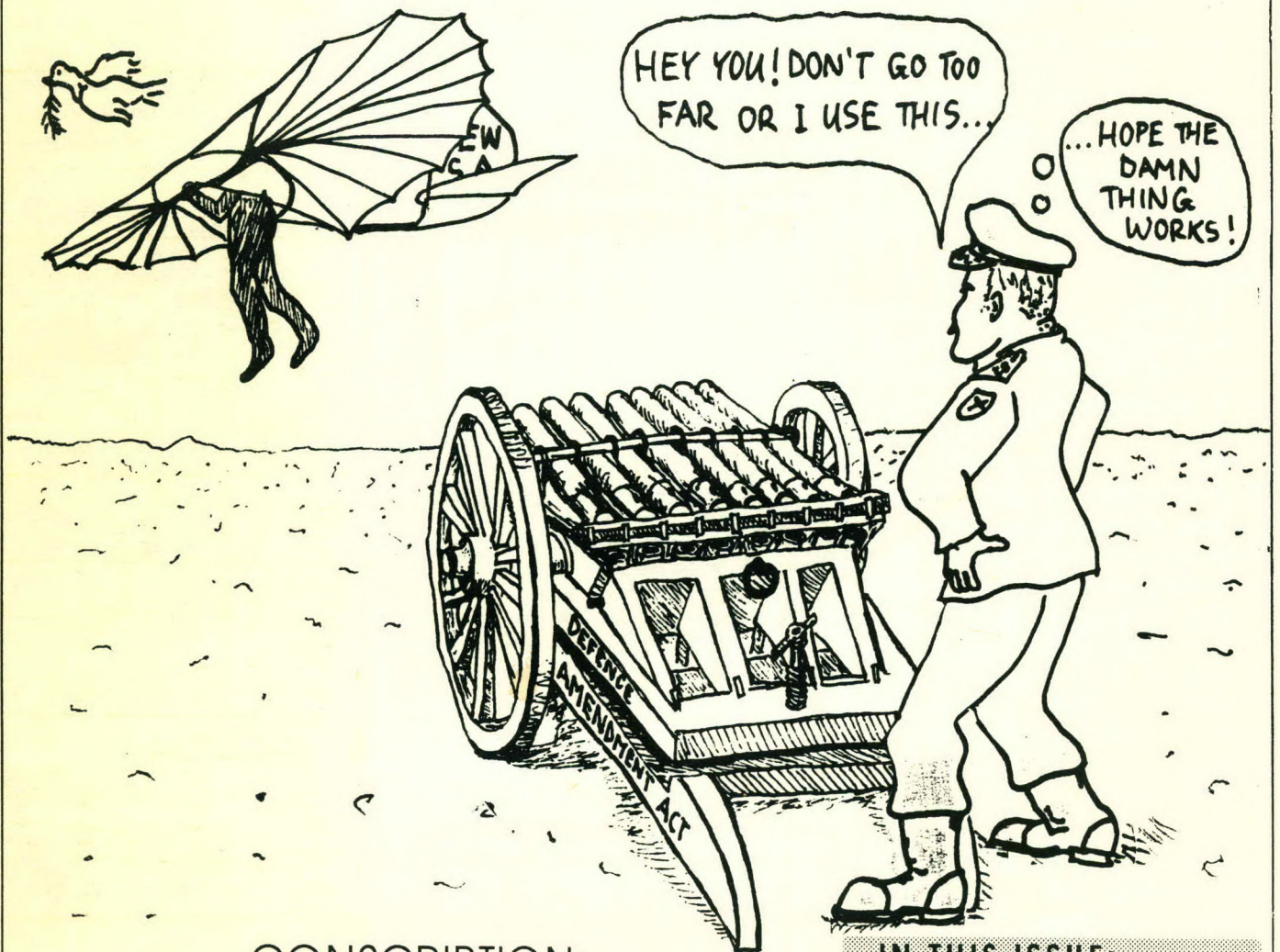


the Objector

JUNE 1992



CONSCRIPTION:

The final
showdown
looms...

