

End Conscription Campaign

A13.4.1

227/9 Khotso House
42 De Villiers Street
Johannesburg
2000
Tel: 337-6796
Telex: 4-86519 S.A.

3/5/87

Ho2 gaan dit, ECC!

I was very excited to hear about recent ECC activities and plans. The launch of ECC at UCT (- what a time for a launch!), the service in support of Philip, the Day of Reflection and the plans to build 'an edifice' all sound superb. I've been showing the Durban 'peace call-up' to folks here - everyone thinks it's great. Was the building of the 'peace park' our first action to involve the white working class?!? Golly.

I've been part of several excellent events over the past three weeks. One evening in Durham, North Carolina, I spoke with Faith. Alas, a Catholic priest who worked with 'basic christian communities' in El Salvador, was imprisoned and tortured by the army there, and now lives in exile in the US. The combined focus on Central America and Southern Africa underlined the aggressive nature of US foreign policy. The following day I spoke at a campus anti-apartheid action to rename the library after Nelson Mandela - good action with lots of press coverage.

I was lucky to be in North Carolina for a successful march in Robeson County. The county is in the rural south of the country. Just think of Cothelotroom: the 'mixed Marriages Act' was only taken off the statute books 10 years ago; the Ku Klux Klan operates openly, does para-military training and is allegedly responsible for several unsolved murders of black people; the local District Attorney is in the Guinness Book of Records for a record number of death penalty convictions (- no prizes for guessing the colour of his victims); and white police have killed Lumbee Indian people with impunity.

In protest against the racist administration of justice, about 1500 black, white and Native American people marched several miles to the local court in Humberton where an open air rally took place. The march was important in involving a multi-racial group of ordinary people (as opposed to demonstrations in the major centres which comprise mostly activists), and in being the first anti-racist demonstration in the history of the country. I spoke at the rally and at a memorial service in a black church the previous evening. It felt really good for a change to be speaking in solidarity with other people's struggle.

On April 25th, 150,000 people marched from the White House in Washington DC to the Capitol, for peace and justice in Central America and Southern Africa. The rally at the Capitol included Jesse Jackson, Paulo Jordan from the ANC, Dean Simon Farisoni, representatives of major trade unions and church groups, and speakers from Central America. The day was great fun - balloons, street theatre, millions of t-shirts, buttons and publications etc. It was a bit odd though to be at such a massive outdoor political event without having to fear police violence.

The event, followed the next day by the arrest of 500 people for civil disobedience at the CIA, was significant for its size, its linking of issues, and the unprecedented involvement of labor and church. It drew considerable flack from 'the establishment' the AFL CIO (the national trade union federation) and newspapers like the New York Times and the Washington Post. The Post, for example, described the protest as a '60's hippy hangover', focussed on the presence of communist groups, and slanted the criticism of US support for "imperfect but nevertheless democratic governments" in Guatemala (where 38,000 people have been 'disappeared' and 100,000 murdered by government security forces since the mid-60's) and El Salvador (where 60,000 people have been killed in the struggle for liberation). Sound familiar? I gave a 5 minute rave at a benefit concert with

Jill Scott Heron the night before the rally, great concert.

Last night I spoke at a meeting organised by the War Resisters League in New York City. The other speakers included high-profile poets, lawyers, Vietnam veterans, journalists and civil rights activists. A highlight of the meeting was the reading of a special proclamation passed by the New York City Council in praise of 'lil' old ECC! I've enclosed a copy of the proclamation.

So, 6 weeks down now. About one to go. Have been to 30 cities, and spoken in 64 forums and to 23 newspapers, 23 radio stations and 12 TV stations. The work has been both exhausting and exhilarating. Being 'on stage' 3-6 times a day and having to put so much energy and emotion into each rap takes its toll after a while, but the positive feedback has been overwhelming. The groups I've spoken to have been inspired by the extent of white resistance to apartheid, and of course by the work of ECC. There has also been a very good response to my stressing the importance of anti-apartheid groups focussing on domestic racism as well as on SA. I'll send a full assessment of the tour as soon as it's complete.

The job in New York City is about to begin! I've already been to a New York Mets baseball game and to the most amazing PAUL SIMON GRACELANDS CONCERT - on its own worth coming over for.

Take care ECC. Keeps your heads down / high.
Lots of love and solidarity
Laurie

War Resisters League/West



942 Market Street, Room 705 • San Francisco, CA 94102 • (415) 433-6676

27/3/87

Dearest ECC

Hey gang, how y'all doin'? I've just been for a lovely walk through the redwood forests outside San Francisco - "the tallest trees in the world", yay America! -- and feel inspired to write to you.

I spent my first w/s days in New York, preparing for the tour with War Resisters League (WRL) and the American Committee on Africa (ACOA). New York is the most exciting place! Its real fast, high energy, funk vibey. Everyone's got style and so much confidence. Definitely a good place for a job. All the New Yorkers I've met just LOVE living there.

In discussions with War Resisters League and ACOA the objectives of the tour were worked out. From ECC's perspective, the objectives are to get across the extent of white resistance to apartheid and the repression of ECC under the Emergency, and to situate these in the broader context of intensifying resistance and repression. I want to talk about the importance of continued international pressure, and suggest things for people to do. The tour will also provide an opportunity to learn about the activities and strategies of progressive movements in the US.

