

OPS

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Sporting Relations with S. Africa

RH

cc:- DOE  
Pay. Gen. Office  
FCO  
Cab. Office

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T55/80

13 March 1980

Dear Mr President

Thank you for your letter of 26 February about the proposed tour to South Africa by the British Lions Rugby Team. May I say at once how much we in Britain appreciate the rapport and good relations between our two countries which you mention.

I entirely understand your attitude towards apartheid generally and to sports contacts with South Africa. The British Government are opposed to the policy of apartheid and fully accept the Commonwealth Statement on Apartheid in Sport, often referred to as the Gleneagles Agreement. You will know that I joined with all the other Commonwealth Heads of Government in Lusaka last August in a Declaration on Racism and Racial Prejudice which mentioned the Statement in its preamble.

We naturally regret the decision by our Home Rugby Unions to go ahead with the British Lions tour. But they have taken the decision in full knowledge of the Government's position on sports contacts with South Africa. They were informed of the contents of the Commonwealth Statement soon after it was made in 1977, as were all our governing bodies of sport. Moreover, they have been left in no doubt in recent months about our attitudes. The Minister for Sport wrote to them on 3 January urging them to decide against this tour. The text of his letter was made public, and I have myself confirmed our position in Parliament.

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The fact, however, remains that our governing bodies of sport are rightly autonomous and Ministers do not have the power to direct them in their day-to-day affairs. We have sought by all the means open to us, in the light of our laws and traditions, to discourage the tour. We shall continue, in conformity with the "Gleneagles Agreement", to oppose sports contacts with South Africa until such time as South Africa's policy towards integrated sport changes sufficiently to warrant the modification of the Agreement by the Commonwealth.

May I conclude by sending you my personal good wishes and expressing the confidence of the British Government that the relations between our two countries will remain as cordial as they have traditionally been.

signed

MT

His Excellency Monsieur Leopold Sedar Senghor GCMG