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DRAFT
REPORT FROM COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY

WHY WAS IT POSSIBLE TO ORGANISE AROUND THE ISSUE OF CONSCRIPTION

The commission attempted to look objectively at why conscription was an effective issue around which to mobilise the white community.

Conscription into the SADF is a material issue which directly effects and oppresses white South Africans. It is a contradiction organic to white South African society.

Our attempted objectivity made this discussion abstract and undirected. We felt, however, that the material disadvantage of conscription was increasing with a greater possibility of being killed and a longer serving time demanded.

Whites might begin to weigh up the material disadvantage of conscription with the desire to maintain white privilege and domination.

It was agreed that many whites are negatively affected by conscription. The negative factors can, however, be divided into two categories. Non-moral factors and moral factors. The first category includes the waste of time, authority and physical and psychological brutality. It was argued that there is a big step between these two categories. ECC has tended to pick up on the moral dilemma of conscripts and not the material disadvantages they suffer in the SADF. It was suggested that picking up on soldiers unhappiness with their material conditions might create the space to transform their grievances into moral ones as well.

HOW HAVE WE ORGANISED

How has ECC historically intervened in this contradiction and how effective have we been.

Analytical history of ECC's development

We can usefully periodise ECC's history into four phases:

1. From its inception to the official launch in October 1984
2. From the launch until the national Peace Festival
3. Troops Out Campaign in mid 85 until WJP in mid 86
4. Since the declaration of the State of Emergency

PHASE 1: INCEPTION TO LAUNCH

The goals identified at ECC's inception were the following:

- a) To build the front. There were debates around constituencies and surveys were carried out by organisations such as the Black Sash and NUSAS.
- b) To establish support from individuals and fraternal organisations. The medium through which this was done was the declaration.
- c) To begin campaigning in the white community which was a big step, and to popularise ECC, through the No War in Namibia No Win campaign.

Constituency:

The targeted constituency was broadly the same as now - those conscripted or

affected by conscription.

There was, however, a debate concerning the extent of involvement and participation of the black community.

The launch saw for the first time an attempt at defining our constituency. The events around the launch (vigil, concert, meeting) were structured to appeal to our particular community, including religious and cultural aspects as well as a broad appeal.

It was felt that the goals as defined in this phase were met by the end of that first year.

Content:

With regard to the content and message of the ECC, there was a haphazard approach. For example the choice of the Namibia campaign was not a logical choice and was not an ideal first campaign, in retrospect. It was unstrategised.

The content of the declaration was militant and hard hitting and in retrospect inappropriate.

The discussion and formulation of the launch saw a change. The meeting was carefully and consciously strategised, reflecting the broadness of the issue. It was also more focused. Stopped just latching onto issues and began strategising.

PHASE II: LAUNCH TO FESTIVAL

In general this phase can be assessed as being less successful. If targets had been set at the launch, by mid 85 they had not been met.

The ideal content presented itself in the form of troops moving into the townships but we failed to seize this issue until Troops Out Campaign (TOC), one year later.

The post-launch period, the first half of 1985 was a difficult period with ECC struggling to define its role. We picked up on Sebokeng and the increasing civil war. But while support grew, we had missed many gaps through grappling unnecessarily with constituency questions and wasting time in involvement with the International Year of the Youth (IYY) campaign.

Goals in this phase would have been identified as:

- a) building ECC as an organisation, developing its structures.
- b) extending support started at the launch.
- c) national expansion and consolidation.

The first goal was very successful with the building of four sub-committees and representing them on the executive. By the end of this phase ECC was more solid organisationally even though there had been little public work.

The second goal was less successful. We missed the message of Troops in the townships as well as the dilemma posed for conscripts. We did manage to expand and consolidate support in the youth constituency as culture committee expanded.

The third goal saw the appointment of a national organiser and saw a process

of consolidation at the national Peace Festival.

PHASE III: TOC IN MID 1985 UNTIL WJP IN MID 1986

This phase saw the rapid expansion of the campaign. A national conference in mid 1985 saw a decision to bring the focus back to the conscript. To focus on the individual and target conscripts and relatives.

