

AG1977 / A15.1.1.



ECC ACTIVITIES : JANUARY - MAY, 1985Cape Town

- Public Meeting and Media Response to Uitenhage shootings and state of Civil War in South Africa.
- ECC Cultural 'Roadshow' performances.
- Rock Concerts against the call up.
- Participation in Western Cape International Year of the Youth (IYY) Campaign.
- Workshops on Namibia; Detentions; for school pupils.
- Media - Badges - e.g. 'Stop the Call-Up'
' No Apartheid War '
Posters - 'Stop the Call-Up'
'No Apartheid War - Hands off Crossroads'
'School Cadets Programmes'
Stickers -
Production of Video on the Campaign
Pamphlets
Newsletter
Press Releases.

Johannesburg

- Public Meeting and Media Response (in co-operation with SACC, Black Sash, DPSC and Jodac) - response to Uitenhage shootings and State of Civil War in South Africa.
- Plans for activities around Republic Day, May Day and the July military intake. Also a public debate with the Progressive Federal Party on conscription.
- Participation in Transvaal IYY Campaign.
- Work in schools, with professions and the sphere of 'youth culture'.
- Research group established and working.
- Media - stickers - response to military budget e.g. 'Budget for Peace not War'
 - Posters
 - Newsletter
 - Press Releases.

Durban

- Public Meeting re Uitenhage and Civil War.
- Drama and Seminar Groups established and working.

- Response through posters/pamphlets to SADF activities in Wentworth (a 'coloured' area in Durban).
- Participation in Natal IYY campaign.
- Plans for public work around Republic Day and the July military intake.

National
1st National Conference held at Botha's Hill near Durban.

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGNA. BACKGROUND ON THE CAMPAIGN1. FORMATION

In March 1983 the Black Sash passed a motion at its annual congress, calling for an end to compulsory military conscription into the South African Defence Force. The call was made in response to the situation which prevails in South Africa, whereby all white males are required to do two years military service, to be followed by two years of military camps, spread over 12 years. (These camps often involve operational duty on the Namibian Border). After completing his camps, the conscript remains "on reserve" until he reaches the age of 55.

At the time that the Black Sash made its call, two significant events prompted the formation of the End Conscription Campaign (E.C.C.). Firstly, in response to the growing conscientious objection movement in South Africa, the government passed a new law increasing the maximum prison sentence for conscientious objectors from two to six years. While certain reforms were introduced, these applied only to individuals classified as "religious pacifists." The punitive six-year sentence indicated to many in the conscientious objection movement that little was to be gained out of campaigning for legal reform.

At about the same time the South African government announced that it was paving the way for the possible future conscription of "Coloureds" and Indians. This was to be a logical conclusion to the introduction of the new tri-cameral constitution, which was to extend limited voting rights to the "Coloured" and Indian communities. The prospect therefore existed of compulsory military conscription being extended beyond the privileged white community, to hundreds of thousands of South Africans who daily suffer the hardships of apartheid.

These two events occurred in the context of the growing militarisation of South African society, with the South African Defence Force (S.A.D.F.) increasingly taking on the role of the major defender of apartheid, and at times even directly implementing apartheid policies (for example, assisting in the government forced removals programmes). At the same time the S.A.D.F. was continuing its illegal occupation of Namibia, and its destabilisation of the Southern African sub-continent.

This was the context when 100 delegates gathered in Durban in July 1983 at the annual conference of the conscientious objector support Groups (COSG's). There a decision was taken to launch a campaign, taking up the call of the Black Sash. It was decided that the campaign should be as broad-based as possible, and that local COSG groups should take the initiative at setting up End Conscription Committees.

Throughout the second half of 1983 a range of church, Womens, student, civil rights and political organisations were approached. These eventually came together in November 1983 to form the End Conscription Committee. Committees were established in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

2. BASIS OF OPPOSITION TO CONSCRIPTION

The End Conscription Committees were united by a three-fold of opposition to conscription. These were expressed as follows in an E.C.C. press package

- i. Conscription intensifies the violent conflict in our society. This conflict is engendered by a political system which denies most South Africans basic human rights. South Africa is confronted by a civil war. Attempts to stop this by compulsory conscription can only result in escalating violence and further division. Conflict can only be resolved by dismantling the apartheid system and recognising all South Africans as full citizens.
- ii. Conscription prolongs the war in Namibia. South Africa's occupation of Namibia is illegal in terms of international law. The Catholic and Anglican bishops, the Namibian Council of Churches and many other church and human rights groups have called for the withdrawal of South African troops and immediate elections supervised by the united Nations so that the people of Namibia can determine their own future. Forcing people to fight in Namibia will slow down the process.
- iii. Conscription violates a human right - the right of any individual to refuse in conscience to render military service and be granted instead a non-military alternative. Present conscription does not recognise this right.

