

Johannesburg, February 2, 1984.

A4.1.1.7

Dear Friends

Here is some early information about the 5TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONTIENTIOUS OBJECTION we would like you to take note of and respond to.

1. The DATES are Thursday July 19th at 4.00pm, until Sunday July 22nd at noon.
2. Tentatively, the VENUE is *not yet known*.
3. COSTS are not yet fully known. We will let you know in due course.
4. Our sense is that the GENERAL AIMS of the Conference are to:
 - a. assess the activities in our groups and on the national scene since last we met (July 1983);
 - b. envision and plan directions and activities for the coming year;
 - c. nurture the awareness that even though we are local groups we are part of a national movement;
 - d. encourage the sharing of information, skills and resources between regions and individuals;
 - e. facilitate the growth of friendship and solidarity amongst the people present at the conference;
 - f. create an atmosphere and cultural/political climate at the Conference which embodies the principles of democracy, cooperation and non-domination which lead us to be part of the CO movement in the first place;
 - g. celebrate our unity as individuals, groups, regions, a national movement.
5. The STRUCTURE of the Conference will be as flexible, open and creative as possible in order to encourage maximum participation by everybody. Besides the usual information oriented events, there will be space in the program too for cultural events like music, theatre and art. ~~There will definitely be~~ There will definitely be "free time" for people to do as they wish.
6. CONTENT has not yet been decided upon, although matters such as conscription and its extension, ramifications of the new law etc. will obviously be included. We would like you please to consider what issues, topics and themes you would like to be part of the program, and then tell us about them. Perhaps you could have this as an agenda item at your next meeting. You could have a brainstorm (or heartstorm - for those who prefer a more affective approach) and send us the results. Besides content, we would appreciate it if you also told us what your general expectations for the Conference are. When considering content, we encourage you to consider creative styles of presentation of that content. We really want this Conference to be creative, so we plan to steer clear if possible from the traditional verbal-monologue-by-an-expert-up-front approach. Group presentation, media, drama, song etc. are alternative ways of presenting material. Could we please have this feedback from you by the end of March. Having this information from you in good time will help us plan a truly representative Conference.
7. We would like to try a new approach to REGISTRATION this year. Our suggestion is that this is done locally by each region. Our reasons for this are as follows:
 - a. this shares the load amongst the regions;
 - b. screening is easier;
 - c. local registration will automatically put people in touch with a local group, which will help with pre-conference preparation, and post-conference follow-up. With regard to pre-conference preparation, we encourage each region to have a pre-conference day (or evening) of some sort. This can be used to share basic history information regarding CO and COSG history, the law etc. with those who are new to the CO scene. Such a day would also be useful to develop

a sense of community so that at the main conference people from the same region will have a natural reference group.

There will be some liaison between the planning group and the regions in respect of registration, so that we can have an idea of what numbers to expect.

8. We hope to have the PROGRAM AND CONTENT in preliminary form by mid-June. We will send this to you then so that you will have time - and at least one COSG meeting - in which to acquaint yourself with it and get a feeling for how you can participate in it.

