

Join the army . .

SOME points to consider for a conscripted army:

□ Conscripts are cheap. They have to take what pay they are given.

□ Conscripts are usually straight from school, trained to obey orders. Life has not yet taught them to question authority.

□ A conscripted army has a small professional core, which is the only part of it interested enough to want to know what is happening.

□ A conscripted army consists of a small professional core, and a large, bored, amateur mass, under professional orders.

The core remains static, providing secure jobs for army leaders, who can dispose of the unquestioning amateur mass as they see fit.

For a professional army:

□ Professional soldiers are keen on their job. They take less time to learn their trade, and practice it for longer. Ultimately they are cheaper to train. There is no dead wood in a professional army. Leadership is not static; rise from the ranks is common. The army, though better paid, is smaller than a conscripted force, and less of a drain on the country's economy. Its members, skilled in engineering, electronics, roadbuilding, etc, can be used for the service of the country in peacetime.

For the ECC — a message:

Your motives are admirable, but your methods are never likely to succeed. The best way to achieve your ends is to join the army. Let all eligible members join up, and work their way through the Permanent Force to positions of influence. You would then be in a position to influence events in the very way in which you wish to do so. It would be a sacrifice. Is it worth it to you?

Plun

Give these young men the freedom to choose

I ECHO the sentiments of Wynberg and his/her call for a professional army. The government can no longer justify the call-up. Military conscription raised for many young South Africans a moral dilemma of excruciating complexity: that they would be called on to face not a foreign enemy but their fellow countrymen.

The deployment of troops in urban areas could be interpreted as amounting to a declaration of civil war. The army is not the appropriate

The SADF and the brain drain

A CURRENT editor reads: "Would the last person to leave the country, please turn out the lights."

Which is perhaps appropriate considering the number of young and mainly university educated people leaving South Africa. And the biggest influence for this exodus is indisputably military conscription.

As Argus reporter Hugh Robertson wrote (The Argus, July 27) even the Soviet Union is more flexible and less severe in its approach to military objectors. Sending a person like David Bruce to prison for six years is untenable. Surely it is not too much to ask the Government to provide alternative service for those who sincerely object to going to the army?

A survey conducted last year at Rhodes University indicated that 56 percent of students were contemplating emigrating, with conscription as the dominant reason. Can South Africa afford this brain-drain because of the archaic and uncompromising attitude of the military?

TERENCE MULLARD
Rondebosch

Shocked by SADF suicides

I WAS absolutely shocked to read in The Argus of March 4 that "a total of 335 national servicemen had tried to commit suicide last year, of whom 17 had succeeded, the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, said in the Assembly."

The first thought that sprung to mind was: Why would 335 young men in the prime of their lives want to commit suicide?

I feel that, in view of the worry that this report must cause parents whose sons are doing their national service, a top-level investigation into the reasons for the 17 suicides and 318 attempted suicides should be conducted immediately.

Especially after the scandalous case of a sergeant in the operational area who, last year, punished a national serviceman by having him dropped from a helicopter in the bush about 50 kilometres from his base, and told him to walk back to his base. And the national serviceman was never seen again, having disappeared without trace.

WORRIED CITIZEN
Thornton 15-03-1988

The age of conscription

RECENTLY there have been a number of films on circuit which have had a 2-11 age restriction ("The Incredible Lightness of Being", for example). Yet we have a conscription system which sends young men of 18 into the army, entitling them to kill, maim and perpetrate violence.

How can a mere film be denied these men? Does our society really consider love and eroticism to be more violent than war? Who can explain this bizarre anomaly? Possibly "Magnum" Malan has the answer?

In our present situation it is absurd for any film to have an age restriction beyond the age of conscription.

DENOON SIEG
Marina da Gama

'Mense verlaat SA oor diensplig'

Deur SAM LAKE:
Kaapstad

DIENSPLIG is 'n faktor wat baie bydra dat medici en ander beroepslui die land uit vlug. Daar behoort dus opnuut na die kwessie van diensplig gekyk te word, skryf dr. J.P. de Villiers van Nierkerk in *Hospitaalforum*, die tydskrif vir doktors wat saam met die SA Mediese Tydskrif versprei word.

