

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

IN PERSPECTIVE ECC

JUNE 1987

The government and right-wing groups over the past few months have launched a systematic attempt to smear ECC. This has been combined with the detention and restriction of ECC members, the banning of ECC activities and a spate of suspected right-wing attacks. We believe the onslaught by the government to be a nationally co-ordinated campaign launched at top government level. Its purpose seems to be to discredit and undermine ECC and to soften up the white public for further anti-ECC measures. ECC believes that this effort is being co-ordinated at a State Security Council level and is being implemented through the Joint Management Centres.

ECC is a legal movement whose main aim is to campaign for a change in the law regarding compulsory military service in South Africa. We believe that conscripts should be given freedom of choice as to how they are to serve their country.

The supporters of apartheid have resorted to disinformation, smears, and extra-legal pressure to counter the message of the End Conscription Campaign. They fear ECC precisely because freedom of conscience is a principle which is a threat to apartheid.

Disinformation and Smear Campaigns

Aida Parker Newsletter: The March 22 1987 edition of the right-wing Aida Parker Newsletter is devoted exclusively to a 16-page diatribe against ECC. It is the fifth edition of this publication in the past year which singles out ECC as its target of attack.

Its main method is to paint a wide variety of American peace groups with a red brush and then smear ECC through its contacts with these organisations. The publication contains about 30 statements which we believe to be inaccurate or untrue and we will be taking the issue to the Media Council.

The discredited April 8 1986 edition of the Aida Parker Newsletter has been distributed to national servicemen in the army and navy and to school-children despite the fact that seven months ago it

was found by the Media Council to be grossly inaccurate and to have violated the Media Council's Code of Conduct.

Veterans for Victory:
In March this year a new group calling itself "Veterans for Victory" emerged with a six-page propaganda sheet which from beginning to end does nothing but make crude, untruthful and defamatory statements about ECC.

This shadowy group is headed by an Australian, Sgt. Rob Brown, who was asked to leave an ECC public meeting in Sea Point after causing a disturbance. He later pointed a gun at one of the marshalls.

In addition to recommending that his readers subscribe to the Aida Parker Newsletter, Brown makes statements such as the following:



“The ECC had big ideas for action in the Cape Town area in December 1986, so who do you think spent December 1986 with them? They would love to know who I am but I’m not telling... The Vets had set up some surprises for the ECC at their “Cultural Festival”, but luck was on their side. The government slapped a banning order on the whole festival. About time too. At last the Government is starting to take note of the voice of the average South African who is sick to death of a bunch of weak-kneed, pimply-faced youths with bad breath trying to destroy our police and SADF.”

The publication goes on to call for the government to ban ECC.

The Students Moderate Alliance,

The SMA, a National Party-supporting student group, has distributed over 10000 copies of its magazine “Standard” to Wits students. The magazine contains statements about ECC which are inaccurate and possibly defamatory.

The SMA and its parent body, the National Student Federation, have sent 1300 copies of the Aida Parker Newsletter to school principals throughout the country.

Women for South Africa:

A group called “Women for South Africa,” headed by Gabrielle Malan, last year produced a publication with information apparently drawn directly from the discredited Aida Parker Newsletter.

In February this year, the SADF distributed thousands of copies of a pamphlet containing an attack on the anti-conscription movement. It calls all those who oppose conscription “the enemy” and accuses them of a “calculated attempt to undermine the defence capabilities”. The SADF has also made extensive use of the Aida Parker Newsletter.

ECC has no doubt that these smear attacks are not simply displays of right-wing antipathy. The close links between these right-wing groups and the state lead us to believe they are part of a co-ordinated attempt to “criminalise” the ECC and to prepare the public for further anti-ECC action.

This view of their close links with the state is supported by the fact that the March 25 1987 edition of the Aida Parker Newsletter contains selected quotes from a report of a tour of the United States by ECC executive member Gavin Evans, which was

seized by security police from the home of former ECC Cape Town leader Michael Evans, when he was detained for seven weeks last year. Likewise, the May 6 1986 APN contains information drawn directly from reports sent by Gavin Evans from the United States to ECC leaders in South Africa.

