

Newsletter of the Cape Town

ECC *Calendar*

End Conscription Committee

International

Support flows in

The Troops out of the Townships campaign received international support from organisations and individuals in at least 12 countries throughout the world.

Messages of support for the ECC and the recent "Troops out" campaign came from the Philippines, Latin America, the USA, the UK, Europe, Australia, and Zimbabwe. Among them was a message from Denis Healey, a leading member of the British Labour Party and Shadow Minister of Defence. He wrote:

"I very much sympathise with the goals of your campaign to provide the rights of conscientious objection for conscripts forced to serve in the townships and Namibia. I hope that your fast went well, and that your campaign meets with success and that you will be able to convey my support to those actively involved."

Another message was received from 75 German war resisters on pilgrimage to Assisi, who heard of the ECC campaign. Many of those who wrote to us, also engaged in protest action - some in the international solidarity fast on 6/7 October, others wrote letters to Louis le Grange in protest at the detention of ECC members. An exciting letter was received from a group of Chilean refugees in Switzerland, who wrote:

"We express our solidarity with all South Africans

and with all organisations which attempt to overcome apartheid by non-violent means and wish you success in your efforts."

A German peace group, affiliated to the international Catholic movement, Pax Christi, wrote to express their delight at hearing part of their message to the Peace Rally read out by Archbishop Russell in a German TV programme on the ECC.

ECC also received a surprise donation - from Humanitas International, an American human rights organisation whose president is singer Joan Baez. They wrote: "Enclosed please find our check as a token of our support for the very important work you are doing in South Africa today. It is indeed encouraging to see the contribution which you are making towards fighting against the increasing militarism of the South African state. You can be sure that we will be drawing public attention in the US to the work which you are doing, and the price which your officers are having to pay for their commitment. We wish you lots of luck in the future. Keep up the good work."

ECC's international contact has made an important contribution in bringing the issues of conscription and militarisation in South Africa to people throughout the world. The response we have attracted has been heartwarming and is an inspiration to all of us to carry on the work of ECC.

Comment

The Emergency and the Conscript

For two and a half months the army and police have had a continuous presence in Cape Town's townships and suburbs. Little restraint has been shown in the way the security forces have conducted themselves. Atrocities have been well-documented by the press and by monitoring groups.

ECC is particularly concerned at the use of conscripts in the present conflict. Both army and navy national servicemen have been used to line the streets of Athlone, to quell resistance in Guguletu and even to seal off Belmont Road, Rondebosch. Now conscripts are being used in the "cleaning up" operations being conducted from Manenberg police station.

The dilemma facing conscripts, who have no choice but to obey orders, is a severe one. And even more so since the declaration of the state of emergency at the end of October. The situation now exists where an 18 year old national serviceman can arrest, detain and search anyone. And he can act with total indemnity from any legal action. If the powers now wielded by all members of the security forces are awesome, how much more so when they are wielded by an untrained young conscript?

Six weeks ago 4 000 people attended an ECC Peace Rally in the City Hall. The demands which echoed from that gathering have even more pertinence today:

- * that the troops should be withdrawn from the townships and suburbs.
- * that the system of compulsory conscription should be ended.

In addition ECC strongly condemns the recently imposed news black-out. Now not only will the security forces operate with complete indemnity, but their actions will be unmonitored and unreported. Only a police state in the grips of civil war denies its citizens the right to information.

ECC under attack

* Sept 7: In Durban, deputy defence minister Adriaan Vlok alleges that ECC is being "used by the ANC to achieve the banned organisation's evil goals." (Natal Mercury, 9.9.85)

* September 9: Detention of 4 ECC activists, Mike Evans, Anita Kromberg, Richard Steele and Sue Britton. Houses raided in all 5 centres where there are ECC branches. Detainees released after 2 weeks without charges being laid.

* September 20: Scathing attacks on ECC by Magnus Malan at the Transvaal National Party Congress and by Major General Van Loggerenberg, Chief Director of Operations, at a passing out parade.

* October 6: Right-wing National Students Federation publishes advertisements in 2 Sunday newspapers (cost: R6 000) - insinuations and questions mirror exactly those raised by security police when interrogating ECC detainees.

