



RG Neale Lecture Series

Australia's role in the apartheid sports
boycott in 1977

Richard Cashman

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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA
AND THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE



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Robert George Neale AO
1919–2004

The RG Neale Lecture Series was established in 2006 to commemorate Professor Robert George Neale's contribution to Australian scholarship and to acknowledge his tireless work in making historical documents available for research. The lecture is presented each year by an acclaimed historian. It focuses on foreign policy issues, utilising the valuable foreign relations records that are publicly released each year by the National Archives of Australia.

ROBERT GEORGE NEALE, 1919–2004

Professor Robert George Neale AO is noted for the significant contributions he made to the fields of history and archives in Australia. From 1975 to 1984, he served as the first Director-General of the Australian Archives (now the National Archives of Australia). Before that he was the first Editor of Historical Documents at the Department of Foreign Affairs, and was instrumental in founding a historical series on Australia's foreign policy.

Robert George (Bob) Neale was born in Werribee, Victoria, on 7 March 1919. He attended Melbourne Boys' High School and graduated from the University of Melbourne with first class honours in history in 1939.

Bob Neale began his working life as a teacher in rural Victoria. During World War II, he enlisted in the Second Australian Imperial Force and served in New Guinea. At the end of the war he joined the History Department at the University of Queensland. He became a professor in 1965, the same year his work *Britain and American Imperialism 1898–1900* was published.

In 1970 Professor Neale was appointed Editor of Historical Documents at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Canberra. One of his enduring legacies in that role was the publication of the series *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–39*, which fulfilled an important goal: informing citizens about how Australia's foreign policy was formulated. Professor Neale's expertise as a historian and academic resulted in rapid advancement within the Department of Foreign Affairs and in the Australian Public Service.

In 1975 Professor Neale was appointed the first Director-General of the Australian Archives. He was asked to carry out recommendations made in the report *Development of the National Archives*, by Canadian archivist Dr W Kaye Lamb. He spent the next eight years turning a small and relatively inconspicuous organisation into a nationally recognised institution, providing high-quality recordkeeping and archival services to the Australian Government and people. Under his leadership, the Archives took many new initiatives and grew substantially, becoming a world-leader in archival and recordkeeping practices.

As Director-General, Professor Neale oversaw the drafting of the Archives Bill, later enacted as the *Archives Act 1983*. This landmark legislation established the Archives on a statutory basis and laid down stringent conditions for public access to, and the disposal of, Commonwealth records. Professor Neale was also instrumental in obtaining suitable accommodation for the Archives' collection and staff. His skill, tenacity, diplomacy and foresight ensured that Australia gained an enduring national archival institution.

Professor Neale retired as Director-General of the Australian Archives in March 1984 and was created an Officer of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours of 1985. He died on 1 May 2004.

Australia's role in the apartheid sports boycott in 1977

by Dr Richard Cashman

Delivered at the National Archives of Australia on 30 October 2008

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) of June 1977, which spawned the Gleneagles Agreement, is probably the best-known CHOGM event.

CHOGM was actually held in London in 1977. However, it was decided that a select group of delegation leaders – Pierre Trudeau (Canada), Michael Manley (Jamaica), Brigadier Shehu Musa Yar'Adua (Nigeria), Mwinyi Aboud Jumbe (Tanzania) and Robert Muldoon (New Zealand) – should retreat to Gleneagles in Scotland midway through the conference to formulate a Commonwealth stance on the vexed question of apartheid. They were joined there by Sonny Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

Gleneagles, situated north of Edinburgh and between Stirling and Perth, is a luxurious resort set in 850 acres of Perthshire countryside. It has its own railway station, championship-quality golf courses and an indoor swimming pool. Gleneagles provided a peaceful environment for the discussion of such a vexed question.

It took barely a quarter of an hour for the five leaders to reach agreement on the core issues. Ramphal then tabled a draft document, which had been prepared beforehand, in anticipation of such an

agreement. Another hour was spent making minor adjustments to the document before it was submitted to the full plenary session in London and adopted.

The Gleneagles Agreement reaffirmed the opposition of Commonwealth leaders to apartheid in sport. It further asserted that it was the duty of each government to take every practical step to discourage sporting competition with South Africa, where sport was organised on the basis of race, colour or ethnic origin. However, the agreement also accepted that each government should determine how best to discharge its Gleneagles obligations.

Gleneagles was an important benchmark in the fight against apartheid, as South African whites were rather more affronted by their exclusion from Commonwealth-dominated sports, such as rugby and cricket, than their ejection from the Olympic Games. The key objectives of Gleneagles were to avert the threat of a major boycott at the 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth Games and a split in the Commonwealth itself.

Although Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was not present at the Gleneagles retreat, Australia assented to the agreement and, more importantly, led the Commonwealth in the opposition to apartheid from 1972 to the early 1990s, when apartheid was dismantled and South Africa resumed its place in international sport.

Issues

While the general outline of the continuing fight against apartheid is well known, the records released by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the National Archives of Australia for 1977 provide new insights into how such a policy was implemented and sustained over two decades despite a continuously changing sporting and political landscape.

Organising a sports boycott was not easy because many sports bodies participated in the campaign reluctantly. Some did not understand the rationale for the boycott, or chose not to. Others attempted to undermine, and even subvert, government policies.

More than three decades later it is worth reflecting on what was achieved by the Gleneagles Agreement and on the effectiveness of the apartheid sports boycott.

