

CADETS CAMPAIGN, A PERSONAL AND CRITICAL APPRAISAL THEREOF.

The idea for the cadets campaign germinated in the schools group shortly after the end of the "Troops Out" campaign. After discussion it was decided to only take up the issue at the beginning of 1986 for the reason that if the campaign originated at the beginning of a school year, its ramifications could extend throughout the year. It was also felt that if the campaign was to have some success it should be carefully conceptualized over a period of time.

Furthermore, it was decided that a campaign targeted at the beginning of the 1986 school year would give us time to forge links with different organizations that were concerned with school militarization. The idea to work with these different organizations had three motivations. Firstly, an in-depth assessment of the strategies that the schools group had employed in schools lead us to believe that we should work as closely as possible with school students. We felt that we, in organizing meetings and distributing media for example, had imposed our ideas on them. Too little credit had been given to their critical faculties. We had resolved to work more closely with school students in the future, especially with the Pupils' Awareness and Action Group (PAAG). PAAG was born towards the end of last year out of a UCT initiative to make contact with school students. A meeting organized by UCT for school students had been banned; the spin off being the formation of PAAG. A number of white school students, at this time had also boycotted school in solidarity with black students. Our second motivation was that we should pull in other organizations that represented other constituencies effected by school militarization, viz teachers and Parents. Organizations that we approached were Education for an Aware South Africa (EDASA), Black Sash, Womens' Movement for Peace (WMP) and UDF area committees. We also had an observer from the UCT education faculty. The third motivation was that given the state's likely repressive feelings towards ECC, a "front" of organizations addressing this issue could possibly moderate experienced aggression.

We also planned to involve the other ECC sub committees in this campaign as much as possible. The campaign would be falling into the period between action round the January call up and the Working for a Just Peace campaign (WJP). In our initial ASP (later to be called WJP) meetings, we had decided that a cadets campaign could be a useful antecedent to WJP, as one could call for an alternative to cadets. We felt that an alternative cadet programme could be incorporated into WJP.

1) A WORKSHOP!

We planned a workshop for the beginning of December to draw the above organizations plus sub com. reps. to discuss the feasibility of the campaign. The workshop ran as follows:

- * Introduction to militarization in schools: a paper was prepared which presented the current state of school militarization including the cadets system, drum majorettes and YP programmes.
- * Personal reflections on individual teachers' and students' perception and experience of school militarization.
- * Presentation of legalities of raising the issue of school militarization in general and cadets in particular. Section 57 of the defense act (Proclaiming cadets is not compulsory) was also of interest.

- * Brainstorm of ideas on how the issue should be tackled
- * Discussion around the way in which different organizations could fit into the campaign.

It was decided at the workshop that the issue of school militarization was unsettling, but that it was difficult to address in its entirety. Consequently, we resolved to address ourselves specifically to the issue of cadets, but with attempts to address ourselves to other components of school militarization. It was felt that it would be important to expose the links between school militarization, the broader militarization in our society and the SADF. The feeling was that the campaign should take place in the second week of the new school term; it would raise the issue of the role of cadets as students were receiving their uniforms. Unfortunately this meant that we would be unable to raise the issue of school militarization with student teachers over the same period. We all resolved to meet early in the New Year.

2) PLANNING THE CAMPAIGN.

Four meetings were held with reps. from the different organizations. It was decided to focus on 12 boys' schools in the Southern Suburbs. The campaign was planned in these forums. PARAG, EDASA and Black Sash reps. participated fully in the conceptualization and planning. In practice however, most of the work was carried out by ECC. Representation from other sub committees was initially disappointing. However, the may be attributed to the unseasonal nature of the timing of the campaign, as well as the sub coms. over extensions.

3) The CAMPAIGN.

For reasons outlined above, the campaign began on the 28/1. Part of the campaign was due to run over the weekend of the National Conference, however the dominant feeling was that this would not be a problem as only 20 Cape Town people were to go. The campaign proceeded as follows:

TUESDAY 28/1: WPM house meeting. Nic, Lois and a PARAG person spoke. Attended by 36 people. It was very successful and useful discussion emerged. Lasted from 8pm to after 11 pm.

WEDNESDAY 29/1: Pamphleteering of 12 different schools. Pamphlet aimed to highlight the issue of militarization in schools and draw links with militarization in the rest of society. It also outlined some of the aims of WJP. Content in the pamphlet was a bit weak with too many assumptions being made about the problem with the SADF's role. Graphic of PW was probably a bit harsh. Pamphlet was well received at schools. At one school, headmaster called pamphleteers into his office, poured them tea and offered to distribute pamphlets to his students in the future if he agreed with the content.

