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Purls for Peace: The Voice of Women, Maternal Feminism,
and the Knitting Project for Vietnamese Children

by

Marilyn Selma Sweet

Thesis submitted to
The School of Graduate Studies and Research
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ABSTRACT

Purls for Peace: The Voice of Women, Maternal Feminism, and the Knitting Project for Vietnamese Children

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University of Ottawa, 2007

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In the fall of 1966, the Voice of Women, a Canadian-based, women's peace organization began participating in a humanitarian aid project to provide clothing for the victims of the Vietnam War. The intention of the project, began by another Canadian organization, the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, was to provide hand-made clothing and blankets to those most defenseless to the atrocities of the war: namely, Vietnamese children. What resulted was an assistance program to which the Voice of Women would dedicate more than ten years of its efforts and which would create a resurgence in an organization that had recently been shaken by several damaging events.

What appeared to be simply women providing assistance to children in need was in fact an example of the result of maternal feminism at work. Not only did members of the Voice of Women utilize their roles and instincts as women and mothers to gain support from others for the knitting project; they also use these same roles and instincts as a means to make a strong political statement regarding the Vietnam War. This study will examine the mean by which the Voice of Women gained a great deal of support from both Canadian and American women. Likewise, it will analyze the role that maternal feminism played in the organization of a project that would prove to be a highly political and controversial endeavor.

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Introduction

In the 1960s many Canadians and Americans were divided regarding the war between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States of America. The United States, in an attempt to thwart the spread of Communism in South-East Asia, vigorously led a full-scale attack on the small nation of Vietnam. Many of the weapons and tactics utilized by the United States resulted in indiscriminate injuries, and more often than not produced widespread destruction and death amongst the Vietnamese civilian population. While some Canadians supported the American decision of a military intervention in Vietnam, a great number also disapproved of these actions and protests were held across the country from university campuses to Parliament Hill. One organization in particular that vocally opposed the American-led intervention in Vietnam was the Voice of Women.

The Voice of Women, a Canadian-based women's peace organization had adamantly voiced its opposition to the Vietnam War through various channels. Letters to Canadian newspapers, protests on Parliament Hill and letters to the Prime Minister were several methods they employed to promote peace for the people of Vietnam. Moreover, in the fall of 1966 the Voice of Women focused on an alternative means to convey its disdain for the war while also assisting those most affected by the fighting: namely children. What resulted was the development of a cooperative humanitarian aid project created by another Canadian-based organization, Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians.

This collaborative effort was meant to provide clothing for the innocent children affected by the Vietnam War.

The two organizations led a knitting project aimed at providing clothing and blankets to the children of both North and South Vietnam. As an organization, the Voice of Women was the largest contributor to the knitting project, donating to the endeavour for more than a decade by sending more than 30,000 blankets and articles of hand-made clothing to the children of Vietnam. Along with these items of clothing also came a commitment from the Voice of Women to defend the Vietnamese who did not have the opportunity to defend themselves. While the knitting project of the Voice of Women and Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians can most certainly be seen as a far-reaching humanitarian endeavour, it can also, perhaps less overtly be seen as a political statement regarding the two organizations' condemnation of the American-led intervention in Vietnam.

This study will show that the Voice of Women employed the principles of maternal feminism- namely that women, as the bearers of life had the right and the duty to participate in the public realm- as an essential motivator throughout its participation in the knitting project with Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians. In doing this, the organization focused on the desire of women to preserve and protect life as its key method of attracting support for the plight of these children. At the same time, the organization was able to maintain a firm stance of opposition towards the Vietnam War while not conveying itself as solely a radical or political organization. This resulted in a great deal of support from women across North America who may otherwise not have been interested in participating in such a politically charged issue, and also produced less

opposition than would be expected from an anti-war organization. While several studies of the Voice of Women have been produced, none to date have focused on the organization's role during the Vietnam War, specifically with reference to maternal feminism.

The desire to promote a safe, harmonious and prosperous world for future generations had always been central to the Voice of Women and they believed that women the world over wished for the same. It must be noted that not all women involved with the Voice of Women were mothers, nor would it be accurate to state that all women who participated in the organizations projects were maternal feminists. However, a clear connection can be made between the principles of maternal feminism and the approach the Voice of Women's organizers and knitters took to the knitting project for Vietnamese children during the Vietnam War. By focusing on the maternal desires and instincts of women, the organization was able to enlist hundreds of women to its cause while at the same time educating the supporters about the fundamental purpose of their organization: to bring women together for the cause of peace.

One can agree that the motivation behind the endeavours of the Voice of Women and the knitting project was indeed highly political. The Voice of Women and the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians discovered a means to express their political opposition to the Vietnam War as well as the Cold War mentality of fear that was so prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s. They used this project as a way to tacitly show their condemnation of the United States' actions in Vietnam as well as to show their disapproval of Canada's complacency during the war. The group noted that Canada was an accomplice of the United States, when, as a member of the International Commission

of Supervision and Control and the International Commission of Control and Supervision, Canada was meant to be an impartial promoter of peace in Indochina.¹

The Voice of Women's methods for condemning the role of the United States and Canada in the Vietnam War were most certainly politically charged. It was also one of very few groups that openly criticized the two countries' roles in the War. The organization, although critical, did not blatantly accuse the two countries which helped recruit women to its cause who may have been less politically active than previous members of the organization.

The knitting project demonstrated that the Vietnam War was a failure of diplomacy and that it was having a grave effect on the innocent bystanders in Vietnam: civilians, women and most specifically, children. This observation made it clear that the women participating in the knitting project were aware of the horrendous conditions civilians were exposed to in Vietnam, making others question whether those in positions of political power were simply ignorant regarding these conditions, or were purposely choosing not to recognize the issues at hand. Through the use of the knitting project, the Voice of Women and the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians were able to bring the deplorable conditions of the Vietnam civilians into the homes of many Canadians and Americans.

Although the Voice of Women's ultimate objective was to see an end to the Vietnam War, its participation in the knitting project demonstrated at minimum, a need for a shift in strategy. Although those in power were reluctant to simply end the war, the Voice of Women, through the promotion of the knitting project, demonstrated a need for

¹ The International Commission of Supervision and Control and the International Commission of Control and Supervision will be discussed in detail in chapter 1.

the alleviation of suffering by those most affected by it. The project became a channel through which the organization was able to illustrate the sheer inanity of the war, as well as a means to express the needless devastation being imposed upon the civilians of Vietnam.

The Voice of Women's participation in the knitting project for Vietnamese children can be seen not only as a selfless humanitarian project aimed at lessening the suffering of innocent children, but also as a means of bringing the tragic conditions of the Vietnam War into the daily lives of many North American women. It showed women all across North America, and indeed the world, what they were capable of achieving at a time when they did not generally entertain the same voice in public matters as their male counterparts.

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Voice of Women and the Vietnam War

The Voice of Women, a Canadian peace organization, was founded in 1960 by women concerned about the use of nuclear arms and the effect that these weapons would have on future generations. The founding women of the organization believed that men were largely to blame for the potentially destructive situation the world was facing, and that it was up to the women of the world to set things right. Lotta Dempsey, a columnist for the *Toronto Daily Star* and one of the founding members of the Voice of Women, wrote an article in the *Toronto Daily Star* citing her frustration over the break-down of the Paris Summit Conference in May 1960.² In the article she wrote, “the men surely

² Lotta Dempsey, “Private Lines,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 21 May 1960, p. 62. The Paris-Peace Conference or Paris-Peace Summit was to be a meeting of the four super-powers at the time (United States, Soviet Union, France and England) in May, 1960. Nikita Khrushchev, leader of the Soviet Union had suggested the meeting, which was set to discuss the future of Berlin, the German city divided since the end of the Second World War. At the same time, the issue of nuclear weapon tests was also to be addressed. However, in the weeks leading up to the Summit, the Soviets accused the United States of spying after a United States military plane was shot down inside Soviet air space. At the same time, the United States had accused the Soviets of spying on themselves and the British. On Tuesday, 17 May, 1960, the *Toronto Daily Star*’s headline announced “K. Kills Summit Meet” and stated that Khrushchev announced he would only participate in the Summit “if the U.S. condemned “the treacherous incursions of U.S. military aircraft,” punished those guilty and [gave] assurances such incursions would not be repeated.” This fear of a lack of cooperation and discussion amongst the super-power leaders sparked Lotta Dempsey to write her column on 21 May, 1960 looking for the support of other women. Mark Gayn, “K. Kills Summit Meet,” and “Trouble at Home for K?” and “Will Sign Peace With E. Germany,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 17 May 1960, p. 1. The *Toronto Daily Star* covered the events leading up to the Summit in detail in the weeks preceding the meeting. See this publication for further detail.

have made a mess of things...if only the women could get together, perhaps they could do better.”³

The Voice of Women began by focusing much of their attention on various issues such as: boycotting companies that made children’s war toys; protesting the dumping of nuclear waste in the waters of Nova Scotia; and collecting baby teeth from across Canada to help assess how radioactive chemicals in the atmosphere were affecting the health of children.⁴ However, there was one particular cause to which the Voice of Women devoted much of their time in the 1960s and early 1970s: the Vietnam War. While little has been written about the Voice of Women as an organization, even less has been devoted specifically to their efforts during the Vietnam War, a period during which their membership was at an all-time high and the women involved were eager to have their voices heard regarding their belief that this conflict could degenerate possibly into nuclear war.

In November 1966, the Voice of Women, along with the Vancouver-based organization, Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, began a humanitarian assistance program which would see tens of thousands of items being sent to the civilian victims of the Vietnam War. The main component of the Voice of Women’s participation in the project was the contribution of knitted and sewn baby and children’s clothing. Through the ‘Knitting Project of the Ontario Voice of Women,’ (the main supporter and organizing body of the Voice of Women’s contribution to the project) women in Canada were able to contribute aid and provide comfort to children on the other side of the world. The project would span more than a decade and would prove to be one of the largest

³ Kay Macpherson, C.M. Donald, *When in Doubt, Do Both: The Times of My Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 90. Dempsey “Private Lines” 21 May 1960.

⁴ For further details see footnote 34.

projects of the Voice of Women, as well as produce a growth in members at a time when its membership had been rocked by several controversies.

It was through the Voice of Women's desire to help the children of Vietnam, as well as a desire to voice their disapproval for the war, that the knitting project really grew. The organization did much to focus on the maternal instincts of women and the belief that women, as the givers of life, were desperate to ensure a safe and non-violent world in which children could thrive. This hope was not simply for the best interest of their own children, but children the world over. While many women believed that their voices would not be heard on the political stage, humanitarian projects such as this one provided an outlet for women to make a worthwhile and measurable contribution to the innocent victims of the Vietnam War.

The Voice of Women's efforts to assist civilians and attract women to their cause by stressing women's values as mothers, clearly demonstrates that the principles of maternal feminism were a focal point of the organization during the knitting project for Vietnamese children. While still in the early stages of the second wave of feminism (which will be discussed in detail in the following section), the Voice of Women focused mostly on the distinctive role of women as mothers, and less on other feminist activities, such as women's rights and minority rights, as a means to attract women from all political ideologies in Canada.⁵ By doing so, the Voice of Women was able to maintain the support of more moderate, meaning less vocal and radical women, while also making

⁵ The Voice of Women did focus much attention on the issues of women's rights and the rights of minorities in Canada and abroad, however, during the latter part of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, their focus was on projects that can be linked to women's roles as mothers. Several of these projects will be discussed in length in the coming chapters.

an undeniable statement regarding their position on the Vietnam War and their disapproval of the activities of the Western Powers in Indochina.

Setting the Stage: An Introduction to the Vietnam War

A brief explanation of the situation in Vietnam from the 1950s through the 1960s, is essential to understand why the Voice of Women saw the need to contribute humanitarian aid to a country half-a-world away. Much discourse is available on the topic of the Vietnam War. For general overviews on the war, essential sources are: Stanley Karnow's *Vietnam: A History*; Gabriel Kolko's *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States and the Modern Historical Experience*; and Edwin E. Moïse's electronic resource simply entitled *The Vietnam Wars*. All three of these sources will be used to offer a general overview of the conflict in Vietnam and the events that led to the need for humanitarian assistance.

Vietnam has a long history of struggle against foreign expansion. It is a history of almost incessant wars: of resistance; of expansionism; and of dynastic change. From the latter part of the nineteenth century until the Second World War, Vietnam was under the control of France, who had divided Vietnam in three regions: Cochinchina in the south; Tonkin in the north; and Annam in the central region.⁶ The Vietnamese often rebelled against the French colonial presence. During the Second World War, many of the French officials in Vietnam fled following Germany's conquest of France. This situation was

⁶ Edwin E. Moïse, "Section 1-Background: The Vietnam Wars," (Clemson University: Edwin Moïse's Home Page, Copyright 1998, revised 4 November, 1998), <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/viet1.html> (accessed 15 December 2006).

aggravated when the Japanese, allies of the Germans, moved into Vietnam. Following the end of the war, the French were able to return to Vietnam, but were met with even harsher resistance from the Vietnamese. This resistance, as well as French ambitions to reclaim their Asian colony, resulted in the First Indochina War.⁷

The war between Vietnam and France lasted from 1946 until 1954. It was during this time that the United States became directly involved in Indochina. Fearful that Communism would spread throughout Indochina, President Truman decided to support France in the first Indochina War.⁸ The Viet Minh, a nationalist organization founded by Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Indochinese Communist Party, provided great resistance to the French during the war, greatly aided by Vietnamese peasants who had suffered much economically, and politically, as a result of French colonial rule.⁹ A conference held in Geneva, Switzerland to negotiate a peace settlement in Indochina resulted in the Geneva Accords in 1954. According to the Accords, it was agreed, “that Vietnam was to become an independent nation.”¹⁰ The United States had apprehensions regarding the Geneva Accords. The U.S. Administration believed that the temporary division of Vietnam into North and South at the seventeenth parallel was a concession to the Communist government in place in the North and that this increased the possibility that Communism could spread to the South.¹¹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (The Viking Press: New York, 1983), 43.

⁹ Edwin E. Moise “Section 2- The Emergence of the Viet Ming” and “Section 3- The First Indochina War: The Vietnam Wars,” <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/viet1.html> (accessed 15 December 2006).

¹⁰ Ibid. “Section 4- The Geneva Accords: The Vietnam Wars,”

<http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/viet1.html> (accessed 15 December 2006).

¹¹ Ibid.

The United States was quick to support Ngo Dinh Diem who, after French rule had become Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam in the South.¹² As Kolko notes, “Diem was by 1954 one of the very few unequivocally anti-French and anti-Communist politicians of any note to whom the United States could turn.”¹³ Once in power, Diem quickly engaged in creating a separate state in the south as he built an army, a police force, and an administration. These actions went against the terms of the Geneva Accord, terms that stipulated that the demilitarization zone at the seventeenth parallel was not meant to represent an international border between two separate states. Both the United States and Diem also disregarded the fact that elections were to be held, in both the North and the South, in 1956.¹⁴

Diem’s government, once formed, began exercising its power by “rounding up opponents without concern for ideology and pro-French Vietnamese were especially vulnerable” and at the same time, they created a law which “made being a “communist” or working with one a capital offence.”¹⁵ By October of 1957, Communist sympathisers in the South had begun to form armed companies and by 1959, supplies were being sent from the North to the South by Ho Chi Minh, who until 1959 had dissuaded his

¹² Ngo Dinh Diem was born in 1901 to a former counsellor of the Emperor, Thanh Thai. His father retired to instead become a farmer, but insisted that his sons receive a formal education. Diem was educated in a French-Catholic school and later attended the School of Law and Administration, after which he quickly became a provincial governor and later the minister of interior under Bao Dai. It was while in this position, that Diem began to vocally oppose the method of French rule in Vietnam and resigned. After spending over a decade in seclusion with family members, and under constant supervision of the French, Diem was captured and sent into exile after attempting to warn Bao Dai of the dangers in joining in work with Ho Chi Minh. After his release and time in the United States and Belgium, Diem realized that in order to advance the fight for freedom in Vietnam, he would need “French endorsement, American approval, and an official appointment from Bao Dai.” Bao Dai, in fact, did believe that Diem, having spent time in the United States could somehow persuade the Americans to replace the French in Vietnam and in June of 1954 named Diem the Prime Minister of Vietnam. Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 214-218. Quote, 217.

¹³ Gabriel Kolko *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (Pantheon Books: New York, 1985), 83.

¹⁴ Ibid. 83-87.

¹⁵ Ibid., 89.

supporters in the South from attacking the Diem regime. However, by early 1960 guerrilla warfare broke out in Vietnam. The South's Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) proved to be ill trained, resulting in the guerrillas' ability to assassinate many key government officials in South Vietnam. Finally, in December 1960, the National Liberation Front (NLF) was created to lead the southern guerrillas in a war against Diem and to bring together those opposed to Diem's regime.¹⁶

As Kolko explains in *Anatomy of a War*;

It was for the United States in 1961 to resolve whether there would be war or peace in Vietnam. It alone could aspire to reverse the social and political forces irresistibly making the southern half of the country again an integral part of one Vietnam. Washington's definition of its national interests would determine its responses to the political imbroglios of the [Republic of Vietnam] and South Vietnam's social dynamics. Arms and war would serve, as always, as a final means of attaining what politics and the remnants of a colonial order could not.¹⁷

Thus began a war that would span two decades and cost the Vietnamese over a million lives.¹⁸

¹⁶ It was hoped that the National Liberation Front would gain the support of those oppressed by Diem's Government. Diem had favoured landowners in South Vietnam and it was hoped that the NLF would "bring together a disparate collection of elements opposed to Diem: various peasants, youth, religious, cultural, and other associations founded by the Vietminh during the war against the French..." Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 237-9. Quote, 238. Edwin E. Moïse "Section 5- The Aftermath of Geneva, 1954-1961: The Vietnam Wars," <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/viet1.html> (accessed 15 December 2006).

¹⁷ Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 111.

¹⁸ Although the numbers of Vietnamese casualties and deaths vary by sources, all note that the number of Vietnamese deaths totalled over one million. The following is an account by Moïse of how the two sides of the Vietnam conflict were comprised in the first two years:

On the side of the NFL guerrillas, the people who are often referred to as the "Viet Cong", the actual fighting men were South Vietnamese. Some had spent several years in the North; others had never been outside South Vietnam. Behind these men stood a political organization, the NLF, which was also made up of South Vietnamese. Behind the NFL stood the Communist leadership in Hanoi, which was in ultimate control of the guerrilla war. This communist leadership was a mixture of North and South Vietnamese. The guerrillas manufactured some crude weapons and ammunition in the jungle, captured some from the ARVN, and got some from North Vietnam. (The men, equipment, and supplies infiltrated from the North to the South went partly by small boat along the coast and partly by land along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which led from North Vietnam through Laos to South Vietnam.)

On the side of the Saigon [G]overnment, the fighting men were mostly South Vietnamese, but a substantial minority of them were North Vietnamese who had come south in 1954-55, and some were Americans.

After years of supporting the Diem regime, the United States' government came to the realization that it was not effective and encouraged the ARVN to overthrow Diem. This occurred on 2 November, 1963 when Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu were assassinated while being transported by armoured vehicle.¹⁹ His death did nothing to resolve the political conflicts in South Vietnam, and by 1964, the United States realized that the Communists had a clear upper-hand in the war. Soon afterwards, the US Navy Destroyer *Maddox*, on inspection patrol near the coastline of North Vietnam from 2 to 4 August, reported it had been attacked.²⁰ This resulted in the passing of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which "granted [U.S. President L.B. Johnson] very broad powers to conduct combat operations in Southeast Asia."²¹

The United States presence in Vietnam quickly grew. There were over half a million Americans serving in Vietnam in 1968. As Moïse notes, "by using equipment and technology as a substitute for men" the United States hoped to keep the number of

Behind these fighting men were two governments: the Republic of Vietnam, whose officials and leaders were partly South and partly North Vietnamese, and the United States Government. Virtually all weapons and equipment came from the United States; shipments of weapons into South Vietnam from the United States were far greater than shipments from North Vietnam to South.

Moïse, "Section 5," <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/viet1.html> (accessed 15 December, 2006).

¹⁹ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 287-310. Edwin E. Moïse, "Section 6- The Fall of Ngo Dinh Diem: The Vietnam Wars," <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/viet1.html> (accessed 15 December 2006).

²⁰ The United States had begun to seek information on the North Vietnamese protection forces in the case of an escalation into war. While airplanes were used to scan inland areas, the U.S. began to gather marine information through the use of destroyers. The *Maddox*, the American destroyer appointed to monitor the Gulf of Tonkin for activity reported that it had come under attack on 2 August and had returned fire upon 3 North Vietnamese boats. The highly debated and analysed events resulted in the United States sending the *Maddox* back to the Gulf of Tonkin, along with the American destroyer the *Turner Joy*. On the night of 4 August the *Maddox* stated that they had intercepted a radio message suggesting an attack on the American vessels was imminent. The two destroyers, taking no chances, opened fire. President Johnson, receiving reports that American vessels had been under attack gained support from congress to attack North Vietnam. It was later revealed that the two destroyers had not been fired upon by the North Vietnamese, but this was unfortunately revealed after Johnson had declared the need for retaliation against North Vietnam. Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 365-372.

²¹ Edwin E. Moïse *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1996), 226. Edwin E. Moïse "Section 7- The Escalation: The Vietnam Wars," <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/viet1.html> (accessed 15 December 2006).

American casualties as low as possible, and was able to achieve this by using “artillery, bombing planes, and air spraying of herbicides to do jobs that the French or the Saigon [G]overnment would have to do with men on the ground.”²² Karnow noted that “[n]ever before in history was so much strength amassed in such a small corner of the globe against an opponent apparently so inconsequential.”²³ It was through this large-scale use of air power that Vietnamese civilians both in the North and in the South became the main victims of the Vietnam War.

These air attacks of the United States caused great upheaval for the ordinary Vietnamese civilians: “reducing the issue for a substantial portion of the peasantry to one of physical survival.”²⁴ In the month of January 1969 alone, more than four million Vietnamese were exposed to one or more air strikes within three kilometres of their homes. This resulted in the displacement of at least 5.8 million people in South Vietnam according to the United States, while the Republic of Vietnam cites the number as being much higher: approximately 7 million civilian refugees.²⁵ Karnow explains the refugee situation as follows:

As the war intensified in 1965, the U.S. bombing, shelling, and defoliation of rural areas drove peasants from their hamlets, creating a refugee problem of immense proportions...[The refugees]...fled to the fringes of cities and towns in an attempt to survive. They were shunted into

²² Moise, “Section 7”, <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/viet1.html>. (accessed 15 December 2006).

²³ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 435. It is important to note that the Vietnamese as well as the Americans were actively fighting in the Vietnam War. One of the main offensives of the war was the Tet offensive in January 1968, led by the Communists during a truce to observe the lunar New Year. The offensive showed the Americans that the Communist forces were not weakening as had been previously assumed. This event, via the media brought the Vietnam War into the homes of most Americans and decreased the support which had previously been felt for the war. Ibid., 523; Moise, “Section 8- The Tet Offensive and its Aftermath”, <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/viet1.html>. (accessed 15 December 2006).

²⁴ Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 200.

²⁵ Ibid., 200-201.

makeshift camps of squalid shanties, where primitive sewers bred dysentery, malaria, and other diseases.²⁶

The large scale use of bombs, defoliants and napalm which resulted in the movement of a large proportion of Vietnamese civilians from their homes created a great need for humanitarian assistance for the most basic necessities. This need for assistance would be answered by two organizations in Canada: Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians and the Voice of Women. A more detailed look at the Voice of Women will help explain why the organization saw the need to become involved in such an endeavour.

The Voice of Women and the Vietnam War

Perhaps one of the most detailed studies of the Voice of Women is the PhD dissertation by Christine Ball 'The History of the Voice of Women/ La Voix des Femmes: The Early Years'.²⁷ This survey of the first three years of the Voice of Women offers a broad overview of the reasons why so many women found the need for a women's peace organization within Canada. Ball's dissertation focuses on a chronological analysis of the Voice of Women as an organization that bridged the gap most other women's organizations could not between the first and second wave of the women's movement in Canada.²⁸ She does this by studying sources amassed by the Voice

²⁶ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 439.

²⁷ Christine Ball, "The history of The Voice of Women/ La Voix des Femmes: The Early Years" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1994).

²⁸ Typically, the first wave of feminism is in reference to the suffrage movement that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the second wave of feminism refers to the period in which women began to challenge typical women's roles and images, the division in labour between the sexes, and a woman's right to make her own choices with regards to her body. These two waves will be looked at in further detail in the second chapter.

of Women during the early 1960s, such as minutes of meetings, brochures and pamphlets produced by the organization, letters between members and oral interviews with surviving members from that period.²⁹ Her study concludes where my own research on the Voice of Women begins: after they have made a name for themselves as members of the Canadian Peace Movement, yet before they became involved as active participants in the Anti-Vietnam War Movement on the international level.

Ball noted in her study that little has been written about the history of the Voice of Women. This remains true, even seventeen years after Ball's dissertation was produced. Other sources I have examined on the Voice of Women range from chapters in women's history texts, descriptions of their activities in literature specifically related to the peace movement in Canada, as well as the impact the organization had on individual members' lives as depicted through memoirs and biographies. Consequently, to find studies specifically related to the Voice of Women's activities during the Vietnam War was a more difficult task. To date, no studies of this nature exist. Therefore, this analysis of the activities of the Voice of Women and their method of contributing to the anti-Vietnam War movement in Canada will contribute to a better understanding of the organization, the motivations of its members, and the changes they wanted to bring about in Canadian society.

Much of the literature written on the Voice of Women which mentions their involvement in the Vietnam War, cite their participation, alongside the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, in a knitting project as one of their largest and far-reaching

²⁹ This theory introduced by Christine Ball will be discussed later at length with regards to the history of the women's movements and the peace movements within Canada, and how the Voice of Women as an independent organization fit into the framework of these movements.

endeavours.³⁰ Such is the case in an article Kathleen (Kay) Macpherson wrote in 1989 for the book, *Up and Doing: Canadian Women and Peace*. Macpherson was an active member of the Voice of Women in Ontario for more than thirty years and was national president of the organization for four years, from 1963 to 1967.³¹ In her article, she notes that the project spread when knitters explained the need to other women in their community, as did one woman who stated;

When I was asked why I was knitting baby clothes in dark green or brown or blue, I would explain that in Vietnam babies have to live mainly underground – sometimes floating in baskets and bowls in flooded trenches – and light-coloured clothing meant they could be seen and bombed by American planes. Women were horrified.³²

Another article written jointly by Macpherson and Meg Sears (also a member of the Voice of Women), entitled “The Voice of Women: A History” was included in the 1976 book *Women in the Canadian Mosaic*.³³ Although the organization had only been active for a little over fifteen years, the authors go into great detail recounting the many activities in which members of the Voice of Women participated, as well as the growth of the organization itself. The campaigns to stop the sale of war-toys, the opposition to Canada’s role in the Vietnam War, and the collection of baby’s teeth to be tested for strontium 90,³⁴ were also pointed out in this brief history. The women also mention the

³⁰ Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, a Canadian organization originating in British Columbia began a knitting project in the summer of 1966. Their objective was to provide clothing for Vietnamese children and babies who had fallen victims to the War in Vietnam. The Voice of Women became the largest contributor to the knitting campaign, drawing the attention of many participants in Canada and the United States and worked closely with Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians for nearly one decade.

³¹ Macpherson, *When in Doubt*, 89.

³² Kay Macpherson, “The Voice of Women,” in *Up and Doing: Canadian Women and Peace*, ed. Janice Williamson and Deborah Gorham (Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1989), 208.

³³ Kay Macpherson and Meg Sears, “The Voice of Women: A History” in *Women in the Canadian Mosaic*, ed. Gwen Matheson (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1976).

³⁴ Dr. Hunt, a dentist from the University of Toronto’s Department of Dentistry headed the investigation of the effects of Strontium 90 on babies’ and children’s teeth. It was believed that the radioactive substance was being absorbed by humans and animals after being released into the atmosphere by nuclear testing.

challenges the organization faced when Lester B. Pearson, (then leader of the opposition in Canada, and future Prime Minister), and his Liberal Party reversed their position regarding nuclear weapons in 1963.³⁵ The Voice of Women, which was a non-partisan organization, was faced with a dilemma. They could either directly attack the Liberal Party and their decision on nuclear weapons (a method they had tried to avoid in the past) or indirectly denounce nuclear weapons while avoiding specific attacks against the Liberal Party. They chose the former route, and in turn lost many members who were affiliated with the Liberal Party, one of whom was Maryon Pearson: Lester B. Pearson's wife.³⁶

A further examination of the Voice of Women's early years as an organization can be found in Candace Loewen's "Making Ourselves Heard: "Voice of Women" and the Peace Movement in the Early Sixties", found in the book *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women's History in the Twentieth Century*, which offers an examination of the Voice of Women and the role that feminism played in the foundational years of the organization. Like Ball, Loewen's analysis of the Voice of Women stems from an external perspective, that of a non-member of the organization, and offers a brief understanding as to what factors motivated women within the organization to get involved in the peace movement in Canada. She explains that "early [Voice of Women] organizers tried to combine women's traditional supportive role in the family with a

Once in the atmosphere, plants and animals would absorb the radioactive Strontium 90 which would then be released into the food-chain and consumed by humans. The Voice of Women was quick to support the study by Dr. Hunt and began collecting babies' and children's teeth to be tested for the substance. MG 28, I 218, Vol. 5, File 7.

³⁵ The Voice of Women had supported Lester B. Pearson, and his party's position that Canada not arm itself with nuclear weapons. Pearson reversed his position in early 1963, causing the Voice of Women to sever their support of the Liberal leader. The events leading up to this division and its aftermath will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3 of this thesis.

³⁶ Macpherson, "The Voice of Women: A History" in *Women in the Canadian Mosaic*, 75-76.

public voice in world affairs.”³⁷ This attempt to unite women’s traditional roles and politics is one that had been present since the first wave of the women’s movement and one that is associated with what is known as maternal feminism, a phenomenon which will be examined in the following chapter regarding the Voice of Women’s role in the women’s movement in Canada.

Loewen focuses much of her attention on the developmental years of the Voice of Women and the different ideologies and political convictions of its members. This examination was similar to that of her Master’s memoir entitled *Women Organized for Peace: Voice of Women, 1960-1963* from the University of Ottawa, as well as the article printed in *Atlantis* in 1987 entitled “Mike Hears Voices: Voice of Women and Lester Pearson, 1960-1963.” Much of her analysis relies on correspondence between early members of the organization and their stated sentiments regarding the purpose and role of such an organization in Canada. The departure of some women from the organization, according to Loewen, was the direct result of these diverging attitudes. A number of women wanted to take a more politically active stance, while others wanted the Voice of Women to “remain a respectable women’s organization.”³⁸

This division and the politicization of the Voice of Women, as addressed by Ball, prompted some women to leave the group, particularly those who were concerned about the image they were projecting to their communities, as well as the effects these images might have had on their families. After all, the Voice of Women had attempted to convey an image of respectable women or as Ball quoted Helen Tucker as stating “members

³⁷ Candace Loewen, “Making Ourselves Heard: “Voice of Women” and the Peace Movement in the Early Sixties,” in *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women’s History in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Sharon Anne Cook, Lorna R. McLean and Kate O’Rourke (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 248.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 249.

contrived to do things “properly,” in a ladylike fashion, “with a hat and white gloves.”³⁹ Ball noted that women in the organization were often portrayed “as a virtuous, quiet woman and mother, amidst middle-class domestic simplicity, harmony and peaceful female pursuits.”⁴⁰ It was hoped by the organizers of the group that they would be able to communicate an image that would attract attention from the media, but as the media was a staunchly male dominated institution, there was fear that the media would convey the women in a negative light, as the media in the 1960s “portrayed Canadian women in the context of their domestic roles: “as happy homemakers, winsome wives, and magnanimous mothers,” [t]o vary from these stereotypes was problematic, particularly in an era rife with fears concerning the subversion of societal stability.”⁴¹

Aside from the limited number of secondary sources devoted to the Voice of Women, there are several memoirs and autobiographies that have been penned by former Voice of Women members. One such source, which offers a good overview of the organization, can be found in Kay Macpherson’s autobiography *When in Doubt, Do Both: The Times of My Life*. In her book, Macpherson dedicates several chapters to the Voice of Women, an organization to which she dedicated many years of her life. Of that section, one chapter is dedicated to the activities centred on Vietnam. As Macpherson wrote, “[f]or roughly ten years, [the Voice of Women’s] major efforts were centred on trying to end the Vietnam War and Canada’s support for US aggression.”⁴² Her recollections offer a broad overview of the different activities in which the Voice of

³⁹ Ball, “The history of the Voice of Women,” 188.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 189.

