

NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVERS' GROUP

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE:

WHEREAS the Defence Act provides an alternative to military service in the form of community service for religious objectors;

AND WHEREAS it is within the ambit of our religious commitment to render community service as an expression of our faith;

NOW THEREFORE we, the prospective members of the National Community Servers' Group, do adopt this constitution in accordance with our sincere religious convictions and in apposition to our liability to render community service.

1. NAME

National Community Servers' Group (NCSG), (hereinafter referred to as "the organisation").

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the organisation are the following:

- 2.1 To live out our commitment to constructive national service for the benefit of all the people of our country;
- 2.2 To assist in transforming and developing the system of community service into a more positive form of national service;
- 2.3 To promote an understanding of national service which includes community service as a constructive and legal form thereof;
- 2.4 To improve the conditions of service of community servers;
- 2.5 To liaise with the government, church and other bodies on behalf of its members;
- 2.6 To facilitate mutual support for members; and
- 2.7 To attend to any matters relating to national service;
- 2.8 For the purposes of carrying out these aims and objectives and any work of the organisation in connection therewith, to operate as an organisation in accordance with the beliefs of its members and the sentiments expressed in the preamble to this constitution and with the provisions hereinunder contained.

3. LEGAL PERSONALITY

The organisation is a legal entity which bears its own rights and duties and can sue and be sued in its own name; it continues to exist as a legal entity regardless of the succession of members unless and until it is dissolved as herein provided.

4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Membership is open to all who:

- 4.1.1 Have been classified as category III objectors in terms of section 72 D (1)(a)(iii) of the Defence Act, Act No.44 of 1957; and
- 4.1.2 Support the organisation's aims and objectives; and
- 4.1.3 Have applied to the Regional Co-ordinator or National Secretary for membership; and
- 4.1.4 Have paid their dues within 4 weeks of receiving notification.

4.2 Associate membership

Any person may, by the simple majority of votes of registered members in any region, be made an associate member of the organisation provided that such person also qualifies for membership in terms of paragraphs 4.1.2. - 4.1.4..

- 4.3 All members shall have the right to vote, to hold office, to receive memoranda and minutes of the organisation and to participate in its work: provided that associate members shall not have the right to vote nor to hold office.

- 4.4 All persons who qualify for membership in terms of paragraph 4.1 (excluding 4.1.3.) and have recorded their intention to join the organisation by 1987.03.31. shall become founder members with full voting rights on payment of their dues.

4.5 Termination of membership

Membership shall terminate:

- 4.5.1 On the date of completion of community service of the member; provided that such member may apply to become an associate member;
- 4.5.1 If a member fails to pay dues as contemplated in paragraphs 4.1.4 and 5;
- 4.5.2 In the event of the dissolution of the organisation as herein provided;
- 4.5.3 If a member submits a written resignation to the Regional Secretary.

5. DUES

Annual dues shall be agreed upon by each region at the first meeting in each calendar year and shall be payable to the Regional Treasurer not later than 31 March each year.

6. NATIONAL CO-ORDINATION

6.1 General

The organisation shall be divided into regions, each of which shall hold its own meetings, co-ordinate the members in the area, have its own regional committee, and conduct the affairs of the organisation delegated to it by the National Co-ordinating Committee.

6.2 The National Co-ordinating Committee (NCC)

6.2.1 The NCC shall comprise one representative from each region, three of whom shall occupy the portfolios of National Co-ordinator, National Secretary and National Treasurer.

6.2.2 The NCC shall meet at least once per year. Its function shall be to co-ordinate regional action, assess the effectiveness of the organisation, propose future action, provide oversight for all the organisation's matters, and to make recommendations on such matters.

6.2.3 Meetings of the NCC shall be open to any member of the organisation.

6.2.4 The National Secretary shall keep a register of all members.

6.2.5 The NCC may make recommendations on any matter referred to it at any time without sitting as a committee if, after consultation between all the committee members, consensus on the matter is reached.

6.2.6 The National Co-ordinator shall convene a meeting of the NCC at least once per year and maintain regular contact with the Regional Co-ordinators.

6.2.7 The NCC may in writing authorise the National Treasurer and individual members to collect funds for the purposes of promoting the work of the organisation.

6.3 Regions

6.3.1 A region may be established by the approval thereof of the NCC following an application made by a member to

the National Secretary requesting the same. There shall be no limit to the number of regions which may be established.