Archival records, as previous RG Neale lecturers have noted, represent 'a never ending conversation between the present and the past about the future.'¹ The word conversation may be too polite a word for the robust and often heated debate over apartheid. Passions were aroused on both sides. The records do more than fill in the gaps and recreate the atmosphere of a turbulent period. They pose new questions and provide fresh insights.

We are all indebted to Professor RG Neale, who recognised the great worth of archives and spent much of his life ensuring that that they were properly organised, suitably housed and accessible to

researchers. Archives, such as those held by the National Archives, are a national treasure that reveal much about policy formation and its implementation, and about the issues that unite and divide Australians.

Australia and the genesis of the sports boycott

After the election of the South African National Party in 1948, an informal policy of segregation was tightened, and apartheid (or separateness) was applied to all areas of public and private life, including sport, during the 1950s.

Dr Eben Dönges, the South African Minister of the Interior, asserted in 1956 that sport should conform to apartheid:

Whites and non-Whites should organize their sporting activities separately, there should be no inter-racial competition within South Africa, the mixing of races in teams should be avoided, and sportsmen from other countries should respect South Africa's customs as she respected theirs. Within that framework non-White sportsmen from the outside world would not be debarred from entering South Africa to compete with non-Whites.²

During the 1950s and 1960s, Australia, Britain and New Zealand lagged behind an emerging apartheid boycott movement. The impetus for the boycott came from within South Africa and gained support from other African nations. The cause was advanced in the United Nations (UN), where African countries were supported by a number of Asian and West Indian nations.

Australia and Britain were two of the five countries to vote against a 1957 UN Resolution, supported by 55 nations, urging South Africa to reconsider its apartheid policies in the light of the UN Charter.³ South Africa continued to be an important trading partner with white-dominated Commonwealth countries and enjoyed regular sporting exchanges with them in the 1950s and the 1960s.

Protests against sporting contacts with South Africa grew during the 1960s. The refusal of the South African Government to allow Basil D'Oliviera to represent England during the 1968–69 cricket tour to South Africa transformed the whole debate and led to the cancellation of this tour. Born and raised in Cape Town, D'Oliviera had been unable to play first-class cricket in South Africa because he was classed as 'coloured'. D'Oliviera migrated to Britain in 1960 where he became a successful Test cricketer and took out British citizenship. He became the cause célèbre of the anti-apartheid movement.

An Australian cricket tour to South Africa in 1969–70 generated less protest because it was tacked on to a tour of India at short notice after the Pakistani leg of the tour had been cancelled. However, the 1970 South African rugby tour of England was so disrupted by protests and pitch invasions that the players voted to return home, and the tour only continued when management compelled the players to remain.

The troubled 1971 Springbok rugby tour of Australia was a watershed in Australia's sporting relationship with South Africa. During the tour, there were violent clashes between pro- and anti-tour demonstrators and police, leading to more than 700 arrests. Games were played behind barbed wire but this did not deter protesters who, armed with bolt-cutters, invaded the pitch on a number of occasions. Because of

trade union opposition and security concerns, the tourists were flown around the country in Air Force planes. The Queensland Government of Joh Bjelke-Petersen declared an 18-day state emergency when the South Africans visited there. The bill for state police protection was very large.

Roland Perry, on the eve of Sir Donald Bradman's 100th birth anniversary, wrote that Bradman's role in the cancellation of the 1971–72 South African cricket tour to Australia was one of his most 'impressive legacies', ranking alongside his acclaimed cricket career. According to Perry, Bradman sought to 'peel back the hyperbole' to get to the heart of the South African problem. Perry noted that while Bradman was opposed to apartheid, he believed that the South African cricketers 'had tried harder than our protesters to do something about it.' Ultimately, the intransigence of the South African Government caused Bradman to shift from tour advocate to tour critic. When Bradman announced the tour cancellation he concluded with a simple statement: 'We will not play them (South Africa) until they choose a team on a non-racist basis.' Bradman's reputation and fame 'meant that this unexpected move was a massive international blow to apartheid.' Bradman 'succeeded', added Perry, 'where politicians and protesters failed.'⁴

Historians of Cricket Australia, Gideon Haigh and David Frith, have suggested rather different reasons for the cancellation of the 1971–72 tour. The 'clinching argument' was that both Prime Ministers McMahon (Australia) and Vorster (South Africa) had made it clear that they did not want the tour to go ahead. Bradman reported to a meeting of the Australian Board of Control for International Cricket on 8 September 1971 that it had no choice but to accept this advice.⁵ The tour, then, was cancelled primarily for pragmatic reasons. Contrary to what Perry

has suggested, it seems clear that the protests of 1970 (in England) and 1971 (in Australia) did have an impact. Vorster and McMahon did not want another round of large demonstrations, social divisiveness, massive police involvement and continuing media preoccupation with South Africa.⁶

Despite the fact that there had been no real change in the structure of South African cricket over the next year, Bradman raised the issue of another South African tour some nine months later. Bradman wrote to the Prime Minister's Department on 6 June 1972, along the following lines:

The Australian Board of Control is very anxious to have a resumption of cricket contests between Australia and South Africa. The present situation is highly detrimental to cricket in both countries, and the profits which could be made from such tours and which are vital to the development of the game, are of course sadly missed.

The cricket authorities in Australia are non-racial in their outlook. Color is no bar to selection in this country and we in turn are happy to play against others of any color. But so long as the South African Gov't forbids the selection of a colored man in a cricket team to represent South Africa, then apparently the Aust. Trades Union and the Anti-apartheid people, will continue their opposition to any resumption of matches.