⁴¹ The quote within Ball’s text is quoting Judy LaMarsh who was elected as a member of parliament soon after the creation of the Voice of Women. Here she offers her position on how the media portrays women in post-war Canada. Ibid., 195-6.

⁴² Macpherson, *When in Doubt*, 118.

Women were involved, including a trip she made to Hanoi, Vietnam, with two other members of the Voice of Women in order to witness firsthand the consequences of the war on the Vietnamese. She also made several trips to attend international women's conferences in Paris regarding the situation in Vietnam. Similarly, she describes two separate visits of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese women to Canada in 1969 and 1971, both of which were hosted by the Voice of Women.⁴³

Macpherson surveys the Voice of Women's work with other anti-war organizations, such as the *Women's Strike for Peace* and the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*, as well as their partnership alongside the *Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians* organization which worked during the Vietnam War to provide clothing, medicine and prosthetic limbs to children affected by the violence in Vietnam.⁴⁴ While Macpherson does not go into great detail on any one topic in her work, she does offer enough of an overview to present an understanding of the activities occupying much of the time of the members of the Voice of Women during the period of the Vietnam War.

Another active member of the Voice of Women who wrote of her experiences with the organization was Claire Culhane, in her book *One Woman Army: The Life of Claire Culhane*. Culhane had been active in the anti-Vietnam War movement prior to joining the Voice of Women, and had in fact spent several months working at a hospital in Quang Ngai, Vietnam, as part of a Canadian medical-aid project.⁴⁵ Culhane returned

⁴³ Ibid., 121-127.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 118-9.

⁴⁵ Culhane, who had trained as a nurse at the Ottawa Civic Hospital School of Nursing, went to South Vietnam after reading about the work of Canadian doctor, Dr. A. Vennema. Vennema worked at the Quang Ngai Provincial Hospital providing medical service to the many Vietnamese infected with tuberculosis as well as medical assistance to prisoners, many of whom were National Liberation Front guerrillas, at the

from Vietnam determined to spread word of the many atrocities she had witnessed during her stay, and at the same time, to denounce Canada's role in the war. She believed that "[a]t best they [Canadians] were the pawns of the Americans, at worst active collaborators in the war effort."⁴⁶ Her introduction to the Voice of Women was in May of 1968 when the organization sponsored her to speak publicly for the first time about her experiences in Vietnam. Culhane noted how political views varied within the Voice of Women with respect to the Vietnam War. Many women were happy to work more discreetly on the knitting project or fund-raising, while others believed a more vocal and public approach would further their cause.⁴⁷ Such difference of opinions within the organization offers insight into the divisions that were caused surrounding the controversial issue that was the Vietnam War. These divisions, which arose from time to time within the Voice of Women during the war, often resulted in the voluntary withdrawal of various members.

Thérèse Casgrain, founder of the Québec branch of the Voice of Women, also wrote about her experiences in the organization in her autobiography *A Woman in a Man's World*. She paid much of her attention on descriptions of the various trips she made as a representative of the Voice of Women, but provided little attention to the programs and initiatives in place in Canada during the Vietnam War.

Beyond those independent studies of the Voice of Women, there are a number of essential writings on the peace movement and the women's movement in Canada. The section entitled "Women's Peace Activism in Canada" in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian*

provincial jail that was located near the hospital. Mick Lowe, *One Women Army: The Life of Claire Culhane* (Toronto: Macmillian Canada, 1992), 120-170.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 169-170.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 184-185.

Women in Politics by Barbara Roberts examines the dynamics of women's peace organizations within Canada, focusing her attention on women-only peace organizations. Through her study, Roberts looks at pacifist women's groups throughout the twentieth century in three distinct periods: The Great War; The Twenties and Thirties; and the Cold War. Through an analysis of these three periods, Roberts observed the changing attitudes of women's peace groups in Canada, as well as the changing momentum of the women's peace movement. She noted that during the Great War, the women's and the peace movements slowed in Canada. Women who did oppose the war were often seen as radicals and traitors.⁴⁸ Similarly, during the post-war period of the 1940s and 1950s, there were barely any women-only peace groups in Canada for several reasons. As Roberts explained "the prevailing post-war ideology sent women back to the kitchens to preoccupy themselves with family life. Not coincidentally, this freed up...jobs for returning men veterans, now expected to resume their positions of authority in the family and other social institutions."⁴⁹ During times of war, many women held more responsibilities around the home, especially if their husbands were away in battle. When their husbands returned home following the war women were again expected to revert to their role as mother and caretaker of the household and the family, leaving little time to participate in peace-groups. It was not until tensions between the super-powers continued to grow in the late 1950s and the fear of nuclear weapons increased that we began to see a growth in membership in women-only peace groups.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Barbara Roberts, "Women's Peace Activism in Canada," in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, ed. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 276-286.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 295-296.

Another book which looks at the involvement of Canadian women in the peace movement, as well as their involvement in the broader women's movement in Canada, is *Canadian Women: A History*. The book, authored by six key historians of Canadian women's history, surveys women's experiences, struggles and achievements in Canada from the mid-nineteenth century up until the 1980s.⁵¹ Of particular interest to this study are two sections entitled "Prelude to Revolution" and "A Bomb Already Primed and Ticking". The former looks at women's organizations in the 1950s and 1960s, where the authors pay some attention to the early years of the Voice of Women. The latter examines the growth of feminist activity within Canada, including the creation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967. Likewise, it looks at radical and socialist feminism in Canada and how these different modes of Canadian feminists worked together on a variety of issues, as well as the opposition these feminist groups often faced.

Following on the theme of the women's movement in Canada is the book *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* by Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail. This essential study focuses on offering the reader a comprehensive outline of the women's movement in Canada. While the book does offer a history of the women's movement in Canada, as did *Canadian Women: A History*, its authors also focus much of their attention on the different ideologies expressed in the movement, particularly with regards to what they see as the

⁵¹ The six authors are Alison Prentice, Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson and Naomi Black.

three main currents of feminism: liberal feminism; radical feminism and socialist feminism.⁵²

A key element for this thesis is the study of maternal feminism and how it motivated and shaped the actions of many members of the Voice of Women during the Vietnam War. The idea of maternal feminism, which will be examined closely in the following chapters, was also examined by Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, who saw maternal feminism as a link between the first and second wave of the feminist movement. They proposed that maternal feminism had come into existence in the late nineteenth century, and that “the main assumption of maternal feminism was ‘the conviction that woman’s special role as mother gives her the duty and the right to participate in the public sphere...[and]...it was woman’s ‘mothering’ - the nurturing qualities common to all women- that made her the ideal reformer.”⁵³ From this we can conclude that it was not simply a desire for women to participate in the public realm which sparked maternal feminism but also a belief that it was women’s maternal responsibility to use their role as women and mothers to better society.

William Ladd’s book *On the Duty of Females to promote the Cause of Peace* is a fine example that the ideologies behind maternal feminism have been evident within society for several centuries. Written in 1836 as a pamphlet, it offers instructions as to how women should uphold the ideals of peace and convey these sentiments to both their husbands and children.⁵⁴ With regards to the study of maternal feminism within women’s

⁵² A greater overview of these three currents of feminism in Canada will be offered in the second chapter of this study in the section entitled “The Voice of Women and the Women’s Movement in Canada”. Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women’s Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 9.

⁵³ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁴ William Ladd, *On the Duty of Females to promote the Cause of Peace* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.: 1971).

history, specifically in earlier periods, several authors have been consulted for this study. Veronica Strong-Boag in her essay “Peace-Making Women: Canada, 1919-1939,” Gerda Lerner in her book *The Majority Finds its Past: Placing Women in History*, and Frances Early in her article “The Historic Roots of the Women’s Peace Movement in North America” examine women in the first half of the twentieth century and the role that maternal feminism played in the women’s movement in Canada, particularly during the suffrage movement.⁵⁵

In the book *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, Caroline Whitbeck provides an analysis of the idea of mothers having a ‘maternal instinct’ in her study “The Maternal Instinct,” while Sara Ruddick provides two essays, one entitled “Maternal Thinking” and the other “Preservative Love and Military Destruction: Some Reflections of Mothering and Peace.”⁵⁶ While many academics support the idea that maternal feminism played a role in the choices of many feminists in the twentieth century, there are also some academics that question what motivates maternal feminist in their cause. Ruddick, in her book *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* questions whether the desire for women to protect others is truly a maternal desire, or instead a socially constructed reaction of people who have been seen as second-class citizens, and not given the option

⁵⁵ Francis Early, “The Historic Roots of the Women’s Peace Movement in North America.” *Canadian Woman Studies* Volume 7, No. 4 (1986), 43-48. Veronica Strong-Boag, “Peace-Making Women: Canada, 1919-1939,” in *Women and Peace: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson (Croom Helm: London, 1987). Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁵⁶ Caroline Whitbeck, “The Maternal Instinct,” in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, ed. Joyce Trebilcot (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984); Sara Ruddick, “Maternal Thinking,” in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, ed. Joyce Trebilcot (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984); Sara Ruddick, “Perspective Love and Military Destruction: Some Reflections on Mothering and Peace,” in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, ed. Joyce Trebilcot (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984).

to hold power in the public realm.⁵⁷ Both Inger Skjelsbaek, in her contribution to the book *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, entitled “Is Feminism Inherently Peaceful? The Construction of Femininity in War,” and Micheline de Sève’s “Feminism and Pacifism” in *Women and Peace: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives* also agree with Ruddick’s belief that it is the traditional lack of power that women have felt that has gravitated them towards a world of pacifism.⁵⁸ The previously mentioned authors whose work focuses on maternal feminism will be studied at greater length in chapter four.

When giving consideration to secondary sources regarding the Vietnam War and Canada’s role in the conflict, an indispensable book is Victor Levant’s *Quiet Complicity: Canadian Involvement in the Vietnam War*. Levant examines the ‘humanitarian aid programs’ implemented by Canada and questions why it was only directed towards one part of the country: that of South Vietnam.⁵⁹ He wrote that “when aid is extended to a country at war, and extended to one side only, the cloak of humanitarianism, however, must be viewed with some degree of scepticism.”⁶⁰ This scepticism expands to include Canada’s role in the International Commission of Supervision and Control (also known as the International Control Commission or the I.C.C.),⁶¹ and the International

⁵⁷ Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (London: The Women’s Press, 1990).

⁵⁸ Micheline de Sève, “Feminism and Pacifism, or, the Art of Tranquilly Playing Russian Roulette,” in *Women and Peace: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson (Croom Helm: London, 1987); Inger Skjelsbaek, “Is Feminism Inherently Peaceful? The Construction of Femininity in War,” in *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, ed. Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith (SAGE Publications: London, 2001).

⁵⁹ From the mid-1950s until 1975, the government of Canada provided humanitarian assistance to the people of South Vietnam through medical aid and food.

⁶⁰ Victor Levant, *Quiet Complicity: Canada’s Involvement in the Vietnam War* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1986), 63.

⁶¹ The International Commission of Supervision and Control was established in 1954 following the conference held in Geneva, Switzerland. This Geneva Conference was organized to oversee the French withdrawal of control from Indochina, and the I.C.C. was to be the body that would supervise this withdrawal. Canada was appointed as a representative of the West for this commission.

Commission of Control and Supervision (I.C.C.S.),⁶² seen by some as an instrument to help conceal both Canada's and the United States' role in the Vietnam War.⁶³ Throughout his study, Levant clarifies the reasons why the Voice of Women, as well as numerous other peace organizations, was opposed to Canada's involvement in the war. The reasoning for this involvement often centres on the financial gains that were to be made from Canadian sales and services provided to the United States. One key way in which Canada was involved in the war, as demonstrated by Levant, was through sales of war products. Although the list of products sent to the United States is long, one of the products that received much criticism and sparked protests from the Voice of Women, and Canadians and Americans at large, was the manufacture and sale of napalm.⁶⁴

There are several other useful sources written to explain Canada's role in the Vietnam War. The first being *Snow Job: Canada, the United States and Vietnam (1954-1973)* by Charles Taylor. Like Levant, Taylor examines Canada's role as a member of the I.C.C. and I.C.C.S. as well as Canada's foreign policy throughout the war. He reaches similar conclusions to those of Levant, namely that Canada gave support to the United

⁶² Similar to the I.C.C., the International Commission of Control and Supervision was established as a means to ensure peace in Vietnam. Following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1973, the I.C.C.S. again appointed Canada as a representative of the West. In both cases (the I.C.C. and the I.C.C.S.), Canada, along with other participating states, was meant to remain an impartial participant while performing duties for the commissions. Canada's role in the two commissions has been criticized as being too favourable towards the United States. For more information on both the I.C.C. and the I.C.C.S. see Levant, 107-210 and 213-254.

⁶³ Ibid., 107-108.

⁶⁴ Levant lists a large number of products sold to the United States from Canada as cited from the U.S. Department of Defence. While napalm was on this list, it was in fact, also produced by American companies, one specifically being the Dow Chemical Company. Dow was the producer of household products, such as Saran Wrap, and the producer of chemicals found in hundreds of product in the American and Canadian markets. It became one of the main producers of napalm as well as Agent Orange, a defoliant used during the Vietnam War. Napalm, a jellied-like substance, is an explosive made from a mixture of gasoline, benzene and polystyrene. When dispensed, Napalm adheres to clothing and flesh, quickly burning through skin and bones. The mixture was widely used during the Vietnam War to incapacitate the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers, but at the same time killed countless innocent civilians when it was dropped by American planes onto the countryside. For an in-depth look at the Dow Chemical Company see: Jack Doyle, *Trespass Against Us: Dow Chemical & The Toxic Century* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 2004), this information specifically from pages 21-60.

States throughout the war, even though it was meant to maintain an impartial position as a member of the I.C.C. and I.C.C.S. However, he pays little attention to the sale of arms and war material to the United States, which would have perhaps made his argument more convincing. Douglas Ross, author of the book *In the Interest of Peace: Canada and Vietnam, 1954-1973* also fails to focus on the issue of war material sales to the United States. Instead, he looks at the ever-present possibility of the Vietnam War turning into a nuclear conflict and claims that it was for this reason that Canada acted as an ally to the United States, although again, they were meant to be an impartial member of the I.C.C. and I.C.C.S.⁶⁵

For more general overviews of the Vietnam War, several key figures in the history of the topic have been consulted as previously mentioned. Stanley Karnow, an American journalist offers an extensive history of Vietnam as well as an account of the conflict in his book, *Vietnam: A History*. Likewise, Gabriel Kolko, a leading scholar in American foreign policy, also gives a comprehensive summary of key events during the war, and at the same time focuses some attention on the effects the conflict had on the Vietnamese civilians. Finally, Edwin E. Moïse's account of the history of Vietnam, spanning ten centuries and ending with the Vietnam War, provides a broad, yet concise understanding of the tumultuous and often debated war.⁶⁶

While the examination of the aforementioned sources will offer great insight and foundational reference for this study, for the purposes of this thesis, the majority of the research focuses on the use of primary sources from the National Library and Archives of

⁶⁵ Charles Taylor, *Snow Job: Canada, the United States and Vietnam (1954 to 1973)*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1974.; Douglas A. Ross, *In the Interest of Peace: Canada and Vietnam, 1954-1973*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

⁶⁶ These three sources have been cited in the previous section entitled Setting the Stage: The Vietnam War.

Canada. The Voice of Women, perhaps as a foresight to the importance of their work and their organization in general, kept meticulous records regarding their activities during the Vietnam War. Of particular interest for my subject are documents that refer to the knitting project for Vietnamese children; a project which members of the Voice of Women participated in for more than a decade.

Key documents that I have consulted include a considerable volume of correspondence both received and sent from the Voice of Women. Much of the correspondence is between the Voice of Women knitting project organizers and the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, along with a great deal of printed material produced by the latter organization with regards to the knitting project. Correspondence between the Voice of Women coordinators in Ontario and knitters throughout Canada and the United States was also consulted to assess the growth of the project throughout North America. These letters also provide insight as to the attitudes and motivations of women in Canada and the United States with respect to the efforts of the organization concerning the knitting project.

Voice of Women newsletters and annual reports provided key statistical updates on the progress of the project. To that end, Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians made many press releases to inform the public on the advancements and success of the humanitarian aid project for the children of Vietnam, and these documents offer an account of the quantity of goods being sent, as well as the monetary value associated with the shipments. Newspaper reports regarding the Voice of Women, specifically with relation to the knitting project, were also analyzed, as well as pamphlets produced by the

Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, the Voice of Women, and various other anti-war groups, all found at the Library and Archives of Canada.

Chapter 2

Introduction to the Voice of Women

As noted in the previous chapter, the Voice of Women was formed in 1960 as a mechanism for women to protest the possible use of nuclear arms and the daunting prospect of a nuclear war. Lotta Dempsey, a columnist for the *Toronto Star*, wrote an article for the newspaper following the break-down of the Paris-Peace Conference regarding the issue of nuclear war and her belief that women should unite to counter this possibility.⁶⁷ This article may be considered as the starting point for the Voice of Women. Following the article's publication, Dempsey was flooded with support from women all across Canada eager to help with the creation of a women's peace organization in Canada. One woman from Downsview, Ontario, wrote Dempsey in response to the article offering her support for the project. She wrote:

If you are going to scream loud and hard about the world situation right now- let me join you.

But let us not scream alone- let us urge the women of the world to join us. I say "women of the world" and that is just what I mean. Russian women- Chinese women- African women. All the women of the world.

And let us not scream for the preservation of Canada alone. Let us scream for the preservation of children all over the world. Even if our own children might somehow be spared in another war, could we live with ourselves if we allowed any children- Russian- African- white, black, yellow or red to suffer the horrible effects of even one atom bomb without our having done all we could to prevent it?...

...The men seem to have lost sight of the fact that the first- the only important thing to do now, is to feed and shelter the hungry, and to

⁶⁷ Dempsey, *Toronto Daily Star*, 21 May, 1960. See footnote 2 for more detail.

get rid of these dangerous weapons of war that all the great powers are hoarding.

Men seem to be much more concerned with economic considerations. Women have always been more concerned with people themselves. So let us women get in and pitch- pushing our men into doing the right thing...⁶⁸

Other women wrote in support of Dempsey's idea to unite women for the cause of peace: women who had also been looking for a way to offer their time to an organization supporting peace and opposing war. Many Canadian women had a general sense of helplessness with regards to world affairs in the early 1960s, and the creation of the Voice of Women would provide an outlet for them to develop and disseminate their ideas. As one woman wrote, "There seems to be so little we women can do and yet, there is a great deal we can try."⁶⁹ This attitude of powerlessness can perhaps be attributed to the gender divisions felt in society at the time. Although women had been entering the workforce in greater numbers, there was still a prevailing sense of division when it came to gender roles and responsibilities at the time. There was also a belief amongst women, that they, as the givers of life, had more to offer society than simply rearing children. This division and hope for change was expressed by a woman from Alberta when she wrote:

I sincerely feel that organized womanhood throughout the world may eventually be able to bring to a halt this madness called war. I know we have always hesitated to use our influence on world-society and too long have kept to the back seat while our men proceeded to prepare for our total annihilation and that of our children. The sneers of the men in my household about the ability of women to do any good in a world organization are met by my answer- "Could we do any worse than you men have done?"⁷⁰

⁶⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 1. Letter from Mavis Wiley from Downsview, Ontario, dated 17 May, 1960.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Letter from Bette McIlvenna from North Bay, Ontario, dated 30 May, 1960.

⁷⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 3. Letter from Pearl Ross from Canmore, Alberta, dated 4 October, 1960.

The creation of the Voice of Women shows that there was a sense of urgency among women to overcome the limitation of powerlessness that they had been victim to for so long, and to make their voices heard politically on a national, and international level.

At a peace meeting in Toronto in June of 1960, immediately after Dempsey's article had created such a stir, Helen Tucker, a Canadian woman peace activist, proposed that the women in attendance meet to discuss a separate women's organization. After several preliminary meetings, as well as a meeting with Prime Minister Diefenbaker, the leader of the opposition in the House of Commons, Lester B. Pearson, and other members of the Canadian Parliament, the Voice of Women was founded on 28 June, 1960.⁷¹

The first meeting was attended by Mrs. D. Henderson, Mrs. W.D. Tucker, Miss B. Touzel, Mrs. G. Swanston, Mrs. F. Davis and Miss Lotta Dempsey. They came to the conclusion that an organization such as the Voice of Women was necessary because they believed women could mobilize to bring about disarmament: something that had not yet been done by men.⁷² The women involved noted that most men had the general intention to strive towards peace, but they did not have the same maternal desire to maintain life and peace as women. The declaration of the Voice of Women stated that:

Our premise is that women all over the world have a great deal in common. No matter how we differ in other respects, there are many things in which we can find a meeting place- our instinct to protect and care for our children, our instinct to preserve family life and make a home, the many interests that professional women share, our capacity for compassion.⁷³

This perceived instinctive, maternal desire to offer an alternative to war would be at the centre of the organization's activities during the Vietnam War. The desire to see an

⁷¹ Macpherson and Sears, "The Voice of Women: A History," 72.

⁷² LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 7, File 15.

⁷³ Ibid.

end to the violence throughout the world through the use of communication can be noted in their organizational declaration. They asserted that the use of technology was often being used detrimentally and the only way to advance societies would be to use technology in a constructive manner.⁷⁴ Such would be the case for the testing of nuclear weapons on Amchitka Island where the Voice of Women would voice their disapproval for the destructive use of technology and the effect it had on its surrounding environment. At the same time, the creators of the Voice of Women aspired to create an outlet to express their disdain for war, and nuclear war in particular. In the concluding page of their declaration, the founding members proclaimed;

One of the greatest horrors of living in a world threatened by nuclear war, is the sense of being helpless. One of the greatest horrors of being a mother at this time is the certain knowledge that, if war comes, we are powerless to protect our children. We believe that the plan outlined in this brief would tend to make women feel less helpless: we believe it would give us something positive and hopeful to focus on: we believe that it would give us a sense of taking a hand in our own destinies. It is our sincere opinion, moreover, that if the latent power and energy of women were to be harnessed in this way, it could be the force that leads the world to peaceful co-existence.⁷⁵

The framework for the organization was to follow that of a standard Canadian organization including national, provincial and local branches. Each of these divisions would have their respective executives and committees and hold annual meetings independent of the other branches.⁷⁶ At the onset, women could become members by sending a two-dollar annual fee to the national office located in Toronto.

The original goal of the founding members of the Voice of Women was to have the organization expand internationally. Therefore, the national executive was established

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Macpherson, *When in Doubt*, 91.

to replicate an international style of organization to ensure its growth would be smooth. It was suggested that each branch aim for a membership of approximately ten individuals, whether it be at the municipal, provincial or national level, and that each member have specific duties to ensure consistency throughout the organization and to warrant “a readily identifiable chain of command.”⁷⁷ This method of hierarchy in a grass-roots organization is quite rare: most do not maintain such a strict system of leadership.⁷⁸

The aforementioned declaration of the Voice of Women suggested that the national executive, and subsequently the other levels of the organization, be established in a particular manner. There was to be one chair, two vice-chairmen, a research chairman, a secretary and a financial chairman.⁷⁹ The lead chairman would be responsible for overseeing the activities of her respective branch, while one vice-chairman was responsible for all publicity for the area. The other vice-chairman was responsible for establishing international contacts and promoting the growth of the organization on the national and international level. The research chairman was required to organize guest speakers, cultural exchanges with other nations as well as manage all the travel arrangements for the group. A secretary was needed to take minutes at meetings and perform regular office work and manage any volunteers that may be working for the branch, while the financial chairman was in charge of fundraising as well as the distribution of funds. Finally, the remaining four individuals (should each division have

⁷⁷ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 7, File 15. From the document entitled: Suggestions for the Organization of the VOW.

⁷⁸ The term Grass-Roots refers to organizations which tend to be community-based and has participants from a variety of backgrounds involved. This discrepancy between typical grass-roots organizations and the formation of the Voice of Women will be discussed in a following section examining the way in which the Voice of Women fit into the women’s movement within Canada. For a visual explanation of the framework of the Voice of Women, see Appendix 1.

⁷⁹ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 7, File 15. From the document entitled: Suggestions for the Organization of the VOW.

the ideal ten members) were in charge of establishing new connections and drawing new members, both regionally and internationally, into the Voice of Women.⁸⁰

Once the national executive of the organization was established, it was expected that provincial and municipal branches would follow the same format. Members of the national committee were encouraged to visit larger urban centres in each province and recruit interested women to their cause. Once provincial and regional offices were established, the representatives from each would remain in contact with their counterpart on the national executive in order to maintain an open level of communication within the organization.⁸¹

Although the founding members of the Voice of Women appeared to be confident in the formation of the organization, and based much of their group on that of other North American organizations, it was at the same time an act of trial and error. Forming the skeleton of the group were women who had been involved in the peace movement in Canada for many years; at the same time they were seen by many as 'simply women'. At a time when women were still considered the weaker of the two sexes, these individuals worked diligently to become respected within the realm of other Canadian peace organizations, and in doing so, made certain that they neglected no aspects of their organization.

Forming an organization from scratch raised many questions concerning internal procedures, and rather than postponing the examination of important issues until the organization was fully operational, the organizers took it upon themselves to address these questions from the beginning. For example, it was decided that the national

⁸⁰ Ibid. See Appendix 2.

⁸¹ Ibid.

executive would hold much of the power and “all decisions on major policy would be made by national executive”⁸² While establishing the order of the national, provincial and municipal divisions of the Voice of Women, creators also laid the groundwork for discussion on several important topics such as sponsors, literature, and mailing lists. The final section of the document entitled *Suggestions for the Organization of the VOW* asked “Who is to compile [the] bibliography, and make up our pamphlets, etc., and co-ordinate other literature available in allied areas?”⁸³ Certainly, publicity in the form of printed material would be essential to the growth of the organization, something creators recognized from an early stage in the organization. Likewise, the question of who would be responsible for handling the organization’s mail and mailing lists was also addressed during the founding days of the Voice of Women. Finally, organizers noted the importance of contacting sponsors for their organization, specifically individuals who were well known on an international level. They wrote: “[a]s soon as the brief and organization are finalized, should we go after prominent, international sponsors – e.g. Mrs. Roosevelt, Schweitzer (he has suggested great interest in women’s role in disarmament apparently)? Wives of heads of Government, etc.”⁸⁴

As previously mentioned, the initial goal of the Voice of Women in Canada was to have the organization grow to an international scale and become a centre where women could communicate on issues specifically related to women. It was anticipated

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt was the wife of the thirty second president of the United States of America, Franklin D. Roosevelt. While her husband had died in 1945, she remained active in political life and was a long time spokesperson for the United Nations until her death in 1962. Albert Schweitzer was a musician, theologian, physician and philosopher who, in the latter part of his life focused his attention on opposing nuclear war and weapons. He was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace for his creation of the Lambarene hospital in Gabon, Africa in 1913. While many carbon-copy letters can be found amongst the archival documents of letters written to Canadian government officials and their wives, I have seen none written to Mrs. Roosevelt, Albert Schweitzer, or any other public figure for that matter.

that the organization would form an institute named the 'Institute of the Voice of Women' which would ideally be located in Canada because of Canada's role as a middle-power nation and its proposed role as a peace-making nation.⁸⁵ Under normal circumstances, creating an international organization on this scale, according to the organizing committee of the Voice of Women, would "prove extremely cumbersome to coordinate."⁸⁶ The organizers noted that "a project of such scope, handled through numerous national committees, would inevitably reflect numerous national policies,"⁸⁷ however, with the creation of the Institute, the organization would hope to circumvent such a range of coordinating issues. The women also believed that such an 'Institute' would offer an exciting new approach of addressing international issues. By forming a new 'Institute', as opposed to affiliating themselves with a previously established one, they would ensure that any preconceived attitudes towards those already established organizations would not be extended onto the Voice of Women.⁸⁸

Publicity during the early months of the Voice of Women proved to be beneficial to the early growth of the organization. Through the use of radio shows heard on the west coast, newspaper articles published in Ontario, national magazine articles, and national television, the Voice of Women certainly did a lot to advertise the work of their group in

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid. While the Voice of Women did become active in other nations, the 'Institute of the Voice of Women' did not come into existence. The Voice of Women, did, however, amass a large list of contacts with organizations in other areas of the world. This list included: Call to Women, in London, England; Comite Hellenique Pour la Détente Intl. Et La Pax [sic] in Athens, Greece; The Committee of Hungarian Women, in Budapest, Hungary; Soviet Women's Committee in Moscow, U.S.S.R.; No War Toys in Los Angeles, California, U.S.A; and Union des Femmes in Bruxelles, Belgium, to name a few. LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 11.

its early months.⁸⁹ Such was the case when Mrs. Josephine Davis, the first vice-president of the Voice of Women, appeared on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's television show, *Front Page Challenge* on 11 October, 1960.⁹⁰ Within days of Davis' appearance on the widely-viewed Canadian show, a flood of letters were written inquiring about the organization, how concerned women could get involved and whether or not there were local divisions of the Voice of Women already established in their community in Canada. Letters were received from: Ottawa, Ontario; Red Deer, Alberta; to Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia.⁹¹

The growth of the Voice of Women within Canada was perhaps greater than any of the founding members had ever anticipated. While the creation of the 'Institute of the Voice of Women' never came into existence, branches of the Voice of Women were created in such international locations as New Zealand, Japan, Jamaica, Australia and Nigeria.⁹² By January 1961 there were 2,000 registered members in Canada with five-times as many people receiving the newsletter by mail.⁹³ At their first annual meeting in June, 1961, Helen Tucker, the first national president of the Voice of Women noted that their membership had reached nearly 4,000 members with seven regional committees overseeing more than 40 groups.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ A Vancouver radio station, GJOR, broadcast an interview with a Mrs. Donald of the Voice of Women; another woman from Kyuout, British Columbia mentioned hearing of the organization on C.B.C.; many women mentioned reading the column published by Lotta Dempsey as their introduction to the Voice of Women. LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 1. The organization was also mentioned on an Ontario television station on the program "At Home" on 27 October, 1960, on CHUM radio in Toronto, as well as in an issue of *Chatelaine* magazine in the fall of 1960. LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 4.

⁹⁰ The host of *Front Page Challenge* at the time was the husband of Josephine Davis, Mr. Fred Davis. Perhaps it is good to mention the irony with Mrs. Davis promoting the Voice of Women on national television when two years later, in 1962, she would question the legitimacy of the organization and cause a rift between many of its members. LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 3.

⁹¹ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 3 and 4.

⁹² Macpherson, "The Voice of Women," 205. Ball, 417.

⁹³ Macpherson and Sears, "The Voice of Women: A History," 72-3.

⁹⁴ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 17.

At the same meeting, the organization approved the text for the Voice of Women's constitution. It read as follows:

The purposes of Voice of Women/La Voix des Femmes shall be: to unite women in concern for the future of the world; to help promote the mutual respect and cooperation among nations necessary for peaceful negotiation between world powers having differing ideological assumptions; to cooperate with other groups of similar purposes and programs; 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 on matters affecting their national security and the peace of the world; to appeal to all national leaders to cooperate in the alleviation of the causes of war by common action for the economic and social betterment of mankind; to provide a means for women to exercise responsibility for the family of mankind.⁹⁵

This concern for the future of the world sparked the creation of an organization whose involvement in international and national political issues has spanned five decades, with a continuing hope and determination to see the creation of a peaceful world for all of mankind. It was this determination that made the Voice of Women a prominent and vocal opponent to the Vietnam War, and that brought the organization into the public eye, often through its involvement in controversial and political issues.

