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GRAHAMSTOWN ECC REPORT TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE, MAY 1986

Grahamstown ECC is still in the process of being launched. A committee was formed to organise the national ECC Troops Out campaign in Grahamstown last year. It had three subcommittees: Contact, Churches and Schools. During the campaign Rhodes ECC was launched on campus. 12 delegates from town and campus attended the ECC National Congress in Durban at the beginning of the year. In February the Troops Out committee was reconstituted as the Interim Grahamstown ECC committee with the specific aim of preparing for a launch, along with possible affiliates, late in May.

EXECUTIVE

- Chair and Contact co-ordinator: Wilhelm Liebenberg
- Treasurer: Mike Kenyon
- Schools co-ordinator: Bridget Hilton-Barber
- Churches co-ordinator: Julia Denny
- Media co-ordinator: Mark Beare
- Campus rep: Melissa de Villiers

CONTACT AND CHURCHES COMMITTEES

Due to lack of person power contact combined with churches com. for the time being. At our first house meeting it became clear that internal education was a priority. Many of our committee members weren't confident about their knowledge of ECC and the issues involved.

A very successful workshop was held on 6/3, addressed by Pete Hawthorne and with input on ECC, Media coverage of SADF action, the defense act, schools, and the psychological aspects of militarisation. The last two issues fired the imagination of the 40 people present and were seen to be priorities for further action.

Contact Com. made contact with a variety of organisations (Black Sash, Lawyers for Human Rights, Gradac, Grahamstown Talks, Round Table, Ministers Fraternal, Rape Crisis Centre, National Council of Women and the PFP). Whereas few see themselves as potential affiliates, most are keen to provide a forum. (NB. Church organisations and PFP Youth are affiliated to Rhodes ECC on campus.)

Contact Committee is seen as a launching pad for further committees and a committee to draw new people in and acquaint them with the issues. A number of individuals have been recruited and Media Committee was set up and split off from Contact.

A house meeting with church hierarchy addressed by Laurie on the 17/3 had a very disappointing turnout. Churches remains a difficult part of our constituency, though we have received keen support from Anglican clergy.

Due to lack of spontaneous public response to our media and meetings up till now, contact committee is seen as important, and housemeetings as an approach through which a lot of ground work is still to be done.

MEDIA COMMITTEE

Media Com. got itself together in time for our pamphlet blitz leading up to the WJP and did a good job.

SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

Up to this point ECC schools work has necessarily been of a low profile and fairly limited nature. Important gains have been made at the level of contact (with pupils and teachers) and laying groundwork. However, work has tended to be slow due to lack of person power and campaign constraints.

Schools Com. plans to have an educational "symposium" aimed at schoolchildren. It will be centred around broad themes of war and peace as linked to aspects of school syllabi. The symposium could establish ECC's legitimacy, enabling us to proceed more systematically and extensively within schools themselves; enable us to involve a range of sympathetic teachers formally approach head masters on a good basis; and raise ECC related issues among a wider range of school pupils.

Another important initiative has been the recent formation of a parents committee, following a groundswell of concern around issues of cadets and registration. The parents group is not part of ECC, but includes ECC members, and aims to explore forms of action around military issues with school authorities and churches.

CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

This committee was formed to plan the WJP and Launch program and involved the exec and some new recruits.

- A successful and highly spirited pamphlet blitz was held in town on 19/4.
- With the help of Laurie a WJP project was organised, involving the making of benches with workers from the woodwork co-op in Grahamstown on Sat. 20/4. To be continued the next Saturday.

WJP

Definite gains have been made in certain quarters by participating in the national Working for a Just Peace campaign. We changed our initial plan to merely publicise the campaign when we organised the bench making project. This type of activity seems to make a favourable impact on our liberal constituency. It also led to the establishment of firmer contact with township organisations and drew the campus and town ECC's closer together.

On the other hand we did not manage to draw new people into the project which ended up drawing personpower from the subcommittees to the detriment of the groundwork that has to be done to build up the organisation.

GENERAL

ECC in town is growing at a gradual but steady pace. One does not meet with the dramatic response from the public that some of the larger centres have experienced, but that is perhaps to be expected from a relatively conservative border town like Grahamstown with a bit more than 3000 white residents excluding students and scholars. More ground work needs to be done to consolidate our organisational strength.

Response from the township is very favourable. There is a keen interest in ECC. We were invited to speak at a township funeral on 27/4 and it was a great pity that circumstances made this impossible.

FUTURE PROGRAM

During May we will be working towards a launch with a public meeting on the 28th.