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * SADF intimidation campaign
- * Court challenge to conscription
- * COSG input to CODESA
- * Antimilitarisation conference
- * COSG reps to go overseas

...and much more!

EDITORIAL

The Objector has survived being transplanted from Johannesburg to Durban, with production being taken over by new volunteer staff. We hope to resume the previous regular publication. Like South African society in general, the peace movement is in a state of flux, so there should be plenty to report for the foreseeable future.

No major protests followed what was possibly the government's most sinister action of the year - its allocation of R 9700 000 000 to "Defence" - of which almost half was designated "special" funding, in other words not subject to auditing.

It is now common cause that the government deliberately destabilised our society; what can only be guessed is the extent to which this continues. The military budget provides no reassurance in this regard.

The recently passed Defence Amendment Act has similarly disturbing implications; by making some concession to the large numbers of conscripts no longer willing to serve under the "old" system, the government hopes to extend the life of what it seems to see as its guarantee of a veto in negotiations.

The mere fact that the government is willing to reaffirm jail penalties for those refusing racial conscription, while claiming to have abolished apartheid and to be negotiating a new dispensation, throws doubt on its sincerity. However, it remains to be seen whether the new law can be enforced any more effectively than the previous one (since it skirts the issue of the racial nature of conscription - the main issue on the minds of the majority of those unwilling to serve, including the new, potentially large, category of rightwing objectors).

The struggle continues!

WILL THE SADF'S INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGN POLITICISE CAMPERS?

In an attempt to reduce the widespread disregard for Citizen Force callups ("camps"), the SADF has widely publicised the court-martial of a number of men accused of failing to report.

In March it was reported that 23 members of Hillcrest Regiment (Pretoria) were fined up to R400 each, and that this was "just the beginning" - that other units were warned that they could also face such action. Since then members of other regiments have had phone calls threatening prosecution should they not respond to forthcoming callups.

However, it seems that charges are being dropped if civilian legal representation is called in; the state is avoiding public trials.

While many "campers" feel that a modest fine is a small price to pay for escaping a camp,

especially as 60-day camps have been reintroduced, a problem is that such call-ups can be repeated (which makes one wonder whether the SADF has decided to supplement its reduced budget!).

This tactic could well backfire if larger numbers of conscripts decide that instead of failing to report, they will take the more serious step of refusing to serve. This theoretically carries heavier penalties but puts an end to future callups - especially while the state seems at least temporarily paralysed in acting against formal objectors.

The recent extension of the community service option to objectors other than religious ones will at most serve as a stopgap in this regard, and will in any case be impossible to implement in time for this year's July call-up.

NATIONAL ANTIMILITARISATION CONSULTATION

COSG and the ECC are joining forces to convene a national conference to determine the future of antimilitarism in South Africa. To be held towards the end of this year, it will involve general membership of the organisations and others such as CAS. The outcome will be fully covered in the next issue of Objector. COSG is having a national meeting in Durban on the 4th of July,

COSG REPS TO GO OVERSEAS

As part of COSG's drive to involve itself more fully with the world peace movement, it is sending two representatives to international gatherings in July.

Paul Goller of the Johannesburg branch is travelling to New York for the annual council of War Resisters International, of which COSG is now an associate member.

After the council meeting, he will speak in various parts of the U.S.A. before attending the

national conference of the War Resisters League in Oregon.

Michael Graaf of the Durban branch is to attend the International C.O. Meeting (ICOM) near Lyons in France, after which he will do some networking in various parts of Europe.

The two will be briefed at a national meeting of COSG in Durban, shortly before their departure (see box above).



