

PRIME MINISTER

British Lions' Tour of South Africa

There is a groundswell of opinion in the sporting world against the Lions' tour. But, if the rugby authorities announce acceptance of a tour invitation, the Government will have to have a line in response to questions, even if it volunteers no statement.

The text of Mr. Monro's proposed letter was drafted with the Rhodesian background very much in view. If the Lancaster House Conference comes to an end within the next week or so, Lord Carrington might wish to look at the tour issue more carefully, freed from the specific constraints created by the Conference.

May we therefore:

- (i) Confirm that the Government should take no action ahead of a formal statement that a tour invitation has been accepted? (Such a statement is unlikely before mid-December.)
- (ii) Withhold approval for Mr. Monro to write as in the present draft when such an announcement is made; but ask for the form of any Government statement to be reconsidered when an announcement is thought to be imminent?

This could allow more pressure to be brought on the rugby authorities by other sportsmen in the interim, which might ease the Government's decision on its stance.

MAD
If we are getting adverse opinion from the rest of the sporting world - surely we can use that to influence the R.U. if we have representatives - can we get the people concerned to discuss it with the R.U.?
23 November 1979

cc Press Office
Mr Gow
Mr Alexander



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

CONFIDENTIAL

Mike Pattison Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Dear Mike,

~~PRIME MINISTER~~

~~This is Mr Manro's advice on the Lions
Rugby tour, shared with Mr Heseltine and
Lord Cawston. He proposes no action until
the Home Unions 22 November 1979
announce acceptance of an invitation. He
would then write as in Flag A. This
follows the line on the S.A. barbarians. This
case would be much more serious than that
one. There will be pressure for more action.~~

/ The Prime Minister has asked for advice on the line the Government
/ should take concerning the proposed British Lions' tour of South
Africa due to take place next summer. This is attached, and has
been agreed by my Secretary of State and the Foreign Secretary.
/ Also attached is a draft letter for my Minister to send to the
Home Rugby Unions if it is agreed that he should do so once it
is announced that the tour invitation has been accepted.

/ Ministers decided their recommendations for the following reasons.
Firstly, it is premature to react to the tour before the invitation
has been formally extended. Secondly, at the present stage
of the Rhodesia Conference, there are strong reasons for avoiding
any provocation of the South Africans. Thirdly, there are major
domestic political implications (these are set out in
/ paragraphs 8 and 9 of the background note attached).

On this last point, there is a groundswell of ^{opinion} ~~option~~ amongst
Government Back-benchers in favour of such tours, as witness the
Early Day Motion No. 211. The Shadow Minister for Sport is
pressing for a full Debate. He is likely to come out strongly
against the tour. Any Division on such a motion would undoubtedly
cause embarrassment to the Government.

Yours sincerely

GEOFF NEEDHAM
Private Secretary

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY

22 NOV 1971



CONFIDENTIAL

SUBMISSION TO THE PRIME MINISTER ON A POSSIBLE BRITISH LIONS
TOUR OF SOUTH AFRICA IN 1980

SITUATION

The international rugby calendar includes a tour of South Africa next summer by the British Lions team. The invitation is ready now, but it will not be sent unless the South Africans are reasonably confident of its acceptance. The British Lions, drawn from the four Home Rugby Unions are, like the Springboks, recognised as a national team (the South African Barbarians were an ad hoc group of players). The Home Rugby Unions have already taken a decision in principle to accept the invitation. A final decision might be made on 25 November, or more likely nearer Christmas. Unless the decision is "No" an announcement is unlikely until later in December in any case.

PROBLEM

To decide the Government's attitude and reaction to the tour in the period (a) before a decision is announced and (b) thereafter, if the tour is on.

SUGGESTED LINE TO TAKE

Take no action unless, or until, a decision to tour is announced. Should the Unions decide to stage the tour the Minister for Sport should write to the Rugby Unions regretting the decision and asking them to reconsider it.

