

WAR IS NOT COMPULSORY - LET'S CHOOSE A JUST PEACE

A7.222

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WAR! WHAT WAR?

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- \* The cost of the war in Namibia is over R600 million annually.
  
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(Apartheid 1987: a few facts - in a box)

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INTRODUCTION

This proposal covers the context and history of our discussion around a national campaign. The proposal originates from the National Committees attempt to draw together the proposals from the different regions. It was decided, on the basis of mandates from the regions and discussion of principle at NC, that an attempt would be made to reach consensus around a proposal. This was necessary because of the short time space between now and the elections. Regions are being asked to accept the proposal in its totality as a broad theme with some key national actions but with the flexibility to allow for regional differentiation of varying degrees. It has been noted by the NC that this campaign discussion has brought the role of that body unusually close to a decision making one. The question of our national decision making processes has been raised elsewhere, but this process has been a good illustration of our problems in this regard.

THE CONTEXT

A.) The State

Riding on the crest of a wave of legitimacy and public support generated by the WJP campaign we gaily surfed into the double brick wall of a well orchestrated smear campaign and the State of Emergency. These state actions defined our immediate reactive priorities - survival, security, defence against smears etc. These priorities were reinforced after subsequent clamps around the Yellow Ribbon Campaign in JHB and the War Is No solution Campaign in CT.

B.) The End Conscription Campaign

In an attempt to go beyond a purely reactive approach we have attempted to accomplish certain things that will allow us to take forward our work despite the state attack. These include training our members in a diverse range of political and organisational skills, establishing more secure forms of public work e.g. house meetings, developing a mass membership etc. and going back on the offensive publically. At this time we have a strong national organisation, that has weathered quite severe state repression, our weakness is in our public presence and our ability to give a voice to the many who oppose conscription and militarisation.

C.) Our Constituency

A common feeling has been that while the white community is becoming increasingly polarised, with the centre being characterised by fear and apathy, there are more and more people who are unhappy about being conscripted.

NP

We must assume that this group will grow (even in the face of a general rightwards shift) as the conflict intensifies. Thus at the point at which the End Conscription Campaign itself is most threatened, the potential for the growth of the movement against conscription is at its greatest.

D.) The Elections

This will clearly define the ideological terrain in the white community over the next few months. The important debate for our purposes is that between the National Party and the PFP/NRP alliance. The NP is standing on an overtly security platform. Stripped of waffle, they are proposing to crush the Democratic Movement (which they define very widely) as the immediate priority and at some unspecified later date come up with reforms that will leave white minority rule intact. This is a more rightwing stance than we have seen from the NP of late. It should be relatively easy for us to demonstrate that the Govt. has chosen to embroil us all in a civil war rather than give in to the demand for democracy. The focus of the NP'S attack on parliamentary groups to the left of it is that they are 'soft on security/communism/the ANC/conscription etc. The PFP/NRP platform will be a mix of 'bread and butter' issues, the Indaba as an example of negotiation politics, critiquing the NP for not coming up with a solution for the incorporation of blacks and generally presenting themselves as a moderate alternative. They are going to keep away from engaging the NP on 'security issues' and conscription would fall into this category. It could be argued that the alliance with the NRP has shifted the PFP's policy slightly to the right and they have certainly abandoned most of their monitoring/civic action programmes in the interests of allocating all resources to the elections. We have felt that any national campaign should intervene in the elections, by putting our issues on the agenda of public debate, and possibly by using some of the symbolism associated with elections i.e. choice or choosing.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DISCUSSION AROUND A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

At the end of last year we were having discussions about a national campaign around the January Call-Up. This was brought to a grinding halt by the repression that accompanied public work in CT and JHB. At the NC that followed shortly after this it was reported that most regions felt we could not get such a campaign together on time (because of the clampdown) and that the state would respond incredibly harshly to a Call-Up campaign, particularly because it seemed to contravene the amended subversion clause relating to conscription. Two distinct campaigns were motivated at that NC and a proposal was sent to the regions. One of the campaigns embodied a broad

anti-militarisation thrust summed up by the slogan 'The Costs of the War' and the other was more directly focused on the individual conscript, calling for a broadening of the definition of a CO in the CO legislation. At the same time it was motivated that any campaign would have to be conducted in a different way from how we have done it in the past. We would have to develop 'new ways of working' - low profile ongoing work, longer and slower campaigning etc. - if we are to survive.