THURSDAY 30/1: Picket had been planned, however had to be cancelled in terms of Bri9. Swart's order. It had been issued the previous afternoon and had banned the display of all anti apartheid media. Order was overturned by Le Grange after vocal outcry by ECC and others.

SATURDAY 1/2: Banner painting by Media committee. Few white students and only 6(?) black students participated with Media com in what was designed as a non racial exercise. Image painted was school students being turned into cadets by machine. Banner was not used in the campaign. Not a very

successful exercise.

WEDNESDAY 5/2: 12 schools Pamphleteered. Pamphlet content informed Pupils that cadets was not compulsory. Again image of soldier was probably a bit harsh. School time table and sticker was handed out. Time table and sticker were exceptionally well received by students. Two Pamphleteers were picked up by Police for "interrogation" after a "complaint". Media was seized and they were released after an hour.

In addition, a schools meeting, hosted by PRAG was held in the afternoon. Meeting had been advertised on Pamphlets. Nic spoke plus UDF speaker. Attendance was poor with about 30 people. UDF speaker's content was not perfect, but Nic spoke well. Attendance possibly reflected organizational weakness of PRAG.

THURSDAY 6/2: Pickets held outside 12 targeted schools with slogan "cadets is not compulsory, section 57 defence act". Pickets were moderately successful, but feeling was that slogan was maybe too specific.

An Open Forum was held in the evening at which a school student, a teacher and a Parent spoke about their objections to the cadet system. This (for me) was the highlight of the campaign, with all the speakers providing useful perspectives of the problem from personal experience. The teacher came from a school that had stopped cadets from 1986. The Parent spoke about how opposition to the cadet system at Bishops had resulted in an alternative to cadets being offered. The school student spoke about why he had objected to cadets the previous year. A very useful discussion followed amongst the 40 people that attended the forum.

FRIDAY 7/2: Cadets Concert organized by Culture Com. A financial failure with only 60 people attending. T-shirts were successfully screened and the Fanzine was released. Problems identified included lack of advertising, inaccessible venue for school students (UCT campus), specificity of bands which possibly had limited appeal and rushed conception of evening.

Other components of the campaign included Good Press coverage and an article about school militarization in the EDASA newsletter. A Press statement was released by Sash, EDASA and PRAG calling for an alternative to cadets. However this was only tacked onto the end of an article in a heavily priced form.

4) SUCCESSES AND FAILURES.

There were a number strong and weak points that emerged during the assessment of the campaign. It was felt that overall the campaign had been successful and significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, a successful media campaign was conducted around the issue of cadets in schools which hopefully had some effect in consciousness raising. However, this is difficult to assess. Secondly, useful contacts were established with the different groupings that participated in the campaign. If nothing else, this justified the energy expended by ECC. Thirdly, the schools group, which has always been a relatively weak sub com., initiated an ambitious campaign which involved the other sub coms, as well as other organizations. A direct spin off has been the recruitment of a few new members.

The weaknesses of the campaign were as follows: firstly, the lack of direct participation of school students (apart from PRAG reps.) in the campaign in terms of participation in and attendance of events. This to some extent reflected our over reliance on PRAG which is experiencing its own

organizational Problems and apathy in schools. We still have plenty to learn in terms of school mobilization. Secondly, the timing of the campaign was a Problem from ECC's Point of view. The draining of 20 key activists to Durban was a Problem that was under estimated by some. A longer Period of conceptualization would have been useful. Thirdly, the lack of schools in the Southern Suburbs that actually have cadets! Out of the 12 boys' schools targeted, only 5 had fully operative cadet systems. Three other schools had stopped cadets or offer alternatives to cadets from 1986: Viva Bishops, St Josephs and Christian Brother's College! Fourthly, organizational Participation could have been stronger with clearer conceptualization. Perhaps there was some fault in coordination with some of the organizations and perhaps more organizations could have been pulled in. Fifthly, no use was made of churches. Sixthly, communication, representation and coordination with other sub coms was a Problem. Seventhly, a Problem felt from within ECC that it was wrong to ignore girl's schools. Seventhly, too many assumptions were made about school students Perceptions of the role that the SADF plays. More attention could have been devoted to educating People about the SADF. Eighthly, not enough was made of WJP in the Campaign.

But all in all, with three Positive Points and eight negatives ones, a useful and hopefully successful campaign.....?

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