With this better understanding of how the Voice of Women was formed, the structure of the organization, and the mandate that they supported, one can begin to understand how the Voice of Women fit into large movements within Canada in the 1960s. A further explanation of the peace movement and the feminist movement in Canada will help to solidify the Voice of Women's position within both of these movements.

⁹⁵ Ibid. The constitution of the Voice of Women/La Voix des Femmes, as decided upon at the first annual meeting of the organization on 16 June, 1961.

The Voice of Women and the Peace Movement in Canada

While not evident by its name, the Voice of Women began not as a feminist organization, but as a peace organization.⁹⁶ Frances Early notes that when the organization “was founded as a ‘women’s peace movement’ in 1960, its organizers chose not to define the group as feminist, preferring to unite women and to speak on their behalf solely on an antiwar platform.”⁹⁷ Beyond direct studies on the history of the Voice of Women, and more specifically, their activities during the Vietnam War, there are several sources that provide an understanding as to where the Voice of Women fit into the peace movement in Canada. From the literature available on women’s organizations, one can draw many similarities between the actions of the Voice of Women and those of other groups. At the same time, there are several differences as to how peace organizations have typically been structured and how the Voice of Women was organized. Barbara Roberts examined the structure of women’s peace organizations in her article, “Women’s Peace Activism in Canada” found in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women in Politics*. She suggested that while most women’s peace organizations “often began with a single issue (opposition to a war, or to nuclear-weapons testing), they usually widened their goals as they came to see the causes of war as systemic: economic,

⁹⁶ Although the line between women’s organizations and peace organizations seems to be transcended throughout the history of the Voice of Women, they did, in fact, begin as a peace movement. Many of their causes soon became centred on women’s issues and the women’s right movement, and it is here that the division between a peace and women’s organization merge.

⁹⁷ Frances Early, “‘A Grandly Subversive Time’: The Halifax Branch of the Voice of Women in the 1960s,” in *Mothers of the Municipality: Women, Work, and Social Policy in Post-1945 Halifax*, ed. Judith Fingard and Janet Guildford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 254.

political, psycho-social, and so on.”⁹⁸ This can indeed be seen as the case for the Voice of Women, as they centred the creation of their organization on the threat of nuclear war and soon branched out to focus their attention on other important issues of concern: women’s and minority’s rights; and the knitting project for Vietnamese children and babies.

Roberts sees the creation of the Voice of Women as a defining moment in the Canadian Women’s Peace Movement and that its “founding...marked an important turning-point for women’s peace activism.”⁹⁹ Her theory, based on the analysis of the activities of the Voice of Women by Sears and Macpherson, Candace Loewen’s article in *Atlantis* entitled “Mike Hears Voices: Voice of Women and Lester Pearson, 1960-1963,” and the book *History of the Canadian Peace Movement* by Gary Moffatt, focuses on the Voice of Women as a grooming mechanism for previously inexperienced female activists. At the same time, the organization offered a fresh, non-violent, non-partisan approach to women who in the past had been involved in more radical forms of peace activism.¹⁰⁰ She notes that in times of peace, peace organizations tended to see an increase in their membership and likewise, a decrease in membership in times of war. Much of the attention that people previously dedicated to an organization needed to be refocused into the war effort, specifically during the First and Second World Wars when men often left home and women remained home with a heavier burden of work and family. Also, few people wanted to appear as if they were opposing their country’s political position during times of war.¹⁰¹ This sentiment was certainly echoed during the Cold War era, when to oppose one’s country could lead to accusations of communism.

⁹⁸ Roberts, “Women’s Peace Activism in Canada,” 278.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 296.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 297.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 277.

While I agree with Robert's theory that peace organizations typically saw a decrease during times of war, one could argue that this phenomenon would not be as relevant to the Voice of Women during the Vietnam War. Canadians were not involved in the Vietnam War in the same way they were in previous conflicts, such as being active on the battlefields. It is far easier to oppose a war when family members and friends are not fighting on the ground and your lifestyle at home is not altered by the conflict, as was the case for Canadian women during the Vietnam War.

While most peace organizations previously had seen a decline in participants during war years, the Voice of Women's membership quickly flourished, growing to over 10,000 members within its first year, a time when tensions and the American presence was increasing in Vietnam.¹⁰² However, within five years of the creation of the Voice of Women, the number of members had decreased by half from the height of participation. One must wonder if this decrease in membership was due to the acceleration of the war in Vietnam, or due to the growing diversity of issues with which the Voice of Women was becoming involved. Not only was the organization concerned with fighting the threat of nuclear annihilation, but it also participated in various campaigns such as opposing the sale of war toys, and promoting the status of women in Canada and abroad. Women who had joined the organization with the hopes of ending the threat of nuclear war had perhaps found themselves spread too thin with the growth of activities within the organization. Likewise, the organization that had begun as non-partisan seemed to be becoming more politically charged with the passing of time, as will be seen with the opposition of Lester B. Pearson's position on nuclear arms in Canada. During the 1960s, members of the Voice of Women maintained the position that the war in Vietnam was

¹⁰² Ibid., 297.

not justifiable and that Canada specifically did not have a legitimate reason for being engaged in the conflict, even in a secondary, non-combatant role.

Another book which examines the Voice of Women's role in the Women's peace movement in Canada is *Canadian Women: A History*. In this work, six Canadian academics collaborated to produce a study dedicated to the role that women played in the formation of Canada. Their study, which examines women in Canada from the mid-nineteenth century through to 1980s notes that the study of women in history has changed with the recognition of different gender roles in society. They noted that the newly recognized theory that the gender of individuals altered the way in which men and women's lives were lived would have a significant effect on how historians studied Canadian history, specifically in reference to the sexes.¹⁰³ For example, the authors note that women have often been excluded from the study of 'work' in Canada because:

...the generally accepted census definition of "occupation" omits much work that women do in the home- housework, childcare and care of the elderly or the sick. Even less recognized is the unpaid "reproductive" work that women do in the family, both in bearing children and in providing emotional stability and support. These omissions stem directly from the failure to treat unpaid work with the same respect as work for pay. In addition, much of women's paid work goes unrecorded, from taking in sewing or boarders to doing housework or childcare for others.¹⁰⁴

Prentice et al. also noted the creation of the Voice of Women as a turning point in the Canadian Women's Peace Movement. They credit the Voice of Women with "playing a key role in organizing Canadian opposition to the war in Vietnam,"¹⁰⁵ and also note that the organization began as a non-politically affiliated group, and as such gained acceptance from many women, politicians, and citizens in Canada at large.

¹⁰³ Alison Prentice, et al. *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 12.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 336.

This approval would be tested when, as previously mentioned, the Voice of Women expressed its disapproval of Pearson's policy on nuclear arms.¹⁰⁶ However, throughout the Vietnam War, the Voice of Women stood its ground as a peace organization amidst accusations of ties to communism from other Canadians, Americans, politicians, and even some of its own members. The National Newsletter of the Voice of Women for April 1965 illustrates this situation with the printing of a column by Elsie Saumure entitled "Are We Left or Right?" In it, she addresses this question of political affiliation raised by members of the organization and gives an interpretation of how she views the dynamics of the group. She wrote:

To know where we stand we must first say who we are. Even without a poll we know we include many kinds of women from many ethnic backgrounds. We are in communication with women's groups in other countries, for example the United States, Jamaica, Australia, the NATO countries and the Communist countries, too. In Canada, most of us are mothers or educators, thinking about the future of our children, our students, our grandchildren. We feel we symbolize and speak for the repugnance women throughout history have felt towards war....Some are equipped with degrees and certificates. Others, though lacking diplomas, serve with equal energy. Some base their hopes for peace on a humanistic philosophy, others, coming from many different denominations, on religious convictions. How can such a collection of people from different origins be classified as a movement of the left, right or centre...it would be a very dubious simplification.¹⁰⁷

The Voice of Women clearly attempted to disassociate itself with any political categorizations which may have proved divisive to the organization and may have also impeded its efforts to promote peace.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 335-336.

¹⁰⁷ MG 28 I 218, Vol. 7, File 19. National Newsletter of the Voice of Women, April, 1965.

The Voice of Women and the Women's Movement in Canada

What were the dynamics found within the Voice of Women to make it a successful and long-lasting organization at a time when many others could not maintain operation? As previously mentioned, Christine Ball found that the Voice of Women was a hybrid organization that bridged the gap between the first and second wave of the Canadian Feminist Movement. She declares that the connection with the first wave can be seen through;

[h]ow the Voice of Women initially adopted the structures, procedures, activities and strategies employed by earlier feminists as well as how its membership shared similar ideological ground with feminist foremothers. Additionally, I [Ball] discern important ideological departures, present within the organization, which became crucial ideas within the contemporary movement.¹⁰⁸

Was it this connection between the first and second wave of the Feminist Movement that is accountable for the longevity of the organization? To help answer this question, one must understand the analyses presented by academics about the topic and how the Voice of Women fit into the larger picture of the movement.

Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada offers a comprehensive, yet concise explanation of the variations between the first and second wave of feminism. Authors Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail note that the first and second waves of the feminist movement were centred around separate, albeit related issues. The first wave focused on suffrage, and the second focused on changing presupposed images and roles of women, ensuring legal and

¹⁰⁸ Ball, "The history of The Voice of Women," 8.

social services equal to those of men, and fighting for the equality of women in the workplace and schools.¹⁰⁹ The second wave also saw an increase of women in widespread popular movements, including the peace movement.¹¹⁰ While many labels have been used in the classification of the feminist movement, both in Canada and abroad, one such label which suits the Voice of Women is that of a ‘grass-roots’ feminist organization. This term, used primarily in relation to the second wave of the feminist movement, refers to a group of women from diverse backgrounds, and opposes ‘institutionalized feminism’ which Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail defines as the collaboration of “professional women who operated within traditional institutions and wanted more opportunities for women within them.”¹¹¹ While many women were drawn to institutional feminism from a variety of backgrounds, the accepted definition typically refers to professional women lobbying for change and advancement through an organization. Grass-roots feminists, on the other hand were described as follows by Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail:

These women were drawn into the movement from the left, from the universities, from their homes and workplaces, and knew little or nothing about the institutional expressions of feminism. Although they had no clearly defined strategy to differ with institutionalized feminism, we can see differences, notably in their emphasis on collective organizing, consciousness-raising, and reaching out to the ‘women on the street’.¹¹²

What remains difficult in differentiating institutionalized feminism and grass-roots feminism is the time period of which we are studying. As mentioned, the Voice of Women was created at the cusp of the second wave of the feminist movement in Canada, and much of the differences between institutionalized and grass-roots feminism were

¹⁰⁹ Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 3.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30-39.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

recognized in the latter years of the 1960s and the early years of the 1970s. As the organization was already well established at this time, it would perhaps be more difficult to classify it as one stream of feminism over another, but it clearly does have more tied to grass-roots feminism than institutionalized feminism.¹¹³

Several discrepancies do arise when examining the Voice of Women as a grass-roots peace organization. First, most grass-roots organization are organized so that all members have an equal part in the group's activities, and as such reject the idea of leadership, or a hierarchy within their organization.¹¹⁴ The Voice of Women, however, did have an elected leadership and appointed heads to committees, therefore assigning tasks to particular members. Second is the inconsistency between the Voice of Women as a multi-issue group and the size of their organization. Adamson, et al. note that most multi-issue organizations, that is groups which have a wider range of goals, will tend to have a smaller membership than single-issue organizations. They equate this to a need for a greater sense of unity amongst those involved in the organization.¹¹⁵ The Voice of Women, as previously mentioned, had a peak distribution list of over 10,000 women, and levelled off at approximately 3,000 members within the first decade of its existence: a fairly substantial number for an organization whose causes grew quite quickly during their early years.¹¹⁶

Even with the noted discrepancies, the Voice of Women can still be regarded as a grass-roots organization due to its involvement of members from a wide-range of

¹¹³ For a more detailed explanation of institutionalized and grass-roots feminism see Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 61-65.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 239-240.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 239-248.

¹¹⁶ Kay Macpherson noted in a letter to Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson in April 1967 that the Voice of Women's membership numbers totaled 3,000 members at the time. MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 16.

backgrounds. Women from a variety of political, religious, social and educational backgrounds gathered through the organization to fight for peace. One thing which can be recognized is that many of the women who joined in the early years of the organization noted their desire to protect children as a means to participate in the Voice of Women's endeavours. Although the Voice of Women was a hybrid organization, uniting women from a variety of educational and social backgrounds, political and religious beliefs, the vast majority of women who participated in the organization could best be associated with middle-class society. While this was certainly not the case for all members of the organization, and can not be seen as absolute, it was a sentiment that was agreed upon by Kay Macpherson in the early years of the organization. While attending the world conference of women for peace in Toronto in 1962, Macpherson was asked by a fellow peace worker whether she would classify the Voice of Women as a middle-class organization. To this Macpherson replied "Yes, at present, I think that is an accurate description."¹¹⁷

Adamson, Briskin and McPhail cite the increased number of women attending universities, which exposed them to a variety of social movements, such as the anti-war movement in reaction to the Vietnam War and the civil rights movements, as an accelerant to the second wave of the women's movement.¹¹⁸ Some of the movements with which Canadian women became involved in the early 1960s were more specifically part of the women's movement, most of which were designated as leftist in nature.¹¹⁹ Prentice et al. believe that the women's movement in Canada gained such strong

¹¹⁷ Macpherson, *When in Doubt*, 94. Otto Nathan, a peace worker from the United States is the peace worker mentioned.

¹¹⁸ Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 38.

¹¹⁹ Alison Prentice, et al. *Canadian Women: A History*, 356.

momentum in this period due to a strong connection to Canadian issues and a sense of Canadian nationalism amongst its participants. At the same time, there was a certain need for women of this movement to classify themselves as feminists and more specifically, to define with which division of the feminist movement they were involved.¹²⁰ Prentice et al. believed that all feminists in the 1960s and 1970s were in some way or another related to radical feminism as they challenged the typical structures that encompassed society. However, they declared that feminists could be divided between two groups, those of radical feminism and those of social feminism.¹²¹

Radical feminism is the decision by women “to concentrate exclusively on the oppression of women *as women* and not as workers, students, etc.”¹²² This definition is expanded upon by Adamson et al. by the declaration that it is women’s ability to bear children that is the basis for the oppression that is felt within our society as well as the “fundamental emotional, social, and political differences between men and women.”¹²³ Meanwhile, Prentice et al. define social feminism as the need to “focus on the ways in which capitalism and patriarchy [are] related so that both [act] as a system of oppression for women.”¹²⁴ Again, this definition can be expanded upon by Adamson, Briskin and McPhail who believe that “equality of opportunity can never be attained in Canadian society as long as there are fundamental differences in wealth, privilege, and power based on class, gender, sexual orientation, and race.”¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Ibid., 356-7.

¹²¹ Ibid., 357.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 10-11.

¹²⁴ Alison Prentice, et al., *Canadian Women: A History*, 357.

¹²⁵ Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 11.

To the list of categories of feminists in Canada, Adamson, Briskin and McPhail add liberal feminism: the idea that equal opportunities should be available to all within a society and that one's opportunity to succeed should be based on one's ability and not on wealth, law, custom, race or sex.¹²⁶ Lorraine Code defines liberal feminism as the "aim to free women from their dependent status in patriarchal society,"¹²⁷ but notes that it is not the intention of liberal feminists to see change of political systems within a society, simply that women have an equal place within the existing political structures.¹²⁸

From these three distinct, yet interrelated feminist groups, one comes to question which one the Voice of Women would be categorized. Naomi Black believes that the Voice of Women can be related to radical feminists because many of its members believed that women's values were needed for change to occur within our society, because it was believed that men's values had caused widespread destruction.¹²⁹ Likewise, Prentice, et al., agree that it is women's abilities as opposed to men's that are required to make change within society and that "those who founded Canadian women's liberation also shared with the Voice of Women, as well as the surviving first wave groups, the Canadian feminist conviction that women were better able than men to protect Canadian values."¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹²⁷ Lorraine Code, "Feminist Theory," in *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada*. ed. Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code and Lindsay Dorney (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1993), 37.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Naomi Black, "The Canadian Women's Movement: The Second Wave," in *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada*. ed. Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code and Lindsay Dorney (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1993), 164.

¹³⁰ Alison Prentice, et al. *Canadian Women: A History*, 356. Of utmost importance to many Canadian women's groups at the time, according to Prentice, et al. was the maintenance of a distinct Canadian identity. This often equated in what was seen as anti-Americanism as the United States was seen as the greatest threat to Canadian nationalism and a Canadian identity.

There is, however, one more component of feminism that can be associated with the Voice of Women's organization: that of maternal feminism. The idea of maternal instincts and the desire for women to protect their children and families was repeatedly mentioned as an essential motivator for the creation of the Voice of Women, as cited in the previous section. According to Adamson et al., maternal feminism was a facet of the first wave of the women's movement and can be seen as a precursor to the second wave's radical feminists.¹³¹ They state that "[e]ach of these [three currents of feminism] has its roots in a long history that pre-dates the second wave of the movement...[f]or the currents of feminism, as we now understand them, did not exist in a fully articulated way at the beginning of the second wave, they emerged during and were shaped by that developing women's movement."¹³² This can help clarify why it is difficult for the Voice of Women to be defined neatly within the parameter of one current of feminism, particularly because it originated so early during the second wave of the feminist movement. While maintaining aspects associated with maternal feminists, it evolved into an organization loosely based on what was later called radical feminism. The organizations ability to span several forms of maternal feminism prevents one from classifying it neatly as one current of feminism and helps to solidify the point that the Voice of Women was a complex organization and tended to defy the concepts of establish definitions.

¹³¹ Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 9-10.

¹³² Ibid.

Chapter 3

Early Years of Unrest: A Need for Change.

The first half of the 1960s was a period of growth and development for the newly formed Voice of Women. While the number of women involved in the organization grew rapidly in its inaugural years, topping approximately 10,000 members in the organization's first decade, there were several incidents that caused great unrest amongst its members. These events resulted in divisions between members as to the Voice of Women's future orientation, and resulted in some women's departures from the organization.¹³³

The Josephine Davis Issue

The first of these incidents occurred late in 1962. At the time, Thérèse Casgrain was the president of the Voice of Women, and Josephine Davis was the organization's vice-president. Thérèse Casgrain, daughter of a wealthy conservative politician who later married a liberal politician, was herself strongly involved in the political affairs for most of her life. Before becoming involved in the Voice of Women, Casgrain fought to get women the right to vote in Quebec and ran several times for office. She became the

¹³³ Pearson Papers, MG 26, N2, Vol. 91. File entitled, External Affairs Voice of Women, 1.

national president of the Voice of Women in 1962 and was also credited with founding the Quebec branch of the Voice of Women (or *La Voix des femmes*).¹³⁴ Josephine Davis was born in London, England to working class parents and was educated at the University of London in England. After working at the BBC as a writer, she moved to Canada to work with the CBC. It was there where she met her future husband, Fred Davis, and after their marriage she became a homemaker and stay-at-home-mother to the couple's three children.¹³⁵ Davis had been an active participant in the creation of the Voice of Women and had been one of its most enthusiastic promoters in its early years. However, in the fall of 1962 there appeared a different side of Davis, one that caused immense uncertainty as to her capabilities and intentions as a leading authority within the organization. At the same time, this event made many members re-evaluate the future of the Voice of Women.

In late November, Davis circulated a letter and a questionnaire to all members of the Voice of Women in Canada. The correspondence was distributed because, as Kay Macpherson wrote in her biography "Jo Davis, co-founder of VOW and a tremendous organizer and fund-raiser, had become convinced that radical militants were taking over the VOW, and she did her best to combat this threat."¹³⁶ Davis believed that the Voice of Women was becoming too politically active, too militant and vocally too radical, and because of this they seemed to be moving away from their original goals to promote respect amongst all nations, protest war and strive for a safe world in which to raise their children. This sentiment came to a head following an event in Ottawa on 1 November, 1962. On that day, a delegation of women had visited Parliament on what was known as

¹³⁴ Macpherson, *When in Doubt*, 96.

¹³⁵ Ball, "The history of The Voice of Women," 91-2.

¹³⁶ Macpherson, *When in Doubt*, 102.

the 'Peace Train' and had vocally acclaimed their opposition to nuclear arms. Press coverage of the event portrayed the women as confrontational towards members of Parliament commenting on the "new element of militancy in [the Voice of Women]."¹³⁷ A headline the following day in the *Globe and Mail* stated that the event saw "300 Irate VOW Delegates Demand Canada Voice Stand on Arms."¹³⁸ This was the second such visit to Parliament by the Voice of Women as members of the Peace Train. The previous visit, in March of the same year had resulted in a tamer, more peaceful meeting with ministers of the government.¹³⁹ As a result, Davis presented each member of the Voice of Women with the following questions and asked that they respond with a yes or no answer:

¹³⁷ Ball, "The history of The Voice of Women," 478.

¹³⁸ Kay Rex, "300 Irate VOW Delegates Demand Canada Voice Stand on Arms" *Globe and Mail*, 2 November 1962, 13.

¹³⁹ This was the second occasion where a "Peace Train" of Voice of Women members ascended into Ottawa. The first was held on 7 March of the same year and saw 300 women from Montreal, as well as numerous others from across Canada, meet with the Prime Minister of Canada to discuss a non-nuclear Canada. As noted in the regional update of Quebec during the second annual general meeting of the Voice of Women, held at the University of Montreal in Montreal Quebec. 16 September, 1962. MG 28, I 218, Vol. 22, File 2. On the occasion of the second 'Peace Train' visiting Montreal, the Voice of Women presented a brief to Prime Minister Diefenbaker on 1 November, 1962. In part it read:

"Mr. Prime Minister,

When you received us so graciously last March, we could not foresee the grave events that have compelled us to return so soon. It seems to us that the present defense [sic] policies, where each crisis leads the major alliances to the dilemma [sic] of surrender or the total destruction of humanity, must end in disaster. We are aware that the events of recent weeks have put great pressure on our government to acquire nuclear arms for Canada. We realize that Canada, at great cost, has acquired a weapons system which calls for nuclear warheads. However, we are convinced that it is only as a non-nuclear power that Canada can play a positive and constructive role in world affairs. If we acquire warheads we become committed to the defense [sic] policy of another country, and are placed in the position where we must condone the acquisition of nuclear arms by any nation large or small. At the same time, we lose all possibility of playing the role of peaceful arbiter in international disputes and become instead a junior nuclear power. Furthermore, the presence of Canada at the disarmament conference in Geneva would lose much of its effectiveness. Let us say we have made a mistake in acquiring nuclear weapons designed for nuclear warheads. It is almost a billion dollar mistake but it has not cost us any lives. You had the courage to scrap the Arrow and we ask that you now show the same courage and scrap these new weapons." Pearson Papers, MG 26, N2, Vol. 91, file entitled External Affairs, Voice of Women, File 2.

- 1) Do you believe that V.O.W.'s main emphasis should be to promote a climate of international understanding, conducive to universal disarmament, through national and international programs such as Peace Research, International Co-operation Year, Freedom from Hunger Campaign, Overseas Volunteers, greater contact between women internationally through correspondence, travel missions, etc.
- 2) Do you believe that V.O.W.'s main emphasis should be in promoting discussion of and support for more specific political objectives such as "no nuclear arms for Canada" no civil defence, no weapons testing, recognition of Red China etc?
- 3) Do you believe that V.O.W. will achieve greater success in the future and attract more members by adopting a more militant posture, and staging public demonstrations, protest marches and so on?¹⁴⁰

The reactions to the questionnaire were varied and showed support to both Therese Casgrain as the leader of the Voice of Women, the position Jo Davis was presenting, as well as members who supported Davis' ideas, but who were opposed to her methods of transmitting them. Those in favour of Casgrain as the organization's leader and the methods being employed by the organization voiced their support in many letters to the head office, to Jo Davis, and to Casgrain herself. As one woman wrote in a letter to Casgrain, "I therefore wish to at this time give my unequivocal support to you as President and to the national board of V.O.W. We are proud of our organization and the work it has done. Let us stay united and continue working on behalf of Peace- - - and build the Voice of Women to more numbers."¹⁴¹ A group from Ontario replied to the questionnaire by saying that while they agreed with Davis' belief that the organization should be "a positive, constructive group rather than a militant, protesting one," they went on to say that they also "wanted to send you [Casgrain] a vote of confidence and let

¹⁴⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 8.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. This quote is from a letter to Therese Casgrain written by Lillian Greene, a woman who was to become the most active leader in the knitting project for Vietnamese children. This letter shows her keen desire to join women together and to see the organization grow, something she would also promote during her time as convenor of the Ontario knitting project. Letter dated 29 November, 1962.

you know what we have faith in your leadership...faith in you ability to be sensitive to the whole of the membership as the national president. We expect to cooperate with you and wish you the very best.”¹⁴²

Davis did receive some support and sympathy for the position voiced in her letter and questionnaire such as a letter from a group in British Columbia that stated “this group concurs [sic] with the feelings expressed in your letter to all V.O.W. across the country and that we are willing to assist you with any plans you may have so that the organization can get back onto its original track.”¹⁴³ Others, although supportive of her undertaking, were less impressed with the manner in which she attempted to approach the issue. Davis had taken the rather unconventional method of voicing her position by distributing her questionnaire and letter using the Voice of Women mailing list and letterhead without receiving consent of the organization’s executive. By doing this, the intentions of Davis’ letter seemed to be lost amongst many Voice of Women members. At the same time, she drew more negative attention to herself than if she had perhaps used another method of distribution. The dilemma here can be seen in letter from a member in Ontario when she wrote, “I am completely against the method in which Mrs. Davis obtained the feeling of VOW membership, and feel this should certainly be the responsibility of our elected executive. I do agree with her though, in the concern that our group emphasize too much demonstrations and protests, and become known as another Ban-the-Bomb group.”¹⁴⁴

The reaction of anger and betrayal amongst women in the Voice of Women was widespread. The general consensus was that Davis had used an inappropriate outlet (the

¹⁴²Ibid. Letter from the Oakville, Ontario Voice of Women dated 7 December, 1962.

¹⁴³ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 9. Letter from the Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, Voice of Women to Jo Davis, 13 January, 1963.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Letter from Shirley McNaughton of Brampton, Ontario. Written 15 January, 1963.

Voice of Women mailing list and letterhead) and in doing so, she had undermined the credibility of not only herself, but of the organization's ability to monitor the actions of its elected representatives. The effect of the letter on the organization as a whole is explained by one woman who responded to the questionnaire by saying, "[i]f we are seeking Peace in the World- let us first seek Peace within our own group!!! I am very upset by the fact that you felt it necessary to write directly to the members and not go through the National Executive. This clearly demonstrates your lack of confidence in the Executive..."¹⁴⁵

It is undeniable that Jo Davis' actions did convey that she was lacking confidence with the actions of the executive. If this were not the case, she would not have sent the letter without the executives consent or without prior approval. In fact, the same time she was sending the letter and questionnaire to all members of the Voice of Women, she also sent Casgrain and other executives a letter attempting to justify her actions. Her letter read :

Quand vous recevrez ceci, la lettre ci-inclue aura été envoyée à tous les membres de la Voix des Femmes du Canada. En la lisant, j'espère de tout mon coeur que vous comprendrez pourquoi je me suis sentie forcée de suivre ce cours, et que vous croirez que je l'ai fait parce-que je veux (comme vous) le meilleur possible pour notre organization, avec toutes ses obligations nationales et internationales...Je ne vous ai pas consultée avant de prendre ces mesures pour plusieurs raisons que, je pense, sont justifiées....[J]e sais (comme vous devez le savoir aussi) que la Voix des Femmes est arrivée à un point de crise dans ses affaires. De plus, j'ai une très forte impression qu'il y a un vrai danger d'un schisma sérieux au sujet de la politique et des procédés de l'organisation.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 8. Letter from B. Lord, dated 30 November, 1962.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Letter written to Therese Casgrain and other key members of the Voice of Women by Josephine Davis, 20 November, 1962.

This disregard for the function of the executive did not sit well with most members of the Voice of Women. Many construed the action as a blatant disregard for the authority of the elected officials within the organization. One woman from Ontario responded to Davis' letter and questionnaire in a letter to the Voice of Women main office as she "believed it should have originated there."¹⁴⁷ Of all those who received the questionnaire, only twenty-five percent of members responded.¹⁴⁸ The issues being dealt with by the Voice of Women were not one-sided issues; they had many facets that made responding to a survey difficult. A woman from Ontario explained this quite well in a letter to Davis regarding her feelings about the questionnaire. She wrote, "I find I am unable to answer your questionnaire since I cannot give a blanket "yes" or "no" to any of the answers. What is VOW's main emphasis today is not necessarily its main emphasis tomorrow. So much depends on the ever-changing world situation."¹⁴⁹

With so much of the Voice of Women's activities depending on the changing situation throughout the world, the actions of Davis certainly did little to create an atmosphere of constructivism amongst members. Instead it created a sense of uncertainty that the organization was using the correct methods to achieve its goal of a peaceful world in which all children could be raised. One member noted her fear of how Davis' actions could influence the organization in a letter sent to both Casgrain and Davis. "It seems to me that the letter could serve to divide V.O.W. either down the middle, or else into several parts. This you can readily see could not possibly be in the interests of [the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Letter from Lola MacDonald of Hamilton, Ontario. No date given.

¹⁴⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 9.

¹⁴⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 8. Letter from S. Kirzner of Toronto, Ontario, dated 29 November, 1962.

organization] or their message for greater understanding of world peace and brotherhood.”¹⁵⁰

This was not the first instance when Davis questioned the image being portrayed by the Voice of Women. During the first annual meeting of the organization in June 1961, Davis, then the Chairman of the Public Relations and Publicity Committee, commented on how the organization was being conveyed to the public. She noted in her report that she believed it was necessary to establish an appropriate ““image” of VOICE OF WOMEN in the public eye,” and also stated that “such a movement as V.O.W. could give women everywhere a sense of personal participation in working to maintain peace. A simple, yet effective, role can be played by women...”¹⁵¹ Davis went on to note that a poll taken by the CBC found that in June of 1961, 45% of people were in favour of nuclear weapons, 21% were opposed to them, while 34% of respondents were undecided.¹⁵² From this poll, Davis believed that the Voice of Women should focus of gaining the support of the 34% of the individuals who were undecided on their position on nuclear weapons. She stated that it was, “the uncommitted whom we should endeavour to reach, and educate; and that national political pressure activity should not be the dominant “image” of V.O.W., but rather a strong educational program for international understanding.”¹⁵³ This position was similar to the one she was promoting when she distributed the questionnaire to the Voice of Women members the following year.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. Letter from M. Ferguson of Toronto, Ontario, dated 1 December, 1962.

¹⁵¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 22, File 1. Voice of Women, First Annual Meeting Minutes, 16-17 June, 1961. Toronto, Ontario.

¹⁵² Ibid. Voice of Women, First Annual Meeting Minutes, 16-17 June, 1961. Toronto, Ontario. This poll was revealed on the CBC television program “Close Up” on an episode aired on 12 June, 1961. The minutes of the meeting do not mention how many people were polled, or who the individuals were (Canadians, Americans, etc).

¹⁵³ Ibid. Voice of Women, First Annual Meeting Minutes, 16-17 June, 1961. Toronto, Ontario.

Following the response from women within the organization to Davis' questionnaire, Davis decided it would be best if she resigned as the vice-president and as a member of the Voice of Women. In a letter to the board of directors, Davis declared that, "[d]ue to circumstances beyond my control, I wish to dissociate myself completely from Voice of Women. I hereby tender my resignation and wish my name withdrawn from membership in Voice of Women immediately."¹⁵⁴ It is questionable as to whether the resignation of Jo Davis was within her control or not. After all, she was the instigating force in an event that caused division amongst many members and made many question the validity of the Voice of Women. At the same time, the loss of a founding member of the organization and a key player in the Canadian peace movement left a void amongst the members and the executive that would not easily be filled.

