

April 4, 1983

**General Election Policy for [Campaign for Nuclear
Disarmament] National Council, 16/17 April 1983**

Citation:

"General Election Policy for [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament] National Council, 16/17 April 1983", April 4, 1983, Wilson Center Digital Archive, CND/2008/16/50, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) Collection, LSE Library, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/projects/peace-security/cnd-archives> <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/300275>

Summary:

This document, written by James Hinton, an historian at the University of Warwick and an active member of CND, outlines which candidates CND should consider supporting in the June 1983 general election.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from London School of Economics and Political Science & The Open University

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

GENERAL ELECTION POLICY

For National Council, 16/17 April 1983

This paper has been prepared following the Executive discussion of election policy on 5th March. Without going over ground already covered at the January NC, or attempting to re-open issues settled there, it raises three issues for decision:

1. Will the NC endorse the Executive's recommendation that CND's intervention in the election be based on the slogans 'Stop cruise: Stop Trident: Don't Vote for World War Three.'? The rationale for this recommendation is explained in the April issue of Campaign.

2. Will the NC recommend to Regions, sub-regions and local groups that, as well as carrying out the preparations for the election outlined in the April issue of Campaign, they consider concentrating their efforts during the election campaign itself on marginal constituencies?

This may seem a simple and obvious policy. But the definition of 'marginal' constituencies raises complex issues of both a technical and a political nature. The technical issues will (hopefully) be dealt with in a further paper to be presented at the Council itself. The political issues are discussed below.

It is not CND's policy to advise people who to vote for. But we do expect to have some effect on how people vote, and how exactly we intervene will be influenced by what we expect to achieve.

For many campaigners the issue is simple. Without actually saying so, our intervention should be designed to boost the Labour candidate. This follows from the fact that both the party, and most of its candidates, are largely committed to our cause. In those constituencies where the choice is effectively between Conservative and Labour (because the Alliance candidate is running a poor third) there is little reason to dissent from this position. (Even so there remains a problem where Labour candidates are not unilateralists, or are even pro-cruise.)

But there will also be a sizeable number of constituencies where the effective choice is not between Labour and Conservative, but between Alliance and Conservative. Where the Alliance candidate is a Liberal prepared to proclaim his or her unconditional opposition to cruise as well as Trident, then the victory of that candidate over the Tory would also be a victory for CND's election policy - assuming that NC endorses point 1 above.

CND groups operating in such constituencies should be asked to consider the full implications of saying to the electorate not 'vote as anti-nuclear as you can' (which could mean voting for a Communist, Ecologist or Labour candidate with no chance of success), but 'vote to stop cruise and Trident' (which could mean voting for an anti-cruise Liberal who did not support CND's other policies, rather than for a unilateralist Labour candidate, because the Liberal had the better chance of defeating the Tory). By concentrating some of its attention on such Conservative/Liberal marginals CND might make the difference between a renewed Thatcher majority and a hung Parliament in which it was impossible to form a government capable of going ahead with cruise or Trident.

3. If the above is agreed, then Parliamentary and Elections Committee should be instructed:

- a) to help Regions identify the marginal constituencies in their areas
- b) to ensure circulation of good ideas about how best to intervene in such marginal seats
- c) to ^{produce} relevant materials - e.g. a nationally produced leaflet urging people to use their votes to stop cruise, Trident and World War Three. Such a leaflet should not breach electoral law by mentioning particular parties or candidates. Eve-of-poll distribution of such a leaflet in key marginals should be within the capacity of CND Regions or sub-regions.

James Hinton
4 April 1983