UPDATE ON S.A. WAR RESISTANCE

Above: Phola Park victims
(pic: Kevin Carter - Weekly Mail)

December 1991:

- * The ECC's call "End Conscription Now" pamphlet in major newspapers;
- * Minister of "Defence", Roelf Meyer, reaffirms the SADF's commitment to conscription, claiming that the reduced military budget precludes a volunteer army.

January 1992:

- * The ECC tells Roelf Meyer in an open letter that racial conscription is illegal and unenforceable, and predicts that less than 50% of the January intake will report for duty;
- * The rightwing Aksie Volkseie Weermag warns that its members will only serve for the good of, and within, their "own community";
- * The SADF claims that 90% of the January intake reported; the ECC dismisses this as a cover-up;
- * Wynand Breytenbach, Deputy Minister of "Defence", announces

a Cabinet decision not to prosecute those who fail to report for service; this is contradicted by Minister Roelf Meyer, who says they are "still liable for prosecution";

* Hundreds of phone calls to the ECC and CAS reveal widespread confusion and dissatisfaction amongst conscripts.

February 1992:

- * Reports indicate U.S. diplomatic pressure on S.A. to stop international arms sales and scale down its missile manufacturing capability;
- * Armscor announces that a new (government-owned) group, Denel, will take over its industrial and commercial subsidiaries - Armscor's function will be arms procurement for government.

March 1992:

* Submissions by the ECC and COSG are amongst those forwarded to CODESA.

* The ECC and a conscript, Richard Rule, lodge an application at the Transvaal Supreme Court for a declaration on the legality of racial conscription (see story on p 2);

* The SADF publicises the courtmartial of 50 members of Pretoria's Hillcrest Regiment who failed to report for a "camp" (see story on p 2);

* The 1992 "Defence" Budget of R9,7 billion is 5,6% more than that of 1991 - inflation means that this is a slight reduction, but almost half is allocated to "Special" projects which have included covert actions; the Police vote of R5,6 bn is up by 21,8% - above the inflation rate;

* The government says the continued existence of the ANC army Umkhonto weSizwe ("MK") is a major obstacle to constitutional negotiations;

* Roelf Meyer announces the reintroduction of 60-day "camps", due to escalating unrest;

(continued overleaf)

(update contd)

- * The Conservative Party calls for conscription to be scrapped on the grounds that it is racist, saying that white liberals who voted for reform should voluntarily provide military personnel requirements;
- * Roelf Meyer denies newspaper reports that the government and the ANC are nearing agreement on the future of the SADF, homeland armies and MK;
- * The Rand Supreme Court dismisses the state's appeal against the acquittal of Peter auf der Heyde on charges of failure to register for military service, saying that such failure is not a criminal offence.* Reports by the U.S. Defence Intelligence Agency claim that elements of the SADF are still supplying RENAMO bandits from a base near the Kruger Park, in contravention of the Komati Accord, and that a "systematic and growing pattern" of illegal transfers of US military technology to SA, via Israel, has been uncovered.

April 1992

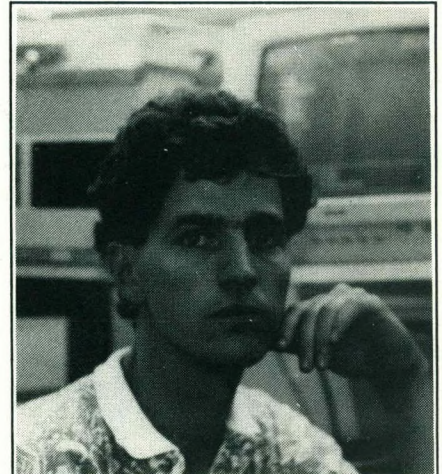
- * Roelf Meyer threatens to amend the Defence Act to remove the loophole which allowed Peter auf der Heyde's acquittal;
- * 32 Battalion members rampage in the Phola Park squatter settlement; a Commission of Inquiry is appointed; SADF members also accused of assault and looting at Bekkersdal shack settlement.
- * The "coloured" Cape Corps is disbanded; its members are absorbed into the new 9 SA Infantry Battalion, which consists of "coloureds", "Indians", and blacks - despite scrapping of racial classification.
- * Northern Transvaal Council of Churches calls on township and village leaders to demand SADF withdrawal;
- * Chris Hani, chief of staff of MK (ANC's armed wing) replaced by Sipiwe Nyande;