The circumstances surrounding the Davis affair were discussed at the third annual meeting of the organization in June 1963. Casgrain addressed the group in the president's report by declaring that the whole situation "came out of the blue."¹⁵⁵ She continued to explain that Davis had written the letters because "she was terribly worried about the future of the V.O.W." and that she did so "completely over the head of the Board without any sort of authorization to use the addressograph."¹⁵⁶ Casgrain closed by stating that the "unfortunate gesture on the part of Mrs. Davis consumed a lot of time and energy and the

¹⁵⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 9. Letter addressed 22 January, 1963.

¹⁵⁵ MG 28, I 218. Vol. 22, File 3. Statement made by Therese Casgrain, president of the Voice of Women, at the third annual meeting of the organization. Held at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg, Manitoba, 8-9 June, 1963.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Statement made by Therese Casgrain, president of the Voice of Women, at the third annual meeting of the organization. Held at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg, Manitoba, 8-9 June, 1963.

spending of lots of money to straighten matters out [and that] this was most frustrating for those of us who really had the cause of peace at heart.”¹⁵⁷

One must question the result that Jo Davis wished to achieve by sending out such a letter to all members of the Voice of Women. Certainly she understood responses to the questions could not be as easy as ‘yes’ or ‘no’, and that within such a vast organization there were bound to be varying views which motivated women to become involved. A situation such as this could very easily have caused a split amongst the group after women discovered the opposing position of other members. Bringing to light the radical motivations amongst some members could easily have caused the more radical members to leave the organization and find a place in a more politically active group. On that same note, the women who were on the more moderate side of the spectrum may have felt inclined to do the same, or unite as a force to prevent the Voice of Women from becoming a vocal, almost militant organization. As one woman wrote, “I was shocked to receive your letter. But I realise that a number of inexperienced women may be impressed by it. In effect, you make it easy for them to favour a policy of such vagueness that it amounts to doing nothing...Nothing is easier than to believe in peace so long as no one expects one to take a stand on any concrete steps toward it.”¹⁵⁸ The goal Davis hoped to achieve may not be easily understood, but the division her action caused can be seen in the correspondence it produced.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. In closing, Casgrain also noted that the Voice of Women, specifically the Board, “bent over backwards to give her a full opportunity to explain her views.” Statement made by Therese Casgrain, president of the Voice of Women, at the third annual meeting of the organization. Held at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg, Manitoba, 8-9 June, 1963.

¹⁵⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol.1, File 8. Letter to Jo Davis from Isabel LeBourdais, dated 26 November, 1962

Lester B. Pearson and his Policy on Nuclear Arms

The second incident which caused great divide amongst Voice of Women members was the situation in 1963 involving Lester B. Pearson and his liberal party's reversal of position with respect to nuclear weapons. Not only did this issue cause a great divide within the Voice of Women, but it also brought the organization that had been promoted as being non-political, into the political spot-light.

Candace Loewen offers a detailed analysis of the Pearson issue in her article: "Mike Hears Voices: Voice of Women and Lester Pearson, 1960-1963." At the onset of her study, Loewen notes that during the foundational years of the Voice of Women, it was discovered that it was difficult to be a non-political organization when the group was consistently involved in politically-charged issues and in contact with politicians.¹⁵⁹ Much of the early growth in the membership numbers of the Voice of Women, according to Loewen, can be attributed to the organization's affiliation with Lester B. Pearson in the early 1960s. She notes that the Voice of Women strongly supported Pearson, then leader of the Liberal opposition party in Canada, after he "made a formal statement of the new Liberal defence policy which opposed Canadian acquisition of nuclear weapons."¹⁶⁰ This support quickly waned when in 1963 Pearson changed his position and declared that Canada would accept nuclear warheads to replace the missiles currently in Canada.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Candace Loewen, "Mike Hears Voices: Voice of Women and Lester Pearson, 1960-1963," *Atlantis*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1987): 24.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Essential during the creation of the Voice of Women was its position on the use of nuclear weapons. This, as previously mentioned, was evident in the opening sentence of the declaration of the Voice of Women which stated: "One of the greatest horrors of living in a world threatened by nuclear war is the sense of being helpless. One of the greatest horrors of being a mother at this time is the certain knowledge that, if war comes, we are powerless to protect our children."¹⁶² Likewise, during the first annual meeting of the organization the issue of nuclear weapons and nuclear testing was discussed, specifically with regards to Canada's position on the issue. A statement made following the meeting declared that the organization "opposes the acquisition of nuclear weapons by any country not now possessing them, because the further spread of nuclear weapons would increase the danger of nuclear war, accidental or otherwise" and at the same time "would increase the difficulty of achieving disarmament."¹⁶³ Receiving the support of the leader of the opposition of Canada not only helped to legitimize the cause for which they were fighting, it also helped to bring the Voice of Women into the spotlight and into the households of women all across Canada.

In the House of Commons on 5 August, 1960, Pearson made his party's position on nuclear weapons in Canada very clear. His position was that Canada, as a middle-power, should not arm itself with nuclear weapons, and that in the case of nuclear war, having weapons of this kind was not going to save Canada from annihilation. He continued by stating, "I think this change of direction which I have mentioned should always have in mind the desirability...for getting out of nuclear disarmament completely,

¹⁶² LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 7, File 15.

¹⁶³ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 22, File 1. Statement made following the first annual meeting of the Voice of Women, 16-17 June, 1961.

without getting out of our collective commitments. I think that is the best role for a middle power like Canada.”¹⁶⁴

Mr. Pearson received great support from the Voice of Women concerning his party’s position on nuclear arms. In a letter to Mrs. J. McLeod in November 1962, Pearson thanked McLeod for the opportunity to meet with a delegation of the Voice of Women the previous week to discuss Canada and nuclear arms. In his letter he wrote: “I have always maintained that the nuclear powers should not be expanded and that Canadians should not accept nuclear weapons under either national control or jointly with the United States.”¹⁶⁵ One member of the Voice of Women even wrote a song and sent it to Pearson in support of his policy on nuclear arms in December 1962. It went as follows:

THE BREAK THROUGH

When the word comes clicking through,
What’s Canada’s going to do,
The wires burn and the T.V. roars the news;
The U.S.A. gets mad---
But they can’t help feeling glad
Since they know the Western World
Has made the BREAK THROUGH!

Chorus

It’s the Break Through!
It’s the Break Through!
NO NUCLEAR ARMS FOR CANADA
It’s the Break Through!

¹⁶⁴ Loewen, “Mike Hears Voices,” 25.

¹⁶⁵ Letter to Mrs. J. McLeod of Edmonton, Alberta from L.B. Pearson. Dated 14 November, 1962. McLeod was a member of the delegation and had written Pearson on 9 November, 1962, stating her opinion on Canada’s position on nuclear arms. In his letter Pearson also notes that along with the Voice of Women delegation he also met with an organization called the Canadian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Pearson Papers, MG 26, N 2, Vol. 91, file entitled External Affairs, Voice of Women, file 2.

And the British say, "Dear me!
Well really, couldn't we?
After all, we threw Lord Russell into jail;
By Jove! We really could!
It would do our old hearts good!
Come on then, let us help
To make the Break Through!"

Chorus

When Khrushchev hears the word,
He nearly has a bird,
The Kremlin trembles as he walks the floor
But he says "By Vodka, Troika!
I believe this thing will woika,
Like a rocket to the moon,
It is the Break Through!"

Chorus

Delegates at the U.N.
Say, "Now we know that men
Are not completely idiots after all,
And the poor old sad U.N.
Shall raise its head again,
Since Canada, for the World,
Has made the Break Through!"¹⁶⁶

On one occasion, Pearson defended the Voice of Women after receiving a letter from a concerned citizen in Manitoba. On 12 February, 1962, Mr. Ferg wrote to Pearson stating that the Voice of Women were in the process of organizing in Flin Flon, Manitoba and that he had heard from women in the town that it was a Communist organization. Mr. Ferg stated that the women who spoke with him had informed him of Pearson's "wife's interest in the [organization] and therefore realized that it could not possibly be tainted in any way but they are however afraid that here the Reds are using the group to lull the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. The Break Through, written by Marion Catto, the National Membership Chairman of the Voice of Women, dated 10 December, 1962.

women into an 'Anti-War Association' or 'Peace Regardless,' sort of thing."¹⁶⁷ In a response to Mr. Ferg on 21 February, 1962, Pearson noted that he supported the Voice of Women, as they were an organization fighting for a good cause. He continued by stating that;

...my wife would have nothing to do with an organization which was under Communist control of any kind or which fell under such control or which operated in such a way as to give aid and comfort to Communism. Unfortunately there are some people very unwisely and wrongly who seem to assume that any organization which has the word "peace", connected with it, must be Communist. This is most regrettable for it is an attitude that plays right into the hands of the Communists; giving them a monopoly of "peace" activities by frightening away non-Communists. One way to ensure that organizations of this kind fall out of the hands of the right people and into the [hands of the] wrong people is by throwing suspicion on them from the beginning. That makes it easy for the Communists to move in and it is exactly what the Communists want.¹⁶⁸

The close and supportive relationship that the Voice of Women and the Liberal leader shared came to a sudden halt in early 1963. Quite suddenly, Pearson's position on nuclear arms changed and in a speech to the York-Scarborough Liberals Association on 12 January, 1963, he noted that the Liberals' policy had to be altered in order to ensure the preservation of peace in Canada.¹⁶⁹ The Voice of Women was quick to comment on the speech and issued a press release on 14 January, 1963 which stated that the "Voice of Women has consistently declared itself against the spread of nuclear weapons... [and]...[f]ollowing Mr. Pearson's statement of policy, Voice of Women wishes to reaffirm its stand" on the issue."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Letter from Mr. Ferg of Flin Flon, Manitoba, dated 13 February, 1962 to L.B. Pearson.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Letter from L.B. Pearson to Mr. Ferg, dated 21 February, 1962.

¹⁶⁹ Loewen, "Mike Hears Voices," 28.

¹⁷⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 23, File 15. From a press release from Pamela Sachs, the Publicity Chairman of the Voice of Women, dated 14 January, 1963.

The Globe and Mail reported on the speech made by Pearson in several articles on 14 January, 1963. One headline article entitled *New Pearson Stand Backs Nuclear Arms for Canadian Forces*, reported that Pearson's new position concluded that "Canada should accept nuclear warheads for defensive tactical weapons which cannot effectively be used without them" and that by doing this Canada can honour its "commitments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization..."¹⁷¹ Walter Gray, a reporter for the Globe and Mail questioned how the new position would affect Pearson's political future. In his article he called the speech,

...one of the biggest political gambles of his career. After playing the nuclear weapons question close to his vest for the last four years, he shows his hand in favour of their acquisition both at home and abroad. Mr. Pearson is gambling that the Canadian public will support the Liberal stand when election time rolls around again.¹⁷²

Gray also brought to light another concern raised by the new Liberal position on nuclear weapons: the fact that the changing position of the Liberal party and the controversy which followed had a damaging effect on one member of the Voice of Women in particular; Maryon Pearson. Mrs. Pearson had been an honorary sponsor of the organization since its inauguration. Gray noted in his article that,

...various anti-nuclear pressure groups which have so far concentrated their anti-nuclear efforts on the Government, can now turn on the Liberals. Mrs. Pearson herself was one of the original sponsors of the Voice of Women, which has been most vocal on the subject during the last couple of years.¹⁷³

Following the new statement by her husband, Mrs. Pearson maintained the position that she would remain a supporter of the Voice of Women, while at the same time supporting the policies of her husband's party. Following Mr. Pearson's speech,

¹⁷¹ "New Pearson Stand Backs Nuclear Arms for Canadian Force," *Globe and Mail*, 14 January, 1963, p. 1.

¹⁷² Walter Gray, "Mr. Pearson's Big Gamble on Nuclear Policy," *Globe and Mail*, 14 January 1963, p. 6.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

Mrs. Pearson sent statements to both the Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star concerning the new policy and her affiliation with the Voice of Women. In them she noted that her husband's new statement would not affect her affiliation with the Voice of Women and that as a member of Voice of Women she still maintained the position of disarmament. She wrote that;

The [Voice of Women] was meant as a protest by women the world over against war in a world where mass destruction has become a possibility. It is not, or was not, meant to be a "Ban the Bomb" organization as such. We are for disarmament, of course, but not for concessions in the name of peace which would mean the loss of freedom and even make war more, rather than less, likely.

Canada made a commitment to her allies that she would help in collective defence by taking on a role which required nuclear warheads. Until this commitment- which was an unwise and unnecessary one- is changed, Canada must live up to her responsibilities.¹⁷⁴

This statement was similar to that found in a letter of response to Mrs. John Kudelka on 19 January, 1963 who had questioned how Mr. Pearson's new position would affect Mrs. Pearson's connection to the Voice of Women. In her letter Mrs. Pearson wrote "that I understand the position perfectly arrived at by my husband in his statement on nuclear defence policy, with which I agree wholeheartedly. It is possible for me to do this and, at the same time, uphold the purposes of the V.O.W. which, after all, is peace."¹⁷⁵

Over time, the pressure of being affiliated with both the Liberal party and the Voice of Women got the better of Mrs. Pearson. Less than two months after her husband's speech, Mrs. Pearson tendered her resignation as an honorary sponsor of the

¹⁷⁴ As mentioned by Loewen, "Mike Hears Voices," 28. Full text found in Pearson Papers, MG 26, N2, Vol. 91, File entitled External Affairs, Voice of Women, file 2.

¹⁷⁵ Pearson Papers, MG 26, N2, Vol. 158. File entitled *Outgoing Letters*, January 1963, Part 2. This letter, written on 19 January, 1963, by Mrs. Pearson was in response to a letter written by Mrs. John Kudelka on 13 January, 1963.

organization. As noted on 6 March, 1963, in a newspaper article in the *Winnipeg Tribune*, Mrs. Pearson “left the 7,000-member organization a week ago because “it has become much more belligerent” in its opposition to Canada acquiring nuclear arms”¹⁷⁶ and she felt that she “no longer agreed with its methods.”¹⁷⁷ Helen Tucker, a founding member of the organization was quoted in the article following a press conference the previous week regarding Pearson’s resignation. She noted that with the Liberals’ changing position on nuclear arms “it might be difficult for members of the Liberal party who were also members of the [Voice of Women] to resolve their party’s views with the aims of the [organization]. “But it seems some of them can.””¹⁷⁸

As Loewen concludes, the events surrounding the conflict with Prime Minister Pearson led to a valuable lesson for the Voice of Women. “The organization’s return to its original emphasis on global peace from overt support for a political party’s policy was the result of its early growth experiences.”¹⁷⁹ Indeed, the first three years of the organization’s life were rocked by two damaging events, both somehow related to the organization’s affiliation to politics and political parties. Davis questioned whether the Voice of Women was becoming too centred on political objectives as opposed to the initial goal of international peace and nuclear disarmament. Less than a year later the soon-to-be Prime Minister would shake the foundation of the organization, one which, according to Loewen, was strong because of their affiliation with Pearson. Regardless of

¹⁷⁶ “Mrs. Pearson quits VoW, Judy LaMarsh adds criticism,” *Winnipeg Tribute*, 6 March 1963, p. 23. Found in Pearson Papers, MG 26, N2, Vol. 91. External Affairs Voice of Women, file 1.

¹⁷⁷ Loewen, “Mike Hears Voices,” 29.

¹⁷⁸ “Mrs. Pearson quits VoW,” *Winnipeg Tribute*, 6 March 1963, p. 23. Found in Pearson Papers, MG 26, N2, Vol. 91. External Affairs Voice of Women, file 1.

¹⁷⁹ Loewen, “Mike Hears Voices,” 29.

the intentions, these two events had an impact on the Voice of Women, the support it received and its membership numbers for several years to come.

By 1967, the Voice of Women's membership numbers had fallen to approximately 3,000 women across Canada.¹⁸⁰ This decrease in membership can be seen as a result of the aforementioned incidents, both of which had a negative effect on the solidarity of the organization. A meeting of the council members of the organization noted the drop in membership and equated it to a feeling of helplessness on the part of members, and women in general, regarding the world's situation as well as a lack of programs within the organization. Mrs. Barnett, a council representative for Ontario, had been monitoring the situation of membership numbers by contacting provincial membership chairmen. She concluded that there was a "necessity for active program[s] to keep members involved...[and that]... groups with active programs don't lose members."¹⁸¹ The Voice of Women was in need of an activity to keep their membership numbers from falling, to unite the members of the Voice of Women, gain new members, and encourage the more moderate, less vocal members of the Voice of Women to participate in activities other than marching and picketing. There was a need for an activity that was centred on a more materialistic desire to protect others. Providing humanitarian assistance to the children of Vietnam by way of a knitting project would prove to be just the activity the Voice of Women needed to mobilize the varying political principles shared by its members.

¹⁸⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 16. As stated in a letter from Kay Macpherson to Prime Minister Pearson, 27 April 1967.

¹⁸¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 23, File 1.

Opposition to the Vietnam War

The Voice of Women had followed the conflict in Vietnam from its creation as an organization in 1960. Concerned with the effects the war was having on the civilians of Vietnam, the Voice of Women began, in several ways to show their disapproval of the American occupation of the Indochinese country. Of utmost concern to the group was the use of new forms of warfare that was increasing the number of injured, killed and displaced civilians in Vietnam to numbers greater than seen in previous international wars.

While the knitting project was indeed the largest humanitarian effort put forth by the Voice of Women for victims of the Vietnam War, it was certainly not the only means they used to express their opposition to the injustices they believed were imposed on the civilians of Vietnam. In May of 1965, the Voice of Women sent a delegation to Ottawa in order to present a statement to the House of Commons voicing its disapproval of the actions of the United States in Vietnam and to urge the Canadian Government to do the same. In it they declared:

In light of the danger of any war leading to world catastrophe we insist once more that differences can no longer be settled by force. The Canadian Government and people must accept the full implications of their claim to be a peace-making nation – and independent nation – and express openly their disapproval of U.S. actions in Vietnam...which are causing unimaginable suffering as well as violating the principles of the United Nations and the right of all people to self-determination.¹⁸²

This statement helps to understand the position of the organization, not only towards the situation in Vietnam, but also towards the political positions of the government of

¹⁸² MG 28, I 218, Vol. 6, File 1. The delegation was sent to Ottawa on 28 May 1965.

Canada. They noted that Canada, as an independent nation, should not be blindly taking the position of another nation, namely that of the United States, if it went against its own mandate to be a peaceful nation.

Much of the Voice of Women's opposition to the war in Vietnam was voiced through correspondence sent directly to the government of Canada. On 30 January, 1966, Kay Macpherson, then the president of the Voice of Women, wrote Prime Minister Pearson asking to have a meeting with him to discuss the "present slaughter in Vietnam."¹⁸³ Similarly, on 22 March, 1966, a memoir was presented to the Honourable Paul Martin, Minister of External Affairs for the Government of Canada. In it, the Voice of Women declared;

We have come here today because we want the war in Vietnam to stop. Every day we hear and see reports of the effects of the war, and we are becoming tolerant of the use of Napalm and gas, inhuman treatment of prisoners, burning and poisoning of crops and the bombing of whole villages. It is said, "but these people are communists". Even if this were true, how can we think that this is justification for such inhumanity? The Vietnamese are human beings like ourselves; they have children as we do. But our children have never had to live in a cave, to hide from bombs and gas, to face starvation of the threat of being burned alive and of seeing their friends tortured and shot. These brutal methods of warfare will not convert the Vietnamese to a different ideology.¹⁸⁴

During the general meeting of the Voice of Women in 1966, several resolutions were passed and later submitted to the government of Canada for review. Among these resolutions were ones noting the organization's belief that the Canadian government should recognize that its "policies of quiet diplomacy have been ineffectual;" and that "its [Canada's] export of strategic materials (explosives, bullets, aircraft parts, etc.) to the United States for use in Vietnam destroys Canada's integrity as a member of the ICC;"

¹⁸³ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 6, File 6.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

and finally, “that no solution in Vietnam is possible other than a settlement that will include the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the dismantling of U.S. military bases.”¹⁸⁵ These observations were quite insightful for an organization that boasted a non-political stance. At the same time, it offers a glimpse into the vast understanding of foreign affairs cultivated within the group.

Beyond the hope that the government would recognize the importance of these issues, the Voice of Women recommended that the Government of Canada take specific actions to find a solution for their position on the Vietnam War. One of these recommendations was to offer assistance to the victims of the war, such as medical equipment and supplies as well as refugee accommodations, “either through the International Red Cross or a recognized international agency.”¹⁸⁶ The desire of the members of the Voice of Women to provide help to others was great, although they had not yet discovered a channel through which they could offer this help. Less than half a year later, they would become involved in a massive humanitarian aid project involving a Canadian-based humanitarian aid organization, the International Red Cross, and women from all walks of life and every corner of Canada and the United States. This project would centre into their innate desire to protect children while at the same time focusing on an activity deemed acceptable for women in the 1960s. In the mean time, they were forced to state their positions the only way they had assumed would be efficient; through letters and protests.

¹⁸⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 7, File 19. These resolutions are numbered 1 through 3, with a 4th one noting that lasting peace would not occur in Asia without the recognition of the People’s Republic of China.

¹⁸⁶ The Voice of Women did not specify whether they believed aid should be sent only to North or South Vietnam, or to both. However, throughout the duration of the knitting project, garments and other forms of aid were sent by the organization and Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians were shipped to both North and South Vietnam. Ibid.

Throughout the war, the organization reiterated its opposition to the forms of warfare used in Asia by American forces, specifically that of napalm. On the 21st anniversary of Hiroshima, the organization produced a statement in its monthly bulletin pledging to continue its work to ensure a peaceful end to the war in Vietnam and wrote that;

[We] will still do what we can to bring relief especially to some of the 30,000 innocent child victims of bombing and napalm, and will try to make more Canadians aware of the appalling suffering that is needlessly continuing day by day as the U.S. escalates the war.¹⁸⁷

Their devotion to the Vietnamese, be they from the North or from the South, was illustrated through providing material assistance and showing their opposition to the governments involved. Also, through the education of other Canadians regarding the situation in South-East Asia and the inhumane atrocities children and adults alike had to deal with everyday. It is worth noting that their opposition to the chemical compound-napalm would introduce them to an American organization called Women's Strike for Peace, with which they would build a strong relationship based on mutual-opposition to the Vietnam War.¹⁸⁸

Several years after the Voice of Women became involved in the knitting project, some members of the Voice of Women took a more public, vocal stance to show their opposition to the war in Vietnam. Claire Culhane, who, as mentioned in the first chapter, had spent time working in a hospital in Vietnam, held a ten day fast on Parliament Hill in September and October of 1968. She began her fast as an appeal to the United Nations to call a stop to the bombing in Vietnam as well as a means to bring the situation to the

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ The cooperation between Women's Strike for Peace and the Voice of Women will be discussed in more length in a section devoted to American participation in the knitting project.

attention of the general Canadian public. The October 1968 issue of the Voice of Women bulletin noted that Culhane “made her vigil to urge Canadians to expose Canada’s complicity in the war and to urge the Canadian Government to stop the export of arms to the United States, much of which is used for the Vietnam War.”¹⁸⁹

This new diversity in methods for members to express their beliefs had led to a well rounded organization where both radical activists and more moderate women could co-exist and at the same time feel as if they were contributing to the peace movement. Most of the activities in which the Voice of Women had been participating prior to 1966 had been geared toward the more vocal, radical members of the organization, leaving more of the moderates on the side-lines. However, the participation in a knitting project with the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians would soon change that imbalance and give many more members of the Voice of Women an active role in the campaign for peace in Vietnam.

¹⁸⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 46, File 6. The October 1968 Issue of the Voice of Women bulletin, Volume 6, Number 3.

Chapter 4

Maternal Feminism at Work: The beginning of the Knitting Project

Essential to many of the activities of the Voice of Women during the Vietnam War was the connection many women within the organization felt towards their role as mothers. As providers of life many women believed they needed to protect all children, not simply their own, from the threat of nuclear war and potential nuclear annihilation. An analysis of the Voice of Women's maternal feminist approach, requires first of all a broader explanation of maternal feminism, and is essential in order to understand why many members of the Voice of Women held to the belief that they, as mothers, had a critical role in the protection of future generations.

The belief that women played a specific role in the struggle for peace was not restricted to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In fact, an American peace activist named William Ladd made note of the phenomenon in 1836 with the printing of a pamphlet entitled *On the Duty of Females to Promote the Cause of Peace*. Ladd begins his work by stating that "[t]he influence of the female sex on the destinies of the world, is full as great as that of the male sex, though it is not so obvious."¹⁹⁰ Throughout the text, it is stated that women should uphold the ideals of peace in all elements of their life and promote these ideals to their husbands, sons and brothers. This was to be done by

¹⁹⁰ Ladd, *On the Duty of Females*, 3.

examining the subject of peace through scripture and conveying these messages to children. Ladd also encouraged women to join local female peace societies, or form their own should there not be one in their neighbourhood.¹⁹¹ While Ladd does not believe that women have any influence beyond that of a typical nineteenth-century female (notably that of a housewife) he does note that, “in moral revolutions, women have a power equal, if not superior, to men, and they are accountable for the use they make of it.”¹⁹²

Over time, the role of women within society changed, but the belief that women played an essential role in the rearing and protection of children, and that their role as mothers was to promote the ideals of peace over war, remained the same. This belief that women, as the promoters of peace and life, should also play an essential role in the public realm became known by the term maternal feminism. Maternal feminism, according to Linda Kealey, is “the conviction that [a] woman’s special role as [a] mother gives her the duty and the right to participate in the public sphere.”¹⁹³ Frances Early’s examination of the early suffrage movement helps to broaden the conviction that maternal feminism was believed to be an essential contributor in the progression of the women’s movement within North America, specifically with regards to the developing peace movement. She supports her position by citing women attending a meeting opposing the war in 1914. Statements such as Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence’s “the bedrock of humanity is motherhood” and Rosika Schwimmer’s “[w]e are united by the motherhood instinct and

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 8-30.

¹⁹² Ibid., 42.

¹⁹³ Linda Kealey, *A Not unreasonable claim: women and reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1979), 7. This quote was also cited by Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 31.

by the knowledge that the terrible waste of life is unnecessary,”¹⁹⁴ help portray the conviction of many early maternal feminists regarding war and society.

Much of the belief in maternal feminism as a mechanism for peace relies on women’s perceived instinctive desire to preserve life. This innate desire can also be drawn from what is known as maternal instinct. As Caroline Whitbeck explains in her essay “The Maternal Instinct” in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, when people speak of maternal instincts, “[w]hat they seem to be discussing are the inner promptings which induce women to care for their offspring.”¹⁹⁵ Related to the belief of the existence of maternal instinct is the belief put forth by Sara Ruddick in her section of the same collection of essays entitled “Maternal Thinking” that there are required, almost universal practices of mothering and motherhood. She argues that some aspects of child rearing change depending on the geographical, cultural or historical setting of the individuals, other aspects remain constant.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, according to Ruddick, it is “possible to identify interests that seem to govern maternal practice throughout the species,” and by doing this we can conclude that “[m]aternal practice is governed by (at least) three interests in satisfying these [children’s] demands for preservation, growth, and acceptability.”¹⁹⁷ Of these demands, Ruddick notes that preservation is the most “invariant and primary of the three.”¹⁹⁸

A key contributor to the role of women, and mothers in peace, Ruddick’s second contribution to the *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory* entitled “Preservative Love and Military Destruction: Some Reflections of Mothering and Peace” delves further into the

¹⁹⁴ Early, “The Historic Roots,” 44.

¹⁹⁵ Whitbeck, “The Maternal Instinct,” 186.

¹⁹⁶ Ruddick, “Maternal Thinking,” 214-215.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 215.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

study of women's supposed innate need to preserve life. In 1979, Dr. Helen Caldicott put out a call to women for non-violence battle, Ruddick responded to this call and found that there were three declarations within Caldicott's statement:

- (a) Women have distinctive interests in and capacities for peacemaking;
- (b) these interests and capacities are connected with maternity; and (c)
- although women's peacemaking has hitherto been confined to maternal life, we have "more influence every day" in making the *world* safe for our children.¹⁹⁹

These three declarations were evident in the work done by the Voice of Women in the 1960s and 1970s. Certainly it can be understood that women, as the givers of life, tend to also be the gender that seeks to preserve life. This was an essential intention of the Voice of Women during their participation in the knitting project. This intention is echoed in several pieces of literature found regarding the Voice of Women. First, and perhaps most importantly, in the declaration of the Voice of Women, penned 12 June, 1960, it is written that "we believe that women, as the givers of life, are particularly concerned about the survival of their children [and] that the tremendous creative power and energy of the maternal instinct can be channelled into meaningful activity which can complement all the other efforts now in progress with peace as their objective."²⁰⁰ The founding members of the Voice of Women noted that the organization had been intended to be "primarily a movement of women, not because we believe that men do not share our concern, but because we believe there is a unique contribution women can make which has not yet been fully mobilized."²⁰¹ Likewise, a development brief concerning the organization of the Voice of Women declared that the purpose of the movement was the

¹⁹⁹ See Appendix 3 for the call to women by Dr. Helen Caldicott, a medical doctor by profession who has dedicated her life to the prevention of nuclear war.

²⁰⁰ MG 28, I 218, Volume 7, File 15.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

following; “by working through women’s common interests and their instinctive concern for the human family, we seek to help create a world climate of understanding, favourable to mutual disarmament without fear.”²⁰²

Several issues associated with the Voice of Women’s activities relied on these so-valued maternal instincts and reflected maternal feminism in general; namely those of women’s innate quality to be non-violent as well as the motives which drove women to act against war and violence. The idea that women are inherently non-violent is a belief that has transcended many centuries, as previously indicated in the thoughts of William Ladd. Indeed, as Veronica-Strong-Boag states in her study of peace-minded women between the First and Second World Wars, this non-violent tendency and the ideals of maternal feminism played an essential role in the suffrage movement in Canada. In “Peace-Making Women: Canada, 1919-1939” Strong-Boag cited Nellie McClung, a leader in the Canadian women’s suffrage movement: “the women’s outlook on life is to save, to care for, to help. Men make wounds and women bind them up...”²⁰³

In *The Majority Finds its Path*, Gerda Lerner notes that the study of women’s history must study not only the events in women’s lives but the changes that occurred in their roles and how they perceived themselves. In doing so we can see that “[h]istorically, women began their public activities by extending their concerns from home and family to the large community” and by gathering with other women in the community and forming women’s groups they were able to form “a new self-consciousness, based on the recognition of the separate interests of women as a group.”²⁰⁴ This association of women helped form a “feminist consciousness- a system of ideas that not only challenged

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Strong-Boag, “Peace-Making Women,” 170.

²⁰⁴ Lerner, *The Majority Finds its Path*, 160-1.

patriarchal values and assumptions, but attempted to substitute for them a feminist system of values and ideas.”²⁰⁵ It was this partnership of women which contributed to women taking action against violence and war in society; a collaboration of thoughts and interests which created a voice for women to announce their desire to eliminate war.

There are some academics who question the motivations behind maternal feminism and whether women’s intrinsic desire for peace is the main motivation for the movement. In *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, Sara Ruddick agrees that women throughout history have worked together to ensure peace and to provide protection for others because of their maternal instincts. She noted that all mothers, feminists, and women in general form a collective group and “[a]s a collective, the group draws strength from the act and symbol of birth and from the passionate labor of women who, throughout most of history, have assumed the responsibilities of protection and care.”²⁰⁶ She does, however, question whether this ideal towards non-violence and the preservation of life is ingrained in all women, or whether it is due to the traditional role women have played in society; namely that of mothers. Certainly, some women do have violent tendencies and Ruddick argues that “like other powerless people, mothers resort to nonviolent strategies because they do not have weapons – guns, legal clout, money, or any other tools with which to work one’s will on others. Like the powerless everywhere, mothers are often enraged.”²⁰⁷

This argument certainly raises questions as to whether maternal feminists were indeed supporters of non-violence as a means to offer solutions to world conflicts. Or did they instead use the principles of maternal feminism as a means to have their voices

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 161.

