ECC PRESS RELEASE

1 APRIL 1992

PIECEMEAL PLUGGING UP OF LOOPHOLES IN THE DEFENCE ACT

According to media reports, Minister of Defence Mr Roelf Meyer has stated that the government intends to plug loopholes in the Defence Act which have been revealed by the recent Supreme Court decision in the case of Pieter auf der Hyde, when the Court held that it was not an offence to fail to register for military service. Mr Meyer has stated that the government intends to continue with the registration of young white males for whites-only military service, and intends simply to amend the Defence Act to avoid the effect of the Court's decision.

This confirms our suspicion that the present Nationalist government intends to maintain exclusive control over the military well into the future, and that it intends to rely on the existing racist system of whites-only conscription in so doing. It should be understood that registration is normally applied to 16 year olds in Std 8, who would normally only be liable for military service two to three years later. This suggests that the government proposes somehow to retain a whites-only call-up for several years.

We reiterate our call on school principals to inform pupils and their parents of the Supreme Court decision and not to attempt to pressurise scholars into registering for military service. We also advise parents not to register their sons for military service if they have any objection to the present racist system of conscription. We call on political parties in Parliament and Codesa to oppose any attempt by the government to amend the Defence Act to perpetuate the status quo.

The government's proposed tinkering with the Defence Act flies in the face of the recommendations of the Van Loggerenberg committee into SADF manpower policy, which are still being suppressed by the government. We are informed that this committee recommended the scrapping of the conscription system. The suppression of this report reflects the government's devious and underhanded attempts to manipulate the SADF for its own narrow political purposes.

In the light of the recent military prosecutions of campers, Mr Meyer has appealed to those called up for camps to "understand the situation". This is an outrageous and hypocritical attempt to manipulate the public. If Minister Meyer and the SADF had shown any understanding for the plight of business and professional people whose lives and careers are disrupted by unnecessary camps, and had not chosen to prosecute individuals selectively as part of a cynical strategy of intimidation, Mr Meyer's plea might be taken more seriously. Most of those called up for camps are older men whose careers are disrupted and who suffer economic loss as a result. These individuals either sit around idly, or are deployed in unrest situations for which they are not properly trained. The fact is that there is no legitimate reason for the continuation of the whites-only call-up. In the short term, the SADF can obtain all the manpower it requires by recruiting volunteers, who could receive appropriate training where necessary, in unrest control duties. The ECC has demonstrated that the increased salary costs involved in replacing all national servicemen and serving campers with well paid volunteers would be a tiny percentage of the current defence budget.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign
DEFENCE AMENDMENT BILL- NEW PROVISIONS CONCERNING CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

As expected, the Defence Amendment Bill published today includes various provisions concerning conscientious objectors who refuse to do military service. Superficially, the Bill appears to broaden the grounds on which conscientious objection will officially be recognized. In fact, the Bill attempts to entrench the existing racist system of whites-only military conscription, and attempts to re-introduce compulsory jail sentences for those who do not fit the government's definition of a conscientious objector, or who reject the punitive 3 year "alternative service" provided for.

The reality is that the existing racist call-up system is falling to pieces, with unprecedented numbers of individuals refusing or failing to report for military service. In particular, the average percentage turnout for camps is presently lower than 30%. Earlier this year, the Minister of Defence stated that the turnout for the January call-up was 121% of the "expected" turnout. Such a figure can only have any meaning if the expected turnout was substantially less than 100%. (For example, if the expected turnout was 50%, and 60.5% arrived, that would be 121% of the expected turnout.) Apart from a few selective token prosecutions, which are in themselves immoral and an abuse of the legal system, many thousands of men who do not report for military service, for whatever reason, are not prosecuted. In fact, it is logistically impossible to prosecute all those who do not report for service.

In addition, the courts have made it clear over the last few years that they are reluctant to imprison conscientious objectors, and have slapped down the clause in the present Defence Act which purported to make the jail sentences for non-recognized objectors compulsory.

In June last year, the ECC made submissions to the Gleeson Committee of Investigation Into Conscientious Objection, and restated our belief that the committee was "little more than a damage control exercise being conducted by the government and the SADF, in an attempt to regain ground which has been taken by the conscientious objection movement, and the anti-conscription movement generally."

We call on democratic organisations represented in Parliament to reject the Defence Amendment Bill, which attempt to entrench the existing racist call-up, and any other measures aimed at maintaining the present government's stranglehold on military power.

In the light of the most recent evidence of SADF atrocities, and the revelation that murderous activities were planned by some of the most senior generals in the SADF, we predict that the spreading resistance against conscription will continue to grow rapidly, and that the approaching July call-up will be the last all-white call-up.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign
ECC PRESS RELEASE

15TH JUNE 1992

SADF CALL-UP FOR MASS ACTION

The ECC has noted announcements by military spokesmen that citizen force members are being called up to deal with the ANC's mass action campaign. This development can only be viewed with grave disquiet.

It is inherently undesirable, for reasons which have been well canvassed, to use soldiers to carry out police functions of this kind. From the point of view of those called up, such call-ups are extremely disruptive. Furthermore, the principle of calling up white conscript soldiers to confront primarily black demonstrators is calculated to exacerbate racial polarisation.