This was not, however, carried through in the content of the following campaigns with the exception of Geldenhuys. ECC moved straight into TOC. This did not meet the major goals coming out of the mid 85 conference directly though it did serve to express conscripts feelings. TOC was high-powered and militant, not directed enough at the conscript but extended support in the black community and church.

It was only through Working for a Just Peace (WJP) campaign that we began to broaden out into the white liberal community. We were more accessible to people other than those who already supported ECC and opened up possibilities for their more active involvement.

PHASE I - III:

All three phases saw the national growth of ECC.

PHASE IV: SINCE DECLARATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY

The emergency had caused a psychological shock for ECC members. Three main areas were addressed:-

1. Maintain and keep organisation intact. A hold was therefore placed on public work as we attempted to:-
 - tightened security
 - improve education and training of activists
 - built effective support structures
 - build effective national and regional channels of co-ordination and contact
 - address the psychological state and morale problems
2. To develop a second level of organising which was less high profile and less risky. There was no clear idea of where to take people reached in this way.
3. We had to continue to campaign at a public level as best as possible. We should not give up our legal space and needed to test and contest it.

The emergency restrictions lead us to decide to broaden our focus to looking at broader, more general militarisation. It was not clear what was meant by broader militarisation however.

Campaigns which followed such as Let ECC Speak and the Yellow Ribbon campaign were defensive in nature. There was no national co-ordination with a War Toys campaign being run in Durban and Pretoria, a War is No Solution (WINS) in Cape Town.

In general the campaign was lacking national cohesion. We had not re-examined or redefined our constituency and were out of touch with it in the light of the changes brought about in the current phase of South African politics.

The increasing state attack and anti-ECC smears had an effect at both an internal and public level.

The emergence of fronts of progressive organisations protesting against the State of Emergency necessitated a response from ECC on the question of our participation and our single-issue nature.

WHAT WERE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF ECC'S HISTORY IN TERMS OF:

1. AIMS
2. CONTENT
3. FORM
4. CONSTITUENCY

1. Aims

We have stopped, recently, defining and identifying our aims clearly at the outset of a campaign. In the past the aims would be clearly spelled out and we could assess our work in terms of those aims. We have failed to do this recently. We seem to have lost sight of broader aims.

We have not reached our stated aims of Phase IV.

We have possibly set aims according to wrong standards.

2. Content

There was a change in the emergency phase from an anti-conscription message to a pro-ECC, as the organisation, message.

We lost our militarization message.

We seem to have become woolly and broad rather than focused and specific. Our demands were less tangible, unachievable and vague.

Pre-emergency saw more tangible demands. We had a better reading of our constituency.

Clear demands versus reactive ones.

Demands arising out of our constituency rather than imposed on them.

Sometimes a wrongly timed reaction

Now over abstracted and missing out on issues.

Just Peace was positive around Phase II, especially when linked to clear demand.

lack of specificity by Just Peace demand.

Honing in on conscripts versus pushing COs. Though had Jan 86 call-up response, WJP and July 87 call-up was blocked by SOE.

Success of WJP due to form

Speaking for rather than at community

Assessing content in terms of the state and our constituency.

More pointed demands will be more successful.

Emergency regulations threw up two possibilities:-

- a) WINS
- b) alternative service (and material effects of conscription)

Are these mutually exclusive or not? Yes, if we want a clear focus. Need tangible, clear and focused campaigns.

WINS has appeal but we cannot provide solutions. It had conjunctural appeal ie. late 86. The point we tried to make in WINS was good but should not have been a campaign. It is a statement rather than a demand. We received flack from the black community concerning content.

WINCLCAJP was even more blurred.

A campaign should have a tangible demand.

3. Form

- used to target constituencies
- used to be more creative
- moved from high profile to low profile
- decentralisation
- narrowing of organisation
- many more internal meetings
- we use forms the white constituency can identify with eg picnics, fair
- people learn through creative forms
- form creates a particular content
- forms based on constituencies
- forms have integrated the life of the community as a whole, not only political life.
- using prominent people carries weight
- unifying forms are very useful to a campaign eg Fast and WJP
- creative media
- diversification of forms under emergency not achieved

4. Constituency

- the same, but have got broader into the white community
- used to target more effectively
- became narrow
- effected by SOE

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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