Yours collectively

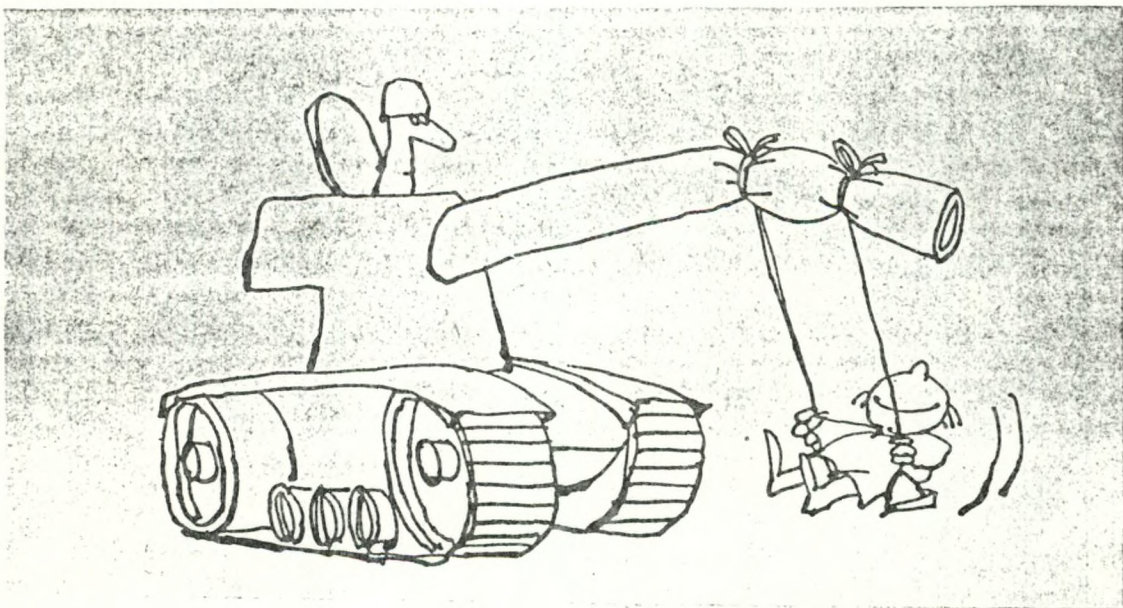
the planning group (on behalf of the Johannesburg COSG)

NOTE: please send your feedback, questions etc to the planning group

c/o Adèle Kirsten
11 Anson Str.

Tel: 680-8213

Robertsdam 2091



THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

CO



DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE RAAD VAN KERKE

REV. R. J. D. ROBERTSON
85 Princess Street
MAYFAIR
Johannesburg 2092

3rd Feb 1984.

TO Contact persons of CO Support Groups

Dear *Peter*,

Enclosed are the proposals a sub-group of the Johannesburg COSG are making about local advice bureaus for COs.

Perhaps your group might be considering the same kind of thing and we would like to hear any improvements you can make to this outline.

If you are setting up anything similar we'd like to keep in touch with you to share experience and any possible leaflets etc that you or we might put out to assist the work of the bureau. Perhaps you can think of a better name too!

We are meeting again on 1st March to work out how to put section B of these proposals into operation and it would be good to hear from you before then if you are likely to take this idea up.

Yours sincerely,

R. J. D. Robertson

ADVICE BUREAU FOR CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS (ABCO)

Proposals of Johannesburg COSG sub-group

A. What service is needed for COs in terms of the new legislation?

1. While others may campaign for an end to war or to particular wars, ABCO needs to offer non-directive counselling to those weighing the issue of military involvement.
2. The individual need is paramount here, rather than fitting a person into a movement. However, the individual needs to know the implications of his decision beyond his own immediate circle and that he is not isolated but will have support from a wider group.
3. ABCO needs to offer factual information on the Defence Act, SADF requirements and procedures and how the law is being applied, and on the consequences of any particular decision the objector may take.
4. For those who apply to the Board for Religious Objectors, ABCO needs to monitor and understand the procedures of the Board, assist in preparation for applications to the Board & help in handling problems that may arise during "community service".
5. For those who do not apply to the Board or whose applications fail, ABCO needs to advise re legal representation & handling exile or prison.

In all this ABCO needs to be somewhat separate from COSG work. It is not a "recruiting office" but an advice bureau. Support for the CO will come from the COSG, not from ABCO as such.

