

December 20, 1982

**Letter from Christine Kings, Campaign for Nuclear
Disarmament, containing Peace Canvas materials**

Citation:

"Letter from Christine Kings, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, containing Peace Canvas materials", December 20, 1982, Wilson Center Digital Archive, CND/2008/16/2, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) Collection, LSE Library, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/projects/peace-security/cnd-archives>
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300278>

Summary:

This information pack was sent out to CND members across the UK and encouraged them to canvas households to ascertain levels of support for nuclear weapons across the country. The last two pages include the results of this peace canvas.

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



Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

11 Goodwin Street · London N4 · 3HQ

Tel: 01 - 263 0977 (4 Lines)

20th December 82

Dear Friends,

Please find enclosed a copy of the updated draft of the Peace Canvass materials. Can you please let me have any comments by Wednesday 5th January, as this project is running behind schedule and we would like to have the materials prepared for the January Council meeting.

The questions in this draft are the ones which were agreed at the last Projects Committee meeting.

Best wishes,

Christine Kings.

Christine Kings.



ADVICE TO GROUPS

AIMS

Since 1980 CND has established a broad current of sympathy for its ideas. During the coming year our capacity to turn this sympathy into a coherent political force will be put to the test. The fact that Cruise missiles are due to be based at Greenham Common from December 1983 is not the only reason for this. We will also probably face a General Election, the outcome of which will have a major effect upon how the campaign against Cruise and Trident and for nuclear disarmament will have to be carried forward.

At its National Conference in November 1982 CND decided on the main lines of its strategy for the coming year. There are plans to mount the largest ever demonstration next October. Preparations are underway for whatever measures of non-violent resistance may be necessary to stop Cruise. These activities will attract publicity, but by themselves they will not be decisive. Demonstrations can be quickly forgotten. Civil disobedience can be suppressed. Our capacity to make CND into an irresistible force depends above all on consolidating and extending the basis of our support among the mass of ordinary people. PEACE CANVASS '83 is designed to help us do this.

We do not control the mass media. Most of our potential supporters will never attend public meetings. To reach them we must go to their homes and talk to them. Some CND groups are already doing this, and they report very encouraging results. PEACE CANVASS '83 draws on this experience in an attempt to encourage all groups to make canvassing a regular and central part of their activity.

Most people are reluctant to go out canvassing at first. But once you surmount the first hurdle, the rewards outweigh the difficulties. Public opinion polls reveal a mass of support for our campaign which we have scarcely begun to mobilise. Door-to-door canvassing is the key to locating these supporters and drawing them into active participation. Regular canvassing will increase the membership, bringing in both the funds and the people needed to expand other local activities. (As membership increases think about forming new groups, or Neighbourhood Groups). Above all the PEACE CANVASS will lay the basis for local groups to make nuclear disarmament the key issue in the General Election, providing the evidence of an organised public opinion which no one seeking election to Parliament can afford to ignore.

ORGANISING DOOR-TO-DOOR CANVASSING

Introduction

PEACE CANVASS '83 is not intended as one gigantic simultaneous burst of activity all over the country. It is designed to help groups to make canvassing a regular part of their campaigning, and there is plenty of scope to adapt it to local needs.

The core of the PEACE CANVASS is a short questionnaire:

1. Do you think that American Cruise missiles should be based in Britain?
2. Should our Government spend £10,000m on new Trident nuclear submarines?
3. Do you think that Britain should get rid of American Nuclear Bases?
4. Do you think that this country needs nuclear weapons for its defence?
5. If there was a General Election tomorrow would nuclear disarmament be an important issue for you?

Canvassers should ask each elector in the household for their opinions on these questions and record the answers on the Recording Sheets provided. When favourable answers are received it will then be possible to ask for signatures to a petition, declaration etc.; to distribute a leaflet; to sell Sanity, a local newsletter, window stickers; to collect donations; to recruit members. (No one group should try to do all these things. Don't overload the canvassers. Remember you can always go back later if the response is favourable.)

