

# Last Grave at Dimbaza: The dark world of apartheid

by Jennifer MacLeod

Last Grave at Dimbaza is a documentary film that presents an hour of appalling facts and scenes describing the state of the black race under South African apartheid rule.

The film, shot illegally in South Africa in 1973, was presented last Thursday evening in the Dalhousie Arts Center and is the first of a series of upcoming films dealing with international development issues. Discussion after the film was led by Rev. James LaGrand, of the Christian Reformed Church; Mr. Rogers Molefi of the Dalhousie History Department; and Dr. Tim Shaw, professor of Political Science at Dal.

Apartheid government grew out of South Africa's history of white imperialist rule in 1948, and has since ensnared the country in a program designed to strip the black person of any freedom, right or vestige of dignity. Reduced to being a source of cheap labour in a country where non-whites comprise 71% of the population, the black South African is engaged in an ever intensifying struggle for self determination. Meanwhile, apartheid government remains deaf and, as its name suggests, strives to create completely separate worlds of development for its white and non-white populations.

Last Grave at Dimbaza began by contrasting these two worlds showing the squalid conditions of the bantustans (government allocated black reserve areas) and the wealth of the white Afrikaaner world that comprises the remaining 87% of the land area. Under the Group Areas Act, blacks have constantly been relocated and forced into the bantustans, compelled to remain there unless officially assigned to work. Usually,

employment for a black male labourer means he is kept miles from his family—a deliberately demoralizing tactic. Those allowed into the white areas to work must present a passbook on demand. Failure to do so or any slight flaw in the pass results in hundreds of arrests each week.

The film portrayed the lifestyle of the White Afrikaaner who enjoys more luxuries and a higher standard of living than any European country; but it pointedly added that seven out of every ten black families live below the poverty line, suffering from rampant starvation and illness.

At various points throughout the film, shots were frozen and quotes superimposed. Against scenes of black repression, the then Prime Minister Vorster was quoted as saying that blacks are needed for their labour but that "can never... entitle them to claim political rights. Not now, nor in the future. It makes no difference whether they are here with any degree of permanency or not..." The blacks, according to other white leaders quoted, "are only in South Africa to sell their labour".

The documentary described the role of the multinational corporation in South Africa. Corporations with branches in numerous countries including Canada enjoy exorbitant profits in South Africa by adopting despicable exploitive policies toward their largely black labour force. The film cited the auto company British Leyland, for example, as having profits per worker five times greater in South Africa than in any of its other countries of operation. Tremendous wage discrepancies prevail between black workers and white counterparts, and according to the "Civilized



Labour Policy", no black is allowed a position higher than any white in industry.

The strict colour bar restricts the black worker to only unskilled and menial jobs. The documentary described the conditions of the gold mining industry, in which 18,000 deaths occurred within 30 years, and the average black miner works 60 hours per week, (20 hours more than allowed by law) and receives 4 pounds per week as opposed to 16 times that for the white miner.

Discrepancies in education expenditures reach similarly gross proportions with, in 1975, \$62 spent on each black pupil and \$917 spent per white student.

**The blacks' struggle must be openly recognized and supported in the form of economic and political pressures.**

The panelists included in their discussions some of the events that have shaped the rise of the black consciousness movement.

Following the 1960 Sharpsville race riots, government bans on the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress left the blacks without an effective political organization. The need for a new black voice that would challenge the system gave rise to the South African Student's Organization. It became evident that consciousness must still be spread to involve the masses and cries for the re-Africanization of South Africa revitalized the black consciousness movement and led to the Black Peoples' Convention, estab-

lished in 1972. One of the strongest black organizations, it helped to spread consciousness among younger and more blacks.

