

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (WITS)

PRESS STATEMENT

The end conscription campaign (ECC) sees the attempt by the Nationalist Party, under the auspices of the Minister of Education's recommendation, to suppress freedom of speech and the activities of NUSAS in a very serious light.

We support NUSAS in its fight to continue to exist and its work for a democratic alternative in South Africa. The ECC considers NUSAS to be one of our strongest and most supportive member organisations and this is especially true of our five ECC campus branches who have enjoyed the support of NUSAS for several years.

ECC, who enjoys the support of a large number of students and organisations on the campuses, regards de Klerk's recommendations as a strategy by the Nationalist Party to clamp down on all student activity that questions the escalating civil war conflict in our society, and works to build a non-racial, democratic and peaceful alternative.

We as ECC pledge our support to NUSAS and stand by them in their attempts to prevent de Klerk's recommendations becoming a reality.

ECC reaffirms its right along with NUSAS and SANSCO to expose the realities of an apartheid civil war in our country and to build, as a university community, the desire for peace and justice in our land.

Wits End Conscription Campaign.

S. L. Payne 27/8/87

End Conscription Campaign

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PRESS RELEASE

ECC RESPONDS TO MANGNUS MALAN

The End Conscription Campaign views in a very serious light the allegations made by the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, in an election meeting in Grahamstown last night.

It has been made very clear both in ECC's declaration and in all our national campaigns that one of our main objectives is to work for the right of all conscripts to choose whether or not they participate in the SADF. We believe that as a country which is on the edge of a civil war situation that the government cannot force young white conscripts to take sides in this war. Conscription remains a crucial issue within the white community. For many conscripts, serving in the army would be tantamount to fighting for apartheid. This moral dilemma has become more acute over the last 2 years, especially with conscripts needing to do duty in the townships, which means in effect fighting their fellow South Africans.

ECC has repeatedly called on the government to recognise freedom of conscience in this regard, a case in point being the evidence submitted to the Geldenhuys Commission of the SADF in 1985.

The End Conscription Campaign is a broad coalition of organisations and does itself not affiliate to any other organisation. ECC does not hold any specific relation to the UDF other than that some of the subscriber/member organisations of the ECC would be affiliates of the UDF, such as Jodac, Nusas. Other member organisations of ECC include the Black Sash, PFP youth, DPSC, and Justice and Reconciliation committees of the various church groups. ECC would relate to the UDF just as it would relate to any other organisation committed to bringing about an end to the injustice in this country.

The Defence Amendment Act of 1983 has made provision for those conscientious objectors who on grounds of religious universal pacifism will not participate in the SADF, and so it would seem strange that General Magnus Malan views this activity as indicative of ECC being a "direct enemy of the SADF" when the government itself has recognised

ECC is not surprised by the full page advert signed by the Chief of the SADF – Jannie Geldenhys – in the Sunday Times of 11 – 1 – 87. In our opinion, the fact that the SADF placed the advert indicates they are worried about the level of confidence the general public has in the SADF.

Future National Servicemen do indeed have fears and questions about their call up. Some of these are raised in the advert. However we believe crucial areas of the reality facing national servicemen have been omitted: for example: participating in roadblocks, patrolling schools in the townships; the reality of killing fellow South Africans; and, the possibility of being maimed or killed themselves.

We are concerned that the advert omitted any mention of the legal opinion of religious objection to national servicemen, according to Section 72 of the Defence Act. So far 1200 people have chosen this option and are now working in civilian forms of national service.

The advert ends by encouraging the national serviceman to decide for himself how to approach his national service. But the current legislation regarding military service severely restricts the choices that he can make.

ECC believes that as an organisation which reflects the concerns of the conscript and his family in this dilemma of military service, that we too should be able to present our views of the reality of our perspective on the choices facing national servicemen. However, current Emergency Regulations prevent us from doing this adequately.

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PRESS RELEASE

ECC COMMENT ON NEW AMMENDMENT TO DEFENCE ACT

The proposed ammendment to the Defence Act tightening up the definition of religious objection is a further erosion on the right to object to military service.

