

the Objector

DECEMBER 1991

Working for Peace



It is good to know that peace initiatives are happening all over the country. The signing of the Peace Accord on September 14th was the result of a larger effort to end the prevailing violence. But the Accord itself recognizes the importance both of a real commitment by the Police to a Code of Conduct, and of ground-roots involvement to achieve results. 5.2 reads "Projects at local level require the co-operation of all members of the community irrespective of their political affiliation".

This raises the question: Do we need a national peace movement in South Africa now? If so, what should its initial objectives and tasks be? - For example, the co-ordination and linking of existing peace activities, campaigning on the sale, carrying and ownership of weapons, peace education...

Two South Africans have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize: Chief Albert Luthuli of the ANC in 1960 and the Right Reverend Desmond Tutu in 1984. This is a

proud achievement which all South Africans can build on.

In this issue we publish articles by peace activists Richard Steele and Anita Kromberg of Durban and Gill de Vileg of Johannesburg. But we also need your contribution to the debate. We would like responses from individuals, and also groups already involved in peace work. Please send your comments to the editors of *The Objector*, P.O. Box 591 Kengray 2100, so that we can publish them in the next issue.

Peace Movement

Thoughts on the need for a peace movement in South Africa.

Perhaps now more than ever before, while our society is racked with so much violence in homes, trains, taxis, the city centres townships and suburbs, there is a need for a movement which says "We can turn this around, we can obtain a true and lasting peace". Yes, I do think there should be a Peace Movement in our land.

We need to be able to present (and live) alternative ways of behaviour. We need to show that conflicts, no matter how severe, can be solved by peaceful means.

Members of a Peace Movement would need to make a commitment to working in non-violent ways in all their actions, which unfortunately would probably mean that initially we would be working with a small core of committed members. (So what's new?)

A Peace Movement would need to be seen to be non-aligned to any political party or any other structure, although it would be able to work in loose alliances on particular campaigns, as organisations did for instance in the Free the Children Alliance.

The most urgent task to take up now is the growing reliance on the use of guns to solve personal, economic and political problems. We have come from a frontier society where the use of guns was manly and glorious and the liberation movements continued that myth by teaching that freedom could come from an AK-47.

That is not to say that there are not other major areas of need. Peace is holistic in that it embraces all facets of life, including the attitudes we adopt to the problems of sexism, economic deprivation, the environment, the lack of justice and human rights and the absence of true democracy.

The way in which a Peace Movement would need to work would be through campaigns, actions and education. We need to use the knowledge that has been gained over the years throughout the world and present this society of ours with a Peaceful Alternative that can be seen to have advantages for the whole nation and for those beyond our borders.

- Gill de Vlieg, Johannesburg



South Africa's Nobel Peace prize winners of 1960 and 1984: Albert Luthuli and Desmond Tutu.



Proposals

A peace movement in South Africa?

If we want an apple to grow, we must plant apple seed. If we want peace in South Africa in the future, we need to plant it now. It will not miraculously appear fully grown.

Peace is not simply the absence of war or violence – it is the presence of justice and creative harmony in all aspects of personal, social and economic relationships, as well as in our relationship with the environment.

The essence of peace is non-violence – non-violation.

For centuries South African society has been based on the violation of human rights and human dignity. The most radical thing we can do to change that is to practise nonviolence.

A peace movement in South

Africa, based on a commitment to non-violence and respect for life, could play an important role in lessening violence and in promoting a climate in which democracy can flourish.

A major task of such a movement would be education – education of ourselves and others regarding attitudes and skills with which to build a peaceful society. This would include developing “peace education” modules for school, church, mosque, synagogue and temple curriculums.

Another task would be to research and demonstrate alternatives to existing systems which endanger peace, such as unjust economic systems, pollution, racism,

sexism and militarism.

This movement would be capable of mobilising small and large scale nonviolent actions in order to oppose violence and injustice, and to support peace and democracy.

Such a movement would need to be independent of all political parties.

A peace movement in South Africa would link with peace movements in other parts of the world. In this way, our work for peace would be strengthened and we would contribute to building peace in the world.

– Richard Steele and
Anita Kromberg, Durban

Update on South African War Resistance Issues

September 1991

● **The new Minister of Defence**, Roelf Meyer, takes over from Magnus Malan. Among other issues, he will have to deal with the recommendations of the Gleeson committee.

