

a7.7.5.1

PROPOSAL FOR A CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE

arising out of the ECC (Cape town) weekend away on 5 & 6
March 1988

The idea of a consultative conference held at the end of ECC's campaign for alternative national service was raised at National Conference, and referred to Cape Town ECC for further investigation.

At the weekend away there was much support for the conference, and its 'consultative' nature was endorsed. It was seen as a logical progression of the campaign, which would push forward a realistic demand for alternative national service. We would seek to draw a variety of important interest groups to the conference, in particular parliamentary groups, business representatives, IDASA, church bodies, community and welfare organisations. The possibility of IDASA hosting the conference was raised. A prolonged period of lobbying prior to the conference would be necessary. We would seek to win the support of these groups for the ECC's call for alternative national service, generate an interest in the conference, and encourage them to contribute to the campaign in whatever manner they could.

A number of well-researched 'inputs' to the conference would be necessary. These could include 1) the survey of community and welfare organisations re alternative service; 2) a specifically commissioned study of whites' attitudes to conscription and the need for alternative service; 3) the economic impact of conscription for professionals; 5) social and psychological effects of conscription.

The objectives of the conference itself would be to draw up a comprehensive, realistic and practical outline of a system of alternative national service. This would be presented as a drafted bill that could be laid before parliament, and it would be adopted as a resolution of the conference. We would also seek to further mobilise support for our call during the conference and develop a programme for taking forward the campaign for alternative national service on a much broader base. While the

conference would be the end point of our campaign as outlined, it would mark the beginning of another phase of mobilization around our demands.

Timing: the conference would logically come at the end of our campaign, and we will need some time to lobby support for it. It should also occur a month or two prior to the opening of parliament in 1989 to allow time for the presentation of the draft bill. We recommend that the last few weeks in November would be an appropriate time.

Process: We felt that Cape Town ECC has the organisational capacity to pull off such a conference, and that, in consultation with ECC national structures, we should plan the conference within the campaign committee.

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