

March 23 1987

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We would like to express our support for an opinion survey on South South African attitudes to be conducted by Dr Philip Frankel, senior lecturer in the Department of Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand.

A section of such a survey dealing with white South African attitudes to the South African Defence Force and to military conscription will be of great interest to all who are concerned about the effects of militarisation of our society. Dr Frankel's work could provide a basis for discovering the extent to which white South Africans are prepared for reforms with respect to the current system of compulsory military service.

We believe these issues are of concern to all South Africans concerned about social justice and the prospects for peace and prosperity in our country. At the moment young white men are required to do a total of four years military service - an initial two years National Service followed by a further two years of camps. For many this means being called upon to do "duty" in the black townships where they will have to face fellow South Africans of their own age in combat.

Aside from the moral consideration of conscripting young men to take sides in a civil war, this situation has serious implications for the South African economy. Last year over 14 000 South Africans emigrated, most of them business and professional people and their families. One effect of this situation is the rapid depletion of the skills base of the economy. From our experience it is clear that many of these people leave because of the situation of compulsory military service which so severely affects them and their families. Not only is business required to pay large chunks of their potential profits in taxation to finance the education of those who emigrate because of conscription, but they also face the prospect of having to pay their young employees for periods up to three months a year while they do SADF camps.

In the past Dr Frankel's research into the military, and particularly his seminal book, Pretoria's Pretorians, has been of tremendous use to all concerned about understanding the role of the military in our society. We believe an opinion survey conducted along scientific lines and related to political attitudes at this time of change will add significantly to this body of knowledge. It could be significant not only at the level of information but also at a policy level in providing backing for moves towards reform in this regard.

We encourage you to give your full support to this project.

*Sheena Duncan
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