6.3.2 Each region shall have a Regional Committee comprising a Co-ordinator, a Secretary and a Treasurer, provided that more than one of these positions may be held by the same person if no other members are available for that purpose.

6.3.3 A region shall make decisions and take action in furtherance of the organisation's aims and objectives: provided that matters affecting other regions or the organisation shall be referred to the NCC for discussion in all the other regions.

6.3.4 Each region shall meet at least once every two months. Minutes of such meetings shall be taken and circulated to the regions and to the National Secretary.

6.3.5 The first meeting after the 31 March of any year shall be convened as the region's Annual General Meeting (AGM), notice of which shall be given in writing to all members in the region at least three weeks in advance.

6.3.6 The committee members and a representative of the NCC shall be elected by a simple majority of votes at the A.G.M. The quorum at the A.G.M. shall be half of the voting members in the region.

6.3.7 Each Regional Secretary shall keep a register of all members of their region and shall ensure that the National Secretary has an updated copy thereof at all times. Each Regional Secretary shall keep a copy of this constitution.

6.4 Communications

6.4.1 Copies of significant letters and memoranda written in the name of the organisation shall be circulated to Regional and National Secretaries; all correspondence connected therewith shall be freely available to all members on request to the Regional Secretary concerned.

6.4.2 Each Regional Co-ordinator shall prepare a report on the year's activities for its A.G.M. and forward a copy thereof to the National Secretary.

7. FINANCES

- 7.1 Each Regional Treasurer and the National Treasurer with regards to national finances shall:
 - 7.1.1 Be empowered to receive and acknowledge monies on behalf of the organisation and deposit it with any recognised bank or building society.
 - 7.1.2 Keep a record of income and expenditure.
 - 7.1.3 Prepare a statement of income and expenditure, with a brief explanatory report for each financial year ending 31 March, and both the regional and national report shall be presented at the A.G.M.
- 7.2 With regard to regional financial matters each member of the Regional Committee shall have signing powers provided that at least two of them shall sign all withdrawal documents and cheques.
- 7.3 With regard to national financial matters, the National Treasurer and each member of the Regional Committee of which he forms a part shall have signing powers provided that at least two of them shall sign all withdrawal documents and cheques.
- 7.4 The National Treasurer and each member may, when authorised in writing thereto as per 6.2.7 above, collect funds on behalf of the organisation and shall deposit all such funds in the National or Regional bank or building society account of the organisation, as the case may be.

8. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND DISSOLUTION OF THE ORGANISATION

- 8.1 Any member or group of members wishing to propose an amendment to the constitution or to dissolve the organisation shall give notice thereof, with full details to all the Regional Co-ordinators.
- 8.2 The Regional Co-ordinators shall, within seven days of receiving such notice, give to the members of their region written notice thereof and of the region's intention to discuss and vote on the matter at the next regional meeting, to be held within 21 days thereafter.
- 8.3 For the purposes of voting on the matter, the quorum at the meeting shall be one third of the voting members of the region, and the motion shall only be carried by a three-quarters majority.

- 3.4 Regional Co-ordinators shall immediately report the decision of their regions to the National Co-ordinator. If at least three-quarters of the regions have carried the same motion, it shall become effective: forthwith in the case of an amendment; or after two weeks from when the National Co-ordinator received the last regional report necessary to constitute the required majority in the case of dissolution.
- 3.5 If in the case of an amendment, if the required majority of regions is not attained, and any region had carried an amended motion, such amended motion may, at the request of the Co-ordinator of the region concerned, constitute a new proposed amendment to the constitution. In such case the National Co-ordinator shall inform the Regional Co-ordinators of the new proposal, and the procedure as from paragraph 8.2 above shall be followed.
- 3.6 If upon the dissolution of the organisation there remain any assets whatsoever after the satisfaction of all its debts, such assets shall not be distributed among its members but be given to such other organisations, preferably having similar aims and objectives, as may be decided by those persons who last constituted the NCC.

