

Internal Work

The past term has been a stormy but very valuable time for Rhodes ECC. Many lessons have been learnt through mistakes, reflection and assessment, but we are finally on the path to being a stable and well-balanced organisation once again.

Internal Education and Development

The bugbear has, as usual, been an imbalance between internal and external work. Since the beginning of the year we have done nothing but organise meetings, make media etc, and have spent very little time developing our organisation and consolidating our new members. Since recognising this as a problem we have taken a number of steps to undo the damage. Before launching into the national campaign we had a very thorough "ABC of ECC" workshop which was well attended and successful. We have also established an ongoing internal education portfolio.

Now that most of the campaign work has been done, we are going to be disbanding the subcommittees until the end of term and will be spending that time on discussions, educational inputs etc.

Structure and Leadership

Fortunately our membership is still pretty strong and reliable. Media is about 12 strong, Culture 8 and DipCom (contact) 4. General bodies are regularly attended by a group of about 20 die-hards. We meet once a week, either in general body or in subcommittees.

The organisation at this stage consists of very few experienced activists, a large middle-level and lots of new members. The subcommittees are therefore a little weak at the moment, but coordinators are learning fast. We have therefore been having general bodies slightly more often than usual, with subcommittees being more work-horses than anything else. We have identified this as a problem and are working towards making the subcommittees more autonomous and dynamic.

Exec. meetings are very fruitful and have played a very important role in the training of a floundering leadership. This has led to some problems with over-centralisation but this is seen as necessary in the short term.

Morale and Cohesion

We've had our ups and our downs! The pressures of a rather intensive campaign have taken their toll on those who, due to the over-centralisation mentioned above, have been doing more than their fair share of the work. However this problem is gradually being solved, with our general membership becoming increasingly more committed to the organisation, and consequently sharing more of the work load.

It has not taken long for ECC to develop into an intimate and familiar grouping. There is a strong sense of working towards a common goal against all odds. Repression has had a very unifying effect. A classic example of this was when our last general body was raided by six security policemen. They took names and photographs of everybody present; and two of us were taken in for questioning. The effect on the organisation was stupendous: the branch managed to achieve in forty minutes what it would have taken us three dinners, a weekend away and several workshops to achieve. Cohesion, morale, security, discipline, individual commitment all went up ten notches. Thank you, Lieutenant Edwards!

On Wed 13 May, six security policemen walked in on a general body meeting. They told everyone to remain seated and not to talk. They then photographed everyone in the room and took down our names. They searched all the bags and looked around the room, the office of the student newspaper. They confiscated a number of organisational and personal documents, but missed 1500 pamphlets which we had hidden. They also confiscated 100 posters which had just been silk-screened and were drying in the passage. All this took about 40 minutes. They then told Karen, Steve and Andrew to accompany them and left after warning everyone present not to go ahead with our WJP project. On the way to the cars the police said that people were being detained under section 3.1 of the emergency regulations. Once at the cars, they told Steve that they had decided not to detain him. Karen and Andrew were taken to the police station, and held for about 45 minutes. They were asked a few questions, but the main purpose seemed to be intimidation, not interrogation. They were released after a warning that they would be "put away" if they continued to work in ECC.

Other forms of harrassment has included:

1. On the morning of our workshop an unidentified person told one of our exec. members that his sister in Ireland had been seriously injured in an accident and that he must phone home at 2:00pm (during the workshop). It turned out to be a hoax. Nasty nasty!
2. Our media lawyer was visited by branch and asked questions about the national "comic". We are not sure whether this is mere harrassment or will lead to something more serious. This should possibly be discussed.
3. Members have been followed for no apparrent reason and some of our houses have been watched.
4. Grocotts' Mail, the Grahamstown printers, have been told by branch not to print ECC material. They refused to print our WJP poster at the last moment, which indicates that they are complying.

Security

On the leadership level, security has been reasonable. We have been in hiding on and off when necessary, and events have been planned with security high on the agenda. Telephones are not used. Sensitive issues are kept within the exec. Our one downfall has been meetings - the whole world knows when and where they are. Since Wednesday night, however, all that has changed. People have finally seen, for themselves, the necessity of security precautions, wheras before it has always been seen as an unnecessary waste of time.

Conclusion

Generally, development of the organisation has been quite uneven. Some of the subcommittees have sprung ahead, eg. DipCom, whilst others have fallen behind. The organisation as a whole lacks the ability to identify the key political issues of the day and strategise a programmatic approach to campus. Many members are being ruled by their hearts and not their heads - to be frank, they are militant but sometimes directionless - whilst others are still a bit wide-eyed about politics.

This report has been a very critical look at our organisation. It's not actually as bad as all that! The future looks good: we have a clear idea of our organisational weaknesses and have the enthusiasm and will to sort them out. The group is dynamic, creative and united, and the level of political debate is high.

External

The Front

Our front work has been the most productive work that ECC has done this year. The "Diplomatic Commission" (DipCom) which is responsible for our contact work has been making steady inroads into other organisations. Our aim is to rebuild the front structure and to develop solid working relations with different groupings on campus. So far we have formally addressed Methsoc (Methodist Society), SAUJS (SA Union of Jewish Students), Ansoc (Anglican society) and have set up meetings with the PFP Youth, Cathsoc (Catholic Society) and Rhodes Music Radio, the Gaming Society and the Women's Movement. Relations with NUSAS have been strengthened and previous tensions put behind us. Another important aspect of this work is to keep societies constantly in touch with what ECC is doing and to consult them whenever necessary. Our WJP project, for example, was organised in close conjunction with Christian societies. The whole of SCA is attending WJP. Three cheers for the front! (at this point we must hang our heads in shame - we have still not completed the promised front report. The culprits have been shot, and the report will be coming soon).

Public Profile

Rather good. We have a very full program planned for the national campaign. This has been boosted by the activities of the town branch, which has heightened the awareness of ECC as a whole. See the enclosed campaign summary for details.

In addition, we have done the following:

- pamphlet: cost of the war;
- statement poster;
- Our "new look" WJP. It now consists of the unveiling of a memorial built ECC members and township residents from brick and marble, "to all those who have lost their lives in the struggle for a Just Peace", in the township graveyard; a memorial service; an ECC speaker; planting 30 trees and cleaning up the graveyard. The whole project has been organised in conjunction with township organisations. 4000 pamphlets have been distributed in the township, and all our affiliates are coming along. It's a biggy!
- We have organised a public meeting with Allan Boesak for 25 May.

We can't as yet say what profile and legitimacy the campaign will afford us, but we are confident that it will certainly put ECC back on the map. We are worried however that the long duration of the campaign might result in a gradual disintegration of the overall message. We hope to bridge these gaps with media, radio programs on RMR and articles in Rhodeo.

Finally, as an item of public profile, when 1500 students (half of Rhodes) marched on 6 May in protest against police actions on other campuses, the detentions of Rhodes students and the holding of a whites-only election, the procession was led by a banner saying "War is not compulsory - Let's choose a just peace".

Regional and Local Communications

See Grahamstown report.

We must apologise for the short and inadequate report. It was done in a rush due to unforeseen circumstances (see the "harrassment" section).

- Schools seen as NB. - joint bet town + campus.
- also joint ~~groups~~ (counselling gp).

Rhodes University

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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