B. What structure is necessary to offer an advice service?

1. A panel of advisers, each with general knowledge, using Manual on counselling COs, some with specialist knowledge of law and cases. They would counsel enquirers, meet as a group from time to time to compare cases, and keep in touch with other ABCOs.
2. A name, address and phone. One contact person, usually near the phone, would refer enquiries to other members of the panel and keep a central index of each case and the counsellor involved.
3. Advertising the service This can be done through churches, on campuses, in private and public schools and through other youth organisations and educational bodies. ABCO could encourage advance notice being given to them of intentions to object before call-up so that as complete an index as possible might be kept.
4. Records of interviews and cases. With the consent of clients details could be kept regarding the advice given, the outcome of their cases and especially their statements to the Board or for publication.
5. Assisting in updating the Manual and in making representations.
could be given from the experience gained in this work.

Phone ITa 648-8613.

Rcb. 643-2102



Gay - psc male copy for Mark Powell

Johannesburg, March 6th, 1984

the planning group
11 Ansom St
Robertsham 2091

File CO.

Dear Friends

This is a follow-up letter to that of February 2nd, concerning the 5TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONTIENTIOUS OBJECTION.

1. The venue has been confirmed: it will be Wilgespruit, about 20 miles west of Jhb. There is accomadation for 90 people on the property. The meeting and eating facilities can cater for just over 100 people.
2. Costs: we estimate that the average cost per person will be R45.00 - this includes food, lodging and various administrative costs e.g. paper and printing. We would like each region to take responsibility for the collection of the fees. We suggest that you have avilailable to applicants a sliding scale of fees, ranging for instance from R35.00 to R60.00. People can then pay according to their income, in which case those with more money can subsidise those with less. The R45.00 does not include travelling expenses. We would like each region to fundraise for yourselves in order to cover these costs. The planning group will generate a central fund which can be used to subsidise the regions, but we hope you can be largely self-sufficient.
3. Registration: as we mentioned in our earlier letter, we plan for this to be done regionally. More information on this - including a suggested registration form - will be sent to you in due course.
4. We are in the process of drawing up a handbill which can be used to advertise the conference. We will send you a copy as soon as it is ready. Obviously, you are free to develop your own modes of advertising too.
5. PRE-CONFERENCE DAY. Refer to our earlier letter for the motivation behind such a day. Here are some suggestions of broad areas such a Day can cover (it will be helpful if at the start of the Conference we can presume that all the participants have covered these areas):
 - + Background i.e. history of COSG and CO; history of previous CO conferences; summary of the 1983 conference minutes; basic information on the new law and the Board; conscription; the basic context of CO in South Africa.
 - + Sharing of the aims of the Conference (broadly outlined in the February 2nd letter. More specific aims regarding content to be covered etc. will be sent to you in due course.).
 - + Sharing one another's expectations of what you hope to learn and contribute at the Conference. Clarification of expectations is important because it already begins the process of participation, in that people are actively expecting rather than apathetically waiting. It can also help sort out priorities with regard to which workshops to attend (some will run concurrently so a choice will have to be made).