COMMUNITY SERVICE : A LEGAL ALTERNATIVE TO
SERVICE IN THE SADF

Pre-intro.

relying on your integrity

- considerable pressure not to participate: no photo or name-quotes
- there are some critical q's which are beyond the scope of my brief for tonight but which are nevertheless vital for us to consider if we are to move beyond a static acceptance of the status quo. Those are, why is there a need for the BRO anyway, why is there a need for conscientious objectors and why is there a need for conscription. If we don't consider these then in a way we are simply moving the deck-chairs around on the Titanic

Nevertheless since the status quo is what it is, and seemingly will be for the short-term future, this is a very real and important topic to consider, which has great practical relevance for many people's lives.

Intro.

- explain the five-heading structure.

1.

1. Steps that led me to where I am today

- 1.1 parabat dreams
- 1.2 beginning of Christian pilgrimage in high school
- 1.3 SACLA - unjust war convictions
- 1.4 pacifism, without losing critical analysis, which is anyway our responsibility as Christians - reject false dichotomy
- 1.5 non-combatant - peace pipe; scribblings incident, shows gospel is more radical than Mao's red book.
- 1.6 too much tension - non-military alt. service.

2. Practicalities of placement

- 2.1 I only waited 6 weeks, had a choice of interviews; others have waited longer; *I'm happy in my job - reasonable job satisfaction*
- 2.2 good people at Manpower, open for you to take initiative; continue to be very helpful with problems
- 2.3 read depts, city councils & municipalities placements; coastal towns open; Durban city council closed

3. Problems with the system (Board) as it operates in law and practice at present

- 3.1 discriminates against just war Christians - the position of all main-line churches, which have all called for the grounds for objection to be broadened
- 3.2 discriminates against moral, philosophical and political objectors who are punishable with a more severe prison sentence than even the Soviet Union!
- 3.3 in operated on a basis of false dichotomy between 'religious' and 'political', which thinking can be found only in the most borderline religious groupings
- 3.4 the result is that people who are honest are nailed; and those not prepared to face jail or exile are forced into a further awful moral dilemma - to lie or not. Under these circumstances I find difficulty in continuing with community service, and I speak for others as well
- 3.5 gives people the right to judge other people's beliefs & motives - impossible task, unfair on Board members, and no way the Board is seen as impartial in the q of military service with a military presence on it
- 3.6 wrong way round - people should justify why they do want to kill, not don't!

These are imp. to consider if you're contemplating CS

FATHER I THANK YOU

269 Key: E^b
Steve Stewart

Father, I thank you
For all that you've done
You gave your Son freely for me
And I praise you for calling me
Drawing me near
Out of blindness
You caused me to see

Spirit of life
You are God's holy fire
You've kindled my heart with your blaze
And I know you're refining me
Changing my life
And by faith
You're revealing your ways

Jesus I need you
As Lord of my life
I give all I have unto you
Lord I want to come under
Your heavenly hand
And to praise you
In all that I do

©1980 Scripture in Song

Colni Mackay
23-5758.

THE SERVANT SONG

256 Key: D
Richard Gillard

Brother let me be your servant
Let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant too

We are pilgrims on a journey
We are brothers on the road
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load

I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the nighttime of your fear
I will hold my hand out to you
Speak the peace you long to hear

I will weep when you are weeping
When you laugh I'll laugh with you
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through

When we sing to God in heaven
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony

Brother let me be your servant
Let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant too

©1977 Scripture in Song

4. Problems with the service itself

- 4.1 one is virtually placed under a banning order - anything that one writes or wrote before commencing, which is viewed as 'political' may not be published, on pain of R1000 fine, 12 months imprisonment, or both. "'document' includes any book, pamphlet, letter, circular, list, register, placard or poster and any part thereof." You can see what this legislation is trying to do.
- 4.2 it is excessively long, continuous, far longer than military servers, far more disruptive of one's life and career, with salary, can't have children
- 4.3 discrimination as against military servicemen, ^{skills stagnate} apart from length: eg medical aid, tax, study & exam leave, promotion, and pay for professionals
- 4.4 one has to deal on an ongoing basis with narrow-minded petty-bureaucrats who resent our presence because they have sons in the army.
I've just been to a conference for community servers from all over the country & assure you there's a deep level of anger & frustration, which we are trying to channel in a +ve and constructive direction.
- 4.5 all these factors point to the fundamental underlying problem: alternative service performed by CO's is not seen as a genuine and equally valid form of national service as is military service. Our society is so closed-minded and bound by such a militaristic spirit that only military service is of value in the minds of state officials.
This is confirmed by the words of the man in charge of implementing this whole system, Director-General Manpower, Dr P.J. van der Merwe (quote from letter)

Not just whinning - were organizing ourselves.