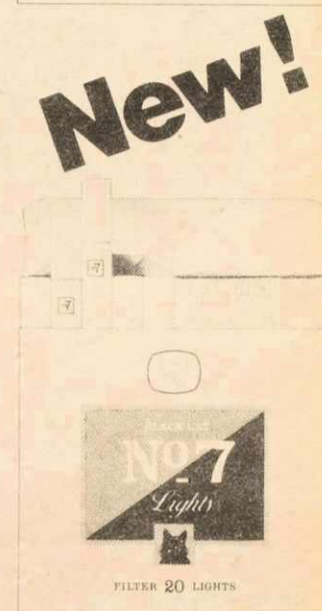
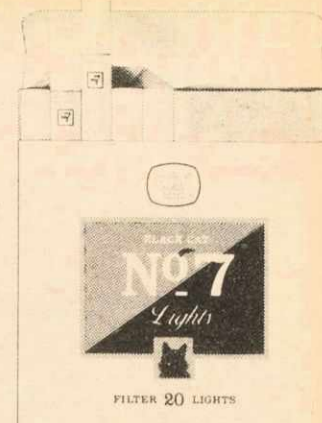
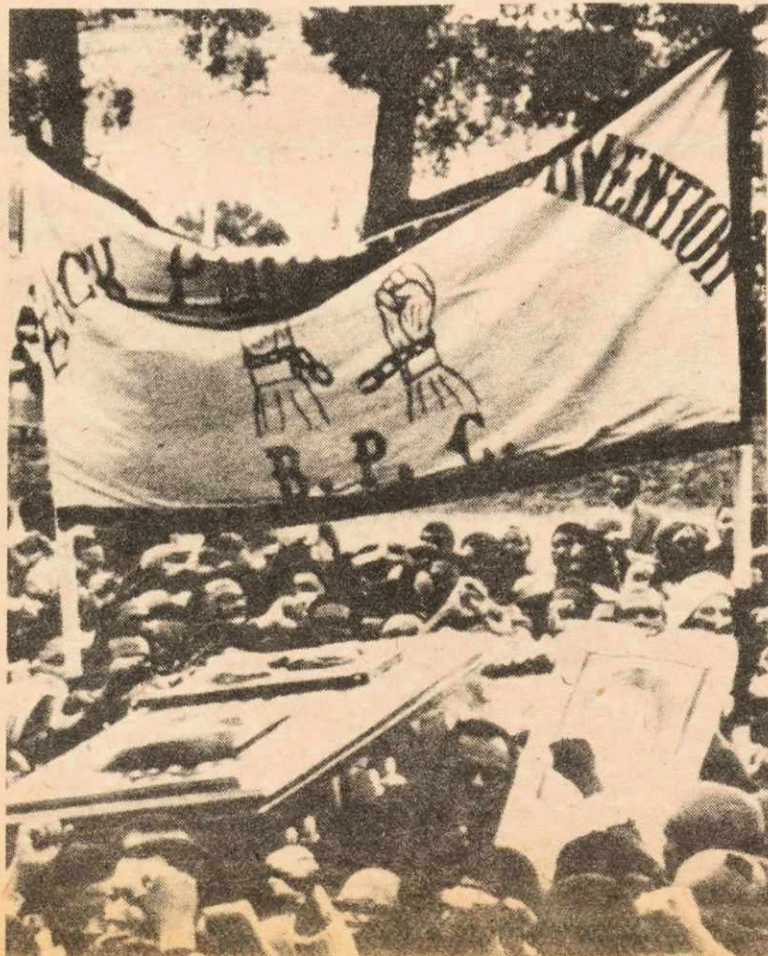
Although the BPC is a non-violent group, a major statement of its consciousness raising was the demonstrations by young students against government enforced language laws in the schools that led to the Soweto riots of 1976 in which 128 died. The toll from continued violence after the riots reached 618 by the end of the year. Encouraged by the ever-widening circle of black rule surrounding South Africa, the consciousness movement, supported by various liberation movements and international organizations, has managed, at least, to put the apartheid government on the defensive. Superficial changes were declared, but according to a 1979 Maclean's magazine article, there remained untouched some 300 laws preventing the mixing of races. Undeniably, apartheid clamps have tightened and its basic structure, the roots of apartheid policy, remain deeply entrenched in South African soil.

Last Grave at Dimbaza left its viewer with certain haunting visions: the shock of recognition, as Rev. LaGrand phrased it, at the sight of crowds of White Afrikaaners filling the grocery stores, tossing a coin at the black packer; the infuriating scene in which black labourers started at 6:00 a.m. in sweltering heat to collect the garbage of white city-dwellers and chase the garbage truck, driven by a smug white who refused to stop.

With such a compelling effect, the film made it difficult just to walk away and forget, and so the discussions ended with the question of what can be done. The panelists cited the fact that the most effective instrument of change is international disdain and action. The blacks' struggle must be openly recognized and supported in the form of economic pressures against foreign investment in South Africa, as well as pressures exerted on corporation firms to eliminate the job and wage color bar and to encourage black labour unions.

For us, this means imploring our governments and corporations to exert these pressures as well as offering our support to international organizations such as Oxfam-Canada. Most immediately, we can stop supporting the exploitive corporations, and thus the apartheid system, by boycotting South African products and travel. These measures are within our capabilities.

In short, White South Africa must be forced to realize that in economic circles, and in diplomatic, cultural and religious circles—in every facet of international intercourse—South Africa has no lovers.



**Regular Length**



**Real satisfaction in a mild cigarette.**

Warning: Health and Welfare Canada advises that danger to health increases with amount smoked - avoid inhaling. Average per cigarette - "Tar" 14 mg. Nic. 0.9 mg.