Two important questions need to be answered about those organisations spearheading the anti-ECC disinformation drive: Where do they get their money from and how much support do they really command?

Hundreds of thousands of rands have been spent by organisations like the Aida Parker Newsletter, The National Student Federation and Women for South Africa on attacking the ECC and defending the actions of the security forces.

A recent example was the expensive national advertising campaign calling for a “National Security Forces Day.” Among the organisations involved were the Aida Parker Newsletter, Women for South Africa and others involved in the anti-ECC drive. Yet despite their pricey publicity in most major newspapers, their public meeting in Pretoria attracted only 50 people.

Detentions, Restrictions & Bannings

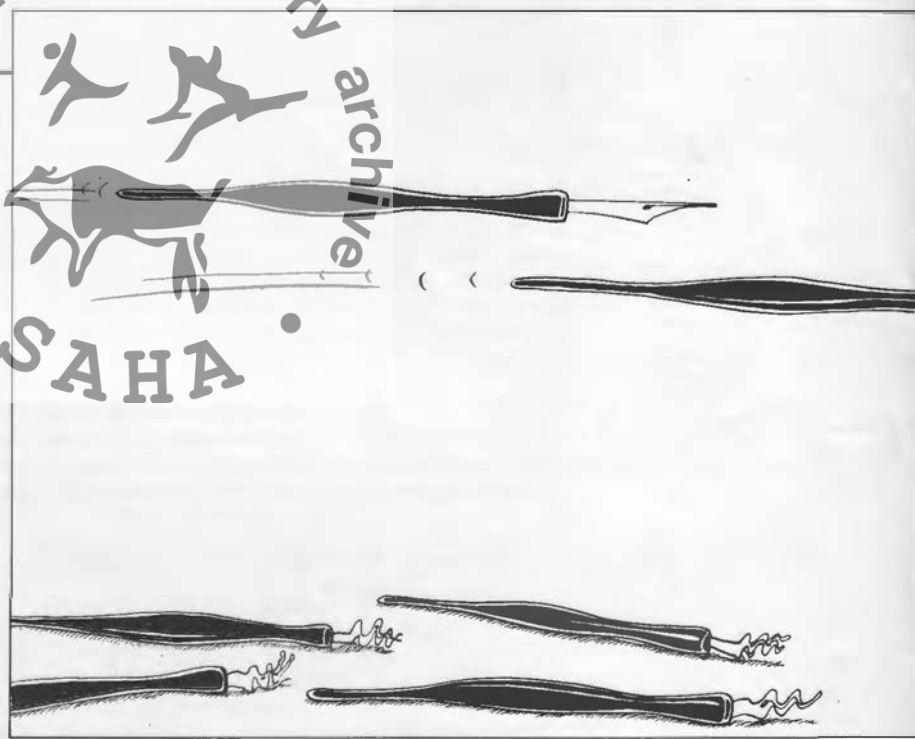
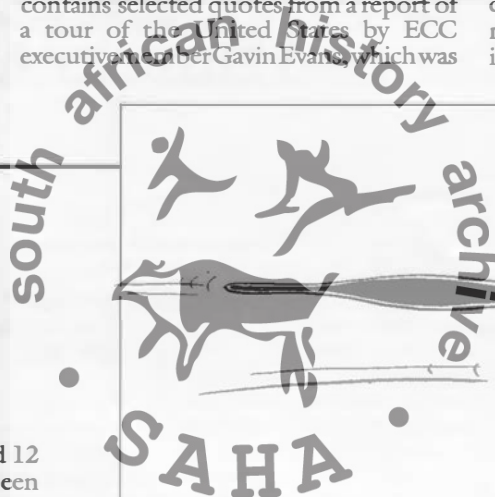
Since the State of Emergency was declared 12 months ago, over 70 ECC members have been detained for periods ranging from a few hours to nine months. ECC Port Elizabeth leader, Janet Cherry, is now in her tenth month of detention without having been charged. Shortly before being held she was the target of an Aida Parker Newsletter attack.

Over the past six months 25 ECC members have been issued with restriction orders under the Emergency Regulations, preventing them from taking part in certain ECC activities and in some instances restricting their movement.