The period of alternative service for religious objectors - and the jail sentence for non-religious objectors - has now been set at six years.

Furthermore, religious objectors who do not accepts the idea of a single deity (such as many Budhists) will now also be liable for six years imprisonment.

A year ago ECC presented evidence to the government's Geldenhuys Committee of Inquiry which examined, among other things, the system of conscription. We called for alternative service to be extended to all those who, for moral, political or religious reasons, felt they were unable to serve in the SADF. We also called for this service to be equal to the duration of military service and for such service to be allowed in non-government organisations.

These recommendations were not accepted by the Geldenhuys Cimmittee. Now it seems that the right to freedom of conscience has been further curtailed.

It is of concern to ECC that these added restrictions come at a time when a growing number of conscripts were applying to the Board for Religious Objection. In the 2½ years of the Board's existence a total of 1059 people have applied to be granted status as non-combatants, non-militarists or non-uniform wearers.

Already 15 conscientious objectors have been refused - meaning that they face the prospect of a possible six years imprisonment . The proposed ammendment to the Defence Act will now make it even more difficult for many objectors to apply to the Board.

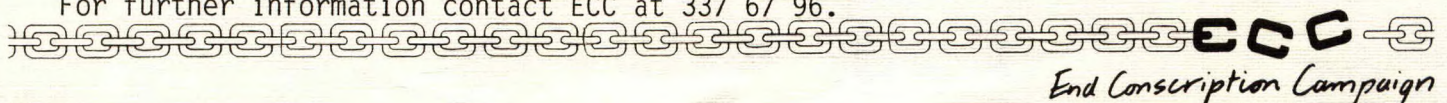
It appears that an increasing number of cosncripts are simply not turning up for their military service, many perhaps because their are no viable alternatives. In Febuary this year the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, refused to release to parliament the figures of those failing to report for duty, because, he said, those campaigning for an end to compulsory military service had "misused" these figures in the past. Figures from previous years had shown a steady increase in the number of conscripts failing to report. ECC has also received information showing that, on average, 25 percent of conscripts are not reporting for their annual SADF camps.

Furthermore, ECC believes that the growing number of emigrants is partly related to the fact that in a civil war situation conscripts are liable for a total of four years military service. In the first six months of this years 7 189 people emigrated and the number is rapidly increasing.

We believe that, at this time of heightened conflict, government should be attempting to broaden the scope of conscientious objection. Many young men experience a severe moral dilemma because of conscription and the amendment makes no attempt to address this.
ENDS

Issued by David Shandler, ECC National Press officer.

For further information contact ECC at 337 67 96.



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DETAINED ECC LEADER AWAITS IMPLEMENTATION OF DEPORTATION ORDER

Prominent Port Elizabeth ECC member Dominique Souchon is still awaiting the implementation of a deportation order served on him on July 4. He has been held in detention in terms of the Emergency Regulations since June 15. There has been no clarity as to why there has been close on four weeks since the issuing of the order and the present.

At present employed by the University of the Witwatersrand as a researcher, Mr Souchon is also actively involved in the Catholic Church. He is shortly to take up full-time employment in the church's Division for Justice and Reconciliation. Previously he had been the Chair of the Catholic Students' Society at the University of Port Elizabeth, and was active in the National Catholic Federation of Students. He is also at present the Port Elizabeth Chair of the Detainees Support Committee.

Mr Souchon, who is 27 years old, has lived in South Africa for the last 25 years. He is a Mauritian citizen. His entire family also lives in South Africa. His situation differs thus markedly from many of the other people, who were resident temporarily in South Africa, who have suffered deportations since the start of the present state of emergency.

"It is tragic that the government has seen fit to deport such a fine person as Dominique," said ECC National Secretary David Shandler. " His consistent hard work and dedication to justice and peace is an inspiration to all in ECC. One wonders whether this is not the reason why the authorities have chosen to act against him in this way. It is all the more appalling since he is to all intents and purposes a committed and patriotic member of the South African community."

Besides Mr Souchon, there are still 9 ECC members being held in detention. They are: Sandra Stewart, a 31 year old PE ECC Executive member and mother of two boys. She has been held since June 15.