Start on a small scale with a manageable short-term target. If, for example, you organise a weekend of canvassing during January this will build up the local experience needed to plan a gradual expansion of the PEACE CANVASS during subsequent months.

Canvassing seems hard, but once started will produce its own enthusiasm because it is rewarding. Success depends on remembering that most people have fears about canvassing and on organising in a way that gives everyone support.

* * * * *

The rest of this sheet is presented in the form of a check-list of decisions that your group will have to make in setting up an initial round of canvassing.

Preliminary Decisions

1. Should a leaflet be delivered to each house in advance of the canvass?
~~AN EXTENSION OF~~ The new national recruiting leaflet, ~~adapted for use with~~
would be appropriate for this purpose.
~~the PEACE CANVASS, is~~ available from CND, /~~(Specimen attached)~~ If you
decide not to pre-leaflet then you still may want canvassers to leave
copies of the national leaflet when they call.
2. What materials are canvassers going to have with them? The Recording
Sheets contain a number of additional columns which can be used for
recording any other information you decide to collect during the can-
vassing (e.g. 'bought Sanity', 'worth following up', etc.).
3. What time of day are the canvassers going to call? A combination of
weekday evenings and Sunday morning ~~canvassing~~ is probably most fruit-
ful. But in some parts of the country it may be difficult to get
people to come to their doors after dark. That is why we refer to
an initial weekend of canvassing in this pack. As the evenings get
lighter all groups should be able to add weekday to weekend canvassing.
4. How many visits are you going to ask each canvasser to make to each house?
Experience suggests that on the first visit up to half the houses may be
empty. So it is worth going round a second time. If canvassers do make
two visits they should choose different times of day, e.g. once on a week-
day evening, once on the following Sunday in the daytime.

5. How many houses are you going to cover in the first round of canvassing?
This will largely depend on the number of volunteers you can get together. One canvasser making up to two visits to 25 houses is unlikely to take more than 3 hours altogether (in many cases it will be considerably less). That is, perhaps, as much time as one would reasonably ask a volunteer to spend canvassing in the course of a weekend.

6. In selecting an area it is probably a good idea to begin with one where you can expect good results. In any event plan the canvassing systematically, so that you know what has been done and so that if at any time you want to publish results you can say which parts of the town they come from.

7. The Peace Canvass provides an opportunity to draw more people into the campaigning at local level. Prepare a leaflet asking for people to volunteer as canvassers. Ask sympathetic local organisations to circulate it - just as you would ask them to publicise a CND demonstration. (Copies of the PEACE CANVASS '83 poster will also be useful here.) In this way you can strengthen your alliances with local political parties, the UNA, church groups, women's groups, trade unions, unemployed organisations, etc. Some of these groups might be prepared to organise their own section of the canvass - e.g. a housewives canvass conducted in the day time, or a task force of unemployed canvassers ('Out of work - but doing the most important job on earth'), etc.

Organising the Canvass

8. Remember that people are usually frightened of canvassing. Despite these fears most canvassers find the experience both rewarding and enjoyable. Respondents are rarely aggressive or abusive, and most of those refusing to co-operate do so politely. The problem is to overcome people's initial fears. Those organising the canvass may need to phone or visit potential volunteers in order to get together a team for the first round. After that, getting canvassers together should be easier. Experienced canvassers will be able to reassure newcomers and persuade them to participate.

9. Organising the canvass will take some thought:
 - a) One possibility is to arrange each phase of canvassing (leafleting, first visit, second visit) as a distinct activity, using separate groups of volunteers assembled and briefed before they go out.
 - b) Alternatively you can hold a single briefing meeting for all the volunteers. At this meeting individuals, maybe working in pairs for support, would take responsibility for all three phases of the canvass in a particular street or area.

