



Scottish Election 2016: What about Trident?

A short guide for Quakers in Scotland on Trident and the Holyrood Election 2016

All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.

Quaker faith & practice (5th edition) 24.04



Why is Trident important now?

The decision to renew Trident this year is in the hands of Westminster, with a vote due on replacing it with a like-for-like system. The vote is being seen as an “in principle” backing for the system, given finances will be decided on separately. It has been indicated that this will be a hot topic for the Holyrood elections and although MSPs won’t have a voice they can influence Westminster colleagues and make Scotland’

Position of the parties

The SNP, Scottish Green's, Scottish Labour, Scottish Liberal Democrats and Scottish Socialist Parties are all in favour of scrapping Trident.

The Scottish Conservatives are in favour of renewal.

It's worth noting that politicians will at times rebel against their parties. You may want to consider engaging candidates in discussion to gauge their individual perspectives.

What are the main arguments against renewal?

- If renewed, the weapons system will cost £100bn at a time of unprecedented public sector cuts.
- Trident was a system designed for the cold war, which is now over. It is not a system that can be used against contemporary threats.
- The International Court of Justice ruled in 1966 that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law.
- There is no way to recall or self-destruct Trident missiles after launch.
- Britain has committed itself to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to move towards disarmament. Renewal would undermine this treaty which is being used to hold other countries to account.
- Countries such as Germany, Spain, Canada and Australia do not have nuclear weapons, and are still able to be influential on the international stage.
- Decommissioning and cleaning-up Trident would take almost 30 years and would need very similar skills to those of people currently working on the project. Meaning an end to Trident would not necessarily mean an end to employment opportunities for those currently employed through it. After the clean-up we could be world leaders in the decommissioning of nuclear weapons.

How to contact candidates

- Many candidates will have social media profiles and be active on Facebook and Twitter. These details may be found on their websites and blogs, or by contacting the local party office. Virtual means to communicate with voters can be valuable in rural areas.
- It is likely that there will be local hustings which you can attend and quiz candidates on a range of views.
- Template letters to write to candidates are available at www.quaker.org.uk/quakervote

Questions you might ask candidates

- Do you believe that nuclear weapons can enhance our countries international relationships?
- Do you think there could ever be a situation in which retaliation with nuclear weapons would be morally justifiable?
- If you could choose between spending £100bn on nuclear weapons, or public services, which would you opt for?

Further reading

Britain Yearly Meeting briefing on Trident

www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Trident-briefing-web.pdf

A series of briefings on Trident, from the CND

www.cnduk.org/information/briefings/trident-briefings

Report from the MOD on existing plans on a successor programme and plans for the coming year www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-united-kingdoms-future-nuclear-deterrent-2014-update-to-parliament

House of Commons Library: Future of the British Nuclear Deterant – suggested reading

www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN04207.pdf

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