3. CAMPAIGN TO DATE

Within the year of the campaign's existence it has had a significant impact. Most importantly, millions of South Africans have been exposed to the call, and the campaign has achieved a legitimacy and acceptance even beyond the expectations of its initiators. It can safely be said that the recent shift in policy on conscription on the part of the opposition Progressive Federal Party was partly induced by the pressure of the End Conscription Campaign. (At its federal congress in November 1984 the PFP passed a motion calling for an end to compulsory conscription).

The E.C.C.'s have so far organised two major campaigns. Over May and June 1984 a focus on Namibia was held in Johannesburg and Cape Town. The demand was made for the immediate withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia, as a first step towards ending conscription. Through public meetings, press conferences, pickets, concerts and an intensive media campaign, the attention of the public was drawn to the demand. Three Namibians were brought to South Africa by E.C.C.: Advocate Anton Lubowski, Mr. Hans Röhr (leader of the Namibian Christian Democratic Party) and Pastor Cornelius Kameeta (Vice-president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church).

The second major campaign was the launching of the E.C.C. declaration in October 1984. The declaration was drawn up as a document expressing the underlying reasons for the call to end conscription, and asserting the demand for a just peace in our land. It was endorsed by a range of organisations and prominent individuals (see sec. A5). The public launching of the declaration was seen as a way of publicly putting the campaign on the map.

In Cape Town, the declaration was launched at a public meeting attended by about 1 400 people, and addressed by, amongst others, Revd. Allan Boesak (President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches) and Mrs Sheena Duncan (President of Black Sash). As part of a build-up to the launch a range of activities were held: a press conference, where prominent individuals indicated why they supported the campaign; a rock concert; a church vigil and communion service; a picket demonstration; and an intensive media campaign, which included the production and distribution of T-Shirts, badges, publications and a slide-tape show.

In Johannesburg, the launch of the campaign was affected by the government ban on public meetings in certain areas. They consequently launched the declaration with a "Spring Fair," which was publicly opened by Sheena Duncan and veteran human rights campaigner, Mrs. Helen Joseph. They, too, held a press conference, at which people like Revd. Beyers Naude publicly endorsed the campaign.

In Durban, the campaign was launched through a highly successful public meeting addressed by church leader, Rev. Wesley Mabuza and by Advocate Zac Yacoob of the Natal Indian Congress. As part of a build-up to the launch meeting, a smaller meeting, addressed by Sheena Duncan, and an organisational workshop were held. The workshop attracted a range of organisations and youth groups not yet part of E.C.C., but which were keen to participate in the campaign.

Besides these two major campaigns, the three E.C.C.'s have engaged in a range of activities in order to raise awareness and consolidate support.

These have included:

- Surveys conducted on all English speaking university campuses and in some churches. (The campus surveys indicated a 70% support for the call to end conscription).
- Education seminars and workshops for E.C.C. member organisations.
- A public focus on the August to November Transvaal and Eastern Cape unrest, in which the military played an extensive and repressive role (in Cape Town, a protest meeting, addressed by Professor Francis Wilson, was attended by over 500 people).
- Mass distribution of pamphlets at the time of the July intake into the S.A.D.F.

The major focus of E.C.C.'s work during 1985 will be a campaign around the issue of youth and conscription. The focus will form part of the United Nations International Year of the youth campaign, which is being taken up in South Africa by organisations such as the South African Council of Churches and the United Democratic Front. One of the Year of the Youth themes is "peace" with conscription being seen nationally as an important sub-theme. Already E.C.C. is participating on the S.A.C.C. Year of the Youth Committee.

Besides the youth focus, a range of other focuses and activities are planned:

- . An on-going focus on the Namibian situation, and increasingly close liaison with their anti-conscription campaign.
- . A continuing focus on the role of the military in internal unrest.
- . a focus on the issue of parents and conscription (as a parallel to the youth campaign).
- . Increasing focus on the issue of "Coloured" and Indian conscription.
- . A national conference in July 1985 to draw together as many active supporters of the campaign as possible.

With these activities in mind, E.C.C. has planned its first national conference for January 1985. Delegates will be mandated from each centre to establish common policy and to plan for 1985.

