

Media Paula

08.4.3.3

REPORT OF CAPE TOWN ECC WEEKEND AWAY (JANUARY 1987)

A) WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Our constituency is varied and is described as: withdrawn, frightened, hopeless, helpless, uninformed. Polarisation, emigration. Government credibility very low. State has lumped us with National Democratic Movement and has alienated us from the public, especially Afrikaners.

Conscription is still the underlying structure of the military. As conditions worsen, conscription becomes more of an issue. However, campaigns would be around the border war, Namibia, Angola, destabilization and relate this to the townships so as to look at immediate issues in South Africa. What is happening here is the prime focus for us.

Without public profile, ECC would cease to exist therefore we should stay public and continue mass public work, but without risk to activists. Others suggested that consolidation and development of activists should be considered along with low profile work, for example, housemeetings, mailing lists, membership.

A priority would be to work and organise in front organisations. Suggestion to have military issues taken up by front and cultural groupings, for example, CAG. Also, in the event of a banning order.

B) GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF WINS, DADS' ARMY, ARTS FESTIVAL AND THE AGM.

WINS

The broad objections of WINS were to get ECC back into the public eye and at the same time to try and test the new regulations. It was an offensive campaign, aimed at a range of sectors within the white constituency. The campaign was also important in getting ECC "back on the road" and re-establishing its own organisational cohesion.

In assessing WINS, it was felt that the variety of activists was good with regard to reaching a range of people, but that it tended to take on too much, resulting in the collapse of some projects (eg: children's film festival). The campaign did, however, play an important educational role (eg: symposiums, booths) as well as generally raising public awareness (eg: City Hall meeting). It was felt that the media was very good and well distributed.

Relations with front members (especially Black Sash re the Peace Picknick) and other organisations (eg: CAYCO re the walk) were very good. The front also pulled in very well in the detentions crisis. Although there were some problems with the slogan with some organisations, this was "healthily" debated and adequately resolved.

It was felt that the circumstances of the Arts Festival and exam time meant that the campaign group was fully drained. At one level, WINS was a good time for developing skills amongst activists (eg: being forced to chair symposiums, etc), but that there was still a serious lack of public speaking skills within ECC.

Finally, security was a problem in that the seriousness of the regulations tended to be underestimated. We generally tend to resume "normality" too quickly after a clampdown. WE NEED A SECURITY WORKSHOP.

DADS' ARMY

This campaign exposed us to a new part of our constituency (older men) who are generally not reached by other aspects of our work. We aimed to broaden our support by opening up this space and providing a forum for those affected by Dads' Army to get together.

Some criticism was made that we should have had the campaign earlier, when the issue first opened up. In general, however, it was felt that good ground work was laid, a lot of press coverage was made and the "parents' group" was formed, which will be a very important subcommittee in ECC. It was felt that the relationship between us and the Advice Bureau was excellent. Finally, the very powerful motion that was passed indicated the importance of this area of work in the future.

ARTS FESTIVAL

Given the changed nature of ECC's relationship to the Festival over the months, our aim here was to get our messages across to our constituency via the Festival activities, and to popularise anti-militarist culture.

Obviously the banning of the Festival was a major problem, but in general it was felt that ECC people worked well in the Festival, giving credibility to ECC as a whole. In addition, some people from the Festival were attracted to ECC Culture Committee.

There were some feelings that the moving of activists to the Arts Festival placed a strain on ECC's campaign work.

AGM

The aims of the AGM are essentially to exercise and demonstrate ECC's democratic structures and to draw the front (and other organisations) into ECC and make supporters (not activists) feel part of ECC. It is both a PR exercise, as well as the genuine exercising of organisational democracy.

One of the major comments coming out of the last AGM was that relations with the front were generally very good and in the case of the Black Sash, excellent.