- + Communicating the basic principles upon which the Conference will proceed: participation, non-domination, anti-sexism, cooperation. This can be communicated through verbal input and discussion, or through games etc.
 - + Regional assessment. This will be helpful for new people, as well as perhaps enabling long term participants to gain perspective on how the year has been. This could also be part of the preparation for the regional report at the Conference.
6. We would appreciate it if you could have your Pre-Conference Day about two weeks or so before the Conference, so that we can get feedback from you about how the day went so we can make any alterations that seem necessary to the Conference program.
 7. We plan to have an outline of the Conference program ready by early June, so you should receive it any time from mid-June onwards. We hope that having this information available in good time will help you in your preparation.
 8. The Conference program will not be rigidly fixed. Before the Conference starts we will be open to making any adjustments, and then when the Conference is in motion, we plan for there to be enough flexibility that plenary sessions, workshops etc. can emerge spontaneously according to the needs of the Conference.
 9. When you do your regional assessment and prepare your report to the Conference, we encourage you to look at both the positive and negative aspects of your activities. We would like the conference participants to know the reality of your group and region, not just the ideal. Our planning group is drawing up a few questions which we suggest you follow in planning your report-back. We are doing this because we feel that if all the regions are responding to similar questions in their reports it will help people gain a coherent view of how each region functions, and then put the pieces together for an overall view. We feel it would be helpful if each region summarised their report on a large piece/s of newsprint or posterboard which could be used as a visual aid while presenting the report as well as being put up somewhere permanently during the conference as resource material. Naturally, you would not be limited to the questions we pose, and the style of presentation is entirely up to you (how about writing it up in the form of a play, or an operetta?) What do you think of this idea? We would appreciate it if you gave us feedback too as to which would be the most useful questions to ask.
 10. We asked you in the earlier letter to please give us feedback on what content etc. you would like to see in the Conference, by the end of March. We hope you are in the process of developing that and sending it to us. We stress again our desire that you also suggest creative ways of presenting material. This also applies to suggestions regarding creative use of time, group process etc. We really do want to get away from the traditional verbal-monologue-by-an-expert-up-front pattern. Think especially about creative approaches to the public meeting (tentatively planned for Saturday afternoon, July 21st, in Johannesburg city). We are wanting cultural events to be a major element of the Conference. Please let us know about theatre groups, dance groups, singers, poets, musical groups, mimes, clowns etc, who could be part of the Conference.
 11. We are planning to have one room set aside as a Media Room & Market Place, so come prepared. The Jhb COSG is preparing a book/pamphlet/t-shirt/button/poster table. Could you please encourage the people in your region to bring along any items relevant to the Conference they want to sell, swop, barter or give away, especially t-shirts, bumper stickers, buttons etc. Bring newsletters and pamphlets produced in your region. Such a space could function as a valuable interchange for ideas regarding media presentation of CO and related issues. Bring posters, photographic displays, ceramics, drawings, paintings, tapestries etc. which can be displayed in this room. In this room we also hope to have a typewriter and roneo machine for use by participants - bring your own materials.

YOURS COLLECTIVELY, the planning group



Dear All,

Letter no. 6 (Sunday 22 August)

This nastily unpredictable weather has taken a suddenly sharp turn towards coldness, necessitating the use of three blankets whereas I had become used to just two. I hear there is snow on the mountains, which, I expect, has caused these conditions. It makes you think that it's all just nonsense to elude our stupid third eye.

I had my cell searched just now (everybody did); they were looking for cigarettes. I told the mannetjie he'd have no luck here as I am militantly anti. (note, not violently anti). Even "militantly" is a bit too militaristic for my liking.

My theological wrangles have taken a back seat (even though I have been challenged on all sides about our alleged immortality of the soul) because during this past week I have been preoccupied with wrangles of a blue vs. brown nature. This all resulted in a summary trial on Friday, where I was sentenced to three days solitary confinement, starting, I expect, tomorrow. I am not too depressed about it. In some ways it will be pleasant to be relieved of the noisy, oppressive military environment and to have some peace and quiet - I am trying to look upon it as a "retreat", where I can do some serious recollecting and praying. I think that three days is manageable, too. I have some fears of being deprived of all sensory stimulation which one normally encounters; I shall be quite interested to see the effects of such deprivation on me. I spent most nights alone at home before I came in so I am used to being alone and have learnt to live with myself and to get along with myself, so that will stand me in good stead.

This will recur and recur with ever-increasing periods being imposed, I expect, as I will continue refusing and refusing. An absurd situation will develop which hopefully they will recognise and will do something.

So I suppose I shall expect my next visit in three or four weeks time, from my brothers.

Letter no. 7 (Friday 27 August)

This will only be posted on Monday but I am starting it now.

The time to myself (Tues, Wed, Thurs, out this morning) was okay. Not a psychological strain at all, although longer times might well be - yesterday afternoon I got a bit frustrated. All of yesterday I was very aware of the vigil in C.T. and tried to "vibe in" on it. So yesterday was quite intense on that score.

