



# The United Church of Canada General Council

## GC29 The Search for Peace in the Eighties-Statement (1982S262)

True Document Date

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### Report Excerpts

#### Statement on Disarmament and Militarization

This policy statement on the issue of peace and disarmament has been prepared in response to the specific call of the 28th General Council to “recognize the escalation of the arms race, to study the complex issues involved, including the assumptions, values and life-styles giving rise to this escalation, to consider these issues in the light of scripture, doctrine and personal favour...to speak and act clearly, prophetically and courageously on this subject in a way which is faithful to our understanding of Shalom in which Peace, and Justice are linked...” (1980 ROP, p. 923)

Disarmament and its shadow-side, militarization, are symptoms of a fundamental insecurity that threatens the survival of all people. Other symptoms threatening people are related to the military threat: poverty, hunger, oppression, environmental

deterioration, depletion of natural resources, population explosions, and so on. Therefore, disarmament and militarization cannot be left to the people who analyze military strategy or plan defence budgets. Nor can it be treated as just one problem among many.

The effort to create a security built on justice for all must move out of the narrow context where it has been confined for too long and into the broader context of the struggle to discern and respond to the concrete signs of the kingdom of God appearing among us. Those who actively seek disarmament and peace in our time need to see themselves as partners with those who work on the other symptoms of insecurity. Those who seek security based on justice are part of a common cause whose adherents are all dedicated to the survival of our race.

Peace is the heart of the gospel. Christians acknowledge that they have peace with God and with all humanity, for whom our Lord died. Therefore, peace and peace-making are central to the life of Christians. In our time, we take particular note of the need for peace among nations and of the need to put into abeyance the differences among us that prevent us from seeking peace with one another.

Peace-making is a way of life, involving not only opposition to the arms race, but also relations with other faiths which share that ideal. As Christians and as a church we need to develop relations with people of non-Christian faiths, as well as with agnostics and atheists. In those relationships, the ideal of peace-making must be rendered very concrete in joint work against the arms race, which for Christians runs counter to the gospel.

## **Recommendation**

### **Spirituality for Peacemaking**

In putting forth these action proposals, we are calling first and foremost for a deep and spiritual awakening within our church; we are calling United Church people at all levels of the church to become involved in the intensive exploration through prayer, Bible study and Christian fellowship, of our spiritual roots for peacemaking. This will lead us to an examination of all facets of peace; its spiritual, psychic, social, political, economic and cultural aspects. It should lead us to understand "Shalom." It will

lead us to a deeper sense of Christian unity and to harmony with people of other world faiths. It will also lead us to a deeper awareness of the need for a new ordering of society, initiated, preferably, by the United Nations, seeking justice in social, economic and political aspects of our common life.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND:

A. TO THE CHURCH

1. THAT we wholeheartedly endorse the "Canada as a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone" campaign of Project Ploughshares; that we commend this program to the congregations for study/action/reflection; and that we increase our financial support for Project Ploughshares;
2. THAT the Division of Mission in Canada explore the feasibility of appointing a Church Advocate for Peace and Disarmament. This person is to travel throughout Canada, promoting concern for peace and disarmament, and working in close liaison with Project Ploughshares;
3. THAT theological professors of Christian ethics be encouraged in the next biennium to place a priority on peace and conflict studies in undergraduate, graduate and continuing education programs;
4. THAT United Church representatives within the Canadian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches give full support to ecumenical priorities being given to peace and disarmament concerns;
5. THAT the United Church encourage church involvement in exchange programs, especially with eastern bloc countries and underdeveloped countries;
6. THAT the presbyteries and conferences of The United Church of Canada initiate Community Conversion Committees in cooperation with other denominations, and with representatives of labour, business and

government to redirect military spending to the serving of human need;

7. THAT the United Church commend to its members for moral and financial support the following organizations and areas of peace and disarmament work in which church people are already active and resources available:

a. the "Noon-Day Prayer Vigil for Peace," including observation of the Peace Sabbath during UN-designated Disarmament Week (24 October-31 October);

b. the Peace Tax Fund;

c. the Pacific Life Community's campaign to stop Trident;

d. the Cruise Missile Conversion Project;

e. the campaigns for a Nuclear-Free Pacific and for a Nuclear-Free Arctic;

f. the Operation Dismantle's campaign for a Global Referendum.

## B. TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

1. THAT all private sector production for cruise missiles be phased out, and gradually converted to non-military production;

## C. TO THE GOVERNMENT

1. THAT the United Church affirm our conviction that the government needs to issue a White paper on Defence and External Affairs, clearly expounding positive and realistic Canadian initiatives to strengthen our role as peacemaker;

2. THAT the United Church urge enactment of legislation, permitting re-direction of taxes from expenditures on armaments to peace research, education and action programs;
3. THAT there be a full review of current mechanisms for controlling export of military goods;
4. THAT the United Church urge much-expanded government funding for cultural and educational exchanges both in East and West and North and South;
5. THAT the United Church endorse Canadian "middle-power" initiatives, leading to the establishment of a World Association of Peace-Making Nations;
6. THAT the United Church re-affirm our support for the Waldheim Proposal (that .1 per cent of military spending go for peace research, education and action);
7. THAT the United Church urge that the post of Ambassador for Disarmament be up-graded to full cabinet rank;
8. THAT the United Church urge an intensive study of the relationship between nuclear technologies and nuclear weapons; and between the arms race and Third World underdevelopment and oppression; and
9. THAT the United Church press the Canadian government for a firm policy of not using food as a weapon, i.e. that Canada commit itself to having no part in an effort to use grains or food crops of which we are major suppliers as a weapon to secure changes in the foreign or domestic policies of governments whose people need famine support.

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