²⁰⁶ Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, 244.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 160-165.

heard and make a place for women on national and international political stages during the first and second waves of the feminist movement. The question of whether women are naturally peaceful was also raised by Inger Skjelsbaek's article "Is Femininity Inherently Peaceful? The Construction of Femininity in War" found in the book *Gender, Peace and Conflict*. In her article, Skjelsbaek cites Ruddick's argument that while society assumes that women are inherently peaceful, they "frequently encourage their sons and husbands to participate in war. In fact, many women are disappointed and even embarrassed if their men do not fight," and she describes "maternal non-violence as an intoxicating myth which prevails even in the face of massive historical contradictions."²⁰⁸

Although I do not want to appear as though I completely oppose Ruddick's argument regarding feminism and non-violence, I must disagree on some level with some of her statements. Yes, perhaps historically women in modern-western culture have supported the men in their lives when they have fought in battles and even showed some signs of shame when men chose not to participate in war, but was this support and shame a sign of their approval of the battle itself, or simply signifying the support for the men in their lives? I would argue that women supported their relatives when they went to battle in the same way they would if they chose to become doctors or lawyers, because they were proud of the profession they were pursuing, regardless of what it was. Women have been taught to support their husbands and their male children, not to question their choices. At the same time, women may have shown some signs of humiliation if their husbands or sons chose not to take part in war, but I would argue that this was a defence mechanism against the reaction of society at large, not a reaction to the choices of their

²⁰⁸ Skjelsbaek, "Is Feminism Inherently Peaceful?," 61-2. Skjelsbaek cited Boulding, Elshtain and Ruddick in this theory of feminism and pacifism. Boulding, 1976, Elshtain, 1987 and Ruddick, 1989 (Maternal Thinking).

relatives. This belief that men who are not willing to defend their country in battle are cowards has changed in the past several decades, as has the belief that women should be ashamed if their 'men' will not take up arms. Women who support the men in their lives who go to battle are doing so because they support the men, not because they support the conflicts in which they are involved, similarly as they support a man's right to choose whether or not they will participate in war.

Ruddick's belief that women tend not to be violent because they have not had the opportunity to act in such a manner is similar to an argument put forth by Micheline de Sève. She noted that women have traditionally been pacifists because of the functions and roles imposed on them by society. In her article "Feminism and Pacifism, or, the Art of Tranquilly Playing Russian Roulette" in *Women and Peace: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives*, de Sève writes that women have revolved towards peace movements in greater numbers as the threat of a global war has grown.²⁰⁹ However, it is not women's opposition to war, or the growing number of women voicing their opposition that has impeded women's ability to cease wars. As de Sève explains, "even if all women rose up in dissent against the authorities and the ministries of defence in their respective countries, they would lack the necessary power to mobilize public opinion and impose demilitarization."²¹⁰ In other words, it is not that there is a lack of women voicing their opposition to war; it is the lack of people in positions of power, namely men, who are willing to listen and offer support to the women's cause.

Despite of the arguments which oppose the theory that it was women's desire to prevent war, or their lack of political influence in society which were motivating factors

²⁰⁹ Sève, "Feminism and Pacifism," 45.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

in maternal feminism, it is undeniable that it was the Voice of Women's desire, as the givers of life, to preserve life. This desire manifested itself in a variety of projects that were clearly linked to women's values and commitment to better the world for the sake of humanity and for future generations.

Projects related to Maternal Feminism

The Voice of Women had been attuned to the instincts of women to oppose violence and war since their inaugural years as an organization. At the same time, the organization attracted many women who previously had little to no experience with organizations of the kind, and likewise, were not necessarily peace-activists, but instead women and mothers concerned with the current and future situation of the world. As a woman from Edmonton, Alberta wrote following the creation of the Voice of Women in 1960, "Women are almost universally opposed to the violence of war and it is most certainly time we made our voices heard. I am not a "clubwoman", a feminist or (heaven forbid!) Communist. I am a married woman with 2 small daughters..."²¹¹

While the knitting project was certainly the endeavour of the Voice of Women which received most of their attention and efforts in the 1960s and 1970s, there were other projects and causes to which these women offered their time. Several of these projects, including the knitting project, relied on their role as women and their innate maternal desire to protect others, promote an atmosphere of non-violence and peace, and

²¹¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 1, File 2. Letter from Mrs. Wilma M. McDonald of Edmonton, Alberta to Jo Davis, dated 25 June, 1960.

ensure the world would remain a safe place for future generations to grow and prosper. Three such programs were the War Toy Campaign, the boycott on products produced by the DOW chemical company, and protests towards nuclear testing on Amchitka Island.

A major concern for the Voice of Women was the effect that violence throughout the world was having on youth during the 1960s, specifically due to their exposure to violence on television and through the use of war toys. In the summer of 1964, a national campaign was established with the objective of influencing parents when purchasing toys during the approaching holiday season. The chairman of the campaign, which was simply called 'The War Toys Committee', was Mrs. Marjorie Lawrence of West Vancouver.²¹² She, along with others working on the campaign, approached media outlets in the Vancouver area requesting that a statement be read urging parents to refrain from purchasing war toys for their children. The campaign attracted much attention on the west coast and resulted in a great deal of media attention, including an interview by CBC Television with Mrs. Lawrence.²¹³ The following statement was read by all media outlets approached and resulted (along with the interview with CBC) in over seven hours of free media coverage for the campaign. It read:

The Voice of Women, through it's [sic.] National War Toys Chairman, launched their national educational campaign against war toys. Voice of Women bases the campaign on the current degree of realism and authenticity presented in their toys now on sale for Christmas. Voice of Women encourages parents to buy more constructive toys for children and maintains its belief that realistic war toys can make war seem inevitable and acceptable.²¹⁴

One of the key targets of the national campaign was a new toy scheduled to appear on the market prior to Christmas, 1964. G.I. Joe, the male equivalent of the female

²¹² LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 7, File 2.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Barbie doll, was being promoted in a two million dollar campaign as being equally as flexible as his female counter-part. This, of course, would “enable him to assume the correct war-like positions [such as] arms up to throw a grenade or hold a rifle, or bend to crouch in a fox-hole.”²¹⁵ The Voice of Women felt that if they could have an effect on the sales of war toys in 1964 via their national campaign it might result in a decreased number of war toys on the market in the coming years.

The premise of the campaign was quite simple- to publicize the position that the use of war toys by youth encourages violent behaviour and makes the reality of war an acceptable alternative to peace. This theory was supported by Dr. Judd Marmor, a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California in Los Angeles, who was quoted in the March issue of Atomic Scientists opposing the use of war toys amongst youth. He declared in an article entitled “War, Violence, and Human Nature” that the use of such toys, along with exposure to violence on television, in films and in comic strips, will “not only indoctrinate them in methods of brutality but also to progressively desensitize them to the spectacle of human death and violence.”²¹⁶

The Voice of Women focused their attention on discouraging parents from buying toys that promoted violent behaviour as well as announcing their distain for stores that displayed, promoted, and sold such toys. One of the first steps that campaign members took was to approach local parent-teacher associations (P.T.A.) and ask for their support.²¹⁷ Reaching this network of parents and teachers was a proactive method of ensuring that a greater number of citizens were exposed to the activities of the Voice of Women, not only during this campaign but year round. The Voice of Women encouraged

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

the P.T.A.'s members to speak to friends, neighbours, and family members about the potentially harmful effects of war toys. They also suggested that women ought to frequent stores that stocked a minimal amount of war toys, and in turn boycott those who were strong sellers of war toys.²¹⁸

The Voice of Women suggested that its members and other concerned parents return pages from catalogues that contained war toys to their respective catalogue departments along with letters voicing their disdain for the promotion of war toys to children.²¹⁹ The committee sent out letters to concerned citizens wishing to get involved, along with a list of manufacturers (including their addresses) that produced war toys and a list of manufacturers that produced educational, non-violent toys. Also added, was a set of questions and answers included with Dr. Marmor's article in the Atomic Scientists.

By all accounts, it appears that the War Toys Committee had its greatest success in the western provinces of Canada.²²⁰ That being said, there is an indication that the campaign was supported by Voice of Women members across Canada. Shirley Sims, the Ontario-Toronto Chairman of the War Toys Committee, attracted attention to the plight of their cause by sending out leaflets to Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian and United Churches in the Toronto area. In the leaflet she declared that, "if this campaign is successful this year, we may have achieved the rare, though surely democratic, privilege of giving some ethical direction and Christian leadership to our business world."²²¹

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ See Appendix 4 for a copy of a letter sent to Simpons-Sears.

²²⁰ While I cannot say for certain that the War Toys Campaign was most effective in the western provinces of Canada, little has been found at the archives to prove otherwise. Most of the letters and documents found in the Voice of Women documentation refer to the War Toy Campaign as a Western-led initiative.

²²¹ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 7, No. 2.

The following year, a War Toy report from Calgary stated that the campaign should continue for yet another year, into 1966 because it was apparent that several toy manufacturers were now beginning to support the view of the Voice of Women and using the message of their campaign in their advertisements to promote the benefits of educational toys. One such advertisement can be found in the Voice of Women's file containing information on the War Toys Campaign. The Lionel Toy Company of Hillside New Jersey promoted a microscope by declaring;

No boy ever held up a store with one of these. Or learned how to make war with a Lionel train. Or played like a dagger-bearing monster with a Lionel-Porter science set. Lionel makes nice toys only. They are good for thrills and fantasies, but the healthy kind... If you're ready to call it quits with violent toys, bring home a Lionel.²²²

Far from being a localized phenomenon of women in Canada, or manufacturers of children's toys, the War Toy Committee also obtained support from women in the United States. The *Women's Peace Groups*, an American-based women's peace organization, included a section in their January 1967 newsletter commending the campaigns of the previous year, but stating that women "may have to do at least two years' campaigning before the manufacturers of children's weapons take us seriously."²²³ Interestingly enough, it appears that women in organizations comparable to the Voice of Women in the United States may not have begun participating in a War Toy Campaign until two years after their Canadian counterparts began their activities. The women from the United States were, however, successful in receiving attention for their cause following two demonstrations against the sales of war toys prior to Christmas, 1966. These demonstrations, which saw women of all ages carrying children's toy weapons,

²²² Ibid. The slogan that is printed on the bottom of the advertisement stated "Lionel: Sane toys for healthy kids."

²²³ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 46, File 1.

gained attention from both the press and the television media. A report the following January in *Call to Women*, a newsletter produced by the liaison committee of *Women's Peace Groups* in the United States noted that "[i]t seems that we have all got so used to seeing our little boys with such weapons that they have to be put in the hands of a white-haired granny before their crude obscenity is recognized."²²⁴

Another key project of the Voice of Women in the late 1960s and early 1970s was that of nuclear testing on Amchitka Island. In September 1969, the Ontario Voice of Women's provincial newsletter mentioned the United States Atomic Energy Commission's proposal of underground nuclear bombing on the island. Amchitka, located 2800 miles from Vancouver, 1100 miles from Anchorage, Alaska, 600 miles from Russia, and 2200 miles from Tokyo, is part of the Aleutian chain of islands.²²⁵ Prior to this time, nuclear testing had been done in the state of Nevada. Residents of the state began protesting the testing on their soil, which resulted in the United States Atomic Energy Commission moving the testing of their h-bomb to the isolate Amchitka Island. This move, however, came with harsh criticism and protest from people in Canada and the United States alike, including members of the Voice of Women.

The Voice of Women opposed the testing of nuclear weapons in Amchitka Island for several reasons. Firstly, in its opposition to the use of nuclear arms in general. They believed that testing of nuclear weapons by the United States only brought the world closer to a possible nuclear war. This was the case regardless of the location, whether it be on Amchitka Island or in Nevada. The September 1969 Ontario provincial newsletter noted that the tests being conducted on Amchitka Island were using weapons 50 times

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 3, File 5. Ontario Voice of Women newsletter, September 1969, page 2.

more powerful than that of the Hiroshima bomb following the Second World War. They believed that testing weapons of such devastating force would “only add to world tensions and bring us closer to the brink of total destruction of life on this planet.”²²⁶

In addition to this principle reason of opposing nuclear weapons, the organization was opposed to the testing for two other relevant reasons as well. It had been revealed that the Amchitka Islands were located in an earthquake zone and that the testing of nuclear weapons could ultimately result in tidal waves or earthquakes.²²⁷ Equally important, the island was home to numerous animals, such as the Bald Eagle, Canada Goose, and the Sea Otter, and for this reason had been zoned as a federal wildlife reserve for 56 years. There was great fear that the use of nuclear weapons on the island would have a disastrous effect on these animals, and in turn an effect on humans if there was a release of radioactive matter into ground water or into the atmosphere.²²⁸

In January 1972, the Voice of Women continued their efforts to oppose nuclear bombs being tested on Amchitka Island when they included an update on the island in the Ontario Voice of Women newsletter. The update noted that the United States Atomic Energy Commission had reported that only 18 sea otters had died following testing in the region. However, researchers of the Arctic Research Centre noted that 1100 sea otters had died in the area of the island.²²⁹ The newsletter encouraged women to write members of Parliament and the United Nations to voice opposition to the testing, and to contact

²²⁶ The Voice of Women cited three reasons why it was imperative for the organization to voice their opposition to the testing of nuclear weapons on Amchitka Island. This reason was first on their list. LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 22. Ontario Voice of Women newsletter, September 1969, page 2.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 7, File 7. Ontario Voice of Women newsletter, January 1972.

local media outlets requesting them to provide “follow-up on Amchitka such as earthquake subsequent blasts.”²³⁰

Finally, aside from opposition to nuclear testing on Amchitka Island and the sales of war toys for children, the Voice of Women was also involved in another project closely linked to the Vietnam War and the perceived ideals of women to oppose violence and destruction to human beings. This project was the opposition of manufacturing and boycotting of purchases of products from the Dow Chemical Company during the Vietnam War. The Dow Chemical Company, established in Midland, Michigan in 1897 by Herbert Dow, began as the processor of brine deposits found underground in the state of Michigan. The company soon began producing chlorine, supplying General Motors with bromine in the 1910s and 1920s, and moved on to produce plastics by the 1940s. By 1958, Dow had grown to be the forth-largest chemical company in the United States. But they wound soon face tremendous backlash for their role in providing the government of the United States with a slew of chemicals to be used in the Vietnam War.²³¹

In his study of the Dow Chemical Company entitled *Trespass Against Us: Dow Chemical & the Toxic Century*, author Jack Doyle focuses a large section of his study on the company’s involvement in the Vietnam War. In 1964, Dow, along with 17 other companies in the United States, was asked to submit a bid for the production of napalm. Napalm was a mixture of “50 percent polystyrene, 25 percent benzene, and 25 percent gasoline,”²³² created by the United States Air Force to be used as a tool in aerial warfare. Soon after, the company began its manufacture of the product and protests against the company were quick to follow. The Voice of Women was one of many organizations that

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Doyle, *Trespass Against Us*, 21-53.

²³² Ibid., 51.

opposed the use of napalm due to the indiscriminate injuries and deaths that the chemical compound was known to cause. Likewise, the Voice of Women opposed the tactical use of the product and the widespread fear it induced in Vietnamese civilians. As stated in a newsletter of a peace organization in California: “[t]he most effective use of napalm in Vietnam is in part of the campaign to terrify peasants in Vietcong-controlled areas to move into American-controlled areas.”²³³

A committee based in Toronto called *Save Lives in Vietnam* began a boycott against Dow Chemical Company and their products by placing advertisements in newspapers because of the “‘jellied’ death on their products.”²³⁴ *Women Strike for Peace* also called for the boycott of Dow products and handed out pamphlets in the streets opposing the company’s actions. One such leaflet, which asked “Can You Support Napalm?” noted that saran wrap and napalm were the two “most famous products of the Dow Chemical Company.”²³⁵

The Voice of Women promoted the boycotting of the Dow Chemical Company within their organization and called on women to seek alternative products not produced by a company responsible for the death of countless Vietnamese. One manner in which they used to state their position was to note that the company that produced Saran Wrap, the product used to wrap their children’s lunches, was responsible for the death and injury of children in Vietnam. Instead, they suggested using alternative products, such as

²³³ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 21. From the *Napalm Newsletter* by the Bay Area Peace Coordinating Committee of Palo Alto, California. No Date for the newsletter.

²³⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 1. Newspaper clipping from the *Pacific Tribune* dated 20 January, 1967.

²³⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 39, File 11. There is no organizational affiliation or date noted on this leaflet.

Wizard by Dominion Tape of Canada, Ltd., and *Kitchen Craft* by Macdonalds Consolidated Ltd.²³⁶

The Voice of Women's desire to protect children and others from harm and violence can be seen in their involvement in these three projects. Through their participation in the War Toy Campaign, opposition to testing of nuclear weapons on Amchitka Island, and their boycotting of Dow Chemical Company products, the Voice of Women proved that they were not willing to take a side-seat when it came to the promotion of issues in which they believed people were being wronged. Whether it be children in Canada and the United States playing with toys, civilians in Vietnam being injured and killed by the use of inhumane devices, or the fear of atmospheric contaminants and the wildlife, the Voice of Women remained true to their intentions. The participation in a knitting project for Vietnamese children and babies would prove no different.

The Knitting Project with Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians

By 1966, the war in Vietnam had been active for several years. What had begun as a small scale intervention by the United States to prevent the spread of communism from North to South Vietnam had escalated into its sixth year of battle. While all wars are destructive, both to human life and land, the Vietnam War proved to be especially brutal on the civilians of Vietnam. Gone were the wars of combat between soldiers on

²³⁶ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 6, File 5.

battlefields, instead the Vietnam War became synonymous with widespread civilian death.

The Vietnam War was fought mostly by air, bringing far fewer injuries to those dropping bombs, but far greater numbers of injuries on the ground. As much of the war was fought in this manner, instead of directly on the battlefield, as was common in previous wars, the number of Vietnamese casualties grew to a great number and with that came a great number of refugees. Due to this transformation to a war that greatly affected civilians, the need for humanitarian aid grew significantly. The Voice of Women, along with the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, made it their mission to provide aid to the civilians of Vietnam, and paid specific attention to the children of the region, be they from the North or the South of Vietnam.

In November 1966, The Voice of Women's national newsletter made its first mention of a new humanitarian project begun by a Canadian organization. Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, a non-government organization based in Vancouver, had started a knitting project in the summer of 1966 for children who had fallen victim to the Vietnam War. By the fall of that same year, executives of the Voice of Women were eager to solicit the help of other members for what they believed was a noble cause. The program was a means for the women in Canada, who may not have had their voices heard otherwise, to alleviate the suffering of victims of war half the world away. As stated in an annual update for the program by the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, "[w]hen women feel strongly about any form of injustice it is natural for them to want to express their emotions through practical channels".²³⁷ The practical means of assisting in this case resulted in a contribution to one of the most fundamental needs of human kind.

²³⁷ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 14, File 14.

While the women could not provide food, shelter, or medical aid to the children of Vietnam, they could provide clothing; clothing sewn by their own hands. It was such a selfless act of humanity for the women of Canada (as well as many volunteers from the United States) to offer their time and energy to knit and to sew clothing and blankets for children they would likely never meet. At the same time, this gesture demonstrated the maternal instinct of the women participants and their need to provide protection for children, regardless of their nationality, race, or their country's political affiliation. It also indicates that they placed a priority on the security of children.

Not only can the knitting project be seen as a humanitarian aid project for those most in need, it also can be interpreted as a strong political statement by the Voice of Women, the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, and the individual women who contributed their time. As Ball notes in her PhD. dissertation, the knitting project could, indeed, be seen as a strong political statement by the organization and women involved. While initially, many people criticised the organizers of the knitting project for wasting their time on “unessential work,”²³⁸ such as knitting, people soon began to see the educational and political value associated with the knitting project. By knitting for the children of Vietnam, Canadian women were declaring their opposition to the American led intervention in Vietnam, to Canada's passive role of the American's actions, as well as educating others in their community of the atrocities occurring in Vietnam. As Ball noted; “the dedication of the Voices connected to the project, as well as the project's educational impact and ability to attract new members led some of the early critics to reflect on effective political education and actions and to modify their views of what

²³⁸ Ball, “The history of The Voice of Women,” 483.

constituted or encompassed the “political.”²³⁹ The participation of the Voice of Women in the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians’ knitting project did much to create an atmosphere of political action regarding an activity once merely associated with women, not only feminists or peace activists, showing that maternal feminism can indeed be highly political.

The Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians (CAVC) had only been in existence for several months when it put out an urgent call in its June bulletin seeking assistance from women. The organization had been formed on 17 February, 1966, by fifty-five attendants of a conference who met with one common purpose: to find a way of providing medical assistance to citizens affected by the Vietnam War.²⁴⁰ The organization was a voluntary one, and there were no specified membership fees or dues to be paid. However, as was mentioned in a pamphlet produced by the CAVC a decade after it came into existence, “numbered among its sponsors are many prominent Canadians from religious, labour, political, academic, medical groups as well as performing artists.”²⁴¹ To add to this list of members was the well known Canadian author, Farley Mowat.²⁴²

Doctor A.M. Inglis, an orthopaedic surgeon from Toronto, Ontario, held the position of chairman of the CAVC from its beginning in 1966.²⁴³ During the initial conference, those in attendance penned what would be the six key objectives of the CAVC. These objectives were as follows:

²³⁹ Ibid., 485–486.

²⁴⁰ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 9

²⁴¹ Published on behalf of The Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, “*The land...that was burned...*” *Reconstructs*, (Vancouver: No Publisher noted, 1976), 1. Found in the section entitled “What is C.A.V.C?”

²⁴² LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 9. As mentioned in the May 1966 bulletin of the CAVC. Mowat also wrote a pamphlet entitled “Farley Mowat speaks out on Canada’s Role in Vietnam.” (Willowdale, Ontario: Authorized by The Conference of Canada’s Role in Vietnam, no date).

²⁴³ Ibid. Dr. Inglis was referred to as the chairman or the president of the CAVC, and held the position from 1966 until at least 1975.

- (1) To help civilian war victims in Vietnam.
- (2) To raise funds for medical aid to these victims.
- (3) To work for friendship and understanding between the peoples of Canada and Vietnam.
- (4) To support all sincere efforts to end the war in Vietnam.
- (5) To keep Canadians acquainted with the horrors of the war in Vietnam.
- (6) To work for implementation of the 1954 Geneva Agreement, including free elections in Vietnam.²⁴⁴

Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians hoped that by raising awareness of the situation in Vietnam they would be able to raise 20,000 dollars in order to allow for the purchase of medical supplies and drugs to aid the victims of the war. The funds raised by the organization were to be sent to particular regions of Vietnam based on need and population, such as heavily bombed villages where many Vietnamese civilians had lost their homes and livelihood. The CAVC noted in a distribution that “45 percent [of the funds] goes to North Vietnam, 45 percent to the National Liberation Front areas and 10 percent to the International Committee of the Red Cross for the injured civilians living in the strategic hamlets in South Vietnam.”²⁴⁵ The pamphlet also noted that the International Committee of the Red Cross had informed the CAVC that “the needs among Vietnam civilians are great but are almost certainly greatest that while the need for goods was great in all regions of Vietnam, it was greatest in NLF territory and next in North Vietnam.”²⁴⁶ Between 2 and 3 percent of their profits went to administrative costs, such as postage, bulletins, and purchasing crates used to ship items to Vietnam.²⁴⁷ Costs for shipping were kept to a minimum because all shipments of goods by CAVC to Vietnam

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. This division of funds was noted in a piece of literature sent out as an appeal for citizens to donate to the newly formed organization. When the pamphlet states that the need was greatest in NLF territory, it was referring to areas in South Vietnam being controlled by the NLF.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Published on behalf of The Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, “*The land...that was burned...*” *Reconstructs*, 1.

were transported free-of-charge by Soviet ships courtesy of the Soviet Embassy.²⁴⁸

Certainly, this service, and having volunteers performing all duties of the organization, helped to keep expenditures to a minimum and ensured that donations ended up where they were intended: in Vietnam.

Only four months after their creation, with the CAVC was already more than halfway towards meeting its financial goal of 20,000 dollars, it still sought an alternative means of providing aid.²⁴⁹ The organization of a knitting project provided such an alternative. It offered a method of providing aid to the most needy, and perhaps most deserving victims of the Vietnam War: the children.

The call for knitters in the June bulletin of the CAVC stated that children and babies in Vietnam were in need of new woollen clothing and blankets, and that volunteers were needed to coordinate knitting bees and to solicit the help of others in their communities. In order to inform the women of the dire situation in the war-torn region, the bulletin stated: "the wool used must be moss green or dark blue for camouflage."²⁵⁰ There was hope that the first shipment of garments would be sent within two months to Vietnam along with other medical supplies.

The CAVC's Children's Committee created particular guidelines to follow for volunteers of the knitting project. When individuals requested information on the knitting project, they were sent a leaflet with a list of the six guidelines. Included in the leaflet was a note to knitters, which helped explain the importance of following the guidelines

²⁴⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 2. June/July bulletin of the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians. During the Vietnam War, shipments of aid for civilian victims were shipped free of charge from Moscow and Peking. Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians was responsible for the shipment of goods to Vietnam which resulted from the Knitting Project. The Voice of Women would simply send their shipments of knit goods to the CAVC and they would in turn deliver it to the Soviets for shipment.

²⁴⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 9.

²⁵⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 2. June/July bulletin of the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians.

set out by the CAVC, and the reasons why these particular guidelines had been put in effect. The note read:

First of all we must bear in mind that many of the children of Vietnam are living under conditions utterly unlike any other children in the world. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee bombed and burning homes to seek shelter in jungles, tunnels and caves. The majority are still existing underground. To these Vietnamese little ones the sun and blue sky do not signify warmth and beauty, but rather danger and death. Very early they learned that to remain alive and without wounds they must be ever on the watch for fire and silver pellets of agony which may fall upon them. They must evade light beams and flares that seek a target.²⁵¹

The six guidelines to be followed by all knitters were as follows. The first, and most widely reiterated, was that the clothing and blankets had to be made in dark colours. This was because light beams and flares were being used to hunt for targets during the Vietnam War and the lighter one's clothing, the easier it was to be seen. It was said that dark navy and dark green were the best colors to be used for camouflage, but that dark brown, grey and heather mixtures of wool were also suitable.²⁵² The second guideline mentioned was the type of material to be used for knitting. Because many of the children who would be receiving the garments were living in damp, cool conditions-often times wading through trenches as mentioned in an earlier chapter- it was recommended that the clothing be made from shrink-resistant light-weight wool.²⁵³ That way the clothing would not shrink in the event that it became wet, and if the wool was light-weight, it would not become too heavy for the children to wear.

²⁵¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30. File 11. Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians leaflet entitled "Guide lines for volunteer participants in the knitting and sewing project to make garments and bed covers for the children of Vietnam." These guidelines were also reprinted in the August newsletter for the Ontario Voice of Women in 1967. MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 2.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

The third of the six guidelines pertained to bed covers, noting that all blankets needed to be made of woollen material as well, and that cotton would not be accepted. Donors wishing to sew instead of knit were referred to in the fourth guideline. Here it was stated that shirts and pants were being made for both boys and girls and that no dresses were sent to Vietnam as “girls do not wear dresses” in Vietnam.²⁵⁴ It also noted that seamstresses need not add fancy adornments to sewn garments as “it is better to have more in plain styles, than to send less with unnecessary trimmings.”²⁵⁵ The fifth guideline stressed that all donors should adhere to the patterns provided for the clothing from the CAVC. The patterns had been suggested by the Vietnamese and as organizers of the knitting project noted, “children in Asia do not wear the same clothing, in many respects, as do Western little ones, it is better to follow our instructions, or, if substituting, keep as closely as possible to their requests.”²⁵⁶ The final guideline to be followed by all knitters was simply with regards to where finished garments and correspondence should be sent, noting the CAVC office in Vancouver would forward the shipments from their office to the Red Cross Societies in the specified areas.²⁵⁷

Due to the poor living conditions of many children in Vietnam, the CAVC believed the least they could do was try to provide them with some warmth and shelter from the elements. Thousands of garments were sent for the babies and children in Vietnam, and thousands more could have been easily collected were it not for another requirement of the Children’s Committee of the CAVC. All of the garments sent to the children in Vietnam were to be new; no second hand clothing was to be accepted. There

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

were several reasons for this requirement, all of which were addressed in a letter to Mrs. W. Tompkins of Akron, Ohio. Mrs. Tompkins had sent a vest to the Voice of Women for consideration for the children in Vietnam, which she had altered to meet the requirements of the knitting project. The vest was then forwarded to Sheila Young in Vancouver. Young replied to Mrs. Tompkins letter by stating the importance of only using new materials for the project. She wrote; “Assuredly, it is a ‘cute’ little garment, and quite original. However, the Children’s Committee has an inviolable rule: We do not send second-hand clothing to Vietnam.”²⁵⁸ Another woman from Polkton, North Carolina mentioned that she would be willing to donate her children’s used clothing as well. In a letter asking for more information and patterns for the knitting project she mentioned, “I have four children of my own, could dark used clothes of theirs be of any help. Please let me know. I’d be glad to send their good outgrown things.”²⁵⁹

The reasons for this rule, once explained, were understandable and reasonable. Sheila Young, in response to Mrs. Tompkins inquiry regarding used clothing, wrote that “there is a law which demands that all used clothing, regardless of condition, be fumigate...”²⁶⁰ It was also necessary that all fumigated clothing be accompanied by certification when being donated and transported. The finances required for this would have been beyond the budget of the CAVC (as well as the Voice of Women). Secondly, the CAVC wanted to ensure the children of Vietnam had clothing which was durable and

²⁵⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 18. A letter sent to Mrs. M.A. Tompkins of Akron, Ohio, 14 July 1968. The vest in question had been sent to Sheila Young from Lil Greene requesting that she reply to Mrs. Tompkins on behalf of the CAVC and the Voice of Women.

²⁵⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 14. This undated letter from Donna Hildreth was in the file marked United States of America: Correspondence, 1967-1968.

²⁶⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 18. Letter from Sheila Young to Mrs. M.A. Tompkin of Akron, Ohio. Dated 14 July, 1968. Young did not specify who set the law for the fumigation of second-hand clothing when being donated.

would last a long time; this could not be guaranteed if used clothing were accepted.²⁶¹

Nor would it be as easy to ensure that all garments were made of an acceptable material or were in a style that would be suitable for the Vietnamese and their way-of-life. Finally, Sheila Young noted that the CAVC felt “that all help given to these little ones should be new -- it is the least we can do for them -- and since transportation is limited we do not wish to load our consignments with less than the best.”²⁶² Young noted in a letter to Greene that she felt it was arrogant for women from the United States to suggest the CAVC and Voice of Women send second hand clothing to the children of Vietnam. She wrote: “Surely, after all the agony [the United States] government is imposing on these Vietnamese, they can purchase new material to try to help them!...I shall not send second-hand clothing to the children.”²⁶³ This belief that the children of Vietnam deserved the best that the people of Canada (and the United States) had to offer sent a clear message to all who became familiar with the project that the organizers of the knitting project wanted nothing less for the children of Vietnam than they would want for their own children.

The October/November bulletin of the CAVC mentioned that the first shipment of clothing for the children in Vietnam was en route to its destination and that knitters from Quebec to Victoria were eagerly knitting more garments so another shipment could be sent.²⁶⁴ The second shipment was sent before the end of the year. It was comprised of boxes holding more than three hundred articles of children’s and baby’s clothing and was sent to the Red Cross Society of the National Liberation Front, as the first shipment had

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid. While this letter indicates that the CAVC did not wish to accept second-hand clothing, it is unclear whether they would have done so if the clothing was made of an appropriate fabric or wool, if it was an appropriate style of clothing, if it was barely used and if the individuals donating the clothing were willing to pay for them to be fumigated.

