

## ARE YOU AN OLDIE? Bruce Kent takes the test

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**Bruce Kent has been involved with CND for more than 45 years and was forced to resign from the priesthood because of his commitment to the movement. Born in England of Canadian parents, he was educated at Stonyhurst and Brasenose College, Oxford, before becoming ordained in 1958 and then parish priest in north London and University Chaplain. He eventually married. In 1992 he unsuccessfully contested Oxford West for Labour but left the party on the day Blair said he would use nuclear weapons. He has written an autobiography, *Undiscovered Ends*, and enjoys walking and friends. His answer machine says, 'Please speak slowly, we are elderly', and he doesn't know his own mobile number.**

*Do you like modern life?*

The modern world is very sheep-like; we are in Orwell's world. And everything is commercialised in Blair's world – e.g. we're customers not passengers – and everything has to have a price. We're too insular; there should be a merging of national sovereignties for the global issues.

*When you hear of 'Big Brother', do you still think of George Orwell?*

What else? The amount of explicit sexuality on television is destructive; the pressure is in the wrong direction, to break up relationships.

*Do you talk to yourself and see nothing wrong with it?*

I talk to myself and other people when I'm preparing what to say to them. My wife sometimes says, 'Who are you talking to now?'

*Can you waltz?*

Of course! I went to Miss Edwards's Dance School in Montreal and we wore dinner jackets aged eleven. I still dance occasionally.

*Do you know what a pronoun is?*

Yes; at school our classes had grammatical names. You worked your way up from Syntax through Grammar to Rhetoric. I also write letters but I use cards so that my letters are all short and to the point.

*Do you save leftovers?*

We usually eat them. Haringey Council has now given us two more green bins for food waste collection – you need a PhD to work out what to put in them. And how much does it cost to make the bins? What's the carbon footprint of that? I recycle jokes in my speeches.

*Do you mend clothes rather than throw them away?*

I'm a good darter. I've never seen the point in having more than two pairs of trousers.

*Do you clean your shoes with a brush and proper polish?*

Of course. I keep the shoe cleaning things in three plastic bags: one for black, one for brown, and one for dubbin.

*Frothy mocca cappuccino or a nice cuppa?*

Oh, cup of tea; and sometimes Ovaltine in the evenings. I'm confused by all the choice when you ask for a coffee.

*Are OAPs starting to look young to you?*

Well, people seem to retire at the most extraordinary ages – in their early fifties, for example.

*What are the benefits of being an oldie?*

One of the benefits of age is that people are quite polite to you – I'm pleased when I'm offered a seat and get a senior's respect. I've passed through the barrier of uncertainty! The joy of my life is my buss pass. And we're very lucky to have the NHS. I had an operation for prostate cancer in 2001 and every day I count as a bonus.