So those of you considering community service, be warned. But I don't want to dissuade you, for it also provides challenges and opportunities.

5. Opportunities the service provides

- 5.1 doing alt. service in state, provincial or local authority departments is very definitely an improvement on spending that time in the military. The objectives & values of the military are directly opposed to what we believe as objectors. While we believe in wholeness and respect for life in the military we either learn to kill, or do a support job so that other people can kill. And for us in this civil war context being forced to put on the uniform and enter the townships of our cities is even more traumatic.

Amuife personalises "to one my"

On the other hand state, provincial or l.a. departments where I and other objectors have been placed are for the most part genuinely making a positive, life-giving contribution to society. While we may still be faced with dilemmas, contradictions & inconsistencies, the context in which we live them out is far more consistent with who we are than is the army.

This is especially true for younger conscripts straight from school, maybe not strong or mature enough to stand up to the breaking-down methods of the military machine. I've been through it, the experience strengthened me, but I've also seen it break people.

- 5.2 we as CO's obviously hold a strong committment to our beliefs and we need to view our time of CS as an opportunity to live these out, witness to them, share them, encourage others to join us in them, 'subvert' our workplace, if you will. We who are Christians believe the gospel of Jesus Christ is the most subversive ~~msg~~ message this world has ever heard & we have the opportunity to be witnesses to it, with integrity, in our places of work.
- 5.3 in a much broader sense, community service, as opposed to jail or exile (I'm not implying these are any less noble or valid choices) is an opportunity to live out our beliefs in the broader society and

work for the peace & justice of God's kingdom which we so ^{deeply} (ferverently) believe in.

Why do I and many others, despite all the frustrations & hassles we are having, choose the way of CS? Why do we not go into the army & get it done with? Why do we not leave the country? I've had offers overseas before starting CS.

Because we are committed to seeing a country freed of the shackles of injustice, released from the spiral of violence and fear. We have a vision for a new society based on the standards of God's kingdom. And we believe we can play our small part in working towards that.

And we are even more dedicated to this task, aware of the responsibility that being able to do CS lays upon us. We work and look to the day when, through our and many others' efforts, the prison doors will be opened and the exiles will be able to return home and we will all be able to serve our community and country in a meaningful & constructive way. ^{the Philip Wilkinson will be able to walk out}

I invite you who are able, to consider joining us.

R.G. 24.3.87

COMMUNITY SERVICE : A LEGAL ALTERNATIVE TO
SERVICE IN THE SADF

Pre-intro.

- considerable pressure not to participate: no photo or name-quotes
- there are some critical q's which are beyond the scope of my brief for tonight but which are nevertheless vital for us to consider if we are to move beyond a static acceptance of the status quo. Those are, why is there a need for the BRO anyway, why is there a need for conscientious objectors and why is there a need for conscription. If we don't consider these then in a way we are simply moving the deck-chairs around on the Titanic

Nevertheless since the status quo is what it is, and seemingly will be for the short-term future, this is a very real and important topic to consider, which has great practical relevance for many people's lives.

Intro.

- explain the five-heading structure.

1.

1. Steps that led me to where I am today

- 1.1 parabat dreams
- 1.2 beginning of Christian pilgrimage in high school
- 1.3 SACLA - unjust war convictions
- 1.4 pacifism, without losing critical analysis, which is anyway our responsibility as Christians - reject false dichotomy
- 1.5 non-combatant - peace pipe; scribbings incident, shows gospel is more radical than Mao's red book.
- 1.6 too much tension - non-military alt. service.

2. Practicalities of placement

- 2.1 I only waited 6 weeks, had a choice of interviews; others have waited longer
- 2.2 good people at Manpower, open for you to take initiative; continue to be very helpful with problems
- 2.3 read depts, city councils & municipalities placements; coastal towns open; Durban city council closed

3. Problems with the system (Board) as it operates in law and practice at present

- 3.1 discriminates against just war Christians - the position of all main-line churches, which have all called for the grounds for objection to be broadened
- 3.2 discriminates against moral, philosophical and political objectors who are punishable with a more severe prison sentence than even the Soviet Union!
- 3.3 in operated on a basis of false dichotomy between 'religious' and 'political', which thinking can be found only in the most borderline religious groupings
- 3.4 the result is that people who are honest are nailed; and those not prepared to face jail or exile are forced into a further awful moral dilemma - to lie or not. Under these circumstances I find difficulty in continuing with community service, and I speak for others as well
- 3.5 gives people the right to judge other people's beliefs & motives - impossible task, unfair on Board members, and no way the Board is seen as impartial in the q of military service with a military presence on it
- 3.6 wrong way round - people should justify why they do want to kill, not don't!