Since the Emergency was declared numerous ECC meetings, publications and activities have been banned.

The houses of over 100 ECC members have been raided since June 12 last year. The ECC offices in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban have also frequently been raided. During these raids ECC members have been interrogated and ECC material has been confiscated.

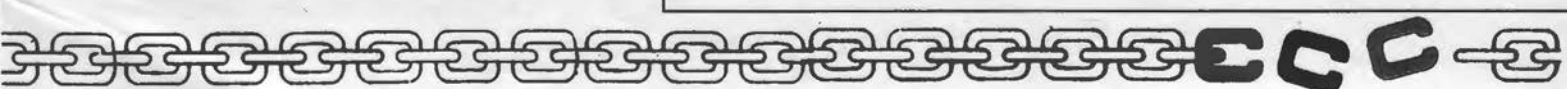
ECC is currently being investigated under the Fundraising Act and has been accused of raising funds in contravention of this act. We believe this investigation to be part of the general attempt to discredit and undermine the ECC.



Why this campaign against the ECC?

In its 39 years of rule the Nationalist Government has clearly shown that it fears all opposition to its policies and is prepared to stamp out all forms of dissent. They perceive the ECC as being an attempt to discredit and undermine their system of compulsory military service which they view as vital for the survival of Nationalist rule. The Emergency Regulations have expressed these fears by making the undermining or discrediting of the system of conscription a crime punishable by 10 years imprisonment and/or a fine of R20 000.

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Verbal attacks by Government Representatives

- In April this year, the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, made an election speech containing several inaccurate statements about ECC.
- In March this year, National Party MP, Mr L.H. Fick, said in Parliament that ECC had been infiltrated by the ANC. Despite the frequency of such allegations, often made under the cloak of parliamentary privilege, neither the ECC nor any of its members have been charged with any offence.
- The Minister of Law and Order, Mr Adriaan Vlok, the chief of the Defence Force, General Jannie Geldenhuys and the Chief of the Army, Lt. Gen. Kat Liebenberg have also made frequent anti-ECC statements and speeches.
- An unsuccessful independent candidate in the Bryanston constituency, Mr Horace van Rensburg, chose to attempt to smear the PFP by alleging that it had supplied its mailing list to the ECC. The allegation was untrue but was seized upon by his fellow anti-PFP opponent, Major Craig Williamson of the National Party as well as by General Malan.

Right-wing violence

Over the past year ECC has recorded over 90 incidents of physical attacks on houses, vehicles and persons of ECC members. These have included ECC members being beaten up by hooded thugs, petrol bomb attacks on the houses of ECC members, numerous incidents of ECC members having their car tyres slashed or their vehicles tampered with, threatening phone calls, bricks thrown through windows, ECC offices being broken into and ransacked, and various other forms of attack.

How do these attackers obtain this information? Why are they never apprehended and charged? Who chooses their targets?

