



AN
ECC
PUBLICATION

COMBAT
COMBAT

FEB
N° 2
BOYRE

End Conscription Campaign



COMBAT

COMBAT

I DON'T WANT TO
KNOW WHO I AM
KILLING

SURELY THIS
CAN'T BE
THE ENEMY?



ECC - 4 years on ...



Welcome to university. The beginning of the varsity year is a challenging and exciting time for students. There are many young South Africans though, who are facing a very different type of challenge - their call up.

While we are jorling and getting into our studies, thousands of young South African conscripts are looking at the following two years with trepidation. For many of them the two years of national service that they face will be an experience that they would have rather gone without. An experience of an army which actively involves itself in the implementation of apartheid policies, such as the occupation of Namibia, the patrol of townships and the invasion and destabilisation of Angola and Mozambique.

Military conscription is a deeply personal issue and experience that affects the lives of all white South Africans, either directly as conscripts or indirectly as the freinds and family of young soliders.

Our society is becoming increasingly polarised as we experience the cycle of violence and anger as South Africa slips into a state of

civil war. It is in this escalating conflict that young white men are being forced to participate in the defence of the National Party's racist and exploititive laws.

Over the past three years the real role of the SADF has become clearer. The SADF has been made to actively supress the anger of the Black community to apartheid policies, by the use of the SADF as a riot 'control' force in the townships, at factory gates against striking workers. In the rural areas the SADF has been used against people protesting forced removals and in Namibia against people fighting for their country's independence.

Some people have argued that the National Party's reform programme is slowly doing away with apartheid. However the experience of heightened unrest and conflict over the past few years clearly show that any 'reforms' implemented have done nothing to apease the real grievances of the majority of South Africans.

There has been a growing concern among conscripts about their participation in the SADF and a recongnition within the white community that peace and justice in our country can only be solidly built once apartheid has ended. Consequenty there has arisen a growing call to end the laws of conscription and to implement a form of national service that benefits, rather than supresses, the majority of South Africans.

Complementing this call to end consription has been the rapid growth of the End Conscription Campaign. ECC is an organisation that gives a coherent voice to the thousands of white South Africans who object to conscription and the role that the SADF plays in our society. ECC has grown, since its formation in 1983, to be an organisation that has branches in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Grahamstown, Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban and Pietermaritzburg. ECC also has branches at the campuses of UCT, Wits, Rhodes, Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

ECC as an organisation has been able to unite a broad range of political opinions and organisations around our issue of conscription. This is because we believe that the commitment to ending conscription is stronger than the variety of beliefs that we have on other issues. What ever our opinions on other issues, our commitment to ending conscription and representing concerned conscripts is paramount, and this has enabled ECC to build a strong, committed and coherent voice against conscription. A voice that cannot be ignored.

"I feel angry that I had no choice"

"When I entered the army, as a conscript, I had no knowledge of anything about the war in Namibia, except for a vague idea that foreign aggressors were trying to invade 'South West Africa.'"

I was also a victim of the South African male macho image - that being brave and ready to go and fight was glamorous and exciting. When you're seventeen, fresh out of school, knowing very little about war and what being in the army really means, you are not in a position to make decisions about what you're doing. What gradually became clear was that the war in Namibia was not against a foreign aggressor, but, that the SADF was a force of occupation.

As a member of the SADF in uniform, it was obvious to see the terrifying affect it had on the local population. You didn't need to be carrying a gun or be with any other conscripts to have this affect. Small kids herding cattle would flee from me, simply because I was wearing that uniform.

Many of the troopies I was with didn't care about what they were doing, or about the

implications of their actions. They were basically racist. The language with which we were controlled, by our commanding officers, emphasised this. Comments such as "we're going to kill the krulkoppe" were commonly used. The local population were also racially insulted.

There were however some people who saw the destruction that the presence of the SADF was causing. They could see the breakdown of Namibian society. This was made especially clear through the absence of males between the ages of 16 to 60, in many of the villages. The reason behind this was that the men were either drafted into the SWATF, or had joined SWAPO, or had fled from the area. They knew that if they didn't leave, they would be suspected of being informers or terrorists, depending upon which side saw them first.

