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**THE NEW ZEALAND
RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION AND
THE 1981 SPRINGBOK TOUR**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts at Massey University

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1999

**For Granddad,
whose life is a continuing source of inspiration.**

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INTRODUCTION

In April 1980 the New Zealand Rugby Football Union invited the South African “Springbok” rugby team to tour New Zealand in 1981. This tour of New Zealand resulted in arguably the fiercest protest action that the country has seen in this century.

Despite substantial pressure, both national and international, the NZRFU refused to withdraw its invitation. Graham Mourie, the incumbent captain of the All Blacks, refused to play against the South Africans citing, among other reasons, that bad publicity would damage the game rather than benefit it.¹ Historians who have written on the tour have made points similar to those of Mourie. Jock Phillips wrote that the greatest threat to the game of rugby in New Zealand came from its association with South Africa.² Graeme Barrow also condemned the Rugby Union’s decision to proceed with the tour claiming that:

... it was apparent to many, including a good proportion of rugby people, that the Springboks did not yet deserve a tour. Some advances had been made toward integration in the sport – although not nearly as much as had been made in other South African sports – but South African rugby had not reached the stage at which it would be regarded as normal by the rest of the world.³

The proposed tour was seen by many as detrimental to the country and to the game of rugby. Historians writing on the event have mainly been united in their criticism of the Rugby Union for proceeding with the tour. In a provocative statement, Phillips suggested:

For the first time the All Blacks were becoming a source of national not pride... The tour tarnished the image of the game and many men who had previously been able to separate their concern about apartheid from their love of rugby found this no longer possible. The obstinacy of the game’s administrators became a judgement about a spirit of the game itself.⁴

Why did the New Zealand Rugby Football Union choose to follow through with their invitation under such intense pressure? There have been many reasons offered as to why so many New Zealanders felt so passionately about rugby, particularly rugby between New Zealand and South Africa. Historian Scott Crawford maintained that ‘Rugby became the ethical exemplar of New Zealand social and spiritual life. The game demanded skill and courage, and provided physical violence and contact.’⁵ Crawford argued that due to this, rugby became a symbol of New Zealand’s strength. It was necessary to test this strength against other national opponents. South Africa was the strongest opponent and, therefore, clashes between the two countries were of the greatest importance. The significance became so great that, until 1970, it was seen as enough justification to send teams to South Africa in which Maori were unable to be selected.

Geoff Fougere made similar points to Crawford. Fougere, however, maintained that ‘the New Zealand rugby nation predated, and in part facilitated, the emergence of the New Zealand nation itself.’⁶ Fougere also argued that men of different occupations and backgrounds are brought together in a close relationship. Building on this point Fougere argued:

The cultural freight carried by rugby - its powerful embodiment of particular relationships between men, the forms of identity they carried, and the national ethos they suggested – helps explain why the challenge to rugby generated by the Springbok tour drew on such deep emotions.⁷

John Nauright offered these reasons as to why the NZRFU acted as they did:

The answers lie in the tremendous revenues gained from series against South Africa, the NZRFU’s continual assertion that they were avoiding the mixing of politics and sport, knowledge of National Party support for their position and close personal links between rugby authorities in New Zealand and South Africa. By their actions over the years it was clear that the NZRFU did not care about the plight of black South

Africans nor their exclusion from equal opportunities in South African sport.⁸

The Rugby Union's justifications for proceeding with the tour have been described as hackneyed and unrealistic. The object of this paper is to look at the arguments put forward by the NZRFU and to try and present the reasons why, in the face of growing public rejection, they decided to stand by their decision to invite the Springboks. During the tour, and since, there has been comparatively little representation of the arguments by the NZRFU or investigation into possible reasons why the NZRFU persisted with those arguments.⁹

The Rugby Culture chapter deals with the culture which has evolved in New Zealand rugby. This culture appears to have been influential in the decision that was made by the Rugby Union. Rugby is a physical, uncompromising sport and that attitude was present in the game's administrators in 1981. Rugby was still an amateur sport and those involved in the running of the game brought with them ideals from the grass roots.

The National Government played a vital role in the Rugby Union's invitation to the South Africans, although the Council of the Rugby Union made the final decision as to whether an invitation would be issued. The Politics chapter discusses the way the Government chose to deal with the tour and how that influenced the Rugby Union's decision. Brian Talboys tried to argue that the Rugby Union had an obligation under the Gleneagles Agreement not to invite the South Africans. However, the Rugby Union did not want to become involved in politics. The decision from the Government not to withhold visas and the confirmation from police that they would be able to handle any problems that could arise were key factors in the Rugby Union's decision. Also influential was the ill-discipline from within National Government and Robert Muldoon's failure to display convincingly he was anti-tour.

In making the decision to issue the invitation, the Council was subjected to a great deal of information concerning the conditions in South Africa. The

Information from Outside chapter looks at that information. Some of this information appeared to directly influence the Rugby Union directly. A British organisation, Freedom In Sport, was officially launched well after the invitation was issued, but appeared to have some influence on the Council's decision to persevere. Bryan Wilson's 'fact finding mission' to South Africa appears to have directly influenced the councillors and other 'fact finding missions' also seem to have had some influence over the Rugby Union.

The players were an important influence on the decision of the Rugby Union. The councillors claimed that they were unconcerned that Graham Mourie and Bruce Robertson decided not to play against the South Africans. However, if several more top level All Blacks had also decided not to play, it almost certainly would have raised some doubts within the Rugby Union. Playing against South Africa was the ultimate achievement for an All Black and players were coming out publicly in support of the tour. The Players chapter looks at the arguments they offered to justify playing.

One of the main explanations that has been offered for the Rugby Union's insistence on continuing with the tour was the financial windfall that a major tour brought in. The Financial Issues chapter looks at whether money was a major factor in the Rugby Union's decision to proceed with the tour. The Rugby Union appears to have been in a strong financial position at the time of the tour and it seems unlikely, therefore, that the revenue that could have been created was the reason the invitation was sent.

The Council of the Rugby Union had the last vote on whether the tour should go ahead. The Councillors chapter looks at the influences and arguments that helped them decide to proceed with the tour. Councillors came under considerable pressure and criticism leading up to the tour and during it, as protesters targeted them because they saw them as able to call off the tour. The Council also had to deal with pressure from other groups such as schools, trade unions and churches. They were able to absorb this immense pressure and allow the tour to continue.

Ces Blazey was instrumental in holding the Rugby Union together in the lead up to the tour and during it. It was important the Rugby Union showed a united front. Blazey's experience in the armed forces provided him with the man-management skills needed to keep the Council together. To avoid divisive public contradiction, only the Chairman spoke to the media. Blazey drew on his experience as the 'number two man for AMP Insurance' and dealt adequately with the media. He ensured Council members stayed united over the tour. Had there been public conflict between council members, rugby people might have decided the tour was not worth it.

Ces Blazey commented that the Rugby Union voted for the tour to go ahead for a number of reasons.¹⁰ Each of these areas played a part in the Rugby Union's decision to continue with the tour.

¹Stephen J. Tew, *New Zealand and South African Rugby Exchanges 1960-1981: A Study of a Sporting Relationship with Far Reaching Consequences*, Wellington: Victoria University, 1982, p.145.

²Jock, Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1987, p.270.

³Graeme Barrow, *All Blacks Versus Springboks*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1981, p.180.

⁴Jock, Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1987, p.271.

