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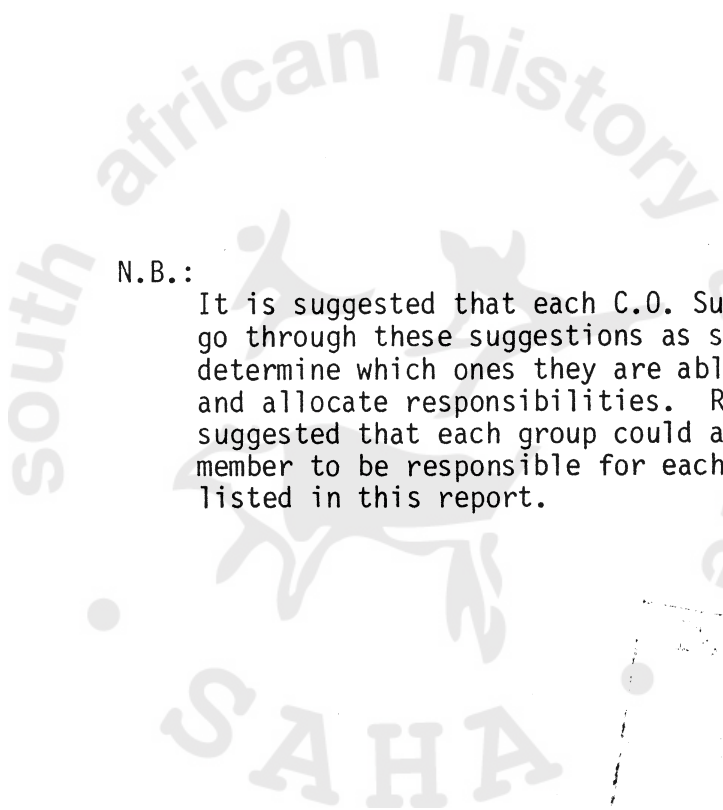
E6.4.2.5

1981 C.O. CONFERENCE

REPORT ON WORKSHOP: "WAYS OF SUPPORTING A C.O."

N.B.:

It is suggested that each C.O. Support Group should go through these suggestions as soon as possible, determine which ones they are able to do, set priorities and allocate responsibilities. Remember that it was suggested that each group could appoint one member to be responsible for each type of support listed in this report.



WAYS OF SUPPORTING A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

1. SUPPORT OF THE C.O. HIMSELF:

A. During decision-making and before court martial:

1. help with clarifying ideas e.g. role play.
2. help with drawing up a statement.
3. help the person to make contact with theological experts.
4. arrange interview between C.O. and his church council for them to examine his sincerity and make a clear statement of support.
5. give information about power of attorney.
6. prepare the person for Detention Barracks and solitary confinement by teaching how to relax, how to do yoga, to meditate, to weep.
7. help dispel myths about D.B. e.g. that warders will be friendly while other detainees will be hostile.
8. person should be given D.B. rules to know his own rights and what will be expected of him e.g. rules re: beard, hair.
9. collection of funds if legal expenses are anticipated or if C.O. has debts to pay back e.g. old mutual bursary in the case of Peter Moll.
10. support group members can offer themselves for training as C.O. counsellors.
11. non-combatants need to be given information about army life.
12. help to find sympathetic lawyers and ensure that the C.O. makes a number of visits to them before the trial.
13. assure C.O. of the support which the group will give his family afterwards.
14. offer the person help in discussing the issue with his family if this is what he wants.
15. find out about the attitude of C.O. to press publicity and ask him to choose a "press liaison person".
16. suggest that the C.O. register for UNISA courses as studies are permitted in D.B.
17. Important: make sure lots of good photos are taken to supply both local and overseas newspapers and magazines.

B. Court Martial and after:

1. try to be present at the Court Martial.