● Signing of the **National Peace Accord** in Johannesburg.

● Both the Conscription Advice Service and the ECC national office receive an **unprecedented number of calls from conscripts**: many in connection with call-ups for the annual joint military exercise at Luatla. Although no official figures are available, rumour has it that of 7000 called up for this “camp”, only 3000 reported.

● At the Maritzburg **inquest into the death of Chief Maphumulo** of Natal, a key witness, Siphso Madlala (who worked with the military police in Durban) reveals a complex web of alleged military and security police involvement in political murders and attacks in Natal.

October 1991

● Right winger **Adriaan Maritz**, who made headlines as a hunger striker while awaiting trial for political murders, is said by his wife to have been part of **Military Intelligence** in a unit whose task was to destabilise Black political organisations.

● *The Weekly Mail* reveals that **former Koevoet fighters** from Northern Namibia are now operating from a northern Transvaal police base near Brits, called Moordkop.

● **Armcor announces the retrenchment** of 5000 workers, mainly from subsidiary companies, because of Defence budget cuts.

● **The formation of the Patriotic Front** by the ANC, PAC and other political groups gives a boost to the negotiations process.

November 1991

● Seven white South Africans indicted in the US on **charges of selling weapons technology to Iraq**. They and a host of front companies for Armcor are said to have

smuggled missile parts through US customs.

● **ECC is awarded costs** by the Cape Supreme Court in connection with a request by the State that the hearing of the charges brought by ECC against the SADF in 1988 be held in camera. (The main case was concluded some time ago in ECC's favour)

● **Further light on the assassination of academic David Webster** in 1989 may come from the information that he was spied on by kwa-Zulu game rangers while doing anthropological research in the Kosi Bay region near the Mozambique border. Western Cape Attorney General Neil Rossouw is leading an inquiry into the suspected involvement of SADF officers in the assassination.

● At the long-awaited meeting of the multi-party/all-party conference, a starting date in December is **set for a national Convention for a Democratic South Africa**.

Where are they now?

The COs who received prison sentences from 1988 to 1990:

Dr Ivan Toms is the National Organiser of the Progressive Primary Health Care Network. This is a travelling post, but he is based in Cape Town.

David Bruce, with a year and a half of experience in journalism and publishing behind him, is coming to the end of his time spent with the journal *Critical Health* in Johannesburg.

Charles Bester has just finished writing his final BA exams and is still

deciding what to do next. All his studies—started in Kroonstad Prison—have been done by correspondence through UNISA.

Saul Batzofin returned to his job at Liberty Life in Johannesburg after his release from Zonderwater prison, and is forging ahead as a business economist.

Michael Graaf is basking in the relief of having been granted political indemnity and therefore having the rest of his community ser-

vice cancelled. He is working with street children in Durban.

Douglas Torr is combining his official job as parish priest and children's home chaplain with his compulsory part-time community service sentence counselling at the Johannesburg AIDS centre; he is also working voluntarily as one of Peace Action's violence monitors.

There are at present no COs in South African prisons.

Telford Vice's call-up cancelled

East London
20 June 1991

The Officer Commanding
Kaffrarian Rifles
Drill Hall
East London

Dear Sir

re: REFUSAL TO SERVE IN THE SADF

I, the undersigned, have received SADF call-up instructions dated May 21, 1991. The period I am being called up for is July 2 to August 1, 1991.

The SADF is the army of apartheid and also of the legacy of apartheid. As I am a member of the ANC it is impossible to justify being a part of your organisation. Obviously my personal feeling is also that I do not want to be associated in any way with the SADF. The community I work in has harsh memories of experiences gained at the hands of your organisation and your lackeys in the Ciskei. It would not be possible to regain the trust of these communities if I obeyed these call-up instructions.

The scrapping of the Population Registration Act has created a mist of uncertainty around the issue of conscription. The retention clause included in the Bill (which scrapped the Act) to maintain existing racial classification on a temporary basis is hopelessly vague. This renews discussion about the future and

nature of conscription in South Africa.

