

# NON-VIOLENCE

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## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

The Review of Charles Yeats' Court Martial took place on 5th February 1982 and his sentence of one year imprisonment with ignominious discharge from the SADF was confirmed. The sentence is now regarded as having started on that day instead of at the end of his DB sentence which would have been the 13th May. He was transferred to Pretoria Central Prison on 9th March and was allowed to take up his UNISA studies again on 3rd May.

In the case of Mike Viveiros, who was sentenced on 23rd February to 18 months imprisonment, the Review took place on the 15th April and the sentence, with ignominious discharge, was reduced to one year. He was transferred to Pretoria Central Prison on 20th April.

Both are short term prisoners and as such are allowed one 30 minute visit by two people per month. Two letters of not more than 500 words are allowed in and out each month. For this reason friends are asked not to attempt to visit them at all, since the parents in each case arrange who will visit each month, and to write briefly to their home addresses so that again the parents can put at least your name and perhaps some of your message into the two letters that they write. The addresses are:

Charles Yeats, c/o Box 986, Durban 4000

Michael Viveiros, c/o Box 11581, Isando 1600

Initially both prisoners understood that, as is the case with "security" offenders, there would be no possibility of remission of sentence. However, the announcement by the Minister of Justice on 12th May that security prisoners will in future be considered for remission gives some hope of a shorter term of imprisonment.

The costs of the Supreme Court application made last year by Charles Yeats, which exceeded R12,000, have been met mostly by donations from the major churches in South Africa and this is an encouraging sign of their commitment to a concern that they have supported in resolutions over the past few years. There is still a claim to come from the SADF for their costs in that hearing.

## DEFENCE AMENDMENT BILL

This Bill, which would extend registration for call-up to all white males from 17 to 60 years of age and lengthens the period of service required of National Servicemen, contains no new provision for COs except that in Section 67(3), which refers to non-combatants, the words "in defence of the Republic" are removed from the definition of the service non-combatants are required to render.

The Minister of Defence was reported as saying on 2nd April that a number of investigations into defence matters are under way including the "problem of COs". These investigations could lead to the introduction of further legislation which would influence the proposed new system of military service.

When the second reading of the Bill was passed and the principle of a CO provision could then not be introduced, the Leader of the Opposition made a statement on the views of his party on the matter. The following is a translation of the report in Beeld of 22/4/82:

"He drew a distinction between people with conscientious objections who are prepared to serve, but not in combatant units, and those who are not at all prepared to serve in the army. The statement dealt chiefly with the latter.

The PFP supports the idea of a Tribunal, on which churches, the Army and legal men would serve, which would test the principles and the sincerity of people with conscientious objections.

The objectors who were recognised must then be given the opportunity to serve the country in a non-combatant and in a non-military capacity for a period of time that is longer than the normal continuous national service period.

This could even happen under conditions not less demanding and dangerous than that for national servicemen. A Select Committee, augmented by experts from the churches, Army and the Bench, could help with the framing of legislation for this.

At present extremely strong action was taken against conscientious objectors who will not serve in an army and this has led to considerable anxiety amongst most churches. The Army policy must be changed. Especially there must be no dishonourable discharge from the Army and such people must be used more productively than is now the case.

The PFP is well aware of the problem of evasion of national service and that some people can fake conscientious objection.

In any revision of policy two issues must be fully kept in mind:

- a method must be found to distinguish genuine conscientious objection based on belief, and
- the alternative must include a sacrifice of time and this must be more than is the case in normal national service."

Shortly after this Die Kerkbode carried an article noting Dr. Slabberts statement and the fact that two prominent Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk theologians had made similar suggestions. They are Prof J Heyns and Prof P. Potgieter who have written church publications on the subject.

With Parliament soon to adjourn it now seems unlikely that a CO provision will be introduced this year and there is even some doubt if the Defence Amendment Bill will be finalised.

ANNUAL C O CONFERENCE This is planned for the 16th to 18th July at the Lutheran Youth Centre in Athlone, Cape Town. The conference is limited to persons with a clear interest in the issue and an information brochure about it can be obtained from Mike Roux, 6 Christow Rd., Rosebank 7700.

COUNSELLOR'S MANUAL ON C.O. A resource manual with details of most of the issues facing possible conscientious objectors is being prepared in Johannesburg. An order form can be supplied on request.

"CHRISTIANS MAKE PEACE" is the title of a recent resource book by Dr. Margaret Nash. It provides constructive things for individuals or groups to do before the choice of violence is right upon us. It can be ordered from Diakonia White Development Programme, Box 1879, Durban 4000 and costs R3.00 per copy.

RESISTANCE TO RESETTLEMENT has recently succeeded in two places in South Africa. North of Pietersburg the Batlokwa have gained the right to stay where they are, and so have the people of Bergville in Northern Natal. Now several groups in the "corridor" between the Ciskei and Transkei are threatened with removal.

The outcome of the fast of Nyanga "bush people" in the Cathedral in Cape Town is also encouraging.

NAIDU TRIAL This case has now been referred to the Supreme Court but a date has not yet been set.

"Let us suppose that certain individuals resolve that they will consistently oppose to power the force of example; to authority, exhortation; to insult, friendly reasoning; to trickery, simple honour. They would be preparing the future. Who can fail to see the positively dazzling realism of such behaviour?" (Albert Camus)