It should be borne in mind that the proposed mass action forms part of a political strategy by the ANC in response to the deadlock reached in negotiations at CODESA. Effectively, white conscripts are being drawn into a political contest, to be used as the government's pawns in its power struggle with the ANC. This is completely unacceptable.

Political commentators have speculated that the government has a hidden agenda (or "Plan B") in terms of which they plan to manipulate a situation of civil unrest in the country to justify the declaration of a State of Emergency, or similar drastic measures, with the intention of prolonging white rule. The possibility exists that such a situation could rapidly degenerate towards a civil war. The government's use of white conscripts to carry out its dirty work in such a scenario is intolerable.

At present, the government is attempting to push the Defence Amendment Bill through parliament, which will close existing loopholes in the Defence Act, and facilitate the maintenance of the existing whites-only call-up system for the foreseeable future. The repressive nature of the Bill and the unseemly haste with which the Bill is being pushed through parliament lends credence to speculation that the government has a hidden agenda aimed at maintaining power through military action for years to come.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign
ECC PRESS RELEASE

1st SEPTEMBER 1992

PROSECUTION OF MILITARY OBJECTORS

The ECC has noted the statement by the SADF that it will not be prosecuting conscripts who failed or refused to do military service prior to 1 September. This statement is merely an attempt to make propaganda out of a situation which already exists. As far as the ECC is aware, no-one who failed to report for the January or July 1992 call-ups has been prosecuted. (According to the Ministry of Defence, only 8% of those who failed to report for national service in 1991 were prosecuted, while only 6% of those who failed to report for camps in 1991 were prosecuted). The SADF goes on to state that as from 1 September, anyone with objections to serving in the SADF must apply for conscientious objector status, or else they will face prosecution. This is merely a bluff, and we predict that the number of prosecutions will continue to drop, due to the embarrassment faced by the government in the continued enforcement of racist conscription legislation. The "alternative" offered to conscientious objectors - up to three years continuous government service at a private's pay - is so punitive and unacceptable that we predict that few, if any, conscripts will make use of the provisions. Our advice to conscripts is not to apply for conscientious objector status, due to the long duration and punitive conditions involved in the prescribed alternative service.

It appears from the SADF's statement that individuals who are currently being prosecuted, such as Merrick Douglas (see attached sheet), are expected to apply for the suspension of prosecutions against them, provided that they then apply to the board for conscientious objection. There is no reason why such individuals, who are accused of exactly the same offence as those who have not yet been charged, should be discriminated against. We demand that the charges against Merrick Douglas and all other conscientious objectors or "draft dodgers" be withdrawn unconditionally.

Numerous individuals and organisations have indicated their support for Merrick Douglas, and have endorsed the call for charges against him to be withdrawn. These individuals include Mr Nelson Mandela on behalf of the ANC, Reverend Frank Chikane on behalf of the South African Council of Churches, Ms Jill de Vlieg on behalf of the Black Sash, and Mr D Band, who is the chief executive of Argus Holdings Limited. The Democratic Party has undertaken to raise the issue directly with President de Klerk. Other well known individuals who have supported the call to drop charges against Merrick Douglas include David Blood, (radio personality), Bruce Fordyce (athlete), Mrs Helen Suzman (ex-DP parliamentarian), Sheena Duncan (past president of Black Sash), Johannes Kerkorrel (musician), and Nadine Gordimer (writer). We believe that no reasonable South African would support the selective and arbitrary prosecution of individuals like Merrick Douglas, which we believe is carried out purely to intimidate others into doing military service.
In a separate initiative, a group of advocates at the Johannesburg bar has formed a roster to provide free legal assistance to any one charged with failing or refusing to perform military service, or related offences. At the launch of the roster yesterday, approximately 35 advocates had indicated their willingness to provide this service, including five Senior Counsel.

Please note: The roster of advocates is not linked to the ECC, and is an independent initiative. Please contact attorney Mandy Taylor at 331 6919 for further details.

We believe that the existence of the roster, and the unacceptability of the alternative offered to conscientious objectors, will ensure that resistance to the whites-only call up will continue to intensify. The prosecution of Merrick Douglas and any further prosecutions of this kind will not succeed in intimidating people into doing military service, but will serve rather to further discredit the government, the courts and the SADF. We call on President FW de Klerk to intervene and to declare a moratorium on all prosecutions of conscripts under the Defence Act.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign
Dear Mr. De Klerk

Merrick Douglas has been charged with refusing to do an army camp. His trial begins in the Randfontein Magistrates Court on September 2.

Merrick Douglas is a 30 year-old computer workshop manager from Krugersdorp. He is appearing in the Randfontein Magistrates Court. The charge against him is that he has refused to do military service after having been called up for a camp at Regiment Paul Kruger in Randfontein in October last year. We believe that there is no constructive purpose that can be served by continuing with the prosecution against him.

