

As a woman involved in the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), I am often asked: "What has conscription got to do with women" and "Why are you so involved in what is primarily a man's issue."

The answer is quite simple. Of course conscription affects my life as a woman!

Most of us white South African women have brothers, fathers, husbands or lovers who have either done their initial period of compulsory military service or who still have to serve in the SADF. At the very least we have friends who are affected by the six monthly call-up. It is not only that these young men get dressed up in 'Browns' and taken away. It is also when they return they are so often changed.

Conscripts in this country face a very difficult choice. Young men in the SADF can expect to be sent into the townships or into foreign countries. If they refuse to go into the army they face up to six years in jail.

It is not only in relation to the men in our lives that we are affected by conscription. As women we are affected by the militarisation of our country and society. A war psychosis is starting to pervade our society, particularly within the white community. This affects our life in so many ways: it affects the way we relate to each other, it affects our economic and political future, it affects the way in which we secure our homes against "possible invasion".

One only has to read the most recent figures given by the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, on the number of people licensed to carry firearms (over 1,06 million - The Star 30/3/87) to realise that we have already entered into a war situation, armed to our teeth.

In the South African context, conscription is an injustice! This is reason enough for me, as a woman, to be involved in the ECC. But in South Africa, there are wheels within wheels, and injustices within injustices. The army has become just like the SABC - a tool in the hands of the National Party. The army is fast becoming the last line of defence of the Apartheid system. When all else fails they send the troops in to crush black opposition to apartheid. My opposition to conscription is as much opposition to all the injustices that shape our lives. Another drawback has been the style of ECC; one that has captured the breadth of

opposition to conscription, particularly through its national campaign work which centered around activities that had mass appeal in the white community.

I became involved in the End Conscription Campaign at its inception in 1983. The call for the end to conscription came at the May 1983 Black Sash Conference. I attended the fourth annual Conscientious Objector's Support Group (COSG) conference in Durban in July 1983 where this call was again taken.

Those early days of grappling with the issue of how best to structure a national campaign against conscription were filled with endless meetings, but also great excitement as we sensed that we were at the beginning of something big. For the first time a broad range of organisations were coming together around the single issue of calling for an end to compulsory military service. This included organisations such as the Black Sash, Nusas, DPSC, and the PFP youth. An important characteristic of ECC's work has been its sensitivity to the differences between the various constituencies and the ability to put across its message in ways appropriate to different groups of people. This has also been true for within the organisation - the ability to cater for people with different views but who are essentially united around a single issue.

ECC was launched in the 3 major centres of Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg in October 1984. I missed out on a year of ECC's activities as I had gone overseas on a one year exchange programme to the USA under the auspices of the Mennonite Central Committee - a traditional peace church. I was away from August 1984 - July 1985.

On my return I immediately established contact with the ECC branch in Johannesburg - There were many new faces and a whole lot more enthusiastic people than I had expected. This high level of energy and creativity has remained crucial in ECC's ongoing work. In September of 1985, ECC embarked on the "troops out of the Townships" campaign - my first involvement in a major national campaign of ECC - and since then it has not stopped. I believe that the activities of the ECC have contributed to the development of an anti-war culture and consciousness in the white community ; with traditional political events such as public meetings being complemented by innovative creative actions such as fun runs, fairs and building sandcastles.

At present I am employed by ECC as the National Secretary, as from January 1987. The work has been demanding and time-consuming but varied and incredibly exciting.

It is a job that is filled with tension - needing to meet deadlines, meeting under secure conditions, but mostly because of the lifestyle that I have been required to adopt under the State of Emergency conditions.

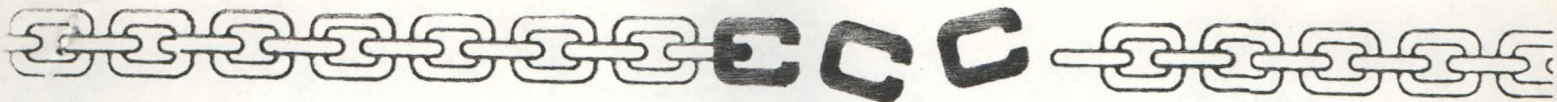
It means getting to know where all the best public telephones are in and around Johannesburg - those that work and do not usually have long queues! For security reasons I do not have a phone at my home and am hesitant to use more easily accessible phones (such as an office or a friend's home) as one can never be certain which phones are being monitored.