C) ECC INTERNALLY

a) The Front

Our relationship with front organisations is important and we need to strengthen it by both involving front organisations in ECC work and being involved in their work. We have neglected some front organisations and need to strengthen links with JFJ, EDASA, LAGO, PAAG, GAYP, NAMOA, Chamber of Commerce, OASJSA. We also should build links with organisations like CAYCO. We can work with front organisations by encouraging anti-militarization groups, meeting with their reps and taking up their requests for help. Stumbling blocks to this would be the political priorities of other organisations as well as an increased work load on ECC.

b) National

National Committee is seen as a mandated represented body, therefore, we need to prepare regional input to NC democratically and to have thorough report backs. There have been problems in the past due to security considerations. It is proposed that NC should have two reps from each region. One rep should be permanent and the other a rotating rep from town ECC. Campus co-ordination should take place elsewhere. It was suggested that NC consider the idea of a National Conference, however, there would be important security considerations.

c) Security

Our security has always been weak, for example, Campaign. We need to develop a security conscious attitude and to be prepared for repression. Under periods of repression, we need to deal with alienation, hiding, decision-making, contact and support. We need to make collective decisions about security and how we cope with a swoop or a banning. A workshop is to be planned.

d) Development of Activists

Education and training of activists is seen as a priority and the internal education programme should proceed without delay. Various skills training workshops need to take place periodically. A broad internal education around general issues was suggested with an ad hoc grouping being given a mandate to prepare a programme.

e) Executive, Democracy and Subcommittees

The Executive was seen as being primarily a co-ordination body playing a watchdog role, overseeing ECC as a whole. It plays an important role in times of crisis and deals with sensitive issues. It should facilitate ECC bureaucracy. The Executive is accountable to subcommittees and GB. In this regard, subcommittee reps are responsible for facilitating, in a lively and accessible manner, the flow of information from both subcommittees and the Executive. It was suggested that portfolio reports take place at GBs.

It was felt that there is often not enough contact between the different subcommittees. Often there is not enough space in GBs for detailed subcommittee reports or debates. There needs to be more social events to integrate ECC members.

We need to be sensitive to the integration of new people in ECC and need to keep a check on alienating ECC jargon and the creation of an inaccessible ECC. On the question of recruitment, high profile work is important to attract people and we need practical concrete work for new recruits.

As a result of these discussions, a number of new structures were proposed.

I. Outreach/Contact Committee

The Outreach Committee would be responsible for organising house meetings, contact work with organisations and individuals and implementing a mass membership drive. It was suggested that there should be a fixed core of members and that the vice-chair be part of this committee. Membership should not be restricted to portfolio holders. The committee should also attempt to involve all ECC members in its house meeting programme.

II. Subcommittee Co-ordination Committee

It was felt that a structure should be set up to facilitate contact and co-ordination between subcommittees. It could provide a forum for detailed subcommittee reports and strategising which often are not catered for by the Executive and GB. It would be responsible for overseeing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the subcommittees and take action to rectify the weaknesses, for example, skills workshops. It would also be responsible for the internal education programme. Where detailed discussion is necessary on particular issues, it could pull together activist forums.

The structure would consist of one rep per subcommittee and would be co-ordinated by the Secretary-General. It would meet fortnightly. A hesitation about the proposal is the possible setting up of an unnecessary structure and overlapping with the role of the Executive.

III. Publicity Subcommittee

It was proposed, given Media's campaign orientated definition and the current conditions facing ECC, that its role be reassessed. The suggestion was that Media become a publicity committee which would strategise around the public image of ECC. Whilst it would still be responsible for producing media items, the press officer should be housed in Media to help strategise around the press. It was also suggested that The Tabloid be housed in media. However, pending a decision, an ad hoc grouping should be set up in the meantime to produce an issue of The Tabloid.

D) CAMPAIGN

Need for campaign to be co-ordinated at a national level.

Advantages

1. Increased public profile.
2. Uniting activists.
3. National theme.
4. Greater impact.

Disadvantages

1. National slogan may be inappropriate to regional realities.
2. Risks of swopping media - general vulnerability under emergency regulations.
3. Theme must not be too "wishy washy".

From National Executive : Ideas for themes:

1. Development of WINS.
2. Development of WFAJP, ASP.

Brainstorm of slogans, ideas:

1. "Security depends on justice" (include JMC's).
2. ASP.
3. Anti-war - no-win situation.
4. Focus on Southern Africa (Namibia, Angola, Mozambique).
5. Veterans, ex-Rhodies.
6. Positive/constructive alternatives of "anti-war" - "National security".

Ideas, methods, dates to employ:

1. Roadshows.
2. Mock elections.
3. SADF's 75th birthday.

Ideas and debates re-discussed at a later meeting, where motions were more coherently formulated.

E) ISSUES

- Sash National Conference : 12 - 15 March. Ideas?
 - Stellenbosch co-ordination.
 - Potential banning to be discussed.
 - Office worker?
 - ECC Trial 16th February; legal group to be set up.
 - Broadening of front?
 - Relationship with campus ECC.
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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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