

Canadian brings new experience home



By Sam Okello

The need for a good job has been nearly everyone's dream.

Two weeks ago, John Peters, a representative from the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) met with a Student Services Counsellor

and myself to discuss job opportunities for students and others interested in employment.

Various job opportunities exist within the MCC, according to Peters. He mentioned that the criteria for selecting suitable candidates did not necessarily depend on academic qualifications. "One has to show the ability that he's determined to work" he said.

Peters pointed out that the MCC provided job opportunities both in Canada and Overseas Countries such as in Europe, South East Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. He added that MCC was a Christian agency concerned with cooperative relief, development, service

and peace programs.

Peters explained that under the Cooperative program, the MCC deals with emergency relief and material aid such as grains, flour, clothing, health and school kits. Where as in the development sector, MCC concerns itself with public and refugees and also issues related to development and human rights in developing countries.

Besides working with MCC as assistant director of personnel, Peters has travelled extensively to overseas countries.

Peters' fascination with MCC stems from his first trip to West Africa when he visited Nigeria for a three year assignment to develop

new materials for teachers to use.

For Peters, travelling in this African country was like stepping onto a different planet. Perhaps never before had he imagined such a variety of peoples from different ethnic tribes, all distinguished by their striking and often strange cultures.

The difficulties of witnessing different cultures in a foreign country was somehow a culture shock to Peters. In certain cases, Peters was not received graciously but he was ready to forgive anyone. Sometimes Peters often wondered why he was viewed with suspicion. He was not aware that in most African traditions, it was "immoral" to give something to a person with your left hand. Un-

aware of such a tradition, Peters would feel surprised.

However, as time went on, Peters observed and learned to cope with the unique tradition.

"It [those years in Nigeria] was a very, very enriching experience for me" softly spoken Peters recalled.

Now back home, Peters encourages people to work developmental programs either in Canada or abroad. For more information about MCC and job opportunities contact UPEI Student Counsellor Shirley Hudson or write to:

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134 Plaza Dr
Winnipeg, Man
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South African Comic Fights Apartheid With Laughter

by Andrea Aster and Shannon Thompson

Enemies of apartheid have assaulted the South African system of racial separation with everything from bullets to divestment.

South African Pieter-Dirk Uys uses laughter.

"It's the only weapon that hasn't killed anyone here yet," he said. "But it's a very strong weapon. In South Africa, every time I get just a few people to share a laugh at a pompous politician, that's a chip away."

After the closing of his one-man play, *Adapt or Dye* at the University of Toronto, Uys will embark on a two to three week tour of Canadian university campuses. Until his visa runs out Nov. 7, the Jewish Afrikaaner from Cape Town will entertain students with his biting, satirical portrait of the oppressive South African political system and draw students into a discussion of the country's current situation.

In *Adapt or Dye*, Uys uses a series of sketches - some comic, some deeply disturbing - to tear the ideals of South African apartheid to pieces. No subject is sacred, and no one is above being chopped apart by Uys' viciously funny axe. He does not merely impersonate his chosen political targets, he

becomes them - brilliantly. His Pieter Botha, all quivering lips and pointing fingers ("we want peace...the biggest piece") and Margaret Thatcher played with an utter lack of feminine qualities (he hasn't even bothered to stuff his blouse for this part) are fantastic. Both of them continuously repeat the same redundant political rhetoric while the lights gradually obscure them into darkness.

Through his portrayal of some 18 people, ranging from Desmond Tutu to ordinary South Africans, Uys has helped spawn an age of political satire in

South Africa. He has gone farther than anyone in publicly lampooning the government. So at home and abroad, people frequently ask him how he gets away with it.

Over the past 15 years his plays have been systematically banned, but to everyone's surprise, it was not because he stood up to the hated apartheid regime. He simply made the mistake of using the word 'God,' which made his work blasphemous, and words like 'kak' (fart) which made his work obscene.

Uys, a white South African, has never been detained or beaten, but his condemnation of the apartheid regime is strong.

Beginning with his one-man shows in 1981, Uys decided to learn the laws and how to get around them. Although he knows the authorities are watching, he refuses, unlike many South Africans, to be intimidated into self-censorship.

"I'm not going to be a victim of fear. No way. I make it clear on stage that I regard all the little things that happen to me as a material for tomorrow night," he said.

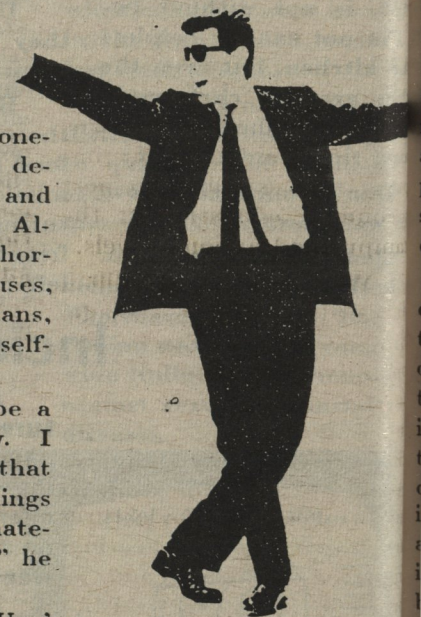
Not surprisingly, Uys' success has created an entirely new set of challenges.

"Success is always dangerous. Am I losing my edge, my anger? Or my commitment? I know the authorities are using me. They come to my shows with U.S. senators and point out that in a real police state I would never be tolerated."

He only hopes he can stay one step ahead of the game. He abides by a formula that has so far kept him out of trouble.

"My philosophy is 49 per cent anger, 51 per cent comedy, because an angry person makes a boring speech. That's not what theatre is about."

Still Uys does not pretend to have all the answers. While his ability to mirror the lunacy in his home country is invaluable, he is uncer-



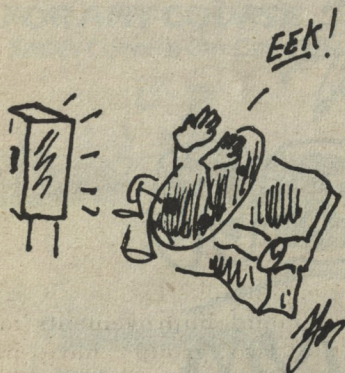
tain of his impact upon stubborn white arrogance. Although he does not have a vision of the future, speaking vaguely of his belief that there must be some meeting ground that doesn't allow violence.

As he ponders his future, his infectious humor recedes momentarily.

"I don't think I can go on much longer. I want to write a play about birds, trees, life. I mean, how can you go on about the cultural death? It's grim. And in South Africa, it's less so than here, because when here I'm talking to you about reading the newspapers smelling freedom. It frightens me to death."

He smiled again. "I want to go back to the war, when the phone is tapped."

"All couch potatoes are deathly afraid of Malain's french fry commercials.."



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