This letter represented a plea to the Australian Government to lean on the South African Government to achieve 'sufficient relaxation' of racial regulations to enable the next tour to proceed in 1975–76.⁷ It seemed that Bradman hoped that a gesture such as the selection of one or two non-whites in the South African squad might make the tour

more acceptable to the Australian Government and public. Bradman had advocated a similar proposal in an attempt to save the 1971–72 tour.

Bradman concluded his letter by stating that ‘one would assume that the resumption of such sporting contests to be in the “political” interests of both countries.’ However, a succession of Australian Governments from 1972 believed that Australian political interests were best served by maintaining the apartheid boycott rather than by the resumption of sporting tours.

As an astute administrator, Bradman was keen to solve the problem of the cessation of cricket contacts between Australia and South Africa and recognised that apartheid was at the heart of this problem. Bradman’s stance on South Africa was consistent. However, he was a reformer and a bridge builder, who worked within the system, rather than a radical who wanted a complete upheaval of the South African sports system.

Australian implementation of the sports boycott

When Gough Whitlam came to power in December 1972, the Labor Government made haste to dismantle all vestiges of racism and to adopt a more independent stance on foreign policy. One of its first actions was to restrict the entry of racially selected sports teams and individuals and initiate an apartheid sports boycott. The subsequent governments of Malcolm Fraser (from 1975) and Bob Hawke (from 1983) endorsed this policy.

The critical weapon in the government's arsenal in the boycott campaign was the denial of visas to South African teams and individuals. This was the nub of Australia's tougher stance. The government applied the test of multiracial selection to determine whether South African sports participants could gain entry to Australia. Few South African teams could measure up to the tough standards applied by the Whitlam Government, which demanded equal and non-discriminatory opportunities for white and non-white participants across the board, from the club to international level. The government did not prevent the entry to Australia of sportsmen or women who came as individuals rather than as representatives of South Africa.

There were some 'unavoidable anomalies and inconsistencies' in the application of such policies from the start. It was noted by one official in 1976 that, while golf in South Africa was 'mainly played by affluent whites', prominent South African golfer Gary Player had been admitted to Australia on a number of occasions and competed in professional tournaments because he represented himself and not his country. Player was regarded as a defender of apartheid and protesters dogged his tours.⁸ South African tennis players similarly slipped through the net because they were treated as individuals.

The Australian Government, on occasions, took such a tough stance against apartheid that it was in advance of public opinion. The denial of a visa to Boon Wallace, president of the white South African Cricket Association (SACA), was one such occasion. Wallace had applied for a visitor visa to travel to Australia from 10 to 19 February 1975, to attend two days of the Sixth Test against England and to visit 'some friends', who just happened to be Sir Donald Bradman and Tim Caldwell, the past and current chairmen of the Australian Cricket Board. The visa

was denied on the grounds that his visit was considered an official one designed to advance the proposed 1975–76 Australian cricket tour of South Africa.

When Wallace resubmitted his visa application he was more forthcoming about his objectives. He indicated:

the purpose of my visit is to further conversations I have had with certain Australian cricket contacts, on the cricket scene in South Africa generally, [about] the possibility of an Australian team touring South Africa and the terms acceptable to the Australian Cricket Board of Control to undertake such a tour.

The second visa was also denied on the grounds that the government failed to see 'why it should assist the white South African Cricket Association to circumvent the Australian Government's policy of opposition to apartheid.' The decision was widely criticised in the media. *The Age* stated that opposition to racism was stretched to absurdity when it prevented people from meeting to discuss in private something contrary to government policy. The *Sydney Morning Herald* noted that the logic of Boon's exclusion was pettifogging at best and, at worst, disquieting in its implications for an open society.⁹

The Australian Government was less able to restrict the movement of sporting teams and individuals travelling to South Africa since visas were issued by the South African Government. In such instances, the Australian Government could make known its disapproval and even lean on sports bodies and individuals not to tour.

While the government failed to stop numerous unofficial tours and visits of individual sportsmen and women to South Africa, it did achieve success in restricting high-profile tours, such as the 1975–76 cricket tour to South Africa, when both cricket boards were keen to tour.

Bradman visited South Africa in June 1974, meeting Prime Minister Vorster and Boon Wallace, when he sought to advance the cause of the tour. The Australian Ambassador to South Africa, DW McNicol, pondered whether it was appropriate to brief Bradman or to meet him at a social function. ‘Could one be reasonably sure that things said to Bradman,’ mused the ambassador, ‘would not be disseminated to other Australian cricket authorities and thus inevitably be relayed back to South Africans?’¹⁰ It is a matter of great irony that the great man of Australian cricket was now suspected of being a possible fifth column – someone batting for the other side – in that he was trying to undermine the government’s stance on the 1975–76 tour.

Boon Wallace made some novel proposals to make the 1975–76 cricket tour more acceptable to the Australian Government. He suggested that the Australians should play two Tests against white South African teams and another two Tests against black teams, with the final Test against a ‘mixed side selected on merit.’ The selectors would treat the first four matches as trials for the ‘first integrated South African team.’¹¹ In the end, Caldwell had to admit that this was something less than the government’s aims of merit selection and the integration of cricket at every level. He reported back to the Australian Cricket Board ‘that South Africa could not bring about the changes in sport which were acceptable to the Australian Government by October [1975].’¹²

The extended dialogue between the Australian Government and the Australian Cricket Board, and the decision of the board, demonstrated that the latter body took seriously the government's agendas – even though board members may not have liked them. There were, as a result, no official cricket exchanges between Australia and South Africa from 1969–70 to 1992, when South Africa met Australia in the Cricket World Cup.

