

At the recent NC meeting a large proportion of the time was used in a conceptual discussion that analysed our constituency after the elections. The discussion then went on to a discussion of our future direction, whether our issue needs to be modified and what style of work needs to be used, given the present talk of 'new ways' of work. In JHB a group of us who were present at the NC got together to put down in the form of this paper, a synthesis of that discussion. We saw it as essential that this kind of discussion be happening in all the regions and hoped that this paper might be a contribution to those discussions.

Our constituency

The discussion started on the theme of examining our constituency, post election. The election results indicate that we had misconceptions about ~~where~~ where our constituency was at. The NP understood the extent of the fear in the white community and provided a clear plan behind which people swung. That plan is basically a mandate for war. To button down the hatches and fight it out.

PFP supporters are depressed and disillusioned,,but whether they will make the jump to extra-parliamentary politics is debatable. Many of these people will now leave, but the group open to extra-parliamentary politics has probably grown as a result of the defeat of the PFP. We are still talking about fringe politics, but our potential constituency has probably grown. The constituency however is shell-shocked and battered. They are still concerned about the same issues but are quite tense about these issues.

Our constituency is still every person who receives the call-up, and his friends and family. That contradiction is still there. We would like to be able to reach all of these people, but our stance on the conscription issue places many of these people outside our grasp. Our stance however becomes more and more important as the conflict escalates because it is these conscripts who are used as the cannon-fodder.

We listed a number of different groups who could potentially support our issue:

- left of the PFP
- disillusioned within the PFP and looking for other solutions
- those who did not vote
- Afrikaner dissent; perhaps the so-called new nats/independants
- students
- white democrats
- churches
- cultural fringe (clubs, etc)
- school students

- ~~XXXXXX~~ dissillusioned conscripts

These different groups fall into a number of broad categories: liberals/ intellectuals / youth-alternative / students / sympathetic christians.

This grouping is asking a whole lot of questions. Their concerns include: future / war / economy / injustice / violence / lack of information / repression authoritarianism / hopelessness / leaderless / anger / ~~XXXX~~ quick saviour-type solutions (the independants).

Our constituency, given the situation is probably more politicised. This means there is more potential within this constituency, but it raises the question about the relevance of our issue. Maybe we have saturated the constituency with our issues? They are looking for total solutions to the country's problems. They are looking for hope in the current state of war. Perhaps we cannot carry on doing nice, gimmicky things with no clear messages?

#### The State's strategy

PW has a mandate to crush the democratic movemeny. Many predict a spate of bannings and detentions. However they also promised reforms, and in some sense have to produce the goods. In pure repression they also take losses; can they afford this? Perhaps the state's repression strategy has been sophisticated. There seems to be greater coordination through the JMC's as well as a more sinister ring with political assassinations and bomb attacks happening.

The government could ban organisations with no real base, because these are easy to. An organisation like the UDF, because of its approach to organising makes it difficult to ban. Its roots in the community and in a wide range of constituencies gives it a resilience the state will have difficulty in breaking.

#### Our Issue

In looking at our constituency and the attitude of the state, in expecting some kind of heavy repression, we need to examine how this affects how we pitch our issue. What kind of content do we give to our message?

We recognised that our constituency is looking for total solutions? ECC has never however given total solutions. The success of the campaign is based in many ways on the narrowness of our campaign. The very nature of our campaign precludes us giving total answers to the questions our constituency is asking. We must not feel we have to answer all the questions but it still

raises the question: must we amend or modify the content of our issue so as to reach our constituency more effectively?

Our issue is conscription. Related issues are militarisation and anti-war. The ~~social~~ social base is the fact that it is the one issue that affects whites directly. It is the one issue that whites understand clearly. The emergency has limited our ability to raise the issue and so we have tended to talk fairly vaguely about war, peace, etc. The motor of the campaign has been that whites are called onto defend Apartheid. We have always rooted our issue within the context of Apartheid. Since WJP however we have focussed a lot on trying to mobilise the mundane opposition to conscription into an effective anti-Apartheid force. Thus we started focussing intently on the Conscript, and pitched our campaign at a level that the conscript could identify with it. The election however has clearly shown that the conscript has voted for the war along with the rest of the white community.

Remembering that our issue is still conscription, given the questions our constituency is asking post-election, do we have to modify our message to try and answer some of the questions our constituency is asking?

To respond adequately to these questions it is clear that a broader anti-Apartheid grouping should be organising nationally. Nationally however no such group exists. The UDF has challenged us to play such a role. In reality we have conscientised people around the issue of conscription but we have not taken them further. In focussing too acutely on the issue of conscription perhaps we have not developed a broader anti-apartheid attitude within our constituency? Maybe the answer lies in participating in broader alliances?

Perhaps another answer is to restate our opposition to conscription within the context of the struggle against Apartheid? This could be by re-launching the declaration, not as a campaign suggestion, but showing to our constituency that we are opposed to Apartheid. To show to our constituency that ECC is an effective opposition to Apartheid. It is a viable forum for people to be involved in, if they are intent on opposing apartheid.

This would not mean fundamental changes in our content, structures or our identity. It is a change in emphasis. We must not lose our single issue, but we need to place it more firmly within our anti-apartheid stance. It means taking up broader anti-apartheid issues, opposing the SADF because it rules the country as much because of its affect on the conscript.

In order to do this effectively it means we need to ensure that we are rooted within our base. We need to ensure that we are responding to the real questions of our constituency. We need to get back to our base, and because of the post-election despondency and depression we need to draw in those people to our base, with a message of hope. This means we need to look at new ways of work.

#### Form of our Work

New ways of work had originally been conceptualised as a way to operate under increasingly repressive conditions. It was seen as a way to make sure that the issue of conscription remains organic to the constituency even if ECC is banned. The discussion however raised the question, that we need these new ways because of the state of our constituency, the questions people are asking, the need for us to get to our extended base.

Our work to date has tended to be high profile propaganda work. This has been successful but under the emergency we have been severely curtailed in this. The UDF and other township organisations have a history of rooting themselves in a mass way within their constituencies. It seems we need to do this, although there is no history of this within the white community and we are not sure at all what mass work means in the white constituency - we do not even know if it is possible.

At NC the different regions talked about how they saw what new ways of work means. These included:

- the membership drive
- becoming more self-sufficient
- networking with related organisations
- maintaining and sophisticating the front.
- protecting activists
- getting other groups to take up our issues

This raised the problem that there was no clear national concept of new ways. We need to develop a clear understanding of this direction at a national level.

Mass membership within our constituency raises a number of problems. The real question is what we do with these people once they become members. A minimum is that they pay a subscription fee. Do we take the membership drive further? This discussion raised the question of national discussion and co-ordination and fed into the discussion about the need for an extended NC meeting or a national conference to make decisions and help us in moving in this direction.

**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.