Philip Wilkinson, 22, conscientious objector from Port Elizabeth. He has been detained since June 15.

Michael Loewe, 27, a freelance journalist and PE ECC member. Detained June 15.

Collum Allen, a 20 year old student at Rhodes University and member of the ECC branch on the campus. Detained June 12.

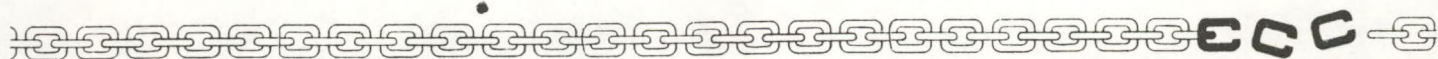
Anne Burroughs, a 29 year old member of the Grahamstown ECC and a researcher. She is also active in the Black Sash. Detained on June 18.

Melissa de Villiers, 21 and Chair of the Rhodes University Branch of the ECC. She was detained on June 28.

Karen Thorne is a 19 year old member of the Rhodes University ECC. She was detained on June 28.

Bridget Hilton-Barber is 22 and a Grahamstown ECC Executive member. Employed by Grocott's Mail, she has been held in detention since July 2.

(MORE)



ECC
End Conscription Campaign

Roelene Theron is 22 and an executive member of the Rhodes ECC. She was detained on 28 July.

Annika van Gylswyk, a Pretoria ECC member and local Chair of the Black Sash in the city. She was detained on June 15.

Up to the present a total of 37 ECC members have been held in terms of the emergency regulations.

Over the past three weeks ECC members have also faced a number of incidents of harrasment. There have been security police raids on a number of homes and offices of Johannesburg ECC members. The home of three prominent members of the ECC in Johannesburg was petrol bombed on July 11 at 3 am. Amongst those who share the house is Steven Lowry, the ECC National Treasurer.

Several ECC members have had their cars vândalised. The incidents included the slashing of tyres, cutting of brake fluid cables and the slashing of upholstery.

"We in ECC, rather than being debilitated by these actions, are strengthened by them. Our commitment to our cause is as strong as ever and the active members of the campaign are very keen to continue our public work. We are of the belief that acts of harrasment and repression against us confirm the fact that we are having a positive affect. Over the past two years we have experienced much growth and increasing public support. It would appear that those that oppose us have to resort to violence to stop the expression of opposition to conscription. They can never succeed in stopping the widespread public dissatisfaction with the system of conscription."

For further information contact 337 6796 (all hours)

31 July 1986

End Conscription Campaign

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PRESS RELEASE

CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST DETAINED CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

Charges against detained conscientious objector Philip Wilkinson have been dropped. He was to have appeared in court on Tuesday 29 July to face charges of failing to report for a military camp. Detained in Port Elizabeth on June 15, Philip was brought before a magistrate in the town on July 13 where the charge against him was withdrawn by the state. The state reserved its right to rebring the charge. Philip remains in detention in terms of the emergency regulations.

Philip, an army corporal and Port Elizabeth ECC member, earlier this year publicly announced his intention to refuse to render any further service in the SADF. The Board for Religious Objection turned down his application for recognition as a religious objector. In a widely publicised stand he announced that while he had no objection to serving his country in a constructive way, religious, moral and political reasons prevented him from doing any further service in the SADF. He said that he could not reconcile his participating in the SADF with his commitment to justice and peace in South Africa. The SADF was upholding the unjust system of apartheid and he could have no part in it.

Minutes before he was to address an ECC public rally in the Johannesburg City Hall on 29 May this year he was arrested by members of the military police, and held for ten days before he was charged and released. Despite the fact that he had made it clear that he would hand himself over to the military authorities whenever they required it, he was arrested in a highly sinister and rough manner.

There has been much public support for Philip, both nationally and internationally. Within South Africa support has come from Archbishop-elect Desmond Tutu, the South African Council of Churches, the South African Catholic Bishop's Conference, the Black Sash, Young Progressives, the UDF, and ECC. International support has been received from all continents and has included the Bishops of New York and Washington, as well as a number (more)

of members of the European Parliament.

