

IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA COUNCIL

In the matter between :-

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

("ECC")

Complainant

and

AIDA PARKER NEWSLETTER

("APN")

Respondent

MEMORANDUM

Complaint by the End Conscription Campaign ("ECC") against the publication of the Aida Parker Newsletter ("APN") of April 8th 1986 (Issue No. 79), on the grounds as set out hereunder.

1. JURISDICTION

APN is not a member publication of the NPU and has not become voluntary subject to the jurisdiction of the Council. Accordingly, the Council is requested to apply paragraphs 1.5 and 10.2 of its Constitution in

order to deal with this complaint. Specifically, the Council is enjoined to request APN to submit itself to the Rules of Procedure of the South African Media Council.

2. THE COMPLAINT

2.1 A copy of the offending Issue No. 79 of APN is attached marked "A". The "block" on the first page indicates that APN regards the issue of the ECC as so important that "... for this issue only, we lift all copyright. If you can use any of this material in any way, use it. The print order has been tripled and extra copies are available at R1,00 each."

The effects of this exhortation to republish have already been felt. There is evidence that the National Students Federation (NSF) has been distributing anti-ECC material to headmasters of schools in Durban. These handouts contain material which emanates from APN Issue No. 79.

In Port Elizabeth on Saturday the 3rd May an ECC church service was interfered with by members of

an organisation who distributed pamphlets containing material emanating from APN Issue No. 79. These persons attempted to disrupt the service by violent means.

2.2 The direct encouragement to use this material in the "block" on page 1 exacerbates the seriousness of the smear upon the ECC. It will be illustrated hereunder that the primary attack on the ECC contained in APN Issue No. 79 is without foundation.

2.3 The thrust of APN Issue No. 79 is to link the ECC to a Soviet inspired apparatus. The ECC is alleged to have personal links with the War Resisters International (WRI). This is correct. It is not correct however that WRI is a Soviet adjunct. The WRI is in no way connected to any Soviet backed organisation and in particular is not affiliated to the World Peace Council (WPC). The WRI is an autonomous body which is an international pacifist organisation with about 50 branches throughout the world. Annexed hereto is a brochure of the WRI marked "B". Although the ECC is not a branch of the WRI there are close links between the ECC and the WRI. Annexed hereto

marked "C" is a copy of a letter from the chairperson of WRI to ECC after hearing of APN Issue No. 79's claims.

- 2.4 As can be seen from the above the philosophy of the WRI is one of absolute pacifism based on the principles and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. The aims of WRI are to end war through the promotion of non-violent means and to remove the causes of war.
- 2.5 On the other hand, the WPC is clearly a Soviet backed anti-war organisation. There is no link between the ECC and this organisation, and the ECC has been at great pains to remain distant from this organisation at every level.
- 2.6 Throughout the newsletter, reference is made to the recent trip overseas by Laurie Nathan the national organiser of the ECC and Peter Hathorn. This trip did indeed take place at the end of 1985 and at the beginning of 1986. It was a trip in which Laurie Nathan and Peter Hathorn addressed public meetings regarding the role of the ECC in

South Africa and the activities of the ECC in South Africa, and also the role of the South African Defence Force.

2.7 Accordingly the first paragraph on page 1 sets the tone for the misleading smears that are contained throughout this document. The link to the Soviet 'Active Measures' apparatus is completely spurious as set out above.

3. SOME OF THE MAJOR INACCURACIES IN APN ISSUE NO. 79

To identify the lack of good faith on the part of APN Issue No. 79 some of the factual inaccuracies will be set out below. For ease of reference, the offending paragraphs have been given numbers, which have been clearly marked upon the face of annexure "A".

3.1 Ad paragraphs 1 and 2

The WRI is not based in Helsinki. It is not an adjunct of the Soviet Active Measures apparatus as set out above.

It would appear that the ECC's declaration is being likened to the "Vietnam war-style 'Draft Dodgers Charter'". This is not correct. The respondent is put to the proof of this allegation.

