

# End Conscription Campaign

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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### MAGNUS MALAN REJECTS ECC'S ALTERNATIVE SERVICE PROPOSALS

Magnus Malan has rejected ECC's alternative service proposals formally presented to the SADF at a meeting between the ECC and The SADF on 15 June 1988.

In a letter dated 27 July and delivered by hand to our Cape Town office today, Magnus Malan said that the situation regarding alternative service had not changed since ECC presented evidence to the Geldenhuys Committee that investigated conscription in 1984.

He noted that our submissions were similar to those presented to the Geldenhuys committee and that their evidence had been extensively debated in parliament. The Geldenhuys Committee proposed that the system of conscription should continue to exist and that alternative service should not be broadened to include all those who objected to service in the SADF for political, moral or humanitarian reasons.

Malan's letter to ECC concluded by stating that he felt it would serve no further purpose to consider further representations from ECC on this issue.

ECC believes that all objectors should qualify for a system of alternative service. By granting such a system ECC believes that many young professionals and newly qualified people would choose to remain in South Africa instead of leaving the country.

We also believe that people like David Bruce and Ivan Toms are committed South Africans who should not have to serve long periods of time in jail, wasting away their lives while they could be more productively used in serving the people of South Africa.

Our submissions to the SADF outlined the nature of the problem of conscription into the SADF given the controversial role of the SADF in the townships, Namibia, Angola and other Southern African countries. We also noted the degree of resistance to conscription, highlighted by the stand of the 143



**ECC**  
*End Conscription Campaign*



conscripts on Wednesday, and the costs of conscription into the SADF.

We believe that a reasonable system of alternative service should be a system that includes not just universal religious pacifists, but all those who object to service in the SADF for political moral and ethical reasons. These submissions made to the SADF, included the belief that the period of alternative service should not be a punitive six years, but should be equal to the total length of military service ie four years, and that alternative service should be offered in welfare, religious and community organisations as well as government departments. (See enclosed copy of ECC SUBMISSIONS TO THE SADF.)

These proposals were presented to two representatives from the SADF, Col. Ben Burger (Air Force) and Captain Dunstan Smart (Navy), on 15 June 1988 *in Pretoria.*

The meeting was conducted in cordial terms by both sides. ECC wanted to discuss the war in Angola, troops in the townships, the smear campaign conducted by the SADF against the ECC as well as the issue of alternative service. However the SADF representatives said they only had a mandate to discuss the system of alternative service with us, which had been the basis of our original request, and that the meeting could not proceed unless we agreed to restrict the agenda to alternative service.

We felt that the opportunity of meeting with the SADF and talking to them was more important than an insistence to debate other issues. In this regard we also agreed to restrict the nature of our public comment on the talks to a joint press statement, pending a response from the Minister of Defence.

Our written representations were given to the SADF representatives who said that they were not in a position to respond to them but promised that Magnus Malan would consider them and respond to them.

ECC believed at the time that the SADF seemed to be genuinely considering a revised system of alternative service and that the talks with the SADF heralded a change in the previous acrimonious relationship that the SADF has had with us in the past.

However, Magnus Malan's recent statements attacking ECC, press speculation and the fact that his representative said that he has "broken off relations with the ECC" are indicative of an attempt to silence the ECC and resistance

to conscription.

We regard Magnus Malan's attempts as destructive in the current context of David Bruce's six year jail sentence and the refusal of 143 conscripts to serve in the SADF - their refusal had nothing to do with ECC and ECC was in no way responsible for, coordinated or facilitated their action.

We believe it is much more important to talk to those who share differing opinions on the issue of conscription, rather than to respond with venom and bitterness.

ECC is always prepared to discuss its position on conscription and alternative service with any grouping or individual.

Instead of attacking ECC publically, we believe that it would be much more constructive for Magnus Malan to debate his differences with the ECC. We are prepared to meet with the Minister of Defence or any of his representatives at any time. Our door is always open for discussions on alternative service with Magnus Malan and the SADF.

A PUBLIC MEETING WILL BE HELD AT 8pm ON MONDAY NIGHT AT THE CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH IN PRITCHARD STREET, JOHANNESBURG, WHICH WILL EXAMINE SYSTEMS OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICE IN SOUTH AFRICA. ALL ARE WELCOME.

RELEASED BY:

Alastair Teeling-Smith

Friday 5 August 1988

For further information page

*A Teeling-Smith*



ECC 5 YRS : STATEMENT FOR THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE

People associated with the End Conscription Campaign have celebrated the organisation's fifth birthday this week quietly and under restrictions, but nevertheless with a warm glow of pleasure. For it has accomplished at least three significant achievements in its brief life-span.

First, it has succeeded in placing the moral question of conscription firmly on the agenda of the white community's consciousness. It has done this in conventional political ways : debates, public meetings, lectures, surveys, lobbying, publication of statistics and other information. It has done it in creative, innovative and eye-catching ways : badges, stickers, pamphlets, newspapers and comics, art competitions, cross-words, pavement art, film festivals, peace fairs, photographic exhibitions, fun runs, concerts and caberets. (The state has found this mode of popular politics threatening and difficult to handle. For example it banned a group of people on a Cape Town beach from building a sand-castle in the shape of the Castle!). It has also done it in practical and constructive ways : building clinics and schools, decorating childrens' homes, clearing derelict plots in inner cities to make space for children to play in safety, and removing polluting litter from rivers. In this way ECC was demonstrating what it saw as constructive forms of non-military national service. At the time of its restriction on the 22nd of August ECC was in the middle of such projects around the country.