5. E.C.C. STRUCTURE AND CO-ORDINATION

Each local End Conscription Committee has a federal structure and operates as a front of organisations. Any organisation which supports the declaration may join the Committee. Representatives are mandated by their organisations to play a role on the committee. An executive is elected from amongst the delegates to convene meetings and undertake administrative tasks. In addition, the Cape Town and Johannesburg E.C.C.'s have set up their own media committees.

National co-ordination has, up till now, operated on an informal and ad hoc basis. However, the need has now arisen for E.C.C. to structure itself on a national basis. At the January 1985 conference a national co-ordinating committee will take office, with one representative from each region.

While the E.C.C. only operates in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, solid contact has been established with supportative organisations in Pietermaritzburg, Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth. It is envisaged that Pietermaritzburg will be incorporated into a larger Natal region, and that a separate E.C.C. will be established in the Eastern Cape. Close contact has also been established with the emerging anti-conscription campaign in Namibia.

E.C.C. work is carried out entirely by volunteers. However, it has been decided to employ one full-time national field-worker from 1985. His/her tasks will be to assist existing regions, build-up new regions, help ensure efficient national co-ordination, help organise the July conference, and conduct research into the area of conscription and militarisation.

Besides the affiliate organisations in each region, a far larger number of organisations, as well as many prominent individuals, have endorsed the E.C.C. declaration. These organisations and individuals have, through their endorsement, given full support to the work of the E.C.C., although they are generally unable to get involved in the day-to-day work of the committees. A list of some of the endorsers is appended to their application.

6. ADMINISTRATON AND FINANCES

Up until now each region has been entirely self-sufficient with regard to administration and financing. Generally, finances have been obtained in three ways:

- i. For specific campaigns, organisations like the South African Council of Churches and the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference have been applied to (an example of one ad hoc application is appended to this application).
- ii. Finances have been generated through profitable projects; for example, holding concerts and selling T-Shirts and badges.
- iii. Affiliate organisations have paid small amounts of money to cover local administrative costs.

While this way of operating has suited E.C.C.'s needs up until now, it has given rise to certain problems. In particular, it has highlighted the need for national financial co-ordination. Consequently, a national E.C.C. bank account has been opened in Johannesburg and the services of auditors have been procured (details appended to this application). The national co-ordinating committee (with one representative from each region) will function as the responsible structure for the allocation of finances.

7. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS

i. South African Council of Churches

The S.A.C.C. was one of the first organisations to endorse the E.C.C. declaration, when it passed a motion to this effect at its annual conference in June 1984. (The resolution is appended). At a local level, the Western Province Council of Churches (the Cape branch of the S.A.C.C.) is represented on the Cape Town E.C.C., and the W.P.C.C. Ecumenical Officer sits on the Cape Town E.C.C. executive.

S.A.C.C. member churches have also given much support to the campaign. A number have endorsed the declaration, and some are represented on local E.C.C.'s. E.C.C., as was stated earlier, is represented on the S.A.C.C. International Year of the Youth Committee.

ii. United Democratic Front.

E.C.C. is not affiliated to the United Democratic Front, but the two groupings do have close working relationships. While U.D.F. has itself taken up the conscription issue, it has recognised E.C.C. as the foremost grouping heading the anti-conscription campaign. In all centres a number of E.C.C. affiliates are also affiliates of U.D.F. In Cape Town, U.D.F. is directly represented on the End Conscription Committee. And in Cape Town in Johannesburg, E.C.C. is represented on the anti-conscription sub-committee of the U.D.F. Nevertheless, despite this close working relationship, E.C.C. has felt it necessary to remain an autonomous campaign grouping, ~~un~~attached to any outside organisation.

iii. The conscientious Objection Movement

E.C.C. has maintained a very close working relationship with the Conscientious Objector Support Groups throughout the country. As was stated earlier, COSG played the prime initiating role in the setting up of the End Conscription Campaign. In addition, a number of past objectors have been centrally involved in E.C.C.

E.C.C. and the various COSGs play complementary roles. While E.C.C. is conducting a high profile public campaign, COSG is able to give personal support to those individuals who, having been challenged by the message of E.C.C., choose not to serve in the S.A.D.F.

Childcare facilities:
The Sanctuary
Wits University
To run throughout the
conference except at lunch &
supper times.

TO CONTACT ECC

Johannesburg

Benita Pavlecevic
643-3941 (011)

Cape Town

Michael Evans
477-407 (021)

Durban

Sue Brittion
(w) 312-600 (031)

Port Elizabeth

Janet Cherry
23098 (041)

Pietermaritzburg

Jacque Boule
67788 (0331)

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