The casual yet constant look in the rearview mirror of my car becomes an automatic reflex when going home. Taking stringent security precautions becomes essential for one's own survival and that of the organisation in the present hostile and repressive environment. Not only does one have to do that in protection against the actions of the Security Police but there is always the threat of right wing attacks. Abusive phone calls, hate mail, tampering with motor vehicles - these are all common threats experienced by myself and other ECC members.

Another infringement on my personal lifestyle is keeping my home a well kept secret. So I cannot have the pleasure of unexpected visits by friends. On the other hand, one of the positive elements is that I can decide whom I want to visit me. This lifestyle can be lonely but because of the conditions under which we all work and live, a spirit of community develops quickly and intensely. The support, warmth and care of friends and co-workers sustains and renews me.

The threat of detention is real. Since the State of Emergency was declared, over 60 of our members have been detained between periods of a few hours to 8 months., although no-one has been charged. But again this is something which most activists have to come to terms with - one could lightly call it an "occupational hazard" if it wasn't such a serious violation of the universal right of the individual's freedom of conscience.

I am sure that there are many readers asking "but why does she continue to take these risks and withstand living under these conditions - all this just for a set of principles?" It's a question I often have to ask myself. The answers are not always clear but they are consistent - I want to be a voice on the side of justice in this country.



End Conscription Campaign

End Conscription Campaign
c/o room 432
Khotso House
42 De Villiers Street
JOHANNESBURG 2001

Dear Sir,

The public debate in Johannesburg on 5 June between Dr David Webster and Dr Van Zyl Slabbert involved a generally constructive discussion around the ending of conscription. *Many newspapers*, however, reported the meeting in a one-sided and unconstructive manner.

Dr Webster's speech was barely mentioned and the fact that the majority of the audience supported the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) was not mentioned at all. Dr Slabbert's was reported fully and his remark that the call to end conscription is "dangerously naive, romantic, simplistic and counterproductive" was given prominence.

There are thousands of white men who are currently confronted with an agonising choice: to be deployed in the townships, to go to jail for six years for refusing on moral grounds to serve in the army, or to leave South Africa permanently. These young men, filled with horror at the immediate prospect of taking up arms against fellow South Africans, would not regard the call to end conscription as "romantic" or "simplistic".

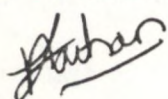
The call to end conscription has been made by Dr Beyers Naudè, Archbishop Hurley, Dr Allan Boesak, Bishop Tutu, Molly Blackburn, Sir Richard Luyt and Sheena Duncan, It has been made by the Catholic Church, PFP Youth, The Black Sash, UDF and the 40 groups affiliated to ECC.

The involvement of these groups and individuals in working for peace has only been productive- it is an exciting development in the white community and a cause for hope. They are not motivated by any simplistic notions but by a profound desire for a just society. They have demanded, and here Dr Slabbert agrees, that SADF troops should be withdrawn from Angola, Namibia and the townships. Until this happens it is as rational and important to demand an immediate end to conscription.

It makes as little sense to call for conscription to be phased out, as Dr Slabbert suggested, as it would to demand that detentions, forced removals and influx control be phased out rather than ended at once.

Despite the differences between the ECC and the PFP, there is no reason for the relationship between the two to be antagonistic. Our position on conscription and that of the PFP, although different and motivated for different reasons, ought to strengthen one another and the mass opposition to conscription.

Yours faithfully



LAURIE NATHAN
ECC NATIONAL ORGANISER

P.W., a 22 yr old PE man, faced 3 yrs in prison. He refused to do an army camp in the 7th ship. He applied to the Bd for Religious to be allowed to do non-mil utl serviq. But now Philip has been called up for 28 April + he feels he has no alt, but to report for his camp cos his views re SADF have since changed tactically.

