

This action is not Christian

n.w.
3-3-82.
Cause Obj.

A BAPTIST Christian has gone to jail for 18 months. Because he undergoes civil imprisonment your leader writer feels that some progress has been made in this issue.

There are so many things in this country which are just not Christian. Let us hope with recent events our decisions may be spiritually governed rather than politically formed or we will still be in a dilemma.

In Britain during the last war various tribunals were established to examine such objectors; various methods were devised so they could be of service within the confines of their conscience, and where a person was committed to civil prison for three months or more he had a right to appear before an appellate tribunal which could grant full or partial exemption.

This man will come out of prison and still be liable to call-up again,

with a repeat procedure. Such a system is barbaric.

I do not agree that denominations — or sects such as the Jehovahs Witnesses — should be given exemption en bloc and certainly not political organisations under the guise of peace unions. Provisions should be made for the individual person, however, to be examined as to his genuine objections.

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SADF move on objectors: churches cool

STAR

27-10-82

By Eugene Saldanha

Proposals being considered by the South African Defence Force — which could save conscientious objectors from having to go jail — have met a cool reception from several churches.

The new deal under consideration involves those who refuse to join the military because of their religious beliefs. It could result in conscientious objectors performing national service in the Department of Manpower instead.

The proposals, by an SADF committee appointed to investigate the issue, are being considered by the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, and the Chief of the SADF, General Constand Viljoen.

If approved the proposals could form the basis for new legislation.

Several churches have welcomed the suggestions as "a step in the right direction" but maintain they do not go far enough to accommodate people who might object to national service on moral or political grounds.

The Rev S Ndungwane of the Church of the Province of South Africa said the proposals were to be welcomed, but pointed out the difficulty of making a distinction between a religious and a political objector.

"A person's decision not to participate in a particular war which he considers to be unjust could be a response to the command of God.

"I am also concerned about non-religious people who are genuine conscientious objectors because of their moral principles.

"My church will consider again the question of conscientious objection at the forthcoming provincial synod," he said.

The Methodist Church gave its support to conscientious objectors at the church's centenary conference in Johannesburg recently.

The church said the SADF proposals did not go far enough. The conference resolved that members of the church should not feel bound by their consciences to observe every aspect of the country's legislation.

A wait and see attitude has been adopted by the Jehovah's Witnesses. A spokesman for the church said a statement on the proposals would be made when more details of the new deal became available.

A spokesman for the Presbyterian Church said the proposals should be extended to include objectors opposed to "unjust wars."

The Roman Catholic Church will react to the proposals at the Catholic Bishops Conference's plenary session in Pretoria in January.

GENERAL NEWS

Brigadier: SACC backed objectors

Own Correspondent

Before 1974 the South African Defence Force had experienced no opposition to military service on the grounds of conscientious objection, the Eloff Commission of Inquiry heard yesterday.

Brigadier E. Niewoudt, Chief of Staff of the South African Air Force, told the commission that in 1974 the South African Council of Churches passed a resolution supporting conscientious objectors.

He said the resolu-

tion did not accept it was automatically the duty of Christians to go to war whenever the State demanded.

"It is hypocritical to deplore the violence of terrorists or freedom fighters while we ourselves prepare to defend our society with its primary, institutionalised violence by means of yet more violence," Brigadier Niewoudt quoted from the resolution.

Mr G von Lieres, who is leading evidence on behalf of the commission, asked

Brigadier Niewoudt whether a resolution had also been passed exhorting the terrorists to non-violent means.

Brigadier Niewoudt said it had not.

Since 1974 churches had become increasingly involved in the question of conscientious objection, and several organisations were founded overseas specifically to promote resistance against military service in South Africa, he said.

The brigadier told the hearing that the SADF could not endure the safety of South Africa without a comprehensive system of military service.

Isolated cases of objection against military service did not have any real effect on the defence force, but the danger lay in escalation from organised resistance.

Earlier Bishop Desmond Tutu, General Secretary of the SACC, said he had to express disquiet that important memoranda handed into the hearing were made available only at the last minute.

He said some of the witnesses before the commission had been hostile, and if such witnesses were going to be called the SACC would have to reconsider its position on further participation.

Mr Justice C Eloff said witnesses had not been called but that interested parties had been invited to give evidence.

"It is my deepest concern that the feeling should be that fairness should prevail throughout," Mr Justice Eloff said.

The hearing is continuing.

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