4. Problems with the service itself

- 4.1 one is virtually placed under a banning order - anything that one writes or wrote before commencing, which is viewed as 'political' may not be published, on pain of R1000 fine, 12 months imprisonment, or both. "document" includes any book, pamphlet, letter, circular, list, register, placard or poster and any part thereof." You can see what this legislation is trying to do.
- 4.2 it is excessively long, continuous, far longer than military servers, far more disruptive of one's life and career, with salary, can't have children
- 4.3 discrimination as against military servicemen, apart from length: eg medical aid, tax, study & exam leave, promotion, and pay for professionals
- 4.4 one has to deal on an ongoing basis with narrow-minded petty-bureaucrats who resent our presence because they have sons in the army. I've just been to a conference for community servers from all over the country & assure you there's a deep level of anger & frustration, which we are trying to channel in a +ve and constructive direction.
- 4.5 all these factors point to the fundamental underlying problem: alternative service performed by CO's is not seen as a genuine and equally valid form of national service as is military service. Our society is so closed-minded and bound by such a militaristic spirit that only military service is of value in the minds of state officials. This is confirmed by the words of the man in charge of implementing this whole system, Director-General Manpower, Dr P.J. van der Merwe (quote from letter)

So those of you considering community service, be warned. But I don't want to dissuade you, for it also provides challenges and opportunities.

5. Opportunities the service provides

- 5.1 doing alt. service in state, provincial or local authority departments is very definitely an improvement on spending that time in the military. The objectives & values of the military are directly opposed to what we believe as objectors. While we believe in wholeness and respect for life in the military we either learn to kill, or do a support job so that other people can kill. And for us in this civil war context being forced to put on the uniform and enter the townships of our cities is even more traumatic.

On the other hand state, provincial or l.a. departments where I and other objectors have been placed are for the most part genuinely making a positive, life-giving contribution to society, while we may still be faced with dilemmas, contradictions & inconsistencies, the context in which we live them out is far more consistent with who we are than is the army.

This is especially true for younger conscripts straight from school, maybe not strong or mature enough to stand up to the breaking-down methods of the military machine. I've been through it, the experience strengthened me, but I've also seen it break people.

- 5.2 we as CO's obviously hold a strong commitment to our beliefs and we need to view our time of CS as an opportunity to live these out, witness to them, share them, encourage others to join us in them, 'subvert' our workplace, if you will. We who are Christians believe the gospel of Jesus Christ is the most subversive ~~ax~~ message this world has ever heard & we have the opportunity to be witnesses to it, with integrity, in our places of work.
- 5.3 in a much broader sense, community service, as opposed to jail or exile (I'm not implying these are any less noble or valid choices) is an opportunity to live out our beliefs in the broader society and

work for the peace & justice of God's kingdom which we so fervently believe in.

Why do I and many others, despite all the frustrations & hassles we are having, choose the way of CS? Why do we not go into the army & get it done with? Why do we not leave the country? I've had offers overseas before starting CS.

Because we are committed to seeing a country freed of the shackles of injustice, released from the spiral of violence and fear. We have a vision for a new society based on the standards of God's kingdom. And we believe we can play our small part in working towards that.

And we are even more dedicated to this task, aware of the responsibility that being able to do CS lays upon us. We work and look to the day when, through our and many others' efforts, the prison doors will be opened and the exiles will be able to return home and we will all be able to serve our community and country in a meaningful & constructive way.

I invite you who are able, to consider joining us.

R.G. 24.3.87

(first draft for critical comment by NSC members)

Increasingly as the socio economic and political situation in Southern Africa worsens, Christians and other people of conscience are being spurred to re-examine their stance in respect of participation within military structures, (whether the SADF, Umkhonto Ye Zizwe, Plan, MNR and Frelimo forces.)

For young White South African males, little choice is given them, as the South African Government has legislated that compulsory conscription applies to them.