Anonymous Posters, Publications, Pamphlets and Stickers

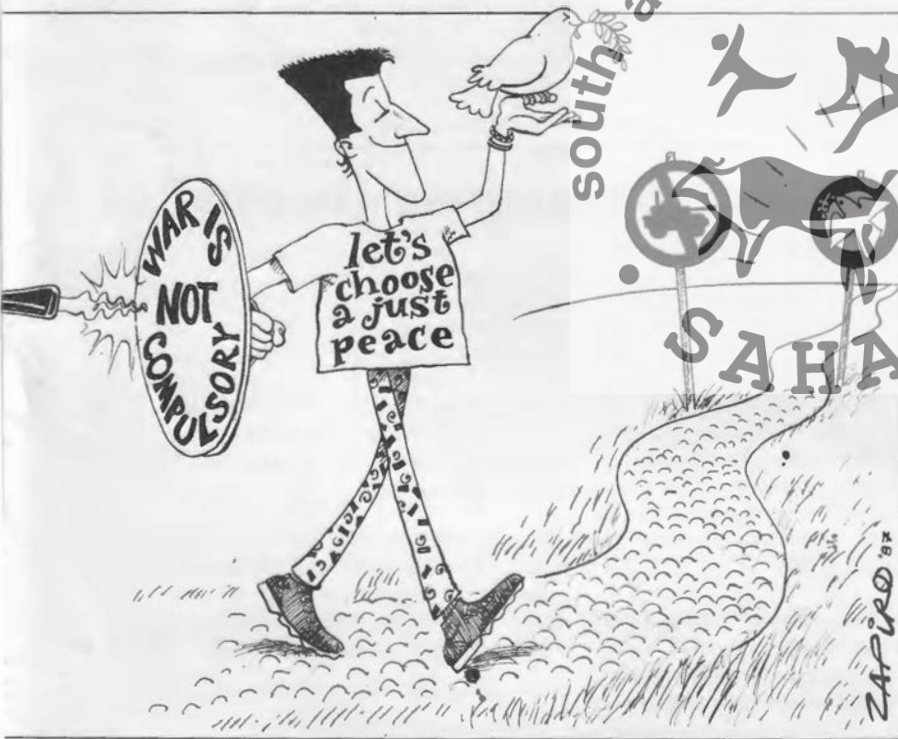
Over the past two months, at least seven different anonymous anti-ECC posters and a further eight anonymous stickers have been distributed regionally and nationally. The posters and stickers, carrying slogans like "Peace-off ECC" and "Don't Let ECC Call You Up" have been put up in city centres and suburbs with impunity, while hundreds of ECC posters have been confiscated.

A more disturbing development has been the emergence of posters purporting to be issued by ECC which have contained illegal left-wing slogans. The purpose of these posters seems to be to confuse the ECC supporters and alienate sections of the public.

Since the declaration of the State of Emergency, at least seven different unsourced pamphlets and publications have been distributed in those centres where ECC has a presence. These have usually involved a crude attempt to link ECC with the ANC and the Soviet Union.

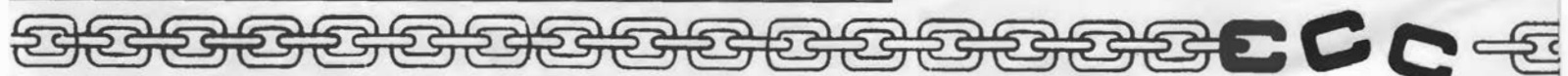
Anti-ECC graffiti have also been appearing on a systematic basis in most major centres. In at least one instance, the graffiti painters were armed men who threatened to shoot when they were apprehended.

The question needs to be asked whether these anonymous smear attempts are simply random expressions of conservative indignation or whether they represent something more sinister. Why are the culprits never apprehended by the Law? Why do the same stickers, posters and graffiti slogans appear in different centres at the same time?



C's aim is to bring about a change in the regarding this system. The government failed to find any action by ECC which is foul of even the Emergency regulations or the Defence Act. So rather than accept the voice of legitimate dissent, they have resorted to detention without trial, disinformation and other forms of repression which fall outside of the Rule of Law. We realise that the End Conscription Campaign is a legal, non-violent and increasingly popular movement. They know that their policies of using the SADF

to help occupy the black townships and Namibia, the allegations of the SADF's role in destabilising Southern African States and the continued enforcement of apartheid policies, all contribute to the rapid growth of ECC. And they suspect that as the civil conflict in our country intensifies, so will the support for ECC and what it stands for. The Aida Parker Newsletter, the anonymous media, the "right-wing" attacks, the speeches from government representatives, the detentions, the raids and the restriction orders are all expressions of these fears.



WHAT DOES THE ECC STAND FOR?

Q: What are ECC's primary objectives?

A: Our main aim is to bring about a change in the law regarding compulsory military service in South Africa. We believe that people should be given the right to choose how they are to serve their country.

We realise, however, that in the short term the government is unlikely to end conscription. That is why we put forward a series of interim proposals to the SADF's Geldenhuys Committee in 1985.

These proposals include:

- Calling for conscripts to be allowed to choose not to serve in the black townships or Namibia – on similar lines to the situation in World War 2 where servicemen had the right to refuse to serve outside South Africa's borders.
- Calling for all conscripts and not only "bona-fide religious pacifists" to be allowed to do alternative service in non-government bodies, and for a period of equal duration to that of military service.