* October 25: ECC listed among 102 organisations whose meetings are banned in most parts of the Western Cape.

* October 27: Scurrilous attack on ECC in 'Rapport' newspaper. Full of unfounded allegations and libellous assertions. ECC takes newspaper to Media Council.

November 2: Ivan Toms detained and then released.

The past 2 months have seen a dramatic increase in state action against the ECC. In the first half of the year there was the security police raid on the ECC national conference held in January near Durban, the withdrawal of Cardinal Arns' visa at the time of the ECC Peace Festival, and the frequent banning of ECC publications and media.

But it is only over the past 2 months that the onslaught against ECC appeared to be concerted and co-ordinated. What's changed things? First, the Peace Festival held in June and the national "Troops out" campaign held in September indicated a dramatic increase in support for the campaign.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the

presence and conduct of the security forces in the townships has significantly intensified the dilemma faced by conscripts. ECC has increasingly come to be seen as the mouthpiece of conscripts as well as their friends and relatives who regarded the ending of conscription as part of the solution of their dilemma.

Clearly the government is increasingly intolerant of this. Its actions and those of the SADF have led to growing dissent. The ECC has become the scapegoat in this situation. Could this not be a clear indication of the fear that government has of the ECC gaining in support?

Yet ECC has shown that despite harassment and repression, the campaign continues to grow. ECC's participation in the recent initiative of the "23 organisations" is just one example of a creative response to intensified state action. And ECC is confident that for as long as young men are forced into the SADF, so the call to end conscription will echo louder and louder, however the authorities might choose to act.

International

Overseas Tour



Cape Town ECC member, Pete Hathorn: carrying the campaign to Europe and India.

In another exciting development 2 ECC members are at present on a tour of Europe and India. They have gone as representatives of ECC to meet with a host of foreign organisations sympathetic to our campaign. The two, ECC National Coordinator, Laurie Nathan, and Cape Town ECC member, Pete Hathorn, are to address a conference on conscientious objection in Helsinki, and the triennial conference of the War Resisters' International in India. They are expected back in early January.

Campaign

Relief Fund

At the peace rally which rounded off the "Troops out of the Townships" campaign there was a call made for donations. These would be forwarded to the South African Council of Churches Emergency relief fund, a fund for the benefit of victims of the state of emergency. ECC is happy to announce that the collection taken amounted to R638,00. This money has been ed over to the SACC.

Working for Peace

ECC has constantly asserted that it is not opposed in principle to the concept of national service. It is opposed, however, to compulsory military service.

However, a genuine 'national' service is one which serves the nation as a whole. To do this, it needs to meet the real material needs of the people.

With this in mind, ECC has decided to embark on a national campaign in March/April focussing on the issue of "Alternative National Service". The intention will be to demonstrate through work projects that genuine national service is a real option; and that ECC is not just opposed to conscription, but also supportative of a real process of peace-building.

The process of defining the work projects will be as important as the work itself. Organisations rep-

representative of the people will be consulted over the next few months. This is important because it will ensure that projects embarked on are not imposed on the people.

ECC believes that this could be one of our most

exciting and dynamic campaigns. Following editions of ECC Calendar will provide more information on the projects, and on how readers can enlist in ECC's "Peace Corps".

ARE YOU AFFECTED BY CONSCRIPTION ?

Open Forum Discussion, with: * a wife of a conscript
* a conscript's father
* a Cape Flats teacher.

Rondebosch Congregational Church Hall.

Wednesday, 4 December 1985 — 8.00 pm

Our friends often ask us if there is any way in which they could aid the work of the ECC. If you feel you could undertake any of the following, please fill in the slip and return it to us.

I could:

Assist in pamphlet distribution in the streets.
Take delivery of 5 extra newsletters and pass them on to my friends.
Take part in a legal, one-person stand.

Subscribe to this newsletter at R5,00 per annum.
Become a donor subscriber at:

R15,00 R30,00 R50,00 R100,00 per annum

SEND TO : P O BOX 208, WOODSTOCK, 7915

Name:

Address:

Telephone No.: