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Report to ECC National Conference 1988

PORT ELIZABETH

An overview of Port Elizabeth ECC's progress (1986-1988)

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At the beginning of this period P.E. ECC embarked on a successful "Work for a Just Peace" campaign.

New and old members; affiliates and residents of Walmer Township worked together to renovate a crèche.

This project was followed by the State of Emergency which hit us hard leaving us with few skilled activists. We were forced to work under very tight security and recruitment happened a slow pace.

Right from the start we identified Education & Training to be the most important area of work for us. We began with a few ad-hoc sessions (inviting outside speakers to address us on the broader issues of the struggle). We eventually established an Internal Education sub-committee to address this need.

Since the State of Emergency our slow emergence into the public eye began around Philip Wilkinson's trial (we organised a service for him on the eve of his trial). The next major event was The "Where To, What Now" public meeting hosted by the Black Sash. We were invited to speak and announced the prospect of a future Alternative Service Project. We have also addressed the Junior City Council and organised a semi-public meeting around Ivan Toms.

Near the end of 1987 we elected a formal Executive (as opposed to a loose, rotating contact committee).

REPRESSION

Before the State of Emergency a number of people were held for very short periods. Bogus pamphlets, visits from strangers and threatening telephone calls are examples of the State strategy at that time.

The State of Emergency led to the detention of 10 of our few activists. Remaining key activists were in deep hiding and other members were constantly observed and followed.

1987 has seen a number of burglaries and fairly constant observation. It presently seems that Military Intelligence is handling us (as they are the ones most affected by us). Smear stickers seem to be a favourite past-time.

RECRUITMENT

We have recruited people at a slow pace and find it difficult to recruit on a mass basis due to a very hostile environment. We have in the past recruited members through House Meetings i.e. Individuals attend House Meetings where they will fill in a recruitment form afterwards. If a person is keen to become active 2/3 ECC members will brief the person on issues like security, the structures and present issues under discussion. Although we have a solid method for recruitment we still need to speed up the process.

AFFILIATES

Young Progressives -

Before the State of Emergency the Young Progs worked jointly on the WJP project. After June 1986 the Young Progs were a bit weary to work with us after the number of detentions experienced. We lost touch with them quite a bit but have recently re-established links after asking them to send a rep to our meetings. There is now much potential for possible joint projects in the future.

Black Sash -

In June 1986 the Black Sash rep to ECC was also detained. We have only recently re-established links with the organisation (we have a new rep).

INTERNAL EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

As mentioned before P.E. has prioritized Education & Training of activists to be the most crucial need.

In the past we held irregular Educational sessions with outside speakers giving input. At the beginning of 1987 we established a Sub-comm to address the need but unfortunately ran into a few logistical and structural problems. Recently however the sub-comm pulled itself together with new motivated members and drew up a very thorough programme covering areas like the broader issues of the struggle (outside speakers will give input) and specific ECC and military related issues (ECC activists to do research for topics). Another important area is that of House Meetings - the Int-Ed sub-comm is taking responsibility for training GB members to give input and handle difficult questions.

MEDIA SUB-COMMITTEE

This sub-committee rarely embarks on large-scale projects. It normally meets when the need arises e.g a pamphlet is needed for meeting around Philip Wilkinson. In the past we have realised the potential for recruiting people from the Art School and would like to involve art students in a local exhibition focusing on the war situation.

Items produced by the Media Sub-comm include stickers, pamphlets, invitations and adverts. (We have never made any posters, T-shirts, banners or badges etc.

CONSCRIPT FOCUS

We had a workshop with a national organiser to look more deeply into the new concept and were convinced that the change in direction was needed. We decided to include into our Educational programme sessions to educate ourselves about the day-to-day experiences of the conscript.

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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