

Conscientious Objector
Support Group
P.O. Box 2861
4000 Durban
March 17, 1988

Mr Pietie du Plessis
Minister of Manpower
House of Assembly

Dear Sir

re: RELIGIOUS OBJECTORS DOING COMMUNITY SERVICE

In our opinion, religious objectors are rendering a valuable service to the communities they are working in, at considerable sacrifice.

For this reason, we are very disappointed to discover your negative attitude to them as revealed in the committee stage debate on the Additional Appropriation Bill. In that debate, you are reported to have said that you do "not have much sympathy " with religious objectors, and that you "won't go out of my way to do things on their account" (as reported in *THE STAR* March 1, 1988 - article enclosed).

As you no doubt know, many conscripts who have conscientious or religious objections to doing military service, leave South Africa. This is particularly the case amongst university graduates.

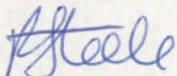
Religious objectors doing community service have made a choice to stay in South Africa, which is an indication of their loyalty and faith in the future of this country. For this reason, we feel that comments such as those attributed to you are a slap in the face to people who are actually a valuable asset to South Africa.

We think that people not wanting to have anything to do with religious objectors because they do not do military service, are shortsighted. Religious objectors are not just doing nothing - they are doing their National Service. Surely, military service is not the only way to serve one's country.

It is also our impression that not all state and related departments have such a stand-offish view of religious objectors. Indeed, many departments welcome them because such individuals are usually skilled and dedicated workers, and because they are cheap, if not free!

In any case, if the state is finding it difficult - for whatever reason - to find jobs for religious objectors in its own arena, we suggest that you seriously consider allowing these objectors to work in non-governmental organisations such as religious and community organisations. In this respect, we were pleased to read your statement that "Consideration is being given at present to the possibility of extending the categories of employers which are referred to in section 72e(4) of the Defence Act, 1957" (as quoted in *THE CITIZEN*, March 3, 1988).

Yours faithfully



Richard Steele
on behalf of COSG, Durban

*Ministerie van Mannekrag en
van Openbare Werke en Grondsake*



*Republiek van Suid-Afrika
Republic of South Africa*

*Ministry of Manpower and of
Public Works and Land Affairs*

Verwysing/Reference

A22-1(79)

1988-03-28

Mr R Steele
Conscientious Objector Support Group
P O Box 2861
DURBAN
4000

Dear Mr Steele

RELIGIOUS OBJECTORS DOING COMMUNITY SERVICE

By direction of Mr P T C du Plessis, MP, Minister of Manpower and of Public Works and Land Affairs, I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 17 March 1988 the contents of which have been noted.

With kind regards

C FOURIE
ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY

DEPARTEMENT VAN MANNEKRAG

Mannekraggebou, Schoemanstraat 215



Republiek van Suid-Afrika
Republic of South Africa

DEPARTMENT OF MANPOWER

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PRETORIA

0001

The National Co-ordinator
National Community Servers' Group
11 Libertas
143 Prospect Road
UMBILO
4001

VERWYS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE NA
IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE QUOTE

RG 6/1/2

1988 -04- 11

Dear Mr Goldman

COMMUNITY SERVICE BY RELIGIOUS OBJECTORS

Your letter to the Minister dated 10 March 1988, receipt of which was acknowledged on 18 March 1988, was referred to this Department for a reply.

The Department has taken cognisance of your sentiments and survey activities amongst various organisations. Although there is sympathy for your request for the placement of religious objectors with Non-Government Organisations this concession can unfortunately not be approved as all placements are restricted to government departments, provincial administrations or local authorities.

Amendments to the Defence Act, 1957 are however being considered to broaden the placement possibilities of religious objectors which in all probability will be submitted to Parliament for consideration during 1989. Thereafter it might be possible to accommodate your request.

Yours faithfully


DIRECTOR GENERAL : MANPOWER

evdv/1132F

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PRETORIA**0001**

Mr. Richard Steele
Conscientious Objector
Support Group
P.O. Box 2861
DURBAN
4000

**VERWYS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE NA
IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE QUOTE**

RG6/1/2

1988-04-21

Dear Mr. Steele

RELIGIOUS OBJECTORS DOING COMMUNITY SERVICE

Your letter to the Minister dated 17 March 1988, receipt of which was acknowledged on 28 March 1988, was referred to this Department for a reply.