The only real unpleasantness about the time to myself was the dirty and smelly conditions. Neil (the other one!) got "crab lice". We were hauled out and the place fumigated. But we were put back too soon - the place was still full of fumes. My bed was upside down and when I tried to turn it over my hands got full of the stuff, and the mattress was sopping wet, and pools of it on the floor, and it all stank terribly. Quite unpleasant.

Immediate future quite uncertain. possibility of civvie jail, which I am quite worried about. I feel it is still worth pressing for recognition.

I am still reading "Little Dorrit" - don't be alarmed at how slow I am, it is over 1000 pages and I am reading much else in between. Dickens is brilliantly clever and witty - I have just read a section on how Mrs. General gets herself jobs as a housekeeper - chaperone to upper class well-to-do families, putting on airs of gentility: "Mrs. General crams all articles of difficulty into cupboards, locks them up, and says they have no existence. It is the easiest way, and, beyond all comparison, the properest". "She might have been taken - had been taken - to the top of the Alps and the bottom of the Herculaneum, without disarranging a fold in her dress, or displacing a pin". Quite brilliant!

Johan came today with communion. We had a good chat.

I got a letter from Peter Kallaway - it was very encouraging. He is now at U.C.T. I wonder how he rates it compared to Wits. I got the track suit and stuff - my brother brought it this morning, and also papers to sign for selling our house. So when I get out the first thing I'll be doing is looking for a place to stay - I'll be able to stay with my brothers temporarily, of course. I feel sad at the thought that the home I had known all of my life is no more, and often when I think how I'd love to be at home in my own room, I have to check myself and realise that that home and room and garden are no more for me! What is, though, I suppose, and this is some consolation, is quite a bit of money.

During the time alone, I got much comfort thinking of the others who had been there before. I read quite a lot of Scripture too. When I got a bit anxious I would just call out to Neil, he'd shout back and vice versa - that was quite reassuring. Well, I shall now get back to Mrs. General of the "dignified and imposing appearance; ample, rustling, gravely voluminous; always upright behind the proprieties", and continue this later.

It is now Sunday 29th evening. I have spent the whole weekend in the block - reading, talking to people, thinking, sleeping. I am really beginning to feel like a prisoner - the confines of this place are so limited and restricting. There are many of the inmates here who have spent time in civilian prison and I have spoken much to them but they all have such different stories and contradict each other that I don't know what to believe. Neil and I talk about this and the possibilities for our immediate future a lot. I also had quite a nice chat with him about relationships yesterday.

I have thought a lot this weekend of how good it will be when my time is up and I can get back to normal life, to have freedom again; but I am trying to cultivate the attitude of living for the present and letting each day take care of itself, or else it becomes too frustrating thinking of that day....it seems such an eternity away!

Letter no. 8 (Wednesday 1 September)

I had another summary trial yesterday, for refusing to wear the browns. The law officer told me that when I refuse a third time to put on the browns I will be court-martialled. Anyway, I was given six days solitary confinement, which will start on either Friday or Saturday, probably Saturday. At the trial, they called the staff sergeant who is dealing with me on this uniform business in to give evidence, since I had pleaded not guilty (I said that the whole reason I am in the DB being punished is because I refuse to have anything to do with the army; for me to now wear the uniform of the army would be absurd, since to wear it would be to identify myself with the army. Such identification would be a violation of my conscience, and to go against my conscience would be to commit sin. To live with the knowledge that I had wilfully committed sin would constitute hardship for myself. It was thus out of necessity that I had to disobey the command to wear the browns, and thus as far as I was concerned I was not guilty).

There is one chap here who spent two years in civilian prison. He is quite old - 36 - and is a quiet, decent type. He is PF in the army and is here for AWOL. I have asked him quite a lot about it and can see he doesn't talk rubbish. He said I musn't get my self into a panic about it as it is not nearly as bad as it may seem. He said the first while of the "observation period" is very tough but after that it is okay. He also said it is very well organised.

My post seems to have dried up. I have received about two letters in the past two weeks - keep writing!