⁵Scott A. G. M. Crawford, "Rugby in Contemporary New Zealand", *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 12:2, 1988, p.108.

⁶Geoff Fougere, "Sport, Culture and Identity: the Case of Rugby Football", *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, David Novitz and Bill Willmott Eds., Wellington, 1989, p.113.

⁷*ibid.*, p.117.

⁸J. Nauright, "Rugby, Race and Politics: New Zealand and South Africa 1921-1993", *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*, 26:3 1993, p.21.

⁹"Ignoring reality – at a price" *The Timaru Herald*, 4 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁰Ces Blazey, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 11, 1 August 1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

1. RUGBY CULTURE

The extremist protesters scarred New Zealand, but had some unintentional help from the New Zealand Rugby Union, which badly miscalculated the extent of the opposition to the tour.¹

This comment from Barrow is worth examining. There can be little doubt that extreme protests did scar New Zealand. Violent clashes with police and illegal attempts to prevent any rugby being played by the South African team deeply divided society. Vicky Duncan, County Councillor for Hunterville, responding to a request from the *Listener* for comment in the aftermath of the tour, wrote in relation to rural society that: ‘...most people now have an even deeper distrust of the urban intellectual, the student, the gang member, and a fear that violent protest will be used every time a protest group is thwarted or dissatisfied.’² Sylvia Ashton Warner wrote: ‘DON’T LOOK for peace now after the Springbok tour. With the vent blasted open there may be more to be expelled by a volcanic people.’³ On the division the tour created, Elizabeth Smither, a poet from Taranaki wrote ‘There is the separation of town and country, like egg-white from egg-yolk...’⁴ Trade unionist Sonja Davies wrote that after Molesworth Street⁵ ‘the divisiveness predicted would develop and split the country apart.’⁶ These comments from individuals who came from different areas and positions in New Zealand society illustrate the division, the scarring, left by the tour.

Almost a decade after the tour, Blazey was asked if there were any times the NZRFU was under pressure to stop the tour after the initial decision to proceed. He commented: ‘I think it’s fair to say and I can express a personal opinion here because I think I would express an opinion that was common to most people – [the Rugby Union] didn’t expect the sort of violence which occurred.’⁷ Blazey highlighted the point that the Rugby Union had not expected the violence that was shown in Hamilton. Fellow councillor Paul Mitchell agreed with Blazey:

I think you’ve got to look at it in the context of the time. That we were not a country where protest was rife. There had been very little evidence of protest movements in place and the only other experience

was way back in 1951 when the waterfront strike was on and that was a different motivation. So, while we were aware there were elements within our society that did not support a Springbok tour we had no inkling whatsoever, and I guess the Government didn't have an inkling and the police didn't have an inkling, of the strength of the protest that finally emerged.⁸

Pat Gill, also a councillor, commented on the protests that: 'Well, when your dealing with some of the people, anti-tour, that we were dealing with, you wouldn't be surprised at what you might run into. [Although] Most certainly not someone going to land a plan amongst a crowd.'⁹

It seems that the miscalculation the Rugby Union made was not the extent of opposition, but the physical presence of the protesters and violent means that some of them used. Tew argued that, as the polls indicated, anti and pro tour groups were evenly split.¹⁰ Blazey made comments that indicated the Rugby Union kept itself well up to date with the polls that were being taken. In an example of this Blazey referred to a Heylen Research Centre poll on the television programme *Eye Witness* when illustrating the NZRFU's position in a newspaper article.¹¹ The Rugby Union vote involved all 26 of its affiliated unions which encompassed New Zealand. The Rugby Union had the support of all these Unions and, almost without exception, their clubs.¹² The NZRFU took the unanimous vote to invite the South Africans to New Zealand as an indication they had the support of large numbers of New Zealanders.¹³ In early July the Rugby Union both showed their knowledge of opposition to the tour and stated one of their reasons for proceeding with it: 'This is not the only occasion when the people of New Zealand have been sharply divided. It does not mean that people who sincerely hold a view must forgo their rights provided that situation has been given careful consideration.'¹⁴

The threat from a pilot to crash a plane into the crowd, and the presence of protesters on the pitch meant the game at Rugby Park, Hamilton was not played. After the game spectators clashed with protesters. What happened at Hamilton was enough to offer an insight to the Rugby Union of how violent the protests could become. It is fair to assume that after this display there

could have been no miscalculation of opposition, yet the Rugby Union decided that plans were all in place and that they would continue with the tour.¹⁵ Ces Blazey commented that:

Now this is not a question of what we would have done had we known it was going to happen, its just a question of fact that we didn't expect that. But after the Hamilton situation we saw that as a case where we could not allow a small group of people, by deliberately planned illegal action, to prevent people who were going about their lawful business, from doing so.¹⁶

Councillor Ron Don pointed out: 'I would imagine it was unanimous to continue with the tour once it had started. I don't think that ever arose [a vote] there was too much at stake and I don't think anyone bowed down to the protesters in the way they handled themselves.'¹⁷ The fact the Rugby Union was not prepared to back down to people acting illegally is an example of the rugby ethos that was a major factor in the Rugby Union's decision to continue with the tour.

Richard Shears, reporting on Blazey's frame of mind after protests at Gisborne, touches on a very valid point: 'The demonstrations there [Hamilton], he [Ces Blazey] had been warned, would be more severe. But again, these were threats. And he was a rugby man and he had his principles. The tour would proceed.'¹⁸ The Rugby Union had been threatened continually with sporting boycotts by other larger nations and also from within New Zealand by the protest movement, but the NZRFU continued to refuse to back down from their stance that their job was to administer rugby not politics. Rugby is a physical, uncompromising sport. It is not surprising that this attitude flowed off the field and into the administration of the game. This was especially so at a time when rugby was an amateur sport and was not attempting to present itself in the professional corporate image of today's Rugby Union. Asked why New Zealander's fought so bitterly over a game, Ces Blazey gave an answer that could easily be construed as the answer to the question: why were rugby people prepared to fight so hard to have the Springboks in New Zealand:

I think the bitterly part of it is what I've just been talking about. The

disagreement is one of the things which we're fortunate in as far as NZ is concerned is because part of our democratic system is the right to have a difference of opinion and I suppose there was never a Saturday night goes on, if we're talking about rugby in particular ... there's never a Saturday night goes on when there aren't very strong arguments all over NZ because it's part ... it has developed to be part of our way of life.¹⁹

Ces Blazey's statement that the right to have a difference of opinion has developed to be part of 'our way of life' neatly encapsulates the rugby culture.

