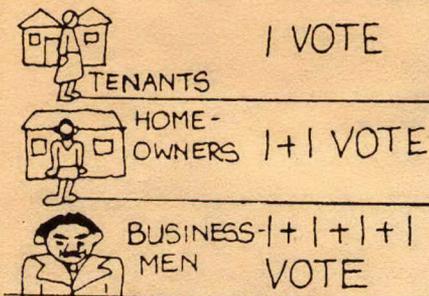


THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The story of Creation in the Bible says that all human beings have the power to develop and enjoy the earth they inhabit. In the modern world this is normally exercised by democratic voting procedures.

We are told that, in October, we will finally join the modern world because everyone will be voting.

These elections, however, do not fulfil the promise of the Creation story. Firstly, we are only voting for local government bodies.



Voting rights for PLAs

Secondly, these local government bodies have no real power and thirdly the votes granted are weighted in favour of the rich.

There are three types of voters. The one-voter, the two-voter and the three-plus-voter. If you have the right to live in the area you get one vote. If you are lucky enough to own your own house you get an extra vote. If you are lucky enough to own a business property you get more votes - one for each business. Is this because you are lucky? No, of course not. It depends on how rich you are. The richer you are the more votes you are given. Has anyone heard of such voting procedure being called democratic? This kind of vote-rigging sparked off the Northern Irish Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

What does our Christian Biblical tradition suggest about extra votes for the rich. The Creation story teaches us that we are all made "in the image" of God. If we are all of equal divine significance how can one person claim more power within creation because of his or her wealth?

You may feel that some people deserve more than others because of their human qualities. The teaching of Christ, however, emphasizes that we cannot take God's place in judging other people's essential worth. We are told not to judge others lest we be judged. All creation is worthy in God's eyes, even the "sparrow that falls". The teaching of Jesus builds on the ancient Jewish concern for the poor, the widowed and the fatherless. The Christian gospel takes an option for the poor. It does not teach that the wealthy must take more power for themselves at the expense of the poor.

At a very profound level the story of creation invites human beings to take responsibility over public affairs as the images of God. Extra votes for the wealthy deny that right.

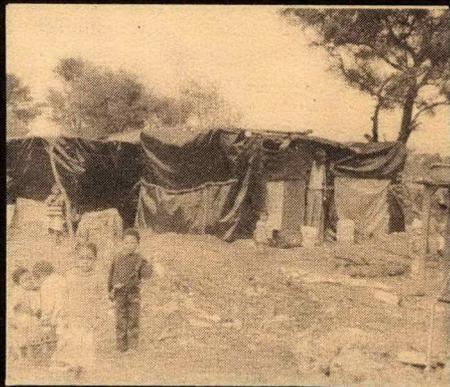
BANKRUPT BOERESAKE FARM WORKERS EVICTED AT GUNPOINT

Farm workers and their families are squatting on the roadside after being evicted from their houses by the farmer, Eric Bock.

They had been paying the farmer rental of between R48 and R60 (up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of their salaries) for their houses.

Workers were retrenched before December without any pension, apparently because the farmer was going bankrupt. On 21 May 21 families including 40 children, and individuals who had lived on the farm for nineteen years, were warned to vacate their houses by 31 May. They appealed to the farmer who threatened them if they did not leave. In desperation they went to the City Council who told them that they must leave by 30 June.

On 30 June they were forced to leave at gunpoint and slept on the roadside. Later, the council and police asked them to move from the corner to further down the road while they found them alternative accommodation. On 3 July the previous owner came to demand rent from them. There are no toilets and they have to pay 10c for a bucket of clean water.