²⁶³ Ibid. Letter from Sheila Young to Lil Greene in response to the letter from Mrs. M.A. Tompkins, dated 15 July, 1968.

²⁶⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 9. October/November bulletin of the CAVC.

been sent to the Red Cross Society of North Vietnam.²⁶⁵ This bulletin was also the first time the contributions of the Voice of Women were publicly noted by the CAVC, but certainly not the last.

Sheila Young became the most active participant and organizer of the CAVC knitting project, which came to be known as the project of the CAVC's Children's Committee. Over the years that would follow, many letters were sent back and forth between the Voice of Women and Sheila Young regarding the growth of the knitting project and obstacles they were to face.

The Voice of Women's Role as Key Contributor

While the CAVC was the organization to begin the knitting project, the Voice of Women, specifically the Ontario branch, was truly the organization that raised it to the national level in Canada. When the Voice of Women's national newsletter printed the same call for knitters that the CAVC had carried several months earlier, the response from interested women was overwhelming, almost echoing the response that Lotta Dempsey had received at the onset of the Voice of Women. Lil Greene, convenor of the knitting project for Vietnamese children, received requests for information, patterns, and wool from knitters of all ages, all across Canada.²⁶⁶

In July of 1966, the Christie-Bloor group of the Voice of Women contacted CAVC after hearing of their appeal for knitters concerned with the situation in Vietnam.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. As noted in the December 1966/January 1967 bulletin of the CAVC.

²⁶⁶ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 2.

They received the first set of patterns from CAVC on 19 July, 1966 and participation in the knitting project flourished from that point on.²⁶⁷ Little did either organization know the magnitude to which the project would grow. As expected, most of the knitters participating in the project were older women: residents of nursing homes, church group members, and homemakers. One such woman from Thorold, Ontario wrote a letter to the Voice of Women expressing how the knitting project had helped open the eyes of her daughter to the horrors often found in other places of the world. Together they read a letter stating the importance of using dark colours so as to camouflage children and babies from bombs in Vietnam. To this, the daughter replied “why Mummy, I must be one of the richest children in the world, I have such lovely things and never thought about it before”²⁶⁸

Perhaps this statement, from a child of only ten years old, helps to explain why so many Canadians wanted to contribute to such a program for children they had never met. For many, it could be seen as the maternal instinct of women reacting to the effects of war on children, but how can one explain the desire for younger girls and teenagers to help with the program? Perhaps this is a reflection of the North American society at the time; women feeling the need to protect children, regardless of their ethnicity or locality, and younger girls mirroring the efforts made by their mothers. This is a fine example of the perpetuating gender roles in North America onto another generation and the socialization, be it intentional or not, of children and teenage girls to eventually become mothers. It might, however, be presumed that the knitting project of the CAVC and the Voice of Women helped to expose people to atrocities a world away that they may have

²⁶⁷ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30, File 6.

²⁶⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 2.

otherwise never seen. It helped to reach out to a different demography that had not really had to think of the effects of war prior to this time. They were aware of war, and knew of its damages, but had previously not had a conceivable method of contributing to the peace effort.

Aside from the mothers and grandmothers who contributed to the project, there were a number of unlikely contributors as well. In Toronto, a fifteen year old girl heard of the project, and with the help of her high school principal solicited seventeen students to help knit garments for Vietnamese children during their lunch break.²⁶⁹ Members of a Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) group in Stouffville knitted shawls for women in Vietnam, while a twelve-year-old girl from Toronto, who was born with only one hand, knit enough strips to complete an entire blanket to contribute to the project.²⁷⁰ An annual report distributed by the Ontario Voice of Women referred to the efforts of 24 Brownies who had knitted a large cot blanket to be included in a shipment.²⁷¹ These, along with numerous other contributors, helped make the Voice of Women an indispensable participant in the knitting project while at the same time conveying the need for more support for the anti-war movement in Canada amongst 'ordinary citizens'.

Only months after beginning to participate in the knitting project for Vietnamese children, the Voice of Women was receiving gratitude for their contributions from the CAVC. Their, the CAVC's, December 1966/January 1967 newsletter noted that the Voice of Women had been one of the "outstanding contributors...[having already sent] three large donations of clothing"²⁷² to be included in the second shipment being sent to

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 19.

²⁷¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 2.

²⁷² MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 9.

Vietnam as well as soliciting over one hundred new knitters to participate in the project.²⁷³

At the Voice of Women's annual meeting in 1967, the Ontario Voice of Women's annual report was presented and read;

Mrs. Lil Greene started a project last fall which tends to get out of hand most of the time. She has about 500 Ontario women (most of whom are not VOW members) knitting garments in dark colours which are distributed through the committee for Medial Aid for Vietnam Civilians. About 6 shipments have already been sent containing 500 garments and more are going all the time. Donations of wool have been solicited from wool shops and manufacturers and to date a significant amount has been received. And the list of knitters grows everyday.²⁷⁴

Not only did the Ontario Voice of Women become the major supporter of the knitting project for Vietnamese children; the project also proved to be an excellent recruitment tool for the Voice of Women's somewhat idle membership numbers. The Ontario Provincial Report for October 1969 noted that the knitting project was "the most active and new-member-getting of all our undertakings."²⁷⁵

Growth of the Knitting Project

No one specific person or event can be credited with the growth of the knitting project in Canada. Instead, a number of contributing factors led to the project's success. One of the greatest things the Voice of Women did for the knitting project was to solicit

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 7, File 3.

²⁷⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 27, File 13.

help by networking to as many individuals as possible. This was done through letters to media outlets, wool manufacturers and stores, trade unions, and through fund raising. These efforts all led to greater participation in the project, but also to a greater number of Canadians becoming aware of the situation in Vietnam.

Although no one individual should be credited exclusively with the response received for the knitting project with the Voice of Women, Lil Greene must certainly be seen as playing an indispensable role in the success achieved by the organization by way of donations and publicity. Soon after the Voice of Women became active in knitting for the CAVC's project, Greene wrote wool manufactures and retailers that sold knitting materials in various locations in Canada asking if they would be willing to donate goods to knitters, or discounts on products being used for the project. The Voice of Women had received correspondence from women across Canada who were willing to knit for the project, but could not afford to purchase the wool required for knitting with their own funds. To remedy the situation, Greene appealed to those in the wool industry for aid and soon received a variety of donations and locations willing to offer discounts to those individuals participating in the knitting project.²⁷⁶

The offers for assistance came from a wide range of locations, but mostly from the eastern part of Canada. The first location to respond to the appeal for assistance was the Peter Pan Wool Shop in Toronto, Ontario. In fact, it made two separate donations to the knitting project during its existence.²⁷⁷ The Wishing Well Shop in Agincourt, Ontario, offered to sell all ends of line wool in dark colours for half their original retail price,

²⁷⁶ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 27, File 2. This file contains numerous requests for assistance from Lil Greene on behalf of the Voice of Women, as well as quite a few responses from wool stores and manufacturers willing to make donations or offer discounts to knitters.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. Noted in a thank you letter from Lil Greene to Mrs. Shirley Norris of Peter Pan Wool Shop, dated 9 May, 1967.

while Briggs and Little's Woollen Mill Ltd., in York Mills, New Brunswick, donated 2 pounds of free wool and offered an additional 10 percent discount for other goods purchased for the program.²⁷⁸ Likewise, the owner of the Spinning Wheel Wool Centre in Newmarket, Ontario, offered to make donations from time to time for knitters, saying "with the store and a home to look after I don't have the time for knitting that I would like to but if I could make my share a few donations of wool from time to time I would feel I was helping out a bit."²⁷⁹

Besides approaching wool manufacturers and retailers, Greene also wrote trade unions and women's auxiliaries asking for help by way of donations. Soon after becoming involved in the knitting project, Greene began writing various unions, mostly in Ontario, to explain the project and solicit help from the groups. The first such group of letters was distributed in November 1966 and explained to the unions the premise of the knitting project and that there were already 150 knitters dedicated to the project in Ontario alone. It went on to say that while there are many volunteers, the need for wool was great.²⁸⁰ The letter did not specify a suggested donation, but simply stated, "I do hope this gives your Committee food for thought and you will see it fit to help....and participate."²⁸¹

The letters were, for the most part, well received and unions and women's auxiliaries were eager to donate funds. Most respondents praised the projects and the

²⁷⁸ Ibid. The Briggs and Little Woollen Mill Ltd. sent notice to the Voice of Women on 20 July, 1967 that they would donate the wool and offer the further discount. A business card in this file from the Wishing Well notes that Mrs. S. Hanff of the store would offer the discount of ends of wool. No date was noted on the card.

²⁷⁹ Ibid. Letter from Eileen D. Watts of the Spinning Wheel Wool Centre to Lil Greene, dated 29 August, 1967.

²⁸⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 6. The particular letter referenced here was sent to Milly Trufal, the Secretary of the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers Auxiliary Coordinating Committee in Welland, Ontario. Dated 14 November, 1966.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

organization's good work and donations ranging from \$10.00 to \$100.00 were received. The success of this manner of solicitation was so beneficial that the Voice of Women made several more requests to the trade unions and auxiliaries who made initial donations following the first request. A second letter, sent in September, 1967, noted how donor funds had been used over the preceding year stating that "we have managed to send 1400 knitted garments, buy wool, carry on our publicity and mailing, for less than \$1,000. Our aim is to triple our activity and output this coming year because the need is so great."²⁸²

A subsequent letter, sent in December 1968 noted that while the project had, to date, been an impressive success; there was more that could be done. A copy of the letter stated that the organizers of the project knew more must be done and the project must continue to grow so long as the children of Vietnam need the assistance. It stated that "[f]or those of us who have worked in the Project, the thought that we have been able to ease even the tiniest bit of suffering is a matter of satisfaction."²⁸³

A letter was received by the Voice of Women from the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America, along with a donation, in March 1969. The letter read;

It is with pleasure and a deep appreciation of the humanitarian work of your organization, that the National Executive Board of our union decided to make the enclosed contribution of \$50.00.

The struggle to compel a just peace in Vietnam is aided by your work, and we wish you every success.

Our contribution is modest- - our hope is great for an early end to the war based on the unquestioned and sole right of the Vietnamese people to determine their future.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Ibid. Filed letter, to no specified recipient, dated 20 September, 1967. Signed by Gwenne Becker, the Ontario Voice of Women president at the time and Lil Greene.

²⁸³ Ibid. Letter dated December 1968 and signed by Dorothy Anwell, at the time the President of the Ontario Voice of Women.

²⁸⁴ Ibid. Letter from George Harris to Lil Greene, dated 7 March, 1969.

While most responded to the Voice of Women's call for help in a positive manner, they did receive several letters that were not as sympathetic. There were two letters in particular from individuals who, while they supported the idea of the program, had problems with certain aspects involved. The first such letter was from Simon Nord of Red Lake, Ontario. In his response to the Voice of Women's request for assistance, Nord was quick to state his position on the war in Vietnam, and specifically which nation he felt was responsible for the war. He wrote that the United States was responsible for the situation and the destruction in Vietnam, and the responsibility to provide aid for the people of Vietnam should therefore fall upon their shoulders. In his letter he stated, "While your organization is busy trying to relieve the suffering of these children the U.S. bombers rain more napalm bombs and destroy more homes and crops, make more cripples and orphans every day, Does it really make sense?"²⁸⁵ The Voice of Women responded to Nord's letter thanking him for the opinion stated in his letter, but noted that "we do feel that we cannot stand idly by....and are therefore involved in this humanitarian Project."²⁸⁶

The second unfavourable letter received during the campaign to solicit assistance from trade unions was from the United Automobile, Aerospace, Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW). The complaint, however, was not with regards to the knitting project or the intentions of the Voice of Women as an organization. Instead, the union was concerned with how the Voice of Women had received the mailing list for the UAW in the first place. Essentially, they believed the Voice of Women should not have

²⁸⁵ Ibid. Letter from Simon Nord to the Voice of Women, dated 27 January, 1969. This letter was in a file specifically pertaining to trade unions, however this letter, or the response from the Voice of Women makes no indication to which union Nord is affiliated.

²⁸⁶ Ibid. Letter to Simon Nord from The Voice of Women, dated 12 April, 1969.

circulated the request for assistance without asking the permission of the Canadian UAW first. Dennis McDermott, the Canadian Director of the UWA responded to the organization's request by stating "I think it rather presumptuous on your part to have obtained a Canadian UAW mailing list and then proceeded to circulate [to] our local unions without first receiving our permission."²⁸⁷ McDermott also noted that the "project appears to be a very worthwhile one and in any event would have received our endorsement."²⁸⁸

Moira Armour, the President of the Ontario Voice of Women in 1970, responded to McDermott's letter by ensuring him that the Voice of Women did not have a specific list of UAW union locations to which the requests for assistance were distributed. Instead, the organization had amassed their mailing list from various sources, such as "[t]he 'Yellow Pages' [which] is a good place to start. So, too, are publications distributed by various organizations and labour unions a basis for a file of those groups and individuals who have contributed to the Voice of Women Knitting Project."²⁸⁹ Armour then used the opportunity of the correspondence to the organization's advantage by reminding McDermott of the achievements of the knitting project to date and that "[w]ool is supplied to our knitters therefore the Project always requires funds. Perhaps the Canadian Regional Office of U.A.W. will be able to assist."²⁹⁰

Aside from these two instances, the knitting project benefited greatly from requests sent to trade unions and women's auxiliaries between November 1966 and December 1972. Unions willing to make donations were numerous and included: various

²⁸⁷ MG 28, I 218, Vol 31, File 5. Letter from Dennis McDermott, dated 27 January, 1970, to Moira Armour.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid. Undated letter from Moira Armour to Dennis McDermott.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

branches of the United Automobile Workers of America; International Chemical Workers Union; Hamilton Civic Hospital Unions; Toronto Mailers Union; and United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum & Plastic Workers. Donations from ladies auxiliaries came from: United Electrical Ladies Auxiliary; United Rubber Workers Auxiliary; Sudbury Mine Mill Ladies Auxiliary; and the Ladies Auxiliary of the United Electrical Workers.²⁹¹ This is only a glimpse of those unions and ladies' auxiliaries who made donations during the knitting project's duration.

Beyond addressing individual manufacturers, retailers and trade unions, the Voice of Women also made great progress by contacting media outlets as a means to ensure that the knitting project was as far reaching as possible. Perhaps two of the most successful of these efforts was the publication of information regarding the knitting project by Elizabeth Thompson in her column 'Elizabeth Thompson Advises' and by Pat Trexler, an American woman with a knitting column included in a large number of American and Canadian newspapers. Trexler's column was widely read in both Canada and the United States, and the reactions from readers in these two countries were in some instances similar, and in others quite different. Thompson's column, on the other hand, seemed to induce only positive feed-back from her Canadian readers. The impact of both of these individuals publicizing the knitting project had two very different outcomes, both of which will be addressed in length in following sections and chapters.

The method of networking through the use of the media was not new to the organization, as they had often approached the media during the formative years of their organization in order to gain national attention to their cause. Even before the Voice of Women had begun participating in the project, newspapers from across Canada had been

²⁹¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 6. List amassed from letters from various unions and auxiliaries.

reporting on the contributions being made by Canadian women for the children of Vietnam. This began what would become extensive media coverage of the project, which undoubtedly helped lead to its great achievements. Headlines such as “Volunteers knit for Vietnamese,” “They Help Vietnam Children,” and “Canadian Knitters Clothe Viet Children,”²⁹² not only spread the message of the knitting project, it also gave more coverage to the war in Vietnam and to the work of the Voice of Women. Many newspaper articles would follow in the subsequent years, conveying the success of the knitting project to readers all across Canada.

In June of 1967, an advice column in the *Globe and Mail* made mention of the knitting project. ‘Elizabeth Thompson Advises’ wrote of the success the project had had during its first year in operation and how the project had offered a rewarding method of offering help during the Vietnam War. Thompson wrote,

I have had letters from people expressing great relief and appreciation that at last they have found a tangible way of helping out in Vietnam. If all the young people who keep writing me for addresses of U.S. soldiers to correspond with would turn their talents to knitting for the Vietnamese babies, I’m sure their time would be better spent. And by the way, once again, I have no addresses of soldiers.²⁹³

This excerpt from a column, which resulted in more than one hundred requests for information and patterns regarding the knitting project, helps to explain why so many women felt compelled to contribute to the project in the first place.²⁹⁴ This project offered a way for so many women to help the victims of the war; women who before were unsure how individually they could make a difference. The knitting project ensured them that

²⁹² “Volunteers knit for Vietnamese” *Toronto Star*, 27 June, 1972; “Canadian knitters clothe Viet children,” *London Free Press*, 3 July, 1972; “They help Vietnam Children,” *Hamilton Spectator*, 30 June, 1972. All clippings from MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30, File 11.

²⁹³ Elizabeth Thompson, “Elizabeth Thompson Advises,” *Globe and Mail*, 14 June 1967, 11. Clipping of article in MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 19.

²⁹⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 5. An update by the Voice of Women noted that the Elizabeth Thompson Advises column resulted in over 100 requests for information.

their contribution would be put to use to directly assist children affected by the war.

Again, this ties in to the maternal desire of women to protect others, specifically children.

By donating money, one could not be sure how it would help victims of the war, if, in fact, it would even reach them. By knitting baby's and children's clothing, they could be assured the aid would reach those for whom it was intended.

Another article, published in the Pacific Tribune in September 1967, also exemplifies how the maternal desire of women in Canada fuelled the knitting project, and how these women gained support and praise from many individuals across Canada. Tom McEwen, editor of the paper wrote a lengthy editorial on the good works being done by so many Canadian women;

In cooperation with the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians the VOW bulletins list the hundreds "...of knitted vests, helmets, sweaters, shawls, cot blankets...etc." they have sent to Vietnam. The closing sentence of this paragraph drives home a terrible lesson...if we only sit down and think about it for a minute. This knitting is "ALL IN DARK COLORS FOR CAMOFLAGE PURPOSES".

We knew many grand Canadian women of an earlier era (one loved one in our own home) who knitted endlessly, even when she could scarcely see the knitting needles, for Canadian boys in Spain, fighting to stem the first tide of Hitler-Mussolini-Hirohito fascism before it engulfed the world. Knitting for the heroic boys of the "Hagana" fighting to create a new state of Israel, free, independent and progressive. Knitting, always knitting.

But this knitting was for fighting men- to bring them some little comfort in the agony and hurt of battle.

Today Canadian women knit for little children; babies in their mothers arms, but the knitting must be "all in dark colors" in order to save as many as possible of these little Vietnamese toddlers from the napalm and all the other death-dealing bombs rained down upon them and their country by the "civilized" savagery of U.S. aggression and genocide in Vietnam.

In every Canadian community, on our streets and in the home, we love the joy and fantasy of color, and particularly our children. Color expresses in its own way the joy and beauty of life.

Not so with children of Vietnam, their little bodies burned with napalm, or torn to shreds with "personalized" bombs raining down upon

them by U.S. imperialism with an intensity unsurpassed in the savagery of modern warfare, For these little Vietnamese children and their war-tortured mothers, the difference between a nice bright red sweater or shawl and a dark-colored one is the difference between the hope for life and the certainty of cruel and premature death.

We Salute the Canadian Voice of Women and their thousands of knitters who stitch into every garment “All in Dark Colors” that imperishable hope for the children of Vietnam. When these little ones can wear all the colors they love without fear and in peace – the whole world will become more radiant.²⁹⁵

This article likened the project of the Ontario Voice of Women to efforts made by Canadian women during previous wars, linking the maternal instincts of previous generations to that of women in the 1960s. The motivation for offering this aid had changed a bit since the previous generation of women had knit for men fighting in the wars. Now, instead of knitting for ‘Canadian boys’, they were knitting for children to which they had no connection. How would the situation have differed had Canadian men been involved on the battlefields of the Vietnam War? Would they still have been so eager to help other people’s children, or instead would they have been compelled to help their own men instead? Questions such as these will be addressed in the following chapter addressing the role that American women played in the knitting project, and how their reactions were often quite different from those of Canadians.

Not all media coverage of the knitting project would prove to be positive during its life-span, however. There were some individuals who were not so supportive of the knitting project or the Voice of Women in general during the Vietnam War. Even before the knitting project had commenced, the Voice of Women had received several negative accusations from both men and women alike.

²⁹⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 19. Clipping printed in the Pacific Tribune, the West Coast edition of the Canadian Tribune on 15 September 1967.

In the summer of 1965, the Voice of Women was targeted in several news articles. One such example is the article written by Bill Drylie in the *Toronto Telegram* on the occasion of the Voice of Women's fifth anniversary as an organization. Drylie, in a condescending tone, implied that the Voice of Women was simply a passing fad and within only five years, the organization had faded from the limelight of the peace movement. He wrote;

Pity the Voice of Women...five years old and a whisper already. Five years of panels and forums, special speakers and conventions. Five years of peace-mongering philosophy and the world's closer to the brink today than ever before. But give them an E for effort along with the F for failure they've already won....It's amazing, isn't it, how all the nincompoops are elected to office and all the big-brained people join the VOW or the Peace Research Institute or nuclear disarmament groups?²⁹⁶

It is difficult to say whether Drylie was opposed to the Voice of Women or the idea of peace-organizations in general. His was not the only negative media coverage aimed at the Voice of Women in the summer of 1965. Several other articles were published, and in turn received responses from women in the community. In August 1965, C. Lane wrote a letter to the *Ottawa Citizen* in response to a letter written by Mrs. Ashe, on 28 July, 1965. Lane's letter read;

I would like to answer Mrs. Ashe's letter of July 28 in which she states that Voice of Women (a) are too emotional, (b) are too far left, (c) give the erroneous impression they speak for all women and (d) should be put in concentration camps.

Voice of Women/La Voix des Femmes (VOW/VDF) is an organization of women concerned about the survival of humanity in this nuclear age. If we are emotional it is because we view the suffering and death of innocent children with emotion- too much emotion?

In my three years with the VOW/VDF in two parts of Canada, I have worked with women of all political beliefs- right, left and centre. We work in many ways towards a common goal of better understanding and peace among the peoples and nations of the world. We would be in a sad state if we wanted to leave the work for peace only to those on the far left.

²⁹⁶ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 14, File 15. Clipping from the 3 August 1965 edition of the *Toronto Telegram*.

VOW/VDF does not speak for all women, at least not for those believing in concentration camps- for anyone. We do speak for the right of all children to grow up in a world without the tragedy of war or the danger of radioactive fallout.²⁹⁷

A letter to the editor of the *Toronto Star* on 31 March, 1965 addressed the ways in which accusations of communist plots against peace-organizations such as the Voice of Women only helped to strengthen the true Communist Party. As Margaret Gane wrote, such accusations “help to cast a suspicious gloom over any established group that seeks to change basic wrongs. They discourage thinking individuals from working for good causes. And, quite conceivably, they could attract many to the Communist camp because that party so often appears to espouse minority causes.”²⁹⁸

To the Voice of Women, even bad media attention could be seen as beneficial. It got the message and motivations of the Voice of Women into the public sphere and brought the topic of the Vietnam War into many more Canadian households. Among the negative media images being portrayed surrounding the Voice of Women, were countless positive images focusing on the good work being done by so many generous women. In December 1970, the *Toronto Daily Star* wrote of the large group of volunteers who were participating in the knitting project with the CAVC and the good work being done by Lil Greene for the project. “Mrs. Greene’s volunteers make up the largest single contributor to the Vancouver based Canadian Aid for Viet Nam Civilians.”²⁹⁹

The sheer size of the knitting project and the amount of attention it gained far exceeded the initial expectations of both the CAVC and the Voice of Women. The

²⁹⁷ Ibid. This letter is response to a letter by Mrs. Ashe, printed 28 July 1965. Letter by Mrs. C. Lane printed 5 August 1965.

²⁹⁸ Margaret Gane, Letter to the editor, *Toronto Daily Star*, 31 March, 1965, 6. Copy also found in MG 28, I 218, Vol. 14, File 15.

²⁹⁹ “N. Viet children get sweaters for cave life,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 31 December 1970, section 3, 25. Copy found in MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30, File 9

October/November bulletin of the CAVC noted that the first consignment of clothing and blankets had been sent to Vietnam, but much more was needed. It sent out an appeal to concerned Canadians stating;

Those unable to knit can perhaps sew and men have the opportunity to donate for the purchase of wool. We appeal to interested friends: WHY NOT GENERATE THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS NOW by concentrating on this particular way of demonstrating humanitarianism to a brave people compelled for long years to resist aggression.³⁰⁰

By November 1966, the Voice of Women had already commenced approaching trade unions and ladies auxiliaries looking for funds and volunteers. In a letter to one of the auxiliaries, Greene noted that by mid-November the Voice of Women already had 150 people in Ontario alone knitting for the project.³⁰¹

On the one year anniversary of the CAVC initiation of the knitting project, the organization printed a bulletin noting the project's successful inaugural year. It listed its measurable achievements by noting that "[f]rom July 1966 to July 1967, 3,263 garments and quilts have been made and shipped. These were divided equally between respective Red Cross Societies of North Vietnam, and the National Front for Liberation."³⁰² It went on to say that an estimated \$4500.00 worth of materials was used to produce the garments, and approximately 800 volunteers and donors had contributed in some form or another to the endeavour.³⁰³

The Voice of Women also recognized the success of the knitting project in an Ontario Voice of Women bulletin in August, 1967. It noted that the number of

³⁰⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30, File 11. CAVC October-November 1966 bulletin.

³⁰¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 6. Letter to Milly Trufal, Secretary of the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers Auxiliary Coordinating Committee of Welland, Ontario, from Lil Greene. Dated 14 November, 1966.

³⁰² MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 18. From a bulletin entitled "Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians Children's Committee Birthday Briefings, July 1966-1967.

³⁰³ Ibid.

participants, be they donors of wool or money, or volunteers giving of their time to knit, had grown to over 600 individuals. All told, the Voice of Women had donated more than 1,100 items to the CAVC to be shipped to Vietnam, more than one third of the project's entire donations for its first year, and they totalled approximately three quarters of all donating knitters in Canada.³⁰⁴ In reflecting on the year's growth the Voice of Women reiterated the reason why it had initially become involved in the knitting project the previous year. The bulletin stated;

We began really because the thought of a child burned by napalm, a child riddled or maimed with shrapnel or bomb fragments; such a child without care, even the warmth of a cot blanket or a knitted vest...wrapped in newspapers....all of this was too much to bear, without acting to ease the pain...of the child, and in our own hearts.³⁰⁵

The first year's success proved to be a great indication of the impending success of the knitting project. The cause attracted the attention of many women across Canada, as mentioned in previous sections, and specifically seemed to centre on their maternal desire to help others. One woman from St. Catharines, Ontario wrote the Voice of Women looking for patterns for the knitting project and stated "I would like to interest my girls and their friends in such a worthwhile cause."³⁰⁶ Another woman from Burlington, Ontario wrote "I have been blessed with a son who is now 4 1/2 months old. If any little thing I can do will make a less fortunate child more comfortable it will be my pleasure."³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 2. Ontario Voice of Women bulletin entitled "Knitting Project for Vietnamese Children," dated 15 August, 1967.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30, File 4. Letter from Mrs. D Ballyk of St. Catharines, Ontario, dated 13 August, 1968.

³⁰⁷ Ibid. Letter from Mrs. George Campbell, of Burlington, Ontario, dated 11 July 1968.

The horrific situation being faced by countless Vietnamese children was brought to light by the knitting project and evoked much emotion amongst some of the projects participants. Anne Kay, a member of the Ontario Voice of Women, expressed her feelings towards the Vietnam War and the affected children by writing a poem. This poem was widely circulated amongst the Voice of Women and the CAVC. It was also often used in publications and requests for help. It reads as follows:

Millions of Stitches Carry Our Love

Dear little Vietnamese babes
We're knitting wool blankets for you
The colours aren't pretty
They're dull and they're drab
They're sure to look more cheerful in blue
Blue as the sky in the summer is blue
On a wonderful, warm, sunny day
When the doves are all cooing under the eaves
When the hawks have all flown far away
We're knitting some warm woollen jackets and vests
To shield you from dampness and cold
The colours are dark
Camouflaged like the earth
(It's damp in the caves, I am told)
How lovely you'd look in a jacket of pink
Like the cherry trees bloom in the spring
Or white- just like white as the breast of a swan
Or the dazzle of doves on the wing
But why do I talk about blossoms?
And why do I mention the sun?
Or the cooing of doves
Or the blue of the sky
When your life in the caves just begun
And instead of the doves, you can hear the hawks screech
And the bombings and chatter of guns

We want you to live, little Vietnamese babes
And to grow to strong sturdy youth
To be able to play and to study and learn
While we struggle together for truth
So keep cozy and warm little Vietnamese babe

Until freedom and peace have been won
Once again you will emerge from the hovels of caves
And bask in the warm summer sun.³⁰⁸

Along with this artistic method of communicating the knitting project to others was also the more conventional method used by the CAVC. The organization made regular press releases monitoring the shipments being sent to Vietnam. This not only kept all active knitters across Canada attuned to the growth of the project, but it also was a means to get more publicity about the project and its success out to the public. To that end, it gave an accurate measure of the growth of the knitting project and the consistent success it was accomplishing. Many of the press releases were produced to correlate with a specific shipment being sent to Vietnam. Also included was the amount the goods being sent was worth, and how close the CAVC was to reaching their monetary goal, which was initially \$20,000, but was soon raised to \$50,000.³⁰⁹

The early years of the knitting project showed a steady growth in the number of shipments being sent to Vietnam. Along with that was another increase in the monetary goal the CAVC set for itself, which increased again from \$50,000 to \$100,000 on 26 January, 1968.³¹⁰ April 1969 saw 1500 knitters participating through the Voice of Women in Ontario alone, with the number of garments sent totalling over 7,000.³¹¹ By March of the following year, the number of garments knit by Ontario knitters reached over 10,000. That number rose to 12,000 and 13,000 in October and November of 1970,

³⁰⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 21. "Millions of Stitches Carry Our Love," written by Anne Kay, February 1968.

³⁰⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 9. A press release by the CAVC from 24 February 1967 mentions the increased goal of \$50,000. MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30, File 8.

³¹⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30, File 8. This subsequent increased goal was announced in a CAVC press release from 26 January, 1968. By 1976, the financial goal of the CAVC rose to half a million dollars. "*The land...that was burned...*," 1.

³¹¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 6. Noted in a letter from the Voice of Women to trade unions dated 18 April, 1969.

respectively.³¹² A press release by the Voice of Women in February, 1971 reiterated the success of the project by stating,

Thousands of children in far-off battle torn Viet Nam are today wearing knitted garments and sleeping under knitted cot blankets from the hands of Ontario girls and women. Ontario concerned girls and women in more than seventy communities are actively involved. More than fifty rural communities are participating in the program... To date more than 14,000 garments and knitted cot blankets have been forwarded...³¹³

By December of that same year the total number of garments knit in Ontario was a staggering 17,000 items.³¹⁴

Perhaps one of the greatest successes of the knitting project was the cooperation between the two organizations in the fight for humanitarianism, particularly the cooperation between Lil Greene and Sheila Younge. On many occasions, the women commended each other for the commitment and time required to maintain the energy of such a large spread project. Their words of encouragement and the conviction in the importance of their effort offered a means of motivation to each other; a motivation which otherwise may not have been present during their years volunteering for the project. This motivation can be felt in a letter from Young to Greene in January of 1971. Young wrote,

OUR GOODS ARE REQUIRED MORE THAN EVER NOW, AND WE
KNOW THAT YOU AND THE VOW REALIZE THIS, AND
TOGETHER WE SHALL GO FORWARD ON BOTH FRONTS-THE
HUMANITARIAN AND THE POLITICAL TO STOP THE WAR AND
ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE SUFFERING AND MISERY. Actually,

³¹² Ibid. The 10,000 total is noted in a letter from Moira Armour to trade unions, dated 5 March, 1970. 12,000 is noted in a letter from the Voice of Women to Mrs. E. Duncan of Brantford, Ontario, dated 2 October, 1970. 13,000 is quoted in a letter to Marion Kleinstreuber of Brantford, Ontario from the Voice of Women, dated 9 November, 1970.

