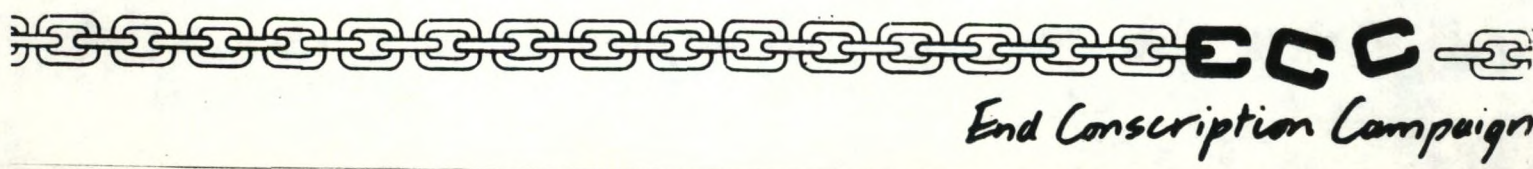


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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

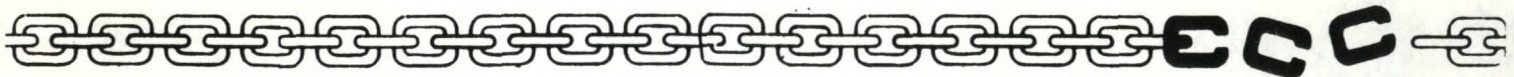
PRESS RELEASE

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INTRODUCTION

The End Conscription Campaign is working for a change in the law regarding compulsory military service in South Africa. We believe that conscripts should be given freedom of choice as to how they are to serve their country. Our focus for 1988 is to campaign for a realistic alternative to national service. In addition we are focussing on the rights of conscripts in the SADF.



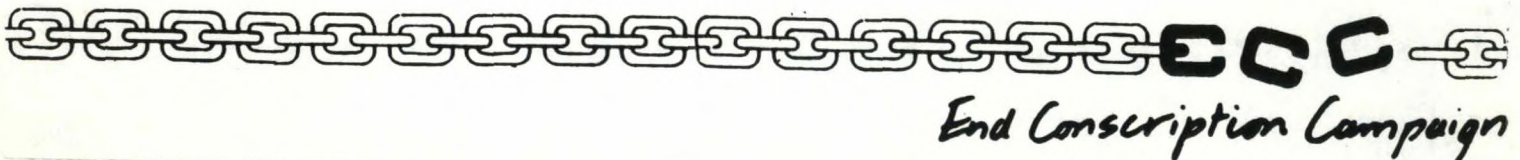
End Conscription Campaign

1. THE SYSTEM OF CONSCRIPTION

Conscription into the SADF was introduced in 1961 in terms of a ballot system. Since then, the number of conscripts and the length of military service has steadily increased.

At present, all white men up to the age of fifty-five are required to complete a period of two years initial service in the SADF. This is followed by Citizen Force camps of a maximum of seven hundred and twenty days spread over twelve years. Provision is also made for all white males up to the age of 55 years to serve 12 days a year in the Commando Force.

The Minister of Defence told parliament in April 1988 that an estimated R705 000 000,00 was spent yearly to maintain the system of national service.



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2. CURRENT ALTERNATIVES TO MILITARY SERVICE

Alternatives are offered to service in the SADF in terms of an amendment to the Defence Act passed in 1983. This amendment broadened the category of persons who could be recognised as conscientious objectors to include all universal religious pacifists.

In terms of this legislation religious objectors can apply to the Board for Religious Objection to do either non-combatant service in the SADF or non-military community service in a government department for one and a half times the length of military service due.

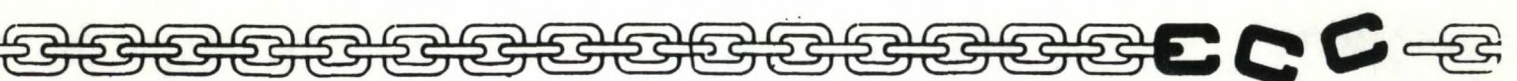
No provision is made for those who object to service in the SADF on moral, ethical, humanitarian or political grounds. Conscripts who object for any one of these reasons face a jail sentence of one and a half times the time owed to the SADF, a six year sentence for those who have not done their initial two years.

3. THE MORAL DILEMMA

Many of those conscripted face profound moral, religious, humanitarian and political dilemmas. Trained and skilled people are choosing to leave South Africa rather than serve in the army against their consciences.

Reasons given for failing to render military service include :

- * South Africa's involvement in Angola's civil war and its support for the rebel Unita movement is morally indefensible and wasteful of this country's resources;
 - * In view of South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia no moral justification can be found for the SADF's military rule of the north of Namibia and South Africa's hindering of Namibian independence;
 - * The SADF's involvement in townships in South Africa actively associates it, and the conscripts it uses, with the maintenance of the morally abhorrent system of apartheid, increases polarization between black and white South Africans and deepens the conflict in our country.
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4. THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Since 1983 there have been a number of conscientious objectors convicted for their refusal to serve in the SADF.

