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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE CALL TO END CONSCRIPTION.

(issued by the Civil Rights League, 8th October 1984)

The October 1970 conference held by the Civil Rights League on Conscientious Objection arose from the public outcry over repeated terms of 90-day detention at Voortrekkerhoogte of young white men refusing military service (made compulsory in 1967). The League was also concerned because white schoolboys were compelled to register for military training at the age of 16 years when hardly equipped to consider the moral dilemma of being trained to kill, and moreover, at the behest of the apartheid state.

The Defence Act then contained only limited provisions to accommodate the demands of conscientious objection, and, in the opinion of the League, was in conflict with Articles 18 and 29 of the ^{UN} Declaration of Human Rights. These respectively provide for freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as for the principle of duty to the community.

The resolution of the 1970 conference, subsequently endorsed by other organisations, called for amendment of the Defence Act so that

- * the right of conscientious objection would be drawn to the attention of those liable for military service, and
- * those objecting on strongly held moral, ethical or religious grounds would be permitted to render alternative service in fields completely unrelated to the SADF.

Responding to this kind of pressure, as well as the stand taken by conscientious objectors, the Act was amended to accommodate the total pacifist on religious grounds. Those whose objections are based on moral or ethical grounds, however, face the prospect of 6 years in prison. In practice this results in a decision for exile, usually by those with university education, professional training and skills which are then lost to South Africa.

In 1983 the Black Sash, pointing to serious divisions in the

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country resulting from unrepresentative, minority government, to failure to relieve poverty and deprivation of the majority, the illegal occupation of Namibia, and the prospect of civil war, called for an end to conscription.

Conscientious Objectors support groups around the country took up this call, and are participating in a campaign to end conscription. The Civil Rights League has representation on the End Conscription Campaign committee, and, believing in the moral right of South Africans to choose not to serve in the SADF, has signed the Declaration calling for a just peace and an end to conscription.

The past decade has seen increasing militarisation and expenditure on arms. Noting that military service is to be extended to resident "foreigners" and to coloured and Indian citizens, it should become unnecessary to persist with a system of compulsion that evokes such intense criticism. Should the Government move to create a more just society, it would surely be able to reduce the level of militarisation and spending on preparations for war.

for: Civil Rights League

Prepared by Mrs. D. Cleminshaw
Committee Member.

2 Buchan Rd., Newlands.

Civil Rights League, P.O. Box 394, Claremont, 7735

8th October, 1984.

Keith Gottschalk

There are an increasing number of young South African's who both reject the idea that they should be conscripted because they happen to be white males and who see the SADF as being an instrument for the implementation and defence of apartheid policies, which they find abhorrent.

Most of South Africa's current problems arise from the dissatisfaction of a broad majority of citizens who are shut out of political power and who experience in their daily life racial discrimination. No amount of military activity can alter the reality that the best defence of any country is a satisfied citizenry. South Africa must turn to meeting the demands of its citizens for decent wages, family life, adequate education and democratic government if it is to live in peace. We must turn our attention to building peace - not to building armies.

To argue that South Africa requires a strong military to contain armed incursions onto its soil is to miss the point that those involved in such incursions are South Africans, whose rejection of apartheid has led them to taking up arms against it. Remove apartheid and institute democratic government and the need for massive military expenditure and for conscription based on racial lines will disappear. Furthermore the financial costs of keeping the existing racially based military machine in operation increase the difficulty of finding peaceful solutions to problems of our country.

We now read that the military machine is being invoked to deal with unrest in Soweto. This is a tragic manifestation of a country that is at war with itself. Many young South Africans utterly reject being conscripted into an army that is being used to deal with what in the final analysis is a political problem: the protests of the excluded and oppressed. To be sure military force may contain these protests for a time but to suppose that institutionalised violence can transform South Africa into a stable, decent and democratic society is absurd. It is to the credit of those wishing to end conscription that they realise this, and rather than being hounded as traitors I join with many other South Africans in praising them for their vision and compassion.

Michael Savage

8 October 1984

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9th October 1984

I once again endorse and give my full support to the statement issued by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference on conscientious objection - for religious and/or moral reasons - to military service. This statement clearly indicates the rationale of the Bishops' call for the sincere conscientious objector to be recognised, accepted and supported by the Church, the State and the whole community.

As long as military service is obligatory and by conscription there remains the very real problem that the conscientious objector will be penalised by the State and by Society - whether by some degree of punishment, by harassment, by opprobrium or by rejection. The person who is conscientious for religious or moral reasons must rather be admired and supported. He has the right to exercise his freedom of conscience.

I therefore call for National Service in South Africa to be made voluntary and not, as at present, obligatory.



+ Reginald J. Orsmond

BISHOP OF JOHANNESBURG

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FROM NANSO TO THE END CONSCRIPTION COMMITTEE

15th OCTOBER 1984

WE, THE NAMIBIAN NATIONAL STUDENTS ORGANISATION (NANSO) HEREBY WISH TO EXPRESS OUR FULL SUPPORT FOR THE LAUNCHING OF THE END CONSCRIPTION DECLARATION BY THE END CONSCRIPTION COMMITTEE.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF NAMIBIA, ARE SUFFERING FROM THE HARD-SHIP, BLOODSHED AND THE KILLING OF INNOCENT PEOPLE AS A RESULT OF THE WAR SITUATION IN OUR COUNTRY. WE TOTALLY CONDEMNED THE INHUMAN AND UNCHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES OF THE SADF IN OUR COUNTRY.

THEREFORE, AS PEACE-LOVING NAMIBIANS, WE DEMAND THE S.A GOVERNMENT TO END CONSCRIPTION IN ORDER TO SAVE OUR BROTHERS FROM MURDERING THEIR OWN PEOPLE. WE BELIEVE THAT A CALL FOR THE END OF CONSCRIPTION MEANS A CALL FOR THE END OF CIVIL WAR IN NAMIBIA AND SIMILARLY A CALL FOR THE TOTAL LIBERATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

FORWARD WITH THE END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN.
FORWARD EVER, BACKWARD NEVER!

AMANDLA NGAWETHU!

ISSUED BY THE WESTERN CAPE REGIONAL COMMITTEE (NANSO)



CAPE AREAS HOUSING ACTION COMMITTEE

PO BOX 263
ATHLONE
7700

15 October 1984

The Secretary

ECC
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● REQUEST FOR MESSAGE OF SUPPORT:

Dear Sir/madam

We, the above mentioned organisation, wish to take this opportunity of requesting a message of support from your organisation for our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING to be held on Sunday 28 October 1984.

We hope that this request will receive a favourable response.

These messages of support can be sent to the Molo Songololo office at 10 Corporation Street (Corporation Chambers-Opposite City Hall) Cape Town or to P O Box 263 Athlone or telephone 456083 if it needs to be collected.

Yours in the struggle

L C Maart

L C Maart (SECRETARIAT)

HOUSES, SECURITY, COMFORT

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