VIABLE OPTIONS OPEN TO MINISTERS

Before a decision is announced:-

- a. do nothing
- b. have the Minister for Sport write to the Home Rugby Unions expressing Government's disapproval in the light of Gleneagles
- c. threaten to advise withdrawal of administrative grant

Option b. would seem to be unnecessary because the Rugby Unions are already aware of the Government's position with regard to Gleneagles following correspondence over the South African Barbarians tour here.

Option c. would not stop the tour and would be seen by many as a vindictive move by the Government. It would also create a precedent and give rise to problems on criteria. The Minister for Sport is firmly against this option.

Option a. is therefore the recommended approach at this stage.

After a decision to accept is made public:-

- a. do nothing
- b. have the Minister for Sport write to the Home Rugby Unions expressing the Government's regret and asking them to reconsider
- c. advise the Sports Council to withhold administrative grant

Option a. would lead to international disquiet - particularly in the Third World countries; this is already building up. The two international organisations chiefly responsible for organising the African boycott of the Montreal Olympics have already expressed their concern about the possible Lions tour (see paragraph 6 of the background note).

Option c. is not recommended for the reasons set out in the preceding paragraph. Option b. would be consonant with the action the Government took over the South African Barbarians Rugby Club although it would similarly not satisfy international and Commonwealth criticism that we had taken every 'practical step' to implement the Gleneagles Agreement.

SPORTING LINKS WITH SOUTH AFRICA

BACKGROUND

POLICY ON SPORTING LINKS WITH SOUTH AFRICA

1. The Government's attitude towards South Africa in sport is based on its acceptance of the Commonwealth Statement on Apartheid in Sport known as the Gleneagles Agreement. This urges every practical step to discourage sporting contacts or competition with South Africa. Each Government is responsible for implementation within the framework of its own laws. The Government have publicly recognised the progress that has been made towards integration in certain sports in South Africa, through the FCO Press Release issued on 14 September. They have also said they would continue to observe the situation and be ready to discuss modification of Gleneagles if and when sufficient progress had been made towards integration.

2. Governing bodies of sport are autonomous. The Government has not always been successful in its efforts to dissuade them from having sporting contacts with South Africa; there are no powers of compulsion. There are no visa arrangements with South Africa and a requirement for one would need legislation and substantial changes in our immigration policy. Many South Africans hold British passports and would, in any case, be able to circumvent any visa requirement. The Home Secretary's powers to direct exclusions as not being conducive to the public good have not been used against people, like sportsmen, who are coming here for purposes which are not contrary to the law.

3. A clear stand is, however, taken through the Sports Council, which operates the grant-in-aid scheme, to deny financial assistance to representative teams or individuals taking part in competitions at which teams or individuals from South Africa are competing.

SOUTH AFRICAN BARBARIANS RUGBY CLUB

4. The Government do not yet consider that sufficient progress has been made in rugby towards integration. Indeed reports indicate that it is possibly the least integrated sport in South Africa. Acting in accordance with Gleneagles, the Government announced their regret of the Barbarians' proposed tour, and the Minister for Sport wrote to the four Home Rugby Unions asking them to reconsider their invitation to the South Africans. The tour went ahead without major incidents in spite of anti-apartheid demonstrations. Bias of reaction to the tour was fairly evenly divided between two extremes, and the Government's middle course was largely unappreciated. Among Conservatives inside and outside Parliament the predominant feeling was that the Government should not have acted at all. Anti-apartheid groups at home and abroad did not accept that if the Government stood by Gleneagles it could not have done more to stop the tour - particularly in the light of more positive action taken by Ireland and France.

IMPLICATIONS OF CONTINUING SPORTING CONTACTS WITH SOUTH AFRICA

5. Britain is already considered to be the prime offender against the isolation of South Africa from international sport in anti-apartheid

circles. They quote the United Nations Declaration Against Apartheid in Sport (to which U.K. is not a signatory), the related Convention now being drafted, the Council of Europe's Sports Ministers' Declaration of 1978 and, of course, the Commonwealth Statement. There is also, as yet unknown to them, a draft Declaration by the Nine which is dormant. Britain is in danger of finding herself isolated from her partners in the Commonwealth and the Nine over this issue.

