

END CONSCRIPTION COMMITTEE REPORT

1. Introduction

ECC was taken up in a number of ways on the different campuses. While there were some overlapping areas, each campus had to assess its activities in terms of different campus dynamics.

An interesting feature of the campaign on some of the campuses is that it was taken up in very creative forms, making use of drama, music, poetry and debate.

The conscription survey is an incredibly useful way to start the campaign. It allows for greater personal contact and serves to raise the issue of conscription. It is also a means of nudging where campus is at and gives some indication of pertinent issues that could be used in the campaign. An important aspect is the timing of the campaign, and while it should be seen as ongoing, it should not clash with other campaigns and must be flexible. Although the survey and focuses on the military served to raise the issue on campuses this year, it cannot be accepted as given that a groundwork has been laid for next year, as new students would not have gone through the same process. Debates with a range of opinions are important means of mobilising students.

2.1 International Year of the Youth

Conscription is an important focus of IYY. The notions of peace, participation and development are ones which can be fleshed out and developed in terms of the ECC. In particular the State's argument that we need an army for the maintenance of peace should be effectively countered. We should also assert that the State does not promote peace, and give a progressive content to the notion of peace in relation to the SADF and Southern Africa.

The aura of celebration surrounding IYY can be used effectively to create a festive atmosphere. An example of this was the UCT Rock the Ratel Concert.

It is also crucial that we reach the white youth, (not necessarily through schools), but possibly through such structures as Christian Youth Groups.

We must also explore ways to link Conscription and IYY and the Freedom Charter.

2.2 The Call to End Conscription and the Declaration.

We need to explain the call and the Declaration in the context of the current political climate, and the role of the SADF in maintaining apartheid. Although both the call and the Declaration have been taken up in varying degrees on different campuses, a lot of educative content needs to be given to both. Students need to be made aware of the political changes South Africa must undergo before ending conscription. A call to end conscription also requires that we look towards alternatives, and explain these to students. The establishment of Advice Bureaus in the different centres can play a useful role here. The Declaration itself was not seen as an issue around which students can be mobilised, but could be incorporated into other campaigns, focuses etc. Different points in the Declaration can also provide the basis for educative input needed to lay the groundwork for the call to end conscription.

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We also need to point out the national aspect of the campaign, and publicise the work of ECC's and ACC's. Practical suggestions for using the Declaration included statement posters, handing it out in pamphlet form, taking it round to various campus clubs and societies for endorsement.

Right wing attempts to undermine the end conscription campaign have occurred in different intensities in different centres. In relation to these attempts it was felt that we must confront these attempts where they occur (through media, debates etc.). The concept of patriotism is an important one in pre-empting right wing attempts to cast opposition to conscription as anti South African.

2.3 SADF involvement alongside the SAP

Opposition to conscription and the SADF is potentially alienating for some students socialised into accepting the SADF as a natural part of our society. However, the increasing role of the SADF in township unrest is an issue of great concern to many liberal students. The role of SADF in unrest provides NUSAS with an opportunity to challenge the notion of an external onslaught, and explain the nature of conflict in South Africa in terms of a civil war. This needs to be an ongoing process and we must draw on recent examples such as Sebokeng and Grahamstown.

SADF involvement in unrest also provides an opportunity to explain to students the nature of the "new deal" and reform. By developing an understanding of both reform and the repressive role of the SADF among students, we can spell out the implications of participation in the SADF, and enhance support for the call to end conscription.

2.4 Namibia

It will be important for us to focus on Namibia as events occur in that country. Although it may not present itself as a mobilising issue, publications and small meetings can be used to highlight important issues. Points which can be highlighted include the role of the SADF and the general destabilisation of Southern Africa by South Africa. Focussing on Namibia also provides us with an opportunity to address questions of change and struggle.

2.5 C.O.'s

It is important to educate students about the Board for Religious Objectors, since it is a legal alternative to conscription. Sympathetic lawyers could be used to advise individual students who are particularly concerned about the issue.

It was felt that while the statements and stands of Board applicants can be useful to publicise, they would not have the same impact as overtly political objectors. It is probable that 1985 will see such political objectors, and their stands could effectively be taken up under the ECC.

2.6 PFP

The debates in the PFP around conscription have given the issue profile in the commercial press. Although this is useful for the campaign, it is important that the difference between the PFP position and NUSAS's position is clarified. However this has to be done without alienating liberal students on campus.

The PFP Youth have shown tendencies to take a less conservative stance on the issue, and this could be encouraged by progressive input to them.

3. NUSAS' relation to other groups opposing conscription

The level of development of the ECC And ACC campaigns, and the extent of NUSAS participation in these varies tremendously from region to region. At UCT NUSAS is represented on both ECC And ACC and there is a fairly close relationship between CAG and ECC, and the COSG publication Objector is distributed on campus.

At Rhodes, there is no ECC or COSG, but planning for a UDF anti-conscription structure is underway. NUSAS would be represented on this. At Wits, Nusas is represented and involved in both ACC and ECC work.

In Maritzburg, NUSAS is represented on the UDF anti-conscription committee, and a support group for objectors is in the process of being established. NUSAS can play a fairly central role in both ECC and ACC campaigns, and provides an organisational link between these structures.

NUSAS has also been able to contribute to the progressive direction of the ECC through its participation in the non-racial movement. Our experience in working on liberal campuses means that we have a lot to offer other organisations such as COSG, ECC, etc. Our student constituency is also an important target for ECC and ACC campaigns.

In the committee, discussion on the role of NUSAS in relation to other groups was fairly limited, and this needs to continue.