These proposals were discussed in the regions. Some regions liked the one, some the other and some didn't like either and proposed other alternatives. Possibly the most important criticism of both campaigns is that they didn't put the elections in a central enough place in the list of criteria by which we defined our priorities and approach.

### WAR IS NOT COMPULSORY - LET'S CHOOSE (A JUST) PEACE

(The parenthesis will be explained!!!)

The NC was thus faced with the task of coming up with a proposal broad enough to incorporate the needs of the different regions, yet specific enough not to be meaningless. We were looking for a slogan that could include:

a) an anti-militarisation thrust; b) the positing of a positive alternative; c) a focus on the individual conscript and the choices he faces and d) a format that lends itself to the Elections. The words we were playing around with, were 'war, peace, conscripts and choice'. After much discussion, we decided on: War Is Not Compulsory - Let's Choose Peace.

At the most general level this slogan means: The govt. has chosen war and it is us, the conscripts and the people who ~~support them who~~ have to pay the costs - this is not a solution to our countries problems - the real solution lies in the establishment of a just peace - let us choose this option and work towards it. In addition, it was argued that the word 'compulsory' raises the whole system of conscription, the word 'Let's' is incorporative and the notion of 'choosing peace' related well to the elections.

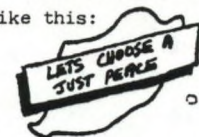
At a second level we could specify our interim demands, or our interim choices for peace, namely that troops should have the right to choose to refuse to serve in the Townships or Namibia, that Alternative Service should be available for all etc. It is at this second level that the slogan is more clumsy. It clearly lends itself better towards a general war v a just peace/anti-militarisation theme. The focus on the individual conscript and the call for a change in the law, will need to be brought out in the

content we give the theme and in the style of the campaign.

### POINTS TO PONDER ABOUT THIS SLOGAN

- WINE  
LCAJP
- SC TG
- A.) The generality of this slogan is both a strength and a weakness. We must ensure that it doesn't get like an amorphous jelly fish. We need to use it to intervene quite precisely into the major debates in the elections. It is up to regions to ensure that our message is not confusing to the public.
- B.) In it's original form the slogan might seem to be calling for the kind of peace where you have got Buffels and troops patrolling the townships and an absense of stone throwing i.e. peace without justice. This point was considered at the NC but we decided that it would make the slogan unwieldy if we added the words 'A Just'. The group mandated to draw up this proposal was given the flexibility to change the slogan as long as it didn't change the principle. We have used this mandate to change the words to 'A Just Peace' because the reason it was excluded was technical and we are proposing a technical way of getting around the problem. If the second part of the slogan was made into an image or a graphic, it would look something like this:

e.g. WAR IS NOT  
COMPULSORY



OR



Note: These are not Dibs proposals for the Camp

The reason we chose to exercise our mandate was because this became an issue of irresolvable debate in one of the regions soon after NC.

### FORM AND TIMING OF CAMPAIGN

The main point to consider about the form, is the question of repression, the law and our proposed new ways of working. Some regions have motivated that we shouldn't call this a campaign. That it is in fact a theme that we should stretch out over a longer period before and after the elections. Regions will have to come up with low profile ongoing forms for themselves. The national proposals for form include the strong suggestion that regions attempt some form of Working for a Just Peace project and a National Day of Mourning for the conscript and the costs of the war on April the 23rd. The original suggestion of April 24 has met with some resistance because it is a friday. The campaign would peak in the week of the Day of Mourning, but we have left the decision about further peaks (possibly) after the elections and the overall length of the campaign untill later. We should have had a chance to assess and finalise this by the next NC.

## PROCESS

- 1.) In the interests of time regions are asked to consider this proposal as a strong recommendation, and make as few changes as possible.
- 2.) Regions are asked to consider the proposal as soon as possible and report back to National as soon as possible.
- 3.) Particular consideration should be given to the changes, namely the addition of 'a just' to the slogan, and the timing of the National Day of mourning.
- 4.) We also need to have greater clarity about the content of the National Day of Mourning. Could regions consider this.
- 5.) DURBAN'S PROPOSAL FOR A LOGO WILL FOLLOW SHORTLY.
- 6.) WOULD LARGER REGIONS CONSIDER MAKING THEIR MEDIA (PAMPHLET, POSTER) SUITABLE FOR NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION.

*Process*

- Same discussion
- regional w/ Hub on Sunday.  
Spm. Pin P.

**Collection Number: AG1977**

**END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)**

**PUBLISHER:**

*Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive*

*Location:- Johannesburg*

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