Letter no. 9 (Sunday 12 September)

I am back in my cell now after the visit from Simon, Martin, Gel, John, Marianne and Jan.

When the sargeant came with Johan to my cell he said that if I wanted to have this visit I would, after it, have to go back to Block 1 for tonight and then only start the 14 days solitary tomorrow morning. Well, after the visit I thought it would be so much hassle to trek all the way with my things to Block 1 that I might as well just spend the night here in the solitary cell, and they can then just add on an extra day. I told the corporal this and he said he'd have to ask the sargeant, who wasn't around, if it was okay. I just came back to the cell, so if it is not okay with the sargeant I might yet get turfed out and brought back only tomorrow.

In any case, I will come out on Monday 27th, which means I'll have to forgoe the visit of Sunday 26th because of today's visit.

I really enjoyed the visit this afternoon, especially seeing John after the disappointment of not seeing him last time. Marianne's sweet peas also provided a beautiful touch of the spring outside. The regards conveyed from everybody and the knowledge that I am in your thoughts and prayers, as Simon told me, was very reassuring.

Johan has been very good to me - he came this morning with communion, and came twice during the six days, although on the second time I had very little to say to him! Father Mullan is now back from the border, so I expect I will see him too.

I am a little apprehensive about these 14, sorry 15 now!, days. I know I will be able to cope well with 6, but after that it may become a bit taxing. During the last 6 days I cultivated a practice of long, deep and fulfilling prayer, and I hope to develop that this time.

I have the Mennonite pamphlet, "Portrait of a Peacemaker". I have been very impressed by the simple truths of it, and have become ever more convinced of how much pacifism is in accordance with the teachings of Christ. This is bolstered by proposing non-violent alternatives to warfare, which also are in accordance with the teachings of Christ since they employ the power of love which is redemptive and life-affirming and not the destructive power of violence. Anyway, I suppose I had better stop preaching!

Talking about preaching, on Saturday I finished a twenty-page long essay on the Trinity for a J.W. friend. I had spent weeks on it and had done a lot of research into it, using my Unisa books, the Dutch Catechism, Hans Kuog's "On Being A Christian", and, mainly, the "New World Dictionary Concordance to the New American Bible" which is excellent - it is a Catholic publication although from the name you may think it is J.W. - their Bible is called the "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures"! Anyway, I proudly presented my efforts to Paul, the J.W. friend. He has not yet studied it carefully but said I had put forward quite a good argument, parts of which he would have difficulty in disputing! So, there! I spent the first five pages explaining the differences, as I understood them, between the R.C. and J.W. approaches to Scripture, and the R.C. faith being time-conditioned and having existed through all sorts of historical backgrounds; and for the rest I based my argument largely on Philippians 2:6-11, where I went on a long exposition of the meaning and historical background of the name 'LORD', using the Dictionary/Concordance as an aid. I also used some notes which Phoebe sent me. Throughout I based my argument solidly on Scripture, which is of prime importance for J.W's.

When I first came into D.B. I was often perturbed by some of the "false doctrines taken over from paganism" of the Catholic Church which they pointed out, and wondered a lot about "the truth" which they had as opposed to the abominations of the Great Whore of Babylon with whom, it seemed, I had fornicated!

However, as I have delved into the points of dispute and seen their attitudes, especially on "involvement in politics", I have become more and more satisfied and happy with Catholicism - Father Mullan will be relieved! Johan brought me a rosary (which I asked for!) and I have been using it.

.....

It is now about 9am on Monday morning. I was turfed out last night and sent back to Block 1, but am now back in the solitary cells.

It is now about 12.30pm; I have just had lunch - it consisted of a piece of chicken, the most awful-tasting gem squash I have ever had, smothered in cinnamon, a roast potato, beetroot and onion salad, and some over-salted lettuce and some delicious gingerbread pudding with custard.

