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REPORT OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICE WORKING GROUP TO THE 2ND ORGANISATIONS FORUM ON CONSCRIPTION

Background:

The first forum meeting in November 1988 proposed the establishment of a group of volunteers to discuss campaigning for alternatives to military service. The group was comprised of individuals from a number of organisations represented by this forum. Several meetings were held covering questions of the desirability of alternative service, whether the government would possibly concede such a system and the potential of a campaign. We also discussed some ideas about the type of campaign which could be launched. In Jo'burg and Cape Town similar processes of discussion are underway though none has developed far enough as yet to provide much guidance.

THE CONSENSUS IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WAS THAT A SIGNIFICANT AND DIVERSE RANGE OF THE PUBLIC WANT ALTERNATIVE SERVICE FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS. THAT PRESENTED IN THE APPROPRIATE STYLE THIS IS A REASONABLE CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT. THAT SOME FORM OF ALLIANCE BASED CAMPAIGN INVOLVING THE BROADEST POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED.

In respect of the role of the voluntary working group the following weaknesses were identified:

- 1 Participants were there individually and so were not representing the views of organised groups which would need to form the basis of a campaign,
- 2 Many organisations which could be involved were not,
- 3 Participation in the group was irregular and meetings were not efficiently organised as a result of too much informality.

OUR CONCLUSION WAS TO PROPOSE THAT THIS FORUM REQUEST ITS PARTICIPATING BODIES TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICE WITH A VIEW TO PARTICIPATING IN A CAMPAIGN AND THAT A WORKING COMMITTEE OF FORMALLY MANDATED REPRESENTATIVES BE ESTABLISHED TO INITIATE THE PROCESS.

Principles of a campaign

The working group and the campaign itself, from the beginning is based on the coming together of organisations rather than re-establishing yet another little group.

The campaign needs to achieve the broadest possible involvement, accordingly the working group should concentrate on increasing involvement to the exclusion of public campaigning. The working group should provide a place for all participants to agree on a common basis for a campaign.

Relationship to this forum

The alternative service working group should continue reporting to this forum for purposes of information, however it needs an entirely independent existence as ultimately the alternative service campaign could be involving group which are neither part of nor accountable to this forum. To tie the campaign to this forum would constrain the potential breadth of the campaign. ✗

Role of the working group

- 1 To formulate initial proposals on a system of alternative service as well as a ... of a campaign which includes many different participant bodies.
- 2 Subject to the approval of existing participants to involve other organisations in the discussions.
- 3 To form the organisational nucleus of the resulting initiative

Request of organisations present

To send two representatives (ideally) to an initial meeting on the basis of which each should discuss its relationship to the alternative service campaign. This meeting will discuss a definite proposal which can be taken into organisations for discussion.

PROPOSED MEETING: 8 March 1989 7.30 - 9.00pm at Idasa, 1206 Sangro House, 417 Smith Street.

NOTE, Representatives need not have a prepared organisational viewpoint but should be present with the authority of their organisation.

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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