Dr. Van Niekerk is die dekaan van die mediese fakulteit aan die Universiteit van Kaapstad.

Hy sê: "Vandag se jongmense is nie minder idealisties as in die verlede nie.

Die meeste wil 'n land dien en die vooruitsigte van die toekoms verbeter. Maar dis "onregverdig" dat net blanke mans dienspligtig is."

Hy sê opvatting oor die diensplig van doktors begin nou verander. Alternatiewe moet oorweeg word, soos gemeenskapsdiens in 'n plattelandse hospitaal of mediese navorsing.

admire them or not.

I ask only for the same right for today's young men to make the same individual choice.

J K BERGER

Wynberg

I SALUTE the courageous stand taken by the 10 young men who refused to serve in the SADF and who have recently returned from exile. In your report (The Argus, December 6) an SADF spokesman is quoted in response as saying that all men

institution to deal with internal unrest, because one must indeed ask the question, where is the "border" now?

The continued conscription of white youths will increase the conflict and further divide our country.

One further point: Mr P.W. Botha, Mr B.J. Vorster and Dr H.F. Verwoerd were not conscripted. They chose, in good faith, not to go to war against Hitler and the forces of nazism and fascism and I defend their right to have taken this decision, whether I

between the ages of 17 and 18 are required by law to do military service. This was a statement merely pretends to ignore the growing problem, feel the government and the SADF should indicate exactly where they stand on the issue and how and when they intend to address it. This obviously cannot continue they are, with the authority ignoring the fact that there is an increase in resistance to the draft.

CONCERNED MUM
Constantia Hills

Democracy and conscription

I REFER to the letter from "Democrat" (The Argus, October 12) which vilified those who oppose conscription into the SADF. The letter contained ignorant, presumptuous and misleading statements.

The penalty "worldwide" for objectors is not additional service. In many countries alternative community service of the same duration is permitted — something which the SADF refuses to contemplate.

Does "Democrat" not know that there are young men in this country serving six years' imprisonment, with virtually no prospect of parole, because they rejected two years' conscription? Could one seriously call them "elitist", or suggest that they were trying to evade hardship, or that they wished to "enjoy the life of a doctor or lawyer" when one considers that in the full realisation of what the consequences were, they voluntarily chose a long term of imprisonment rather than be conscripted?

The trouble with people like "Democrat" is that they invariably underestimate those whom they disagree with. Young men who reject conscription face a vastly more unpleasant prospect than those who do their military service, and the least they are entitled to is respect for their principles, if nothing else.

"Democrat" also asserts that conscription in South Africa is truly democratic. It would be if all the inhabitants of the country faced conscription. But only whites do. Of course, to people like "Democrat", whites are the limit of their vision in this matter, which explains the racist arrogance behind the claim that conscription in South Africa is "truly democratic".

Why do only whites face conscription? Because, primarily, the government uses the SADF to protect white interests. That is one of the major objections of those who oppose conscription.

"Democrat" is so proud of the SADF's "affairs with Africa" (whatever that might mean) that one wonders whether he has reflected on the 25 years of fighting on the border, what it achieved, and what all those fine young men who were forced to do military service and who died in the struggle against Swapo actually died for? Has "Democrat" also reflected on the massive suffering of innocent women and children in Mozambique at the hands of Renamo, an organisation aided and abetted by the SADF for many years?

There is not a lot to be proud of, but a great deal for people like "Democrat" to think about.

THE ARGUS FATHER
Observatory

End of national service?

THOUGHTS of scrapping national service conscription in favour of a voluntary multiracial army would be widely endorsed.

Such a move, said to be considered by a SADF committee, could mean huge savings and a reshaping of the services.

With the retreat of the "total onslaught," millions of rands could be pruned from military spending.

Even more important is the human factor. It is parents who most of all have borne the anxiety of having sons in combat zones. Furthermore, the disruption caused to young men who have been obliged to spend long, and often wasteful, months on military duty at a time when they could be starting their careers or furthering their studies and training has been immense.