Another important aim is to oppose all expressions of militarisation in South Africa.

Q: Who makes ECC policy?

A: Decisions in ECC are made democratically by its member organisations and the members of its subcommittees.

Q: How much support does ECC have?

A: ECC has 52 member organisations nationally. These include religious, civil-rights, youth, women's and political organisations. We also have nine regional branches and five campus branches which involve several hundred active members. In addition, we have several thousand supporters throughout the country. Our public meetings have attracted up to 4000 people.

Q: To what extent is the ECC influenced by outside organisations?

A: ECC's decisions are all made by its members and member organisations. ECC is not affiliated to any other organisation. It is an independent movement devoted to the single issue of ending conscription in South Africa.

Q: What is ECC's attitude to those who are doing their military service?

A: We fully understand the dilemma which faces the conscript in South Africa.

While we certainly support the right of conscripts to conscientiously object, our aim is to change the law and not to

encourage individuals to break the current law.

Q: Does the ECC condemn all violence?

A: ECC is a non-violent movement whose members hold a wide range of views on issues of war and peace. Some are universal pacifists who believe that all violence is wrong. Others support the idea that the system of conscription should be replaced by a volunteer professional defence force. Others believe that one cannot condemn those who choose to use force to oppose oppression.

However, ECC members are united on two points: We believe that laws affecting conscripts in South Africa should be changed and we believe that apartheid is the primary source of conflict in our country.

Q: Why does ECC oppose the presence of troops in the townships?

A: We believe that the decision to use troops in the townships contributes to an escalation of the conflict in South Africa and plays a central role in the spread of violence that we have seen over the past two-and-a-half years. Surveys such as that commissioned by the Women for Peace last year have shown that about 90 percent of town-

ship residents oppose the presence of troops in their areas and that the issue of troops in the townships and schools is a key point of concern in their lives.

Q: What is ECC's attitude to the presence of the SADF in Namibia?

A: We believe that the SADF is part of a colonial occupation force in Namibia, and that the presence of South African troops is opposed by the majority of Namibians. We believe that the government should agree to the speedy implementation of United Nations resolution 435 and allow Namibia to take its place as an independent nation.

Q: Will ECC oppose conscription in a post-apartheid society?

A: We hope that there will be no need for conscription in a post-apartheid society.

ECC is also founded on the belief that individuals should have the right to choose whether to participate in an armed force. This right of freedom of conscience is contained in both the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Nuremberg principles. We would therefore uphold these rights under any political system.

The future of the campaign to end conscription

The government and other supporters of apartheid have shown very clearly they are determined to crush the End Conscription Campaign and all extra-parliamentary opposition. The NP's successful slogan of "No Surrender", and its plan for peace, illustrated by a weapon of war, convinced the white electorate that security equals "separate development" and that this must be fought for at all costs.

We believe that they are wrong. The Nationalists' message was that if you want peace prepare for war. We believe that if you want peace prepare for justice. That is why we are determined not to allow ourselves to be snuffed out by the government's campaign of repression.

ECC has succeeded in adapting to the challenges which have confronted it. When the Emergency was declared in June last year some predicted that we would be unable to survive. But nearly a year later we are more alive than ever. Now we are hoping to consolidate this expansion by inviting individuals to join

ECC as associate members. In the past participation in ECC took place only through ECC's member organisations and sub-committees. But hundreds of ECC supporters, who were unable to participate on a day-to-day basis, expressed the desire to become members as individuals.

We realise that in the wake of the election results, many white South Africans have become disillusioned with the future of their country. We believe that a better alternative is to become involved.

If you are interested in hearing more write to:

Johannesburg: Khotso House,
De Villiers Street.
Cape Town: 1 Rhodesview,
Main Rd, Observatory
Stellenbosch: Nathan Telephone 4541
Grahamstown: SRC Office,
Rhodes University
Pietermaritzburg: 16 Harwin Arcade,
Pmb.
Durban: Ecumenical Centre,
St. Andrews Rd, Dbn