



A4.8-1

MS/509/1

*Ministry of Defence
and of Communication*

*Ministerie van Verdediging
en van Kommunikasie*

Posbus 47
KAAPSTAD
8000

PO Box 47
CAPE TOWN
8000

Tel: 45-7540

14 January 1992

Mr Chris de Villiers
The End Conscription Campaign
PO Box 537
KENGRAY
2100

Dear Mr De Villiers

OPEN LETTER TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (AND OF COMMUNICATION)

The Minister has taken note of your recently published open letter concerning National Service and various political issues.

Your will be aware of the Ministry's public response to media inquiries in this regard.

The Minister has asked me to forward you a copy of our media statement, as a courtesy.

Yours sincerely

CHRISTIAN M VAN DER WESTHUIZEN
HEAD: COMMUNICATION

4919Y/jcs

MEDIA STATEMENT BY MR CHRIS VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, SPOKESMAN FOR THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND OF COMMUNICATION. FRIDAY 3 JANUARY 1991 (2 pages)

1. The Ministry of Defence takes note of the open letter of the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) in which the ECC attempts to engage the Minister in public debate on certain issues that are currently being considered by the SADF.
2. The Minister has not been approached by the national body of the ECC, and as a matter of practicality will not entertain representations from subordinate regions and branches of the ECC. The Minister is available for discussions with the ECC at National Level.
3. Mr De Villiers' letter provides a distorted picture in a number of respects : For example, the Exemption Board is not under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Defence or the SADF. It is an autonomous body and functions independently of the military. The Exemption Board has taken cognisance of the current assessment of the potential conventional military threat against the Republic and has consequently applied a more flexible approach on the question of exemption and deferment recently.
4. The SADF is pleased to confirm that a large number of recruits of all ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds are making themselves available for service in the SADF on a voluntary basis - In fact, there are more "non-white" volunteers under arms in the SADF than there are "white" conscripts.
5. As far as the deliberations of the Gleeson and Van Loggerenberg Committees are concerned, there is no question of their being suppressed : their recommendations are under consideration. However, should any amendments to the Defence Act be envisaged as a result of the findings of these Commissions, the constitutional path will have to be followed. This means that Parliament will have to be consulted, and Parliament will have to endorse such amendments.
6. The SADF is obliged in terms of the Defence Act to support the SAP when requested to do so. At the present time the SADF is engaged in such support on a large scale in order to play its part in combatting violence, border protection etc.

7. We reject the ECC's impatient and hysterical reaction to what we regard as careful, deliberate and responsible consideration of a number of options open to the SADF. We realize that anomalies exist : For example, the racial foundation for national service. But, correcting this situation is no simple matter, and must involve Parliament itself, in terms of the present Constitution. Political negotiations will lead to a new Constitution that will help to solve such anomalies.

Inquiries : MR CHRIS VAN DER WESTHUIZEN
HEAD : COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND OF COMMUNICATION
Tel : 021-5911902 (H)
021-457540 (W)

sj/9020B

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

P.O. Box 537
Kengray 2100

Phone: 836-8423
Fax: 834-3189

FAX TRANSMISSION

TO Peace News.

FAX NUMBER 0944 71 7082545.

ATTENTION Ken Simon.

FROM Non Cross.

NUMBER OF PAGES (including cover sheet) 2.

DATE 16.1.92.

Herewith the article for Peace News as promised. Please let us know if this is not what you need or should be modified.

I am in the process of putting together a newsletter plus press-clips and will be mailing this in the next day or so.

Regards to you, Howard & Chris

Dear Howard

I'm a guilty fool for not having been in touch with you.

I hope you are well. It would be great to see you again! Love Charlie B.


ECC
End Conscription Campaign

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

P.O. Box 537
Kengray 2100

Phone: 836-8423
Fax: 834-3189

As South Africa enters a time of negotiation to bring about a non racial democracy, certain telling anomalies remain in place: One of these is the system of "whites" only conscription. Along with its stranglehold on state radio and television, control of the security forces remains the government's strongest source of power in the transition. At the same time the call-up is a growing source of political embarrassment to a government which still claims that Apartheid is legally dead while maintaining the racist call-up.

Having lied for so long, it must come as some surprise to the government that conscripts are now taking them at face value. "If Mr. De Klerk says that Non-discrimination is government policy ", the argument runs, " who am I to oppose him by serving in the racist army?" Hence conscripts, by not pitching up, are doing the government the favour of ending conscription themselves.