Either way try to make time at the briefing meeting for a general discussion of the issues and the arguments designed to reassure canvassers about their ability to hold their own on the doorstep. (Copies of the leaflet 30 Questions and Answers about CND would provide a useful basis for such an exercise.) Don't forget the more mundane preparations. How are the canvassers to carry the materials? A stock of clip boards might be a good investment. It will also be useful to prepare maps of the area to give to the canvassers. It may be a good idea to arrange the canvassing in small groups, with several pairs working in different streets in the same area. They can meet up afterwards for a drink or coffee and discuss how the canvassing went. If the whole thing is an enjoyable experience, people are more likely to do it again.

10. Finally, you should arrange a de-briefing meeting when the canvassing is completed. This meeting will make a substantial contribution to the whole operation by enabling you to pool experience, sort out organisational problems, and make plans for the next round of canvassing.

Using the Results

11. As the canvassing gets under way, think about how you are going to publicise it and make use of the results. Where local political conditions are favourable you might try to arrange civic sponsorship, maybe a Town Hall reception for the canvassers. Interest the local media in the canvass - e.g. by making an event out of canvassing local dignitaries. When you have a significant number of results tell the media and tell the local Parliamentary candidates. Remember that what you are trying to do is to get those candidates to compete with one another for the nuclear disarmament vote. Use the canvass results to pressure them to issue statements opposing Cruise, opposing Trident, etc.
12. Please return the results of the canvass to the national centre in Oxford. The major effects of PEACE CANVASS '83 will be felt locally. But it also needs a national dimension - if only to inform the movement in general of what can be achieved by the best organised groups, and to build up the momentum of the canvassing in the run up to the General Election. The intention is to publish a monthly digest of the canvass returns in Campaign and to circulate a detailed breakdown to the CND regions. Please send in a Return Form as soon as you have completed your first weekend of canvassing, and thereafter at regular monthly intervals.

13. There is a section of the Return Form asking you to send in general comments, advice and good ideas that arise from your local canvassing experience. One of CND's problems has always been in ensuring that the best ideas for local campaigning get spread quickly around the movement. The PEACE CANVASS WORKING GROUP will be putting together the ideas that come in and feeding out regular reports through Sanity, Campaign and the Regions.

PEACE CANVASS '83 RETURN FORM

Please fill in and return this form to the address below at the end of your first weekend of canvassing. You will then be sent further forms on which to make a monthly return.

Name of Group.....

Name of PEACE CANVASS COORDINATOR.....

Full Postal Address.....

.....

..... Tel.....

Date.....

Breakdown of canvass results,

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
Q.1				
Q.2				
Q.3				
Q.4				
Q.5				

Please write below, or on a separate sheet, any comments about the organisation of the PEACE CANVASS; any good ideas you would like to share with other groups, etc.

Return this form to Peace Canvass '83, c/o Ann Black, 88 Howard Street, Oxford OX4 3BE.

Final

PEACE CANVAS RETURNS SUMMARY

DATE 7/6/83

Number of returns received 70 From 63 groups.

	In Favour No. %	Against No. %	Dont' Know No %	Total
Q1) Cruise	23.6 %	65.01 %	11.3 %	
Q2) Trident	24.2 %	65.04 %	10.2 %	
Q3) Getting rid of US bases	55.1 %	33.06 %	11.07 %	
Q4) UK nuclear weapons	52.6 %	38.08 %	9.5 %	
	64.3 % <i>yes</i>	31.9 % <i>no</i>	5.8 %	
Q5) issue in General Election				

Final

PEACE CANVAS RETURNS SUMMARY

DATE 7/6/83.

Number of returns received 70 From 63 groups.

	In Favour No. %	Against No. %	Dont' Know No %	Total
Q1) Cruise	4894	13,506	2342	20,742
Q2) Trident	5004	13,501	2108	20,642
Q3) Getting rid of US bases	11,432	6,970	2,295	20,729
Q4) UK nuclear weapons	^{keep} 10,719	7,912	1,939	20,368
Q5) issue in General Election	^{yes} 11,784	^{no} 5846	1,062	18,338