A change in meeting the country's military preparedness needs would be in keeping with the search for a new constitution and enduring peace.

South Africa will always need a capable defence capacity, but in ordinary circumstances military service in the hands of committed professionals and volunteer battalions — of all races — is preferable to a whites-only compulsory call-up.

07-11-1990

Troopie's wife asks 'Why...?'

I am a young wife of 25 with a 2½-year-old son and another baby is due three weeks before my husband is to return from a 90-day Border duty.

My husband is not a professional soldier but a 25-year-old diesel mechanic. We depend on any overtime he earns but unfortunately his firm will only pay him his basic wage while he is on a camp — and deduct his army pay.

Like all young couples we have a mortgage to pay, insurance and rates, and although we live modestly we will be R200 short each month he is away. We asked the army to transfer him until our finances improve and our baby is born; they said no.

In my last months of pregnancy I must now look after a toddler and all our affairs and give birth alone — it was something my husband had promised to do.

Can you help me? I would be very grateful for any advice or assistance you can give.

entertainment allowances complain bitterly about perks tax and tax in general, does anyone give a thought for the young man sent away from his home and job, wondering how his family will survive financially?

Many men I know have never been called up for a camp and others haven't even done National Service. Why does my husband's name come up time and time again? Why will he be forced to miss the birth of his last child and lose six months from his 2½-year-old's life? Why do I see National Servicemen on their way home every weekend while I sit wondering how to make ends meet?

Many South Africans fought abroad during World War II as volunteers — we are forced with no compassion shown, to fight for a foreign land on a foreign soil. That land, like Rhodesia before it, will be given away and those who died there will be forgotten.

Can you help me? I would be very grateful for any advice or assistance you can give.

Two servicemen found dead in W Cape

Defence Reporter

TWO national servicemen have died in separate suspected suicides.

Cavalryman Johan Nortjé, 20, of Klipheuwel, was found dead in a gas-filled car on the Philadelphia road yesterday.

He was on 14 days' leave from Group 2 headquarters at Worcester and would have completed his term of duty in May.

RIFLE FOUND

Lance-Corporal Anthony Davies, 20, of Cape Town, was found dead by personnel at Youngsfield Military Base after they had heard five shots being fired.

Corporal Davies's body was found at the Anti-Aircraft Regiment's headquarters. His rifle, set on automatic fire, was found near him.

Corporal Davies, who had joined short service, was reported to have arrived at the main gate security office about 3.50am and to have asked a regimental policeman on duty if he could see his rifle.

He took the rifle and started drawing it on a piece of paper. When the regimental policeman turned his back, Corporal Davies grabbed a magazine, put it in the rifle and cocked the rifle.

He warned the policeman not to follow him and ran out of the office.

The policeman fetched the night duty officer and when they ran to search for Corporal Davies, they heard the shots.

Corporal Davies left a note for his sister.

No crimes were suspected, a Defence Force spokesman confirmed.

06-03-1990

You 23-11-1990

350 objectors hand in petition at Castle

5 -10- 1989
by JOHN YELD
Staff Reporter

A NATIONAL delegation of the Conscientious Objectors Support Group handed a petition calling for an end to conscription to the SADF after a march through the city by about 350 people to the Castle.

Yesterday's lunchtime march, held with the permission of Cape Town's Chief Magistrate, followed an inter-faith service attended by several hundred people at St George's Cathedral Hall.

Leading the march under a big yellow banner proclaiming "Support Objectors! Stop the Call-Up!" were eight national leaders, including prominent anti-conscription activist Dr Ivan Toms, of the recent group

of 771 publicly announced objectors.

Earlier, Dr Toms announced that the "second-in-command" at the Castle, a Major Redlinghuys, would be waiting to receive the group's delegation. He would be handed a list of objectors from each region and a list of demands calling for an end to conscription and the release from prison of objectors to military service.

The march stopped at the SADF barrier outside the entrance to the Castle and the leaders were asked to accompany a sentry inside one at a time. Mr Mike Rautenbach, leader of the Cape Town delegation, and the group's legal adviser, Mr Justin Hardcastle, were escorted into the

guardroom.