Galvanising the sports bodies

Relatively few sportsmen and women and sports organisations were keen to be part of an extended boycott with the aim of overturning apartheid. The left Labor Alderman Clem Jones, who was Lord Mayor of Brisbane, was a lonely man on the cricket Board of Control during the 1960s as he was the only member of the board who believed that apartheid was 'abhorrent' and that the board 'should have no part of South Africa.'¹³

Opposition to the government's stance on the sports boycott was based largely on three grounds. First, there was that hoary old chestnut that sports and politics should not mix. This shibboleth was repeated so often that it was taken to be axiomatic even though sport, like every other human activity, is intensely political. What was meant by this phrase was that politicians ought not interfere with the operation of sport, allowing the sports bodies to operate in whatever way they pleased. (This did not rule out, however, government support of sport through funding and infrastructure. This 'interference' was always welcomed.)

Test cricket captain Ian Chappell seemed to regard the politicians and not apartheid as the problem: he stated in 1975 that South Africa would be back in Test cricket if the decision was left to the players.¹⁴ Greg Chappell shared his brother's optimism that the players could help reform South African cricket when, one year later, he called for a team to visit South Africa on the grounds that this 'would further the de-segregation of sport in South Africa.' He supported his call for the renewal of sporting contacts on the grounds that 'the South African government is relaxing its restrictions in many ways ... They are making concessions.'¹⁵

The debate was clouded by vast differences about what constituted politics. While South African sports administrators regarded the international campaign against apartheid in sport as political interference, they considered the apartheid system as nonpolitical, 'simply one of the customs of the country.'¹⁶ This was not a view shared by the Australian Government.

A second argument, related to the first, contended that international players could play a bridge-building role. The proponents of this view suggested that visiting teams would promote change within South African sport and society by insisting that some matches be played against mixed XIs.

Richie Benaud, who was an articulate advocate of bridge building, managed the International Wanderers Cricket tour that played eight matches in South Africa from 12 March to 12 April 1976. The team included Ian and Greg Chappell and Dennis Lillee. On the insistence of Benaud seven matches were played against racially mixed teams, with at least three non-white players in the opposition. The eighth

match was against a black XI in Soweto. Benaud also demanded that there should be complete freedom of movement for all members of both teams in hotels and no segregation of facilities for players and spectators. Benaud believed that this tour would stimulate the reform of South African sport and would also constitute a useful fact-finding exercise enabling an assessment of what advances had been made in multiracial cricket.

After the tour Benaud asserted: 'I have not the slightest doubt that in 35 days there we achieved more for coloured South African cricketers than 20 years of boycotting of cricket tours could achieve.' Ian Chappell advanced the view that if South Africa continued to be ignored the South African Government would take the view, 'what's the point of fostering "multi-racial sport"'.¹⁷ Chappell was of the opinion that the primary push for multiracial sport was coming from above, from the government. However, those promoting the apartheid sports boycott took a contrary view, arguing that it was pressure from below that was providing the main impetus for reform.

A third and related argument against the sporting boycott was that the Australian Government had railroaded sports organisations to support the boycott. No one put this argument more passionately than former Australian Test cricketer Bruce Francis, who organised two Australian 'rebel' cricket tours to South Africa in 1985–86 and 1986–87. Francis protested about the 'hypocrisy and humbug' of Australian politicians who transformed the general guidelines of Gleneagles into 'holy writ' so that sportsmen and women were obliged to follow. Francis wrote to Bob Hawke in July 1986 complaining that 'the onus on the Government to "discourage" [South African sporting contacts] has become a license to bully and blackmail ...'¹⁸

The government's response

Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock maintained in 1977 that it was impossible to divorce politics from sport because the South African Government had imposed a political dogma on its sportsmen and sports associations. Prominent non-white cricket official Hassan Howa, who agreed with Peacock's stance, coined the phrase that there could be 'no normal sport in an abnormal society.' 'Truly integrated sport' could only be achieved in South Africa, in the view of Howa, 'with the dismantling of apartheid in all aspects of South African life.'¹⁹ Howa had been a founding member of the South African Cricket Board of Control (SACBOC) in 1947, which represented Coloureds, Cape Malays and Indians, and in subsequent decades he continued to lead a fearless campaign against 'white' cricket.

The Australian Government took the view that the occasional efforts of bridge builders produced only token change in South African sport. The Australian Ambassador to South Africa, DW McNicol, offered a detailed critique of the Wanderers tour. The invitation for the Wanderers to tour had come from the South African Cricket Council, which was an umbrella organisation of the white South African Cricket Association. Since SACBOC refused to join the council, it was not a party to the invitation. The three non-white players that made up the mixed racial teams were chosen according to 'selection procedures [that] made a mockery of multi-racial cricket.' Most SACBOC players declared themselves unavailable for selection against the Wanderers because the visit by this foreign team was seen as 'temporary white concessions' and 'window dressing'. McNicol concluded that the tour had 'not led to the reforms necessary for South African cricketers to return to the international community.' He added that it was difficult

to see how cricketing authorities, with the best will in the world, could overcome the main obstacles which were political, including legislation such as the Group Areas Act, the Separate Facilities Act and the Community Development Act.²⁰

Hassan Howa confirmed the farcical character of the selection of the three multiracial players for the teams that met the Wanderers. While the names of the eight white players were published well in advance of each match, the names of the three non-white players were kept secret until the morning of the match because of fears that they would be pressured not to play. Some individuals were not informed of the character of the match and were 'just handed air tickets' and told 'where they had to play.'²¹

Australian officials took the view that the more effective strategy was to encourage the reform movement that was going on within South Africa. IL James, Counsellor in the Australian Embassy at Cape Town, noted on 7 March 1977:

there is increasing evidence of a more radical attitude among black sportsmen and of a weakening of the influence of those black officials committed to a conciliatory approach who are prepared to accept white concessions falling short of 'normal sport'.²²

Howa and his supporters wanted nothing less than mixed, or non-racial, clubs.