Indeed we at End Conscription Campaign are also trying to do our little bit. Sending out an open letter to the Minister of Defence via the press (after our private letters had remained unanswered) we predicted that only 50% of conscripts would pitch for the large January intake of national servicemen. Furthermore we claim that with the repeal of the Population Registration Act (which classified everyone "white" or "black") conscription is now illegal: an edifice without a foundation.

Unfortunately it seems the government doesn't want people to take them too seriously; and apparently doesn't appreciate conscripts' helpful attempts to bring in the policies they espouse but haven't the tenacity to implement.

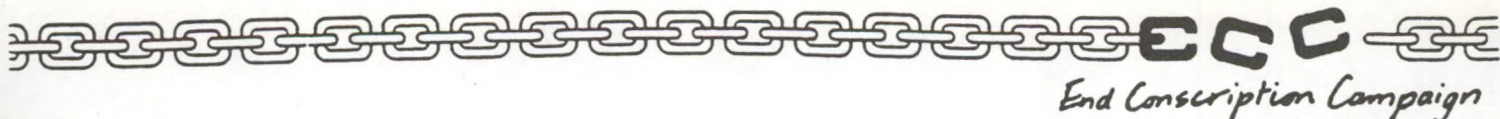
The press in general has come out strongly on our side in editorials by calling for conscription's immediate demise . In petulant fashion the government responded by saying that the system is still in place and objectors will be "followed up". E.C.C called their bluff by challenging them to prosecute the many who aren't serving, noting that in June last year charges against three objectors were dropped, and since then the State has declined prosecuting any objectors. It appears, not only do they not have the moral will-power to implement espoused policy, but they also don't have the courage to use the courts to uphold their conscription laws, lest the courts find them not only to be "repugnant" (as they did in the past), but illegal too.

A side issue is the number of right wingers who, sensing the end of minority rule, are now also not prepared to serve, and some of whose leaders are calling for them not to. Right wing refusals are still very much in the minority.

While we don't underestimate the strength of the state and its underhand use of the security forces to be a danger in the transition, we believe that when it comes to the call-up, the government is a grumpy dog that has lost its bite. What remains to be done now is to get rid of its fetid breath .

Charles Bester

16 January 1992



END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

P.O. Box 537
Kengray 2100

Phone: 836-8423
Fax: 834-3189

16 January 1992

Dear Friends

Update on War Resistance Issues in South Africa.

1. Military service and Conscription.

1.1 The groundswell of resistance to the call-up continues. ECC's campaigns to "End Racist Conscription" in July 1991 and to "End Conscription Now" in December 91 to January 92 both focussed on the illegality of the existing system of conscripting whites only. This had two consequences:

- this idea has finally filtered down to the ordinary non-politicised white conscript, and both the End Conscription Campaign and the Conscription Advice Service have had a huge number of queries by phone and face-to-face over the past few months. This reached a peak just before and during the new intake of national servicemen in January, though queries from short service citizen force campers continue at all times.
- there have been no trials for Refusal to Serve since the withdrawal of charges against C.O.s Alan Storey and Wally Rontsch in June 1991. ECC interprets this as a backdown by the State and a reluctance on the part of the S.A. Defence Force to argue for the legality of the call-up in a public court of law. This failure to prosecute has also become fairly widely known, with the result that more and more conscripts are simply staying away when called-up. It must be emphasised, however, that whites are thoroughly indoctrinated both at school and through the conservative churches (and often at home) to obey the law and respect authority. It is therefore a major step especially for young school-leavers to step outside this framework of brainwashing with regard to conscription.

1.2 Since 1985 the Minister of Defence has consistently refused to make public the numbers of those failing or refusing to respond to their call-up for national service. ECC has been collecting its own unofficial figures from the conscripts themselves or their families. An analysis of these figures since July 1991 shows a fairly steady attendance figure of only 10% to 20% for camps, i.e. the short-term annual citizen force call-ups which can continue for ten years after the completion of one-year full-time national service. (Resistance to these camps is



ECC
End Conscription Campaign

understandably higher than to national service since the camps are thoroughly disruptive of both economic and domestic life and generally seen as a waste of time). As far as National Service goes, our estimate for last July's intake was that about 70% responded and on this basis we predicted a 50% turnout for the current January 1992 intake. This has been vehemently denied by the SADF, claiming a 90% turnout, but again with no actual figures. The ding-dong battle between ECC and the Military has raged in the press and radio (even State-controlled TV gave a short clip of ECC's spokesperson) for the last two weeks.

