

April 22, 1971

Mrs. Florence Casey
Foreign Policy Staff Specialist
The League of Women Voters
1730 M Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

Dear Mrs. Casey:

Thank you for your letter of April 19. I was very much impressed with the testimony of the League on the Geneva Protocol of 1925. I thought it was very well argued and likely to be quite effective. For your possible interest I enclose a copy of the testimony I gave on March 26 and also copies of the statements of McGeorge Bundy and Donald Brennan.

Has the League presented its position on the Geneva Protocol and on the Administration's "understandings" in the League's national publication?

The problem now appears to be one of marshalling substantial support in the Senate for a broad reading of the Geneva Protocol, one that would discard any special understandings on riot gas or chemical herbicides. I believe a large number of senators could be interested in the issue if it were made clear to them and if important public organizations like the League were to make representations to individual senators. I do not think that the highest officials in the administration are particularly pleased with the fact that the United States appears to be stuck with an unpopular and very probably unwise position on riot gas and herbicides stemming from our use of these chemicals in Vietnam. Nevertheless, there needs to be some new vehicle for reconsideration of the administration's position. Without it, it will be difficult to "re-bake a cake that has already been baked once." In spite of what is being said by middle-level officials in the Department of State and at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, I believe there is a reasonably good chance that in time the administration will change its position and seek ratification of the Protocol without special exemptions of any kind. In order to achieve this result I think it would be helpful for the League to communicate directly with the President expressing admiration for the wise steps he has taken thus far and encouraging him to culminate and solidify his previous actions by agreeing to extend our interpretation of the Protocol to allow us to ratify it without exceptions.

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There will be growing pressure on the White House to do this from the Disarmament talks at Geneva. Again, what is being said by State Department and ACDA officials seems to me rather misleading. I have received private letters from participants in the Geneva talks expressing the view that U. S. ratification of the Protocol with the current understandings would do more to block progress at Geneva than to leave the question open.

If it is not too much trouble I would appreciate being kept informed of the activities of the League on this question.

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Meselson

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Enclosures