

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN WORKSHOP - JOHANNESBURG REGION.

1. INTRODUCTION

2. 1) CONTEXTUALIZATION

1) 5 minute small group discussion -

What are the most significant points coming out of this which have bearing on ECC presently and for the workshop?

3. THE ISSUES.

These will take the form of brief inputs followed by 10 minute group discussion. Then there will be 10 minute plenary discussion.

3A ONE ISSUE CAMPAIGN.

"Conscription is one aspect of apartheid rule. Therefore we take up the conscription issue within the broad framework of anti-apartheid groupings. This means that other issues besides conscription also concern us and require our comment and work.

"Conscription is our issue - anyone who is opposed to conscription can join us and fight our campaign. Other organisations will address other issues. We will address conscription.

- a) Do you agree with either of these approaches. Consider the nature of ECC as a front, our overall aims and the most effective ways of reaching these.
- b) Frikkie is an H.N.P member. He doesn't believe in conscription because P.W.'s reform initiatives are going too far, and he is not prepared to fight for this. Should we allow him to join ECC.

LUNCH TIME!

3B. RELATIONSHIP TO SADF

Some of our affiliates take the view that, as a matter of principle we should not have contact with the SADF because this would give a platform and legitimacy to the military. Others argue that certain strategic gains could be made from public discussion with the SADF eg giving evidence before the Geldenhuys Commission established our sincerity in the eyes of the white constituency and will hopefully offer us some degree of protection.

- a) Do we have principled objections to having contact with the SADF or do we approach the issue on the level of strategy?
- b) What would be the possible losses and gains for ECC of debating the SADF on a public platform.

3. THE INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER.

The question of the position of the individual soldier has often been raised in ECC. On the one hand some people say that everyone who has an objection to conscription can join us and that soldiers are particularly oppressed by conscription and we need to make soldiers aware that ECC is catering for their needs. Others maintain that those who wear the uniform and participate in the activities of the SADF, should not be allowed to be part of ECC while they still do so: seeing a fundamental contradiction between being part of apartheid's oppressive army and being a member of ECC. In this debate there has also been a distinction drawn between participation in ECC on the level of ordinary member, member of an affiliate, and executive member.

- a) Do we aim some of our work at winning the support of the individual soldier? Why?
- b) To what extent should we make short term demands which address the problems of the individual soldier? eg "Troops to have right to refuse in township"
- c) Do we make an attempt to actively encourage soldiers to join ECC structures.

3) OUR CONSTITUENCY.

The situation of conflict in this country is presenting white South Africans with very real challenges. A variety of groupings have been inspired to become involved in initiatives to reduce the conflict eg Big business is now prepared to meet the ANC, 60 women's groups including Conservative Afrikaans groups call for the lifting of the emergency, and thousands of whites support our demand for Troops out of the Townships. At the same time The Troops Out Campaign has generated a good deal of support for ECC among black communities, and this has helped to build non-racialism.

- a) How does all this affect the potential of ECC within the white community?
- b) Which groupings within this constituency can be drawn into supporting the call to end conscription.
- c) Should we direct our work more towards the black communities.

³E) PFP

largely through the efforts of the PFP youth, the PFP now supports a phasing out of conscription and the establishment of a professional army. Involving the PFP youth in ECC would bring the support of a large constituency to our campaign; it would give us legitimacy in the eyes of the liberal white public. BUT the PFP has now decided to participate in the coloured and Indian Houses of Parliament which have absolutely no credibility. In addition, ECC has suffered severe attack from PFP leader Van Zyl Slabbert.

- What gains / losses would be experienced by the involvement of PFP youth in ECC
- How do we make a decision with regard to the affiliation of PFP to ECC considering that different ECC affiliates have different positions on the issue.

HALF HOUR TEA

⁵F) THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL NATURE OF ECC

ECC is taking on a Christian nature through activities such as the fast. Many churches are issuing statements of support for ECC.