³¹³ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 27, File 13. Press Release from Voice of Women, released in Toronto, 8 February, 1971.

³¹⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 6. This total is noted in a letter to trade unions from the Voice of Women, dated 13 December, 1971.

our sharing in this work is too deep for words- - It is a stimulating, sorrowful joy.³¹⁵

Even when faced with personal difficulties, the women upheld the objective of the program in high regard, and did not fade in their dedication even when faced with challenges and discrimination, such as those mentioned in the previous section. Greene, who lost her husband suddenly in the summer of 1973, stated in a letter to another member of the Voice of Women that although the loss was difficult, "...we must go on working for the living..."³¹⁶ Perhaps Greene felt that to spend time mourning the passing of her husband would not be helping others, instead she dedicated herself to the Voice of Women and the success of the knitting project. This dedication was recognized in a letter from the Vietnam Women's Union in the summer of 1973. In part it read;

We highly appreciate the movement initiated by you and which is very popular not only in Canada but has also spread to the USA. What a significant comfort for us when, during the years of US bombardment of our country, we received the pretty clothing and beautiful quilts you sent to our children from a cross [sic] the ocean. Your acts have considerably encouraged us in our hard struggles. You may rightly be proud of your contribution to our common success. It is an honour for us, Vietnamese women, to have such great friends as you who have persistently supported us in our struggle for national salvation against the US aggression. We would like once again to express to you and to the Canadian women our Vietnamese people's deep gratitude.³¹⁷

The knitting project proved to be beneficial to all who participated, not exclusively to the children who received the clothing. By participating, women in Canada and the United States gained a sense of accomplishment for their efforts. While the roles they played may have appeared small in the grand scheme of humanitarian aid, it

³¹⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 27, File 13. Letter from Sheila Young to Lil Greene, dated 10 January, 1971. Printed as seen in the letter, capitalization not inserted.

³¹⁶ Ibid. Letter to Tina Frost from Lil Greene, dated 12 January, 1974.

³¹⁷ Ibid. Letter dated 7 August, 1973 from the Vietnam Women's Union, addressed to Lil Greene.

nevertheless made them feel as if they were somehow contributing to the anti-war effort. Likewise, while most people in North America were detached from the war in Vietnam, only gaining information through the media, the contributors to the knitting project had a deeper sense of connection to the conflict through their efforts. In the report to the annual meeting of the Voice of Women in October 1969, Lil Greene wrote an address regarding the knitting project. It read:

We feel that this Project has been most rewarding not only for the children of Vietnam....but for Voice of Women too. We are known to hundreds of people in Canada for this effective peace work and admired. We have not only enriched many Canadians and U.S.A. women about the truth in Vietnam...but many have joined the Voice of Women too. No matter how time-consuming this entire Project {sic} is to Ontario VOW- - is it most rewarding - - and will, we hope, with its minimal results (in contrast to what should be done) help to bring an end to the war in Vietnam.³¹⁸

Over time the knitting project grew to include children from Laos and Cambodia as well as children from Vietnam. Young wrote a compelling letter to Greene and other members of the Voice of Women seeking their support when Cambodian children were included as beneficiaries in the project. In her letter she thanked the Voice of Women for all their past donations and declared that, “we are sure that you will share our relief that the time has come to bring these innocent little ones under the wings of our endeavours to provide comfort and medical help to alleviate the calamitous conditions in Indochina.”³¹⁹ Young’s letter not only showed her great desire to help the young victims of the Vietnam War, it also showed her immense ability to attract people to a cause through the use of persuasion and flattery. As the letter continued;

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30, File 8. Letter to Lil Greene, Mirion May and members of the Voice of Women from Sheila Young, dated 6 October, 1972.

The extension of our efforts, first to Laos and now to Cambodia has been made possible through the consistent enthusiasm and activity of hundreds and hundreds of supporters. Without them we are helpless.

Thus, we enter the 7th year of united action with added opportunities and responsibilities. Headlines of an 'early peace' will not slacken our pace, for even if it were true we know that that blissful time will bring its aftermath of broken bodies and minds; devastated homes; contaminated croplands and other catastrophes that have constantly occurred during the reign of death and danger that the brave people have endured.

While we hear of black markets and profiteering that are flourishing by means of Aid sent to Peru and Bangladesh we are thankful to know that our gifts are being distributed equitably to those for who they were intended.

At this crucial time when 'survival' is the keynote for the children of Indochina, we are extremely grateful to know that the VOW and other friends are ready and willing to do a little extra for the children of Cambodia.³²⁰

This particular letter exemplified Young's ability to use discourse to the advantage of her humanitarian cause. In her writing, she commended the Voice of Women, and other volunteers, for their contributions to the knitting project stating that without them it would not have been possible. While this is true, Young stated the fact in a flattering tone. She noted that although headlines had been predicting a peaceful settlement to the fighting, this prediction would not diminish the hard work of the knitting project. Likewise, when mentioning the occurrence of humanitarian goods being sold on the black market, she was quick to note that the knitting project's donations are being distributed to their rightful recipients. While others might write that they must not cease their hard work, Young phrased her words in a manner implying that the reader has already declared their dedication to the project and that they had full confidence in the project to which they were contributing. Her closing statement, "we are extremely grateful to know that the VOW and other friends are ready and willing to do a little extra

³²⁰Ibid.

for the children of Cambodia” was worded to imply that the organization and its members would undoubtedly pledge their support to the growing endeavour. By phrasing her position in such a way, instead of requesting for their aid in the form of a question, Young made the possibility that the Voice of Women would turn down her request all the less likely. This was possibly Young’s intention from the onset of the letter, to appeal to the women’s conscience and their ethical side, while at the same time using guilt to persuade their decisions.

While most humanitarian aid would end following the cessation of hostilities, the Voice of Women and CAVC continued to send donations. They were aware that even if the war was over, the need for humanitarian assistance for the children of Vietnam still existed. Their need for warmth and shelter would not end as soon as a ceasefire was agreed upon. Young addressed this issue in a letter to the Voice of Women in the summer of 1973. She noted that many people questioned whether there was still a need for donations following the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam in the spring of 1973. She responded to this question by noting that “while the North is speedily reconstructing hospitals, schools, factories and homes, the long suffering people in NFL areas still must struggle against insidious violence, and brazen ‘sweeps’ of terror and arrest.”³²¹ Besides the need for essential goods, Young noted that many people could not begin providing essential food for their families because of the “vast acreage of cropland contaminated by poisonous sprays, and affected water supplies.”³²² She concluded her letter and appeal for continued help by stating “Both Cambodia & Laos have endured

³²¹ Ibid. Letter addressed to Lil Greene, Miriam May and the VOW members, from Sheila Young. Dated 25 August, 1973.

³²² Ibid.

equally intense air bombardments as did the North last winter. Yet, so far as can be ascertained assistance to them, from any source, has been extremely small.”³²³

This fact was also addressed in a press release by Young on behalf of the CAVC on 13 November, 1973 which stated;

Little publicity is given the tragic aftermath of the devastating war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, nor does there appear to be large-scale programs of Western AID to the people who face the Herculean task of rehabilitation and reconstruction. The fact that children comprise 50% of the population emphasizes the imperative need for long-term assistance to help the homeless, orphaned and wounded.

On the occasion of International Children’s Day, June 1st, Vietnamese mothers issued an urgent appeal to “Parents and lovers of children everywhere to step up material aid to the children of the three Indochinese countries.”

The 42nd shipment of the Children’s Committee of Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians is a response to that call. The 20 crates contain 3,185 garments, blankets and bandages, 465 yards of clothing material, sewing needs, school supplies, dolls, toys, surgical dressings, 4,330 pairs of eye glasses etc. with a total value of \$16,815.00

The consignment will be loaded on the Soviet M.S. ‘PARAMUSHIR’ on Wednesday, November 14th, 1973, and taken to Vietnam without charge.

During the past seven years women of Canada and the United States have made 83,000 items of children’s wear and bedding for Vietnam and Laos with an estimated worth, (material only) of \$157,236.00. Other commodities forwarded bring the value of all shipments to \$213,538.00.³²⁴

The subsequent press release of the CAVC echoed the same sentiment when released on 18 May, 1974 by stating “Reliable reports from Vietnam refute the common assumption that the war is over, and AID no longer required. While there is an uneasy peace in the North, the people of the South continue to live under precarious conditions of violence. Children reap the consequences.”³²⁵

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid. Press release number 64 of the CAVC, written by Sheila Young, dated 13 November, 1973.

³²⁵ Ibid. Press release number 65 of the CAVC, dated 18 May 1974.

In fact, while one might assume a sudden drop in humanitarian donations following peace agreement in a previously hostile area, the year following the peace agreement saw three of the CAVC's largest shipments head to Indochina. Prior to 1973, there is only one shipment on record in press releases with goods totalling over \$10,000. However, from November 1973, to September 1974, three shipments, ranging in value from \$15,450.00 to \$21,570.00 were sent by the CAVC Children's Committee.³²⁶

The strong momentum behind the knitting project did eventually begin to diminish. While the Voice of Women and the CAVC continued to provide aid to the children of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia for several years following the cessation of American-led hostilities, the time did arrive when the organizations decided their work should be completed in the region. In December of 1976, Greene responded to a letter requesting information concerning the project and the current status of its activities. The letter, addressed to Mrs. McCulloch of the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, stated that the Voice of Women had been phasing down their activity and donations to the children on Vietnam over the previous year and that they would be sending their final shipment of garments to the CAVC that month. She stated, "[i]t is now time for the Vietnamese to knit and sew their own clothes....the materials for which to be manufactured by themselves and obtained through trade with other countries in dignity."³²⁷ This exemplifies the attitude of the members of the Voice of Women, as they saw the end of the knitting project as a positive beginning for the people of Indochina.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ LAC MG 28, I 218, Vol. 27, File 3.

The following February, the Ontario Voice of Women newsletter recognized the closing of an important project, and indeed an important era within their organization.

The knitting project had brought women together during a time of unrest in the organization, and had at the same time offered a channel for women to provide measurable assistance to the victims of the Vietnam War. The newsletter read;

After ten years of active involvement in the aid to Vietnam...Ontario Voice of Women Knitting Project for Vietnamese Children completed this honourable work at the end of 1976. A grand total of 30,000 items were shipped. We are proud of our modest assistance during the agony of the years of this unjust war on the Vietnamese people. Ontario Voice of Women will continue to help the Vietnamese by cooperation with the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians-----and the next CAVC bulletin will be sent to you in order to keep you informed of how you can help. Thanks to all of you.³²⁸

From the Voice of Women's first shipment to the CAVC in September 1966 to their last shipment December 1977, the Voice of Women certainly played an essential role in the success of the CAVC knitting project for Vietnamese children. This fact was echoed by Dr. Inglis, the president of CAVC at the end of the knitting project when he wrote the Voice of Women to express his, and his organization's appreciation for all the help received from the Voice of Women over the decade-long project. He wrote:

We wish to let you know at this time how valuable the Ontario Voice of Women Knitting Project for Vietnamese Children has been to the Vietnamese since it began in 1966. We have enjoyed including your 30,000 items in our shipments to Vietnam and we wish to thank the Ontario Voice of Women for its co-operation and solidarity over the years.³²⁹

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30, File 11. Letter from A.M. Inglis to Marilyn Calmain (at the time the Voice of Women President) March 4, 1977.

Chapter 5

Different Implications of Maternal Feminism: Help from Concerned Americans

It was not only Canadians who participated in the Voice of Women knitting project by knitting and donating materials and money. There were also concerned citizens from the United States as well. Women in the United States took considerable risk in helping the Voice of Women and Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians with their cause because to help ‘the enemy’ as the North Vietnamese were at the time, was considered a crime in the United States. The United States had always prohibited offering assistance to those considered enemies. In fact, the Constitution of the United States stated that it was judged as treason to adhere to enemies of the country or to “[give] them aid and comfort.”³³⁰ This did not stop hundreds of women from becoming involved in the knitting project. A great number of Americans, mainly women, but some men, wrote the Voice of Women asking for further information on the project. Women with draft-aged sons, members of organizations that would become affiliated with the Voice of Women such as Women’s Strike for Peace, as well as the chairman of the U.S. Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam were among those who showed interested in the project.

³³⁰ *Constitution of the United States, Section 3* (The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, last updated 24 January, 2007), <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/usconst.htm> , (accessed 24 January, 2007).

That American women were willing and eager to participate in the knitting project for Vietnamese children is relevant to this study for several reasons. It reveals the means by which some women chose to show their disapproval for the Vietnam War and the lengths they were willing to go to in order to offer some level of assistance to its innocent victims. At the same time, it demonstrates that there is a link between their participation in the knitting project and the principles of maternal feminism, albeit sometimes different than those of Canadian women. Some American women participated to show their disapproval for the war in general, others to help protect the innocent victims in Vietnam (regardless of whether or not they were in the North or the South). Other women approved of the American occupation in Vietnam and saw this as a way to help protect Vietnamese children from the threat of communism, while some women misinterpreted the motivation behind the project and believed they were in fact knitting for American men fighting in Vietnam. While there were varying reasons why women were interested in participating in the knitting project for Vietnam children, all can be related to the desire for women to protect others. Meanwhile, women who were not willing to participate in the project cited their disapproval because it negated the work of American men fighting in Vietnam. They felt that by participating in such a project, it would depreciate the legitimacy of the work being done by these men, and at the same time devalue the memory of American men who had died in the war. Regardless of the reasons for participating in the project- or not participating in some cases- there is a clear link to the desire of women to care for others and use their roles as women to protect and promote life.

One individual in particular drew the attention of many participants after she mentioned the project in her popular knitting column. Pat Trexler's column, known by several names but most commonly as the "Knitters Niche" or "Pat's Pointers", was carried in many Canadian and American newspapers in the 1960s. The column gained exceptional attention from its readers regarding the knitting project for Vietnamese children. However, the relationship between Trexler and the Voice of Women would soon be severed following confusion over the intentions of the Voice of Women and the CAVC.

Pat Trexler: Exposure of the Project to the United States

In the spring of 1967, Joan Mayne, a member of the Voice of Women from Scarborough, Ontario, contacted Trexler via mail concerning the possibility that some of her readers might wish to become involved in the Voice of Women knitting project. Her letter read: "Some of the readers of your column might be interested in the knitting project of the Voice of Women in Ontario. We knit simple articles of clothing for the innocent infants and children in Vietnam. These garments are to be knit in dark colours for camouflage purposes."³³¹ Trexler, in a response to Mayne, agreed to include information about the project in the forthcoming issue of her column set to appear on 12

³³¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 27, File 1. Letter from Joan Mayne to Pat Trexler, dated 26 May 1967.

November, 1967 and went on to say, “[m]y heartiest best wishes to you and the other women engaged in this wonderful project.”³³²

The appearance of the column resulted in almost one thousand inquiries from interested and concerned readers.³³³ By 1 August, 1968, women from at least thirty-one states wrote the Voice of Women requesting more information on the project and how they could become involved.³³⁴ One woman from Seven Hills, Ohio wrote; “[s]ome of my friends and I feel this is a very worthy cause and will try to get something going on our side of the border.”³³⁵ Another woman from Ohio wrote asking for more information on the project and said there was great interest in the United States for such a project. She continued to ask how “I can start a branch of your organization here in the States, as I have ample room for groups of women who want to work on this worthwhile project.”³³⁶ It is unclear whether this individual was interested in beginning a branch of the Voice of Women in her area because of similar interests in their mandate, or if she thought they were simply a knitting organization doing this work as an extra project for the CAVC. Her letter was addressed “Dear Fellow Knitters”³³⁷, leading one to believe she was

³³² Ibid. Joan Mayne was also the convenor of the West Ellesmere United Church in Scarborough, Ontario. The letter being quoted here was dated 17 October 1967. While the readership of Pat Trexler’s column is unknown, reference was made by many American participants of the knitting project that they had first read of the project in Trexler’s columns. Some of these papers included: The Boston Herald Traveller; The Dayton Daily News; The Minneapolis Star Journal; The Cleveland Press; The Pittsburgh Press; The Greenboro North Carolina News; The San Diego Union; The Enquirer & News of Battle Creek, Michigan; The Indianapolis Star; The Beacon Journal; and The Houston Press. MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 8.

³³³ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 14, File 9.

³³⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 27, File 5. From a list on interested knitters added to a mailing list. The states included: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

³³⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 8. Undated letter from Jennie Incarvia of Seven Hills, Ohio, (replied by the Voice of Women in December 1967).

³³⁶ Ibid. Undated letter from Mary J. Mumma of Phillipsburg, Ohio.

³³⁷ Ibid. With her letter she also included one dollar. She wrote; “P.S. Enclosed money for patterns, if no charge, put it towards your costs, no need to return it to me.”

interested in forming a knitting group. The Voice of Women responded by sending her all the available patterns from the Children's Committee of the CAVC as well as the address for the *Women's Strike for Peace*, an American-based organization that did similar work as the Voice of Women, although they were not affiliated.

Along with those interested in participating were also some individuals apprehensive about who, exactly, would be receiving the garments. Several weeks after the publication of the column, Pat Trexler wrote a second letter to Joan Mayne regarding concerned letters she had received from several readers. Those readers had inquired whether the garments being produced were being sent to children in South or North Vietnam, or to both. Trexler wrote that she had not thought to ask that question prior to publication but would like to know the response so that she could accurately inform the readers who had posed the question. She wrote that "it had not dawned on me to inquire about that earlier...[m]y own personal feelings are that as long as we are helping little children it makes no difference..."³³⁸

The 'personal feelings' of Pat Trexler were somewhat different in the subsequent, and final letter sent to Mayne in March of 1968. In it she wrote;

While I still feel that you and I could probably be friends on a personal level, I must let you know that we are poles apart in our political thinking. Therefore, I am going to ask that no more of your bulletins be sent to any of my readers in the United States who have contributed knitting garments to your organization. I have received many complaints from readers who have received your bulletin. They, like myself, did not realize that your sympathies lie directly with North Vietnam and against our country.... I am having to write personally to answer each complaint. I am telling them that I was unaware of the true situation at the time that I wrote the column and that I am not in sympathy with your literature either. I sincerely hope that you will honor [sic] this request of mine and that you will also see to it that my name is in no way used in any of your literature.

³³⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 27, File 1.

P.S. Would you please also send me a list of the women who have received your bulletins to date?³³⁹

This letter seems quite presumptuous of Trexler to assume that *all* of the women who had contributed to the project as a result of reading her column in the United States would not sympathize with the cause being promoted by the organizers of the knitting project.

Although Trexler had received some letters of complaint regarding the intentions of the knitting project, there were still hundreds of women who supported the premise of the project for a variety of reasons, which will be examined in greater length in the following pages. Had the Voice of Women complied with Trexler's request that no more information be sent to American knitters who had learned of the project through her column, it would have greatly slowed the growth of the project. At the same time, it would have severed ties to hundreds of women who were willing to support the project regardless of it opposing the political position of the United States. This was also the sentiment felt by the convenor of the knitting project for the Voice of Women.

Lil Greene wrote Sheila Young a letter on 27 March, 1968, addressing the conflict that had arisen with Pat Trexler. In the letter she stated that only three letters had been received from Trexler and that the Voice of Women was under the impression, due to the severity of the third letter, that "someone has a gun to her back."³⁴⁰ Greene stated that only three women out of a total of seven hundred had written the Voice of Women asking to be removed from their mailing list following the distribution of literature by the

³³⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 2. Much of the literature sent to women in the United States and Canada mention the atrocities which were occurring in Vietnam and stated the Voice of Women's disapproval for the American intervention in Vietnam. Upon receiving this information, some women from the United States may have been offended by the literature. One such letter, distributed in late 1967, and perhaps the one in question by Trexler, noted the increase in U.S. troops being dispatched to Vietnam and the need for more assistance for the Vietnamese.

³⁴⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 24, File 18.

organization. On top of that, requests were still being received for more literature and patterns from the knitting project as a result of Trexler's column. The letter assured the CAVC representative that the Voice of Women would not be distributing their mailing list to anyone, as the names and addresses of the women involved in the program were kept confidential by the organization.³⁴¹

The discontent felt by some women in the United States was clear in letters from the three knitters wanting to be removed from the Voice of Women's mailing list, as mentioned in the letter from Greene to Young. Of those requesting to be removed from the Voice of Women's mailing list was a woman who wrote, "[p]lease remove my name from your mailing list - - if the knitting garments were for only the South Vietnamese, I would not request this. Evidently the Viet Cong are also recipients- - my husband and I do not approve."³⁴² Another woman declared, "I was not aware – that it was a communist project."³⁴³ It is unfortunate that the attitudes of some women were altered after they discovered the position of CAVC and the Voice of Women and that they did not see the project as being worthwhile once they determined that children in the North would also be receiving clothes. These changing attitudes certainly did not lessen the need of Vietnamese children for humanitarian aid, it only penalized children based on their geographical location.

It cannot be known exactly how many American women took offence to the knitting project after receiving the package of information in the mail from the Voice of Women. Certainly the three responses received by the Voice of Women represented only

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 13. Letter from Evelyn M. Carroll of Clarks Mills, Pennsylvania, dated 6 March, 1968.

³⁴³ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 14. Letter from Angus M. Frank of San Diego, California, dated 24 March, 1968.

a portion of those opposed to the political position of the knitting project's organizers. However, this brings to light a resourceful method of networking on the part of Joan Mayne. When she took it upon herself to send Pat Trexler a seemingly innocent letter regarding a Canadian women's organization sending hand-made clothing to the innocent children of Vietnam, nowhere in her letter did she indicate whether the clothing was being sent to North Vietnam, South Vietnam, or both.

This 'oversight' on the part of Mayne offered a greater assurance that her letter would be printed in Pat Trexler's column and thousands of women would become acquainted with the project who may otherwise not have had the opportunity. One can infer that Mayne's intention was to publicize the project using as little description as possible which would in turn result in a greater number of positive responses. Had Mayne informed Trexler of the position of the CAVC and the Voice of Women, Trexler's initial letter in response may have been more similar to the response found in her third letter. Her vague explanation in the column led one woman from California to question the intentions of the knitting projects organizers. She wrote in her letter to the Voice of Women, "Do the donated articles of your knitting project go only to South Vietnam, or do you also send these as aid and comfort to the enemy we are fighting, North Vietnam? Your letter was not at all clear on this point."³⁴⁴

Certainly this position was not all-encompassing in the United States. As previously mentioned, people of various backgrounds responded positively to the request for help with the knitting project from those north of the border. One woman, who in her initial letter stated "[s]urely the welfare of women and children all over the world is of

³⁴⁴ Ibid. Letter from Nancy Epperson of Del Mar California, dated 13 November, 1967.

concern to every woman”³⁴⁵, wrote for a second time to the Voice of Women after noticing the package of literature and patterns she had received was lacking a pattern for the cot blankets. In the responding letter from the Voice of Women, they noted that this was not simply an oversight, and that they had not included all the patterns in packages to the United States for fear that they would simply be discarded by American women “because we were not quite sure whether they would be willing to knit for Vietnamese babies once they received our covering letter.”³⁴⁶

With such an impressive response from the United States, one begins to question why there was such overwhelming support for the knitting project from American knitters. There are several contributing factors and theories that can be used to explain such a response. One theory which immediately comes to mind is that many women who read Trexler’s column regarding the knitting project misunderstood the intentions of the Voice of Women. This can be seen in one letter stating “Thank you for you good works. Its [sic] lifting to know some of you care to be on our side.”³⁴⁷ Another woman from Rhode Island, misinterpreted the program as a knitting project for the ‘men’ in Vietnam and wrote, “[w]ould you please send me your instructions for making articles for the men in Viet Nam. My husband is in the Navy and maybe sent to Viet Nam in the very near future. I’m sure many of my (Navy Wives) friends would like to have the [I]nstructions also. I plan on having some copies made for them.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Ibid. Letter from Clarice Hanes from New Palestine, Indiana, dated 12 November, 1967.

³⁴⁶ Ibid. Letter from Clarice Hanes from New Palestine, Indiana, dated 6 December, 1967.

³⁴⁷ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 11. Letter from Jackie Zavacky from Butler, Pennsylvania, dated 13 November 1967.

³⁴⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 9. Letter from Mrs. William O’Rourke from Middleton Rhode Island. The letter is not dated but information was sent to her by the Voice of Women on 6 December, 1967.

Misunderstanding of intentions was obviously a factor, as previously mentioned, with regards to who would receive the garment once they were completed. Likewise, this may have drawn support to the project from some women who would have otherwise not wanted to participate. For example, a woman from Connecticut, who had lost a nephew in the Vietnam War, asked for patterns to be sent and said “You can see how I am all the more interested in your project of helping the very people my nephew gave his life for.”³⁴⁹ Another woman from Ohio mentioned that she had one son serving in Vietnam and another who had just returned from service and she thought this program would provide her with a means of doing her part as well.³⁵⁰ Finally, a woman from Indianan wrote, “[w]e as girlfriends and mothers of the boys in Vietnam could do nothing better to help.”³⁵¹ Were these women so supportive of the program because they thought the aid was only going to the children of South Vietnam, or were some women willing to provide support to the children of North Vietnam as well- even though the North was considered an enemy? Perhaps some of the women who had sons serving in Vietnam were not supportive of the war and this was a way to show disapproval without voicing their political position.

This was the case for one woman from New York State whose letter, sent to the Voice of Women with a hand-knit blanket in the spring of 1968, was later used in publicity distributed by the organization to gain more support for the knitting project. It read;

³⁴⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 10. Letter from Mrs. Dorris Sharp from Groton, Connecticut, dated 20 November, 1967.

³⁵⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 12. Letter from Mrs. Ruth Biddle from Kettering, Ohio, dated 17 November 1967. She also mentioned in her letter that she was the secretary of a local Junior High School and she thought some girls in the Home Economics class might be interested in participating as well.

³⁵¹ Ibid. Letter from Jenny Burger from Fort Branch, Indiana, dated December 1967.

I had hoped that the Vietnam War would be over before I finished it [the blanket]. With it go my apologies to the mothers and children for all the barbaric crimes we have visited upon them. What insane irony—American women knitting camouflaged blankets to shelter the babies American men are dropping napalm upon! As did many millions of others, we voted for Johnson—what choice when Goldwater was the only other candidate! This time we are voting for McCarthy, and we will do no more than hope that it will finally stop. Since I have 3 draft-age sons, and the American Post Office is reporting to act as an unconstitutional censor, I am not signing this note. Thank everyone involved.³⁵²

This level of desperation and discontent for the actions of the United States was seen in several letters to the Voice of Women. Another woman from Minnesota inquired as to whether there was a Scottish counterpart for the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians as she planned “to obtain political exile in Scotland next year, because I [the author of the letter] greatly dislike my country’s involvement in the Vietnam War and especially the needless harm of Vietnam Civilians.”³⁵³ Certainly, many women in the United States were opposed to war in general, and this program provided an outlet for them to show their displeasure.

Some women, whether they supported the war in Vietnam or not, participated in the knitting project because they were upset with the effects the war was having on the children of Vietnam. Others saw it as a means to do their part for the war effort and support the effort of American boys and men fighting in the war. Regardless of whether or not their motivations for participating in the project were clearly defined in their letters to the Voice of Women, it can be concluded that many were motivated by their maternal desire to protect and shelter children.

³⁵² MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 1. The lady who wrote this letter was from Pine Plains, New York. It was dated 20 May, 1968.

³⁵³ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 12. Letter from Joan Axtell from Minneapolis, Minnesota, dated 15 November, 1967.

Continued Growth in the United States: Anne Hardy

While the Voice of Women knitting project seemed to offend some women in the United States, there were a larger number of American women who were willing to offer their time and their efforts to the project. Perhaps of greatest importance to the growth of the knitting project on American soil was the time and effort contributed by Anne Hardy from Rochester, New York. Hardy, a member of the Rochester branch of *Women Strike for Peace* had become active in the knitting project in early 1968 and soon after became the unofficial convenor of the knitting project in the United States.³⁵⁴ Over time, Hardy's participation with the project grew, as did the time commitments required to help oversee such a vast project and the obstacles that arose.

Members of the Rochester branch of *Women Strike for Peace* had begun knitting for the Voice of Women's knitting project in the spring of 1968. Anne Hardy, an active participant in the peace movement in the United States was soon named the unofficial convenor of the knitting project for the United States and began to receive countless requests for information from women all across the country. As the mother of three draft-age sons, her disdain for the Vietnam War was evident in much of the correspondence between herself, Greene, and knitters in the United States. In response to a letter from Greene concerning American women's participation in the knitting project Hardy responded: "You're right that U.S. women should show more concern, and you can start right here in Rochester."³⁵⁵

³⁵⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 15.

³⁵⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 7.

Greene soon began handing off much of the duties of the Canadian convenor to Hardy once it was decided that she would play a more active role in the knitting project. Letters from women in the United States interested in participating in the knitting project were forwarded to Hardy for response. In a letter to an interested knitter in New York, Greene wrote; “[t]here is now a very active U.S. Knitting Group...who work in cooperation with our Canadian group...and we use the same patterns. The convenor of this U.S. group is Mrs. Duane Hardy, 150 Varian Lane, Rochester, 14624, N.Y.”³⁵⁶ Similarly, in another letter to an interested participant Hardy concurred with Greene by writing; “Rochester Women Strike for Peace has been working with Mrs. Greene’s group for a number of months. We have mimeographed the Canadian patterns, but have written them up in terms of U.S. needles and yarn.”³⁵⁷

It was hoped that Hardy’s contribution to the knitting project would help to ease the difficulties felt when sending items and correspondence over the Canadian/American border. The Voice of Women sent the following correspondence to knitters in the United States that contacted the organization for information pertaining to the project;

Under the circumstances of the law in your country forbidding “aid to the enemy”, we do not solicit help from citizens of the United States. Nevertheless, when contributions are sent voluntarily, they are accepted in the spirit of humanitarianism for the welfare of these unfortunate victims. There is now a Knitting Committee in the U.S.A. which operates in cooperation with our project. The coordinator is Mrs. Duane Hardy, 150 Varian Lane, Rochester, New York, 14624, of Rochester Women Strike for Peace.³⁵⁸

Hardy also addressed the issue of shipping packages in a letter to a concerned American knitter. She noted that she and other women had initially sent packages to Canada via

³⁵⁶ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 15. Letter to Mrs. Clifford Zigler of Rochester, New York from Lil Greene, 10 June, 1968.

³⁵⁷ Ibid. Letter to Margaret A. Stites of Higgamen, Connecticut from Anne Hardy, dated 3 May, 1968.

³⁵⁸ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 7.

first class mail because they did not require attached declarations as did other forms of mail. She explained:

I did not send them in envelopes, I used small boxes. But, of course, sending them this way was expensive, because we had to pay at the rate of 6 [cents] an ounce. Later, as we got up more courage to send larger packages, we shifted to parcel post. This cost \$1.30 for the first pound, but only 30 [cents] a pound after that. This week- hold your breath, as I am- we shipped out largest package yet- just over five pounds. I am really anxious to hear of the safe arrival of this one. It contained many blanket squares, some booties, and 13 sweaters. I marked it "Gift" but wonder if they won't notice that that could hardly be a gift for one baby.³⁵⁹

Indeed, these fears of parcels being stopped at the border were not unjustified.

