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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

Extract of Prime Minister's speech to the Sports Writers
Association Annual Dinner, 29 July 1983.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL 8.00 P.M.

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, HON. R.J. HAWKE, AC, MP,
TO THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS WRITERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL
DINNER, WENTWORTH HOTEL, SYDNEY, JULY 29, 1983.

FIRST, LET ME SAY HOW PLEASED I WAS WHEN I RECEIVED
THE INVITATION FROM THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS WRITERS
ASSOCIATION TO ADDRESS THIS DINNER AND PRESENT THE
INAUGRAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS JOURNALISM.

MANY INVITATIONS COME ACROSS MY DESK EACH WEEK.

I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT WHEN YOUR REQUEST WAS FIRST
RAISED EARLIER THIS YEAR, OFFERING AN OPPORTUNITY TO
TALK ABOUT SPORT AND NOT POLITICS, I DIDN'T HESITATE
TO ACCEPT.

AT A GATHERING LIKE THIS WITH SO MANY LEADING
SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN, SPORTS ADMINISTRATORS AND
SPORTS JOURNALISTS IN ATTENDANCE IT MAY APPEAR
UNNECESSARY TO UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF SPORT
IN OUR NATIONAL LIFE.

BUT OFTEN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ISSUES IS RESTRICTED
TO OUR OWN EXPERIENCES AND I WOULD LIKE TO SET OUT
HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT VIEWS THE ROLE OF SPORT.

THOSE WHO HAVE DESCRIBED AUSTRALIANS AS BEING OBSESSED WITH SPORT MAY WELL HAVE UNDERSTATED THE POSITION.

NO SUBJECT PROVOKES MORE ARGUMENT, AROUSES MORE PASSIONS AND ENTERTAINS MORE AUSTRALIANS.

MORE THAN 70 DIFFERENT NATIONAL SPORTING BODIES REPRESENTING MORE THAN 4.5 MILLION REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS EXIST TO ADMINISTER THE MAJOR SPORTS.

ADD TO THAT FIGURE THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF AUSTRALIANS WHO ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED OUTSIDE THESE ORGANISATIONS AND YOU BEGIN TO APPRECIATE THE EXTENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN SPORT.

BEYOND THOSE ACTIVELY INVOLVED ARE COUNTLESS THOUSANDS WHO ARE ACTIVELY INTERESTED - THE READERS, VIEWERS AND LISTENERS CATERED FOR BY SPORTS JOURNALISTS.

CLEARLY SPORT REACHES INTO MOST CORNERS OF AUSTRALIAN LIFE.

FOR MOST OF THE 80-ODD YEARS SINCE FEDERATION, GOVERNMENT HAS PLAYED VERY LITTLE DIRECT ROLE IN SPORTING AFFAIRS - NOTWITHSTANDING THE SERIOUS THREAT TO AUSTRALIAN-BRITISH RELATIONS THAT AROSE DURING THE "BODYLINE" SERIES.

OVER THE PAST DECADE, HOWEVER, WE HAVE SEEN THE GROWTH OF GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN, AND SUPPORT FOR, SPORT AT FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVELS.

AND THERE ARE SOUND REASONS FOR THIS INVOLVEMENT.

MOST IMPORTANT, IS THAT TODAY WHEN MANY PEOPLE WORK IN SEDENTARY OCCUPATIONS, ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING SPORT IS A GOOD INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY HEALTH.

THE HEALTHIER OUR SOCIETY IS THE LESS DEMAND IT MAKES ON HEALTH SERVICES.

THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT IS THE MOST WIDELY RECOGNISED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT.

THROUGH ITS PROGRAMS THE INSTITUTE ASSISTS AND ENCOURAGES OUR MOST PROMISING SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN.

THE A.I.S. HAS THE SUPPORT OF BOTH PARTIES AND IS DEVELOPING INTO A WORLD-CLASS INSTITUTION.

WHAT IS TRULY REMARKABLE IS THAT IN AUSTRALIA OF ALL COUNTRIES IT TOOK SO LONG TO ESTABLISH SUCH A BODY.

IT IS NOW 10 YEARS SINCE THE PROPOSAL WAS FIRST
ADVANCED - BY THE LATE FRANK STEWART, THE MINISTER
RESPONSIBLE FOR SPORT IN THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT.

THE CONCEPT WAS DEVELOPED BY A STUDY GROUP UNDER
DR. ALAN COLES AND ITS REPORT WAS TABLED IN 1975.

BUT IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1980 THAT THE PREVIOUS
GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO SET UP THE
INSTITUTE.

