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Cape Town report to NC - October 1987

This year has been characterised by an inward focus with a lot of emphasis on assessing ECC under the emergency - where we have come from and how to go forward. The commission of enquiry pointed us to the 'conscript focus' and clarified what content is appropriate for ECC. However it has taken some time for that purpose of direction to be felt organisationally. It is only in the last couple of weeks that we have started to suddenly find our numbers growing, our morale is high and we look poised to "regain the initiative".

AREAS OF WORK

Conscripts

Conscripts have been targetted as a crucial constituency for ECC. We set up an interim group to look at how to take forward our work with conscripts, which absorbed some "real live conscripts" and became a subcommittee. The aims of the subcomm are attached to this report. There is a lot to discuss through about what this conscript focus means for ECC, how to go forward etc.

Cadets

After a Cape Times expose of a Cape ED Dept document on cadets we planned a focus, very much targetting school pupils and teachers. Parents are more difficult to target because they are not to be found in any specific physical space. Focus included a broadsheet, press strategy, discussion with orgs and a small public meeting/discussion. We felt that we should not go for a scrap cadets campaign initially, but rather the "cadets in question" slogan (not us dictating the line etc). Out of the public meeting a group was pulled together to look at the content of an alternative programme and at strategies to pressurise schools into implementing alternatives.

Southern Africa focus

We held a four part lecture series on Southern Africa. We felt that this filled an educational gap which has been lacking in our public work. It was very interesting, reasonably well attended and we felt it to be important that we continue to hold such forums.

Angola

We were very slow to respond to the war in Angola. When we did we held pickets, had a delegation to the castle, there was a meeting at UCI, and a broadsheet (done by town but used on campus). It was a response, but not very powerful and we need to be more conscious of goings on in Southern Africa and integrate the issues into our public work.

Ivan Toms

Ivan has received a call up for 12 November. We are planning a public campaign around this, and hope other centres will do likewise. Areas of work include: press; media; national speaking tour; local itinerary; WJP action; meeting; trial; support.

Important issues to consider are how to use the campaign to reach people we wouldn't normally (eg NGK) and how to integrate the conscripts thrust into the campaign.

Aims of the campaign: Present something which conscripts can identify with; strengthen non-racialism; highlight role of SADF; push call for an end to conscription and interim demands; build support around objectors; build ECC and broaden base of support. Idea for WJP involves doing action at clinic Ivan working in, idea for slogan something along the lines of "conscripts need alternatives - support Ivan Toms".

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND ISSUES

- our AGM is taking place on Nov 19th so exec elections are in process
- we were invited to address a newly formed PFP youth branch in the northern suburbs. It went very well, there were about 25 people there and they were strongly supportive of ECC. The idea of a joint Young Progs-ECC concert in Bellville is being floated.
- our office was petrol bombed (unsuccessfully) and we have been asked to leave, which we have, so are now homeless.
- the editorial pages of the Cape Times have had plenty of pro and anti ECC contributions lately. Willem Steenkamp went on a rampage about ECC and since then there have been ongoing debates.
- Five Freedoms: after the JHB conference committee was set up in CT made up of people who were at the conference. A couple of ECC individuals are participating in this. They are planning a day long workshop to try to bring the spirit and content of the conference to a broader group in CT.
- FINANCES ARE A BIG PROBLEM - CAR BOOT SALES AND OTHER SUCH EVENTS ARE STARTING TO DOMINATE OUR LIVES.

SUBCOMMS

Churches

The group is stronger than it has ever been before with most members having joined in the past few months. Their emphasis has been on working with youth groups, and in the past while they have been to a number of new churches and often made a significant impact (sometimes negative).

Conscripts

They have held two housemeetings with conscripts, plan a workshop for ECC members, and are planning two "know your rights" meetings- one for schoolstudents in December, and one just before the February intake.

Schools

3 main areas of work in schools: cadets and alternative programme; drummies; and the schools forum. The forum held a symposium for pupils at the end of September and schools subcomm is thinking of holding a much bigger symposium next year.

Culture

Members have increased. Plan to take advantage of the Christmas season and go for stalls on Greenmarket Square. They have done

two new t-shirt designs and are planning a 1988 calendar (very slick, glossy, selling at R9.99, and something of an entrepreneurial (sp?) venture. Also planning a record, like Forces Favourites 2 with local Cape Town bands and Koeksusters, and the UCT cabaret. (other centres must please consider whether they want calendars, and if so how many).

Parents

Three main purposes: place for parents of conscripts, general education and Dad's Army. They are also linking in with the schools cadets alternative and are hoping to exert some pressure on schools in their capacities as parents.

Publicity

Membership has doubled. Out of Step continues to come out, and the pres group reviews and plans press strategies with the Press Officer. With increased members there are plans afoot to establish a general publicity group.

INTERNAL EDUCATION

Education has included completing a National Democratic Struggle series, a reportback and discussion of Five Freedoms, What we mean by the conscripts focus. The structured programme has tended to be taken over by issues of the day which we want to discuss sooner rather than later.

SECURITY

On the whole security-consciousness is not that high, but we still keep to standard security arrangements.

HARRASSMENT

Phone calls etc continue. Gavin Younge who was going to do the memorial received death threats to himself and his children and this resulted in his pulling out. Ads in newspapers have continued. Since Ivan received his call-up the graffitti has gone wild. The son of some members in Parents has had a rough time in the army because of their involvement.

No associate memb. drive - not a priority.

Minutes of conscripts meeting - October 1987

TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Gain more information about conscripts, soldiers and campers; reach conscripts through further house meetings.
Aim of housemeetings to learn from conscripts, inform them about ECC and possibly recruit into ECC.
Need to discuss with UCT ECC the possibility of organising housemeetings on campus.
Need to have (substantial) material on ECC at housemeetings
Can find people for further house meetings from those at previous house meetings and through mailing list.
2. Be in a position to provide advice to conscripts; tell conscripts about their legal rights before they go into the army.
Need to start with educative programme for conscripts group.
Must work more closely with advice service for exchange of information.
Want to produce pamphlet and organise meeting on conscripts/soldiers rights for school pupils and university students. Link to schools group. Afrikaans community important.
3. Develop an understanding of conscripts into the whole of ECC.
Want to produce paper for general ECC forum before conference.
4. Contact with school pupils.
This to be done through ECC schools group.
5. Follow up housemeetings and incorporate new people.
- recruit into conscripts group where appropriate
- follow up meetings on ECC
- involve in broader ECC activities if appropriate
- ask people to organise further house meetings
6. Provide the 'voice of the conscript' for ECC public events.
Must be continually on the alert for opportunities.
Someone to motivate to General Body.

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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