There had been a long tradition of black opposition to apartheid. Jon Gemmell observes: 'When [Australian cricketer] Neil Harvey scored 151 not out at Durban in 1950 every shot was cheered by black

spectators, one of whom was Nelson Mandela.' However, such action hardly challenged the structure of racial sport.²³

From the 1950s a number of bodies organised sustained and effective opposition to apartheid sport within South Africa. The South African Sports Association (SASA) was formed in October 1959 to promote non-racial sport. The South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) was launched in October 1962, though it was soon banned by the South African Government and operated from exile. Individual sports, such as cricket and rugby, had their own organisations to lobby for non-racial sport, such as SACBOC and the South African Rugby Union (SARU).

In March 1973, at the instigation of Hassan Howa, members of non-racial associations from 11 sports formed the South African Council on Sport (SACOS), which became an important lobby group against the readmission of South Africa to international sport. SACOS took the view that while there had been some relaxation of apartheid in sport the changes were relatively minor. Efforts within South Africa were supported by the 32 African countries which formed the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa in December 1966.

The problem of minor sports

Minor sports presented many problems for officials trying to implement policy in a tidy and consistent fashion. First, there were numerous minor sports that had regular or occasional South African links. Department officials had to wrestle with questions raised by a host of sports such as archery, darts, fly and game fishing, hang gliding, lawn bowls, netball, sailing, squash, surfing, ten pin bowling and

trampolining. Second, there was invariably precious little information about how these sports operated in South Africa and, namely, whether they were racially segregated or not. Third, there was only scanty information about international competitions in minor sports and the key personnel involved.

Lawn bowls proved a particular problem. Douglas Grant Watson slipped through the immigration net when he was issued a visitor visa after he had identified the purpose of his one-month trip to Australia as a holiday. It was only after he had arrived in Sydney on 28 August 1976 that it was discovered that he had been invited to represent his country, by the secretary of the Waratah Club, at an international bowls tournament at Sydney on 6 September 1976.

Miffed by such a development and perhaps wishing to avoid similar situations in the future, one official wanted to know the standing of Watson in club and national bowls organisations and how his action had escaped the attention of the Department of Immigration. He also sought information about the 'racial' structure of bowls in South Africa.

Research revealed that lawn bowls in South Africa was primarily a sport for white men though there were about 300 coloured, Indian and black lawn bowlers based in seven clubs. Club membership was mostly on a racial basis, though there was a small amount of interclub competition between races.

Australian officials undertook much detective work to apprise themselves of the organisation of many South African sports. Officials scrutinised the constitutions of minor sports, studied South African newspapers to detect sporting information, and scanned calendars to identify future international championships.

One official from the Australian Embassy at Pretoria gave an insight into how difficult, time consuming and exasperating it was to collect evidence of the racial composition of a host of sports:

There is no ready source of information. White sporting journalists and most white sports officials are hostile and ignorant of black sport. It is difficult to identify and contact office bearers of non-racial sporting bodies who are the only ones who are really helpful in judging the inflated claims about the reform of white sport. They have no offices, do not live in Cape Town or Pretoria ... and are not accustomed to being approached by embassies.

I tramp around sports arenas at week-ends introducing myself, asking to meet officials and being passed up the line. I spend a lot of time cultivating SARU, SACBOC, black life saving and golf and that is about my limit.²⁴

Stretching the guidelines

The cricket world was stunned by the news of Kerry Packer's daring raid on international cricket and the establishment of World Series Cricket (WSC) in May 1977, just a month before the Gleneagles Agreement.

It was known before Gleneagles that Packer wanted a number of South Africans to join WSC. Influential Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley informed Malcolm Fraser that the presence of South Africans would create great difficulties for him and other Caribbean leaders. Fraser had a breakfast meeting with Manley in London in June 1977 to discuss the matter.

Manley was 'as fervent an opponent of sporting links with South Africa as he was a lover of cricket.'²⁵ He later published *A History of West Indian Cricket* in 1988.

In order to ensure that West Indians would play against the World XI, Packer gave Manley an assurance that South African players selected for WSC would not be recruited directly from South Africa. Manley was prepared to accept South African players who played in English county cricket on the grounds that the fraternisation of West Indians and South Africans in county cricket was 'an occupational mishap'. However, he was prepared to go 'no further'.²⁶

The Australian Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs received visa applications for five South African cricketers. Two of them, Barry Richards and Mike Proctor, had been county cricketers for a number of seasons while Eddie Barlow had been a county cricketer for one season. However, this was not the case with the other two: Denys Hobson had never played outside South Africa and Graeme Pollock had not ventured out of South Africa for several seasons.