Four days after I went into Angola, the SABC and the SADF authorities were still denying that South African troops were in Angola. We were actually there and listening to this on the radio.

When I finished my 2 years in the SADF, I had become an extremely angry and aggressive person. I did not understand what I was angry about, but I

knew that I was resentful of a world which found issues, trivialities to me, so important. As I realised that the occupation of Namibia and the invasion of Angola were rooted in the government's policy of Apartheid, my political beliefs were strengthened. Another very strong feeling which emerged after returning home was one of guilt. I felt guilty about fighting in a war I did not believe in, and which I saw as being wrong.

I now feel angry that I was taken into a situation which I feel is morally wrong - that of being part of an occupying force. I feel angry that I had no choice in what I was subjected to.

Today, knowing what the SADF stands for, I am certain that I would never again serve in it - in any capacity!



Dr. Ivan Toms refuses to serve

Will the State send conscientious objector Dr. Ivan Toms to jail, or will the Government finally address the urgent need for constructive alternatives to national service?

On November 12 Ivan refused to render service in the South African Defence Force after reporting for a one month camp in civilian clothes. Two hours later he was charged under Section 126 (a) for refusing to serve.

The minimum sentence for this offence is 18 months' imprisonment, but for Ivan it was the only viable option: "South Africa is in a state of civil war and we have to take sides. I believe that the side of justice and truth is the side of the poor and oppressed in our country. I stand on that side."

"I am committed to South Africa and I believe that the truly patriotic action for me is to go to prison rather than deny my faith and my belief," Ivan said.

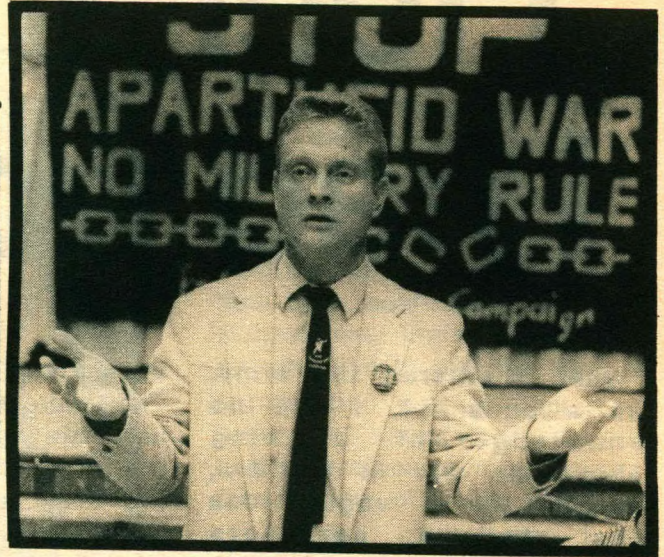
Speaking at a public meeting in Pietermaritzburg before his call-up, Ivan said that he hoped his stand against conscription will contribute to a change in the law on objection.

"I hope my stand will add a little to the pressure already on the Government to change the legislation and broaden the definition of conscientious objection to include political and other objectors."

In the mean time the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference has again urged the Government to allow objection

UPDATE

Dr Ivan Toms is to stand trial in Cape Town on 29 February. We wish him all the best.



to military service on conscientious as well as religious grounds.

"The universal church has always defended the right and duty of all people in all situations, while acting in good faith, to follow their conscience," the SACBC said in a statement to the Press.

At his first appearance in the Goodwood magistrate's court, Ivan was asked whether he was not ruining his career by opting for imprisonment rather than to serve in the SADF.

He replied that he was a doctor working in the Cape townships where medical skills are desperately needed. He said the people there have learned to trust him, and should he go into the SADF he would never be able to return to the community.

Ivan has said he is not a "raving radical", as the Government would like whites to believe all those who disagree with its policies are. His decision to become an objector was based on a sound religious grounds and his experience of security force actions in the townships of Cape Town, where few white people go.

