



American Chemical Society

OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT

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December 11, 1974

The Honorable J. William Fulbright
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Fulbright:

The opportunity to testify at the hearing on the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the Bacteriological Convention on December 10, 1974 is greatly appreciated. I would like now, after a chance for a little reflection, to offer some comments on the President's proposed policy, as presented by Dr. Fred C. Ikle, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

First, the Administration is to be commended for defining a most reasonable and generally acceptable set of circumstances under which riot control agents and herbicides would be considered for use by Armed Forces of the United States. There is little reason to quarrel with this proposed U.S. policy, although some of the language could be made clearer.

It seems of major significance to point out that virtually all of the uses of riot control agents and herbicides by U.S. Armed Forces in Vietnam would now be excluded by the proposed new U.S. policy. Thus, there is virtually no use as a military weapon which would remain open to the U.S. Forces.

One, therefore, must wonder what purpose is served by Administration resistance to removing the exclusion of riot control agents and herbicides from the Protocol, especially in view of the many serious dangers such an interpretation presents for undermining the broad purposes of the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

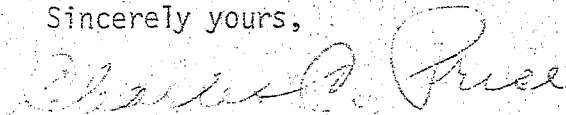
It seems evident that the issue raised by Senator Humphrey, the personal concern of the military officers who authorized use of these agents in Vietnam, may be a critical factor in the Administration's position. It seems to me that it would indeed be tragic if a concern of such fleeting significance would serve as the basis for permanently weakening a treaty of such long-term importance as the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

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I would urge that the Committee on Foreign Relations take action consistent with long range United States interests and principles and recommend to the Senate that it give its advice and consent to ratification of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, without the Administration's proposed clause excluding riot control agents and herbicides. The President could then still announce his interpretation of this action in terms of the proposed policy of the United States regarding permitted uses of herbicides and of riot control agents for saving lives. Such non-weapon uses would be considered to be outside the scope of the Protocol. The Committee could, in fact, encourage the President to thus clarify this particular issue.

While the above is an expression of my personal views, I would like to emphasize that they are offered in the context of extending and reinforcing the American Chemical Society's official position of full support for immediate passage of Senate Resolution 48, and thus for ratification of the 1925 Geneva Protocol with the understanding that it covers all chemical weapons.

Sincerely yours,



Charles C. Price
Past President

cc: Members, Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations

Dr. Robert W. Cairns, Executive Director
of the American Chemical Society