IT WAS OPENED ONE YEAR LATER IN EARLY 1981.

THE INSTITUTE WAS ESTABLISHED TO ADDRESS TWO
PROBLEMS FACING YOUNG SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN.

ONE WAS THAT OFTEN THEY WERE FORCED TO CHOOSE
BETWEEN DEVELOPING THEIR SPORTING CAREERS AT THE
EXPENSE OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL CAREERS; THE OTHER,
THAT IN MOST SPORTS IT WAS NECESSARY TO GO OVERSEAS
TO GAIN EXPERIENCE AND FIND APPROPRIATE COMPETITION.

THE INSTITUTE NOW OFFERS TOP CLASS SPECIALISED COACHING
IN EIGHT SPORTS, A SPORTS/MEDICINE SCIENCE BACK-UP, TOP
CLASS COMPETITION OPPORTUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA AND
OVERSEAS, AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CANBERRA ACADEMIC
AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS.

BY ANY MEASURE, THE A.I.S. HAS ALREADY ACHIEVED MUCH.

AT THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES 26 OF THE 70 GOLD MEDALS WON BY AUSTRALIANS WENT TO A.I.S. ATHLETES.

OUR NATIONAL NETBALL TEAM, WITH WHICH THE INSTITUTE IS CLOSELY INVOLVED, HAS RECENTLY WON THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP.

THAT MAGNIFICENT DISTANCE RUNNER ROBERT DE CASTELLA, WHO INSPIRED US ALL WITH HIS WIN IN THE BRISBANE MARATHON AND HAS NOW ESTABLISHED HIS DOMINANCE IN THIS EVENT WITH HIS BRILLIANT VICTORY IN ROTTERDAM, IS ALSO AT THE INSTITUTE.

WALLY MASUR, WHO WITH PAT CASH, LOOKS SET TO RE-ESTABLISH AUSTRALIA AS A FORCE IN MEN'S TENNIS IS YET ANOTHER A.I.S. ATHLETE.

OF COURSE, THERE HAVE BEEN RECENT NOTABLE SUCCESSES BY NON-A.I.S. TEAMS AND INDIVIDUALS.

AND I MUST MENTION THE WORLD CHAMPION MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM WHICH IS CAPTAINED BY A MEMBER OF MY TEAM IN CANBERRA, DR. RIC CHARLESWORTH, THE LABOR MEMBER FOR PERTH.

THE INSTITUTE WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT
ROLE IN THIS GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO SPORT.

AMONG THE ISSUES BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT RELATING
TO THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF THE A.I.S. ARE:-

- * AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SPORTS
INCLUDED IN ITS PROGRAM,
- * WHETHER MANAGEMENT OF A.I.S. FACILITIES
SHOULD BE UNDER DIRECT CONTROL OF A
BOARD OF MANAGEMENT OR REMAIN WITH THE
DEPARTMENT OF TERRITORIES AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENT, AND
- * THE POSSIBLE DE-CENTRALISATION OF SOME
SPORTS PROGRAMS, FOR EXAMPLE, HOCKEY BEING
SERVICED FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

WHILE THE A.I.S. IS THE MOST VISIBLE OF THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE TO SPORT, THERE
ARE OTHER IMPORTANT PROJECTS.

THERE IS THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WHICH PROVIDES
FUNDS FOR NATIONAL SPORTING BODIES TO ASSIST IN
ADMINISTRATION, COACHING, INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION
AND SPECIAL PROJECTS.

ANOTHER VITAL PROGRAM IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF
INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SPORTS FACILITIES.

WE ARE ALSO COMMITTED TO THE ASSISTANCE OF DISABLED
ATHLETES THROUGH THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR SPORT
AND RECREATION FOR THE DISABLED.

NOW I WOULD NOT WANT THIS AUDIENCE TO THINK THAT
OUR COMMITMENT IS LIMITED ONLY TO EXISTING AND
ON-GOING PROGRAMS.

AND BEFORE I OUTLINE ONE INITIATIVE THAT IS VERY
CLOSE TO BECOMING A REALITY I SHOULD PAY TRIBUTE
TO THE MINISTER FOR SPORT, RECREATION AND TOURISM,
JOHN BROWN.

OUR GOVERNMENT IS VERY FORTUNATE IN HAVING A MAN
OF JOHN'S ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM IN THIS PORTFOLIO.

NO DOUBT MANY OF YOU WILL ALREADY KNOW OF JOHN'S
CAPACITIES AND HIS LONG-STANDING AND DEEP CONCERN
ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT IN AUSTRALIA.