"If the SADF was truly a 'defence force' protecting the rights and property of all South Africans, I would willingly serve as a non-combatant medical doctor."

"But since October 1984 troops have been used to control the black townships of South Africa and to suppress resistance to apartheid. The border is no longer thousands of miles away in Namibia, but right on our door step, in Langa, Alexandra, Soweto and Duncan Village."

Ivan continued: "Friends who might have gone to the same church school are now facing each other across the barrel of a gun in the townships."

Ivan said he stands with all conscripts that support the End Conscription Campaign's call for constructive alternative service.

"I really believe that I have been doing true national service in my work in the poorest squatter areas of greater Cape Town. This is the kind of service that I believe will help build a South Africa that we can all be proud of."

Hell no! We won't go!

On the 3rd of August 1987, 23 young men publicly refused to serve in the SADF. They are not isolated cases, but rather they epitomise the increasing doubts felt by many

conscripts about service in the SADF.

These 23 objectors have since received widespread support from both within and outside South Africa. We, in ECC,

admire the courage with which the 23 objectors have taken their stand. We look forward to the day when the sacrifices that they have to make will no longer be necessary.

Why we reject the SADF.

We are a group of South Africans compelled by law to serve in the South African Defence Force. We believe our country is best served if we refuse to fight in the SADF. The laws of this country make this a serious step to take. Yet, we feel there comes a time when moral choices, no matter how difficult, cannot be avoided.

We believe our country is experiencing civil war. We, as whites, are conscripted to serve on one side of the conflict. Yet this war is not of our making, nor is it of our choice.

We believe that the root cause of the war is Apartheid. It is indefensible. It poisons relations between our people and with our neighbouring countries. It creates poverty and inequality. Its bitter fruits are hatred and violence.

We believe that the State of Emergency is a declaration of war against the people of South Africa. The SADF is deployed against township youth and members of the liberation movement. These people are not our enemies. They are fellow South Africans and we will not take up arms against them.

We believe that South Africans have nothing to fear from a non-racial democratic society where all have equal rights. It will bring stability, peace and progress. Until Apartheid is abolished, the civil war that is tearing our country apart can only intensify.

We believe that the SADF is not a shield behind which peaceful change can occur, but an instrument for defending the privileges of a minority. The SADF continually contravenes international law. It illegally occupies Namibia. It violates the sovereignty of neighbouring states and commits acts of aggression against the citizens of these countries.

The SADF consumes the country's resources, resources that are so desperately needed for health, housing and education.

It is against our moral principles to participate in such an institution.

We believe there is a future where all South Africans can live in peace and harmony with each other. We pledge ourselves to build and be part of that future. To serve in the SADF would contradict such a pledge.

THIS STATEMENT BY
THOSE 23 OBJECTORS
MAKES A LOT OF
SENSE, YOU KNOW!



End Conscription Campaign

Many people seem surprised when they learn that at least half the ECC membership is female. Women after all are not conscripted - yet. But, when you think about it, it is not surprising at all. The affects of conscription are felt by all South Africans.

Women have a massive stake in a peaceful South Africa. You do not need to be conscripted to see the damage caused by our militaristic government. You don't need to be conscripted to see that war is no solution to South Africa's problems. What really appeals to women about ECC is that it is an organisation trying to defuse violence, trying to promote peaceful solutions and a peaceful transition to democracy. ECC believes in a political solution rather than a military one.

Besides the long-term political dangers of Botha's military solutions, women are very much affected by the general militarisation of our society. They are affected by society where boys are taught to love guns and violence and women are expected to keep the homefires burning; and to extend moral and emotional support to the troops. Increasingly, women are questioning the waste of their energy on propping up a military society instead of being directed more constructively towards equitable and peaceful alternatives.

Army life perpetuates machismo. Men are taught to be violent and aggressive. Women are taught to be passive and supportative. The worst stereotypes of female subordination and female passivity are encouraged. Army life breeds violence towards women through a



"...You don't have to be conscripted to support the right of men to choose."

simultaneous process of depriving troops of the normal company of women whilst encouraging the sexual objectification of women. It is in the interests of all women to break down sexual stereotypes and to reform a society which breeds sexual violence.