- The population registration Act has been repealed. You have said that "the book of apartheid is closed". But Merrick Douglas is appearing in court charged under a law in terms of which only white South Africans can be prosecuted.

- While black volunteers are being turned away by the army each year, whites are forced to do military service and face criminal prosecution if they don't.

- The police and the courts are already overloaded with thousands of real criminal cases. But the government chooses to add to the burden on the courts by prosecuting people who don't comply with the whites only conscription laws.

- Merrick Douglas is a law abiding South African citizen. He has already completed two years of military service and a number of army camps. Now he is being treated like a criminal.

- The call-up system is in disarray. Thousands of those who receive call-ups simply ignore them. Hundreds have indicated that they refuse to do military service. But the government continues to victimize one or two individuals as a way of pretending that the system is still functioning effectively.

- We believe that prosecutions such as these will not succeed in intimating people into doing military service. All they will actually achieve is to further discredit the government, the courts and the SADF.

WE CALL ON YOU TO IMMEDIATELY WITHDRAW ALL CHARGES AGAINST MERRICK DOUGLAS

Yours Sincerely

If you support this call, please sign this letter and post it to the State President, at the above address.
Issued by friends of Merrick Douglas, PO Box 537, Kengray, 2100.
Dear Mr. De Klerk

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Issued by friends of Merrick Douglas, PO Box 537, Kengray, 2100.
SUPREME COURT APPLICATION TO DECLARE THE WHITES-ONLY CALL-UP INVALID

The Supreme Court application brought by the ECC and Richard Rule against, inter alia, the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Force is due to be heard on Wednesday, 23 September 1992 by a full bench of the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court. Legal counsel for the ECC have argued that the repeal of the Population Registration Act, to which the Defence Act refers for its definition of "whites", has rendered the whites-only call-up legally invalid.

If the ECC's application is successful, all call-ups issued since the repeal of the Population Registration Act will be invalid, and there will be no legal basis for forcing those conscripts affected to continue performing military service. Equally, those who have not yet reported for service will not have to do so. By its intransigence and its obstinate refusal to negotiate with the ECC and other interested parties on the status of the whites-only call-up, the government has therefore created a potentially embarrassing situation for itself and the SADF.

In the above scenario, the government will either have to accept the termination of its conscription system, or it will have to rush new racist legislation through Parliament in order to fill the gap which has been created. In this regard, it should be noted that the legitimate personnel needs of the SADF do not depend on the conscription of whites, but can be satisfied more than adequately by the current over-staffed permanent force and the large numbers of volunteers applying for posts in the SADF, many thousands of whom are turned away annually.

Even if the ECC's application is unsuccessful, it will focus attention once again on the anomaly of a racially selective military call-up, at a time when racist legislation has largely been phased out. In this regard, it is worth noting that the SADF continues to attempt to force white schoolboys to register for military service, enclosing a copy of the definition of a "white" person from the now repealed Population Registration Act with the registration form. This definition is one of the most repugnant and racially offensive remnants of apartheid's legacy, which attempts to define a person's race by personal or physical characteristics.

The real reason for the government's desperate retention of the whites-only conscription system is its desire to retain the option of a mass mobilisation of the citizen force, numbering possibly 500 000 men, in the event of the negotiation process developing in a direction which does not suit the government. This can be referred to as the "Rhodesia option". If this option were to be exercised, particularly under the present leadership of the SADF, South Africa would be plunged into a civil war. The ending of the whites-only conscription system is therefore vital to the stability of the country and the success of the negotiation process.

For further details of the court proceedings, please contact the ECC's attorney, Mandy Taylor at 331-6919. Other queries should be addressed to the ECC office at the above number.
The present purge of the SADF which is being conducted by President de Klerk is long overdue. It is regrettable that Mr de Klerk had to have his nose rubbed in the dirty doings of the SADF by the Goldstone Commission before finally taking some action against corrupt and renegade officers.

Now that his hand has been forced, we urge Mr de Klerk to resist the temptation to stop short of a full flush of the system. In particular, we are concerned that Mr de Klerk may restrict himself to removing only those officers who are perceived to pose a threat to his administration, and who have flouted his authority over the last year or two. We believe that those responsible for murders, atrocities and illegal dirty tricks in the past should not escape the purge simply because they were acting in line with the government’s policy of crushing its opponents by any means. Soldiers cannot escape liability for illegal acts simply by arguing that they were "following orders", if those orders were manifestly unlawful. In any case, such a defence is clearly not available to those at the top of the command structure.

We have noted the plea by the Minister of Defence, Mr Gene Louw, to organisations and political parties to refrain from "making capital" out of the present state of affairs. This is a little rich from a representative of the very government which poisoned the SADF with its racist political agenda in the first place. As Minister of Defence, Mr Louw should take firm steps to assert civilian authority over the SADF, and to rein in the rogue generals. Such an approach could greatly facilitate the transferal of control over the SADF to a multiparty body in due course.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign
TO: SAPA PR WIRE SERVICE - FOR IMMEDIATE TRANSMISSION

ECC PRESS RELEASE

3 JANUARY 1993

JANUARY 1993 CALL-UP

The End Conscription Campaign advises conscripts who have been called up to report for military service this week to ignore threats by the SADF that they will be prosecuted if they do not report. Threats of this nature are made annually by the SADF, but are now nothing more than hot air. In this regard, it should be noted that no one who failed to report for National Service in January or July 1992 was prosecuted, despite threats of prosecution.