In a letter to Greene in May 1969, Sheila Young mentioned that she had written Hardy with advice on instructing donors how to assist parcels crossing the border into Canada. She noted that if the parcel was marked 'gift' and the value was estimated at less than 10 dollars (preferably 5 dollars if possible), it decreased of possibility of questioning by customs.³⁶⁰ When parcels were apprehended by customs, it was not only of concern to the individual shipping the parcel, but also to the individual to whom the parcel was addressed. By not indicating the shipment was being received by an organization, and instead was a gift for an individual, the chances of customs officers implicating individuals in 'aiding the enemy' were far less than if a parcel was shipped directly to an organization, specifically if the organization was called Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians. Hardy had informed American knitters of the situation and instructed them on the proper procedures to follow, as described to Greene by a knitter in New Jersey who,

³⁵⁹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 31, File 15. Letter to June McShean of Clinton, Iowa from Anne Hardy, dated 12 July, 1968.

³⁶⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 16. Letter from Sheila Young to Lil Greene, dated 9 May 1969.

along with a shawl included a letter stating she “addressed it to you [Lil Greene] without any organization mentioned. (I received directions from Mrs. Hardy).”³⁶¹

Even with clarification on preferred shipping procedures, some individuals did not correctly mark their parcels from the United States destined to Canada. Young referred to one such instance in a letter to Greene. She wrote, “One dear soul valued the parcel at \$55.00, and no gift marked—This meant about \$22.00-all told- [for customs fees]. After getting the head man to speak with me I got them down to [\$]9.85. I do not want to get the donors in trouble.”³⁶² However, receiving so many parcels from the United States could also have negative implications for Young (or Greene, depending on who was receiving the parcels). In the same letter to Greene, Young confessed that “It is quite embarrassing to get them from [c]ustoms because I cannot say anything about Vietnam, and with so many coming at once they question me about what they are being used for.”³⁶³

In September 1970, Joan Mayne sent a letter to Hardy mentioning that a parcel from the United States had been opened at the border because there was no declaration tag attached. Because of this, a 35-dollar duty was charged to the Voice of Women upon retrieving the parcel. Hardy responded to Greene regarding Mayne’s inquiry about the parcel by saying that the contents of the box were not worth more than \$8.35 and wondered, “if perhaps the tag was lost in the process of shipping- otherwise I am at a loss

³⁶¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 15. Letter from Winifred Hearn from Basking Ridge, New Jersey to Lil Greene, dated 24 October, 1968.

³⁶² MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 16. Letter from Sheila Young to Lil Greene, dated 9 May, 1969.

³⁶³ Ibid.

to know why the \$35 valuation is. Maybe it's an arbitrary amount they put on when they can't figure out the value."³⁶⁴

The incidents of proper shipping procedures not being followed could have occurred for several reasons. Individuals from the United States may have heard about the knitting project through various channels, not necessarily through Anne Hardy, Sheila Young, Lil Greene or Joan Mayne, and in those cases may not have been informed of proper procedures to follow. As previously mentioned, there was evidently much confusion from some American knitters over the intentions of the program. Many women who were making donations were under the impression that the clothing was being shipped only to children in South Vietnam and not to children in North Vietnam. Therefore, there would have been no need to address the parcels in an anonymous manner. As far as these women were concerned, they were not aiding the enemy, but instead assisting allies of the United States.

With the dangers attached to being involved in the knitting project, Hardy certainly took many risks in order to promote and facilitate the project for the Voice of Women, an organization to which she did not have any affiliation. At the same time, her contribution to the program seemed to be challenged by members of her own organization, *Women Strike for Peace*. In a letter to Greene, Hardy addressed the conflict she had with participating in the knitting project soon after she had become involved. She confided that some of the women involved in *Women Strike for Peace* disapproved of the amount of time Hardy had been devoting to the knitting project since it was not directly linked to their own organization. In response, Greene wrote:

³⁶⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 7. Letter from Anne Hardy to Lil Greene, dated 5 September, 1970.

I am in exactly the same boat as far as [Ontario Voice of Women] is concerned with the Knitting Project....."I seem to be a stepchild" too...and "it annoys me" also....but this is much bigger than personalities....and I know that it not only has resulted in new members of VOW and etc....but.....it is worth all the efforts from this dining room.³⁶⁵

While Greene could undoubtedly understand the amount of time required to organize such a large endeavour as the knitting project, as she was the main organizer of the project for the Voice of Women in Canada, she did not seem to comprehend that the situation she was in was far different from that of Hardy. While both women were dedicating much of their life to the project in order to create some optimistic change for the children of Vietnam, Hardy was doing so with no affiliation to the Voice of Women and in turn taking time away that could be spent on other humanitarian/*Women Strike for Peace* activities, of which she seemed to be quite active prior to her involvement with the knitting project.

On one occasion, Hardy confided in Greene that members of the *Women Strike for Peace* had informed her that they "feel I [Anne Hardy] should handle all requests that come directly to me as a result of my own promotions with peace groups and referrals from people who are already participating; they feel that you should handle requests that come directly to you."³⁶⁶ The issue of who would bear the costs was also an issue raised by Hardy on behalf of her organization. She suggested that she could provide the Voice of Women with copies of the U.S. patterns (those altered to adhere to U.S. needle and wool standards) to be inserted in packages intended for American knitters, or instead send a letter to interested American knitters informing them to send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Hardy in which case she would forward them the patterns and information on

³⁶⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 8. Letter from Lil Greene to Anne Hardy, dated 4 March, 1969.

³⁶⁶ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 7. Letter from Anne Hardy to Lil Greene, 1 October, 1968.

the project. She concluded that “[t]his would cut down on our costs as well as eliminate the duplication on those who aren’t going to knit anyhow after they learn the “truth.””³⁶⁷

The number of requests Hardy received for information pertaining to the knitting project continued to grow once news of the endeavour became wider in circulation. Not long after beginning her work for the knitting project, Hardy wrote Greene a letter explaining how her own actions had caused a sudden surge of interest in the program:

Had quite a surprise last week. My item telling about the beginning of our local knitting project was printed in the December issue of the Rochester Peace Newsletter. Without consultation with me, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (a pacifist organization to which my husband and I belong) picked up the item and reprinted it in their national publication (circulation around 17,000, if I remember correctly). So I have begun to get all sorts of inquiries from all over the United States. Two letters included money; a package arrived with yarn and all sorts and sizes of needles, etc. Many of them write very enthusiastically and are eager to help. But the problem is, or course, that I have to explain about the McCarran act and the risks that are involved. I had an inquiry locally from a church group three weeks ago, but I lost them when they learned that “enemy” children were involved. Of course, in all fairness, I must recognize that perhaps they were afraid of running afoul with the law, rather than that they didn’t want to help the babies.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid. Letter from Anne Hardy to Lil Greene, dated 4 March, 1968. Senator Pat McCarren of Nevada was a key participant in the *Internal Security Act of 1950* which was enacted to monitor the activities of people considered to be members of or assisting a communist organization. Because of this Act, there was fear that participants of the knitting project from the United States could potentially be named as a supporter of a communist organization as the Voice of Women and Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians was providing assistance to a communist country. Under the Act, American citizens could be considered violator of the Act had they: “(1)...been listed to his [or her] knowledge as a member in any book or any of the lists, records, correspondence, or any other document of the organization; (5) Has acted as an agent, courier, messenger, correspondent, organizer, or in any other capacity in behalf of the organization; (10) Has mailed, shipped, circulated, distributed, delivered, or in any other way sent or delivered to others material or propaganda of any kind in behalf of the objectives and purposes of the organization; (12) Has indicated by word, action, conduct, writing or in any other way a willingness to carry out in any manner and to any degree the plans, designs, objectives, or purposes of the organization; or (13) Has in any other way participated in the activities, planning, action, objectives, or purposes of the organization.” Many of the activities of participant in the knitting project could have been interpreted as falling under any or all of these violations. Office of the Law Revision Counsel, U.S. House of Representatives, 50 United States Code, Section 844, Title 50, War and National Defense, Chapter 23, Internal Security, Subchapter IV, <http://uscode.house.gov/uscode-cgi/fastweb.exe?getdoc+uscview+t49t50+1747+11++%28%29%20%20>, (accessed 24 February 2007).

This was not the only instance where a surge in requests for information on the knitting project occurred in the United States. In September 1968, a voice from the past resurfaced and again began to create problems for the Voice of Women's humanitarian effort while at the same time producing more interest amongst American knitters. A newspaper in Detroit, Michigan, which had not been publishing newspapers due to a strike, had inadvertently published the Pat Trexler column that had sparked much controversy earlier that year throughout the United States. Due to the reprinting of the column, the Voice of Women office was again inundated with requests from American knitters. Greene informed Hardy of the situation and the controversy that arose once Trexler became aware of the reprinted column. Greene wrote that Trexler had contacted the women's editor of the newspaper and informed her that the Voice of Women had "misled her.... [regarding] what kind of an organization we are (as if she knows)....and the horrible Communist propaganda we have been sending to the readers..."³⁶⁹

The women's editor, after receiving this news from Trexler, had phoned the Voice of Women's office in Toronto urgently seeking more information on the organization and the project. She was desperate for answers for fear that her actions might result in the loss of her job. The Voice of Women's secretary, Lil Zaremba, spoke to the editor and "promised that Mrs. Greene would send her a copy of the "horrible communist" materials.....Sufficed to say.....the women's editor is in a stew....Trexler too....and the FBI are on their backs... And [now the Voice of Women has] letters waiting and arriving requesting patterns."³⁷⁰ Even with the controversy that arose from time to time with

³⁶⁹ Ibid. Letter from Lil Greene to Anne Hardy, dated 12 September, 1968. The newspaper in question here is the Detroit Free Press, who's Women's Editor at the time was Dorothy Journey, (as stated in a letter to Lil Greene from Dorothy Journey dated 24 September, 1968.) MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 1.

³⁷⁰ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 7. Letter from Lil Greene to Anne Hardy, dated 12 September, 1968.

regards to the knitting project in the United States, Greene always kept her role as the convenor and the objective of the project in mind; that of recruiting a large network of knitters to support the project and in turn produce the greatest amount of knit articles for the children of Vietnam. Although Trexler and the women's editor were uneasy about how they had become involved in the knitting project, their actions had resulted in a greater awareness about the project and an influx of letters from women willing to support.

While this incident could have caused greater problems for the Voice of Women in the United States, and for Hardy as the key individual of contact, it instead resulted in another contact for the organization in the United States. Upon receiving literature regarding the Voice of Women and the knitting project, Dorothy Journey, the Women's Editor for the Detroit Free Press, responded to Greene and thanked her for the information and added, "I hope the day will come when we can separate sincere democratic drives to end all wars and eliminate arms races without being called communist."³⁷¹ While Journey agreed with the motives of the Voice of Women and their role in providing aid for the Vietnamese, there was little she could do to offer her support without facing repercussions, a position that was undoubtedly felt by countless individuals across the United States.

Events such as the reprinting of Trexler's column by the Detroit Free Press and the inclusion of Hardy's article in the Fellowship of Reconciliation publication caused an increase in the amount of people aware of the project in the United States, and it also increased the time dedicated to the project by Hardy. Over time, Hardy became frustrated with her role as the convenor in the United States. This frustration can be observed in the

³⁷¹ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 1.

correspondence between Hardy and Greene as Hardy became more and more overwhelmed with the level of support required to keep the knitting project in working order in the United States. At the same time, the expectations set upon her by the Voice of Women also seemed to increase, perhaps beyond what should have been expected from an individual who was not even a member of the organization. At one point, Greene asked Hardy if she had mentioned the knitting project to the *Women Strike for Peace* on the national level, to which Hardy responded “No, I haven’t told Washington WSP about the project. I have been a little timid about publicizing, because I know how these things can grow, and I try to be a bit realistic in the evaluation of my own time.”³⁷² On another occasion, Hardy admitted that she was overwhelmed by the amount of time she was dedicating to the project and declared; “Lil, as much as I would like to, it is impossible for me to do any promoting on the knitting project.”³⁷³

This feeling of frustration on the part of Hardy came to a head in December of 1969 when she wrote a letter to Greene voicing her concerns about her role as the convenor of the knitting project in the United States:

About your request to help from here.I am certainly not saying “no” to you, but not an unqualified “yes” either- I would simply have to judge at the time. In this connection, Lil, I think we should long ago have defined my role. We just drifted into my being the coordinator in the U.S., as you know, without discussing it, but I think maybe we still should. In your letter of October 27th, you said you planned on sending a copy of the Visit Report to each knitter that you have a record of, and “will not burden you with this task.” This is exactly what I mean about defining my role. Lil, I do work with my local peace groups, and thus this is my local medium, not VOW. I am not an arm of the VOW, I am an arm of the knitting project. The Visit was a VOW project, not a knitting project activity per se. I have read the Visit Report carefully and there is no direct reference to the knitting project in it. The report is beautiful, and VOW has a right to be proud of it and the whole Visit. And if they want to publicize it to

³⁷² MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 7. Letter from Anne Hardy to Lil Greene, dated 14 July, 1968.

³⁷³ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 8. Letter from Anne Hardy to Lil Greene, dated 5 April, 1969.

people in the U.S., they certainly have the choice, and they may have my list of knitters if they like. But to my mind, it's not my function in my capacity as a knitting project coordinator. Sure, it's all one peace movement, I agree, But I AM doing what I hope is my part here in Rochester, and have to limit my connection to "outside" peace groups accordingly. A completely VOW function, such as the mailing of a report on its summer project (the Visit), has to be covered, it seems to me, by VOW resources in manpower and funds. I can't possibly participate fully in every good movement with which I agree, and direct work on the knitting project is my level of participation outside my local area. I just can't be coordinator for anything more than the knitting project, and I'm genuinely sorry if that angers you.³⁷⁴

Although the relationship between Hardy and Greene seemed to become strained over time, it is undeniable that the dedication and advice provided by Hardy to the knitting project accomplished a great deal more than could have been expected without such help. Hardy, through her hard work and networking, was able to ensure a greater success for the knitting project and maintain the activity of knitters who may have otherwise been fearful of being implicated in a 'communist scheme'. Indeed, this insight into the American psyche helped her Canadian counterparts understand the mindset of many of the American contributors. For example, in February 1969, Greene had approached Hardy about whether the CAVC newsletters should be distributed to American knitters of the project as it was to Canada knitters. Hardy's response to Greene, although it may seem severe, does offer insight into the division between Americans during the Vietnam War (as was discussed in the previous section), but at the same time appears to justify the actions of the Voice of Women and their approach to dealing with many American knitters. She wrote:

I'm not sure you will approve of my opinion....But personally, I wouldn't do it if the choice were mine. I think you have to decide whether you want to put your opinions about the war and the U.S.'s abhorrent actions into the hands of your U.S. knitters and thereby "turn off" some of them; or

³⁷⁴ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 7. Letter from Anne Hardy to Lil Greene, dated 8 December, 1969.

whether you want knitted garments for the babies. Some of these women who write to me are unbelievable, they're so damn naïve. I had a letter from a woman in Alaska who joyously told me about the number of flights that are going to Vietnam daily from the air base near her, and that she wanted to help too. Another one, received this week, told of the death of her only son in Vietnam last year. She said, "He only had 2 months there to try and spread the good word and help those needy people." These are the people who simply don't get the point when, in our literature, we say that the garments go to children in all parts of Vietnam. I'm sure they take it to mean all parts of South Vietnam. However, since I have been honest, and also told them in the literature about "trading with the enemy," I feel that's enough. So it boils down to the question if you want to make propaganda, even peace propaganda, and possibly lose some knitters; or simply acknowledge their knitted goods with thanks and keep the garments coming in. Now, I admit that perhaps I don't have enough faith in people; maybe they do know the score. I do have letters from women who express their deep disturbance with what the government is doing. These would present no problem....So that's my opinion, and I hope you feel free to ignore it if you wish.³⁷⁵

Anne Hardy, during her time as the convenor of the knitting project for the United States offered her time and expertise as a peace activist selflessly to an organization to which she was not a member. By doing so, she provided necessary insight into what motivated many American women and the course the Voice of Women should pursue to receive the greatest level of support from American knitters. She was an indispensable element to the success of the program in the United States, and at the same time took many risks in offering her time to the project, which could have been a detriment to herself, her family and her association with women in *Women Strike for Peace*. Beyond that of the support from Anne Hardy, and the networking that had occurred as a result of Pat Trexler's column, there was strong support from individuals in the United States eager to get involved with the Voice of Women.

Throughout the knitting project, the effects of women's maternal desires to help other manifested itself in several very different manners. The motivations felt by all

³⁷⁵ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 32, File 8. Letter from Anne Hardy to Lil Greene, dated 9 February, 1969.

women towards the project were not universal as seen in many letters written by American women regarding the project, however, women's strong desire to support others was felt in all the cases examined. Many American women were supportive of the knitting project because they saw it as an essential and worthwhile humanitarian aid effort. Others saw the project as a way to show their disapproval for the Vietnam War in a way that would offer assistance to those most affected by the war; Vietnamese children. Some women, while offering to assist with the project, seemed to misunderstand the intentions of the Voice of Women and instead saw the project as a pro-American endeavour and a means of supporting their troops. Finally, there were the women in the United States who opposed the project completely and saw the efforts of the Voice of Women as that of an anti-American organization. By opposing the organization and the project, they were not declaring their lack of desire to help children in Vietnam, but instead declaring their support for the American troops sent to fight in the war. They feared that by supporting such a program, they would in effect be opposing the role of the Americans in Vietnam, and making the deaths of thousands of American soldiers appear in vain.

Whatever the motivating factors which lead to so many American women contributing to the knitting project of the Voice of Women, it can be concluded that most did so with the desire to help those less fortunate and provide some level of protection to others. Whether it be women opposing the Vietnam War; girlfriends or mothers confused with the intentions of the project and assuming they were knitting for American soldiers; or women assuming the clothing was being sent only to children of South Vietnam, all donations were made under the premise that they would be helping others. This desire to

help others, regardless of the motivating factors, is closely linked to the women in Canada who donated to the same project but may have done so for very different reasons.

Conclusions

Throughout the duration of the Voice of Women's involvement in the knitting project, the members of the Voice of Women were able to draw on their roles as mothers to obtain support for their efforts and in turn, gain more support for the peace movement in Canada. As Sara Ruddick wrote, "Women who organize themselves in peace groups often draw upon images of maternity to explain their commitment and urge it on others."³⁷⁶ Indeed, the Voice of Women is a prime example of the way in which an organization did appeal to the images of motherhood and maternity as a means to gain support for its cause: that of its opposition to the Vietnam War, and showing who the real victims of the war were, the Vietnamese children.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the Voice of Women's participation in the knitting project, along with Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians. Firstly, that the Voice of Women promoted and conveyed the knitting project in a way that centred on the maternal desires of women to protect life and make the world a safer place in which future generations could live. This concern had been a central goal of the Voice of Women since its inauguration as an organization in 1960, and by again focusing the knitting project on the desire of women to preserve life it were able to maintain a constant level of support from women all across Canada and the United States.

³⁷⁶ Ruddick, "Perspective Love and Military Destruction," 232.

The organizers of the knitting project for the Voice of Women focused on the maternal instincts of mothers through the project in several ways. Primarily, it did so by focusing on most women's ingrained desire to help others, especially children. Much of the literature distributed to interested knitters was written in such a way that it would draw sympathy from its readers, especially women who were concerned with the preservation of life. After reading statements such as, "[t]o these Vietnamese little ones the sun and blue sky do not signify warmth and beauty, but rather danger and death,"³⁷⁷ women would be eager to learn how they could help to alleviate some of the suffering of these children. Likewise, the organization focused on gaining support through the media, and specifically through columns more frequently read by women rather than men. By sending calls for assistance to columnists such as Elizabeth Thompson and Pat Trexler, the Voice of Women helped to ensure the greatest number of women would be exposed to the knitting project. Indeed, simply participating in a project of this nature, one centred on providing clothing for children in need of humanitarian assistance, plays heavily on women's desires to preserve life and promote an atmosphere of peace and a safe world in which children can grow.

Members of the Voice of Women also drew on their roles as women and mothers to gain support for the knitting project. Participation in this project differed from some of their other more vocal efforts of opposing the Vietnam War, such as staging hunger strikes and presenting statements of disapproval to the House of Commons in Ottawa. While these forms of activism attracted much support, the more moderate members of the Voice of Women were drawn to a project which relied on their skills as mothers as a

³⁷⁷ MG 28, I 218, Vol. 30. File 11. Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians leaflet entitled "Guide lines for volunteer participants in the knitting and sewing project to make garments and bed covers for the children of Vietnam."

means of voicing their opposition to the Vietnam War. Not only could participants contribute to a worthwhile cause for children of severe poverty, they could do so and remain in their roles as mothers and wives; roles that were still considered of the utmost importance in 1960s Canadian-society. To participate in a peace organization and vocally show opposition of a political issue could prove to have negative implications to ones family, a risk many women were not willing to take at the time. Instead, to be a member of a women's organization that was knitting for less fortunate children would be more acceptable to neighbours and friends, not to mention ones husband.

That being said, one must agree that the participation of the Voice of Women in the knitting project for Vietnamese children was a highly political statement. Regardless of whether participants were vocally declaring their opposition to the Vietnam War in demonstrations, or silently protesting the war through knitting garments for the innocent victims, members of the Voice of Women were clearly denouncing Canada's and United States' roles in the war. The knitting project itself was a political statement regarding the injustices of the United States' Government imposed upon the civilians of Vietnam. It brought to light the excessive force being inflicted on people that did not have sufficient means to defend themselves and most importantly, demonstrated that it was not those fighting the war who were the main victims of the American force, but instead the defenceless civilians.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the Voice of Women's knitting project did much to promote their opposition to the American occupation of Vietnam. As mentioned, women in Canada in the 1960s were still considered to have a primary role as caregiver to her children and husband. At the same

time, women were becoming more concerned with political issues that had an impact on the world in which their children would be raised. The knitting project became a way for women to provide assistance to children in need, but it also became a channel through which the Vietnam War could be communicated. Homemakers and mothers, a segment of society who had not previously been associated with being as familiar with current events and political issues in the world as males, could now learn about the situation in Vietnam and at the same time remain within their typical societal roles.

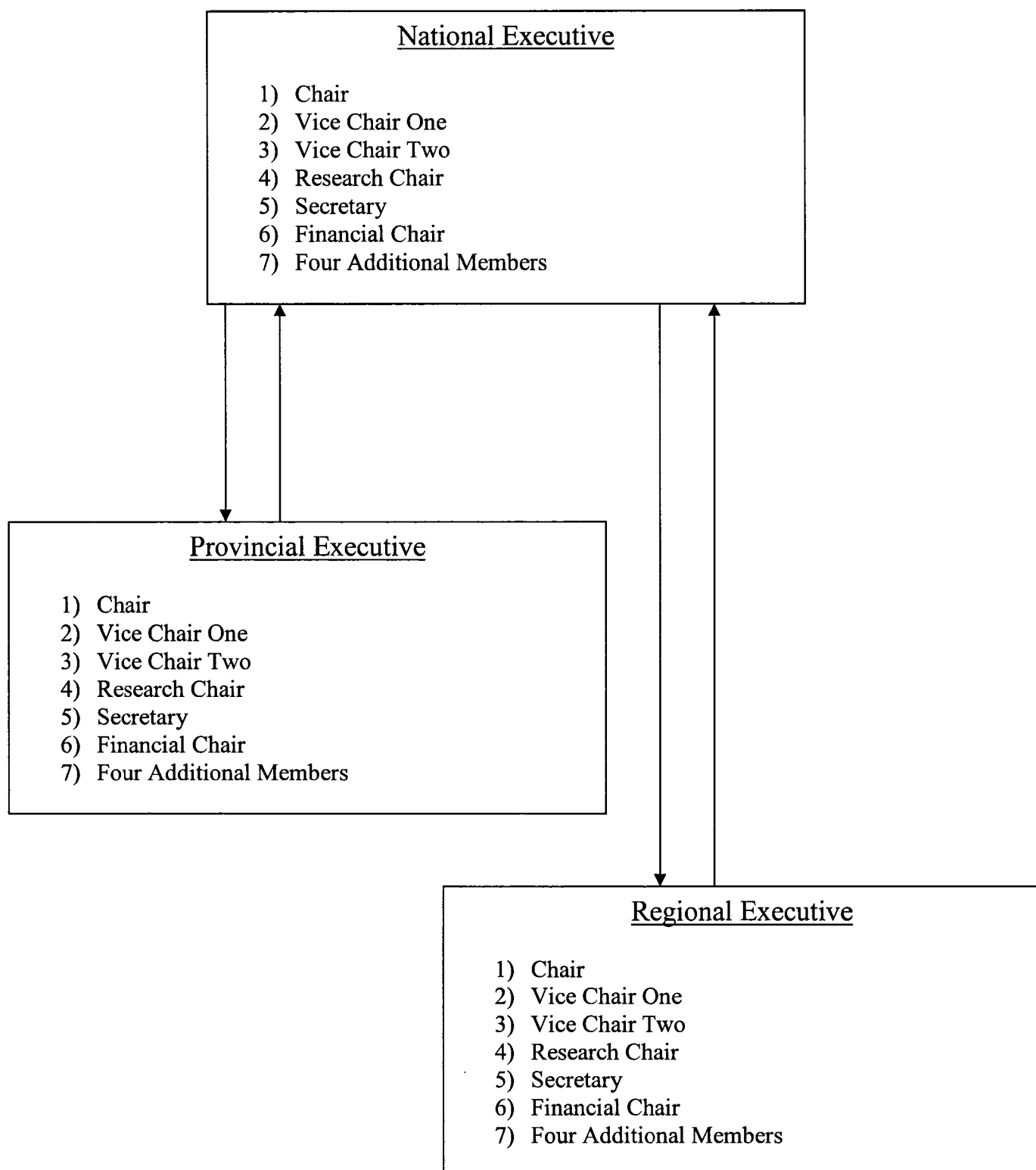
The Voice of Women's participation in the knitting project also facilitated the integration of women from the United States into the project. By promoting the humanitarian project in the United States, the Voice of Women was able to attract a much larger network of donors and volunteers, and at the same time gain much needed administrative help from an American counterpart. With the addition of Anne Hardy of Rochester, New York as the convenor of the knitting project for the United States, the Voice of Women was able to decrease some of the administrative duties of Lil Greene of the Ontario branch. Likewise, with the risks associated with sending packages from the United States to Canada for such a cause, Hardy was able to offer assistance and pointers for knitters in the States, and reduce the chances of American knitters being accused of aiding the enemy.

It was not only the increase in knitters to the project which made American participation an essential part of the knitting project, but also the different connotation these women's participation had on the role of maternal feminism and the project. While the participation of Canadian women in the knitting project was directly associated with their desire to offer protection to the children of Vietnam, the motives which impelled

many American women to participate were not as easily decipherable. As seen from a variety of letters, the project evoked many different motivating factors from women all across the United States, all of which can be closely related to maternal feminism. From women wanting to provide assistance to the project regardless of whether the goods being sent were destined for South or North Vietnam, to women who adamantly voiced their disapproval of the project because it negated the jobs of American men fighting in Vietnam, all women showed a keen desire to provide protection of some variation to someone other than themselves.

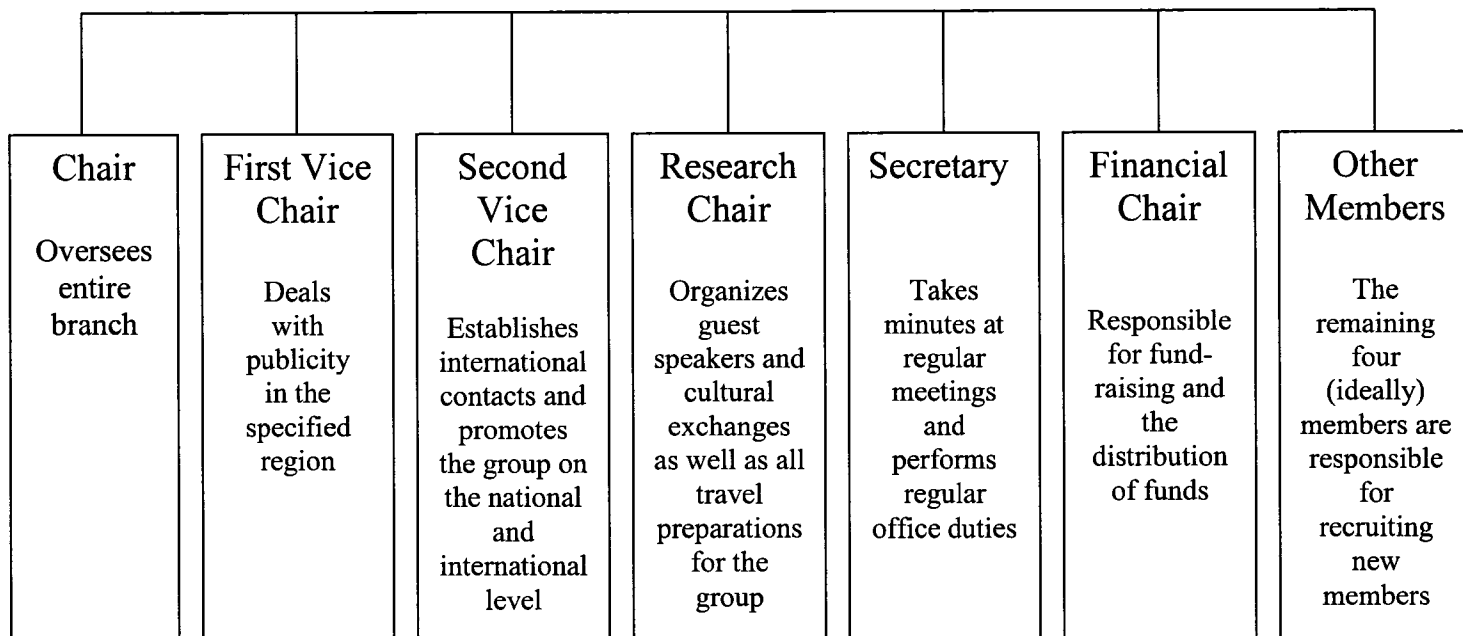
By participating in the knitting project, the Voice of Women was able to show its disdain for the Vietnam War in an atypical manner, while at the same time expressing the great need for humanitarian aid in the war-torn country. Whether or not the organization was successful at gaining support in their effort to condemn the Vietnam War from all those who participated was not the primary concern for the Voice of Women. Throughout the duration of the knitting project, the organization hoped to offer a solution for the suffering of the Vietnamese and provide some comfort, while at the same time show their disapproval for the war, however, their main goal was achieved, to offer a measurable form of assistance to others in need and help create a better environment for all children of the world.

APPENDIX 1: An example of the lines of communication between the national, provincial, and regional levels of the Voice of Women.



APPENDIX 2:

Executive*



*

This is an example of the proposed framework for one division of the organization. A similar framework was expected to be used for all levels of the Voice of Women, be it on the national, provincial, or municipal level.

As mentioned in chapter two, the representatives of each of the provincial and municipal branches would be in contact with their counterparts on the national level, ensuring that communication remained open between all members of the organization. Although the ideal size for each group was estimated to be approximately ten members, many groups surpassed this number, specifically in urban areas.

APPENDIX 3:

Dr. Helen Caldicott's call to women for non-violence battle, as found in Sara Ruddick's "Preservative Love and Military Destruction: Some Reflections on Mothering and Peace" in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*.

A Women's Party for Survival is being organized throughout the US and women all over the world are mobilizing for disarmament....Women have tremendous power. As mothers we must make sure the world is safe for our babies...Look at the changing seasons...Look at our growing children. Look at one child, one baby...I have three children. I live with grieving parents. I understand the value of every human life...We have only a short time to turn the destructive powers around. A short time. I appeal especially to the women to do this work because we understand the genesis of life. Our bodies are built to nurture life. We have wombs, we have breasts, we have menstrual periods to remind us that we can produce life! We also have a voice in the affairs of the world and are becoming more influential every day. I beg of you: do what you can today.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁸ Ruddick, "Preservative Love and Military Destruction," 231. Originally printed in the War Resisters League Calendar, 1981.

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