On their return Mr Rautenbach said he had been told Major Redlinghuys was "in conference" and was not available. The petition had then been handed to the duty officer.

"The major wouldn't see us. We are a bit disappointed because we had an appointment," Mr Rautenbach told journalists.

The other leaders were escorted as a group into the Castle where they handed over their lists.

At the service, the Dean of Cape Town, the Very Rev Colin Jones, saluted the "great act of conscience" of the 771 objectors.

"The way to peace in South Africa is that we must stop

waging war against South Africans. You have done that ... It is this kind of action which holds hope for South Africa," he said.

● The Argus Foreign Service reports from Melbourne that two South African men, who have moved to Australia because they did not want to serve in the South African military, criticised the Australian government for not encouraging others in their situation also to leave.

The two, Bruno Rolando and Andrew Backwell, pointed to a United Nations resolution co-sponsored by Australia which called on member countries to give political asylum to conscientious objectors such as themselves.

Conscription and its consequences

TUES 25TH APRIL

ON April 14, Saul Batzofin was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for refusing the attend camps in the SADF. He is the fourth South African to be jailed for refusing to do military service.

The Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, informed Parliament on April 19 that in the last year 21 members of the Defence Force committed suicide

and a further 344 attempted to commit suicide.

Mr F W de Klerk, the Minister of National Education, suggested in Parliament, on the same date, that graduates who leave South Africa might be forced to repay the state subsidy on their university education. It is well-known that one of the major reasons graduates leave South Africa is a reluctance to serve in the SADF.

All three of these occurrences have on thing in common: they took place in a country with compulsory military conscription and extremely harsh punitive measures against those who refuse to do compulsory military service.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above is obvious.

(Mrs) F BIGGS
Observatory

South African seeks asylum in Mauritius

Argus Africa News Service
PORT LOUIS. — A 27-year-old South African who no longer wishes to serve in the South African army, is seeking political asylum here.

Mr Richard George Tarr, who arrived here at the end of December, said he had served in the SADF for two years but was still bound to undergo two months training every two years.

He said he refused to do this. Mr Tarr said he had contacted several embassies and the United Nations offices here.

However, he had experienced difficulties in obtaining asylum because he had entered Mauritius with a valid three-month visa.

He now fears he will be sent back to South Africa.

troverial role military service has, and always has had, in South African affairs.

Thus jailing a young man for six years for refusing such service is quite disgraceful. It shames the entire community that orders our country's affairs.

This is a country where dissension and even rebellion have an honoured place in history, where armed rebels have been granted military pensions and traitors and saboteurs have been freed as "political prisoners", at electoral whim.

The National Party's position on conscription is nauseatingly hypocritical. It damages the national interest through emigration. It is un-South African.

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I REFER to the letter from "Father" (The Argus, October 16).
The fact that conscription is for whites only is official acknowledgment of the con-

Keeping bad company on conscription

THE meandering letter from "Democrat" in defence of compulsory conscription (The Argus, October 23) was revealing nevertheless.

"Democrat", apparently, draws great comfort from being able to point to a list of some of the very worst examples of oppressive governments in his endeavour to prove that other countries also punish their objectors. Does this really exonerate South Africa, or put us in good company? Does he really feel proud to be compared with such examples as Bulgaria, Iran and Iraq? Is their attitude to conscription one he would advocate for South Africa?

And does he not see the revealing irony in the fact that several of the less than admirable examples he cited — including Iraq, which has just emerged from a war — actu-

ally are more reasonable in their treatment of objectors than is South Africa?

I suspect "Democrat" has misunderstood his son whom, he says, tells him that there are objectors who serve in the SADF. What we are talking about are not those conscientious objectors who are willing to serve in non-combatant roles and who do so in SADF units and in SADF uniforms. We are talking of those who object to all compulsory conscription into the SADF and for whom the SADF makes no alternative provision other than a six-year prison sentence.