The ACOA hopes to use the tour to inject life into anti-apartheid campaigns, in which the American public, with their limited attention span, are losing interest. ACOA is also keen for me to use

3
the situation in SA to address issues of racism and non-racialism in the US. You probably never believed that North America was the land of the free and the equal, but if you did, you were dead wrong. 'People of colour' - blacks, asians, hispanics, chicanos, latinos - are harassed by police, economically disadvantaged and victimised by discriminatory legislation. More on this once I've done some reading. Even the progressive movements focusing on different issues are racially divided; I haven't yet spoken to a completely mixed audience.

WAL's objectives for the tour are to use ECC's experience to explore the power of creative non-violent action, and to focus on militarisation and anti-draft registration work here. WAL also hopes to make organisational gains by forming national and regional coalitions to take responsibility for the tour. Already the tour has provided an opportunity for anti-military and anti-apartheid groups to work together.

I've been 'on the road' for four days now. In New York I spoke at the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid's annual commemoration of the Sharpsville massacre (yes yes, I wore a tie). The event is very prestigious, and this year was addressed by the UN Secretary General. Murr wanted me to go and rap to him afterwards, but I felt this was overreaching, even for ECC. Also did an interview with UN radio.

Then off to San Diego for two days, Los Angeles for one and San Francisco for one at the end of my second day in San Francisco. Hebbler place, California. I've spoken to groups of 50-70 university and high school students - these have gone very well - and had many useful less formal discussions with activist groups. I've also done

several press and radio interviews, but these generally haven't gone well at all. The journalists / interviewers are not interested in SA at the moment, and don't prepare properly. One radio interviewer even read his newspaper during the interview! Press conferences have been very badly attended. As one reporter explained to us, when he was asked why he hadn't come to a press conference: "Well he (i.e. me) is not on fire is he?"

It's too soon to make a proper assessment of how the tour is going but I'm feeling very positive about it. Tonight I speak at the local WRA branch's annual dinner, the Pacificast, and tomorrow morning (Sunday) at a black church. I'm coming back to San Francisco in a few days to talk at Berkeley and Stanford University.

My first impressions of the progressive movement in the US are of great diversity, but fragmentation. The larger movements focus on nuclear disarmament, US involvement in Central America, apartheid and draft resistance, with other smaller groups concentrating on a multitude of domestic and community issues. While the movements all have progressive analyses of their immediate issues there seems to be no structural analysis that links these issues to a broader critique of US society. As with the Vietnam resistance and the civil rights movement, important struggles can be won without US domestic or foreign relations being fundamentally altered. A number of factors contribute to this problem: the sheer size of the country and size of the population, the splits within the left on ideological grounds, the affluence of the vast majority of citizens, corporate control of the mass media and a rabid anti-communism that marginalises radical positions. Every activist I've spoken to is pessimistic about the possibility of

4
real change occurring here.

The anti-apartheid movement is currently in a hiatus, for a number of reasons. There is little national or even regional strategizing and co-ordination. Instead, a whole number of groups do their own thing, without co-operating, and sometimes even fighting amongst themselves. The divisions reflect debates within the US rather than the SA progressive movements. A further problem is that the movement has tended to focus exclusively on divestment and sanctions. Many anti-apartheid sympathisers (as opposed to activists) believe these issues have been won, and this has demobilised the movement. The news blackout has obviously also taken its toll. The national anti-apartheid organisations feel that they made mistakes in not focussing on solidarity action, and in focussing on only South and not Southern Africa. i.e., typically it seems, some anti-apartheid activists are preoccupied with their work in the US, and are both ignorant of the situation in SA and unwilling to learn more about it.

I'm now in the plane to Oregon - in true form, have already missed two planes (not my fault!). The tour has been great fun up till now, not too hectic. I only wish I had more time to find out about the struggles that people are involved in here. I'm 'real keen' to speak more to Vietnam Vets groups doing Central American solidarity work.

What's going on in Natal at the moment? And with the white elections And ECC? Please send media etc. All strength, ECC. Wish you were here.

Your man in Oregon

Laurie



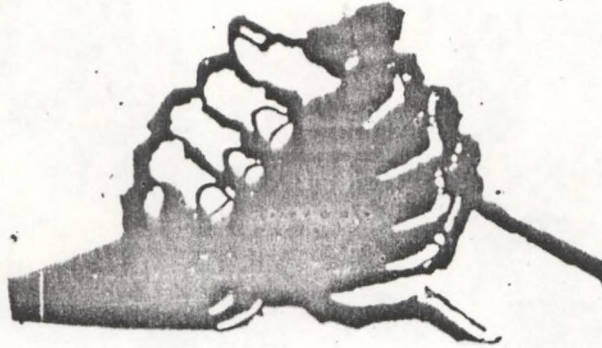
Associated Press

Members of the End Conscription Campaign in South Africa rebuild a peace sign in the sand at a beach in Cape

Town yesterday after police detained two members of the group and kicked down the sign.

INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

WHITE OPPOSITION TO APARTHEID



All white men in South Africa must serve in the Army.
The Army enforces Apartheid Laws and crushes Black Resistance.
Those who object face long prison terms or exile.

Now, a growing movement among whites, called the
END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN,
has emerged as an inside threat to Apartheid.



Mr. Laurie Nathan

- Founder and National Coordinator of E.E.C., 1984-86.
- National Organizer, National Union of South African Students, 1983-84 (an anti-apartheid student movement).
- Recently made a public statement that he will refuse service in the South African army when he concludes his university deferment in 1988.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26th • 12 noon
Bovard 305 — USC

Organized by: Task Force on South Africa (made up of representatives from): Concerned Faculty at USC, USC Students for Peace and Justice, USC Students for Responsible Use of Technology, Latino Student Assembly, Black Student Union, The Peace Center of United University Church, the USC Peace and Conflict Studies Program, and the Office of the University Chaplain.

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.