Our estimate, based on information gathered during 1992, is that only 30% or less of those called up this January will actually report for service. This group will comprise individuals who want to do military service, and who are in reality volunteers, as well as a number of youngsters who have been intimidated into reporting. As was observed in 1992, a significant number of those reporting will be individuals who have no other employment or study options open to them, and who can be considered to be "economic conscripts". However, the majority of those called up will either evade the military by means of a deferment, or will simply ignore their call-ups.

In the light of recent admissions by the Minister of Defence, Mr Gene Louw, that the present call-up will probably be the last whites-only call-up (which in reality should mean the last call-up of any kind), we advise anyone who objects to military service in the SADF to resist the SADF's bullying and to avoid being the last suckers in the system.

To Mr Gene Louw, who has just rejected our third request for a meeting since he assumed the role of Minister of Defence in July 1992, we say: "Read our lips - no more call-ups!"

Issued by Chris de Villiers
for the End Conscription Campaign
ECC PRESS RELEASE

9 FEBRUARY 1993

RENEWED PROSECUTIONS OF "DRAFT DODGERS"

The SADF has begun prosecuting a number of individuals for failing to report for recent military camps. It appears that the SADF's tactic is to summon the individuals concerned to appear before a court martial with very little warning, in the hope that they will appear without proper legal representation and plead guilty to a charge of failing to report for military service.

However, in the case of certain individuals who were represented by an attorney, and who indicated that they would defend themselves, the charges were dropped. Apparently, the military authorities are reluctant to deal with any arguments involving political considerations or principled objections to the current system of military service.

In the circumstances, we urge anyone faced with such charges to obtain legal representation immediately, and not to plead guilty to charges of failing or refusing to report, or to make statements to the military authorities which may incriminate them. The ECC national office (tel: 011 836 8423) will refer concerned individuals to attorneys if necessary. We also remind the public of the fact that there is a roster of over 30 advocates at the Johannesburg Bar who are prepared to defend individuals in such cases free of charge.

The resumption of call-up related prosecutions, hot on the heels of the announcement by the Minister of Defence that the call-up system is to end this year, is a disgrace, and shows breathtaking hypocrisy on the part of the government and the SADF. The announcement that the call-up system was to be phased out was made on the same day the government introduced its proposed Bill of Rights, which inter alia proposes to outlaw discrimination on the basis of race. However, the present prosecutions can only apply to people who are defined as whites by their appearance, in terms of the racist and repugnant provisions of the Population Registration Act which are retained in the Defence Act. The few individuals being prosecuted represent only a tiny fraction of the thousands who have failed to report in recent months, and are being used as pawns in a cruel political game by the government. We believe that the new prosecutions are a cynical attempt to create fear and confusion in the minds of those who may still be liable to be called up this year, so that the government does not lose its grip entirely on the crumbling call-up system.

We call on the ANC, the Democratic Party and all other democratic political organisations to join us in condemning the renewed prosecutions, and to press for a moratorium on such prosecutions.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign
TRIAL OF JOHN DOWNIE & JOHN KELLY POSTPONED TO 10 JANUARY 1994

John Downie and John Kelly appeared in the Vanderbijlpark Magistrates Court this morning on charges of refusing to do any further military camps. An application had earlier been made on their behalf to postpone the trials, pending negotiations for the suspension of trials for politically motivated offences. On the instructions of the Attorney General, the trials were postponed until 10 January 1994.

The implication of this development is that it is now almost completely impossible for the SADF to enforce its whites-only call-up. Any person who objects to serving on political grounds should be able to apply for indemnity, while the SADF itself has dropped charges in all known cases where individuals facing a court martial for failing to report for service have indicated that they will defend themselves rather than pleading guilty. In recent months, turnouts for military camps have reached record lows, with only a handful of individuals reporting in some cases. A number of SADF units have taken to sending plaintive letters to citizen force members, all but begging them to attend camps. This is indicative of the final disintegration of the call-up system. As far as National Service call-ups are concerned, the ECC is not aware of any successful prosecutions of individuals who failed to report for National Service during the last two years, despite dire threats from the SADF to the effect that those failing to report would be prosecuted en masse.

This state of affairs highlights the few token prosecutions which do take place (usually court martials initiated by gung-ho unit commanders) as being blatantly capricious and unfair, notwithstanding the small fines imposed.

