

Some Recommendations for structural changes in the Cape Town End Conscription Campaign, arising out of a workshop on 29/11/87 dealing with ECC'S "new conscription focus"

This is a draft report for discussion in the organisation. It follows the full report on the content of the workshop which contains the background motivation for the recommendations.

During the workshop five areas requiring attention were identified. These are:

- 1. Public image
- 2. Service role
- 3. Research and information
- 4. Membership
- 5. Broadening out

1. Public image

ECC is seen by conscripts as a clique-ish left wing student organisation that is hostile to those in the army, offers little of benefit to the conscript, and whose public spokespeople have no experience of army life. We need to be projecting ourselves in a professional non-propagandistic style that is accessible to the conscript, offers the public more than just slogans, and portrays ECC as a conscripts organisation. A reworking of old images is needed to capture the mood of our new focus.

This has implications for:

- the way we appear in public eg. dressing neatly at public meetings, while holding a placard or pamphleteering
- the selection and portrayal of public spokespeople ie. a preference for people for army experience and emphasising our own activists roles as conscripts "mothers, brothers, sisters lovers etc."
- ECC's press releases and media.

There is a need for a group to be actively strategising and working on ECC's public image. This was originally intended to be the role of the 'media and publicity' subcomm, and they have been asked to investigate the feasibility of the subcomm taking on this task, and to make recommendations to the organisation.

2. Service role

The ECC has tended to focus on propaganda around conscription and related issues, and has failed to offer the conscript anything of benefit in his situation. One of the conscripts most important needs is advice around conscription, and we have previously referred the many requests we received to the advice bureau. We have also tended to neglect the advice bureau, and have lost out on many important contacts.

The following actions have been recommended:

-a closer working relationship between ECC and the advice bureau, who are now formally represented at ECC general bodies. ECC activists are strongly encouraged to attend the advice bureau's training programme.

-The ECC office worker will be trained as a counsellor by the advice bureau.

-The conscripts group will continue to play its role of focussing on conscripts needs, and in particular will host 'know your rights' forums and discussion groups.

3. Research and information

The ECC is widely recognised as the leading anti-military organisation in South Africa, and as such we need to become experts on the topics that concern us. We should be co-ordinating our own research, educating ourselves and providing information to the public on regular basis. People should come to see ECC as a leading authority on military and conscription issues.

This is being taken up in the following areas:

-an education and training portfolio has been established on the executive to give this area special attention. The precise nature of the role will be developed during the year, but will include convening internal education forums and circulating relevant documents through the organisation.

-in the long term the 'Research on Militarisation' group on campus will provide an important source of new research, and ECC should have a formal representative on this group.

-Barry Streek's press-clips are an important and underutilised resource, providing much of the raw data we need. A monthly package assembled in selected categories is available at about R15 p.m. In addition we can commission reviews of specific topics.

-following discussion in the exec it was felt that a 'research and information' group was needed to co-ordinate the above areas. This would be a formally constituted group within ECC, but not large enough to become a subcomm. Its functions would be to liaise with various groups or individuals doing research on the military, identify gaps in our knowledge and recommend appropriate research projects, co-ordinate the pressclips package and its processing into accesable data, and to make this information accesable to the organisation.

-the office worker will be available to assist in this process, and could work on resource packages and documentation.

4. Membership

We have identified the need to involve conscripts more actively in the organisation. Conscripts fall logically into three groups: those conscripted but not yet in the army (ie. at schools or tertiary institutions, those in the army and campers. The middle group are extremely difficult to organise; our success has largely been with school or university students. Campers are tied by work and professional obligations and cannot function as 'activists' within the organisation.

There is therefore a need for more limited forms of involvement or support in ECC. This could include being on the mailing list, making financial contributions, receiving information packages, and attending a monthly information forum. It is proposed that we implement the membership proposals that we have already accepted in principle. Formal membership would give campers access to the organisation without substantial time commitments.

It was felt that a group should be responsible for implementing

the membership drive. We wish to propose that a contact or outreach comm. be constituted to perform the above tasks. Details of membership still need to be worked and the implications thereof thoroughly discussed.

5. Broadening out

In addition to the membership drive ECC needs to be broadening its base, both within the front organisations and in the wider community.

a. Front Organisations: the front structure needs to be re-evaluated in terms of our new focus, and brought in line with current political developments. Potentially affiliates include the new youth, womens and white democrats organisations. The advice bureau and objectors support group already have representatives to the general body. Recognising that our front organisations have thier own programme of activities, we nevertheless need to ensure that the campaign against conscription becomes a living thing within these organisations. The above tasks fall within the newly created portfolio of the 'front co-ordinator'. This role will also be developed during the year. These tasks, and hence the 'front co-ordinator' will probably need to be housed in the contact committee.

b. Wider community: There are a large number of proffesional, service and political organisations which for various reasons cannot affiliate to ECC, but would like contact with us. We should also be actively engaging in constructive debate with those who dont support our position. Groups such as the NDM have expressed a willingness to meet with us.

Cape Town ECC is very much a southern suburbs campaign. We need to be actively penetrating into areas such as SeaPoint, the Northern suburbs and Muizenberg, and we already have contacts in many of these areas.

These functions would best be housed in the contact committee, as they require a number of people to be doing ongoing strategising and work around them.

Conclusion

Many of the above areas have been mentioned previously and failed to get of the ground. Responsibility for these areas is being delegated to old and new sub comms and/or executive portfolio holders. This restructuring needs to be seen in the context of our focus on conscription and the momentum of this new drive will hopefully carry us through the next year. There ius an obvious need for new activists to take on the load of the additional tasks, and recruitment will be a priority early this year. All members are encouraged to assist in this process.

These proposals need to be thoroughly discussed in the organisation and problems raised. Full discussions and final decisions will be taken at the general body.

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