

E6.4.3.1.

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Thursday 19 October 1989

Dear friends

National anti-militarisation conference - The Way Forward

Minutes of the national conference will be reaching you shortly. What follows is a summary of the conclusions reached, a brief overview of the conference and a reminder of tasks which need to be completed in the near future.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS:

The conference was a turning point for the anti-militarisation movement. After a year of disarray we all agreed on the need for a new national organisation which will put conscription issues firmly back on the public agenda and will provide a centre for co-ordinating the different elements of anti-militarisation work.

There was consensus on the following:

1. That there is an urgent need for a new organisation which raises the public profile around conscription issues.
2. That such an organisation should not be ECC in drag, but should endeavour to reach into communities that ECC was not successful in reaching.
3. Consequently, that we should embark on a thorough process of consultation and should enter that consultative process with an open agenda. This will ensure that if a new initiative develops, all the participants would have helped in defining that initiative.
4. Consultation should happen between now and March 1990, when a broad consultative conference will be held.
5. Our bottom line in the consultative process should be:
 - that the new initiative should be inclusive
 - that it should focus on conscription
 - that it should define itself as an anti-apartheid initiative.
6. Further, the vision of the conference was of a broad social movement mobilising support against conscription into the SADF, whilst the SADF continues to be used in upholding apartheid. Conscripts are affected by conscription in a particular way and we should therefore be seeking to develop work amongst conscripts.

We did not gain clarity on the implications of being both a broad social movement and having a particular conscript thrust to our work. There was no consensus about the feasibility of being able to attract serving conscripts/campers as well as objectors and a broader constituency.

To assist the process of consultation, guidelines will be drawn up and circulated nationally. These will look at the issues that we need to be consulting about, as well as the types of groups we should be approaching.

OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE:

Whilst the representation at the conference was good in that we had reps from 9 regions and about 12 organisations, we could not be defined as a broad gathering, in that we were very largely English speaking young lefties. It is in the light of this that the conclusion to the conference should be seen as being correct and perhaps inevitable. Had we given more definition to the new organisation, we may have hindered the process of extensive consultation.

Having said that though, it is unfortunate that not all of the debate was that creative or constructive, as the polarisation that occurred may have dampened our sense of enthusiasm and drive to take the initiative forward. It is now going to be absolutely crucial for regions to report back in such a way as to inspire enthusiasm and action.

TASKS ARISING:

1. Regional report backs about the week-end, which should be as inclusive and enthusiasm inspiring as possible!
2. Where they exist, local AMF's should be responsible for the process of consultation. Otherwise regions should set up a group which can take on this responsibility. Regions should begin identifying organisations and individuals with whom we should be consulting.
3. Regions are to elect a regional rep for a national co-ordinating comm. Names are to reach the COSG office by 6th November 1989.
4. A full time worker will be appointed to facilitate the consultative process. Dave Schmidt is considering taking up the job but regions were asked to consider other possibilities should Dave not be available. Again names are to reach the COSG office by 6th November 1989.
5. Some delegates have not yet paid their R40. Kindly collect outstanding money and forward it to the COSG office, or else let us know if those people are for some reason unable to pay.

Until such time as a national worker is employed, I will be co-ordinating the above process and can be contacted at the above telephone number. I hope to hear from lots of you soon.

Strength and best wishes



SAHA