- Why / why not is it important to draw in religious groupings into ECC.
- How do we incorporate Christian groupings into ECC and continue making ECC attractive to them, while not alienating other groups.
- How do we incorporate other religious groupings in ECC - Jews, Muslims, Hindus etc.

³G) PEACE MOVEMENT.

Our most basic call in ECC is for an end to conscription. The declaration makes this call as a step towards building a just peace in South Africa. We attempt to give content to the term Just Peace. The concept of peace is catching on and sometimes we are referred to as a peace movement. This relates to the fact that our activities reflect to some extent the activities of international peace movements - the festival, fairs, the fast.

- What factors characterize international peace movements?
 - Could these apply to ECC? Why should / shouldn't we project ourselves as a peace movement.
- Is it appropriate for ECC to be called "The peace movement" in the S.A context, where so many other groups are essentially working for peace.

4. ECC STRUCTURES

a) ECC AS A FRONT AND AS AN ORGANISATION INVOLVING INDIVIDUALS

i) INPUT (covering the advantages and disadvantages of our front structure and of our nature as an organisation involving individuals participating in our activities as well as affiliates)

ii) DISCUSSION: ① Should we be encouraging participation of individuals in ecc - why?

② What are the implications of this for our structures and way of working and making decisions?

b) SUBCOMMITTEES

(i) General discussion on the role of subcommittees as

- forums for discussion related to activity
- forums for more general internal education
- forums for involvement of new members
- other.

(ii) Brainstorm of ideas for subcommittees

- decisions.

c) EXECUTIVE

(i) What kind of an exec. do we want?

- role of exec in relation to general body
- role in relation to sub-committees

(ii) Do we need elections in the near future?

(iii) What kind of lead-up process is needed?

D) AFFILIATES.: Break up into Affiliates to discuss how you are going to improve relations with Ecc.
REPORT BACK

MINUTES OF ECC WORKSHOP DISCUSSION, JOHANNESBURG, 19/10/85

A) SINGLE ISSUE CAMPAIGN

ECC is a 'single issue' campaign in the sense that there is a central group of related issues - conscription, militarisation and the role of the SADF - around which we mobilise support and on which we have national policy. This policy is expressed in our Declaration and in our evidence to the Geldenhuys Commission.

Being 'single issue' is one of our strengths: it is the essence of our structure as a front of organisations with different policies and strategies; it is one of the main reasons for our having so much support from so wide a range of people and groups; and it is one of the main reasons for our having established a clear, coherent and consistent public presence.

At the same time we have always situated our immediate issues in the broader South African context, and used them to develop an understanding of the nature of apartheid and of an alternative just society.

One implication of being 'single issue' is that it is not our responsibility to respond directly to other aspects of apartheid unless they are closely related to our immediate issues.

A second implication is that, as a general rule, we cannot be part of other fronts whose focus is broad (e.g. UDF or Convention Alliance.)

The problem of Frikkie from the H.N.P. wanting to join ECC is not realistic as ECC is clearly part of the broad anti-apartheid movement and our opposition to conscription is clearly progressive.

B) RELATIONSHIP TO THE SADF

Our approach to having contact with the SADF is a matter of strategy, not principle. Such contact therefore needs to be assessed in terms of the gains and losses to ECC in the particular circumstances.

Debates against the SADF are generally a good idea: they allow us to expose the army; the army has more to lose from giving us legitimacy than we have to lose from giving it legitimacy through a debate; the SADF is unlikely to debate us and we can make mileage from this. There may however come a time when it is not possible for us to debate them.

Making representations to the SADF, as with the Geldehuys Commission, has obvious advantages in terms of establishing our legitimacy in the public's mind. It might be a good idea to compile a document of atrocities committed by the army and formally present this to them (as DPSC has done in its area of work).

C) THE INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER

It is important that serving soldiers do not perceive ECC as being antagonistic to them - it must always be clear that we see the system of conscription and not the individual soldier as 'the enemy'.

Our public position must be such that soldiers can identify with it. Without abandoning our demand for the immediate withdrawal of troops, we must also make the explicitly short-term demand that soldiers should have the right to refuse to go into the townships.

