

**SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC  
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE**



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TELEGRAMME: "CHURCHWEL PRETORIA"  
TELEFONE: 323-6458/9/0, 323-6501/2/3  
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0001

5th June, 1987

Dear

The conflict in our country and on our borders intensifies daily. More and more young conscripts are being placed in a moral dilemma because of this. With this in mind the Peace and War sub-Committee of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference is proposing an Alternative Service Campaign. We hope this campaign will be used to raise the issue of conscription into the S.A.D.F. and to provide support to objectors falling outside the classification of the Board for Religious Objection. Please could you discuss this proposal in your church.

We have set up a time for an ecumenical meeting around the proposal at which people can share their ideas, suggestions and comments.

Date: 31st August, 1987.

Time: 3.00 pm.

Venue: Khanya House, 140 Visagie Street, Pretoria

If possible please can you send a mandated representative to this meeting. If not, can you please send an observer.

If you have queries about the proposal or if you would like more information please can you contact the Secretary of the Sub-Committee  
Ms Jacqui Boule  
C/O Khanya House  
P.O. Box 941  
Pretoria  
0001

Thanking you.

Yours in Christ

*Daniel*

pp. Archbishop Daniel  
Chairman of the Peace and War Committee.



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SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
PLENARY SESSION  
1 - 7 FEBRUARY 1978

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ARCHDIOCESE OF PRETORIA.

To all the Bishops.

Your Eminence, Your Grace, My Lord, Dear Monsignor

Herewith I enclose a copy of a letter I have received from the Methodist Church. It indicates decisions made at their recent Conference arising out of recommendations from Military Chaplains.

As you are aware we were invited, together with Chaplains from other churches, to meetings of the Commission on Military Chaplaincy.

I have already discussed this matter with our Liaison Chaplain, Father Armstrong, and I do believe it would be possible for our chaplains to work within the system proposed by the Methodist Church.

What is particularly commendable is the idea of a pool of Chaplains to serve in the operational areas and the effort to provide maximum contact with Catholic National Servicemen, whilst not being too closely identified with the South African Defence Force.

The matter will come up for discussion at the forthcoming Plenary Session commencing on 1st February 1978. I would be pleased if you would prepare your comments for this discussion.

+ GEORGE F. DANIEL  
MILITARY ORDINARY



THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTH AFRICA

9th December 1977.

Your Grace,

re: COMMISSION ON MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

1. I regret that I am not able to send you a copy of the report to the Methodist Conference of the above-mentioned Commission. The Conference ruled that the report remain confidential.
2. I am able, however, to advise you of the resolutions approved by the Conference arising from a consideration of the report. These are as follows:-

"Commission on Military Chaplaincy

- a. The Conference approves the following points as the basis for negotiation with the SADF and instructs the Commission to report on its discussions to the Conference of 1978 for its consideration and decision:
    - i. An alteration in status of all Methodist Chaplains, whether Permanent Force or Citizens' Force, with a view to their functioning in their Ministry to SADF personnel, as ordinary Methodist Ministers either in full time or part time capacities.
    - ii. The creation of a pool of ministers, selected by the Church and screened by the SADF, for Ministry to men in the operational areas on a roster basis and for limited duration.
    - iii. The amendment of SADF policy, regulations and procedures so as to provide for Ministers serving in such civilian capacities to be able to fulfil meaningful and effective Ministries both in the local and in the operational areas.
    - iv. The continued payment by the SADF for such Chaplaincy.
  - b. The Conference refers to the Commission the investigation of the whole question of providing effective Ministry to all everywhere who are involved in Military conflict.
3. While I am sending this letter to all who on various occasions represented their Church at the meetings of the Commission, I should be grateful if those who in the first instance were responsible to their Churches for meeting with our Commission and reporting back to their Church authorities, would kindly advise me as to what response there has been from their Churches to our invitation to be associated with the Methodist Church in its negotiations with the SADF along the lines set out above.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

F.C. LOUW (Convener)



