

Grahamstown ECC Report to National Committee, March 1988

1. **Membership.** We signed up a total of 125 people (active and passive) in orientation week. Of these, about a half were new members. General bodies draw a regular attendance of 25 (plus about 5 irregulars), of whom 10 were actively involved last year. A number of active members from last year, including four exec. members, have left Grahamstown or feel unable to continue in ECC because of pressing academic or work commitments. Distribution of active members amongst subcommittees is uneven, with Media having 13, Contact 6, Creative Action 4 and churches only 2. The role and status of the Churches subcommittee is currently under discussion, with the possibility of amalgamating with Contact.

2. **Activities.** Our activities since last NC include:

(a) A regular table in orientation week. We distributed the comic at registration. It was very popular, especially among first year students. We also had an amazing orientation week braai, a fairly drunken but exceedingly pleasant, relaxed and social occasion with new people, where we had no agenda, discussed nothing of importance and reached no decisions but all had a great time!

(b) Widespread distribution of the pamphlets about Ivan, including official distribution to Std. 9 and 10 divinity classes at St. Andrew's. This is an exciting development, and could be very important in paving the way for further ECC work in the private schools.

(c) A public meeting with Ivan during orientation week. It was held on campus and attended by 150 students, many of whom were new faces. Feedback after the meeting was good, and people who did not attend seem to have heard about it from others. However we were disappointed with the poor attendance. A combination of insufficient advertising and an unavoidable clash with a Rag fashion show were probably to blame.

(d) A successful stall at societies' evening (where students have an opportunity to see what different societies are about). We had balloons, multi-coloured media etc, and made badges on the spot. ECC was awarded a R50-00 prize by the SRC for "best table".

(e) A "mini-picket", petition and letter-signing table outside the Rhodes library on the Monday following Ivan's sentencing. About 250 people signed letters to the Minister and a petition supporting Ivan. This was essentially designed as a limited action to introduce our new members to campaign work. It was successful, and heightened enthusiasm within our ranks. The effect on the public was very limited - it showed that ECC is around and active, and helped in a small way to keep the Ivan issue alive, but probably did not do more than this.

(f) We presented a short input at a Sharpeville/Uitenhage commemoration service in the Rhodes Chapel, and presented some singing items at a cultural event organized by BSM that evening. The cultural item was very well received, and we feel this has strengthened our relationship with BSM and black stu-

dents generally. It was also a pleasant experience for participants, and helped to involve new members on a less formal level.

- (g) A public meeting organized in conjunction with the Black Sash to report back from Ivan's trial. Speakers were Bishop David Russell, who was a witness at the trial, and the national vice-president of NAMDA. The meeting was held in town and was attended by approximately 150 people. This is quite reasonable for an off-campus meeting in Grahamstown. The meeting went very well; we were pleased to see about 30 school children present. We have not had an assessment of the meeting, but I think it was important in reasserting ECC's presence in town, showing that we are not only a campus society. It has also raised possibilities for further schools work.

**3. Internal Development.** There has not been much internal education in ECC so far. We have only held one seminar, a session on democracy which was poorly attended, although it was very useful and raised some areas where new members are feeling alienated - eg. too much jargon at meetings. In addition we had a short discussion on the banning of SANSCO, UDF etc, before the campus protest march. However we have been fairly successful in involving new members in ECC activities, and making them feel a part of the organization. Subcommittees especially have played a useful role in this integration, since they are smaller and less formal than GB.

**4. Morale.** Morale amongst new members is high. People who were active last year found themselves suffering from exhaustion, and consequently low morale, after conference and orientation week. This has been quite a problem, especially in exec, with many of us resenting the amount of time that ECC has taken up, etc. We recognized the problem a couple of weeks ago and had a personal rap-session in exec, which enabled people to share their frustrations. Things are definitely getting better in this regard, but we still have a way to go before we will all be feeling bright and enthusiastic.

I think that the banning of the UDF also took a toll in this regard amongst the old membership, with people feeling that hell, the government's back in command, here we have the middle 60's all over again. The loss of key activists, and the resulting work load, and the need to place fairly heavy responsibilities on people who do not have much experience, has also been a problem.

**5. Security.** Security-wise we are quite relaxed (slack?) at the moment. We have stopped changing venues for meetings, feeling that this is likely to alienate new members, and that in any case a procession of 30 people wandering across campus is fairly easy to follow. We still maintain basic precautions, eg. not talking about confidential matters over the phone. In the event of a clampdown, it would probably be quite easy to snap back into a secure way of operating.

**6. Front.** What front? We are feeling more and more that a front structure as such is not particularly useful, and that we should rather think in terms of good inter-organizational relationships. This needs discussion. We have worked with a wide range of societies during the SRC campaign against the banning of SANSCO, but have done very little "front work" ourselves. We are just

beginning to contact societies regarding the national campaign, and also around an AGM which we plan to hold towards the end of April.

**7. National Contact.** National contact has been almost nonexistent due to a hitch in communications which meant that Grahamstown was not linked into the national network. I don't think this cause us too much grief although it would have been problematic if it continued any longer. We just toddled on in our own way, doing our own thing and feeling comfortably secluded!

However we received a flying visit from Alastair and Claire on 23 March, which was very pleasant and was useful in making people aware of ECC as a national organization, and lifting our spirits somewhat. Thanks! We really missed not having a proper N.O. visit, and some of the morale problems mentioned would probably have been alleviated earlier had this been possible. However given Claire's illness it obviously wasn't possible.

**8. Repression.** There has been a noticeable and pleasant absence of repression. The only incidents are:

(a) Mark Beare, one of our active members, was picked up by security police and questioned for half an hour on the day of the "Unban SANSCO" protest march. Mark had been on the march, and was questioned about his involvement. He was also questioned about what ECC was planning for the year, how often we were meeting, etc. On a personal note he was asked how long he had been studying for and told to "watch out for your next call-up".

(b) The Vets for Victory pamphlet "Rape of Peace" was sent to ministers and school headmasters in Grahamstown. We are currently formulating a response.

**9. SADF Initiative.** The SADF has started inviting women's residences up to the military base for a braai with the troops on Sunday afternoons. This is a matter of great urgency, and we are considering various ways of using it to our advantage and/or confronting the issue in a way that won't negate our focus on conscripts.

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