THE GOVERNMENT WILL VERY SOON BE IN A POSITION TO
ANNOUNCE THE DETAILS OF OUR PROPOSED AUSTRALIAN SPORT
COMMISSION - AN INITIATIVE THAT OWES A GREAT DEAL
TO JOHN BROWN.

THE COMMISSION WILL BE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT IN AUSTRALIA AND WILL NOT MERELY SEEK TO DUPLICATE FUNCTIONS ALREADY ABLY CARRIED OUT BY OTHER BODIES.

IT WILL HAVE AS ITS MAIN TASK CO-ORDINATING THE NATIONAL EFFORT IN SPORT AND RECREATION AND WILL REPLACE, EVENTUALLY, THE EXISTING SPORTS ADVISORY COUNCIL.

THE COMMISSION WILL WORK WITH ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND WITH SPORTING AND RECREATION ORGANISATIONS.

THE NEW COMMISSION WILL BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO ISSUES THAT EMERGE IN SPORT AND RECREATION BECAUSE IT WILL BE A FLEXIBLE BODY WITH A LARGE DEGREE OF AUTONOMY.

I WOULD LIKE NOW TO TURN TO AN ISSUE THAT IS OF VERY REAL CONCERN NOT JUST TO THOSE OF YOU CLOSELY INVOLVED IN SPORT, BUT TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY AND THAT IS THE QUESTION OF SPORTING CONTACTS WITH SOUTH AFRICA.

BEFORE GOING TO SOME OF THE ISSUES IN DETAIL IT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE A FEW PRELIMINARY POINTS.

OUR GOVERNMENT IS FUNDAMENTALLY AND UNRESERVEDLY OPPOSED TO THE SYSTEM OF APARTHEID THAT OPERATES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

THE VERY FIRM AND CLEAR STAND OUR GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN ATTRACTS, I BELIEVE, BI-PARTISAN SUPPORT.

IN FACT, DURING THE RECENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS I COMMENDED THE GENERAL STANCE TAKEN BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT ON SOUTH AFRICA.

BUT ON THE QUESTION OF SPORTING CONTACTS WITH SOUTH AFRICA SOME OF THE ACTIONS OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT LED TO SOME CONFUSION AMONG SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN AND SPORTS ADMINISTRATORS.

NO DOUBT YOU WILL BE AWARE THAT OUR GOVERNMENT IS CURRENTLY REVIEWING THIS WHOLE QUESTION WITH A VIEW TO ENDING THIS CONFUSION AND GIVING AUSTRALIAN SPORTS ORGANISATIONS AND SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN CLEAR GUIDELINES ON SPORTING CONTACTS WITH SOUTH AFRICA.

THERE CAN BE NO DEBATE ABOUT THE EXISTING BAN ON THE ENTRY OR TRANSIT THROUGH AUSTRALIA OF SOUTH AFRICAN SPORTING TEAMS - THAT WILL REMAIN IN PLACE.

HOWEVER, THERE ARE THREE AREAS NOW UNDER EXAMINATION WHICH ARE MORE COMPLEX AND NOT YET THE SUBJECT OF FINAL GOVERNMENT DECISION.

INDEED, BEFORE ANY FINAL DECISIONS ARE MADE WE WILL BE ANXIOUS TO HEAR THE VIEWS OF SPORTING ORGANISATIONS.

THESE AREAS ARE:-

- * THE ENTRY OF INDIVIDUAL SOUTH AFRICAN SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN NOT CLAIMING TO REPRESENT SOUTH AFRICA,
- * CONTACTS BETWEEN AUSTRALIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN SPORTSMEN IN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS IN THIRD COUNTRIES, AND
- * THE ENTRY TO AUSTRALIA OF SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN FROM THIRD COUNTRIES WHO HAVE COMPETED AGAINST SOUTH AFRICAN TEAMS.

EACH OF THESE ISSUES WILL NEED FULL AND CAREFUL CONSIDERATION.

BUT WHATEVER THE DECISIONS OF OUR GOVERNMENT, THE END RESULT WILL BE A SYSTEM THAT IS CLEAR CUT AND LEAVES AUSTRALIAN SPORTING BODIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN NO DOUBT AS TO OUR POLICY.

BEFORE I LEAVE THIS SUBJECT I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A FEW FINAL POINTS.

A RECENT DEVELOPMENT WHICH THE GOVERNMENT VIEWS WITH REGRET IS THE EFFORT OF SOUTH AFRICAN AUTHORITIES TO ENCOURAGE INTERNATIONAL SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN TO COME TO THAT COUNTRY BY OFFERING LARGE FINANCIAL INDUCEMENTS.