Christians particularly, are faced with a vexing dilemma as to how to be faithful to Christ as both Saviour and Lord, especially since to some perception the State, despite past claims, is showing diminishing submission to that same Lordship. The faith of both the white electorate and the black opposition groups appears increasingly to be vested in military might and violent attack and counter attack as a solution to the state-mate. To many this seems to lead only to an escalating spiral of violence which threatens to engulf increasing numbers of innocent people.

This trend stands in sharp contradiction to the psalmists affirmation;

"Unless the Lord builds the house,
in vain do the masons toil.
Unless the Lord guards the city,
in vain do the sentries watch" (Psalm 127, vs 1 and 2)

Devout Christians are challenged today, by the same challenge SPROCAS put out in late 60's *early 70s?*

"To whom does the Christian owe his first and final allegiance ?
To his racial grouping, his national identity, his tribe, or
to Jesus Christ ?"

If indeed the latter, the State makes it difficult for one to live this out practically, - but it is not impossible. (It could never be made impossible in any case, because Jesus has after all done the impossible - He rose from the Dead).

The Defence Act allows for those having religious convictions opposed to active participation in warfare, to make application to the Board for Religious Objection (which sits in Bloemfontein, Private Bag X20 521, Code: 9300) to be classified in one of three permissible categories of Religious Objectors, in short

1. Non combatant
2. Non combatant and non uniformed
3. Fully non militarist.

The latter two options carry with them the obligation to render National Service for one and a half times the maximum period for ordinary Military Service still outstanding. The non militarist is moreover obliged to render his community service in a single continuous stretch within a National or Provincial government department or municipality.

Despite the restrictions and hardships imposed by the legislation, increasing numbers of young men are opting for the uphill struggle, and finding satisfaction in their jobs in various community welfare orientated placements, and fellowship and support from each other under the auspices of the National Community Services Group, which they have formed. Working in rural hospitals, in clinics, schools and poverty stricken rural and urban communities, they are imparting healing and hope to many down-trodden folk, and discovering the truth in Malcolm Muggeridge's classic observation

"It's only dead fish that swim with the stream."

If you are interested in finding out more about the NCSG, or Community Service as an alternative to military service, you are welcome to phone ...

Squatter doctor gets jail reprieve

Ex-Durban schoolboy tells why he would rather face prison than wear a uniform

A DOCTOR who was preparing to go to jail for 18 months rather than do an army camp has had his call-up cancelled at the last minute.

Dr Ivan Toms — known as the "Crossroads doctor" for his work in the Cape Town squatter community — was gearing up for a heavy prison sentence, the only option open to him after he decided to refuse to wear SADF uniform.

He was planning to report for his camp on Wednesday, but to refuse on Christian and political grounds to serve. Then at the last minute he was told he was not needed because "too many doctors" had been called up.

Dr Toms, whose camp has been deferred until November, believes it is important for whites to show that they are prepared to make personal



Dr Toms

By Carolyn McGibbon

sacrifices in the struggle against apartheid.

"I feel there is a need to strengthen non-racialism in a small way by showing that whites can also make a costly commitment to the struggle for justice."

Dr Toms initially con-

sidered going into exile to avoid military service, before deciding he had a contribution to make in South Africa.

The Glenwood High School old boy bought a ticket to London after graduating as a doctor from the University of

Cape Town, but cancelled the flight at the last minute. He then served two years' training as a non-combatant, and rose to the rank of lieutenant.

A committed Christian, he was challenged to become part of the solution to South Africa's problems and started the SA Leadership Assembly (Sacla) clinic at Crossroads in 1980.

The little clinic started with just one doctor, and swelled to a staff of 27, helping 175 medical and 60 dental patients a day, six days a week.

"I believe I have actually been doing national service for the past seven years," he said.

As the Crossroads doctor, Toms witnessed the brutality of the security forces and decided he could never again wear

army uniform.

In September 1983, after a terrible drought in the homelands, people thronged to Cape Town, building pathetic little shelters from branches and plastic.

For three weeks during that cold Cape winter, police tore down their homes.

"When the people tried to hold onto their branches, police used teargas, sneeze machines and rubber bullets," he said.

At the clinic he treated fractured skulls, legs bitten ragged by police dogs and tiny babies left out in the rain.

His decision was reinforced in February 1985 when the Government tried to forcefully remove the people from Khayelitsha.