Department officials wrestled with the pros and cons of granting visas to the five South Africans. While they could be regarded as private individuals because they appeared in the World XI rather than a South African team, it was likely that they would be viewed as South African representatives and the 'products of white racial cricket in South Africa.' Their involvement in WSC, noted one official, 'will probably do nothing to promote multi-racial sport in South Africa and its influence might rather be in the other direction.'²⁷

While it was decided to approve visas for Richards, Proctor and Barlow, the sticking point was whether to issue visas to the two 'non-county' South Africans, Hobson and Pollock. It was at this point that Packer made a confidential written assurance, this time to the Minister for Immigration, Michael McKellar, that if Hobson and Pollock were granted visas, they would not play in the Supertests and would appear only in one-day and country matches. On the basis of this assurance, McKellar granted visas to all five South Africans.²⁸

The Australian High Commissioner in Kingston, Jamaica, was instructed to contact Michael Manley to explain the grounds on which Hobson and Pollock had been admitted to Australia. However, discussions revealed that Manley regarded Packer's second assurance as a breach of their original undertaking. Packer himself travelled to Kingston House, with Clive Lloyd in tow, to lobby Manley to accept Hobson and Pollock, but Manley would not budge.²⁹

Hobson and his wife arrived in Australia on 24 November 1977 while Graeme Pollock arrived a week later. The Hobsons were VIP guests at the first Supertest that began on 2 December at Glen Waverley. Because Hobson and Pollock were blacklisted by the West Indians, they were 'excused' from further WSC duty after the first Supertest. Pollock, and the Hobsons after a two-week holiday, returned to South Africa.³⁰

This episode highlights the extent to which Packer attempted to bend the rules to suit his own agendas. It is ironic that the Packer assurance to McKellar assumed that the Supertests would be the real cricket and the one-dayers mere sideshow, so it mattered less that Hobson

and Pollock might have played in the latter. As the Australian summer progressed, one-day cricket, particularly night cricket, counted rather more with the public than the Supertests.

Jamaican fast bowler Michael Holding insisted that there should be a clause voiding his contract if he had to share a room with a South African unless such an arrangement had received the 'prior blessing from his Prime Minister Michael Manley.' Holding agreed with Manley's stance that there should be no contact with non-county South Africans.³¹

For the second season of WSC, Packer avoided the problem of the non-county South Africans when he recruited three more South Africans, Clive Rice, Kepler Wessels and Garth Le Roux. The first two were already part of the county system. On the advice of Eddie Barlow, Western Cape fast bowler Le Roux played half a season in the Sussex second XI and had one first-class match against New Zealand.³² This was sufficient to remove his South African 'stigma'.

During the season, the five South Africans played a significant part in the success of the World XI, which beat Australia comprehensively in the Supertest final. However, after the rapid rapprochement between WSC and establishment cricket, the South African players soon discovered that they were expendable. Mike Proctor believed that he would be awarded another three-year contract, on the basis of a Lynton Taylor handshake, at the end of the second year of WSC. Confident that he would play more cricket in Australia, Proctor had left his kit in Australia.³³

New Zealand's stance

The election of a National Government in New Zealand, headed by Robert Muldoon, in November 1975 had a profound impact on the apartheid sports boycott. The National Party had stood on a platform that sports bodies should be free to decide whether or not to have sporting exchanges with South Africa. The New Zealand Government, unlike its Australian counterpart, did not believe that the government should deny visas to racially based South African teams.

One consequence was that South Africa's isolation from international sport from 1971 was broken when the All Blacks toured South Africa in 1976. For five years, South Africa had been virtually excluded from international cricket, rugby and the Olympics, with the exception of the British Lions tour of South Africa in 1974, which went ahead without the approval of the British Government. The 1976 All Blacks tour was a major breach in the apartheid boycott since rugby was the preferred sport of South African white males. It proved an unhappy tour for the New Zealanders, who lost the series by three Tests to one and were subjected to unduly rough play by the South Africans. The tour coincided with the Soweto riots, which began on 16 June, when hundreds of protesters were killed.

The 1976 All Blacks tour incensed African nations and led to a boycott of the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, when 22 nations (including 20 African nations) withdrew at a late stage. Until the Gleneagles Agreement, there was the likelihood of an even larger boycott at the 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth Games, since many Asian and West Indian countries supported this stance. The issue even threatened to wreck the Commonwealth.

The Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand, CT Moodie, reflected on the New Zealand tour, noting that the Nationals had come to power with 'a fairly simplistic view on the question of sporting links with other countries.' He added: 'what the African countries and Mr Ordia have rightly perceived is that there was at the outset a mood of disregard of African opinion on the part of Mr Muldoon and his government.'³⁴ Nigerian Abraham Ordia was an influential African politician who was president of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa at the time.

Many New Zealand politicians complained loudly and frequently that their policies were misunderstood, and they resented that they were singled out for criticism by African and international media. Midway through the 1976 tour, the All Blacks captain even wondered why a Dutch women's hockey team, touring South Africa at the same time, escaped similar censure. The Dutch team, however, was a private one, and was not allowed to wear the national colours. Women's hockey was also a low-profile sport in South Africa. This farcical comparison demonstrated the sensitivity of New Zealanders to international criticism.

Although the All Blacks had a racially mixed team, they played against a completely white South African Test team because the conservative pro-Afrikaners that dominated this sport had insisted that this be the case. SARU, the largest non-white rugby association, refused to meet the All Blacks. The New Zealanders played matches against two small non-white bodies that accepted apartheid.³⁵

There was no love lost between Muldoon and African leaders. Gleneagles broke the deadlock between Muldoon and his African critics. However, while Australia set great store on the Gleneagles

Agreement, it seemed that Muldoon had no real conversion on the road to Gleneagles: New Zealand chose to adopt a very loose interpretation of the agreement.

