

### Work this term

We have been fairly quiet on a public level, but have been working hard within our organisation, consolidating, strengthening and focussing on internal education which was found to be lacking after our action-orientated last 2 terms.

This has been an important term for us in terms of gathering our strengths and reviewing our position. Also very important is a definite sense of increased commitment and responsibility amongst our members.

While Nic and Clare were here, we held a seminar/discussion programme on issues like the State of the Nation, Nic's paper on the future and direction of ECC and how and why we organise. Attendance at these was very good and discussions were fully participated in, which helped to stimulate serious thought about our role and the struggle in general.

The SRC referendum around the issue of centre affiliation to NUSAS has involved a number of ECC activists. This was valuable for all those involved and exciting in terms of the heightened political awareness and debate on campus. But this has resulted in attention being focussed away from the activities of our own organisation, which is why we haven't been particularly ambitious. Media rained like cats and dogs on campus during the referendum, and Rhodes is rather saturated. But the winning of the referendum by NUSAS is definitely a gain for us.

### Amalgamation

#### Why??

Probably the most important initiative since the inception of the 2 Grahamstown ECCs has been the recent proposal to amalgamate the two. The most negative response so far has been why on earth it's taken us so long to think of this.

The proposal came out of the rationalisation of our constituency. We concluded that our constituency could be divided into 5 neat categories that could easily be spanned by one organisation. The constituencies we identified include Campus, Churches, Liberal Academia and Conscripts.

Up to now, both of the ECCs have been fairly weak in terms of leadership and organisational skills and it was seen that an amalgamation of our organisations could transform us into a formidable force.

#### Process

The process so far has been to discuss it in our respective GBs. We then elected a working group who drew up a formal proposal, outlining the problem areas and suggesting a possible structure. This then went back to the GBs where it was received with much enthusiasm.

An important area that has been addressed in the amalgamation discussion is that of setting up a Real Live Front. It was felt that this is the ideal time to include our potential affiliates in a process that involves them being actively included in making and therefore owning our campaign.

We are therefore holding over our AGM until we have discussed this with our affiliates and given them the chance to discuss it in their organisations. The AGM and official launch of our organisation will therefore take place sometime in October.

At this stage we are looking at having 5 or 6 sub-committees: Media, Culture, Schools, Churches, Contact and Outreach. We are still a little unclear about our constituency based sub-committees; the debate being whether or not we need to have separate town and campus sub-committees. This will have to be resolved later.

### Conceptual Discussion

A time has been set to hold the first joint meeting of town and campus ECCs, and will take the form of a weekend away. It was felt that this would be the best time to have a full conceptual discussion of the history, role, aims and context of ECC. We plan to take a thorough look at our Grahamstown constituency so as to develop a clearer picture of what structures we need to accommodate our role. It will be a valuable experience as having our conceptual discussion in the process of forming a new organisation will define clearly for us our role and direction.

Campus ECC has, however seen it as a priority to get our members to a position of being able to participate in that discussion - that being the objective of our 3 seminars. We have therefore covered the important areas which will lay down the basis for further discussion through Nic's paper on the history, aims, context and future of ECC. The general feeling that emerged out of that discussion is that ECC does not need to move either to the 'left' or to the 'right'. It was stressed that we should rather concentrate on contextualising ECC within the issue of apartheid while at the same time putting our emphasis on the conscript.

### Morale and Cohesion

A number of factors have contributed to the substantial strengthening of cohesion and increased morale over the past few months. Firstly, last terms WJP project created a sense of unity and purpose around the event, and the state repression which came down during and after the project increased our commitment and confirmed our belief in the justice of our cause. Secondly, Nic and Clare's visit provided a sense of belonging to a national organisation. Thirdly, the seminar programme gave us the opportunity to pool our ideas and understanding of the issues before us. Fourthly, having regular General Body meetings has brought together our sub-committees which have been quite disparate and fragmented.

Lastly, people are excited and enthusiastic about the possibilities that amalgamation offers for the growth and strengthening of ECC.

### Security

Recently we had a thorough assessment of the level of security in ECC. We have realised that it is a fallacy to believe that campus organisations can operate as openly as we have been doing. Experience has taught us that we are just as "open" to clampdowns and harassment as any town organisation. Although at this point we have only recognised the need to tighten up the organisation, and have done so, we have not as yet had thorough discussions of what this means for us as an open, legal organisation in terms of recruitment, etc.

### Public Work

So far this term we haven't done much public work. With the referendum process, amalgamation talks and our focus on consolidation, public work has taken a back seat for the meanwhile. However, there are plans for National Namibia Day.

### Harassment

We haven't been plagued with much overt "bogey" harassment, apart from a smear letter written by a "concerned academic" (who doesn't disclose his/her name), to the parents of NUSAS and ECC members. The letter claims that these students are involved in extra-mural political activities which are illegal, and that they're neglecting their studies and wasting their parents and the government's money.

Our response is to send an delegation to the VC (Dr Derek Hendersen) requesting that he send a letter to all the parents involved, condemning and disclaiming the letter. We have also written a letter to all the parents concerned, reassuring them of the legality of ECC.

### The Churches Sub-Committee

One development outside of but conducive to the amalgamation process has been the formation of a churches sub-committee.

The "Diplomatic Commission", whose role up to now has been to approach potential affiliates and introduce them to our organisation, has made important inroads into all of the Christian societies on campus. We have therefore done most of the groundwork for the setting up of the front. At the beginning of the term we began to discuss more concretely how we could get these societies actively involved in our campaign.

It was identified at this point that the church groupings are hesitant to be involved in the same structure as overtly political organisations, and that we need to give them space to do work with their own constituency around the issue of conscription. We therefore set up a meeting with reps. from all of the church societies and individuals from some of the churches in town to discuss the proposal. We have only had one meeting so far which was very exciting and positive. The central debate at this point seems to be what relationship should exist between ECC and the Church group. By the end of the meeting everyone had been dispatched off to gather together reps. from all the churches in town to attend the next meeting. YAY!!!

### Regional Co-ordination

Regional co-ordination in the eastern cape has been very weak. we have identified our communication problems as the root cause of this and have with the help of the national organisers formalised this process. In future the contact between the three regions will happen on a regular weekly basis during which we will not only keep one another in touch with what is happening in our respective regions but also make sure that there is no confusion about arrangements affecting all three regions. It was also felt that we need more personal contact between the regions in the way of attending each others' events. regional co-ordination meetings will happen approximately once monthly. It was also felt that we need a thorough assessment of the role and function of regional co-ordination and should perhaps include some strategising around a regional program. It goes without saying that the services of a regional co-ordinator have become essential.

To conclude, although I started off saying that it has been a quiet term it has infact been rather hectic. All our hard work this year suddenly seems to be coming into fruition. We have finally settled down to a consistent group of about 20 activists who seem to have a fairly clear idea of why we are going to all this trouble to end conscription.

Our initial aims of making this a term of consolidating and building our organisation seem to have been achieved and we still have time on our hands for a little action around Namibia Day and whatever else we dream up.

I think it goes without saying that having Nic and Clare here was invaluable to the achievement of what we had set ourselves. Particularly in the areas of internal education, amalgamation and the formation of the churches group, their contribution was vital. One regret is that they left Grahamstown a few kilograms thinner with bags under their eyes from being overworked. There was even talk of them joining a Union!!! We must keep these workers under control!!

**Collection Number: AG1977**

**END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)**

**PUBLISHER:**

*Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive*

*Location:- Johannesburg*

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