3.2 Ad paragraph 3

The Ecumenical Officer of the Western Province Council of Churches (WPCC) Lesley Liddle has not been on the Cape Town ECC executive since November 1985.

3.3 Ad paragraph 4

The ECC does not promote conscientious objection amongst Indian and Coloureds. This is simply not possible since they are not subjected to conscription. This is an incorrect and damaging allegation in that it contains the fallacious smear that the ECC promotes conscientious objection. The ECC is a lawful organisation which is campaigning for the Government to change the law regarding compulsory military service.

3.4 Ad paragraph 5

It is claimed that Nathan and Hathorn addressed a meeting of the committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR) in London. This is not correct. They addressed the meeting hosted by WRI. Further, the words that are attributed to

Hathorn are a complete fabrication. It would appear that the APN itself is sceptical about the correct reporting of this statement.

3.5 Ad paragraph 6

It is incorrect that Mr Nathan's replies to Mr Myburgh's questions at the Stellenbosch meeting were not favourably received by the audience. This is simply not correct. Two-thirds of the audience supported the ECC.

3.6 Ad paragraph 7

To state that the working paper referred to in this paragraph advises solidarity with Libya is a particularly scurrilous accusation. It seems that the author has erroneously substituted Libya for Namibia (see annexure "D" - paragraph 7.1 page 5.)

3.7 Ad paragraph 8

The reference to Miss Janet Cherry being arrested on a charge of being in possession of Mandrax is misleading and constitutes a smear which was perpetrated by certain elements in the Eastern Cape in March. Miss Cherry was never charged with possession of any drug, and it has now become

clear that charges will not be proceeded with and that the mandrax was planted in her home in order to embarrass her on the eve of attending the conference in France. See annexure "E" which contains newspaper cuttings. As can be seen from the Eastern Province Herald of the 2nd April 1986, Lt. Col. Gerrie Van Rooyen from the South African Police is quoted as saying that the Public Prosecutor has decided not to press charges. APN Issue No. 79 was published and printed on April the 8th 1986.

3.8 Ad paragraph 9

The claim that the ECC branch in Port Elizabeth in particular opposes PFP affiliation is incorrect. The Port Elizabeth ECC was the first ECC branch to accept affiliation from PFP youth and PFP youth continues to be a member of ECC in Port Elizabeth.

3.9 Ad paragraph 10

The meeting in the City Hall on October 7th last year was not an ECC inaugural meeting. It was not addressed by Allan Boesak, Desmond Tutu, or Beyers Naude.

3.10 Ad paragraph 11

This is the most serious allegation against the ECC. It is quite clear from the article that the ECC is being directly linked to Soviet policy. It is reiterated that WRI is in no way connected to the WPC. In the opening paragraph there is talk of finance by the Anti-Vietman Group. The ECC has never heard of this organisation. Presumably this is a reference to War Resisters League, which is an American organisation that did oppose the war in Vietnam. It is correct that the trip was financed by War Resisters International (WRI). The link up between WRI, the ECC and the Soviet inspired WPC is scandalous and blatantly false. In an in-depth study such as the APN purports to have done, this kind of mistake is unpardonable, particularly considering the detailed nature of the publication. The first paragraph of this article is the main base of the smear against the ECC in this publication. WRI have been informed about this and at the hearing hereof their response to this allegation will be made clear.

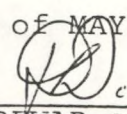
The second paragraph of the article is baffling. In the first paragraph the writer has purported to

already link WRI with WPC. She then seeks to show the link by referring to the contents of a report back in which it is claimed that it was decided in principle at the conference of the WRI to establish an international organisation of conscientious objectors and to render aid in any State to persons who have conscientious objection to compulsory military service. This was never part of the report back and was never part of the conference. It is wholly inaccurate. Even if it were accurate, it would not provide a clear link with the WPC.

3.11 Ad paragraph 12

Annexed hereto marked "G" is a list of the organisations which sent messages of support. None of these are WPC fronts or are associated with WPC.

DATED at JOHANNESBURG on this the 12 day of MAY 1986.


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Ref. Aida Parker

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