

Summary of the decisions reached at the
ECC, COSG, CAS COMBINED CONFERENCE, 7 - 9 August 1992.

Timeline

- August - networking for non-cooperation campaign
- work on pamphlet, stickers, media
- 2 September - Merrick Douglas appearing in court
- 9 September - circulation of research proposals
- 15 September - national phone conference
- 16 September - ultimatum to Minister
- 22 September - ECC/Richard Rule court application in Rand Supreme Court.
- 1 October - launch of campaign of non-cooperation.
- November - petition update
- December - war toys campaign
- January - national service intake

Campaign of non-cooperation

The campaign will focus on the fact that the call-up system remains as an essentially apartheid based institution. However it will also be presented in such a way so that other objections which people may have to conscription can be accommodated. The campaign will have a number of components:

1. The breaking of section 121(c) - we will approach people including some prominent members of the community (such as actors, sportspeople) to support the campaign by breaking section 121(c). Part of their role will also be to declare their support for people who are refusing to do military service.

2. Register - we will start a register of people who refuse to serve in the SADF.

(a) People who are signatories to the register will also not cooperate with the conscription system by either applying to the Board for Objectors or applying for deferments.

(b) We will need to approach certain members of the community to act as custodians of the register.

(c) People who will be asked to sign the register will include signatories of the previous register, members of the general public who are contacting CAS and ECC for advice, and members of organisations like the ANC who are liable for conscription.

3. Members of the community (who perhaps are not willing to break section 121(c)) will be approached to give their support to a

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statement declaring that people should not face criminal prosecution for breach of the conscription laws.

4. The campaign will be launched round about the beginning of October with a press conference in Johannesburg and other major centres and simultaneous meetings on a number of campuses. The campaign will be launched with a challenge to the government to charge all of the signatories of the register as well as those who have defied section 121(c). If possible people at the press conference will have call-ups with them.

5. Prior to the launch of the campaign, and prior to the court application hearing on the 22 September we will issue a challenge to the Minister of Defence to end conscription. In this we will draw attention to the pending court case, the continuation of current prosecutions and the anomaly of the continuation of conscription. In it we will warn him that, if he doesn't comply with our requests, we will go all out to beat the system. The challenge will include a proposal as to how exactly conscription should be ended.

6. Other aspects of the campaign would include:

- distributing a pamphlet on how to avoid the call-up,
- mobilising students and teachers to oppose registration
- clogging of bureaucracy
- jamming SADF faxes
- introducing viruses into SADF computers
- calling on people to inform us about the number who reported at their most recent camps.
- regions approaching the campaign creatively.

On-going work

Information and counselling to conscripts

Press work - we need to project ourselves as powerful. One suggestion was that we pay more attention to the economic costs of conscription.

Legal work

Lobbying

Exploiting new contacts/organisations

Information work to schools and churches

ECC/Richard Rule court application

The fact that the court application is taking place needs to be publicised. Whatever the outcome it is likely that it will go on appeal.

Campuses

Pietermaritzburg, Rhodes and Wits are the main campuses where ECC has a presence. It is hoped that SASCO will also play a major role in promoting the non-cooperation campaign particularly on campuses where ECC does not have a formal presence (eg. UND, UCT, Stellenbosch, RAU, University of Port Elizabeth, Tukkies, and the Orange Free State University).

- a suggestion is for a coalition of student organisations to be set up for the purpose of conducting the campaign. The particular organisational structures on each campus should be related to the dynamics of the individual campuses. For instance it was suggested that at UCT a group of ANC supporting students might be interested in taking forward the campaign. Alternatively a range of student organisations could be called on to support the campaign.

- to coincide with the launch of the campaign of non-cooperation mass meetings will be held on the campuses.

- academics and the university administrations should be approached to break 121(c), to join the register, or to give their support to the campaign. University administrations need to be approached to commit themselves to supporting students who may be prosecuted as a result of their participating in the campaign of non-cooperation.

- the petition can continue to be used as a way of getting through to people on campus.

- we also need to make a big effort to recruit people for the campaign on campus.

Strengthening organisations

We should use the non-cooperation campaign to draw people into our organisations. Where, for instance, campus branches exist, but there is no activity in town, an effort should be made by the campus branch to set up links with people in town and vice versa.

The national office must ensure efficient coordination and communication between regions. Regions should keep in touch with David.

CAS should retain its separate identity and continue giving non-directional information to conscripts. An effort should be made to distribute information about the service more broadly particularly in smaller centres (eg. through the press).

Where appropriate CAS should try and recruit people for the non-cooperation campaign.

COSG has a separate agenda and will remain independent. COSG's focus is, at least in part, to entrench the right to refuse in a Bill of Rights.

Peace tax and other peace issues

Our different organisations should discuss the peace tax discussion document. We should consider sending a delegation to the broader group. COSG will definitely send a rep.

Our main focus is on a final push to end conscription. At the same time however we should not lose sight of the general context of a militarised society which is South Africa and the issue of laying the foundation for a future anti-militarisation organisation. We should link in with the work which is being done by the Black Sash. Linking up with the Sash should take place on

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a regional level and not only in Jo'burg. A suggestion was that Jackie Cock's paper be reproduced in the Objector.

Merrick Douglas

We will conduct a campaign to publicise the fact that Merrick is on trial. This campaign will be centred in Johannesburg and will consist of:

- a poster and pamphlet
- general press work and a press conference.

Petition

The agreement was that we would continue to push the petition, particularly as a tool for getting through to people, but that we would have to get a substantially greater number of signatures on the petition (at present 626) if it was to be at all effective. We will review the petition again in November.

Policy

* ECC needs to initiate research into (i) immediate issues of ending conscription and ii) military personnel policies. We could commission some individual or agency to do the research for us and/or do it wholly or in part ourselves. Possibly some moneyed research group could do the research for us. If we did not do the research ourselves then we would have to assess it. Jo'burg agreed to take responsibility for this. A first step would be to motivate to research groups for them to do the research for us.

* A further proposal is that we put forward a question to be included in a nationwide opinion poll. The purpose of the question would be to get some idea of the general population's attitude towards conscription. Apparently the rate is in the region of R1 300 per question.

* The following concrete interim proposal relating to the future of the SADF and of conscription was agreed upon:

- The SADF should be brought under the control of a democratic mechanism.
- Prosecutions under the Defence Act must be stopped.
- That the call-up as such should come to an end and that there should be a shift to a voluntary system.

CAS 087 number

The conference supported the idea of CAS setting up an 087 conscription advice line as soon as possible.

Stickers and pamphlets

These need to be distributed to all the regions for use in the non-cooperation campaign. It was suggested that the stickers would be popular at schools.

National worker

David should look into the possibility of visiting some of the regions especially where there is a lack of activity. However if someone else would be more appropriate to visit the area then they should rather be sent. Regions could also request visits from the national worker.

Press releases should be sent immediately to regions

Treasurer/present state of finances

- * Regions would appreciate receiving a financial overview with the minutes.
- * Regions should submit a budget for the coming period and inform Kevin of what they presently have in their accounts.
- * David and Kevin should continue to coordinate the day to day management of finances.
- * The Bill for lobbying work done on the Defence Amendment Bill has been sent to the Jacaranda Trust. A recommendation was made that ECC should carry 2/3 and COSG 1/3 of the costs.
- * There should be a meeting between the respective treasurers of ECC, CAS, COSG, the Jacaranda Trust, and the National worker.

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