2. The negotiations.

The big breakthrough came with the first meeting of CODESA (the Congress for a Democratic South Africa) shortly before Christmas. At this stage the negotiators are still working in small groups towards some form of interim government and trying to persuade the far right and far left to become part of the process. The issue of the role of the SADF in the interim period should also now warrant a place on the agenda.

3. The violence.

The "fringe" newspapers, such as the Weekly Mail, Vrye Weekblad and New Nation have done invaluable work in exposing the SADF and Police links to the ongoing violence, as well as the exposure of government funding and training for Inkatha. These issues have not been covered to the same extent in the mainstream press or radio, where there is a tendency to focus on violent crime in white areas rather than the ongoing violence and insecurity in the black townships and squatter camps. Groups which monitor the violence have noted a sinister tendency in that the level of violence apparently fluctuates according to the political climate; e.g. there was a notable drop in the level of violence when President de Klerk went abroad, and a notable (and frightening) increase just before the signing of the National Peace Accord in September. CODESA seems to have signalled once again a drop in the level.

In Natal, ECC's field worker, Haydn Osborn, has spent a harrowing year doing both violence monitoring (with special reference to the role of the SADF) and reconciliation work. He has been particularly involved in the Richmond area of the Natal Midlands.

4. The anti-militarisation groups.

4.1 The Conscription Advice Service, as previously mentioned, is dealing with a large number of conscription queries, running into several hundred a month. The service still operates in 8 centres. Since there are now so many callers, more telephone

counselling is being done than face-to-face.

4.2 The Conscientious Objector Support Group continues to meet regularly in Johannesburg and Durban. Although there are currently no high-profile CO's to support, COSG produces "The Objector" as an anti-militarisation quarterly, and keeps in touch with Religious Objectors. It also has links with other groups such as the Methodist Order of Peacemakers and Diakonia in addition of course to ECC and CAS. In Johannesburg a joint pre-Christmas street action with the Methodist Order of Peacemakers was undertaken in some of the suburban shopping areas, where MOP Anti-War Toys pamphlets were handed out in addition to COSG, CAS and ECC literature, and signatures obtained for a petition against conscription.

4.3 The End Conscription Campaign.

4.3.1. The ongoing "End Conscription Now" campaign has had extremely good press coverage nationally, following on the release to the Press of a hard-hitting Open letter to the Minister of Defence from ECC. Both ECC and the issue of conscription have been in the headlines and leader columns of all the mainline press since the beginning of 1992. Since there have been no court cases to test the legality of the call-up ECC is now contemplating keeping the initiative by applying to the Supreme Court for a ruling on the legality of conscripting whites, following the repeal of the Population Registration Act in June 1991. At the same time, ECC is continuing to press for a meeting with Defence Minister Roelf Meyer.

4.3.2. ECC staff. Haydn Osborn the Natal fieldworker is returning to University this year to complete his law studies. The question of a replacement for him is currently under discussion. There is no doubt of the value of the work done by Haydn and the credibility for ECC in the communities he has served; at the same time the ECC label has sometimes been a hindrance to him in trying to talk direct to the SADF. Nan Cross is leaving the National office in February after an interesting year, and will be replaced by David Bruce. For the last month Charles Bester has been helping temporarily in the office, where his main task has been to help cope with the unending number of phone-calls (up to 26 per day, each requiring a 10 to 20 minute session of counselling and information). Without his help the national worker would probably have had a nervous breakdown!

- Enclosures.
1. ECC pamphlet "End Conscription Now"
 - ~~2. Pamphlet with comments.~~
 - ~~3. Press-clips on current National service intake and conscription, and some recent cartoons.~~
 - ~~4. ECC's Open letter to the Minister of Defence.~~

16.1.92

ECC
P.O. BOX 537
KENGRAV JHB.
2100

Fax 0944-717082545

Attn: Ken.

Additional background
material in case
you need it.

From: ECC - Nam

Phone (SA) 011-836 8423

Draft Article for Peace news, London.

Early January is call-up time for about 30 000 young "white" South African men, mostly school-leavers who have just completed their final school year and are now pushed into one year's compulsory military service.

Since the repeal of the population registration Act (which slotted South Africans into racial groups) in June 1991, the End Conscription campaign had been saying that the conscription of only white men is illegal, and calling for a small professional army to replace the present system of conscription.

