

WITS CAMPUS ECC REPORT

At the beginning of the 1990 academic year, past ECC members called a meeting on campus to discuss the possibility of reforming a Wits campus branch of ECC. At this meeting there was much discussion around ECC's role in the changing climate, and whether it would be viable to reform as ECC on campus. There was definitely a strong feeling that there is still a role for ECC to play on campus, in terms of both short term issues such as objector trials, as well as long term issues such as the drawing up of a policy with regard to the role of the military and conscription in a post-Apartheid South Africa. Immediately after the reformation of campus ECC an interim committee was set up. During this interim period we attempted to accumulate and consolidate our core membership.

In April an executive committee was elected consisting of two chairpeople, a secretary and three other members. Through our work on this committee we identified the need to establish certain priorities within campus ECC. We have an inexperienced group of core members, most of whom have not been involved in organisations for very long and thus lack many of the necessary organisational skills. The contradiction that Wits ECC faces is that we see the need to train anti-militarisation activists, but the organisation must also be run on a day to day, bureaucratic level. We also have a large, passive support base on campus, and we have spent a good part of the last few months grappling with how to draw these passive students into action. We see the need to popularise ECC on campus through exciting and dynamic programmes of action.

The major question that campus ECC has needed to ask is: Do we expend our limited energy and skills in drawing people into action or do we rather consolidate and educate our core membership? The need for internal education is very clear and within our executive an internal education sub-committee has been set up. We have consequently embarked on a long term, internal education programme which will cover a range of issues. These include conscription, objector trials, alternative national service, Natal violence, the CCB, militarisation and women, as well as broader political issues such as the question of negotiations and the resurgence of the right wing. Our internal education programme will consist of formal education such as talks, videos and readings, as well as informal discussions and social events. We hope that once our core membership is made aware of the intricacies of the issues that we choose to deal with, we can take them onto campus in an informed as well as dynamic way. Thus we hope to popularise our issues as well as our organisation on campus.

During this fluid political climate we found it difficult to isolate which particular areas we needed to focus on. We thus attempted to embark on a multifaceted campaign which covered all our areas of work. Due to internal problems we were unable to

carry out such an ambitious programme of action. The result was a scaled down focus on objectors and the CCB.

In the course of the year campus ECC has taken on two major campaigns:

1. An objector focus as part of the Release Objector Campaign. We brought the conscientious objector issue to campus through media, information meetings and pickets. As part of this we brought CO's onto campus in order to demystify and decriminalise them. Many CO's attended our parties, meetings and pickets, and this enhanced campus' understanding of the issue.
2. CCB Focus
Campus decided to highlight the CCB issue because:
 - a. It is an important political question that had not been taken up by other progressive organisations.
 - b. What is fundamentally a political question has been made into a legal question, and the information coming out of the commercial press, lacks the necessary content and analysis.
 - c. As we had assessed that it was an important priority to build ECC on campus, we felt that the CCB issue had the potential to mobilise students and popularise our organisation.
 - d. Through a CCB campaign we saw the potential to make the link between objection and the role of the SADF clear to students.

The CCB campaign will be continuing into next term, but at the same time we will be focusing on the upcoming objector stand as well as the issue of exiles.

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