

PRIME MINISTER

c. Mr. Gow

VMA 2
SPORT

Mr. Monro today answered Mr. Dalyell's Question about the possibility of a British Lions Rugby Tour to South Africa.

In supplementaries, Nicholas Winterton asked why the Government had adopted their current attitude to sports tours to and from South Africa, when these could help to convert the South Africans, and when the suspected threat was to the Olympic Games being held in a barbarous and totalitarian country. Mr. Monro commented that the Government would be prepared to review the Commonwealth statement when South Africa made progress towards multi-racial sport. Roy Hughes said that he had understood that no decision had yet been made on the tour and he therefore asked Mr. Monro to prevail on the rugby authorities not to go ahead. Mr. Monro said that the Government's attitude on such tours had been made clear, and the position had not changed. Toby Jessel asked why the Government was involved. Mr. Monro said that the Government had an obligation to stand by the Commonwealth statement and had made this clear to the rugby unions.

Denis Howell complimented Mr. Monro on his strong, intelligent and civilised stance; stressed the value of the Olympics as a full gathering of the world's youth; asked Mr. Monro to confirm that one sport had no right to jeopardise the efforts and hopes of other sports; and spoke of the risk of destroying the Commonwealth Games, or turning it into a whitesonly meeting. Mr. Monro stood by the press statement issued in September.

In the circumstances, Mr. Monro held the line. It was noticeable that the Questions from the Labour side stressed the importance of other sports making their views known, a point on which Mr. Monro is working hard as a result of your earlier comments.

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12 December 1979