Conscription causes massive disruption to family life and personal relationships. Some men are drawn out of normal society for a long time, whilst others go into permanent exile. Women share the emotional and moral dilemmas of men close to them; you don't have to be conscripted to support the right of men to choose.

For a variety of reasons, then, conscription is the concern of

women as well as men. As women we work within the End Conscription Campaign not only for our own good, but also for the future of our country.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The information provided in this article comes mainly from section 72 of the Defence Act. Few alternatives to military service exist for conscripts, although the Defence Act does recognise and cater for religiously motivated pacifists.

To meet the requirements of the act you must believe in a God and believe that your faith limits your participation, to varying degrees, in any army. You do not have to be a member of a "peace church" (eg. Jehovah's Witness) or any church. It has been found that most successful applicants have been active members of a recognised church. You can apply for classification as a religious objector at any time, either before going into the SADF, or alternatively during your initial two years service or while doing camps.

The Defense Act recognises three categories of religious objection:

* The first category is that of noncombatant. A person applying for this category must be willing to serve in any army and wear uniform but be unwilling to use weapons. If this status is granted, you will

be required to do the normal service of two years plus two years camps. Such a person will not be trained in the use of weapons but will be used in a noncombatant position such as a clerk or a cook.

* The second category are those willing to serve in any army but not willing to perform any task of a combatant nature or wear a military uniform. You are required to do one and a half times the normal period of service, i.e. six years service, or one and a half times the length of your required remaining period. That is, if you have completed two years national service but still have two years camps remaining, you will have to do three years of non-combatant service.

* The third category comprises those who are not willing to serve in any army. Instead you will be posted by the Minister of Manpower to do non-military work in government-linked organisations such as the post office or local fire station. Your duration of service will be one and a half times the normal period, that is six years. This must be done in one continuous stretch. During this time you will not be promoted and you will receive the pay applicable

to the rank of private for the entire period.

To be recognised as a conscientious objector you have to convince the Board for Religious Objection in Bloemfontein of the sincerity of your beliefs.

If you refuse to serve in the SADF and are not accepted by the Board, you face a jail sentence of a minimum of 18 months and a maximum of six years. In prison you will receive the same treatment as a common criminal, rather than that of a political prisoner.

If you are thinking of objecting to military service or would like more information about your options as a conscript, we suggest you contact the advice bureau for conscription operating on your campus.



STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN UNION OF JEWISH STUDENTS:

" Jewish students, especially those eligible for army service need to be as informed as possible in as far as what army service in this country really means... SAUJS therefore shows its support for the End Conscription Campaign in its task of creating a fuller understanding of the SADF." Greg Blecher, SAUJS National Committee Member.