2. arrange for the best possible press publicity, supplying background material before the trial (if C.O. has approved this)
3. try to visit D.B. and check for loopholes for other visitors.
4. leave parcels e.g. toiletries, special soap, shampoo, shaving cream, writing material - inform parents or permitted visitor (e.g. chaplain that this has been done - in this way you can check whether they are passed on to him.
5. write letters, some in Afrikaans, bearing in mind that all will be read by D.B. authorities.
6. write picture post cards.
7. compile a "register" of C.O.'s, families etc. so that support groups and families can have a feeling of there being others involved and can contact them - use this only with approval of those concerned and with great discretion.
8. write to or phone D.B. authorities about conditions (support groups to circulate phone numbers and procedure for phoning. Voortrekkerhoogte 012 - 711311 ask for the Commanding Officer; ask how the C.O. is, what work he is doing, is he getting enough food etc. has he needed medical attention, does he have free access to the chaplain - some calls in Afrikaans if possible)
9. phone D.B. Chaplain to ask about how C.O. is and how often he is being visited by the chaplain.
10. send a copy of resolutions concerning C.O. made by church or other bodies to the C.O. concerned.
11. organise vigils of prayer; times of fasting and remembrance between the C.O., his family and friends and the various C.O. support groups.
12. find out and inform other support groups what kind of content is permissible in letters to C.O.'s in D.B.

NOTE:

Those who have gone overseas or who have chosen a non-combatant option also need support by the groups and many of the ideas listed above could apply to them as well.

2. SUPPORT OF THE C.O.'S FAMILY:

1. Help family come to terms with CO's decision.
2. Include families in the C.O. support groups or set up a separate group for them; invite them to participate in vigils, etc.
3. Share C.O. information with them so that they realise their son/husband/brother, etc. is not the only one.
4. stress that conversations with them about the C.O. - or anything else - will be confidential.

5. Discuss the question of legal costs.
 6. explain D.B. procedure and rules about visits etc. to the family and if necessary put them in contact with D.B. and military authorities.
 7. arrange for C.O.'s who have completed their D.B. period to talk to the families of detained C.O.'s.
 8. Discuss the question of travel costs (between home and D.B.) with family.
 9. If C.O. is married or has children or elderly parents some specific support for the family could include:
 - a) shopping for elderly parents
 - b) father-substitute for children
 - c) check whether family feels secure at night or would like someone to stay over
 - d) perhaps suggest that the family temporarily join an existing community
 - e) help younger brothers and sisters who have difficulty reconciling their hero image of their brother with his new "criminal" image
 10. Special contact with family over Christmas and birthdays.
 11. Help to find a supportive minister if the family's one is not supportive.
 12. Give information about regular and special visits e.g. Christmas.
 13. Discuss the question of financial support with families who are dependent on a C.O.
 14. Introduce parents and family to families of other C.O.'s.
3. a) SUPPORT THROUGH PUBLICITY IN THE CHURCHES:
1. Encourage church magazines, bulletins and pew leaflets to carry information about the C.O.
 2. Encourage church leaders to attend trial and give witness for the C.O.'s defence.
 3. Have the question of C.O. considered in confirmation classes and other youth groups, and also at church schools.
 4. Sunday school children to write C.O. or peace theme plays; essay competitions, poster competitions.
 5. Put up displays on church notice boards.
 6. Get church conferences to express clear support for C.O.
 7. Arrange prayer vigils and include C.O. in prayers of intercession, intercession lists, sermons, etc.

8. Arrange for C.O.'s to speak to parish groups, give sermons, visit church schools (to be introduced by a sympathetic church leader).
 9. Encourage church school to have supplies of useful pamphlets on C.O.
 10. Put pressure on church leaders to provide training for ministers who might be interested in C.O. counselling to appoint properly trained councillors for each diocese or district and organise regular ecumenical gatherings for these councillors at which they can discuss the problems they encounter and useful resources that are available. Similar opportunities for military chaplains to discuss the issue of C.O. should be organised.
 11. Find out whether cadets is compulsory for male pupils at church.
 12. Keep church heads in contact with SADF authorities.
- b) SUPPORT THROUGH PUBLICITY IN THE SECULAR MEDIA:
1. Requests to "Forces Favourites" and similar programmes for (suitable) music i.e. peace songs to be played for C.O.'s (and non-combatants?)
 2. Make use of Capital Radio for news about CO's (phone 011 - 7260111
031 - 317281)
 3. Try to establish a Chair of Peace Studies at a university (start with sponsored lectureship).
 4. Put a "peace candidate" at municipal or provincial level.
 5. Peace diary.
 6. Peace calender.
 7. T-shirts.
 8. Car stickers.
 9. Peace Christmas, Easter and other cards.
 10. Donate peace books to SADF library.
 11. Influential deputation to the press if they don't publish stories or reveal an unsympathetic approach.
 12. Write to "Letters to the Editor".
 13. Encourage influential community leaders in business, etc. to make public their support of conscientious objection or of a particular CO known to them.
 14. Establish contacts with student press.
 15. Try to have CO and related issues raised on radio "phone-in"