At the beginning of 1992 ECC's Johannesburg chair ^{+ press officer} Chris de Villiers released a hard-hitting letter to the minister of Defence after months of trying in vain to get an ECC delegation interview with him. Chris accused the SADF of acting illegally in continuing with the old call-up system and predicted no more than a 50% response to the January call-up.

At the same time, some groups in the far right were saying that their young conscripts would refuse to serve unless they could be used to "protect their own people". However, it seems more likely that most young right-wingers would (and do) welcome the opportunity to get free military training - in a country where the barrel of the gun is still seen by many as the only solution to political problems.

The SADF now claims that the response to this January's call-up was as high as 90%. While ECC disputes this figure, saying that on its past record the SADF is "prone to lie", it nevertheless concedes that the response to the call-up was higher than 50%, and argues that one of the reasons for this is the current economic depression and high rate of unemployment.

Both before and during the call-up period, the ECC office was inundated with calls from anguished conscripts and parents seeking advice. Since no-one has been brought to court for refusing to serve in the SADF since the withdrawal of charges against Conscientious Objectors Alan Storey and Wally Rontsch in June 1991, the legality of the call-up has not been tested in court since the repeal of the Population Registration Act.

Whatever the position numerically with this month's call-up, there is a growing groundswell of dissatisfaction with the whole system, especially among older men who after completing national military service are still called up for "camps" of up to two-months duration almost every year. Conscripts themselves are questioning the validity of their call-up as never before and many are voting with their feet to end conscription by simply staying away.

immediately .

- cancel all camps
- arrange for conscripts already in the SADF to clear out early
- withdraw all call-ups ~~x~~ for initial service in January 1992
- formally abolish ~~x~~ conscription when parliament sits again in 1992.

348 words

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

P.O. Box 537
Kengray 2100

Phone: 836-8423
Fax: 834-3189

20 January 1992

Dear Howard

Inclosed are some of the articles that have appeared recently in the press regarding the call-up. It has been an exciting period for us as we see conscription coming firmly back into the limelight. For a year it seemed the public, and political organizations, had forgotten about the issue, when suddenly with the January intake the issue took its rightful place high up on the agenda once again.

It is exciting for me to be working for E.C.C for this month. I finished my degree at the end of last year (English and Politics majors) and it provided me with some space to think about what to do next. One option I'm considering is to work for the mission organization I worked for before my imprisonment- Africa Enterprise.

I hope you are well. I was in England for a brief period last year and one of my regrets of my hectic stay was not getting in touch with you; nevertheless it would be great to see you again in less confining circumstances! My family remembers your visit fondly, and send their love. We continue to think of you with appreciation and gratitude for all you have done to help secure our release, and to diminish the forces of militarization in our land.

With fond regards



Charlie Bester

P.O. Box 1177

Parklands

2121

20/1/92.

Dear Mr. Beets,

Sorry for the delay in answering
your letter 23/12/91!

The reason being I was too fed-up with the position and nothing has changed my grandsons still are conscripted they have to find odd jobs till July when the Army will only take him its six months of his life wasted where he could have started a trade but they all say finish you ball up + then come + look for a job. He wants to go to the Permanent Force now + also they say we'll pull up and only can consider him for July. This is not fair. Why are not all colours conscripted why only the white boys they have no chance in this country at all but always they're crying for man power. Now the young whites are to control the suburbs, they're not Police (that's the police's job, why do they turn away up to 2000 men + boys this year

who wanted to become police ever
after all the attacks on police
New our 17-18 yr olds have
to do this I think it is
grossly unfair in this so called
New S. Africa

I haven't seen anything new
yet just deterioration of everything.
Look at Hillbrow for instance
it's a stinking filthy place.

boonscript these people who
hang around snatching bags +
molesting old people + begging
+ sniffing glue.

That's my opinion.

And end the boonscript of whites
only

Yours faithfully
Mrs. D. Human.

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

P.O. Box 537
Kengray 2100

Phone: 836-8423
Fax: 834-3189

FAX TRANSMISSION

TO Mr H.J. Haas

FAX NUMBER 01521 956151

ATTENTION _____

FROM Non Cross

NUMBER OF PAGES (including cover sheet) 1

DATE 22.1.92

Herewith copy of clipping ~~to~~ from
 Business Day as promised
 All good wishes in your
 correspondence with Minister Roelf Meyer!

