

# End Conscription Campaign

A56216

## fact sheet

### WHAT COST THIS WAR

An important aspect to ECC's current national campaign is the question of what cost is involved in this war - not only financially but more importantly in human and social terms. South Africa is in a war situation on two fronts:

- a low intensity civil war inside the country
- a colonial war in Namibia

### THE CONSCRIPT

Our society is becoming increasingly militarized. The conscript is the person most directly affected.

- almost all white male South African citizens between the ages of 18 and 55 are liable for military service in the South African Defence Force.
- the total duration of this service could be nearly 5 years, spread over a period of 37 years.

The Defence Act is more and more strictly applied and increasing numbers of older men are being called up.

What are the effects of military service on the conscript? Conscripts are trained to become "good soldiers". This means:

- being trained to obey all commands immediately and without questioning them.
- ceasing to be an individual and becoming an unimportant part of a large military machine.
- being trained not to think of the "enemy" as fellow human beings, but rather as objects to be eliminated.

After training, conscripts generally have to put their training into practice as active soldiers. In a war situation cases of war neurosis/psychosis are inevitable. There is no data on the extent of this problem in South Africa.

### Objection to Military Service

Many conscripts do not go into the SADF willingly. Some of them become officially recognized religious conscientious objectors.

- From 1984 to 1986, 910 applications for full objector status were granted by the Board for Religious Objection.

This option is only available to those who have a pacifist viewpoint and whose religious views conform to the board's criteria. Anyone objecting on political, moral or other grounds has three options - evasion, jail for six years and exile. Many conscripts evade the SADF by simply not reporting for their national service or camps.



# End Conscription Campaign

- In 1985 an average of 25% of conscripts called up for camps in Witwatersrand units failed to report (SADF figures) Since then, figures of failure to report have not been made known to the public.

## THE ECONOMY

- During 1986, 2164 professional and technical workers left South Africa. They included engineers, medical doctors, dentists and educationalists.

Many of these people left to avoid the SADF - either for themselves or for their children. Our country suffers the consequences.

Like all third world countries, South Africa has a shortage of skilled workers. Our economic future depends partly on raising the general skill level of the population. By driving away skilled people the government is sabotaging the future of all the people in South Africa.

- In 1960 the Defence Budget was R44 million. It increased by about 9000% between 1960 and 1985. In 1986 the Defence Budget was R5,25 billion.

The rate of increase in the amount of money spent on the SADF has been far higher than the inflation rate.

- Defence costs South Africa more than R13 million per day.
- In 1984 South Africa spent 9,5 times more on defence than on health.
- For the 1985/86 tax year the auditor general found that "losses, deficiencies and fruitless expenditure" by the SADF cost taxpayers R58 million. This includes avoidable accidents, theft etc.

As anyone in the SADF knows, most of these kinds of losses go unreported.

South Africa is experiencing the worst depression since the 1930's. Unemployment has never been higher. Capital investment in industry is declining. Money that could be spent improving the economy is being spent on the SADF instead.

## THE TOWNSHIPS

- In 1985 over 35 000 soldiers were deployed in 96 different townships
- Deaths in political violence have increased from 176 in 1984 to 879 in 1985 to 1298 in 1986. (SAIRR figures)

The overwhelming majority (90%) of township residents are opposed to the presence of soldiers in the townships. The presence of the SADF was seen as a major cause of continuing "unrest" (Women for Peace Survey, August 1986)

# End Conscription Campaign

Mrs Wilhelminah Mhlongo, principal of Dons Binswage Nursery School in Pinville (Soweto) says:

"Children in class or at play are preoccupied with soldiers, casspirs and guns. Children use coat hangers and plants as guns to imitate soldiers. During their free play they mime soldiers in casspirs - some build houses using crates in which they hide for safety. I have observed that in their art classes they no longer design pink and yellow cats but casspirs, guns and soldiers in drab dark colours (Sowetan 4/10/85)

## NAMIBIA

- In 1971 the International Court of Justice ruled that South Africa was occupying Namibia illegally.
- There are over 90 000 SADF members in Namibia.
- The direct cost to South Africa of the war in Namibia is over R600 million annually - about R2 million per day.
- 10 000 Namibians, mostly civilians, have died in the war since it started in 1966.
- As a percentage of the population, three times more South African conscripts have died in Namibia than American conscripts died in Vietnam.

## SOCIAL COSTS

What about the social costs of the war?

- Many people have been killed by security force action in our townships, in Namibia and in SADF raids on neighbouring countries. For example:
  - + 69 township residents were killed by security forces between July 1986 and January 1987 (statement by Vlok in parliament.)
  - + 5 Zambian citizens were killed by the SADF on a raid into South West Zambia on 25 April 1987. (Sunday Times)

How do their families and friends feel?

- 115 members of the SADF were killed in military operations and training accidents in 1986.
- 362 conscripts attempted suicide in 1986 and 18 were successful.

Their families and friends have also suffered.

WAR IS NOT COMPULSORY, LET'S CHOOSE PEACE!

**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.