IMPLICATIONS LIKELY TO ARISE FROM A LIONS TOUR

6. The South African non-racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) has warned that if such a representative British tour took place it would seek to have Britain excluded from the 1980 Olympic Games. The Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA) is to discuss Britain's attitude at its meeting on 12/14 December, when similar calls could be made; a boycott of the 1980 Games by African, Caribbean and Asian countries is the alternative if Britain competes. Should Britain not withdraw, the Soviet Government would be under pressure to exclude British participants, or to press the International Olympic Committee to withdraw Britain's invitation. Russia would clearly prefer the loss of one country to a boycott by a larger number of countries with whom they are eager to develop relations. This was inferred by Mr Vladimir Propokov, Chief of International Relations for the Moscow Olympic Organising Committee when he addressed a conference of British governing bodies of sport in Bournemouth last week. Although in theory only the IOC can debar Britain from the Olympic

CONFIDENTIAL

Games, the Soviet Union would still need to issue visas. If they were faced with the threat of a major boycott by African, Caribbean and Asian countries there is the possibility that they might refuse visas to the British team. In 1976 the Canadians gave similar undertakings to admit all IOC members, but subsequently refused visas for the Taiwan team rather than offend the Chinese. The Russians might calculate that the policy gains of this action would be considerable, and the political losses negligible. Lord Killanin, President of the IOC, has privately told Mr Monroe that he expects everyone - including Britain - to be in Moscow for the Games. The Russians are known to be putting pressure on everyone concerned to cool the issue.

7. African and Caribbean countries would be most likely to demonstrate disapproval of the British Lions tour by threatening to withdraw from the 1982 Commonwealth Games to be held in Brisbane; they might even seek to have Britain barred from all international sporting events. A threat to the 1982 Games would upset the Australians, whose Government would then likely seek assurances from HMG that they have taken every step to prevent the Lions tour as required under the Commonwealth Statement. It could become a major issue at the 1981 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Against such a background, the possibilities of an approach by HMG to seek a relaxation or modification of the Commonwealth Statement would be out of the question.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS AT HOME

8. There is a natural reaction in Government to disdain threats of any kind in deciding their attitudes or policies. However, the nature of the office of the Minister for Sport requires him to take an overall view of what is best for British sport generally. He has to consider how the actions of one sector or sport might affect other sectors. If continuing sporting contacts with South Africa do lead to Britain's exclusion from international sporting events of any significance,

it will be taken badly by our sportsmen, by the sporting media and by the general public. Set against this, however, there is an active body of opinion - especially amongst Government supporters - which is strongly against Government interference of any kind in sport and which favours the bridge-building approach to South African sport rather than the isolationist approach required under Gleneagles. 61 Conservative Back-benchers have put down an Early Day Motion welcoming the British Lions tour to South Africa and asking the Government to do the same.

9. It is understood that the Shadow Minister for Sport is pressing for a full Debate in the House in which he will speak strongly against the Lions going to South Africa. If a motion on these lines were forced to a Division it would undoubtedly cause embarrassment to the Government.

DRAFT LETTER FOR MR MONRO TO SEND TO THE CHAIRMAN
OF THE TOURS COMMITTEE

I understand that the Tours Committee has accepted an invitation
for the British Lions to South Africa next summer.

Your Committee will be well aware of the attitude of the Government
to any such tour following our exchange of correspondence over the
recent tour here of the South African Barbarians Rugby Club. Our
position remains as I put it to you then. We are fully committed
to abiding by the Commonwealth Statement which discourages sporting
contacts with South Africa.

The Government therefore regret your Committee's acceptance of
this invitation, and hope that you will reconsider the wisdom of
your decision.

RM.

22 NOV 1978