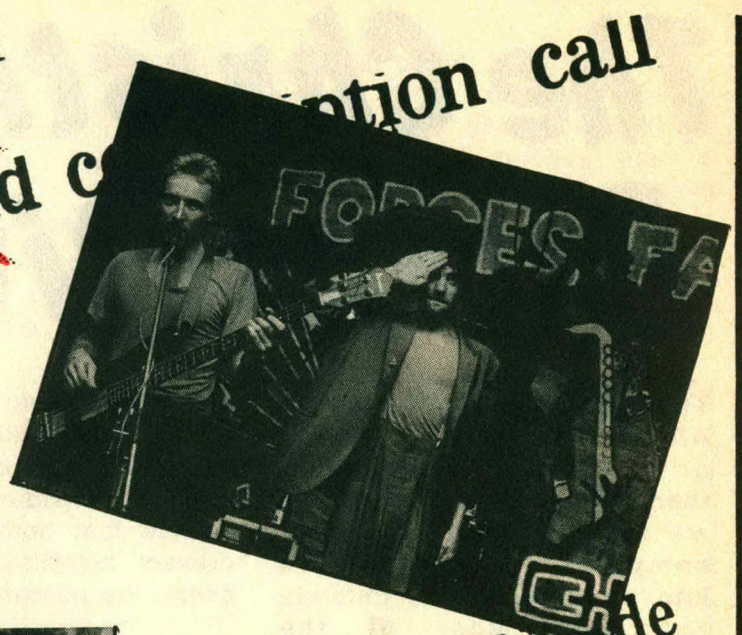
Protest

NIC to intel
conscription camp



Culture

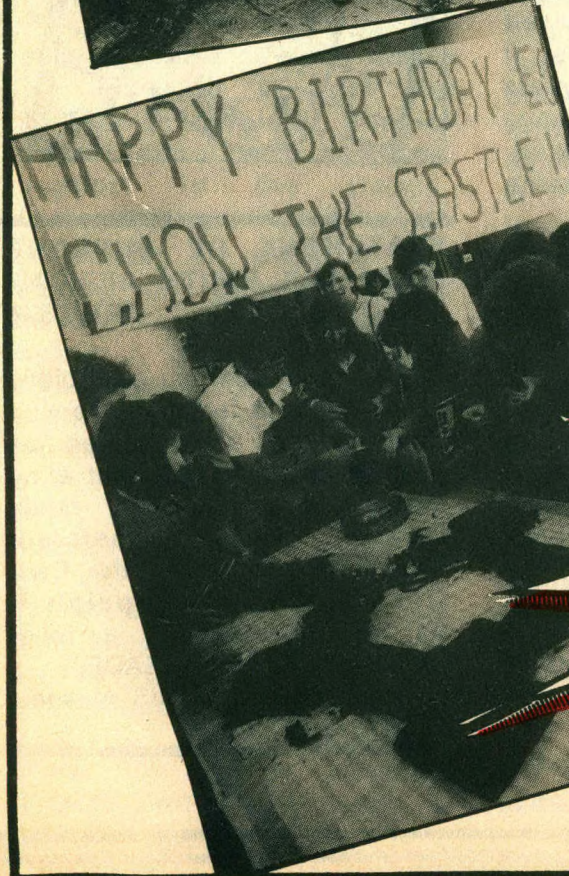
policy
queried



go - Beyers Naude



An Explosive Year



Campaigns



Meetings



People of
SWA want
SADF out'

Survived
without conscription

The Christian Perspective

The Churches of South Africa have over a period of years addressed themselves to the issue of white males being compulsarily conscripted into an army which defends apartheid. Most of the major churches have extended their support from Pacifists to Conscientious Objectors who are not prepared to fight for what they consider an unjust cause.

There are two major theories underlying the Conscientious Objector's beliefs and principles. These are the Pacifist theory and the Just War theory.

Pacifism is usually advanced on the basis of Christ's example and teaching recorded in the New Testament.

"The peacemaker is realistic about the cost of peacemaking. He is aware that peacemaking cost Jesus his life. He is willing to die at the hands of his enemy, rather than be the means of his enemy's death. ("Portrait of a Peacemaker")

Pacifists believe that the way of destruction and violence is antithetical to the Christ-like way of love and healing. They believe that there are positive alternatives to violence as a method of defence and conflict resolution.

Just War theorists, on the other hand, believe that there are some instances where war can be considered just. They believe that both previous and present activities of the SADF cannot be considered justified.

The SADF is seen as instrumental in the defence of apartheid and not in the defence of all South African citizens. Apartheid is seen as contradicting the commandment to love, as it does not recognise the unity and brotherhood which flows from the oneness of God, (Father of All) and the single sacrifice of Christ (Redeemer of All).

Any system which mitigates against this unity is seen as against God's plan for the world. Especially so when the justification for such a system is based on the way in which God himself has created people.

ECC itself evolved in a time when the Conscientious Objector movement was growing. Pacifists and those who objected to participating in an unjust war upholding apartheid went to jail or into exile, rather than into the SADF.

In 1983 the government introduced the Defence Further Amendment Act which recognises the principle of Conscientious Objection and alternative service, but for religious Pacifists only. All



other Objectors are liable to a prison sentence of up to six years.