4. Conclusion

While many campaigns would have to be taken up next year, ECC should be seen as a major campaign. Taking into account the Education Charter Campaign and IYY, ECC could be used to mobilise white students as conscription affects them personally. IYY and ECC can also play complimentary roles in some instances and this should be exploited.

ADDENDUM TO END CONSCRIPTION COMMITTEE REPORT:

Introduction

At last year's congress the end conscription campaign was identified as both a priority and our on going campaign. The military and conscription were seen as issues that could be taken up on their own or in cooperation into other campaigns.

Throughout this year we have seen the establishment of ECC's in Cape Town, JHB, and Durban and the intensification of opposition to the military. Regional UDF anti conscription structures have been set up in different regions. The impending conscription of 'coloureds' and indians has also brought to the fore as an important issue during tri cameral elections. NUSAS involvement in ECC and ACC has served to both legitimise the demand to end conscription and linked this demand to broader political demands.

While the campaign is ongoing and has been taken up on most campuses to differing degrees, it is imperative that we recap the objectives of the campaign, the specific reasons for our opposition to the military and conscription as well as re situating ourselves in terms of recent political developments. We need to assess how the focus and issues of the campaign have changed, what our successes and failures have been, and we need to reformulate our approach to the campaign for the forthcoming year.

Anti military campaigns and End Conscription Campaign

The state relies on both force and consent for the maintenance of the apartheid system. The SADF is obviously an essential aspect of force used to uphold apartheid and the white community are all important sectors who grant consent and legitimacy for the SADF and apartheid policies. If conscriptees come to reject the military and conscription a direct challenge is posed to the legitimacy of the state. An anti military campaign can also be used to successfully expose broader issues in our society. The anti military campaign was taken up primarily through focussing on CO's responding to legislation, UMU's on campus etc.

After the Black Sash case in March 83 the anti military campaign began to assume the form of an end conscription campaign. Conscription is an issue directly affecting white students and allows for a less reactive response than a broader anti-military focus. The issue of conscription can expose the role of the SADF, and also provides for a more personalised and direct approach: who are YOU fighting for, who are YOU fighting against. Because the issue of conscription affects so many students, we can draw a wide range of students into an end conscription campaign.

Objectives of the End Conscription Campaign

Objectives included:

1. to transform students gut response to conscription into a clearer political understanding of the role of the SADF and reasons for conscription
2. to involve a broad range of students in the campaign
3. to raise the issue of the military and counter state propaganda by exposing the role of the SADF internally and externally
4. to highlight the nature of the conflict in SA as an essentially civil one and to focus on resistance to the military (in the form of CO's, publicising COSAS, ECC's and ACC's etc)
5. to promote the goals of non racialism by linking the campaign against conscription to the extension of conscription and to popularise the Freedom Charter, especially the demands for peace and friendship.

2.

Goals Crisis of the Campaign

1. It has aroused interest among a broad range of students because many students identify with conscription as it affects them personally.
- 2.. This gut reaction against conscription has developed into an understanding of the role of the SADF (and therefore conscriptees) in South African society
3. It has been taken up by a broad range of organisations
4. We have learnt that creative methods can be used to reach a broader range of people (eg debates, focus weeks, music, drama, poetry, T shirts, badges, concerts etc)
5. People have joined organisation specifically around this issue.
6. The ECC off campus campaign has legitimised the our on campus work which has facilitated our reaching a larger number of people

Difficulties experienced with the campaign

1. Different conditions on the campuses have resulted in an uneven national campaign. This means different approaches have to be considered.
2. In some cases the campaign has drained organisations. An ongoing ad hoc structure has been most successful but isn't appropriate for all campuses. The ECC can be linked to other campaigns (see under projections for 85)
3. Questions have been raised about the futility of calling for an end to conscription. We need to assert that apartheid relies on conscription and that a call for an end to conscription is a call for peace, and an end to apartheid.

How Conditions have changed during the course of the year

1. Broad public awareness around conscription has been generated (eg microphone in, press coverages, PFP)
2. The SADF has invaded townships, resulting in widespread public outrage
3. White democratic organisations have developed and their work complements the campaign.

Projections for 85

a. relationship with other campaigns: IYY - The issue of peace is part of IYY We need to show that the SADF is an obstacle to peace and that conscript are being asked to protect the violent system of apartheid. Conscription in a civil war situations serves to further divide our society. The role of the SADF in obstructing peace and development in Southern African countries especially Namibia, can be tied in with IYY.

Education Charter Campaign

Both the EdCh campaign and the End Conscr campaign can focus on the achievement of peace and can both be linked with IYY. The focus on youth through both IYY and the Educ Charter Campaign lends itself to looking at the militarisation of education particularly cadets. The government is preparing upith for war, rather than peace, and this should be challenged.

The Freedom Charter

End conscription can be linked with the Education Charter (as explained), and this will be part of the freedom Charter Campaign It also can be taken up under the 'Peace and Friendship clause of the Freedom Charter.

b. Other issues specific to the ECC

- CO's
- PFP
- call to end conscription
- SADF and SAp

The issues have been elaborated on in the body of the report. However the area of the SADF and SAP can be expanded.

The SADF invasion of townships illustrates the civil war in SA. There has been a public outcry about this, but the time of year restricted the way we could take it up on campus.

Students are likely to respond to the fact that as conscripts they might be expected to participate in such invasions. This issue lends itself to mass mobilisation and should be picked up next year.

A civil war polarises people and we need to use the anti-apartheid feelings of students to ensure that they are polarised onto the side of the majority of South Africans.

Conclusion

Generally we have seen that some ground work has been laid this year in the campaign. Next year we have to build and strengthen organisation around the ECC. In addition, we must continually develop our understanding of the role of the SADF and increase the level of politicisation and mobilisation around conscription on all our campuses.