SIX YEARS FOR BRUCE

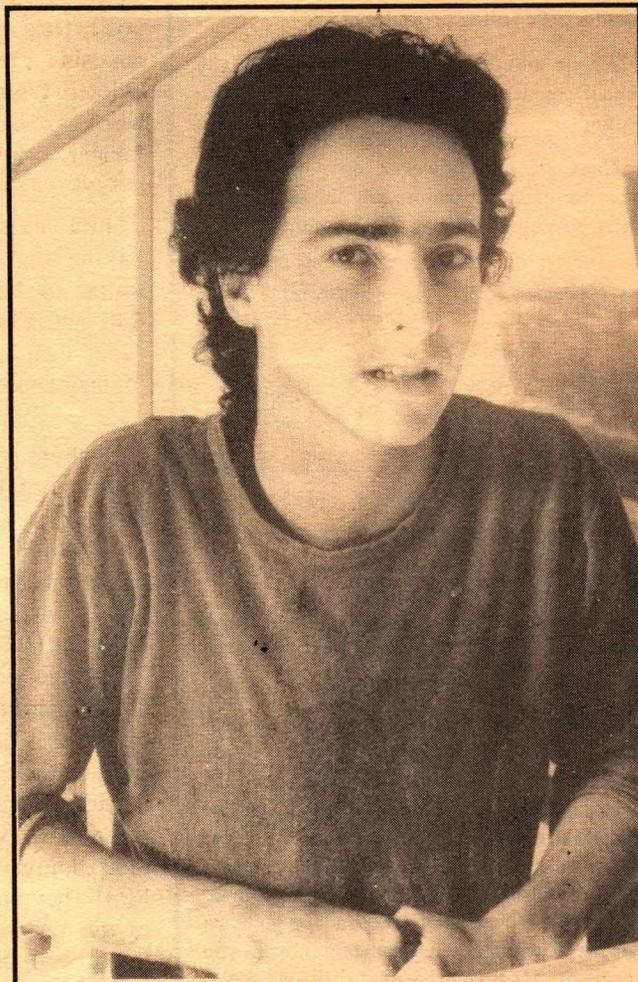
David Bruce, 25, a former student at Wits University is today serving a six year prison sentence because he would not fight in the SADF in defence of a racist political system.

David, who was called-up into the SADF in August last year, told the Johannesburg Magistrates Court that he did not wish to leave South Africa because he is not prepared to be another refugee from racism. He refused to be part of the South African Defence Force (SADF) which in his view is fighting a "civil war which is being conducted by those seeking to defend the privileged position of a military minority against the legitimate aspirations and demands of the majority of the people in this country."

David's mother gave evidence to the court in an attempt to reduce his prison sentence. She explained that her family was persecuted in Nazi Germany because they were Jewish. Many of her family members were killed by the Nazis in concentration camps. She herself fled from Germany and took up residence here in South Africa. She explained to the court that she was grateful to the South African government for accepting her in 1939, but that she could not help being concerned at the parallels between Nazi Germany and life in South Africa.

David is the first South African to be sentenced to the maximum sentence for refusing to fight in the SADF. In March this year Dr Ivan Toms was sentenced to 21 months in jail for refusing to serve a one month camp in the army.

In a statement of support, an ECC spokesperson said that "the trial has highlighted the need for reasonable alternatives to military service. Every South African should be able to serve his country in a way in which he feels comfortable."



David Bruce

Photo: Mike Hutchings

UNDETERRED, A FURTHER 143 OBJECT TO SADF

"We, the undersigned, refuse to serve in the South African Defence Force. The reasons for our refusal are outlined in our individual statements, attached to this document. We have taken this decision in the knowledge that there are hundreds of other South Africans who refuse to do military service .

As loyal South Africans we wish to contribute to the building of a peaceful and just society. The SADF violently maintains and propogates a fundamentally unjust and oppressive system. We cannot make a contribution to justice and at the same time be part of the SADF.

Current legislation concerning conscientious objection is excessively restrictive and punitive, forcing us to choose between the following difficult options:

1. A jail sentence of up to six years;
2. Indefinite exile;
3. Application for recognition as a religious pacifist;
4. Evasion of military call-up;

WE, UNITED IN OUR COMMON REFUSAL TO SERVE IT THE SADF, DEMAND TO BE RECOGNISED AS CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS WITH THE RIGHT TO SERVE SOUTH AFRICA IN THE INTERESTS OF ALL ITS PEOPLE."

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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