

Social dark age plagues blacks and whites



Black South African drill operator at work in coal mine.

By Dave Holmes

Editor-in-Chief

Part One of a Two part series. Dave Holmes' interview with Alison Tedder will be continued in next week's issue of *The Print*.

Some things must be learned the hard way.

Things such as "Don't argue with a linebacker," or "Buy gas BEFORE the needle hits E" come with experience. To Alison Tedder, an 18-year-old white South African, lessons like "When to take a stand" have come early.

"I can remember, when I was younger, telling my mother that I thought apartheid was a good thing," Tedder said. "She just looked at me and started crying. I think she thought she had raised a mindless idiot."

Tedder, far from "mindless," now has a different opinion. "Apartheid is a silly theological idea, and a theology is what it is. Some Afrikaners actually believe it's divine will that blacks and whites should be kept separate and will use select parts of the Bible to defend their position. They feel they are protecting the rights of the minorities and keeping ethnic groups pure. I say it's just stupid."

Tedder lives in suburban Randburg, several miles outside of Johannesburg, went to an exclusive, private high school, and is socially in the midst of the middle class. Her parents are both white collar professionals. She feels she's provided for quite nicely. So why does Alison Tedder want to rock the boat?

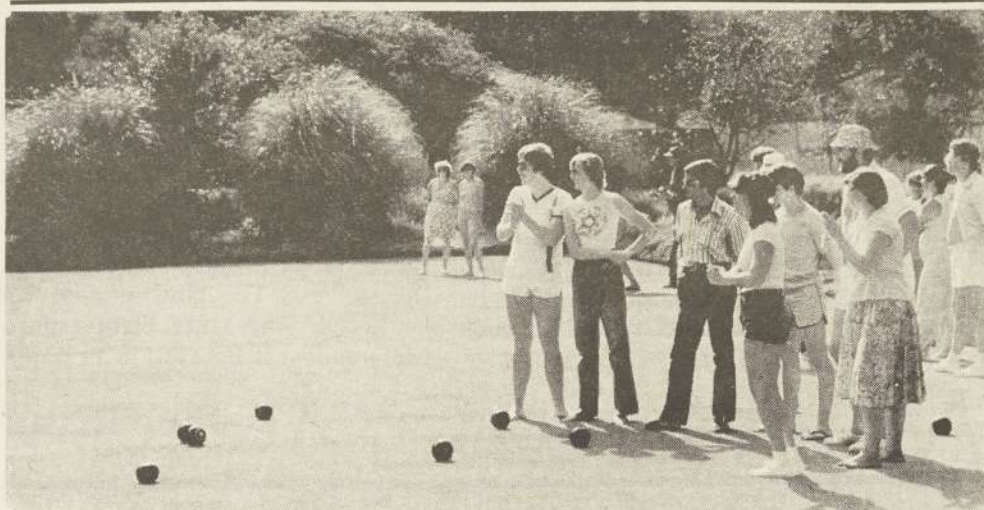
"My parents want me to keep an open mind about all things," Tedder said. The high school she attended was very liberal and was open to all three of South Africa's racial groups (black, coloured, and white). Tedder feels that by remaining objective a person can see what's fact and what is not, what's right and what is wrong.

One thing that Tedder feels is wrong is the treatment of blacks in South Africa by their government. "In South Africa, whites must attend school until the age of 16, but blacks aren't required to go at

all. And the schools that they do have are pitiful." Tedder said that most blacks don't get

"People are going to have to come to the realization that eventually the black man is going to come out on top."

- Beyers Naude -



In contrast, white South Africans spend a leisurely afternoon lawn bowling.

beyond the third grade and she thinks that this sets up a vicious cycle of ignorance and poverty among most black populations.

The cycle goes like this: Black children don't receive a decent education, so when they get older they have to take low-skill, low-wage jobs. Because of this, they have to have large families so that the children can go to work as soon as they are able and help support the family. To work, the children have to drop out of school, and, hence, don't get a good education.

This has gone on for generations, Tedder said.

Education is one of Tedder's pet peeves. "A lack of education is at the root of most of the world's problems," she said. "Well educated people are better understood than those who aren't and they understand others better."

The lack of education among people, especially when it comes to Americans trying to understand her country and

its social system, is another thing that bothers Tedder.

"Americans shoot their mouths off when they have no knowledge of what they're talking about. But if they knew more about the subject (apartheid) and perhaps visited South Africa, then I think they'd be a bit more undecided as to why they think the way they do."

While retaining her view on American opinion of apartheid, Tedder thinks that there are other factors besides ignorance that influence American thought on South Africa. She sees the American press in South Africa as accurate, but single-faceted.

"(The press) portrays the black man as a down-trodden, suppressed man which is partially true. What they don't understand is that the black has no education, where the American black has quite a bit

in comparison. A lot of (blacks) don't even know they are in a low position. Many can't read the newspapers. For quite a few it's like the Dark

Ages."

The Dark Ages not only hover over the black peoples, but over the white as well, maintains Tedder. Sexual discrimination is wide-spread, she said, with most women getting paid less than men for similar types of work. Ideological deviations from the governmental standard of right-wing Republicanism is a punishable offense.

"Say a group of my friends and I wanted to meet at my house and discuss socialism. If someone wanted to take the time to report it, we could be thrown in jail," Tedder said. She also noted that "Das Capital," by Karl Marx, is officially banned by the government.

"A lot of things are 'Officially Banned,'" she said. An official ban, in its human implications, usually results in restricted movements and close monitoring of the individual by the government.

"If I were to give this type of interview at home, and someone found out about it, I'd most likely be banned."

