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Memorandum to the Minister of Defence, General M. Malan.

1) In August 1985 the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) made submissions to the Goldenhuys Committee which was at that time investigating the operations of the SADF. In our submissions we called for:

- a) the termination of the system of compulsory military service;
- b) an extension of the rights to conscientious objection to all who in good conscience refused to serve in the SADF as long as the system of conscription remained. We called too for the length of community service to be the same as that for military service, and that such service be permitted in religious, community and welfare organisations;
- c) the rights of the Serviceman to be respected. In particular we called for the Serviceman to be given the right to refuse to serve in the controversial areas of Namibia and the townships of South Africa.

The Government since then has made an attempt to accommodate these requests. Since that time the Government has maintained this position:

We believe this situation should be reviewed. The need for reform with respect to the Defence Act has become all the more urgent. In the years since 1985 conflict in Southern Africa has deepened with conscripts being called on to act in numerous controversial, if not morally reprehensible, roles.

3) Many talented and patriotic South Africans have left the country rather than be part of the SADF against their will. Some have been classified as religious objectors and have been placed in employment by the Department of Manpower. Others, no less committed to the interests of our country, have found themselves with no option but to do military service against their will.

4) The basis of the End Conscription Campaign's objection to compulsory military service at present is based on the fundamental belief that individuals should be free to choose whether or not to serve in the SADF. In particular it is the nature of the Government's policy of apartheid and the role of the SADF in upholding this policy that has caused many individuals, conscript and nonconscript alike, to support the

role in these situations as highly destructive in that he is being used against his black fellow South Africans with whose plight he identifies. Most say that their deployment in this way is not only morally repugnant, but also serves to deepen conflict. They would prefer to have the option of doing National Service which contributes to the development of the community and serves to lessen conflict.

6) The destructive effect of the SADF extends beyond the damage it causes to race relations and regional peace. Disruption in the lives of Servicemen with respect to families and careers is common. The psychological effects of military service on conscripts is most worrying. Research by psychologists has shown that such service has led to anti-social behaviour which alienates the soldier from his family, friends and community. This research is borne out by the experience of ECC. In many instances loved ones come to be equally negatively affected by military service.

7) With consideration to the above and in the knowledge that intensified conflict in South Africa is leading to large numbers contemplating or actually leaving the country, the ECC believes that changes to the Defence Act with respect to National Service is urgent.

call made by our campaign for reform in the law pertaining to National Service.

The government's policy of maintaining its presence in Namibia against the dictates of the international community, as well as violations of the territorial integrity of states in Southern Africa is being pursued in great part through the vehicle of the SADF. This is additional cause for opposition to compulsory service in this Force.

5) In the course of its work ECC has been in contact with a large number of conscripts unwilling to serve in the SADF. While some have made the choice of refusing to serve, a larger number have served, are serving, or intend to serve in the SADF. In the great majority of cases the ECC has been struck by the commitment to South Africa expressed by these men.

They are willing to serve South Africa in a constructive way. In their opinion, however, serving in the SADF amounts to their personal participation in upholding the Government's policy of apartheid. In particular constant reference is made to the role that the SADF has played in the conflict in South Africa's black townships.

The conscript serving against his will views the deployment of troops in the black areas as abhorrent. In particular he sees his

We believe that the introduction of a voluntary system of military service is greatly more preferable to the present system. Until such time as such a system is introduced we believe that a viable and constructive system of alternative service should be available to those conscientiously objecting to service in the SADF. We believe that such service would be of benefit to the country and would contribute in great part to satisfying the needs of those called on to serve in the SADF against their will.

We therefore call for your urgent consideration of the following proposal.

B) As long as the system of conscription exists we propose that the following issues need to be addressed:

- a) The option of community service as an alternative to religious service should not be limited to religious pacifists, but should be available to all those who in good conscience cannot serve in the SADF.

ECC proposes that in section 72 B(1) of the Defence Act, the definition of "religious objector" be changed to "conscientious objector". This should be defined as "a person

for whom - for reasons of conscience or profound conviction arising from religious, ethical, moral, humanitarian or similar motives - it is in conflict to perform all or part of their military service."

- b) Community service should be of an equivalent length of time to military service. It is illogical that someone recognised and classified as a bona fide conscientious objector should be punished for his beliefs by serving one-and-a-half times the length of military service. From the Defence Force point of view, a maximum four years continuous service would be a sufficient deterrent to possible mala fide objectors, bearing in mind that very few soldiers complete a full 720 days after their initial service, and never in one continuous stretch.
- c) Community service should not only be available in state organisations but should also be available in e.g. independent community, welfare and religious organisations.

9) For as long as conscription exists, National Servicemen should be given the freedom, in conscience, to choose not to enter South Africa's black townships, or neighbouring countries including Namibia.

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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