One thing that has bothered me is that at my court martial, and in my statement, I did not give enough attention to the "just war/political" aspects of my CO. stand - not that I believe there can be a just war, But I'm sure you know what I mean: what I do mean is that peace does not mean simply the absence of conflict - that would be just a semblance of peace. For true peace to exist, just conditions have first to exist. So a necessary part of "peacemaking" is the pursuit of this justice. The South African political set-up is so fundamentally unjust and oppressive, and the SADF so clearly exists to uphold and keep intact this unjust set-up. To serve in the SADF would mean assenting to the very injustice which, as a "peacemaker", one should be endeavouring to eradicate.

In my discussions with the J.W's, I have said that here in DB it is necessary to remain alert to all the goings-on and to constantly analyse the workings of it, to avoid the danger of becoming blind to it and succumbing to all the evil (the J.W's agree 100% with me on this point); so, similarly, in one's society one has to analyse it's structures and operations, so that one does not succumb to the evil of bannings, detention without trial, unequal provisions in education, health, wages, resettlement, petty apartheid and so on. Here, unfortunately, the J.W's disagree - that would be becoming "involved in politics", and Christians have no part of this world. But it is essential that a Christian response be worked out to these things.

As I say, I did not include this sufficiently in my statement; but the pursuit of a justice upon which a true peace is dependant, and serving in the SADF being upholding injustice which is the opposite of one's peacemaking ends, is an integral part of my stand.

At the visit we didn't talk sufficiently about support for Neil Black, which Simon mentioned. I am sure Neil Black would be encouraged by letters of support. His stand, like all J.W's is one of neutrality - they will not fight for an earthly kingdom, but put their hopes in the "incoming world government" - God's Kingdom. They certainly do not see their stand as part of the struggle for peace and justice in S.A., which, they believe, can never be brought about by earthly means. I am sure that Neil Black will have his court martial on the same day as I will have mine - in the DB it is very much a case of "Black en Mitchell" - we are undergoing exactly the same treatment - taken to get our browns together, charged at the same time, summary trials at the same time.

Pax Christi Vobiscum,

NEIL.

File CO
8 Bridgebank
Liesbeek Road
Rosebank 7700
4 December 1984

Dear Friend

The sufferings of many South African's in the SADF's Detention Barracks are relatively undocumented. After speaking to some people who had spent time in DB, it was felt that a booklet describing their experiences would be valuable

The booklet, which is now in the process of production, will largely be devoted to the experiences of Peter Moll, as well as those of Peter Hathorn, Andrew Orpen, and Anthony Waddell. A few extracts have been enclosed for your interest.

The booklet will be published before the end of the year, and as it is being produced on a limited budget, it is necessary to have a fairly accurate estimate of how many copies to print. If you would like to order copies for your organization, please fill in the form below, and return AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, but at least by Wednesday 12 December.

The booklet will consist of about 50 pages of A5 size. There will be no charge but a request for a donation will be enclosed in each one.

Yours


RONALD LOUW

"When I used to go and see the doctor before going into solitary, he would ask me if I was all right, and I would say yes except that I don't like being in solitary, and then he would say to the corporal, okay, take him away. Once or twice he would take up his stethoscope and listen to my heart and breathing. But it would never really be a careful physical examination. Never anything like a psychological examination."

- Peter Moll

"There is an average of nearly one suicide attempt a week in DB."

- Peter Hathorn

"When I came out of DB, I was resentful of authority and aggressive towards people that I normally related well to. I was less wary of disobeying authority and was extremely rebellious.... This was something I saw in everybody who came out of DB. (And most people who had been to DB were sent back a short while later.) My feeling was, and still is, that DB as a punishment is completely counter productive."

- Andrew Orpen

"I was given a long and clever 'interview' by a brigadier and two aides. It was made up of countless questions, ranging from what my father's full name was to whether I had ever met Joe Slovo or had had sensitivity training. They admitted to me that they didn't believe I could have come to a decision to object to military training on my own. They believed that some group or person had persuaded me."

- Anthony Waddell

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