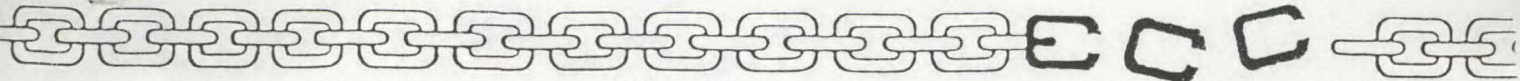


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End Conscription Campaign

MEMORANDUM ON THE BOARD FOR RELIGIOUS OBJECTORS ADDRESSED TO THE STATE
PRESIDENT AND THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE BY CHURCH LEADERS

The situation of conflict in our society is increasing as time goes by. Over the past year we have seen the extensive deployment of the SADF in the townships of our country. Through this involvement we have become painfully aware of the crisis of conscience that many of our members and indeed, many others experience.

We note that the law does make provision for alternatives to military conscription contained in the Defence Amendment Act (Act no. 1983). We realise however that as the crisis has deepened the terms of reference of this act and the constraints placed on the Board For Religious Objection, make it impossible for many young men to gain redress of their grievances. At the time the law was introduced, many, both inside and outside the Churches, objected vociferously to the proposed amendments. We feel it necessary to restate the content of those objections and to call again for changes.

While we support the call to end compulsory military conscription, as the most effective way of giving young men the opportunity to choose whether or not to fight in the developing civil war, we recognise that this may not be achieved in the near future. It is for this reason that we suggest changes in the existing law affecting Conscientious Objectors:

1. The law only provides alternatives for religious pacifist objectors ie. those who object to serving in any armed force. We feel that particularly because of the nature of the war in SA that all objectors from whatever motivation, (religious, moral, ethical, philosophical, political) be granted recognition. We also believe that all such objectors need not be pacifists only ie. people who object to the specific nature of the conflict both in SA and Namibia should be given the right to refuse such service.
2. Secondly we believe objectors recognised as such should not serve a longer period of service than the normal length of service of any conscripted member of the SADF. *We do not believe that people should be punished, with longer service because of conscientious beliefs they hold.*
3. We believe that Conscientious Objectors granted alternative national service should not be restricted to service with a government department at the national provincial or municipal level only. Objectors should also be allowed to serve with Churches or with recognised registered welfare organisations.

There is much controversy about the role of the SADF in our society. Many feel that it is playing too much of a political role in that it is responsible for suppressing legitimate dissent to the system of government in our country. We strongly believe that people should be able to choose if or how they should participate in such a force. Changing the law to incorporate our three requests would go a long way in helping people out of such a conflict.

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