The ECC extends its support to Philip for the stand he has taken and to him in his situation as an emergency detainee at present. We believe that Philip's case is a reminder to us all of the immense crisis of conscience faced by so many young South Africans at this time. We are committed to the belief that it is folly for the government to ignore their dilemma. We call for the recognition in law of all who in good conscience wish to serve South Africa in a way other than in the SADF.

ENDS

Statement issued by ECC National Secretary David Shandler.

For further information contact ECC at 337 6796 (all hours)

28 July 1986

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PRESS RELEASE

ECC COMMENTS ON PRESENCE OF SADF TROOPS IN TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

The presence of SADF troops in township classrooms throughout the country is playing a major role in disrupting black education and fueling tensions in the already volatile black townships.

This situation is of concern not only to the township residents, but also to many conscripts who face the prospect of being called up to enforce the Department of Education and Training's draconian regulations.

According to information received by the ECC from young conscripts as well as from township residents and community organisation, armed soldiers have been patrolling school grounds, entering classrooms, disrupting student meetings, attempting to implement the DET's unpopular registration programme, inspecting class registers and occasionally attempting to entice students into playing soccer with them. We have also heard several accounts of soldiers assaulting students on school grounds.

Without exception the presence of troops on school premises is resented by the black students, parents and teachers. Black students say the presence of the SADF increases tensions and makes it virtually impossible to learn properly.

Every school in Soweto is being boycotted for three days a week - mainly in protest against the occupation of the schools by the SADF, and a similar situation exists in numerous other townships.

ECC has also received a constant flow of young conscripts who have called up to the townships and are being forced to take part in the occupation of the schools. Many of these young men have asked ECC for advice on this situation and have said that the black students view them as the enemy and that their presence is universally hated.

We feel it is imperative that conscripts be given the right to refuse to enter the black townships. More than ever before we believe it is imperative that alternative service be extended to all those who feel their consciences will not allow them to serve in the SADF.

ECC calls on the SADF to withdraw its forces from the black schools and from the townships.
ENDS.

Issued by David Shandler, ECC National Press Officer.

For further information contact ECC at 337 6796

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PRESS RELEASE

ECC GIVES NEW EVIDENCE TO UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The End Conscription Campaign this week gave evidence to the United Nations Commission for Human Rights. The ECC evidence concerned human rights violations with specific respect to the campaign. ECC had been invited to submit the evidence to the Commission's working group sitting in Lusaka, but was unable to do so in person. A document outlining ECC's views was sent to the Commission's Geneva headquarters instead.

A major focus of the document was the denial of ECC's right to express itself fully and freely in terms of the emergency regulations. Fundamental rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression had been eroded by the current emergency said the ECC in the document.

"The general provisions of the emergency regulations create conditions unfavourable to the free expression of our views," reads the document.

"As well as the general constraints there is the specific clause which makes it subversive to incite anyone to discredit or undermine compulsory military service. We see this clause as directly aimed at denying our campaign the space to express our views freely and legally."

These limitations were seen by the ECC as worsening "the denial of freedom associated with the system of conscription. In turn, it is a further denial to many conscripts of their right to exercise freedom of conscience and to freely and fully express their views. It is in this context that the ECC is at present concentrating on a call to the government to recognise our right to oppose conscription."

The document also focussed on the system of conscription as a central denial of human rights in South Africa. "It denies the basic rights to freedom of conscience and to freedom of choice," it said.

"Conscription into the SADF imposes on conscripts the obligation of implementing and defending the government's apartheid policy. In a South Africa as divided as ours, this causes thousands of conscripts to be forced to side with the government against their consciences."

Detention and harassment of ECC members during the current state of emergency was also highlighted. A total of 48 ECC members have been detained in terms of the emergency regulations. Of these 10 are still being held. Raids on the homes and offices of ECC members are also cited. The ECC describes these incidents as "adding to the denial of our right to express our opposition to the system of conscription."

Earlier this year ECC Executive member Gavin Evans gave evidence on behalf of ECC to a sitting of the UN Special Committee on Apartheid in New York.