~~Tuesday~~
 SDAY, JANUARY 21 1992 B/DAY FINAL

inc VAT Subscription 80c inc VAT (where available)

A TIMES M

Govt softens its stance on draft dodgers

CAPE TOWN — Government acknowledged for the first time yesterday that it would be unfair at this stage to prosecute draft dodgers.

The surprise admission was made by Deputy Defence Minister Wynand Breytenbach during an address at the Army Women's College at George.

JONATHON REES reports the End Conscription Campaign said Breytenbach's statement amounted to an admission that conscription was no longer enforceable.

Breytenbach said that as certain aspects of the Defence Act were being reviewed, it would be unfair to prosecute those who failed to turn up for national service until the investigation was completed.

Government spokesmen have insisted in

Political Staff

the past that the law would take its course if individuals failed to present themselves for national service or training camps.

Two weeks ago, Defence Minister Roelf Meyer promised to prosecute conscripts who did not report for the 1992 call-up.

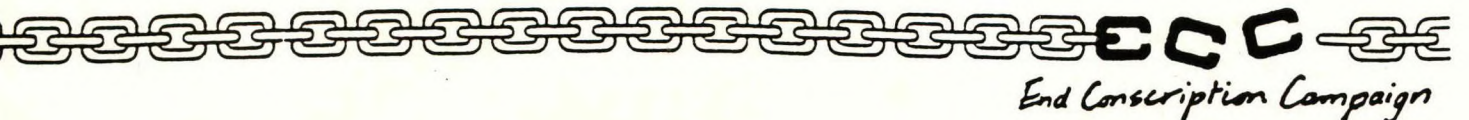
Yesterday Breytenbach dismissed suggestions that government was "afraid" to prosecute national service dodgers.

He said when the Population Registration Act was abolished, provision had been made for certain transitional measures, but the current national service system for white men remained in force in spite of the political discomfort it caused.

The controversy surrounding compulsory conscription for whites was expected to be cleared up by the publication of the Gleeson report, commissioned by government. Military sources have indicated that the full report might never see the light of day because many of the sensitive issues it deals with would probably have to be settled at the negotiation table.

Breytenbach said yesterday SA could not afford a volunteer Defence Force large enough to meet its requirements.

"I would thus like to appeal to the public ... to bear in mind that there will always be a need for a defence force and that the SADF does need trained men and women to staff this force."



END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

P.O. Box 537
Kengray 2100

Phone: 836-8423
Fax: 834-3189

24 January 1992

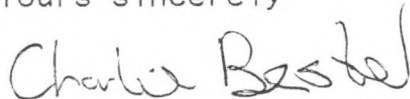
Dear William

THanks for your letter and questionnaire which we received from our Grahamstown region yesterday. As it doesn't appear like a document which we as an organisation can answer, we have decided to volunteer it to someone at our next commitee meeting. His or her views should be fairly representative of our opinions as a group.

It would however be wonderful for us at E.C.C to meet you when you visit South Africa in March. Please contact us in this regard and we shall arrange a date for such a get together.

We wish you all the best in what appears to be an interesting thesis topic, and look forward to meeting you soon.

Yours sincerely



Charles Bester
(E.C.C office worker and slave extrodinaire)



Quaker Peace & Service

A department of London Yearly Meeting and of
Ireland Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Telephone 01-387 3601 Telegrams Enhearten London NW1

NOTE: on May 6, our telephone number
changes to **071-387 3601**

Dear Nan Cross,

29/1/92

Many thanks for the Update
which as always I appreciate.

Inote that you will be
moving on after your one year of
service to ECC & wish you all
the best for what comes next.

Also warm goodwishes to
David Bruce when he takes over

Yours sincerely
John Harding

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

P.O. Box 537
Kengray 2100

Phone: 836-8423
Fax: 834-3189

29 January 1992

Dear

RE: YOUR ORGANISATION'S POLICY ON MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

This is a reminder of our letter (from chairperson Chris de Villiers) of 29 November 1991, in which we requested that your organisation's policy, or views, on conscription be forwarded to the Ministry of Defence. We also asked for a copy for ourselves.

Since the beginning of January the issue of conscription has once more been in the public eye. The role and accountability of the security forces, including the defence force, during the interim period is also a topic high on the national agenda.

We would therefore be glad to hear from you in response to our earlier letter.

Yours faithfully



Nan Cross
National worker

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.