COURT CHALLENGE TO CONSCRIPTION

In March the End Conscription Campaign announced its application, made jointly with conscript Richard Rule, to the Transvaal Supreme Court for a ruling that whites-only conscription is "unlawful, invalid and of no effect."

Besides the repeal of the Population Registration Act, Rule, who has completed two years of initial training and several annual "camps", cited the unreasonableness of expecting soldiers to act as police, and the detrimental economic effect of conscription, as reasons for his refusal to serve.

The court's decision is expected in July.



ABOVE: *Richard Rule (27) is an instrument technician and marathon runner who, after a Catholic upbringing, served as an SADF junior leader on the Angola/Namibia border in 1985-86.*

- * Evidence of Armscor supplying cluster-bombs to Iraq emerges in a civil case in Guernsey;
- * The SA government announces legislation against private armies.

May 1992

- * Gene Louw replaces Roelf Meyer as Minister of "Defence";
- * Government rejects the ANC call for an international peacekeeping force to oversee transition in SA;
- * *New Nation* publishes a military document implicating senior security personnel in the 1985 assassination of township activists;
- * The Defence Amendment Bill is tabled, containing proposed extensions of community service to other categories of objector than religious, and a new provision for jail sentences, as well as various loophole-closing measures.

June 1992

- * The most controversial clauses are dropped from the Defence Amendment Bill after urgent representations by church and business sectors, and by organisations (see article, p6).
- * President de Klerk hints that he may accept the deployment of an international monitoring force in order to halt the escalation of violence.
- * The Goldstone Commission on violence advises that 32 Battalion (a unit composed of Angolans) never again be used to maintain law and order, after the Phola Park incident.
- * The ANC, in its ultimatum to the government, demands (amongst other things) the disbanding of all special forces, particularly those employing foreign nationals, before negotiations can resume.

International Briefs

Information from Peace News Bulletin

Spain:

- National Council for Spanish C.O. reports that 1991 applications for C.O. were 20,851, and expects this figure to grow by 30% in 1992 -- alternative service is to be reduced from 18 to 13 months.

Ukraine:

- C.O. Alexei Skopin remains in jail despite the republic's recent independence. He maintains that both Soviet and Ukrainian law violate freedom of conscience.

U.S.A.:

- More than 20 Marines imprisoned for refusing to obey orders related to the Gulf war are released, most having served about six months of sentences of 12-18 months. "Only 7 or 8" remain in Camp Lejeune, but more than 100 other soldiers out of 315 Pentagon-acknowledged C.O. applicants (over 2500 actually filed for C.O. discharges) are imprisoned or awaiting court-martial on charges such as AWOL.

- A more liberal draft C.O. law has been tabled in Congress, in response to the abuses which emerged as a result of "Operation Desert Storm".

- Tax resisters Randy Kehler and Betsy Corner re-occupy their house after being released from jail, despite federal authorities having auctioned it in their absence, in an attempt to retrieve outstanding taxes.

Poland:

- Roman Satuszko, first religious objector since the change of regime, sentenced to 18 months in prison after being refused the right to apply for alternative service; about 4000 objectors apply per year in Poland.

(Source: *Tygodnik Powszechny* -- thanks to Beatrice for translation!)

"WHAT'S UP WITH THE CALL-UP?" MEETING IN DURBAN

A public information meeting entitled "What's up with the Call-up?" will be held in the Jubilee Hall, in the Durban City Hall complex at 19:30 on Thursday 2 July. It will be addressed by Jo'burg ECC chairperson Chris de Villiers, conscription counsellor Richard Steele and Durban North M.P. Mike Ellis, as well as various conscripts refusing to serve.