Earlier this year, the then Minister of Defence Gene Louw stated that 1993 would see the last all white call-up. Thus, we expect no call-up in January 1994, and Citizen Force camp call-ups should also cease soon. It is hardly conceivable that such call-ups can continue under an interim government. In the circumstances, we repeat our advice to all conscripts ignore their call-up instructions if they have any objection whatsoever to a whites-only call-up. If, as appears likely, the SADF goes ahead with a National Service call-up in July, we predict that the percentage turnout will be the lowest ever, rivalling the risible turnout for camps.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign
ECC PRESS RELEASE

1 JULY 1993

NATIONAL SERVICE INTAKE - JULY 1993

Quite predictably, the SADF has issued its usual tired threats, to the effect that conscripts failing to report for National Service next week will be prosecuted. Similar threats were uttered prior to the January 1993 call-up, but nothing came of them. In fact, in its own press release, the SADF admits that up those who failed to report in January have simply been called up again for July. If any proof were needed of the feebleness of the SADF’s threats, they have provided it themselves.

The then Minister of Defence, Mr Gene Louw, admitted earlier this year that 1993 would see the last all-white call-up. Clearly, racially exclusive call-ups cannot continue under an interim government. It is therefore safe to predict that we are about to witness the last whites-only National Service call-up.

In view of the fact that nobody has been successfully prosecuted for the last 2 years or so for refusing or failing to report for national service, the SADF’s threats of prosecutions are obviously toothless. We repeat our advice to conscripts who have any objection to a whites-only call-up to simply ignore their call-up instructions.

We predict that the percentage turnout for the July call-up will be the lowest ever, rivalling even the embarrassingly low turnout for camps.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign
The Editor
The Star

Fax No: 836 5593

Dear Sir

Recent developments, particularly the occupation of the World Trade Centre by armed thugs of the AWB, highlight the question of what to do about the right wing. Like many others, I have felt that the demand by right wingers for a "boerestaat" is a cheek, and should be ignored. However, a consequence of this view is that these right wingers, seething with racial hate, will remain citizens of South Africa in future. Surely this is an undesirable situation in itself. Perhaps the solution is, after all, to agree to a "boerestaat". This can be regarded as a sort of constitutional dustbin in which the white trash of the AWB and similar organisations can be discarded. The citizens of such a "boerestaat" will then, of course, be foreigners in South Africa, so that influx control can be applied to them. Another benefit will be that individuals holding the most extreme and obnoxious racist views will not be circulating their poison within the society as a whole.

Extreme right wing leaders like to pretend that their followers are a majority of noble, freedom-loving Boers who only want a place in the sun. In fact, they are the lowest common denominator of society: ignorant bigots who think that being "white" is a substitute for ability and hard work. The majority of decent Afrikaans-speaking people reject them and their bogus agenda with contempt.

South Africa can be likened to a patient, afflicted with the disease of apartheid, who has been partially cured by the administration of a democratic antibiotic. However, there remain stubborn pockets of disease which resist such treatment. The hateful racist views of the extreme right wing, in this analogy, are a tumour which must be excised surgically. The desired effect would be achieved by a two pronged approach: firstly, granting the right wingers their own territory, even if this is costly, and secondly, by strict and severe police action against contraventions of the law by right wingers. In this regard, if the police cannot be relied upon to take appropriate action due to the presence of large numbers of right wing sympathisers in their ranks, this must be dealt with by a purge of the SAP, not by inaction.

Yours faithfully

CHRIS DE VILLIERS
Dear Sir

Alan C Brown accuses the End Conscription Campaign of "sniping" at military servicemen. (The Star, 9 July 1993). As usual, Mr Brown has got the wrong end of the stick.

After almost 10 years of campaigning against racially exclusive conscription, we in the ECC might have been forgiven for thinking there could hardly be a literate South African who does not know what we stand for. Perhaps Mr Brown simply prefers his own version of reality to the facts.

One more time, let us say that the ECC is not opposed to the security forces. We are opposed to compulsory military service on a racialistic basis, as presently implemented by the SADF, and we have consistently opposed the use of the SADF and SAP in support of apartheid in the past. It may interest Mr Brown to know that top SADF and SAP officers make no bones about the fact that white-only conscription is wrong, or that the image of the police has been tarnished due to their enforcement of apartheid legislation over the years. The ECC, together with a number of other organisations and military experts, proposes that our future defence force should comprise a relatively small permanent force, supplemented by short-service volunteers (as are presently being recruited in large numbers) and a voluntary reserve. If Mr Brown was more attentive, he would know that the ECC is on record as having suggested that a large proportion of the funds which are currently channelled wastefully into the SADF should be diverted to the SAP, to improve their training, staffing and equipment.

The ECC has moved with the times, graduating from simple defiance of the call-up to facilitating and participating in the debates on such crucial issues as the composition of a future defence force, intervening to prevent violence and the demilitarisation of South African society. To this end we are holding our tenth anniversary festival, on the Wits University campus, at which a wide range of speakers and members of various organisations will be present. This may be the ECC's last major public event, and we encourage all interested parties to contact our national office at (011) 836 8423 for more information.

Yours faithfully

Chris de Villiers
For: END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN
The End Conscription Campaign held its 10th anniversary Peace Festival this weekend, with a series of workshops on a range of military and peace-related issues.

The opening function on Friday evening was addressed by Mr Nelson Mandela, President of the ANC, and by Ms Maggie O'Kane, 1992 British journalist of the year for her coverage of the war in Bosnia.

