society. It is easy too for women to see how ever increasing budgets for armaments lead directly to decreased funds for social services and women's needs. The ultimate threat of violence to us all, is nuclear war.

It is the growing responsibility of women, so long absent from public decision making, to provide alternative solutions to the violence and war which for so long have been the ultimate threats ^{to} our male dominated society.

The building of confidence and trust, techniques for face-saving, cooperation, joint action and collaboration, mutual understanding and even those almost forgotten qualities - humanity and love - must replace threats of violence and nuclear war in negotiations between nations.

Voice of Women is therefore asking that research be undertaken from a feminist perspective into conflict resolution and non-violent peace-making techniques which can, we hope, be applied to reducing violence in our society and in preventing the horrors of nuclear war.