This law was felt to be inadequate and unjustly punitive. People began to see that it was not so much the narrowness of Conscientious Objector recognition which was the problem, but conscription itself.

Many Christians today must face up to this moral dilemma. As violence and injustice in our society increases, Christians have begun to question the validity of what they are taught. They have to ask whether it is morally right as Christians to support or participate in the SADF.

The following three quotes graphically illustrate this crisis of conscience:

"There is so much pressure on young white men to accept the military, so why didn't it affect me? I think that I just came to a point in my Christianity when I felt it would be antithetical to my beliefs to go into the army"
Richard Steele,
Conscientious objector.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

End Conscription Campaign

continued

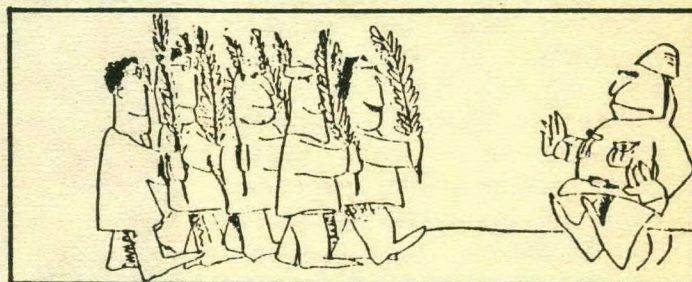
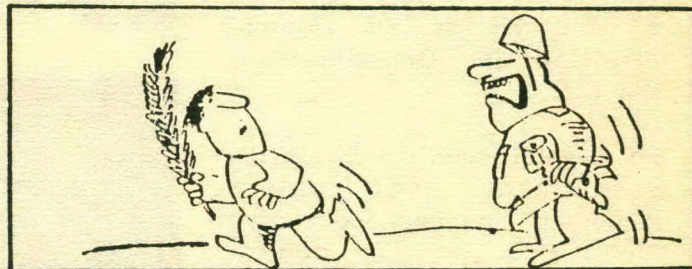
"All the while I was in the army, I tried to reconcile my Christian faith with my experiences and found that I could not". **Andrew Brown, non-combatant.**

"I believe it is hypocrisy when Christians in positions of privilege endorse violence on

behalf of a biased law and order, whilst making moral denunciations against violence that threatens the unjust order." **Billy Paddock, Conscientious Objector.**

We recognise that concerned Christians in the SADF are faced with the dilemma of

what to do in a situation where fellow Christians and South Africans are killing each other. However, we believe that in ECC we are working for a more lasting peace based on love, justice and democratic principles, rather than military solutions.



Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference:

" In this matter of conscientious objection we defend the right of every individual to follow their own conscience; the right therefore to conscientious objection on the grounds of universal pacifism and on the grounds that the person seriously believes the war to be unjust" (1977).

" We recognise that an end to conscription would leave membership of the SADF open to those who are in sympathy with it and would grant individuals freedom of conscience in determining their response to the situation. Therefore we join our voices with those who have already asked for an end to conscription. We call on the government to amend the Defence Act to make this possible" (1985).

Churches speak out on conscription

South African Council of Churches (1974):

" The national conference of the SACC points out that the military forces of our society are being prepared to defend an unjust and discriminatory society and that the threat of military force is already used to defend the status quo... the conference calls on its member churches to challenge all their members to consider whether Christ's call to take up the cross and follow him in identifying with the oppressed does not, in our situation, involve being conscientious objectors. "

Church of the Province of South Africa, Provincial Synod (1982):

" That the Synod wishes to make clear that allegiance to Christ demands of every Christian that before he takes up arms for any purpose, or enters the military, he should face our Lord and ask himself whether this is truly what he should do... given our understanding of the Christian faith and its implications for our life in South Africa, we feel bound to express our serious doubts about the legitimacy of a military system when it is increasingly seen as the protector of a profoundly immoral and unjust social order..."

Methodist Conference (1984):

" It is the moral right of South Africans to choose whether or not to serve in the SADF"

Collection Number: AG1977

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a collection held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.