The outcome of recent cases involving conscientious objectors makes interesting reading. Douglas Torr was sentenced to 800 hours of community service for refusing to serve his initial period of one year. Wally Rontsch was acquitted of the charge of not reporting for a camp. Alan Storey was acquitted of not reporting for military training without having served a day in the SADF.

In light of all of this I refuse to serve in the SADF. I trust you will take all of the above into consideration when formulating reaction to my decision.

Yours faithfully

TELFORD VICE

He received the following reply dated 24 June from the officer commanding the Kaffrarian Rifles:

1. Kindly note that your call up instructions for the period as mentioned above has been cancelled.
2. Notify your employer immediately."

Oops! David Bruce called up again!

CO David Bruce, who was released from Pretoria Central Prison last year after serving 20 months for refusing to serve in the SADF, received call-up papers in September, ordering him to report for National Service in January 1992. On the day after publication of this in the *Weekly Mail*, the call-up was hastily withdrawn by the SADF.

ECC says: Stop Conscription Now!

At its latest National Committee meeting the End Conscription Campaign decided to focus its work during the next few months under the title "End Conscription Now".

ECC aims to publicise:

- the racism and unenforceability of call-ups for whites only;
- mass non-reporting by conscripts, especially for camps;
- the futility and wastefulness of conscription.

ECC is also consulting a range of other organisations to determine their views on conscription now and in a future South Africa. Ultimately this could include discussions with the government.

As part of the debate on changes needed to prepare for a democratic country ECC has drafted discussion documents on a system of voluntary civilian national service, and the structure of a new defence force.

Peace on the Move? The WRI Triennial 1991

350 people gathered from all over the world to spend a week on a green hilltop talking about peace: were we totally crazy or coolly sane? While nations still rely on arms and soldiers to "keep the peace", the small minority of people who believe in active non-violence need mutual support. The War Resisters International Conference in Belgium from July 28 to August 3 was both encouraging and enlightening for those of us who were there.

We heard at first hand about the international Gulf Peace Team in Iraq, and the Peace Walk between Israel and Jordan after the Gulf War, and of ongoing reconciliation work in Jerusalem between Israelis and Palestinians; about the fears of the Polish people of a re-united Germany; about the peace work centred in Ljubljanka, Slovenia and the huge problems of ethnicity

ICOM '91

The International Conscientious Objectors' Meeting is an annual event which all CO movements are encouraged to attend. It offers an opportunity for COs to formulate demands and work out strategies for the demilitarisation of society. This idea came from a War Resisters International seminar on "Responses to conscription" held in France in 1981. The idea of an international CO day (May 15) was conceived at a later conference and in May 1989 the focus was on South Africa.

This year's conference was held in Budapest, and a large number of European countries, which still have conscription, were represented. A disappointment, however, was the small number of Eastern European delegates as well as the fact that South Africa was the only country outside Europe represented.

From a South African viewpoint the conference was interesting as the debates are so different from our own. It was fascinating to finally come to grips with the Community Service/Total Resister de-

in Yugoslavia; about the oppression of young girls used in the "sex-tourism" trade in Thailand.

We also learnt of some successes and some failures with regard to Conscientious Objection and conscription, and had the opportunity to give an update on the South African situation. Greece is still imprisoning C.O's but in Spain the CO movement has made huge strides in making the call-up almost unworkable, as is starting to happen here too. The acceptability or not of alternative civilian service are an ongoing debate in Europe, as is the question of Europe Without Armies. And there are still hundreds of U.S. Gulf War objectors either undergoing trial at home or hiding out in Germany...

An exciting thing about this conference was the large number of people from Eastern Europe. And a disconcerting thing to South Africans working for a united non-racial society was the apparent reverse trend in Europe itself. Could

However this argument proved destructive in that the working groups on Peace Relevancy and the Development of alternative service in East European countries, focused on this issue and lost the opportunity to gain insight into other areas.

Other working groups discussed North and South: Nationalism and Conscientious Objection (with an interesting input from the Slovenian delegate); Unemployment and civilian service; and Women and Conscientious objection.

For us the highlight of the weekend was the chance to get back into protest politics. We felt quite at home marching through Budapest demonstrating against human rights violations. Police lined the route and the march took place without a hitch. The event was greeted with much enthusiasm and received extensive coverage on Budapest television.