Administrators of the NZRFU in 1981 had been very active in the 1950s. Ces Blazey was in his seventies when the tour took place. Phillips suggests that 'the 1950s saw the triumph of the New Zealand male stereotype' – the good keen man. 'It was a postwar decade in which the nation's men basked in their wartime glories.'²⁰ Phillips, when writing about the decline of the New Zealand male stereotype, discussed the impact of the election of the Labour Government in 1984:

A more significant symbolic act came in 1984 with the election of a Labour Government committed to refusing entry to nuclear-powered and armed ships. The previous administration of Robert Muldoon had for much of its time been dominated by veterans of the Second World War – men like Duncan McIntyre, J. B. Gordon, David Thompson, Air Commodore Gill and Muldoon himself. The new administration consisted of people too young to have served, and free of the cant about Neville Chamberlain and the Munich analogy which lay behind so much of the war-preparedness argument in the postwar years.²¹

The relevance of this statement to the Rugby Union is that members of the Council were also under the influence of the war-preparedness argument. Ces Blazey served in the Second World War and commanded the Army Service Corp in the Pacific.²² Often in interviews Blazey talked about his experiences in the war and how they affected his life afterwards. In defending the Rugby Union's decision to continue with the tour, Ces Blazey commented:

If we were to seek to change the political philosophy of other countries

involved in rugby where we disagreed with it, the time which we would be able to devote to sports administration would be materially reduced. We would need to be able to decide in each instance whether the majority of rugby people in New Zealand were in favour or disagreed with the system. We have no wish or intention of becoming involved in it.²³

This statement has a great deal in common with the appeasement argument that Phillips alluded to when he referred to the Munich analogy. The postwar argument was that in appeasing Germany the alliance only heightened the inevitability of having to fight Germany and only succeeded in making that country stronger. The logic in Ces Blazey's defence is that if the NZRFU makes a political judgement on playing South Africa, they are going to have to make that same judgement about everyone they play. The Rugby Union's response is that they are unable to do this, so, rather than calling the tour off, which would encourage the anti-tour movement, they were prepared to make a stand on their belief that politics should be left out of sport.

Elsewhere Phillips wrote:

The identity of European (or pakeha) males in New Zealand was forged by the interaction of two powerful traditions: a desire to preserve the muscular virtues of the frontier against a feared urban decadence, and the concern to discipline that masculine spirit and contain it within respectable boundaries. The purest expression of the stereotype has been found in rugby football and the rituals which surround the game.²⁴

The development of rugby as a hard physical battle is something that has become entrenched in New Zealand rugby. Writing about the 1956 Springbok tour, Pearson stated that:

New Zealand rugby reinforces these plain hard ideals. It is, as a semi-official history notes, "based on physical strength rather than subtlety of mind, it is a game of bodily contact". A famous player and administrator warned that "there is no place in Rugby for the squealer. Play the game; take the hard knocks; give them; and afterwards shut up and forget them." As Bob Scott put it, "Rugby in terms of manliness,

sportsmanship and fair play has so much to offer a virile nation".²⁵

This statement demonstrates how rugby was typically seen as a hard physical battle. Pearson is referring to rugby in 1956, but this is the time that the administrators in 1981 would have been most active in rugby.

'The bigger they are the harder they fall' is a rugby cliché used in young rugby teams to teach children that they should not be afraid of bigger opposition. Taught to children it is an ethos felt right through the sport. Other countries were threatening New Zealand because of the Rugby Union's decision. The New Zealand Cricket team's up-coming tour of the West Indies was being called into question and the Black African nations were threatening to boycott the 1982 Commonwealth games in Brisbane.²⁶ After the boycott of the 1976 Olympic games, this threat was seen as very real. As well as these sporting measures, anyone who involved themselves with South African Sport was put on a 'Black List' prepared by the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee. Ces Blazey and Ron Don were thought to have been put on this list. Three English tennis players who were on this list visited Nigeria legally. Once they arrived, however, they were put behind bars for the night and deported in the morning without a chance to speak to the British diplomatic post in Lagos or anywhere else.²⁷ Blazey was aware of this story, which made being put on the list more than just an academic exercise. Responding to these threats, the Rugby Union showed its reluctance to submit to a larger opponent that they saw as acting unjustly. The Union sent out in the form of a circular a comment on the situation by Ces Blazey: 'There are certain other gentlemen overseas who have recently been adopting a "big brother" or should I say a "big stick" stance.'²⁸ Within New Zealand the Rugby Union was threatened by anti-tour groups. Trevor Richards commented: 'We warned the Rugby Union that it would be unwise for it to 'linger' before cancelling the tour: "All they are doing is fuelling a campaign which will divide them from the people of New Zealand and do rugby a lot of harm."²⁹ In response to these threats the Rugby Union commented:

It is true that a relatively small group have had some success in creating a fear complex in the minds of some sections of the people. I do not like nor, I am sure, does the average New Zealander like being

required to make decisions based on threats.³⁰

The threats coming from outside the country were also seen as unwarranted and unnecessary by one journalist who wrote:

...just when so many New Zealanders would have been moving behind the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his pressure on the NZRU, in came another boisterous African, this time our old tormentor Mr Abraham Ordia, warning us that any tour would be a hostile act...Individual New Zealanders, including the sportsmen, can watch and form their own attitudes to contact [with South Africa] at this time. Ces Blazey, on one side, and Graham Mourie on the other, help form this opinion. Abraham Ordia doesn't.³¹

Keith Quinn, an active rugby commentator for some years, and commentator during the 1981 tour, has been quoted as saying:

I don't think that the NZ rugby people, the rugby seen here, learned many lessons from what happened in 1976... there was a strong attitude within a good percentage of rugby people that the tour should take place and to hell with what anyone else thought... I think rugby was blind to the morality of the questions about apartheid in those years and it wasn't until a number of years after the 1981 tour that attitudes began to change in NZ.³²

In Montreal for the 1976 Olympics, Keith Quinn also remarked how on a number of occasions people said to him: "So you are a NZ'er. You are the ones causing all the trouble."³³ About this Quinn went on to say: 'It was very direct finger-pointing at NZ for the wrongness that many people believed came from our rugby tour of South Africa.'³⁴ It becomes obvious that the blame the world put on New Zealand was a key reason as to why some sections of New Zealand were opposed to the Springboks touring the country. From 1971 to 1981 the *New Zealand Herald* conducted a poll with the question 'Should the South Africans come to New Zealand?' After the 1976 Olympic games was the only time those opposed to the Springboks touring significantly outnumbered those in favour of it.³⁵ After the tour was completed, many of the letters to the *Listener* by people against the tour had a similar concern that is well summed up by this letter writer:

I'M VERY pessimistic about the long- term effects of the tour.

Internationally, and however unfair it maybe, we are now branded as racists. That mark won't even begin to fade while we continue to flick two fingers at world opinion...³⁶

In the twelve months following 1 September 1979 fifteen countries hosted South African non-rugby sports people. These countries included Britain, the United States, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland and Italy.³⁷ In regard to rugby, Barrow wrote:

The Argentineans had played two tests in South Africa before the Lions arrived, and the French played four provincial matches and one test in South Africa after the Springboks got back from South America. The supposedly isolated Springboks were playing more international rugby than the All Blacks. To add insult to injury, it was announced that Ireland would make a short tour of South Africa to give the Springboks a warm up before the scheduled tour of New Zealand.³⁸

The Rugby Union was aware of these sporting links with South Africa and commented that there was 'blatant discrimination against New Zealand and Rugby in particular.'³⁹

For the Rugby Union it was not a case of considering the evils of apartheid and they insisted that the invitation did not mean they supported apartheid. They were not going to be drawn into dealing in politics as they were only a sporting organisation. The Rugby Union saw other nations competing with South African sportsmen while New Zealand was the only country being punished for it. The Rugby Union was not prepared to be bullied into making a decision they thought was unjust. The comment made by Roger Hall was an example of the fear complex they saw as being created by those taking the 'big stick' attitude. In July 1981 the Rugby Union confirmed this when they stated:

The good name of New Zealand is not necessarily maintained by giving in to unwarranted local or international pressures.

Without doubt New Zealand is being subjected to intimidation and

threats.