Where are they now?

-- objectors of the past

In 1988, David Bruce became the first C.O. to receive the maximum six-year sentence provided for by South Africa's Defence Amendment Act of 1983. He was released after 22 months, when the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court ruled that courts had the discretion to impose lesser sentences.

After his release, David worked in a music shop and then spent 10 months editing the journal **Critical Health**. Recently he became full-time National Office coordinator for the End Conscription Campaign.

National Decisions

COSG's two branches have made several important decisions at a December national meeting and a telephone conference in March. Some, such as the sending of reps to ICOM and WRI, are covered in other articles. Others include:

* transfer of Objector editorship to Durban (which is why there's been a gap in publication!);

* adoption of a constitutional clause under the title "Association not for gain", to protect us from new tax laws.

Ahoy there, readers!

Now that regular publication of **The Objector** is resuming, you are encouraged to make use of these pages as a forum.

You may remember that the last issue carried a proposal by some COSG members for a widely-based South African peace movement, and an invitation to readers to submit responses or proposals of their own. Only one arrived, and it was so verbose, incoherent and self-indulgent that it has not been printed, by agreement of the members at a monthly meeting. However, the invitation still stands, and you are also welcome to send letters (or -- dare I say it? -- articles) on any topic related to the struggle against conscription and militarisation.

Although drafts of articles in this issue were circulated amongst Durban COSG members, ultimate editorial responsibility lies with myself, Michael Graaf, and I apologise for the delay in publication -- this is my first effort and it's been a learning experience!

Amendment Act passed ... after crucial cuts

Intense lobbying by church, business and political sectors led to the abandonment of the most controversial aspects of the Defence Amendment Bill before it was tabled in Parliament. Clauses dealing with unilateral conscription into the police force, mandatory sentencing by courts, and nullification of C.O. status in times of war (!) were among the "casualties" (critics of the Bill claimed that certain parts of it were so clumsily drafted as to make no sense). After these cuts, the Bill was tabled and passed as the Defence Amendment Act of 1992.

Pressure

Representations made to the relevant parliamentary select committee suggested that an attempt to enforce legislation based on the bill as it was originally formulated would have been disastrous. Thousands would have faced jail sentences,

and a renewed wave of exiles would have accelerated the "brain drain". Some of those making representation were the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the End Conscription Campaign, the SA Council of Churches, and business groups. The ANC also publically demanded the withdrawal of the Bill.

Streamlining

Although the clauses removed from the bill were the most repressive, a number of "streamlining" features were retained and are now law. For example, the loophole identified by the Transvaal Supreme Court, in the case of Peter auf der Heyde, whereby potential conscripts were relieved of legal obligation to register, has now been closed -- except that the new Act gives no more clarity than the old one on the question of who is defined as a potential

conscript, now that the Population Registration Act is gone; the state has failed to protect its Achilles heel because it cannot afford to make explicit its continuing reliance on racial categories to ensure the continuation of racial privilege.

The road ahead

At least, and at last, the government has put its cards on the table. Its strategic commitment to continued military domination is implicit in the Act. Other parties to negotiations can respond to its "security" agenda -- and the ANC has done so by its ultimatum.

However, insofar as various concessions have been made, and a new system introduced, conscripts and their supporters will be able to continue finding loopholes and gaps, and using them to paralyse the machine -- the next issue of **The Objector** will

Do you want to continue receiving
The Objector?

Yes No

(if "yes", please enclose a subscription fee)

Name:

Address:

Postal Code:

Telephone number (if SA):

I would like to join COSG

(SA residents only)

Send to COSG, Box 2861, Durban 4000, South Africa

The Objector is produced by the Conscientious Objector Support Group, Box 2861, Durban 4000, South Africa. A year's subscription is valid for four issues.

A year's subscription costs R20 or US \$20.

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.