The lure of another series against the Springboks was eventually too great for the New Zealand Rugby Football Union, which invited South Africa to tour New Zealand in 1981. Muldoon, who was still Prime Minister, took no action to stop this tour. The tour deeply divided New Zealand, in a manner similar to Australia in 1971: the second match of the tour was abandoned, and there were pitch invasions and many arrests. Malcolm Fraser refused to allow the plane carrying the Springboks to refuel in Australian territory en route to New Zealand. New Zealand won the series 2–1, but rugby and the Nationals went backwards in the court of public opinion. There were no further rugby tours involving these two countries until the 1990s.

Shifting sands

Another problem in maintaining the boycott was that the sports landscape in South Africa was continually changing. Stunned into action by six years of isolation from rugby, cricket and the Olympics, the South African Government made attempts to reform its sports system in 1976 to restore international sporting contests. Such actions provided tangible evidence that the sports boycott was working.

On 23 September 1976 the South African Sports Minister, Dr Piet Koornhof, set out guidelines for the introduction of ‘multiracial’ or ‘multinational’ sport, as it was variously reported in South Africa, stating that the objective was to move away from discrimination on the grounds of race and colour. The new sports policy approved mixed

teams at the international level and inter-group competition at all levels in individual sports, including, in some cases, team sports.

Muldoon was fulsome in his praise of this decision to, as he put it, 'introduce full integration at all levels of sport in the country.' He made the questionable assertion that the decision of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union to send a racially mixed team to South Africa had 'played no small part in the South Africa decision to remove the artificial and inhuman barriers which were imposed upon its own sportsmen.'³⁶

There was, first of all, some confusion and considerable controversy about what precisely was permitted under the new guidelines, particularly when it came to team sports. While interracial competition was permitted in individual sporting events, competitions in team sports remained racially segregated. Interracial competitions and matches in team sports required the consent of the Minister for Sport.

The level of integration depended to a large degree on the administrators in each sport, and the progress achieved varied from sport to sport. Cricket was far more progressive than rugby, for instance, with the latter lagging behind in the move towards non-racial sport. In September 1977 the South African Cricket Union was formed with a non-racial constitution, and white clubs played black clubs in the same league. A few clubs even fielded multiracial teams. While this action was contrary to government policy, the minister took no action.³⁷

Australian Foreign Affairs officials were less sanguine than Muldoon about the 1976 reform of South African sport. One noted that 'the announced changes are minor and heavily qualified.' The use of the

term 'multiracial' to indicate interracial competition created confusion. Another noted that while individual sports may be desegregated to some extent, there was no guarantee that team sports would be. 'Spokesmen for non-white sportsmen,' it was noted in addition, 'regard the changes as cosmetic and insignificant.'³⁸

The issue of the reform of the South African sports system was clouded by language. The term 'multinational' reflected the Vorster vision that South Africa consisted of many 'nations' – one white, one coloured, one Indian and eight African. Visiting multiracial teams could play against one or another African 'nation' but multiracial team sport was largely not permitted under the new guidelines.

Words such as multiracial, non-racial, interracial, multinational and integration were bandied about to such an extent that their meanings became blurred. In the end, those who wanted to change the South African sports system opted for simpler words such as merit selection and normal sport.

Effectiveness of the apartheid sports boycott

There has been much debate about why there was an unanticipated rapid erosion of white South Africa's will to resist outside pressure and a determination to gain reacceptance into the international community, which led to the rapid dismantling of apartheid in the early 1990s. Historians have pointed both to pressure from within, such as the growth of anti-apartheid political opposition within South Africa and Africa, and from without, such as government, trade union and private sector campaigns affecting trade, investment and sport. However, other factors have also been canvassed, such as the economic cost of the apartheid

system and the collapse of the Soviet Union by 1991. The decline of communism made a political deal between the South African Government and the African National Congress more possible.³⁹

It is difficult to weigh up the precise impact of trade and sports sanctions, other than to suggest that they worked, in tandem with other forces, to bring about an end to apartheid. Sanctions, at the very least, had a psychological impact on the governing party and diminished its will to cling to apartheid.

The sports boycott was cheap and was less likely than trade restrictions to arouse influential vested interests. In the sports that really counted – rugby and cricket and a lesser extent, the Olympics – there was a sustained boycott over two decades. Since sport was popular, it also provided maximum publicity for the apartheid sports boycott cause. The boycott achieved two purposes: it undermined the morale of white South Africans and it kept the issue of apartheid prominent on international agendas.⁴⁰

David R Black and John Nauright have noted that the South African Government's use of sport in the March 1992 whites-only referendum on constitutional negotiations demonstrated sport's importance. The South African success in the Cricket World Cup and the impending South African return to international rugby were key elements in the 'yes' campaign.⁴¹

Although there had been a UN arms embargo in the early 1960s and an oil embargo by OPEC nations from 1973, multilateral trade sanctions did not emerge until the mid-1980s and were much more limited in character than sports sanctions. South Africa was

also able to circumvent trade sanctions by shipping goods through countries that were not involved in embargoes. Thatcher's Britain and Reagan's United States preferred a policy of the carrot – 'constructive engagement' – to the stick, regarding the absence of trade sanctions as an incentive for South Africa to reform.⁴²

The sports boycott was more tightly controlled and sustained over a longer period than trade sanctions.