Some decisions were reached in the closing session of the conference. ICOM decided to have working groups running throughout the year, looking at issues such

International Conferences

it be that just when we are emerging from the long dark night of Apartheid and separate ethnic identities, Europe is starting on an ethnic spree that sees the splintering off of ethnic groups all over the USSR and Eastern Europe? The study group at the conference dealing with solutions to ethnic conflicts world wide had possibly the hardest theme of all to tackle. South Africans in this group could both contribute and learn.

At the business session at the end of the open conference, COSG(SA) was accepted as an associate member of WRI - which gives us certain responsibilities in Southern Africa and in "The South" generally. WRI is still largely oriented to Europe and the Western world and we in South Africa need to strengthen our contacts with other WRI members in India and the Far East, in South and Central America, and in the Middle East. And what about our own continent, Africa?



as North and South; with a mandate to investigate and communicate, but not to make decisions. Selecting a topic for CO Day 1992 created huge conflict since half the delegates wanted the focus to be "Europe without armies" while others suggested a country, Turkey being the hot favourite. Ultimately, because lunch was beckoning, "Turkey, and Asylum Issues" were adopted as a compromise solution.

And so ended the conference; a really enjoyable experience.

- Cathy Bronstein
and Saul Batzofin

Gulf War COs

So far, Amnesty International has adopted as Prisoners of Conscience 25 US military CO's who resisted the Gulf War, but these represent only some of the vast numbers of CO's that surfaced during and since the War. One of those recently adopted is Captain Yolanda Huet Vaughn, a doctor, who has been sentenced to a 30-month prison term, the hardest sentence ever with regard to refusing to participate in the Gulf War.

In Britain, Vic Williams, a British soldier was jailed in August for 14 months for desertion and speaking to the media about his opposition to the war. He is reportedly the first British Prisoner of Conscience to be adopted by Amnesty International since 1973.

(Source: *Peace News Bulletin* no 19/91 21/91)

Writing about "The case of Gunner Vic" in the international Catholic weekly *The Tablet* of 21 September 1991, Robert Green, a former Royal Navy Commander, who had discussed the issue of selective conscientious objection with Vic Williams, makes the following comment:

"I believe that Vic has performed a vital service for the British political-military establishment.....If modern weapons are used without chivalry or restraint, volunteers like Vic will question the morality of

their orders or become traumatised....."

"Vic accepted that the primary role of the armed forces is to sort out failures of diplomacy by legalised violence. He had joined to take part proudly in the application of reasonable force within the context of the NATO alliance upon which his country's security depended. He had no qualms about the need to fight IRA terrorism, yet he felt so strongly that what the Army expected him to do in the Gulf was wrong, that he decided to sacrifice a secure career and withstand all the military, political and social sanctions that exist in a nation with such a strong martial tradition.

"I think that stand took a special blend of moral and physical courage. That leaves a question for the Army: was it Vic's lack of moral fibre, or too much of it, that drove him to break military law?"

For those wishing to show support for these CO's, the address of Amnesty International is 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, U.K.

Two exciting international events in 1992 will be the **Middle East Peace Walk** from Jerusalem to Amman in July and the **Womens Conference in Thailand** in October; further details about these events will be published in *The Objector* or can be obtained from the WRI office, 55 Dawes St London SE17 1EL.

International News

Yugoslavia

In Belgrade, 200 reservists organised a protest against the war, according to the Serbian magazine *Vreme*.

The Serbian-dominated Yugoslav Presidium threatens conscripts who are not following call-ups to be sentenced to prison terms of up to ten years.

In Croatia a new peace umbrella, the Anti-War Committee of Croatia, has been established by 12 mainly pacifist organisations. The movement supports actively the right to conscientious objection in accordance with the new December 1990 Constitution of Croatia. The AWCC council includes non-Croatian members and emphasises that "the Balkans have to disarm, and a demilitarised zone has to be created."

Seven peace organisations from the different republics are supporting a letter to Lord Carrington who is presiding at the EC Peace Conference at the Hague, asking for a hearing of the testimony of the peace movements. The letter starts: "Dear Lord Carrington, Beside the two parties, fighting in Yugoslavia under ruins, there is another party to be considered - it's the people.."

Source: *Peace News Bulletin* No 19/91 and 21/91

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