ENDS

For further information contact ECC at 337 6796.

We salute Ivan for his courageous stand.

In times like these when our country is being ravaged by civil war and the role of the SADF in upholding Apartheid has become only too clear, we cannot stress strongly enough the significance of this act.

It demonstrates clearly that not all white men are prepared to take up arms against their fellow South Africans. It therefore stands out as a symbol of hope in our striving for a non-racial, democratic and united South Africa.

As members of the UDF we appreciate fully the fact that Ivan is refusing to take up arms against our comrades in the township.

Yours in struggle

JODAC
(Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee)

BLACK SASH STATEMENT

The Black Sash stands by the resolution passed at our 1983 Conference calling for an end to conscription. We have watched with growing concern the increasing militarisation of our country and the destabilisation of neighbouring states.

Young South Africans are being forced to take up arms against their fellow citizens, and are actively engaged in exercises in neighbouring states. Young men, such as Dr. Ivan Toms, who for reasons of conscience refuse to accept their call-up are being imprisoned or fined, others are being forced into exile.

We call again for freedom of choice and an end to conscription.

COSG STATEMENT

DR IVAN TOMS - CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

The Johannesburg Conscientious Objectors Support Group (COSG) endorses the stand taken by Dr Ivan Toms in refusing his call-up for an army 'camp' starting on November 12.

Dr Tom's position clearly highlights the inadequacies of the Defence Act's provision for conscientious objection. The board for Religious Objection was established by an amendment to the Act in 1983, and, by its terms of reference the Board can only deal with religious pacifists. Dr Toms is a committed and practising Christian, with a strong bias towards the saving and preservation of life : his medical work at clinics in the squatter areas of the Western Cape is a clear testimony to this. But he cannot in good faith claim to be a pacifist and has precluded himself from applying to the Board for 'Religious Objector' status. He also wishes to identify himself with others who have a moral or ethical base for conscientious objection, and for whom no allowance is made in the law.

Dr Ivan Toms is totally committed to working for justice and peace in South Africa, and this excludes him from leaving the country, as so many medical men have done. He is willing to go to jail for his principles, and can face a three year jail sentence if convicted of refusing to serve this camp.

COSG acclaims his bravery and pledges its support for his actions and their consequences.

STATEMENT ON IVAN TOMS

The SACC, in its 1987 National Conference, adopted a resolution regarding the SADF in which it resolved to:

- (a) Call upon people to reject conscription until there is a universal franchise in a unitary state;
- (b) to encourage member churches to support those who undertake to do this.

In 1986 the then General Secretary Dr Beyers Naude wrote a letter to the State President (endorsed by the National Conference) in which he stated that "compulsory conscription to military services is a violation of the individual conscience..... in the matter of military conscription in South Africa. It is therefore the duty of those whose consciences tend them to believe that compulsory military service is wrong to work to persuade the government to end the system.

The SACC believes that Dr Ivan Toms is a man of conscience. He has proved this in his compassion for and tireless work amongst the poor and oppressed in the SACLA clinic in Crossroads. Such a man is a true servant of God and should not be treated as a criminal but be granted the right of serving his country in a way that will not betray his beliefs but rather allow them to be expressed in furthering the work for true justice and reconciliation in South Africa. Refusing to participate in an unjust struggle against his fellow country men and rather wishing to serve people as a Christian in a way that does not further the divisions of apartheid, is surely to be lauded rather than condemned.

To conclude in the words of the previous SACC General Secretary in his letter to the State President:

"If we believe that God speaks to those who do not acknowledge his existence, then we must respect the human conscience as we respect the voice of God!"



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S T A T E M E N T

The SRC salutes the courageous decision of Dr Ivan Toms. He has chosen to go to jail for three years rather than to fight against his fellow South Africans.

We condemn the Government for requiring such sacrifices of the very people whose love for their country goes beyond the desire for personal comfort and which love is expressed in the willingness to serve the best interests of its people.

We call on the Government to provide appropriate alternatives for people who refuse, on moral or political grounds, to serve in the SADF.

WITS SRC EXECUTIVE

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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