

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NEW FOCUS ON CONSCRIPTION BUT.....

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1. What does the new focus mean?

The new focus means returning to the reason for ECC's existence and the basis of its support: conscription. We oppose conscription because it is an issue which negatively affects the white community and because it is a fundamental pillar of apartheid.

The new focus means that:

- \* we need to address all our constituencies in terms of how they are affected by conscription
- \* we must work with conscripts and soldiers as constituencies in their own right
- \* we must begin to speak more directly to and on behalf of unwilling conscripts and make ECC's message more accessible to them
- \* we must develop a better understanding of how conscripts and soldiers see ECC and the army

2. A new focus on the conscript or on conscription?

The new focus is a focus on the issue of conscription. We are concerned with how conscription affects the entire "conscripted community": school pupils, students, women, professionals, parents, working people, conscripts etc.

3. Why are conscripts the most important of these constituencies?

Conscripts are the most important because they are most directly affected by conscription and because their opposition to military service is the most threatening to the government.

Being more representative of conscripts will enhance our credibility in the entire conscripted community.

4. What do we mean by "conscripts"?

By conscripts we mean all white men that face call-ups. This broad category includes a wide range of different groups: school pupils, students and working people; men who have served, those currently in the army and those who have not served; men who have served in administrative capacity, on the border or in a township.

We will need to differentiate between these groups and target them differently.

5. Why does ECC need to address its image?

If ECC is to speak more directly to and on behalf of conscripts, it needs to take seriously their perceptions of the organisation.

Many conscripts who oppose conscription do not support ECC because it is seen as cliquish and elitist, radical and trendy, and out of touch with what is happening in the army.

6. So how should ECC address its image?

In order to improve its image ECC needs to:



- \* be able to offer conscripts a real service (eg around know your rights)
- \* be seen to be positive and have realistic demands (eg Alternative service projects around ECC's practical goals)
- \* have more spokespeople who have done military service
- \* review the style and content of ECC media and activities
- \* review the language, dress and 'social behaviour' of ECC members
- \* involve a broader cross section of the 'conscripted community' in ECC in creative ways

7. What are the implications of the new focus for women in ECC?

Women in ECC are affected by the new focus because it targets conscripts as a special constituency and involves getting more campers into the organisation and as ECC spokespeople. There will also be times when we feel 'a man' is needed to represent ECC in a particular forum. This political tension will have to be resolved through further discussion and in practice.

The new focus does not mean that women will no longer be spokespeople or office bearers. Office bearers will continue to be elected on merit. ECC spokespeople must include representatives of all constituencies we are trying to reach. Just as we want campers talking about military service, so we need women and parents talking about how they experience conscription.

Women are welcome in the Conscripts Group.

ECC remains committed to non-sexist behaviour within the organisation. We need to constantly assess whether we are meeting this goal.

8. What are the implications of the new focus for ECC taking up C.O.'s?

Many conscripts see ECC as an organisation of objectors and feel that they cannot get involved unless they too have decided not to go into the army. This feeling reinforces the perception that ECC is anti-soldier.

This does not mean that ECC should not support C.O.'s - their stands raise the dilemma of conscription in a most effective way. What it does mean is that ECC must strategise more clearly how best to support CO's in a way that the average unwilling conscript can relate to.

ECC will also need to be selective in the objectors it campaigns around. As O.S.G. develops into a national organisation it will take increasing responsibility for objectors.

9. What does the new focus mean for ECC's political message?

The new focus does not involve ECC neglecting, abandoning, or diluting the political basis of its opposition to conscription, the role of the army in the townships, the occupation of Namibia, and the destabilisation of Southern Africa.

The new focus simply means that ECC's political position must be expressed more sensitively and less rhetorically/propagandistically, and must be more closely linked to the real concerns and fears of the conscripts and their families.

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