The workshops and addresses on Saturday and Sunday dealt with the themes of peacekeeping, the armed forces in transition, and the task of developing a peaceful society. Speakers included members of the ANC and MK, the SAP, the Peace Secretariat, the Institute for Defence Policy, the Military Research Group, and many others. (Full details available on request.)

The festival ended on a high note, with delegates agreeing on the need for a new, broadly-based movement to oppose the pervasive militarisation of our society, and to promote a climate of reconciliation. ECC members at the festival felt that, with the ECC's goal of an end to conscription in sight, the organisation would possibly wind down soon, and that the organisation's traditional single-issue focus did not make it an ideal vehicle for such a new movement.

Copies of speeches delivered, and a summary of the conclusions and recommendations of the various workshops and plenary sessions will be made available in due course.

More information is available from the ECC office at tel. 011 836 8423.

Issued by Chris de Villiers
for: The End Conscription Campaign
Recent statements by General James Kriel of the SAAF concerning the imminent demise of the whites-only callup are encouraging, inasmuch as they reflect an acknowledgement by senior SADF officers that the present conscription system is no longer politically or practically viable.

Predictably, there have been contradictory statements from other SADF sources already. Inter alia, SADF headquarters is reported as having repeated the standard line, to the effect that the whites-only conscription system cannot be changed before the Defence Act is amended, and that callups will therefore continue indefinitely.

It should be understood that this argument is untrue, and is a deliberate attempt to mislead the public. The Defence Act merely empowers the SADF to conscript individuals; it does not compel them to do so. To even suggest otherwise is a blatant misrepresentation of the true situation. In other words, the SADF is free to cease callups tomorrow, whether for 1 year national service or for camps. The SADF has already recruited nearly 10 000 short-service volunteers this year, as a preliminary step to ending callups, and we believe that a formal announcement on the scrapping of the callup is imminent.

The callup has for several years contributed less and less of the personnel strength of the SADF, and is not necessary for the SADF’s legitimate personnel requirements at this stage, apart from being both morally indefensible and politically unacceptable.

In the circumstances, anyone reporting for a callup at this stage must be considered a volunteer. The SADF’s threat of mass prosecutions of conscripts who fail to report has been proved to be so much hot air, and we repeat our advice to conscripts to simply ignore their callups if they have any objection to serving in the SADF.

Issued by Chris de Villiers
for the End Conscription Campaign
END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

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ECC PRESS STATEMENT

25 AUGUST 1993

END OF NATIONAL SERVICE

The announcement by Minister of Defence, Kobie Coetzee, that whites-only National Service has come to an end is not unexpected. Government and SADF spokesmen have been creating a climate for this announcement for some time, and it appears that the Government wanted to be seen to make the announcement itself, rather than be seen to bow to the inevitable. As it is, the decision could hardly be delayed any longer, with the call-up system in tatters.

Some confusion remains over the question of citizen force members who may still be liable for camps. Irrespective of what the Government and SADF intend, it is clear that the system of camps is no longer functional, with an average of less than 20% of those called up for camps actually reporting for service. Once it becomes known that National Service is to end, we predict that the numbers of those reporting for camps will drop even further, and that only those who wish to do camps will actually report for duty.

In principle, there is of course no difference whatsoever between calling up individuals for one year of National Service or for a one month camp, and we fail to see how a transitional Government will be able to tolerate racist call ups, even on a reduced scale.

Since the beginning of the year, the SADF has been recruiting short-service volunteers for its VPSS system, and has apparently come close to its target of 10 000 personnel. These personnel fully replace the personnel which the SADF obtained by means of conscription, and there is therefore no need whatsoever for any further call ups, even from the SADF's point of view.

Taking into account the 45 000-odd permanent force personnel, supplemented by the abovementioned 10 000 new recruits, plus the personnel of the homeland Defence Forces and MK, there is in fact a surplus of trained military personnel in the country, and there is no legitimate reason whatsoever for the retention of the call up on the statute books. Until the Defence Act is amended to exclude the possibility of conscription, it remains theoretically possible (although politically unlikely) that the Government could reintroduce a call up.

Once we are certain that call-ups are really being phased out, the ECC will almost certainly dissolve. However, we will be monitoring the situation for a while longer. In particular, we will oppose any further prosecution under the call-up laws, which would be particularly unacceptable now that the end of whites-only National Service has been announced.

Issued by Chris de Villiers
for The End Conscription Campaign
Dear Sir

The recent raid by the SADF on an alleged Apla house in Umtata is another example of the murderous stupidity for which our military leaders are notorious. So you suspect Apla of carrying out terror attacks on civilians? Well, clearly there is nothing for it but to spend months planning a military raid in which a few 12 year olds and teenagers can be murdered as they sleep. That'll show them!

According to Defence Minister Kobie Coetsee, the soldiers involved thought they were killing adults. (You know how big these 12 year olds look when they're asleep.) General Kat Liebenberg, Chief of the SADF, stated that the intention was to bring them back alive. Strange how the blood on the end of the mattresses makes it look as though sleeping people were shot in the head – maybe they were dreaming of resisting arrest?