"It was like a war," said Dr Toms. He counted the casualties who came to the clinic: 18 dead and 178 injured.

The final incident that confirmed his decision was in June last year when the conservative "Witdoeke" attacked the squatter camps at KTO leaving 70 000 people homeless.

"The police and army were working together with the conservative," he said.

M-Net hopes steamy saga will hook the viewers

A representative of the Durban Community Service Group said that the Department of Manpower in Durban was very helpful in trying to place objectors in jobs suited to them, and in dealing with their general queries and problems. However not all state, provincial and city departments were willing to ~~emp~~ employ objectors. The Durban City Council has only recently agreed ~~o~~ to do so.

He highlighted one of the major assumptions held in the public service as being a belief that national service equals military service and that community service is not as genuine or valid a form of national service as military service. This view began right at the top, with the ~~man~~ official responsible for implementing the community service system, Director-General Manpower, P.J. van der Merwe. He sees "...community service as an alternative to being detained in detention barracks. Community service must therefore not be compared to national service." This attitude was symptomatic of the militaristic spirit pervading our society, and objectors doing community service had an important role to play in countering this spirit and demonstrating that national service is far more than only military service.

While agreeing with the sentiments of the Cape Town community servers, he nevertheless felt that doing service in state, provincial or local authority departments was definitely an improvement on serving in the SADF.

"The objectives and values of the military are directly opposed to what we believe as objectors. While we believe in wholeness and respect for life, in the military we either learn to kill, or do a support job so that others can do the killing. And for us in this civil war context being forced to put on the uniform and enter the townships is even more traumatic.

"On the other hand the departments where we are working are for the most part making a positive, life-giving contribution to society. While we may still be faced with dilemmas, contradictions and inconsistencies, the context in which we live them out is far more consistent with who we are than is the army. This is especially true for younger conscripts straight from school, who may not yet be strong or mature enough to withstand the breaking-down methods of the military machine.

"Doing community service is an opportunity to live out our beliefs about the peace and justice of God's kingdom. We would rather do this than, for example, go overseas, because we are committed to seeing a country freed of the shackles of injustice, released from the spiral of violence and fear. We have a vision for a new society based on the standards of God's kingdom. And we believe that we can play our small part in working towards that.

"Because of the heavy responsibility that being able to do community service lays upon us, while many others are excluded by the narrow scope of the law, we are even more dedicated to this task. We work for and look to the day when the prison doors will be opened and the exiles will be able to return home and we will all be able to serve our community and country in a meaningful and constructive way."

*For incorporation into 'Tied to the State' article,
to be critted at next meeting.*

SOME UNSATISFACTORY ASPECTS OF THE LEGISLATION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE GOVERNING COMMUNITY WORKERS

(i.e. Religious Objectors classified in terms of Section 72D (1) (a)(iii) of the Defence Act, 1957)

1. Community Service only begins when a Community Worker is placed, not when he is tried.
 - The effect of this is grossly unfair. Because the Dept of Manpower is taking many months to place most C.W.s, and with the end-date of their service thus continually being put back, most are in effect serving far more than their allotted sentence.
 - A NSM knows where he stands : he is called-up for a certain date and his period of service begins punctually, regardless of whether the Dept of Defence has a 'suitable vacancy' or properly utilises him or not. Not even a convicted criminal receives the same treatment as do C.W.s : he begins serving his sentence immediately upon being convicted - and is not forced to wait around idly before beginning, so postponing the date of his eventual release. (The legislation already condemns the C.W. to an excessive sentence. Why should he be further sentenced by factors beyond his control : the Dept's inability to find posts - indeed, the lack of posts?)
 - Personally : It is now almost a year since I was tried (21 February 1985) and I have yet to start my C.S. During the first four months the Dept of Manpower did not contact me at all with any offers/directives re placement. I then found and accepted a post, with the assurance from the Dept of Manpower that it would be recognized as my C.S., only, a short while after beginning, to be told that it was not going to be recognized. (See (3) below).
2. Many Community Workers are effectually forced to endure the interim idle and without income.
 - Most objectors are unemployed when they appear before the Board : many have just completed school or university educations; others, in view of the uncertain course of events once sentenced, leave (voluntarily or otherwise) their employment just prior to appearing. With the months of delay before being placed, all these persons have to live in uncertainty, denied any real chance of earning an adequate income to support themselves : no employer will employ you when you are available for an unknown period and could be called upon by the Dept of Manpower at any time. This state of non-productivity, frustration and 'leeching' is beneficial to no-one.