programmes e.g. Mervyn John's "capital phone-in" programme (011 - 7260111) and then phone to express your views, and arrange for other sympathetic to do likewise.

16. Promote public discussion of violent toys for children (with suggestions for alternative games).
17. Organise a "Run for Peace".
18. Raise the issue indirectly in the press by informing sympathetic journalists of interesting "peace" personalities who could be interviewed e.g. CO's from W.W. II, or from other countries, and visiting representatives from peace churches.
19. Equip yourself so that you can discuss the issue unemotionally with friends who disagree.
20. Appoint a "media-contact or liaison person" in each support group.
21. Find out who is your local contact person for overseas media e.g. B.B.C. and provide this person with information.
22. Don't neglect Afrikaans secular and religious press and "Paratus".

4. SUPPORT THROUGH CONTACT WITH SADF AUTHORITIES:

1. Send letters and telegrams to SADF in English and Afrikaans.
2. Write letters to officers commanding D.B. about treatment of Charles Yeats and others.
3. Phone D.B. and ask about welfare of particular CO's.
4. If a deputation is sent to the SADF try to persuade a sympathetic senior ex-military person to be part of it.
5. Encourage CO's family to maintain contact with the SADF (discuss with the family the issues they are going to raise to ensure that a concession for a particular CO will not adversely affect other CO's or future CO's)
6. Ensure that your support group has contact with local military chaplains.
7. Keep in constant communication with Rob Robertson and try to give him help in this matter (011 - 35632)
8. Ensure that your denomination has frequent communication with its military-chaplain-appointees so that the chaplains know their church's teaching on violence and are not more influenced by SADF attitudes.
9. Prepare papers, affidavits, etc. for submission to SADF.
10. Compile a register of sympathetic military chaplains.
11. Ensure that delegations to SADF include Afrikaans speakers.

5. SUPPORT THROUGH PARLIAMENT:

1. Write to your MP and any other with whom you have any connection. Where applicable remind MP of the message in recent "Kerkbode" article. (see Rob Robertson's conference paper).
2. Have special contact with Nat MP's.
3. Consider sending petition to Parliament by potential CO's.
4. Hold one-person poster demonstrations outside parliament.
5. At election time ask questions about CO at public meetings.
6. If you're in Cape Town or your MP is back in your constituency, make an appointment for an interview.
7. Put pressure on PFP to make sure CO is raised in the no-confidence debate.
8. Ask a sympathetic M.P. to raise questions in the House e.g. how many conscripts have left the country? how many CO's are in D.B.? how many non-combatants are there? ask for estimates of number of broken marriages as a result of national service, psychological stress amongst servicemen after call up, and acts of violence committed by servicemen out of the war action.
9. Try to establish whether it would be worthwhile appealing to the State President who has de jure control over the administration of D.B.

6. SUPPORT THROUGH OVERSEAS CONTACTS:

1. Ask amnesty, Pax Christi, Mennonites, etc. to pressure their governments to provide asylum for S.A. CO exiles.
2. Ask overseas Christian churches to write to S.A. government expressing concern about treatment of and provisions for CO's.
3. Use overseas contacts to help exiles get passports etc.
4. Ask overseas contacts to make person-to-person calls to Charles and other CO's in D.B.
5. Ask amnesty to organise petitions to the S.A. government.
6. Get overseas peace material into SA to improve and maintain peace libraries.
7. Ask overseas supporters of Richard and Peter to write to current CO's in D.B.