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Synapses MESSAGES



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Some Say NO!

South African End Conscription Campaign

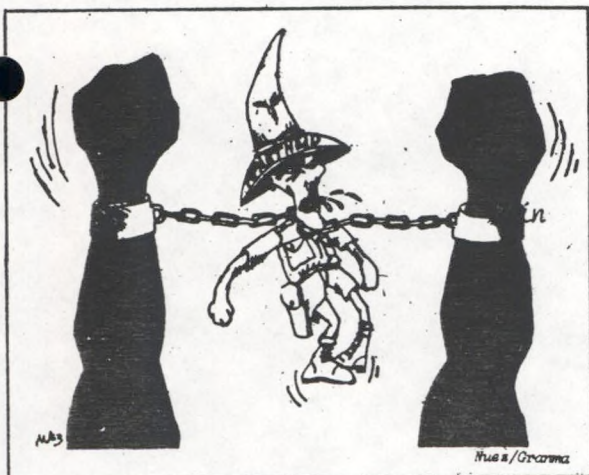
News of South Africa is in the media daily. The struggle of the black majority is heightening. At the same time, the white minority government continues its uncompromising implementation of the apartheid system.

Organized opposition like the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front; actions like funeral procession protests, labor strikes, rallies and economic boycotts inside the country; disinvestment campaigns, legislative sanctions and appeals to the U.N. outside the country -- all are cutting away at the apartheid foundation.

Another contribution to the demise of the system (that is rarely reported in our media) is the growing non-cooperation of white males with military conscription. In January, 1985 alone, 7,589 men failed to report compared with 1,956 for the whole of last year.

The End Conscription Campaign (ECC) organized South Africa's first ever Peace Festival in June. Together with many groups around the world, Synapses sent a message of support to the Festival.

Following is an excerpt from an article written for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament publication:



"The Festival, held June 28-30, involved over 3000 people from all walks of life who unanimously supported a motion calling for an end to the compulsory conscription of white men into the South African Defense Force (SADF).

"The motion read: 'The building of peace in Southern Africa is threatened by the presence and actions of the SADF in Namibia and elsewhere in Southern Africa, and in SA's townships. We call on the government to immediately withdraw all these troops. We call for an end to conscription which forces young men to fight in these situations.'

"The ECC was formed in 1984 as a broad front of over 50 political, womens, religious and student groups. It has received strong support from the generally conservative white community because a significant sector finds it intolerable that white men are compelled to be part of an army whose primary role is to defend apartheid.

"At present every white man is legally obliged to serve two years 'national service' and do annual camps till the age of 55. The options for the majority of those who refuse to serve are six years in jail or a life in exile. A third option of six years 'alternative service' is limited to universal pacifists with a proven Christian commitment."



"The ECC 'STOP THE CALL-UP' Peace Festival in Johannesburg united the different groups that oppose conscription. It consisted of a weekend of seminars and workshops, concerts, a prayer service, public protest meetings and anti-war culture which involved delegates in action and discussion around militarization and resistance.

A highlight of the Festival was a panel discussion with conscientious objectors, entitled 'Some Say No'. Richard Steele (Synapses Dendrite), who served a year in a detention barracks in 1980 and recently addressed the UN Commission for Human Rights on conscientious objection in SA, declared:

'The military is designed to train people to destroy one another and misuse the land. I see the military as a pillar of an unjust society and saw my steps as an act of non-cooperation with apartheid.'

"Another highpoint of the Festival, and a new development for ECC, was the focus on the international struggle for peace. Carole Tongue, Euro-MP, spoke about the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the European peace movement. The other invited international guest, Cardinal Arns, the Archbishop of San Paolo, Brazil, was denied a visa by the South African government when it learned that he was due to speak at the Festival.

"Despite this act of State harassment, the Festival was regarded as a huge success and showed clearly that there now exists within the white South African community a growing movement for peace and justice."

Synapses also received an 11 page ECC pamphlet entitled "STOP THE CALL-UP" which contains the Declaration Against Conscription, and describes apartheid & the End Conscription platform. Summary statements include:

- We live in an unjust society where basic human rights are denied to the majority of the people and where the land and wealth are owned by the minority.
- Young men are conscripted to maintain the illegal occupation of Namibia, to wage unjust war against foreign countries, and to assist in the implementation and defense of apartheid policies.
- We believe that the financial cost of the war increases the poverty of our country and that money should rather be used in the interests of peace.
- We believe that the extension of conscription to colored and Indian will increase conflict and further divide our country.

If you would like a xerox copy of the complete pamphlet, send \$1.00 to Synapses

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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