Second, it has shown whites that the struggle against apartheid is not a black/white one : there is a place for whites to resist apartheid in a meaningful, effective and creative way. Whites who have a conscience about the gross evils of apartheid policies have more options than to wallow in guilt-ridden inertia or to leave the land of their birth in despair. The End Conscription Campaign, as a broad-based organisation without ideological rigidity, provided a home for many such people, who came from a wide spectrum of the white community. This despite the risks of house-raids, detentions and a variety of right-wing harrassment.

Third, it has stood as a sign of hope in the black community. It has shown that there are whites who are prepared to put their words into deeds of commitment to a non-racial and democratic South Africa. ECC's stance and way of working earned it the respect of both 'Charterist' and 'Black Consciousness' political organisations.

By honouring it with a restriction order (making it the only organisation working in the white community to be affected in this



way) Minister Vlok has acknowledged the ECC's effectiveness and has in effect crowned it with a mantle of credibility.

In recalling the history of the End Conscription Campaign it is worth remembering that of its over 100 activists who have been detained (and since released) not one was charged with any crime. Furthermore not one ECC member or office-bearer in its entire five-year history has been charged and convicted for political or 'security' offences. Indeed, the ECC has departed from the public eye on the moral high ground with the conviction of the SADF for unlawful behavior against the ECC, in the Cape Supreme Court last week.

What of the future? By lashing out at the messenger articulating the problem, rather than facing up to the problem itself, the government has achieved nothing constructive at all. The economic, moral, social, psychological and other problems attendant to the system of military conscription continue to be with us.

While there is indeed great sadness that the life of ECC has for most practical purposes come to an end, the organisation had, in a sense, fulfilled its task. At the time of its restriction it was, with some difficulty, wearing a number of hats. Some would go so far as to say the hats were of such clashing colour and design as to be incompatible! On the one hand the organisation was articulating the needs and problems of conscripts, and providing a service to them, most notably the KNOW YOUR RIGHTS IN THE SADF booklet launched in July this year. ECC had veterans' groups within its structures and was enjoying growing support among active servicemen. On the other hand it was articulating an uncompromising political message, calling into question the legitimacy of the SADF's role in the townships, Namibia, the Angolan war and its activities elsewhere in Southern Africa. This analysis found resonance with a growing number of conscripts who had doubts about the morality of obeying their call-up. ECC was thus seen as being a supportive environment for conscientious objectors. It provided a publicity platform for a number of them, the most recent being David Bruce. In addition, somewhere in-between these two poles ECC was engaging in a serious research and lobbying campaign for a system of alternative national service.

These aspects of ECC's work are already on the agenda of numerous other organisations, some of which were in existence well before ECC was founded. The Conscientious Objector Support Group will continue in its work of supporting objectors, since it has been doing since 1979. As the conscripted community's crisis of conscience grows, no doubt its workload will increase! The Conscription Advice Service will continue its work of counselling and providing information to conscripts on their legal rights. With regards to alternative service: community, business and



welfare organisations as well as churches and parliamentary parties are actively concerned about this issue and will no doubt continue to press for the establishment of such a system as an alternative form of national service open to all conscripts.

Therefore while we undoubtedly face the bleak prospect of conscription for the foreseeable future, it is also true that the needs of conscripts going into the SADF with little choice, the support of conscientious objectors, and the work of raising the need for alternatives to military service, will be well cared for.

# # # # #

Rob Goldman  
CHAIRPERSON : DURBAN ECC  
(personal capacity)

issued 20 October 1988

- speculation about charges - Angola Namibia
- Dave Bruce, Tans, 143.
- Not a campaign against security forces.

Mike Acott.

A16.

£4

By not considering charges to the call up,  
The government is committing a <sup>costly</sup> ~~serious~~ error that ~~will have costly~~  
implications.

Mr. the troop withdrawn from  
According to Breytenbach, Deputy Min of Defence, ~~there~~ has resulted  
been widespread speculation about charges to the system of  
Nat Service.

But ECC believes that ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> pressure on the gov to amend the  
Defence Act has resulted from the <sup>high</sup> jail sentences of Dave Bruce  
Ivan Tans + the recent start of the 143 objectors.

The ~~could~~ <sup>on the gov</sup> jail sentence facing objectors has resulted in  
many calling ~~for~~ <sup>to offer</sup> a reasonable system of alternative  
service for all objectors.

By not granting alternative service, many thousands of  
skilled professionals will continue to leave the country  
will others choose to waste away in jail. ~~Our country~~ <sup>Breytenbach who</sup>  
South Africa cannot afford this loss. ~~is not a~~ <sup>is not a</sup>

Breytenbach believes that campaigns against conscripts are  
campaigns against the security forces. But ECC is an organization  
of conscripts + <sup>some</sup> many of our members are in the SAOF  
while others will be going unwillingly into the army.

ECC is against conscript <sup>without alternatives</sup> not the conscript

Only by introducing a reasonable system of alt service  
will the ~~cost~~ economic + harmful costs of conscripts be reduced  
for those <sup>of us</sup> who are conscripted.

PRESS  
RELEASE  
SAPA  
702  
Capital  
56r

16 August 1988  
telephonically



- consumption :

Father Esterson.

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