Isn't it funny how the more things change, the more they stay the same?

Yours faithfully

Chris de Villiers
PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

17 October 1993

ATTORNEY-GENERAL GIVES GO AHEAD FOR PROSECUTION OF CAMPERS

The Transvaal Attorney-General's office has given the go ahead for prosecutions to proceed against three men who are due to appear in court tomorrow on charges of refusing to do further army camps.

Hendrik van Rensburg, Roland Sibley, and Frik Barnard, are all due to appear in the Pretoria Magistrates court tomorrow, Monday the 18th of October. The Attorney-General had been approached to withdraw the charges on the basis that the three would be likely to receive indemnity from prosecution at some point in the near future.

Two other Citizen Force members, John Downie and John Kelly, are also facing similar charges and are due to appear in court again in Vandebeielpark on the 10th of January. At their last court appearance, on the 28th of June, their cases were postponed pending the outcome of their applications for indemnity.

These individuals are all being prosecuted under provisions which are expressly discriminatory. The legislation in terms of which they are being prosecuted only applied to "whites" at the time when they were first charged. The alleged offences were all committed prior to the latest amendment to the Defence Act which has deleted all references to race from the Act.

Other cases of this kind include that of Luis Mitras, who has been charged with refusing to complete his community service as a conscientious objector, and a handful of "failure to report" cases, either for call-ups for initial military service, or for camps, which continue to be brought before the courts.

While all references to race have now been removed from the Defence Act, the Act still effectively maintains a "disguised" whites-only Citizen Force call-up by stating that every person who was a Citizen Force member at the beginning of 1985, or who has subsequently become one, is liable for camps. People who have become Citizen Force members up to this point have all done so under the whites only call-up system.

The End Conscription Campaign intends to approach the Transitional Executive Council, as soon as it is established, to suspend all call-up related prosecutions.

Issued by: David Bruce
For: the End Conscription Campaign
PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

PROSECUTION OF CAMPERS POSTPONED

18 October 1993

The cases against Hendrik van Rensburg, Roland Sibley and Frik Barnard, who all appeared in the Pretoria Magistrates court this morning, were postponed until the 21st of January, pending the outcome of their applications for indemnity.

Van Rensburg, Sibley and Barnard have all been charged for refusing to do further army camps. Their court appearance today followed an instruction from the Transvaal Attorney-General that the prosecutions against them should go ahead.

In our opinion these prosecutions are perverse and stupid. While people are no longer being called-up to do initial military service under the whites-only call-up system, those who have already completed periods of service under the system are still being called-up for camps.

With only a handful of people reporting for camps and the vast majority of campers ostensibly in breach of the law, it would appear pointless for the law to go on being used to make an example of one or two individuals.

We suggest that taxpayers money and the time of court officials could more profitably be used in dealing with the rampant crime and corruption which are presently affecting South Africa rather than being wasted on charges of this kind which serve no purpose.

Issued by: David Bruce
For: the End Conscription Campaign
Dear Sir

Recently you published a letter from P Linzer concerning a military call-up which he had received. The points made by Mr Linzer are valid, and it is indeed astonishing that the SANDF, with many thousands more recruits than it knows what to do with, is continuing to call up white male civilians to run around in the bushes, while its 120 000 full time personnel do little more than consume oxygen, at great public expense.

I would like to put Mr Linzer straight on one point. The End Conscription Campaign has not disbanded entirely, although we are operating very much with a skeleton staff. We have concentrated our recent efforts on advising individuals and lobbying the new government to end the call-up. To this end, we have proposed that certain sections of the Defence Act be scrapped, and we are informed by the Minister of Defence's Office that legislation to amend the Defence Act will be introduced in August. Of course, it is not necessary for the Defence Act to be amended for call-ups to be stopped, and the public ought to ask why such an obviously racially discriminatory system is being maintained.

In the meantime, the best advice to those faced with camp call-ups is simply to ignore them.

Yours faithfully

CHRIS DE VILLIERS
ECC CHAIRMAN
ECC PRESS RELEASE

27 JULY 1994

MORATORIUM ON CALL-UP PROSECUTIONS

The End Conscription Campaign welcomes the announcement by deputy Minister of Defence Ronnie Kasrils that there will be no further prosecution of men who have refused to report for military service. Such an announcement is long overdue.

We trust that this announcement will apply to the thousands of people who have failed to report for camps recently, as well as to the handful of individuals who have already appeared in court and whose cases are presently in limbo.

Our understanding is that amendments to the Defence Act to do away with compulsory call-ups will be introduced in the next few weeks. A case can be made for the retention of the Citizen Force system, provided that attendance at military camps is voluntary. However, it is difficult to imagine a sensible reason for the SANDF to proceed with the proposed large-scale battle exercise at Lohatla next month, particularly in the light of the two to three-fold increase in the size of the permanent force in the last year.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: End Conscription Campaign
Tel. 884 4701 (w)
ECC PRESS RELEASE

29 JULY 1994

CONFUSION AROUND CALL-UP PROSECUTIONS

There appears to be total confusion in the Ministry of Defence concerning the government's policy on prosecuting individuals who refuse or fail to report for military service, in the light of contradictory statements made by Deputy Minister Ronnie Kasrils and Defence Ministry spokesman Major Muff Andersson.