We cannot accept that the majority of New Zealanders would support a decision being required to be made based on intimidation, threats or blackmail, whichever term is preferred.⁴⁰

This statement reinforces the concept of the rugby culture. The Rugby Union saw themselves as protecting 'New Zealand's good name' by refusing to back down to unjust threats. Bob Stuart commented:

There were other sports teams going to South Africa. There were people going elsewhere, no one worried if we went to Russia or anywhere like that. Why was New Zealand being picked on? Why was rugby being picked on? So, it doesn't go down well with the average kiwi.⁴¹

It is interesting to note that the rugby union saw itself as being an integral part of the upkeep of New Zealand's good name. Geoff Fougere made the point that 'the New Zealand rugby nation predated, and in part facilitated, the emergence of the New Zealand nation itself.'⁴² Perhaps desire to defend New Zealand is part of the culture that was born with the nation's desire to play the game. The role the culture of rugby played in the NZRFU's decision to invite the Springboks, or their determination to carry on with the tour, can not be underestimated.

¹ Graeme Barrow, *All Blacks Versus Springboks*, Auckland: Heinemann, 1981, p.180.

² Vicky Duncan, "Now That The Tour Is Over...", *Listener*, 99:2176, 3 October 1981, p.15.

³ Sylvia Ashton Warner, "Now That The Tour Is Over...", *Listener*, 99:2176, 3 October 1981, p.14. (All quotes are reproduced as appear in original documents)

⁴ Elizabeth Smither, "Now That The Tour Is Over...", *Listener*, 99:2176, 3 October 1981, p.17.

⁵ Molesworth Street saw a major clash between protesters and police

⁶ Sonja Davies, "Now That The Tour Is Over...", *Listener*, 99:2176, 3 October 1981 p.14.

⁷ Ces Blazey, Transcript of interview of Ces Blazey by unknown interviewer, 1 August 1990, Tape 12, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

⁸ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁹ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

¹⁰ Stephen J. Tew, *New Zealand and South African Rugby Exchanges 1960-1981: A Study of a Sporting Relationship with Far Reaching Consequences*, M. A. Recreation Administration thesis, Victoria University, 1982, p.143.

¹¹ "The Rugby Union's Case for Bok Tour" *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1980, p.10.

¹² New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Press Release, 10 July 1981, p.5.

¹³ *ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁵ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

¹⁶ Ces Blazey, Transcript of interview of Ces Blazey by unknown interviewer, 1 August

1990, Tape 12, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

¹⁷ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

¹⁸ Richard Shears, and Isobelle Gidley, *Storm Out Of Africa: The 1981 Springbok Tour Of New Zealand*, Auckland: Macmillan, 1981, p.39

¹⁹ Ces Blazey, Transcript of interview of Ces Blazey by unknown interviewer, c.1990, Tape 52, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

²⁰ Jock, Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1987, p.263.

²¹ *ibid.*, p.270.

²² Ces Blazey, Transcript of interview of Ces Blazey by unknown interviewer, 1 August 1990, Tape 9, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North

²³ Ces Blazey, "The Rugby Union's Case for Bok Tour" *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1980, p.10.

²⁴ Jock Phillips, "The Hard Man: Rugby and the Formation of Male Identity in New Zealand", *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity*, John Nauright and Timothy J. L. Chandler Eds., London: Frank Cass, 1995, p.70.

²⁵ M.N. Pearson, "Heads in the Sand", *Sport in History*, Cashman, R and M. McKernan ed., Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1979, p.282.

²⁶ New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Circular to Unions No:81/41, 9 April 1981, p.3.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.5-6.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.5.

²⁹ Trevor Richards, *Dancing on Our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1999, p.206.

³⁰ New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Circular to Unions No:81/41, 9 April 1981, p.5.

³¹ "To and Fro on Africa", *The Dominion*, 1 December 1980, p.2.

³² Keith Quinn, Transcript of interview of Keith Quinn by unknown interviewer, c.1990, Tape 60, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

³³ Keith Quinn, Transcript of interview of Keith Quinn by unknown interviewer, c.1990, Tape 59, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

³⁴ Keith Quinn, Transcript of interview of Keith Quinn by unknown interviewer, c.1990, Tape 60, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

³⁵ Stephen J. Tew, *New Zealand and South African Rugby Exchanges 1960-1981: A Study of a Sporting Relationship with Far Reaching Consequences*, Victoria University, 1982, p.143.

³⁶ Roger Hall, "Now That The Tour Is Over...", *Listener*, 99:2176, 3 October 1981, p.15.

³⁷ Graeme Barrow, *All Blacks Versus Springboks*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1981, p.172.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.172.

³⁹ New Zealand Rugby Football Union, *Press Release*, 10 July 1981, p.4.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.4.

⁴¹ Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

⁴² Geoff Fougere, "Sport, Culture and Identity: the Case of Rugby Football", *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, David Novitz and Bill Willmott Eds., Wellington, 1989, p.113.

2. POLITICS

So why did the NZRFU persist with tours [from South Africa]? The answers lie in... the NZRFU's continual assertion that they were avoiding the mixing of politics and sport, [and] knowledge of National Party support for their position...¹

In April 1980 the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Brian Talboys, sent the Rugby Union a letter advising them not to invite the South African rugby team to New Zealand. Talboys' main argument was that: 'Sporting contact with South Africa gives the appearance- however much this is unwarranted- of condoning the apartheid policies of the South African Government.'² Talboys added additional pressure when he commented that:

The attitude adopted by the Rugby Union stands out in sharp contrast to that of the great majority of sports organisations in this country and, I believe, of most New Zealanders. If they stay with their selfish decision, not only they but the whole country will have to live with the consequences.³

The Rugby Union ignored this advice, invited the South Africans and released a press statement to justify publicly their decision. They presented a number of arguments. The NZRFU argued that: 'An invitation issued to the national governing body for rugby in any country does not infer that the NZRFU, or any of its members either support or are opposed to the political policies or decisions of the country-concerned.'⁴ At a later date Ces Blazey, representing the NZRFU, asked the question:

Some-one might explain to me sometime why it is that we have never heard any suggestion that we were supporting the political systems of, for example, Argentina, Uruguay, Romania, France, Italy- or for that matter USA, Canada, Ireland, Australia – when we arranged tours with those countries.⁵

Around this time Australia's laws regarding the Aboriginal people were being strongly criticised.⁶ However, there was no criticism or suggestion that the

NZRFU should not be playing against the Australian rugby team or that it endorsed the Australian Government's treatment of the Aboriginal people.