I would like to clarify certain misconceptions which might exist about the policy of the Department of Manpower with regard to religious objectors doing community service. Be assured that the Department's attitude towards classified religious objectors who do community service has always been one of understanding and without prejudice.

Special attempts are always made to place religious objectors in community service in accordance with their aptitudes, interests, training and previous experience. At present the Department is experiencing no problems in placing religious objectors in community service as is clearly illustrated by the fact that placements are as a rule, accomplished within six weeks after classification.

The Department is also in continuous dialogue with church leaders of the various denominations representing religious objectors to ensure that any problems effecting religious objectors and their community service are identified and dealt with as soon as they arise.

Yours faithfully

DIRECTOR GENERAL: MANPOWER
0115/1jvr

Other services for army objectors

STAR
3.3.88

Consideration was being given to allowing religious objectors to perform alternative service in religious and community groups, Minister of Manpower Mr Piet du Plessis said yesterday in the House of Assembly.

"Consideration is being given at present to the possibility of extending the categories of employers which are referred to in section 72E (4) of the Defence Act, 1957. — Sapa.

Alternative for objectors is considered

CITIZEN 3.3.88

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. — Consideration was being given to allowing religious objectors to perform alternative service in religious and community organisations, the Minister of Manpower, Mr Piet du Plessis, said.

"Consideration is being given at present to the possibility of extending

the categories of employers which are referred to in section 72e (4) of the Defence Act, 1957.

"After the negotiations which have to take place in this regard have been completed, I shall in due course in consultation with my colleague, the Minister of Defence, make a statement on this matter."

Religious

objectors

STAR

are a real
MARCH 1, 1988
problem

Minister of Manpower

Mr Pietie du Plessis
said yesterday in the
House of Assembly
that he personally did
"not have much sym-
pathy" with religious
objectors doing "alter-
native national ser-
vice" and that using
these people was "a
real problem".

NOT WANTED

"People don't want
them or anything to do
with them," he said.

He was replying in com-
mittee stage debate on
the Additional Appro-
priation Bill to ques-
tions from Mr Arrie
Paulus (CP Carleton-
ville) and Professor
Nic Olivier (PFP No-
minated).

"People" did not want
anything to do with the
objectors because they
did not do military ser-
vice.

"I will put them into jobs,
but I won't go out of
my way to do things
on their account," he
said. — Sapa.

MEMORANDUM

TO : CARRUTHERS

FROM : J WILLS, CHEADLE THOMPSON & HAYSOM

RE CROUCAMP / BOARD FOR RELIGIOUS OBJECTION

On 20 June 1990, the Board for Religious Objection classified Mr A Croucamp as a religious objector with whose religious convictions it is in conflict to render any military service or to undergo any military training or to perform any task in or in connection with any armed force. (i.e in terms of section 72 D (a) iii of the Defence Act 44 of 1957).

This must be viewed as an important decision which represents a significant breakthrough in the field of conscientious objection on religious grounds. Prior to this decision the scope for religious objection was very limited. In terms of the decision, Hartman vs The Chairman, Board for Religious Objection and Others, the question was that in order to be classified as a religious objector, the applicant had to, inter alia, either believe in a Supreme Being or be a member of world recognised religion.

This test was problematic for applicants who found the doctrinal confines of the major established religions unacceptable. Their are many conscientious objectors whose religious views fall outside the traditional religious groupings but who nevertheless are very sincere and serious. A common feature of such persons is the abhorrence of violence. When faced with conscription only two alternatives were available : to be imprisoned for up to 6 years for refusing to serve in the South African Defence Force or to leave the country to evade military service.

The decision given by the Board in the Croucamp matter clearly widened the legal definition of what constitutes religion. The Board has accepted that, provided the applicant is sincere, individually held beliefs falling outside the parameters of the recognised world religions can be classified as religious for the purposes of Religious objection to military service. Hence people with unconventional religious convictions may now apply to the Board with a view to performing community service instead of military service. (The requirement of universal participation remains). It is therefore no longer a necessity that an applicant be a member of any recognised religious sect.

The Croucamp decision is therefore important in the legal battle against conscription. It is a step towards the position that an individual must have the right to decide whether or not to participate in an organisation which is essentially of a violent nature.

JW.

Collection Number: AG1977

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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