PHILIP WILKINSON

Convicted : Fourteenth of May 1987
For : Failure to report for a camp
Sentence : R600 fine

“The SADF defends apartheid, which in terms of my Christian understanding is a heresy. For me to participate in the SADF would therefore be a betrayal of all that I know to be good and just.”

DR IVAN TOMS

Convicted : Fourth of March 1988
For : Refusal to serve in the SADF
Sentence : 21 months imprisonment

“I refuse to serve in an army that defends apartheid, rather than the whole nation of South Africa. If the SADF was truly a defence force protecting the rights and property of all South Africans, then I would willingly serve.”

DAVID BRUCE

Convicted : Twenty fifth of July 1988
For : Refusal to serve in the SADF
Sentence : 6 years imprisonment

“I would be willing to serve in an army which is involved in fighting for and defending all the people of this country. I am not prepared to serve in the defence of a racist political system.”



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5. THE "BRAIN DRAIN"

Between 1984 and 1987 South Africa lost 1651 engineers, 329 doctors and dentists and 714 from the accounting profession. In a 1987 survey of Rhodes University students, 57 per cent of those planning to emigrate cited conscription as their major reason for leaving.

The Department of National Education has estimated that the "brain drain" costs the government more than R11 million a year in wasted investments in university training alone.

There is also a growing population of "semi-fugitive nomads". These are people who simply fail to report for military service and evade the SADF for as long as possible. According to evidence in 5 different trials in 1985, an average of 25 per cent of conscripts failed to report for their camps. Many of these men govern their lives by the desire to evade military call-ups. This is both a disruption to our community and an invisible drain on the economy.

6. ALTERNATIVE NATIONAL SERVICE

A limited survey conducted in 1986 revealed that a number of bodies involved with rural and urban development, social welfare and conservation would be willing to accommodate people doing alternative service for extended or short-term periods. These bodies included the Urban Foundation, the Rural Foundation and Operation Hunger.

South Africa is a country with many development needs. There is a desperate shortage of housing, rural medical personnel, trained farmers in rural areas ... the list of needs is daunting. Alternative servers could go a long way towards addressing these needs.

The ECC has put forward interim proposals with regard to alternative national service. These are :

1. That all objectors be recognised, and allowed to do community service.
2. That the community service be the same length as military service.
3. That the community service be allowed in non-state organisations as well.

These demands along with argument were submitted as evidence to the Geldenhuys Committee investigating the Defence Act in Cape Town on the 13th of August 1985.

On the 15th of June this year the ECC and the SADF met to discuss the proposals, which were forwarded to General Malan for consideration.



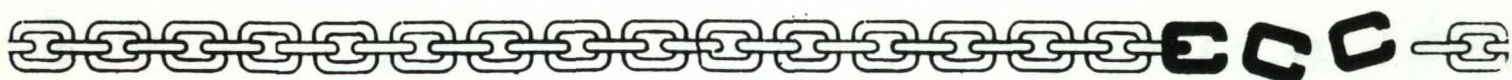
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7. ALTERNATIVE SERVICE PROJECTS

The ECC believes these proposals are practical and achievable. In order to demonstrate this, the ECC has embarked on a number of alternative service projects. Most of these were clustered together in the first quarter of 1986. We entitled these "Working for a Just Peace".

Six hundred volunteers around the country worked on projects that we believe constitute real national service. We helped plant trees, renovate creches, lay water pipes and clear rubbish in black communities. We were welcomed with open arms by township residents at a time when they were strongly demanding the withdrawal of the SADF.

ECC believes that these projects not only showed the viability of a system of alternative national service, but also (in a limited way) the nature of that service.



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8. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICE

Other countries also conscript their youth. Some of them provide alternative service to conscientious objectors.

Listed are the forms of service available in some countries.

AUSTRIA

- General and mental hospitals**
- Forestry service**
- Social service eg. work with the underprivileged and poor.**

BELGIUM

- Hospitals**
 - Social service eg. with lepers and in prisons**
 - In human rights organisations**
 - In peace movements**
 - Overseas development service.**
-

DENMARK

Objectors attend Peace Schools before placement.

- Forestry service**
- Social service eg. work with the handicapped and maladjusted**
- Overseas development service.**

FINLAND

- Municipal and State institutions eg. fire fighting, repair and maintenance of public property**
- In the University Peace Research Bureau.**

FRANCE

- Hospitals**
 - Forestry service**
 - Non-violence training and Peace Education.**
-

GERMANY

- In ecological centres and environmental organisations
- Hospitals
- Social services
- Overseas development service
- Peace training.

NETHERLANDS

- Peace movements
- In ecological centres and environmental organisations
- Hospitals
- Social service
- In human rights organisations
- Overseas development service.

NORWAY

Objectors undergo peace training before placement.

- Land reclamation and drainage of farms
- Forestry
- Social service.

POLAND

– Priests and irreplaceable farm workers continue their normal work, supervised by the Ministry of Employment.

SWEDEN

- Forestry service
 - Hospitals
 - Emergency corps work in disaster areas for those technically competent.
-



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9. "KNOW YOUR RIGHTS"

For those facing a call-up, information around their legal options, and rights in the SADF, is a great need. The ECC has sought to address this need through our 'Know Your Rights' focus, including our Call-up booklet 'Know Your Rights in the SADF'.



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