Ron Don explained:

More over, if we want to talk about human rights, which the protesters brought up when any other argument failed, let us just have a look at what Australia has done or not done with the Aborigines and indeed when I was in Australia very recently it was a hot topic. So, I really don't think the Australians should criticise anybody till they tidied up affairs in their own country.⁷

Referring to the television programme *Eyewitness*, the Rugby Union responded to questions regarding the amount of support they had. The Heylen Research Centre carried out the poll aired on the programme. The Rugby Union commented when asked if the scheduled 1981 tour by the Springboks should proceed that 'those in favour far exceeded the "no" answers.'⁸

However, Ces Blazey commented: 'I am aware of the limitations of opinion polls. In particular, they are apt to be affected by recent events.'⁹

The Rugby Union also highlighted changes that had been made to the sport of rugby in South Africa: 'A favourite expression in certain circles about changes which have occurred in recent years in South Africa is to refer to them as "cosmetic". The facts show this is an inappropriate term.'¹⁰ The NZRFU claimed there were two non-white national team selectors, mixed trials, that any player could progress to the highest level of his potential and that players, irrespective of colour, shared changing and social facilities.¹¹

In an article based on a Rugby Union news release the Rugby Union pointed out that their job was solely to administer sports:

If we were to seek to change the political philosophy of other countries involved in rugby, where we disagreed with it, the time we would be able to devote to sports administration would be materially reduced. We would need to be able to decide in each instance whether the majority of rugby people in New Zealand were in favour or disagreed with the system. We have no wish or intention of becoming involved

in it.¹²

The first point that the Rugby Union had made in their statement was that they were not supporting apartheid. However, the *Evening Standard*, in its short introduction to the article, singled out the Rugby Union's argument that its job was only to administer an amateur sport, not to involve itself in international politics.¹³ This becomes more relevant in light of the response Brian Talboys made:

I must say at once that I am quite astonished that in more than four pages of statement not a single mention has been made of the Gleneagles Agreement, to which I drew particular attention in my letter dated 9 April... That Agreement was a direct consequence of the All Blacks tour of South Africa in 1976, the first casualty of which was the 1976 Olympic Games following the boycott by African and other countries. That the Council of the N. Z R. F. U. should deliberately ignore the Gleneagles Agreement three years later is a matter of gravest concern to me... It is the Gleneagles Agreement which is of paramount importance in this question... Nothing can alter the fact that your decision has implications going well beyond the administration of your amateur sport, however much the council might wish it otherwise.¹⁴

In a scathing criticism of the statement, Talboys commented that he regarded as irrelevant 'various other references in the statement such as the visit to South Africa of the British Council of Sport and the multiplicity of rugby associations in South Africa in itself demonstrates that apartheid exists.'¹⁵ Later, Talboys stated: 'What the Rugby union cannot do, in all conscience, is to behave as though it is free to act in the interests of Rugby alone when it knows that the action which it contemplates will have consequences for the whole nation.'¹⁶

Talboys' response to the points made by the Rugby Union seemed, upon closer analysis, to have been unusual. The Rugby union had clearly stated that they did not wish to become involved in international politics; that their job was to look after the interests of rugby players. This point was illustrated by one journalist who wrote:

What is intolerable to the very large body of thinking and discriminating New Zealanders is that about 18 administrators of one of New Zealand's major sports, whose only collective expertise lies in the running of rugby, should in effect be permitted to dictate a vital area of the country's foreign policy. With respect, that responsibility is one of the gravest bestowed on the Government, and on Parliament, and can never be delegated to a lesser authority.¹⁷

The key clause of the Gleneagles agreement that deals with the discouragement of sporting contacts with South Africa is:

Mindful of these and other considerations, they [the heads of government within the Commonwealth] accepted it as the urgent duty of each of their governments vigorously to combat the evil of apartheid by withholding any form of support for, and by taking every practical step to discourage, contact or competition by their nationals with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa or from any other country where sports are organised on the basis of race colour or ethnic origin.¹⁸

It is unclear why the Rugby Union should have considered itself bound by the Gleneagles Agreement. The heads of state within the Commonwealth drew up Gleneagles. The Rugby Union had no involvement in the signing of this agreement and was an organisation for which the document had no relevance. Ron Don indicated this when he stated that the Gleneagles Agreement was: 'Not worth the paper on which it was written.'¹⁹ Gleneagles clearly talked about the differing governments' responsibility to discourage sporting contact. For the National Government Gleneagles meant everything, but for the Rugby Union it meant nothing. It was up to the National Government to discourage the Rugby Union.

The Rugby Union was not financially dependent on the Government. Therefore the first option for the Government was to try and reason with the Rugby Union. Talboys dismissed the Rugby Union's argument on the progress of South African rugby simply as irrelevant and that the existence of different rugby organisations was proof of apartheid in sport. In a press release, the

Rugby Union responded that it had:

...not overlooked the SARU but that organisation, by its own declaration has made it clear that it will not join with other Rugby organisations until the South African Government amends its laws. That is a political matter and it is not within the capabilities of a sporting body to make the changes.²⁰

Rather than try to argue with the Rugby Union on points on which it had accepted responsibility, Talboys tried to impress upon the Rugby Union the importance of a political document when the Rugby Union had already stated it would not become involved in politics. The Rugby Union's function was to administer an amateur sport. However, the National Government was elected to govern the country. It was their responsibility, not the Rugby Union's, to make decisions that would affect the country. As Ces Blazey pointed out in a later press release:

We [the NZRFU] should not be expected to make assessments or judgements on matters such as international relations and international trade. We have neither the knowledge nor experience to do so. We do not accept that it is our responsibility to make decisions based on such considerations.²¹

In 1981 the Human Rights Commission released a report which said the tour should not go ahead but that the responsibility for stopping the tour rested with the Government. The Commission saw no reason why the Government could not deny the Springboks visas as any government had the right to refuse entry to its country.²²The Prime Minister responded to the Commission's findings: 'the Commission was comprised of "pretty strange people" who had "very strange ideas" on this issue and had made very strange decisions. "In the past their reasoning has been flawed on occasions and in this case I think their reasoning is flawed.'²³

It has been suggested that one reason the tour went ahead was the Rugby Union's knowledge of the extent of support within the National Party. Malcolm McKinnon argued that the National Party caucus was roughly divided into three sections on the issue of the tour. Norman Jones, Pat Hunt

and Ben Couch were in support of the tour. Brian Talboys, Aussie Malcolm, Ian Shearer, and Marilyn Waring were against the tour, while the remaining MPs occupied the middle ground. They were against the tour, but were not prepared to go further than lobbying the NZRFU.²⁴ McKinnon acknowledged that it was hard to study exhaustively members of the National Party's thinking over this period, as it was adept at concealing its conflicts from the public. McKinnon also stated that it was difficult to know what significance to give information which did pass into general circulation.²⁵ S. G. Brosnahan also claimed that: 'Mr Talboys' efforts notwithstanding, other members of the National caucus and notably the Minister of Police Ben Couch were fairly open in their support of the tour.'²⁶ Couch was also reported to have had to apologise after a television interview where he appeared to have supported apartheid.²⁷

The issue of sports boycotts was a major concern which stayed with the Rugby Union throughout the tour. It was clear to the Rugby Union that there had been no complete sports boycott of South Africa by other nations. A National MP also raised in Parliament the fact that African countries themselves traded with South Africa.²⁸ In their press release, the Rugby Union attacked sporting boycotts:

Apart from any other consideration, a basic objection of the NZRFU council is that the initial point of attacks by Governments against a political situation is through sport, rather than by economic or other measures. We continue to believe that sporting boycotts are undesirable and also unfair to the young people who participate in sport.²⁹

The Government's defence of trading and economic ties with South Africa confused the issue of sporting boycotts. For example, Brian Talboys stated in parliament: 'There is a very sound case to be made for the fact that involvement by New Zealand companies has helped the condition of blacks in South Africa.'³⁰

Ben Couch was asked to confirm that he would not participate in the tour by attending matches or meeting members of the Springbok team but would give

no such assurance.³¹ Independent MP Mel Courtney commented publicly: 'I think it's a shame rugby is being used in this way. It's possible that we could be accused of being hypocrites. We continue to associate with Russia, despite the issue of Afghanistan, and we play table tennis with China, although we don't like Communism.'³² As HART pointed out, there was far from a united stand by the Government against the tour and that it was unclear how many members of Government planned to attend Springbok matches or functions.³³

