

Bitter Cane explores Bishop's Grenada

by Robert Lothian

Bitter Cane is a movie, a political account, that dramatizes the dreams, the drudgery and desperation in the lives of Caribbean Blacks.

In the documentary *Grenada: The Future Coming Towards Us*, we get a glimpse of life after the drudgery and desperation, when Blacks control their own country.

Bitter Cane depicts modern Haiti and *Grenada* was finished just days before the U.S. invasion. *Bitter Cane* and *Grenada* played for one night only at the Cinema 21 recently.

Bitter Cane, sometimes rhetorical and always moving, illustrates, in textbook fashion, the mechanism of Haiti's domination by foreign, mainly American, business.

Shot clandestinely with the help of the Haitian Liberation Movement, *Bitter Cane* soon makes it clear that life in the western hemisphere's poorest nation is next to intolerable for most of its population, and responsible for the exodus of 500,000 Haitians since 1971.

We are shown the cane cutters and coffee pickers who rent land and contribute a share of their meager harvest to the buyers, going deeper in debt each year. Next comes the rich landowner and members of the "comprador bourgeoisie" who profit from doing the legwork of the foreigners.

An American garment factory manager gloats over not having to pay corporate taxes for the first nine years. He confidently talks about "developing the country's greatest resource, its people," translating of course into cheap wages.

Small farmers are driven to the city to become fodder for the companies. "We make just enough to survive and to go work," says a woman garment worker who makes \$2.64 for sewing 720 bras each day.

Dissidents face persecution by dictator "Baby Doc" Duvalier's ghoulish secret police, the Tonton Macoute. The only desperate alternative for some is to flee in leaky boats that sometimes founder off the Florida coast. Refugees who

make it to the U.S. are interned in camps and some are interviewed in the movie.

The oppressive atmosphere of *Bitter Cane* is lifted in *Grenada: The Future Coming Towards Us*. The film affords a rare and intimate glimpse into revolutionary Grenada under the leadership of Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement.

Even though still a poor country, the spirit comes across. In light of the tragedy about to befall that tiny island, the film takes on a sad and even nostalgic quality.

Bishop is shown handing out school supplies to fighting children.

Prime Minister Bernard Coard tells a meeting of citizens how the new Grenada has taken over the mango industry from foreign control and invented new products for export.

Beautiful St. Georges is shown, along with views and discussion of the ill-fated airport and Cuban construction workers. The country's leaders thought the airport would have been a boon to the tourist industry, but Reagan, of course, thought otherwise.

Before the 1979 revolution, the narration tells us, there was inflation, unemployment and no social services. "We did not have to read Karl Marx to see what was

happening before our very eyes," said Grenada's ambassador to the U.N., Caldwell Taylor. After the revolution, we are told, the country's rate of investment in the public sector increased 700% with vast improvements in health care and education.

"Grenada is dangerous," Bishop tells an enthusiastic audience at Hunter College in the U.S., "because we speak English and can communicate directly with 30 million Black people in the U.S."

Long live friendship, solidarity and cooperation among the peoples of the world," Bishop said in his parting remarks.

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Quilts donated

J.M. Gates has donated six Afro-American quilts to an institutional archive. Included was one she designed and made and which was exhibited for two months of 1984 in downtown Portland, Oregon.

Mrs. Gates has developed two in-service courses with graduate credit for teachers. Her recent research has been on the work environment and has continued the emphasis of her earlier masters thesis in 1949.

School Lunch Menu

Sept. 24

Hamburger on Bun
Lettuce, Tomato, Pickle
Green Beans
Orange Wedges
Peanut Butter Cookie
Milk

Sept. 25

Mexican Taco
Shredded Lettuce and Tomato
Whole Kernel Corn
Whipped Fruited Gelatin
Milk

Sept. 26

Beef-Tomato Pizza
Carrot Coins with Ranch Dip
Fresh Pear Half
Granola Cookie
Milk

Sept. 27

Fish 'N Chips
Tossed Salad with French Dressing
Warm French Roll
Apple Wedges
Milk

Sept. 28

Vegetable Chowder
Hot Chickenwich
Tater Tots
Sliced Peaches
Milk



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Or Collard, Or Chopped Mustard, 10-Ounce, Save 77¢ On 3 **3 \$1**



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