"I'm a Christian, brought up in belief / church. I am committed to & + to working for a better future for all SAs. I abhor violence + have consciously not used v myself since childhood. I have been brought up to respect all people, regardless / their c, s, or status. I believe that all armies legit use force to prevent large-scale violence. The SADF defends our E, which, in my Chris understanding is god's will. For me to partic in SADF wd be a manifest fall that I know to be good + just.

The bible + the teachings /
my church, call on me to
love my neighbour as myself.
As a christ, I must ... involve
myself in the 'protect' the
community around me. I believe
that there are still ways in which
I can work @'fully for
change, + I must ... do my
part in protecting the peace
within my countries borders so
that change can be made
implemented by par negote.

When I received call-up for June
1985 for 2 months, in the
UK I decided to object. I
then did not know exactly what
these camps meant. They in
fact meant I was being
called upon by the SAHF
to protect the people in
the + ships + those who wish
to overthrow Govt by rev
which by nature causes violence
+ bloodshed.

We are in a sit/civil war where
the SAHF + SFP are being
used to provide L+O for the
benefit of all SAHs. The use/the

Security forces to crush + ship
 unrest has happened before with
 got success. It will keep on happening
 for as long as the res. forces
 attempt to create + ship unrest.
 The presence Army + police in our
 + ships + factories @. Many T'ship
 res's do not perceive the SADF
 + SAP to be their friend + protect.
 They seem to be diff parts/
 Single army / occup. T'ship don't
 see no diff betw a soldier
 in a bunker + a policeman in
 a 'caspiot'. Both / them however
 play the role / keeping the @. As
 long as some blacks accept
 the protest option chosen by
 the ANC + its allies we will be
 used in the SADF to protect
 our fellow SA's on this.

Now true to my Christ. Cause
 + full understanding, I feel I must
 go to my camp. There can be
 no justification for my refusing to
 sit in the SADF whether in a
 direct or indirect way. The
 moment I were to assoc myself
 with the res forces I believe
 I w'd be legitimizing the violence
 used by them. pubd by ¹⁹⁹³ some
 address

Philip.

"This bogus pamphlet has twisted the words my refusal to serve in the SA/DF to such an extent that I appear to be pro - conscription. I ask anyone who receives it not to take it seriously.

I obviously cannot be certain who was responsible for putting out this pamphlet but I know whose interests it serves. In 1983 Min Tik Soha admitted, in fact that his unit was involved in distributing away' pamphlets distributed to working class in the W.C. SA/DF soldiers, have also distributed such away' pamphlets. #

This bogus pamphlet was issued by people clearly threatened by my stand & fearful that others may see the truth. What I am saying. They are too cowardly to come out

only + disengage with me, but
have distrib'd the pamphlets
in Ft. White. I am in the
explaining my pos publicly.

The ^{log}pamphlet proves that what
I am standing for is not just
because it exposes the devious nature
of those who I am opposing. I
remain firm in my convictions +
will not be reporting for my
camp call up on April 28.

ID: ECCSTAT PC: ED: DA: PUB:CT
BY: MOODIE;27/10,16:50 VER:00 HJ: LH: WI:
PO: MOODIE;27/10,16:50 QU: MOODIE-CT ST: MSG:

Staff Reporter

THE facts contained in the Rapport article are fallacious and amount to libel. The ECC is considering legal action. A series of comments are falsely attributed to the ECC. This is a traditional conservative scare tactic.

It is time to stop that they stopped making excuses for the govt and finding scapegoats. The articles create a false web of intrigue around ECC. They are disrespectful of the deeply held feelings of 1 000's of SAs to end conscription and not to be forced to participate in a defence force that is defending apartheid.

Whatever our opponenents might say it is precisely because of this mood that the ECC has grown immensely over the last year.
David Shandler press officer for ECC.

** (END) **

Tribune - either
Sunday Times house
DDA
Release
for
Sunday paper
Want to hear from house.

Collection Number: AG1977

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a collection held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.