The actions of the Prime Minister were left his position on the tour questionable or at least blurred. Ian Fraser commented that: 'It was a game all the time of doing just enough to placate the rest of the world but doing it grudgingly, and constantly winking at heartland New Zealand, saying well, we know what this really means don't we?'³⁴ In 1975 'Muldoon said that a Springbok team would be welcome here in New Zealand and that when they played in New Zealand he would be in the stands cheering on the All Blacks.'³⁵ This comment was in line with the National Party policy of non-interference in sport, which they declared during both the 1972 and 1975 election campaigns.³⁶ Although National's sporting manifesto in 1978 was against any sporting contact with South Africa, it was not until March 1981 that Muldoon publicly affirmed that he was personally anti-tour. Muldoon claimed it had been unnecessary for him to state publicly that he was against the tour as the party manifesto was against it. He claimed that the media was greatly exaggerating the importance of his statement.³⁷

Muldoon said he supposed that some rugby people would have thought that he was secretly on their side.³⁸ However, Ces Blazey maintained that: 'The union had always assumed the Prime Minister's attitude was the same as official Government policy...'³⁹ Nevertheless, HART stated: '...the Prime Minister has yet to utter one criticism of the NZRFU decision makers (compared with his continued vilification of the anti-apartheid movement)...'⁴⁰ It seems as though rugby councillors also picked up this attitude in meetings they had with Muldoon. Pat Gill commented that, in a meeting he attended with Muldoon and protest groups, Muldoon warned the protest groups that the Government would not put up with any violent action, but 'at no stage did Muldoon ever

ask the Council to call off the tour.’⁴¹ Councillor Paul Mitchell commented: ‘I think personally Rob Muldoon favoured it and made that reasonably clear in discussions he had with rugby people.’⁴² If Muldoon believed rugby people were not aware he was against the tour then it is unclear why he did not come out earlier and make it clear that he opposed the tour so there could be no misunderstanding of his position. Further confusing the issue, the All Black captain, Andy Dalton, received a telegram from Robert Muldoon at the end of the tour, congratulating him and his team for their series win over the Springboks.⁴³

Confirmation from the police that they would be able to handle any problems that arose on the tour was an important factor in the Rugby Union’s decision to continue with the tour. Blazey commented that: ‘...having their assurance that they could deal with it then for a variety of reasons, we decided that we should go ahead with it.’⁴⁴ On the Government’s policy towards policing of the Springbok tour, National MP Marilyn Waring commented that:

Inside caucus from week to week, whether it was the provision of more barbed wire, the cancellation of police leave, calling out the army, whatever it was, everything, all government resources, were mobilised to make sure that apartheid sport was played. And the only game that was cancelled was extraordinarily cynically cancelled in a Labour-held marginal. And there were definitely rugby grounds that were far more difficult to secure, as they used to say, but just more resources were given to National-held marginals to secure the ground.⁴⁵

Ron Don denied that the Government influenced the Rugby Union on game venues. Don commented that the Rugby Union decided as usual what games would be played and their venues and then the police were involved in case there would be trouble.⁴⁶ There were two games that were cancelled on the tour. One was at Waikato but that was called off because of disruptions by protesters. The game at Timaru was cancelled in advance and this appears to be the one which Waring referred to. Pat Gill, who was the Council’s liaison officer with the police during the tour, commented:

...with the police we decided that their men would need a rest and if they didn't get a rest there with the constant being on duty it would be hard to hold things together... I was the man that made those decisions, with the police planning trip we decided to call that game off.⁴⁷

The game intended for Timaru was to be the ninth game of the sixteen match tour and it would have been played on the Wednesday following the first Saturday test match. Therefore, Gill's comment that the match was called off not because of the difficulty of securing the ground but because the police needed a rest is a plausible explanation.

Ces Blazey stated in 1990 that: 'I need to make it quite clear that not only at the beginning but all the way through, the NZ government of the day made it very clear that they didn't want the tour to go ahead.'⁴⁸ However, the Government's refusal to deny the Springboks visas appeared to be the only fact the Councillors were interested in. Ron Don stated:

He [Muldoon] ruled correctly that it was a matter for the Rugby Union...that is my recollection of Robert Muldoon's part, which was a very small part really. Important, but I mean in terms of words etcetera a very simple issue and we were naturally pleased to know that the National Government would not stop the tour. If the National Government had said to the New Zealand Union we forbid you to have this tour the tour wouldn't have taken place.⁴⁹

Paul Mitchell also showed that the Rugby Union was only interested in the Government's decision to allow the Springboks into the country: '...it wasn't done lightly and we were given absolute assurances from the Prime Minister at the time that we had the authority and the approval of the Government to proceed.'⁵⁰

Ces Blazey commented that the Rugby Union knew the Government did not favour the tour but the councillors' personal feelings appeared to be different. Mitchell stated: 'We were certainly not discouraged to go ahead with it [by the Government]. Whether you could say we were encouraged to go ahead with it is just a matter of interpretation.'⁵¹ Pat Gill felt the Government could have done more: 'Yeah, I guess they could have done more but I don't believe that

they being a Government in a democratic country [should have]because it's not really the Government's job to interfere, particularly in the activities of sporting bodies.⁵² The fact the National Government was not united in its stand against the tour also affected the councillors' personal opinions towards the tour, as Gill demonstrated:

...if anybody in the Government supported it, well, you felt as though you weren't against the Government in making the decision, although the decision again was purely a rugby one, but it did reinforce your thinking that, well, we're not going against the Government.⁵³

The official justifications by the Rugby Union for continuing with the tour do not involve Government support. For example, Ces Blazey made this statement in April 1981:

When people talk about the N. Z. R. F. U. not accepting the advice of our Government, they seem to conveniently forget that teams from both Australia and Great Britain competed at the Moscow Olympic Games contrary to the strong pressure from their Governments.⁵⁴

Advising their individual unions that it was acceptable to disregard Government advice showed that rugby people were aware the Government did not support the tour. However, the councillors who had the final vote did seem somewhat confused as to the Government's stance. Gill claimed it was a rugby decision, not a political one, but it would be naive to suggest that the appearance of Government support would not have influenced the councillors.

The Rugby Union insisted that it could not deal with politics. Indeed it seemed there was no forum for the councillors even to discuss politics. As Ron Don explained:

I want to stress the political angle at this moment. Never ever in the New Zealand Union do we discuss politics in New Zealand or South Africa. We never even discussed apartheid in South Africa. Had we tried to our chairman, Ces Blazey, would have ruled us out of order.⁵⁵

Despite the Rugby Union's insistence that they were not going to involve themselves in political arguments, in a circular to the provincial unions Ces Blazey commented:

I cannot help feeling that there is a good deal of validity in the N.Z.P.A. report dated 16 March 1981 from Washington which said *inter alia*: -

“The new American Administration’s policy towards South Africa is a major factor in a clear decision by the black African nations to step up pressure on the New Zealand Government to stop the Springbok tour.”⁵⁶

Ronald Reagan had stated he did not believe in isolating South Africa. Consequently the tour was seen as additionally important because if the Springboks toured New Zealand South Africa would not appear at all isolated.⁵⁷ Blazey made the releases from the Rugby Union. He apparently sat down with the secretary after the meeting and constructed the releases, which did not come back to Council for approval.⁵⁸ While the Councillors did not officially discuss the matter, Ron Don pointed out that: ‘I am sure councillors in their personal capacity read the news media reports.’⁵⁹ Ron Don also said that while they did not discuss politics in council, they were aware that countries were trading with South Africa.⁶⁰ Although the Rugby Union may not have wanted to become involved in political arguments, these comments from Blazey and Don show that the Councillors were not immune to political discussions.