I have sufficient faith in the fair-mindedness of my fellow South Africans to let them judge whether "Democrat" was being reasonable, or rational, in his flippant dismissal of the principles which would cause young men,

many of them still in their teens, to choose six years of imprisonment over two years of service in the SADF. Whether one agrees with them or not, one cannot just dismiss them as "yuppies" seeking an easy way out of national service.

FATHER

Observatory

27-10-1989

I AM not a supporter of the apartheid policies of the government. I did my national service in 1976 and have since then completed all my army camps. Several of these camps were completed in the townships. I feel that my decent Christian upbringing was greatly advantageous when in the townships.

I am sure that any person such as myself, with the relevant upbringing, by showing compassion and a caring atti-

tude, can be an excellent example to his fellow army conscripts, as well as to township inhabitants, in difficult circumstances.

If people such as myself had to be conscientious objectors, our caring influence would be lost. My army camps in the townships clearly illustrated one thing to me. This is that 70 percent of all township inhabitants, when un intimidated, requested an army presence to maintain law and order (not apartheid).

Ideally township violence, or black-white polarisation, which apartheid and white minority rule have helped to create, should be prevented by meeting the legitimate grievances of the township people. This cannot be done at once and increasing the police force should therefore take place to combat crime

in the townships. Unfortunately this country does not have the funds to do this. So we have to make the best of a bad situation. Getting rid of the root cause, namely apartheid, could take some time, even though a fair amount of progress has been made.

How do the authorities distinguish the difference between a genuine conscientious objector and a person who wants to avoid conscription merely because it disrupts his yuppie lifestyle?

It is my honest opinion that conscription if carried out properly for the right reasons is justified where no immediate suitable alternative exists.

S J GILLMER

Plumstead

□□□□

IN response to "Democrat's" letter (Argus, October 23):

if this person is really convinced that conscription into the SADF is "truly democratic," and that it is supported by a majority of South Africans, then I think that he should demonstrate that there is some substance to his claim.

May I suggest that a good way of doing so would be for him to take his letters to the townships to see how many signatures of support he can collect. A good place to start would be outside the SACLA clinic in Crossroads (which is run by Cape Town objector, Dr Ivan Toms).

I might add that it would probably be necessary for "Democrat" to secure a back-up of at least two battalions of SADF conscripts in order to ensure his personal safety.

UNWILLING CONSCRIPT
Observatory

Cap Times Wed March 22 1989

Army admits to Young's Field suicide attempts

READERS will be delighted to hear that the Great Young's Field Suicide Attempt Mystery has been solved — by the army itself.

A spokesman for the chief of the army called me last week to confess: "Our faces are very, very, red. Our statement to you was wrong. Yes, there have been suicide attempts at Young's Field, and we would like to apologise to you and your readers — it was an honest mistake."

The SADF's original denial that there had been any suicide attempts at Young's Field by members of the February intake resulted, I am given to understand, from crossed wires between two departments, the result being that Question A received Answer B, to the eventual discomfiture of all involved.

The correct facts, according to the army, are as follows:

● There were four attempted suicides at Young's Field during February.

● Three involved the February 1988 intake and one a 1988-intake "ouman".

● The details of the attempt by the "ouman" are not yet available because the routine investigations are not yet complete, but the three other cases consisted of two pill overdoses and one wrist-slashing.

● The three 1988-intake attempts did not do much harm: The pill-swallowers took their overdoses in full view of their comrades, while the wrist-slasher "scratched" himself a couple of times with the knife from his mess kit.

● One made his play because he had felt "crowded" in his bungalow, and another after his request for a transfer was turned down. The third had long-standing personal problems and a history of pre-service suicide attempts.

● All three were referred to 2 Military Hospital, and one is still under psychiatric treatment; the opinion is that all three attempts were actually "cries for attention" rather than serious essays at suicide.

Well, there you are. It has all been rather unfortunate; the bright points are firstly that readers made their voices heard and got the whole thing

into the open, secondly that the army realised its mistake and was already assembling the real facts for release to me before I made further inquiries, and thirdly that steps have been taken to ensure incorrect facts are not released.