This will involve

- a publicity campaign
- a blitz which will combine the national survey with pamphleteering
- consolidating contacts with possible affiliates and meeting with them to finalise structures.
- a recruitment drive
- house meetings
- other media and cultural events.

1. Structure
2. ECC as a front: sub-committee reports
3. Ecc as an organisation

1. STRUCTURE

Rhodes ECC consists of a range of affiliated campus societies - Cathsoc, Ansoc, Methsoc, PFP Youth, SAUJS, NUSAS and EdAct - plus a number of interested individuals. The organisations's working group is comprised of three sub-committees (media, culture and contact) while an administrative executive consisting of a chair, treasurer and secretary attend to bureaucracy and broad co-ordination.

Sub-committees meet regularly once a week and come together fortnightly for a general body meeting where the various projects of each are reviewed, overall direction of campaigns is planned and internal educative inputs can take place.

2. SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS

CONTACT: This subcommittee was formed at the beginning of the year and is responsible for handling publicity liason work as well as building the front structure on campus and consolidating links with affiliate organisations. This group is also responsible for planning internal education seminars for the broad group. Other projects include a resource centre for ECC material and research work on militarization, also an advice group which offers legal/religious/ psychological aid.

This subcommittee has proved successful in drawing together the front and extending and strengthening ECC's links and credibility with a whole range of students previously outside the organisation's reach. However, involvement of the affiliate's membership in ECC activities, rather than just the attendance of affiliate reps, could be improved. Internal Education also seems to be de-emphasized in the course of a busy term and this very important area needs attention

MEDIA: This group attracted a number of new recruits and has worked well, managing to generate a constant ECC profile through the high quality media they produced. A series of statement posters on the WJP theme was followed by an 8-page newsletter on the WJP campaign which was very well received. Other media include pamphlets and flyers advertising other WJP activities, media for Orientation Week, while future plans include painting an ECC wall mural, t-shirts and producing a slide/tape show. Skills media-wise have been passed

on and the group is able to respond quickly and innovatively to demands.

CULTURE: Recruited a large number of students, many of whom were new to organisation. The group's major activity last term was the organisation of a culture evening to launch the WJP campaign at a club in town. This was very well attended and an important step for ECC as nearly all the affiliates participated in some way or another. The legendary Koeksisters have been much in demand to sing at various campus functions (a May Day rally for instance) as well as being exported up to Jo'burg to perform at a Jodac culture evening. Immediate plans include programmes on the campus radio station and organising a weekend away for ECC culture groups nationally.

On the whole the sub-committees have been action-orientated and worked cohesively within each structure. ECC's profile has been built and various skills passed on within the groups. But a tendency to emphasize extending the front at the expense of reproducing the organisation as a cohesive strategising body has been identified. A lack of overall direction has meant the sub-committees tend to work somewhat in isolation from each other. This has meant we haven't provided ECC members with more than a basic grasp of ECC strategy and the arguments behind them - a problem which we hope will be addressed in the coming months.

3. ECC AS AN ORGANISATION

Key activities to date have been the initial recruitment drive around Orientation Week and the WJP campaign, which was taken up in conjunction with Town ECC.

ORIENTATION WEEK: Activities included a stall selling ECC paraphernalia and signing people up every day of the week; a cheese and wine for new members at which videos were shown; and a workshop for new members. We recruited about 100 people, roughly half of whom are still with us as active members. The media on sale and up around campus attracted a lot of attention - and we made a lot of money!

WJP: This was launched by the Culture Evening mentioned above. Affiliate NUSAS held a seminar on 'Patriotism in the South African Context', with input by Wilhelm and Brendan Barry. A mass meeting on WJP and CO's with input by Philip Wilkinson and Pete Hathorn drew a disappointing turnout but stimulated a lot of debate from those who attended. Participation in a pamphlet blitz in town and in the bench-building 'Peace Project' proved useful in integrating the town and campus groups and generating a sense of ECC identity as a whole. (As the project is continuing until May 4, a full assessment of the campaign is pending until then).

(3)

Plans include taking up the May survey campaign - seen as an excellent way of pulling the group together around strategizing a blitz of the residences - and a focus week laying groundwork for the July Call-up Campaign, where it is hoped the balance between front and organisation outlined above will be addressed.

More contact with other campus groupings is an important area which we feel should be addressed, to share ideas and ways of overcoming common problems (ie the July Call-up Campaign fALLing largely during our mid-year vac). The election of a national campus contact person, in this light, is a useful idea.

On the whole, ECC is working well and growing in strength.

Collection Number: AG1977

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

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