The Rugby Union claimed that it wanted no part in politics and there was no forum for councillors to discuss politics officially in meetings. However, in the climate the 1981 tour created, it would have been impossible for the councillors to be unaware of the political arguments that would have been expressed in the media. While the Rugby Union was determined not to allow politics to become a factor in their decision to invite the South Africans it would almost certainly have contributed. The way Brian Talboys chose to try and dissuade the Rugby Union was not the most constructive approach and the ambivalent conduct of the National Government would also have had some influence on the Rugby Union.

¹J. Nauright, “Rugby, Race and Politics: New Zealand and South Africa 1921-1993”,

Journal of Physical Education New Zealand, 26:3 1993, p.21.

² Brian Talboys, "Letter to Ces Blazey from the Minister of Foreign Affairs 9 April 1980", *Proposed 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour of New Zealand*. Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1981. (Document has no page numbers.)

³ *ibid.*

⁴ "The Rugby Union's Case for Bok Tour", *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1980, p.10.

⁵ New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Circular to Unions, No 81/41, 9 April 1981, p.4.

⁶ Tom Scott, "Tom Scott's Political Notebook: Under a lot of Strine", *Listener*, No 2157: 13, 23 May 1981, p.13.

⁷ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁸ "The Rugby Union's case for Bok tour", *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1980, p.10.

⁹ New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Circular to Unions, No 81/41, 9 April 1981, p.6.

¹⁰ "The Rugby Union's case for Bok tour", *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1980, p.10.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Brian Talboys, "Letter to Ces Blazey from the Minister of Foreign Affairs 29 September 1980", *Proposed 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour of New Zealand*. Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1981.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ Brian Talboys, "Letter to Ces Blazey from the Minister of Foreign Affairs 3 December 1980", *Proposed 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour of New Zealand*. Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1981

¹⁷ "Cicero's Viewpoint", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 15 December 1980, HART Files Box 17, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁸ Edward Grayson, "Special Analysis and Guide on the Commonwealth Statement on Apartheid in Sport – Known As "The Gleneagles Agreement" *Freedom in Sport: The Way Forward*, Dublin: The Chairman, International Steering Committee, Freedom in Sport, c1980, p.13.

¹⁹ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

²⁰ New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Press Release, 10 July 1981, p.2.

²¹ *ibid.*, p.3.

²² Human Rights Commission, *Report and Recommendation to the Prime Minister on Recommendations Regarding the Proposed Springbok Rugby Tour of New Zealand*, Wellington, 1981.

²³ Richard Shears and Isobelle Gidley, *Storm Out Of Africa: The 1981 Springbok Tour Of New Zealand*, Auckland: Macmillan, 1981, p.35.

²⁴ Malcolm McKinnon, "Resolution and Apprehension: The Parliamentary National Party and the 1981 Springbok Tour", *Counting the Cost: The 1981 Springbok in Wellington*, Wellington: Victoria University, History Department, 1982, p.26.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.26.

²⁶ S. G. Brosnahan, *Rugby, Race and Religion: The Catholic Church and Controversy over Sporting Relations with South Africa 1959-1981*, M.A. History thesis, University of Canterbury, 1986. p.221.

²⁷ Richard Shears and Isobelle Gidley, *Storm Out Of Africa: The 1981 Springbok Tour Of New Zealand*, Auckland: Macmillan, 1981, p.34.

²⁸ Peter Wilkinson, *NZPD*, vol. 437, p.306-307.

²⁹ "The Rugby Union's case for Bok tour", *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1980, p.10.

³⁰ Brian Talboys, *NZPD*, vol. 435, 27 November 1980, p.5000.

³¹ Ben Couch, *NZPD*, vol. 437, p.170.

³² Mel Courtney quoted in "Courtney would welcome Boks", 24 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³³ HART, "Eight Practical Steps: Four Years After Gleneagles the Government Falls Short", c.1981, HART Files Box 8, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, p.1.

³⁴ Ian Fraser quoted in Finlay McDonald, *The Game of Our Lives: The Story of Rugby and New Zealand and How They've Shaped Each Other*, Auckland: Penguin, 1996, p.99.

³⁵ Robert Muldoon quoted in "Muldoon Reaffirms Visit Undesirable", *The Dominion*, 16 March 1981, p.1.

³⁶ Malcolm McKinnon, "Resolution and Apprehension: The Parliamentary National Party and the 1981 Springbok Tour", *Counting the Cost: The 1981 Springbok in Wellington*,

Wellington: Victoria University, History Department , 1982, p.25.

³⁷ Robert Muldoon quoted in "Muldoon Reaffirms Visit Undesirable", *The Dominion*, 16 March 1981, p.1.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.1.

³⁹ Ces Blazey quoted in "No more pressure on tour: Muldoon" *Wanganui Herald*, 11 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁴⁰ HART, "*Eight Practical Steps: Four Years After Gleneagles the Government Falls Short*", c.1981, HART Files Box 8, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, p.1.

⁴¹ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁴² Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁴³ Lindsay Knight, *The Geriatrics*, Auckland: Moa, 1986, p.216.

⁴⁴ Ces Blazey, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 11, 1 August 1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

⁴⁵ Marilyn Waring in Finlay McDonald, *The Game of Our Lives: The Story of Rugby and New Zealand and How They've Shaped Each Other*, Auckland: Penguin, 1996, p.104-105.

⁴⁶ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁴⁷ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁴⁸ Ces Blazey, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 11, 1 August 1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

⁴⁹ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁵⁰ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Circular to Unions, No 81/41, 9 April 1981, p.2.

⁵⁵ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 1999.

⁵⁶ Ces Blazey speaking for the NZRFU in New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Circular to Unions, No 81/41, 9 April 1981, p.4.

⁵⁷ David Barber, "Reagan's View Behind Latest No-Tour Effort?", *Evening Post*, 17 March 1981, p.34.

⁵⁸ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁵⁹ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

3. INFORMATION FROM OUTSIDE

The New Zealand Rugby Football Union has been much maligned for its alleged lack of sensitivity to the plight of black South Africans. John Nauright claimed that: 'By their [NZRFU] actions over the years, it was clear that the NZRFU did not care about the plight of black South Africans nor their exclusion from equal opportunities in South African sport.'¹ Trevor Richards, a HART activist, also criticised the Rugby Union for its alleged lack of sensitivity:

The South Africa of the NZRFU somehow had nothing to do with Sharpeville or Soweto. The politics of apartheid, which determined the basis on which sport was administered and played, were of no relevance. Repeated statements from the NZRFU asserted that its function was to administer an amateur sport not involve itself in politics.²

In 1973 when the Labour Government told the New Zealand Rugby Union that they would not allow the Springboks to tour, the then Prime Minister Norman Kirk stated:

The Government, for its part, states that when it has been clearly demonstrated that all South Africans have an equal opportunity to be selected through mixed trials for the Springbok team it would have no objection to a visit by such a team; indeed it would welcome it.³

The NZRFU used this quotation to defend its invitation to the South Africans.⁴ The Rugby Union was criticised for not being interested in the politics that determined the conditions under which the sport was played. When the Rugby Union used Kirk's statement as a defence, however, they showed they thought the team was merit selected.