Belt up, Sam

I do not believe readers should be too worried about Swapo leader Sam Nujema's recent outpourings (a couple of weeks ago he was going to seize Walvis Bay, and now he is planning to allow ANC bases across the Orange River — a remark on which, I notice, Swapo spokesmen started back-pedalling immediately).

Mr Nujema has a congenital weakness for factless statements, so I think we should see his remarks for the empty bletherings they are.

● Firstly, Swapo has yet to win a convincing election victory. I have it on good (non-official) authority that it is not having things all its own way; conventional wisdom aside, at this stage things could go either way.

● Secondly, in the event of such a victory Mr Nujema might well find himself sidelined by the Young Turks who have been at the coalface while he has been lolling in Lusaka these 25 years past.

● Thirdly, attacking Walvis Bay or setting up ANC camps would be regarded as a *casus belli* by the South African government, which has shown that it has no scruples about attacking any perceived threats. In any case, Pretoria will have a future Namibia firmly by the financial short and curlies.

So let's all just keep cool. And maybe Mr Nujema's mates should gag him.

Good show, Ysterplaat

I must have attended a dozen Ysterplaat "open days" in my time, and they have always been well-organized events, but I think readers will agree with me that last Saturday's was the slickest of them all. Full marks to Colonel Des Lynch, the OC Ysterplaat, chief organiser Commandant Dereck Emery and all their colleagues.

● Willem Steenkamp is a reservist of the Citizen Force.

30 suicide attempts — Malan

THIRTY national servicemen attempted suicide during the first quarter of this year, the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, told the Assembly.

He said 130 absented themselves without leave after reporting for service during this period and 252 received psychological or psychiatric treatment or counselling.

No servicemen actually committed suicide.

General Malan said high-risk cases were being identified early during intakes by questionnaires and interviews by professionals such as doctors, psychologists, social workers and chaplains.

Military community development units had been established in every unit in order to develop a healthy lifestyle, initiate preventive programmes and create channels to make specialist personnel available for servicemen in need. — Sapa.

14 The Argus, Thursday August 10 1989

Changing of the guard on national service?

IT was an unusual experience, no doubt, for the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, to face a gathering — as he did in Maitland last night — which did not accord him the respect of the senior officer in the mess.

Nevertheless, facing a lively audience at least half of which appeared to consist of war resisters and their confederates, the general appears to have given as good as he got. It is good that the Minister should have been exposed first-hand to the experience.

General Malan made use of the opportunity to acknowledge that national service and subsequent camps had a negative effect on the national economy. He said a committee, chaired by the Chief of the Air Force, had been formed to investigate the entire system of national service. He invited his hecklers last night to present their views to this committee.

This is a very different General Malan from the belligerent warlord of recent times. Perhaps that is the result of the recent outbreak of peace in south-western Africa. Perhaps it also has to do with National Party politicians having to soften their positions in order to distinguish themselves from the Conservative Party's eternal hawks.

Whatever the reasons, General Malan's demeanour last night appears to signal a change of sorts from the stiff-necked fire and brimstone that went before.

Staying put

I was in South Africa over the Christmas holidays and loved it and saw eight advertisements for my trade but I am not coming.

In England I am usually unemployed. I hate the weather, I hate the miserable people, and I envy you your food and wine and sports.

But if I came I would be called up and you can forget it. *Skilled, Shrewsbury, Salop*

YOU 12 -01- 1989 7

Malan slashes supporters of draft 'dodgers'

25-08-1989
Parliamentary Staff

JUST days after the banning of the End Conscription Campaign, Defence Minister General Magnus Malan has rattled sabres at those who condone national service "dodgers", saying they not only break the law but support "terrorism".

Speaking yesterday during a special joint debate on developments concerning the independence of Namibia, General Malan said anyone who took sides with "dodgers" took sides against the stability and order necessary for democracy.

MP Mr Jan van Eck (Ind Claremont) said the government had no right to sacrifice the lives of young South Africans "on the altar of their reckless adventures in Southern Africa".

Banning the ECC would not end the debate surrounding conscription. "The conscription debate will end only when this government stops misusing the Defence Force in pursuit of its selfish political goals."