Cricket historian Jack Williams has noted that 'isolation was more effective than bridge building' in promoting change in South African cricket during the 1970s. Ironically, isolation 'helped to promote the growth of multi-racial cricket on more or less the lines desired by the bridge builders.'⁴³

The sports boycott worked in Australia because there was strong bipartisan support for such a stance over two decades. Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke were all passionate believers in the efficacy of the boycott. Hawke in fact straddled the two decades of the boycott: as the president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions in 1971 he was prominent in the anti-tour protests, and he was Prime Minister until December 1991.

The recently released archival records relating to 1977 provide some additional insights into the success of the boycott. While the Australian Government occasionally got ahead of public opinion, it went to great pains to advise sports bodies of the rationale for its policies and then to lobby, negotiate and lean on sports organisations, such as the Australian Cricket Board.

A key factor in the success of the apartheid sports boycott was that the officials on the ground were diligent and conscientious in collecting and evaluating information about the operation of apartheid in sport so that policy was soundly based. There were many like the Australian embassy official in Pretoria who tramped the streets and visited ovals on the weekends seeking out elusive information. There were other officials within Australia who were prepared to ring and lobby athletes and teams that were planning to play sport in South Africa against the government's wishes.

The information gathered by Australian embassy officials in South Africa enabled the government to have a clear idea of the ever-changing landscape of South African sport and allowed it to formulate sound and effective policy. McNicol's comprehensive critique of the Wanderers tour provided cogent evidence for the government to continue on its course of supporting the ongoing reform movement within South Africa.

Conclusion

Australia played a consistent role in the implementation of the apartheid sports boycott from 1972 to 1991, when there were no official Australian rugby or cricket tours. There were, of course, many unofficial tours of South Africa, such as the rebel cricket tours in 1985–86 and 1986–87. These mercenary tours were 'not simply a reaction to the boycott of South Africa but a struggle over the control of Australian cricket, which contained a number of unhappy and disillusioned players.' Both the Australian Cricket Board and PBL Marketing, an arm of the Packer organisation, opposed the tours, as did the government.⁴⁴

Other Commonwealth countries, such as New Zealand, Britain and Canada, were less prominent in the apartheid sports boycott. The All Blacks toured South Africa in 1976 and South Africa toured New Zealand in 1981. A planned All Blacks tour of South Africa in 1985 was only stopped after a New Zealand High Court interim injunction. The British Government took a 'middle path', leaving it up to the individual sports and international sports federations to boycott where they thought appropriate.⁴⁵ The British and the Canadians, in addition, did not have the option of cancelling visas for incoming South African sports teams because South African passport holders did not require visas. Canada was less drawn into the apartheid sports boycott because cricket and rugby were not prominent there.

Abraham Ordia commented in the month of Gleneagles:

Australia is the only white Commonwealth nation that has fully accepted and implemented United Nations resolutions on sporting relations with apartheid South Africa, in conformity with the Olympic charter which forbids any form of discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, religion or even political persuasion.⁴⁶

It is not easy to assess the significance of the Gleneagles Agreement. It did prevent a major boycott of the 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth Games and a split in the Commonwealth. However, interpretations of Gleneagles varied from country to country. Australia did take the agreement seriously and joined with African, Asian and West Indian countries in a stricter interpretation of it. Gleneagles was, then, an important benchmark for such countries.

Professor RG Neale

I never had the privilege of meeting Professor RG Neale but I have become very conscious of his work, and his vision, in the preparation of this lecture. We are fortunate that he recognised the value of high quality recordkeeping and accessible archives services. Professor Neale's role in setting up the National Archives and in overseeing the *Archives Act 1983* has ensured that his legacy will be ongoing.

The recently released records relating to the boycott demonstrate the continuing value of his work in that they pose fresh questions. One is whether the apartheid sports boycott was a unique event and a response to a situation that is unlikely to recur. It is hard to conceive of another occasion in the past – and possibly in the future as well – when an international campaign over the issue of race was conducted through the medium of sport so successfully and over such an extended period. Australia played an important role in this process in the 1970s and 1980s.

Endnotes

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- ¹⁹ Jack Williams, *Cricket and Race*, Berg, Oxford, 2001, p. 85.
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- ²² NAA: A1838, 201/5/4.
- ²³ Gemmell, *The Politics of South African Cricket*, p. 121.
- ²⁴ NAA: A1838, 201/10/11/3 Part 5.
- ²⁵ Gideon Haigh, *The Cricket War*, Text, Melbourne, 1993, p. 52.
- ²⁶ Haigh, *The Cricket War*, p. 52.
- ²⁷ NAA: A1838, 201/10/10/3 Part 10.
- ²⁸ NAA: 1838, 201/5/4 Part 15.

- ²⁹ NAA: 1838, 201/5/4 Part 15; Haigh, *The Cricket War*, p. 96.
- ³⁰ Haigh, *The Cricket War*, pp. 124–5.
- ³¹ Haigh, *The Cricket War*, p. 52.
- ³² Haigh, *The Cricket War*, pp. 204–5.
- ³³ Haigh, *The Cricket War*, pp. 256, 292.
- ³⁴ NAA: A1838, 201/5/4 Part 7.
- ³⁵ NAA: A1838, 201/5/4 Part 8.
- ³⁶ *Evening Post* (Wellington), 24 September 1976.
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- ⁴⁶ Statement by Abraham A Ordia, President, Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, 1 June 1977, file in the custody of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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Professor Cashman has written extensively on sport in Australia and Asia. He is the author of two histories of Australian sport, *Paradise of Sport* (1995) and *Sport in the National Imagination* (2003), and was President of the Australian Society for Sports History from 2001 to 2004. He was editor of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Sport* and General Editor of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket*.



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