Emphasizing positive alternatives to national service is a better way of reaching soldiers than by opposing the role of the army.

The ECC has received and welcomes support from soldiers. We would have no problem with their wanting to get involved in our structures, although for practical reasons this is unlikely. It is also unlikely that ECC executive members would be in the army at the same time.

It is obviously very difficult for us to make direct contact with soldiers. Indirect contact, by reaching schoolpupols and mothers of conscripts, is therefore important.

D) OUR CONSTUENCY

The shift to the left of various groups and prominent people within the white community has increased ECC's potential to gain support there. We should take advantage of the formation of the new groups, like the Concerned Citizens Group, without actually becoming part of them.

Within the white community we need to be working more consistently with our affiliates, church ministers, parents, school pupils and the Afrikaans community.

We need to be more sensitive to changing moods and attitudes within the white community to inform what issues we take up and how.

In the black community, we need to give real effect to our commitment to non-racialism by working with black activists or groups around the issue of troops in the townships. Stickers, pamphlets, workshops and collecting affidavits are possible forms of action.

E) ECC AND THE PFP YOUTH

It is necessary to appreciate that the position on conscription of the PFP Youth is distinct from that of the PFP Party and is entirely consistent with that of ECC.

The advantages to ECC of the affiliation of the Youth are: an opportunity to expand into the PFP's constituency; greater legitimacy and protection; the broadening of ECC as a front; a greater ability to shift the Party's position on conscription in a progressive direction.

The disadvantages are that the PFP is linked to Inkatha through the Convention Alliance and has decided to work in the coloured and Indian communities - this has given rise to greater antagonism to the PFP from the black community. ECC'S credibility amongst progressive black organisations and within the black community may consequently be threatened by our working too closely with the PFP Youth.

Since ECC is a 'single issue' campaign, the criteria for considering the affiliation of a new organisation are simply whether that organisation supports the ECC Declaration and whether its position on conscription is consistent with that of ECC. The position of that organisation on other issues is not relevant to ECC, although it may be important to ECC's existing affiliates.

The decision on the PFP Youth's affiliation will be made by existing affiliates but they should take into account ECC's feeling on the matter. Those present at the workshop were overwhelmingly in favour of the Youth's affiliation.

We need greater clarity on the issues of affiliation to, membership of and observer status on ECC.

F) THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL NATURE OF ECC

The advantages of ECC having a religious nature and of working with the churches are obvious. A number of qualifying points should be made, however: our work is still too much at the level of the church hierarchies and is underdeveloped at the level of the ministers and their congregations; our work with religious groups should include contact with Jewish groups and with the proposed Jews Against Apartheid in particular: work with Hindu and Muslim groups is not a priority at this stage but should be investigated.

It is important that ECC's public image is not exclusively Christian or religious as this might alienate other constituencies like youth culture. ECC's religious symbols like the dove have been effective broadly, but we need to create specifically South African symbols of peace.

The setting up of a Churches Sub-committee is necessary. The possibility of this being a Religious Sub-com. is a matter of debate although the former was preferred at this workshop.

G) PEACE MOVEMENT

A distinction can be drawn between 1st and 3rd world peace movements. The former are concerned with nuclear disarmament and the East/West conflict while the latter are concerned with issues of oppression and exploitation. ECC's issues are more closely linked to those of the 3rd world although our constituency is closer to the 1st world.

The advantages to ECC of having established contact with groups overseas are support for ECC, pressure on the S.A. government and an opportunity for us to learn from them.

It is essential that ECC does not refer to itself either internally or publically as being a peace movement or even as being part of a broader peace movement. The notion of a peace movement has particularly European connotations and it is not appropriate in the South African context.

ECC's emphasis on the notion of a just peace has been very important in attracting support and in being able to offer a positive alternative to the violence of apartheid. Because the meaning of "peace" in S.A. is interpreted differently from different ideological positions ECC needs to ensure that progressive content is always given to its call for a Just Peace.

Collection Number: AG1977

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PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

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