

Women and



Conscription

Why is Conscription a women's issue?

As the army is used increasingly in the townships and in the rural areas, as the civil war in our country escalates; so conscription becomes an issue that faces all South Africans.

At first glance it may seem that women are not involved in the SADF. Yet women in the townships and in rural areas are faced directly with the army in their struggles around rent and other issues. And white women are increasingly affected by the militarisation of our society, as it serves to uphold and enforce the rigid sex-role stereotypes of men and women.

The stereotyped image of men is tough, strong 'protectors'. As children they are encouraged to play with guns and to be aggressive. They are emotionally and ideologically prepared for the role of soldier. The SADF claims that they will 'make a man of him' - the type of 'manhood' that is created in an all-male, authoritarian, brutal and violent institution. It is no accident that there are reports of increased crimes of rape and wife-beating from men who return from their military service.

Women are also involved indirectly to 'keep the homefires burning'. They are expected to be supportive, nurturant and caring - the traditional passive role assigned to women. By organising food parcels, writing letters, sending books etc; women play a crucial role in giving moral and ideological support to the South African war effort.

It is for these reasons that the End Conscription Campaign calls on women to support our work. We need to challenge the role that women play in supporting the SADF, and we need to expose and challenge the role of the SADF in the civil war.

What is ECC?

The End Conscription Campaign started in response to the 1982 Black Sash call to abolish conscription because this is a civil war. The ECC committees were a natural extension of the work done for many years by the Conscientious Objector's Support Groups, whose focus is to press for change in Defence legislation on C.O.s and practical support for C.O.s. By the end of 1983 there were ECC committees in Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg, and a national campaign to educate people about the role of the military and conscription in South Africa, and to build up public support to End Conscription.

The regional committees are composed of representatives from affiliate organisations such as Black Sash, Nusas, Catholic Student's Society, Jodac,

C.T. UDF area committees, Diakonia, and several others. The Johannesburg ECC also has a co-ordinating committee of five people and a representative on the National Council which facilitates the national co-ordination of campaigns.

Why do we oppose conscription?

We oppose conscription because we are in a situation of civil war, where the army is used in roadblocks, house to house searches and patrolling the townships in order to 'control' the people in their resistance to apartheid. In this situation it is untenable for the state to force young men to fight in such an army.

We oppose conscription because the role of the SADF in the continuing illegal occupation of Namibia, and in using military force in neighbouring states, is a violation of international law, and contributes to the continued suffering of the Namibian and other peoples.

We oppose conscription because of the burden it places on young men, who for moral, political or religious reasons do not wish to fight in the SADF. The alternative service is only open to religious pacifists, leaving others with the option of permanent exile (2000 - 3000 leave every year), or six years in jail. This situation will soon face 'coloured' and Indian youth as conscription is extended.

What do we do?

- * The ECC's provide education for affiliates on the role of the military and conscription
- * We run national campaigns to educate the public about these issues. This year we are looking at International Youth Year, Namibia, and the use of the SADF in the townships.
- * We do research into militarisation and the activities of the SADF, and make these and other resources available. We will be publishing a newsletter as well.
- * We train members of affiliates and other interested people in media and other skills needed in the course of our work.

Who to contact?

As ECC is a representative organisation it would be mostly through affiliate organisations that people get involved. However, individuals are encouraged to participate in the sub-committees and other activities. People interested should contact Benita Pavlicevic at 643-3941.

The Declaration to End Conscription

TOWARDS A JUST PEACE IN OUR LAND

A Declaration to End Conscription

We live in an unjust society where basic human rights are denied to the majority of the people.

We live in an unequal society where the land and wealth are owned by the minority.

We live in a society in a state of civil war, where brother is called on to fight brother.

We call for an end to conscription.

Young men are conscripted to maintain the illegal occupation of Namibia, and to wage unjust war against foreign countries.

Young men are conscripted to assist in the implementation and defence of apartheid policies.

Young men who refuse to serve are faced with the choice of a life of exile or a possible six years in prison.

We call for an end to conscription.

We believe that the financial cost of the war increases the poverty of our country, and that money should rather be used in the interests of peace.

We believe that the extension of conscription to coloured and indian youth will increase conflict and further divide our country.

WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE MORAL RIGHT OF SOUTH AFRICANS TO EXERCISE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND TO CHOOSE NOT TO SERVE IN THE SADF.

WE CALL FOR AN END TO CONSCRIPTION

WE CALL FOR A JUST PEACE IN OUR LAND

SECCO
End Conscription Campaign

Collection Number: AG1977

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a collection held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.