



FCS/81/93

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCEWorld Disarmament Campaign

1. I believe that we need to consider rather more fully our attitude to the World Disarmament Campaign (WDC) and to the petition which is now widely circulating throughout the country. There is little doubt that the Campaign and its allied groups have ample funds, produce effective literature, are particularly strong in schools and universities, and are making a substantial impact on public opinion. Very large numbers of people will doubtless sign the petition, the text of which I enclose.
2. The WDC was launched by Lords Brockway and Noel-Baker late in 1979, and came to public attention with a mass rally in April 1980 at which Cardinal Hume was one of the speakers. It is an umbrella organisation, and it was clear from the beginning that the Communist Party and the CND would try to use it for their own purposes. However, the General Secretary, Brigadier Michael Harbottle, has resolutely stuck to the position that the WDC is campaigning for multilateral negotiated disarmament.
3. I feel sure that it would be a political mistake to attack the WDC as such. It contains many sincere people, including Conservatives, who have not hitherto been active politically. On the other hand, the WDC is unhelpful to us, because those concerned are strongly opposed to a defence strategy which includes nuclear arms and because they create the impression that disarmament can be achieved by circulating petitions and organising popular pressure on governments in both the West and the East.



4. When Ministers or Conservative Members of Parliament are asked whether they will sign the petition or encourage others to do so, I am sure that they should say clearly that they are not willing to do so. The WDC give the impression that the Government has said that it supports their activities (as opposed to their ultimate aim) but this is misleading. Arms control and disarmament agreements will only be achieved by long, tough and patient negotiations with the Soviet Union and its allies. The petition will have no effect on the Soviet Government, whether or not it instructs its citizens to sign. If the petition is widely successful in Western Europe, it may simply create both in the Soviet Union and in the United States the dangerous impression that Western Europe has gone soft on defence. Such an impression does nothing to advance the cause of arms control and disarmament.

5. At the same time, I think it is crucial that we should go on to expound what we are actually doing in the fields of arms control and disarmament, eg our support for US/Soviet talks on theatre nuclear forces and our support for the French proposal at Madrid for a European Disarmament Conference with Confidence-Building Measures as its first objective. Very few of those who organise or sign the petition know what is really going on in this field.

6. You and I have already corresponded about ways of bolstering the public argument in favour of our defence policy, and recently Peter Blaker and Douglas Hurd had a useful meeting about stimulating the right kind of activity outside government. I am sure that we should push ahead with this as fast as possible.

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7. I am sending copies of this minute to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Chief Whip and to Peter Thorneycroft at Central Office. If the above line as regards the WDC and the petition is agreed, then the Chief Whip may like to consider how we impress it upon our colleagues in both Houses of Parliament, and the Chairman of the Party how we can equip our supporters in the country with the right arguments.

C

(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
7 July 1981

(A)

Your Mayor, Member of Parliament and other leading public figures will be invited to support the Petition and we hope that this invitation will go out over the signatures of leading national Churchmen, Politicians and other prominent personalities.

In the meantime we suggest that you might be making preliminary plans for the house to house collection of signatures.

If you are able to assist, kindly complete and return the enclosed form as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Eric Messer

Eric Messer
(for the Petition Committee)

TEXT OF THE PETITION

To all Governments and to the United Nations
General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament 1982:-

We, the Peoples of the world, demand:

1. The abolition of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction
2. The abolition, by agreed stages, of conventional arms, leading to
3. General and complete disarmament
4. Transference of military expenditure to end world poverty.

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO ERIC MESSER, PETITION SECRETARY WDC.
21 RYDONS LANE, OLD COULSDON, SURREY. CR3 1SU

I would be prepared to -

- a) Assist in the formation of a local Action Committee to organise the collection of signatures to the petition in my locality.
- b) To act as Convenor of the Action Committee.

NAME

ADDRESS

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~XXXXXX~~ 218 2111/3

MO 18/1/2

3rd August 1981

Dear Brian,

WORLD DISARMAMENT CAMPAIGN

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary minuted my Secretary of State on 7th July proposing the line he considered the Government should take in response to the activities and policies of the World Disarmament Campaign.

My Secretary of State (who is presently in his constituency in Cornwall) has asked me to say that he agrees with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary that we should take the Campaign seriously; that Ministers and Conservative Members of Parliament should take every opportunity to explain the misconceptions in the Campaign's thinking (and in particular oppose signing their petition); and that the essence of the presentation of the Government's position should be not only the need for the United Kingdom to possess an independent strategic deterrent but our considerable, and continuing, efforts to secure meaningful arms control in both the conventional and the nuclear fields. If he himself can be of any assistance to the Chief Whip in taking the action Lord Garrington envisages in his last paragraph, and as a supplement to the work already done by the Department, he would be very glad to know.

I am sending copies of this letter to Michael Alexander and Bernard Ingham (No 10), David Heyhoe (Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy), Murdo Maclean (Office of the Chief Whip) and to the Private Secretary to Lord Thorneycroft.

*Yours most
Brian Norbury*

(B M NORBURY)

B J P Fall Esq

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