



End Conscription Campaign

October 1986.

NC PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AROUND THE FEBRUARY CALL UP

In the light of the national assessment of ECC at the last NC meeting, we felt strongly that ECC is in dire need of another big, ambitious, national campaign. We came up with some exciting ideas for a campaign around the February call up. What follows, for discussion in regions, is a record of the NC discussion.

Background and motivation

In assessing ECC nationally, the following were amongst the key points that emerged : \* ECC has been successful in meeting the organisational objectives it set itself under the Emergency. Co-hesion is good, morale is high and the organisation is strong.

\* It would be a mistake to think that the harassment of ECC, which appears to be lessening at the moment, is over. It is quite possible that we will be subjected to further waves of harassment. We therefore cannot become too lax in our security;

\* ECC has not been very successful in meeting the objectives of testing the Regulations, winning back legal space and asserting itself publicly again. While most regions have had some public profile, and a couple have just or are about to run campaigns, we have not even come close to regaining the national presence we enjoyed before the Emergency;

\* Over the past 4-6 months, not only has ECC been less effective than before but the right wing has considerably stepped up its anti-ECC propaganda. We cannot underestimate the damage done by the wide distribution of the Aida Parker Newsletter and by State propaganda.

\* At the same time that ECC has been rendered less effective publicly, conscripts are becoming increasingly concerned about their call ups. Our constituency may as a whole be becoming more conservative but more and more conscripts are indicating their opposition to conscription.

In the light of this assessment, NC felt that another national campaign, on the scale of the TOC and WJP, is desperately needed. Such a campaign will obviously involve some risk - we need to assess this realistically and prepare for it. But we exist as an organisation in order to campaign and, without being reckless, campaign we must .

At this early stage of discussion, the aims of the campaign can be said to be : reestablishing a national ECC presence, countering anti-ECC propaganda and providing our constituency with information and an understanding of what is happening in our country. We will need to work out the aims more carefully and specifically as our planning progresses.

### Theme and Orientation of the Campaign

NC felt that the campaign should be orientated around, what for many white people, is the issue of concern - the call-up.

The suggested theme (as a guide for our thinking rather than public use) is : "What cost this call-up?"

The campaign would involve looking at the different costs of the call-up that are of concern to different people - moral/ethical, personal, economic, psychological, etc. It would cover the range of concerns that conscripts have, from being used in the townships to simply being inconvenienced.

Most of our actions and campaigns in the past have involved ECC talking to conscripts, to its constituency. This campaign would be fundamentally different. It would involve conscripts talking to/petitioning the government. It would hinge around conscripts saying to the government: 'change the law', 'recognise our right to choose.'

At every level and in every action of the campaign, conscripts who have done and who have still to do their military service will be centrally involved. The campaign is an opportunity for ECC to justify its claim to be speaking on behalf of conscripts.

By directing the campaign at the government ~~level~~ throughout, we can intensify pressure on it to change or at least improve the law. We could also be avoiding contravening the Emergency Regulations as we would not be inciting people to discredit or undermine conscription, but ~~would~~ be calling on the government to change the law (- this opinion needs to be checked with lawyers ).

### **Forms of Action**

Only a few ideas came out of the NC meeting : organising forums for conscripts to act/speak; conscripts going on walks/marches; approaching an independent company to survey attitudes to conscription amongst white youth.

Brainstorming ideas for action will be far more creative and productive if done by regions once there is agreement on the campaign.

### **Legal Position**

We need to check out the legality of the campaign with our lawyers and, if necessary, tailor it accordingly.

### **Regional Differences**

Clearly not all branches will be able to take up such a campaign in the same way. In some regions, either because of the organisational strength of ECC or because of the level of harassment, the campaign will have to be fairly low profile. These regions should not feel under pressure to take up the campaign in ways they think are inappropriate.

### **Where to from here**

We need much discussion about this proposal in all the regions. This will be difficult in regions that are in the middle of campaigns or already winding down. But we need to start

planning now if we are to pull off a major national campaign around the February call-up.

Regions need to consider the following questions :

- \* Is a high profile national campaign a correct strategy for ECC, given Emergency conditions?
- \* Are the proposed orientation and theme of the campaign appropriate for your region? Are there conceptual changes you would like to make?
- \* What should the public theme of the campaign be?
- \* What forms of action could be national actions?
- \* What should the timing of the campaign be? When should it begin and for how long should it continue?

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