According to media reports, Mr Kasrils stated that there was a moratorium on prosecutions, while Major Andersson states that this is not true. However, it appears that Mr Kasrils has let the cat out of the bag, since it does appear that few if any prosecutions are actually taking place. According to press reports, there are about 30 000 potential prosecutions pending, which proves that the vast majority of campers called up are not responding to call-up instructions.

Notwithstanding the above, the SANDF is harassing individuals called up for camps, and threatening them with prosecution. We have also received reports of individuals being harassed for alleged failure to report in 1993. As we have stated previously, whites-only call-ups are blatantly in conflict with Section 8(2) of the Constitution, and it is outrageous that the SANDF persists not only with the call-ups themselves, but with threats of prosecution.

It appears that the SANDF is unable to come to terms with the changes that have taken place in South Africa, and is trying to run its massive call-up bureaucracy as usual. It is unclear whether this is due to massive incompetence or deliberate policy. Neither possibility is confidence-inspiring.

It is argued by the SANDF that it is necessary to call up white Citizen Force members for the foreseeable future, due to their "expertise". For example, the impending large scale battle exercise at Lohatla supposedly requires civilians to be called up on a large scale, since the 120 000 -odd Permanent Force personnel are of no use for this purpose.

The SANDF is not coming clean with the public, and it appears that the new Minister of Defence and his subordinates are unable or unwilling to take the tiger by the tail. We call on the government to stop wasting vast sums of money on pointless military exercises, and to put the generals in their place.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign
TO SAPA PR WIRE SERVICE - FOR IMMEDIATE TRANSMISSION

ECC PRESS RELEASE

10 AUGUST 1994

OFFICIAL MORATORIUM ON CALL-UP PROSECUTIONS

The ECC welcomes with great relief the announcement by Mr Joe Modise, the Minister of Defence, of a moratorium on call-up prosecutions. It has previously been a matter of concern and disappointment to us that the new government had not made its position clear on the future of the call-up. The effect of the moratorium is that any response to future call-ups will be entirely voluntary. This is in line with the thinking of the ECC and can hardly be objected to.

There are presently a handful of individuals who are facing prosecution for call-up related offences. It would be grossly unfair to persecute these individuals further, and we call on the relevant Attorneys General to withdraw the charges faced by these individuals, as requested by the Minister of Defence himself.

With the removal of the last element of coercion in the recruitment of personnel into the SANDF, it appears that the work of the End Conscription Campaign is essentially completed, and that our organisation can now be disbanded. We will shortly issue a final statement in this regard.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
For: The End Conscription Campaign

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It is with a mixture of relief and satisfaction that the End Conscription Campaign announces that it is closing down with immediate effect. It was our intention to disband at the end of 1993, when compulsory national service or primary conscription was done away with. However, when it became apparent that the SADF was continuing with secondary conscription in the form of ongoing camp call-ups, and in the light of threats of continued prosecutions, we reluctantly continued to operate.

After some months of lobbying on our part and some egg-dancing on the part of the Ministry of Defence, the announcement of a complete moratorium on call-up prosecutions by Minister of Defence Joe Modise came as a welcome relief. Although we had trusted the new government to act on the conscription issue, we had been alarmed by the lack of urgency with which the matter was treated.

We in the ECC are proud to have made a contribution, however small, to the undermining of the machinery of apartheid and the fostering of a spirit of non-racialism in a part, at least, of the white community. The ECC’s campaign against conscription has always had a political aspect, in terms of which we saw whites-only conscription as part of the apartheid system, designed to bolster white rule. Now that apartheid is officially dead and conscription has effectively ended, we are still a long way from our ideal of "a just peace in our land". Amidst the many problems that our country faces, the role of the newly-named SANDF remains somewhat problematic.

The command structure of the SANDF comprises almost entirely SADF officers who waged "total war" against the ANC and all perceived enemies of the apartheid state, real and imaginary. It is not overstating the case to say that the senior officer corps of the SANDF is replete with apartheid's warmongers. The token purge of Military Intelligence carried out shortly before the election will have had little impact on this situation. Apart from this, the generals have already shown that their hunger for power and influence has not abated, and the demands of the military on the budget are not likely to decrease.

The alacrity with which the new government has embraced the arms industry also gives cause for concern. It is hard to imagine an act more immoral than the supplying of arms to Rwanda as it teetered on the brink of genocide, but this is the proud record of our "pushers" of the instruments of death. Assurances of a "responsible" arms sales policy ring hollow in the face of such cynical exploitation.

In the light of the above, our final call is on the new government, on political parties and on other organisations not to lose sight of these issues and lapse back into the apathy and ignorance which has, regrettably, characterised white South Africa during the apartheid years. The End Conscription Campaign came into existence because of a sense of outrage which had no other outlet. It would be a sad waste if nothing was learned from our experience.

Issued by CHRIS DE VILLIERS
ECC Chairman (Retired)