WHAT IS THE ALTERNATE SERVICE CAMPAIGN

In the last few years we have seen resistance to conscription into the S.A.D.F. growing. Several young men find themselves in a moral crisis sre: participation in the S.A.D.F. This could be because they re pacifists due to religious convictions, or because they believe the war to be unjust. Whatever the reasons most of these young men have little alternative. (i.e. except for universal religious pacifists)

Conscientious Objectors have long being part of the tradition of christianity and the churches in S.A. The churches do not only recognise universal religious pacifists but rather all objectors of conscience. As such, we have a responsibility towards all those young conscripts who find themselves unable to serve. We have made this demand to the S.A. government on numerous occasions yet no moves have been made to provide for these young men. The time has come for us to stand witness to our demands and to provide an alternative national service for these objectors either in our churches or in welfare instructions. This service should be the same length as national service. The volunteers would be paid the same wage as they receive in the S.A.D.F., only this time the church would be paying them. By doing this the Churches would be reiterating their demands that:

1. Alternate service be made available to all objectors.
2. It be for the same length as service in the S.A.D.F.
3. That objectors be allowed to do their community service in church or welfare organisations.

This would be the essence of the Alternate Service Campaign.

TO WHOM WOULD THE CHURCHES BE ADDRESSING THEMSELVES IN THE CAMPAIGN?

There are a number of concripts who fall outside the classification of the Board for Religious Objection but who would regard themselves as objectors. The majority of these people, while being opposed to service in the S.A.D.F., are willing to do an alternative form of national service which they regards as a genuine service to their community. This will be the primary target group to the Churches would be addressing.



HOW WOULD WE GO ABOUT IMPLEMENTING THIS PROGRAM OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICE?

If the Churches agree to provide alternative service to objectors falling outside the Defence Amendment Act some mechanism of clarifying the objectors must be introduced.

It is in light of this that a Panel for Conscientious Objectors is being suggested. This Panel should be an ecumenical one, made up of representatives from the various churches as well as non-religious representatives. The Panel would be responsible for interviewing possible objectors in order to help clarify the objectors motivation and to ascertain:

1. Whether the objector falls into the Panel's definition of an objector.
2. If the objector needs to be placed in a church or welfare agency and for what period.

This information could then be passed to a placement team who would find a place for the objector. This team could consist of some representatives from those churches and welfare organisations that are willing and able to employ objectors.

Applications to the Panel should be made in writing and should include :

1. Personal details of objector: age, dependents, work and situation with the S.A.D.F.
2. The nature of the applicants objection (e.g. moral, pacifist or or just war) and the grounds for such objection.

This Panel for Conscientious Objectors would have no formal relationship to the Board for Religious Objection and would serve as an alternative to those conscripts who either fall outside the classification of the Board or who choose not to recognise the Board. Note that the terms of reference of the Panel should not include recommending that the applicant should serve in the S.A.D.F. or that he should apply to the Board for Religious Objection.



### HOW WOULD WE INVOLVE THE WHOLE CHURCH IN THE CAMPAIGN

There are 2 possible ways of gaining congregational involvement in the campaign. The first would be to publicise the stands of the individual objectors in our churches and to encourage support actions. The second would be to ask for Peace Volunteers over a specific period. The volunteers would then make part in various Peace Projects (similar to those conducted by the E.C.C.). The importance of this would be:

1. An active sign of solidarity with the objectors.
2. The display of a constructive action as oppose to the destructive actions of the S.A.D.F.
3. An emphasis of our commitment to a genuine national service.

### TIMESPAN

As the campaign is an important one and one which directly confronts the State with the Churches' demands, it is important that the campaign as far as possible, has official church support and backing. In order to allow for this and because of the infrequency of official church body meetings it is suggested that the campaign be seen as a one year project. This timespan does not however mean that we can sit back and wait for the next eight months. It is important to put as much effort as possible into the campaign from the start.

### CONCLUSION

Although the government has absolute power in the area of conscription it would be loathe to act against the united initiative of all the churches. This coupled with wide public and international support might enable us to make our demands.

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**END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)**

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