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Obscure Disarmament Group Is Made Political Issue in West

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Staff Reporter

SALT LAKE CITY, Oct. 25—An obscure organization founded by one of the world's greatest nuclear physicists is playing a controversial political role in four Western states.

The organization is called the Council for a Livable World. It was started in 1962 by physicist Leo Szilard who died last June.

Szilard conceived of the Council, which claims a membership of 2500, as a political force to help bring about world-wide disarmament.

He decided that the way to do this was to help elect Senators who would work for the Council's disarmament goals.

Two years ago the members of the Council contributed funds to seven senatorial candidates.

McGovern Aided

Their greatest success in 1962 was in South Dakota where Democratic Sen. George McGovern received \$22,000 from the Council—a fourth of his total campaign funds. McGovern won by only 597 votes. He is a critic of waste in defense spending and an advocate of planning for disarmament.

This year the Council has asked its members to concentrate on the campaigns of Sen. Frank E. Moss in Utah and Gale W. McGee in Wyoming, senatorial candidate Joseph Montoya in New Mexico and Rep. Ralph R. Harding in Idaho. All are Democrats.

The Council is interested in Harding's reelection to the House because of his plans to run for the Senate in 1966.

Sen. Quentin Burdick (D-N. D.) was on the Council's original list for help this year. But after the Council came under sharp criticism from conservatives, Burdick returned to the Council \$14,000 contributed to his campaign by its members.

Dirty Word in Campaigns

Despite the overwhelming acceptance of the 1963 test-ban treaty in the West, as elsewhere in the country, disarmament is a dirty word in political campaigns.

The word disarmament seems to have become the 1964 successor in the lexicon of the political right to the "soft-on-communism" charges of the McCarthy era of a decade or more ago.

In a statement inserted in the Congressional Record earlier this month Sen. Milward L. Simpson (R-Wyo.) called the Council for a Livable World "a secret political organization with a satchel full of money."

The Simpson statement charged that the Council advocates "unilateral disarmament, stripping the United States of its muscle, turning this country into a fourth-rate power at the mercy of the international wolfpack."

The statement also said that the Council is deliberately concentrating its efforts in thinly populated states "where a political buck packs a bigger punch."

Council Denies Charge

Despite words of praise for the Council by President Johnson and denials by Council officials that it backs unilateral disarmament, charges such as those made in Sen. Simpson's statement are hurting the Western Democrats being supported by the Council's members.

Political contributions to candidates of both parties frequently cross state lines, but it is always a good issue to charge, particularly in the insular Mountain States, that a man's campaign is being financed by the bad guys from back East.

The Mountain States are also quite conservative—there has been much activity by right-wing extremists in these states—and suggestions for any kind of disarmament are generally suspect. This is

particularly true in the aftermath of the recent changes in the leadership of the Soviet Union and the explosion of a nuclear device by Communist China.

And the defense program means jobs in the Mountain States. In Utah, Sen. Moss is being hurt by a cutback in missile production that resulted in the loss of 8000 jobs in the last two years. In Wyoming Sen. McGee constantly refers to the missile base he claims to have brought to the state's capital city of Cheyenne.

Members Are Scholars

Most of the members of the Council are scientists, educators and scholars. Szilard, a Hungarian who lived in Germany, came to the United States after the Nazi dictatorship assumed power in Germany in the 1930s. He was one of the pioneer nuclear physicists who persuaded Albert Einstein to write his letter to President Roosevelt urging the United States to try to develop an atomic bomb.

William Doering, professor of chemistry and director of the Division of Science at Yale University, is now chairman of the Council for a Livable World's board of directors.