WHILE THE GOVERNMENT REGRETS THAT MANY SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN HAVE SUCCUMBED TO THESE INDUCEMENTS IT IS ALSO AWARE THAT MANY SPORTS, INCLUDING SEVERAL AUSTRALIAN SPORTING ORGANISATIONS, HAVE REJECTED THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO TO SOUTH AFRICA.

THEY HAVE DONE THIS EVEN THOUGH COMPETITION THERE WOULD HAVE BROUGHT LARGE FINANCIAL REWARDS TO THESE SPORTING ASSOCIATIONS.

THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THIS ATTITUDE DESERVES THE PRAISE AND SUPPORT OF THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY.

IN THE END, HOWEVER, IT WILL BE FOR SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN TO EXAMINE THEIR OWN CONSCIENCES WHEN IT COMES TO PLAYING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

APARTHEID IS A MORAL ISSUE WHICH EFFECTS EVERY MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND THE SITUATION REMAINS THAT THE BASIC INJUSTICES OF THE APARTHEID SYSTEM DENIES EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN OF DIFFERENT RACES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

HAVING SAID ALL THAT, AUSTRALIA LOOKS TO THE DAY WHEN IT CAN COMPETE AGAINST THE BEST OF ALL SOUTH AFRICANS AND CAN PIT ITS ATHLETES AGAINST TEAMS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BEEN SELECTED ON THE BASIS OF MERIT AND WHO HAVE HAD THE FULLEST OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP AND DISPLAY THAT MERIT IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR RACE.

I WOULD NOT LIKE TO END MY REMARKS TO YOU TONIGHT WITHOUT OFFERING SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE PRODUCT OF THE LABOURS OF THE SPORTS JOURNALISTS HERE TONIGHT.

12.

AS A POLITICIAN, AND THEREFORE A KEEN NEWSPAPER READER, I MUST CONFESS THAT ON ONE OR TWO OCCASIONS I HAVE FOUND THE NEWS DIET MUCH MORE PALATABLE IN THE SPORTING SECTION THAN ON THE FRONT PAGES OR IN THE EDITORIAL COLUMNS.

AND AS AN OCCASIONAL PUNTER I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK THOSE TURF ANALYSTS WHO HAVE INFREQUENTLY PROVIDED ME WITH A WINNER.

I MUST ALSO SAY THAT THE QUALITY OF SPORTS WRITING HAS IMPROVED MARKEDLY IN RECENT YEARS AS NEWSPAPERS HAVE ADAPTED TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF THE INSTANTANEOUS BROADCASTING AND THE SAME DAY REPLAY OF SPORTING EVENTS.

THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLES OF THOUGHTFUL AND ENTERTAINING WRITING AS OPPOSED TO STRICT REPORTING IN THE SPORTS PAGES OF OUR MAJOR NEWSPAPERS.

THE LAST DECADE HAS ALSO SEEN A SHARP IMPROVEMENT IN THE PRESENTATION OF SPORT ON TELEVISION.

PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE TELEVISION IS NOW MORE CONCERNED AS A MEDIUM WITH NEWS AND SPORT THAN ENTERTAINMENT AS A RESULT OF THE EXPLOSION IN THE HOME VIDEO INDUSTRY.

WHATEVER THE REASON I THINK WE ARE ALL THANKFUL THAT THE DAYS OF THE SINGLE, FIXED CAMERA COVERAGE OF CRICKET HAS ENDED.

NOR COULD WE HAVE EXPECTED TEN YEARS AGO THE MAGNIFICENT COVER OF THE BRISBANE COMMONWEALTH GAMES PROVIDED BY THE A.B.C.

IF THERE IS ANY CRITICISM TO BE MADE OF SPORTS JOURNALISM IT IS THAT NOT ENOUGH OF YOUR RESOURCES SEEM TO BE DIRECTED TO REPORTING WHAT ARE CLASSIFIED AS 'MINOR' SPORTS BUT COMMAND LARGE FOLLOWINGS (FOR EXAMPLE, NETBALL) AND TO THE COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S SPORT.

OVERALL, I BELIEVE AUSTRALIANS HAVE REASON TO BE PROUD NOT JUST OF OUR SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS AND TRADITIONS BUT OF THE SPORTS JOURNALISTS WHO COVER THESE EVENTS.

AND IF OCCASIONALLY YOUR WORK RESULTS IN PUSHING THE GOVERNMENT OFF THE FRONT PAGE OR OFF THE TOP OF THE NEWS BULLETINS I WILL NOT BE TOO RESENTFUL.

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