

ECC'S DRAFT POLICY ON CONSCRIPTION IN A POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA.

Background note

This paper has been generated by Johannesburg ECC for discussion in the branches of ECC nationally and for final adoption at our May 1991 conference. A request was generated by the last National Committee meeting for a draft policy document to be drawn up looking at ECC's position on conscription in a post apartheid South Africa. The need for such a document is clear, as we need to be responding to and contributing to the general climate of debate and discussion around the make up of South Africa in the future. As ECC has spearheaded the campaign against military conscription in apartheid South Africa, we are well placed to comment on post apartheid scenarios. Clearly in a policy document some form of preamble and context should be drawn up. This element of the policy document has been left out for the moment as the core issue of our position is simply being discussed. Once we have reached consensus, it is planned that the document will be written up in a fuller form and circulated to relevant political formations and other interested groups.

Conscription policy in a post apartheid South Africa

1. The ECC believes that military conscription in a post apartheid South Africa should not be part of the defence force's manpower procurement policy. The ECC takes the position against military conscription in a post apartheid South Africa based on our belief that:
 - a. Military conscription is a violation of the individual's right to choose how he or she wishes to define "service" to ones country.
 - b. Military conscription is a serious misuse of person power and is inefficient as a basis for ensuring adequate troop levels but at the same time directing skills where they are needed most.

c. While there is an acknowledged need for nation building, particularly among the youth of our country, the ECC believes very firmly, that military conscription is the inappropriate vehicle for such a programme.

1.1 In the event of a democratically elected government deciding that military conscription should be introduced, the ECC believes that the right of Conscientious Objection should be recognised, in that people should be given open access to non military service of equal time and pay. To completely ensure that conscientious objection would be respected in a future time of military conscriptions, such a right should be included in a future bill of rights.

2. The ECC further believes that a system of non military conscription, in the form for example of youth brigades, is unadvisable and should not be introduced in a post apartheid South Africa. The ECC recognises the claimed role of such a programme in "nation building", but believes, for the following reasons, that such a programme is inadvisable:

a. The size of the population potentially available for non military conscription is a massive one, up to 500,000 18 year old South Africans per year could be eligible for a years service. Such a programme would put an unbearable pressure on the state in order for such a programme to run effectively and to contribute to the actual improvement of disadvantaged communities and built a sense of nationhood among the youth.

b. Such a programme would be too large and clumsy to be able to effectively manage development programmes.

c. The ECC believes that in a post apartheid South Africa the coercion and force that has characterised our nation for so long should be done away with. This means that conscription, both military and non military should not exist. Rather, avenues should be made available for those who wish to volunteer for military duties or for non military service.

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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