3. Some government departments are most unhelpful when approached by the Dept of Manpower re placing C.W.s within their ranks.

- Although the legislation is government approved, and C.W.s have to serve in state employment, some government departments are obstructing the working of the legislation by being unwilling to employ C.W.s, even when they are fully qualified for posts vacant in that department.
- Personally : Last July, the Dept of Manpower approved an advertised teaching post at a High School in the Cape Province as a valid position for C.S. I successfully applied for the post. However, the Cape Education Dept was unwilling to accept the headmaster's appointment of myself because of my status as a C.W., and my four months there (July to October inclusive) was not credited as part of my C.S. The fact that in this particular case I was not fully qualified had nothing to do with the decision : it was simply part of the several education departments' blanket "no" to C.W.s. There are fully qualified teachers that have been refused posts by the Education Department.
- Even departments/municipalities employing C.W.s seem reluctant to fully utilise them, and to give them the more meaningful posts which their qualifications entitle them to. For example, lawyers are not being allowed to prosecute. The question must be honestly answered : Does the government intend the Defence Amendment Act of 1983 to be a real alternative to military service, through which people can be put to the best possible use for the general good, or is it intended as a set of punitive measures, apparently satisfying outside pressure but actually using the few as 'examples' to discourage the others?
- One senses that certain departments are unwilling to utilise C.W.s, or to give them certain posts, because of the 'political threat' these persons constitute. Yet this displays a government distrustful of - and divided against - itself, for the Board is government-constituted to screen out just such persons.

4. Recession and Unemployment compound the obstruction.

- The state of the economy and the many people already out of work are slowing-down even further the placing of C.W.s; the legislation is not functioning (cannot?) as smoothly as intended. Government departments, being instructed to rationalize and cut state expenditure, are thus even more unwilling to take on extra staff. There are many C.W.s simply waiting and unable to get positions.
- It could be recommended that C.W.s be allowed (in special cases approved by the Minister) to serve with approved non-profit making, community-orientated social/religious welfare organisations and charities (e.g. SANCA, Salvation Army, Children's Homes) to release the burden on government

departments and to facilitate the proper working of the legislation. Terms could easily be worked out with the Minister so that these C.W.s have no advantages over their counterparts in State employ; e.g. salary and leave could still be controlled by the Dept of Manpower.

- Personally : In view of my especially drawn-out case and the failure to place me, and my lack of any clearly defined secular qualification, which further complicates placing me, the above could well be pressed for (e.g. with SUPS). (This may be more successful if pursued personally with the Minister or his office than in parliamentary debate. Also, because the latter cannot be instituted immediately, and even when done so is time-consuming, and because the local office of the Dept of Manpower is being pushed to place me, time may demand the former. For, "Once placed, once stuck" seems to be the norm - but even this I don't think is absolute).
- While such a special dispensation may seem extremely remote in the face of the Monolithic Law, and while the Minister himself cannot contradict the Law, he has this loophole open to him : The final paragraph (Part XXV, Para 53) of the Extracts from the regulations governing Community Service, published in the Government Gazette of 30 March 1984, and amended in the Government Gazette of 2 November 1984, is entitled "Exceptional Cases"; and reads :

If circumstances arise which justify a departure from the provisions of these regulations with regard to a religious objector or a category of religious objectors, the Minister of Manpower may amend such provisions.

5. No provision for any kind of medical aid or service is made for the C.W. (cf. the comprehensive and free medical services available to the NSM).
6. Whereas it is fair to limit a C.W.'s salary during the first two years of his C.S. to that of a NSM (so that the former has no advantage over the latter during the corresponding period of service), the limiting of his salary thereafter (even the double amount paid) is not fair; for now the ex-NSM, in the corresponding period (i.e. between camps), has an unfair advantage.
7. Similarly, whereas it is fair that a C.W. receives no extra remuneration for overtime work during his first two years of C.S. (this parallels the lot of the NSM), thereafter it is not fair.
8. Similarly, whereas it is fair to disallow a C.W. to gain promotion, or undertake any apprenticeship/training in his profession which may lead to promotion, during his first two years of C.S. (this parallels the lot of the NSM), thereafter it is not fair.

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.