Trevor Richards referred to one group in the Rugby Union as: '...the confused, represented by 1980 [NZRFU] president Jim Fraser, who seemed to believe that some sort of a deal involving a 'multi-racial' team would do the trick...'⁵ The Rugby Union was not confused, but sticking to a deliberate policy of concerning themselves with rugby only. Publicly, the NZRFU only ever

referred to the findings of the British Council of Sport, which they believed revealed that there had been very significant progress made in eliminating discrimination in sport.⁶ However, there is evidence to suggest that the Rugby Union, and particularly its Councillors, were subject to more information about South Africa than just the British Council of Sport's visit to the Republic. The information that the Rugby Union received from these sources may have helped form opinions on the tour and at the least it would have given the Rugby Union more confidence in defending their decision to invite the South Africans to New Zealand.

Graham Mourie claimed that when he decided to make himself unavailable to Captain the All Blacks against the South Africans, Ron Don provided him with information to try to persuade him to change his mind.⁷ Graham Mourie was unable to recall exactly what material was made available to him, but suggested that 'it was probably something picked up on one of his free trips to Africa.'⁸ Ron Don was also unable to remember what he had sent Mourie but admitted that he would have tried to convince Mourie to play and that if Mourie said he had sent him pamphlets then he would have.⁹

Freedom in Sport was one organisation that appears to have had influence over the Rugby Union, but it could not have featured in the pamphlets that Don sent to Mourie because the organisation was not officially launched until June 1981. Ron Don commented about Freedom in Sport:

Well, the so-called international pressure was a media myth. In England there was formed a body called Freedom in Sport. A very large and powerful body financed by some of the biggest people in business and financially in the British Isles and they were very powerful over there, very influential and very successful, but of course the New Zealand media hardly ever mention their existence. A couple of high profile people from the Freedom in Sport movement came to New Zealand and lectured, very successfully, but where were the media reports? Almost non-existent, I think.¹⁰

Certainly, for Ron Don, Freedom in Sport (FIS) had a huge influence on his thinking. Don saw their existence as support from a wide international

community for the actions the Rugby Union were taking. For Don, FIS's existence confirmed the bias of the information provided in the media.

An FIS document was filed with press releases and circulars to provincial unions in the NZRFU material held at the New Zealand Rugby Museum. This would suggest that information from FIS was spread throughout the Rugby Union. The pamphlet in question contained an analysis of the Gleneagles Agreement. The President of FIS was Lord Chalfont, O.B.E., M.C., a former minister of the British Labour Government who had served in the regular army and played rugby. The fact that FIS was organised by eminent members of society would probably have increased its appeal to the Rugby Union. The pamphlet also focused on statements made by Robert Muldoon about the signing of the Gleneagles Agreement on the eve of the Springbok tour, which made it even more relevant to New Zealand.¹¹

Tommie Campbell, one of the founding members of Freedom in Sport, wrote that:

Freedom in Sport has never been happy about the *Gleneagles Agreement* on two main issues.

1. It was put together by politicians without any prior consultation with any sporting bodies.
2. It attempts to discriminate against sportspeople who in any case have no control of Government policy.¹²

This attitude is very similar to the Rugby Union's comment that: '...a basic objection of the NZRFU council is that the initial points of attacks by Governments against a political situation is through sport rather than by economic or other measures.'¹³ However, this statement was made by the NZRFU in September 1980 whereas FIS was not officially launched until June 1981. It is unlikely, then, that FIS would have influenced the Rugby Union's decision at that late stage, but its presence with other documents that would have been sent out to provincial unions suggests that it was probably used as evidence, backing up their original statements.

Bryan Wilson, a sports recreation consultant in Wellington, spent three weeks

in South Africa on a fact-finding mission. In May 1980 Wilson wrote a report headed *Sport in South Africa: The Facts of the Matter*. It is not clear whether this particular report was intended for public consumption or was written especially for the Rugby Union, but it was filed with the same material as the FIS pamphlet. Wilson was actively involved in presenting the case that South African sport was integrated. He gave evidence to the Human Rights Commission of Enquiry into the tour, and on the *Tonight Show* on Radio New Zealand Sport, and also prepared reports for newspapers. As the report from Wilson was prepared in May 1980, it may well have influenced the Council's vote in September. The filing of the document in relation to other material would suggest that the Rugby Union used it.

Wilson pointed out that the British Sports Council, French Sports Council, International Cricket Conference and International Tennis Federation had all sent investigative committees to South Africa within two years of 1980 and favoured resuming sporting contact with South Africa.¹⁴ Wilson also stated that in the 'twelve months ending August 13, 1980 - South Africa took part in 33 different sports in 26 countries. During the same time 30 different countries (representative teams or representative individuals), played in 44 kinds of sports - within South Africa.'¹⁵ Wilson also showed that mixed trials had been held since 1977 and 76 percent of rugby players were under the South African Rugby Board, which was made up of three separate organisations.¹⁶ Wilson wrote: 'Both the non-white leaders are strongly in favour of the Springbok tour.'¹⁷ In Wilson's statement for the *Tonight Show* (which was filed with his report) he claimed:

All the South African sports I have interviewed have nothing in their constitution that inhibits integrated sport – in fact, they have gone to considerable lengths to go out of their way as sporting administrators to encourage non-whites to become involved.¹⁸

These comments from Wilson precede those from the Rugby Union and the Rugby Union's comments seem to have mirrored Wilson's. The Rugby Union, like Wilson, stated that the British Council urged all sporting bodies to bring South Africa back into their activities.¹⁹ This interpretation of what the British

Council of Sport had stated was not unanimously accepted. Brian Talboys commented:

It is certainly not correct to say that the [British] sports council decided to “urge all sporting bodies to bring South Africa back into their activities”. The council, while condemning apartheid, did no more than recommend that the International Olympic Committee, and international sports bodies, carry out a further review of South African sport, taking the council’s report into account.²⁰

Talboys also confirmed that the British Council of Sport followed and endorsed the Gleneagles Agreement.²¹

In September 1980 the NZRFU stated that:

Both the South African Rugby Football Federation (coloured) and the South African Rugby Association (black) have made it clear that, at this stage of their development, they prefer to retain the present organisation rather than have complete integration.²²

This comment was very similar to one made by Wilson and in a later interview Ces Blazey remarked:

We were told and had it confirmed that two of the rugby groups in South Africa: the non-white groups, that the coloured and (for want of a better term) the blacks were in favour of the situation as it was. They did not believe at that stage of their development it should be changed.²³

His statement that they were told this information and the mirroring of Bryan Wilson’s comments, suggest Wilson’s report did have some influence on the Rugby Union.

There were other ‘fact finding missions’ to South Africa which could have influenced the Rugby Union. The Labour Party sent one of its Members of Parliament, Dr Michael Bassett, to South Africa to assess the situation.

Graeme Barrow stated that:

Dr Bassett was regarded as a rather radical left winger, but on his return expressed some surprise at the progress that had been made, and at the level of integration in sport, particularly in soccer. He said,

however, that integration in rugby had not yet reached the required standard, and that the liberal forces in South Africa who opposed the Government were against the tour.²⁴

Race Relations Conciliator, Hiwi Tauroa, also visited South Africa on a 'fact finding mission.' On his return to New Zealand, Tauroa was reported to have said:

He was also impressed by the advances toward integration in sport - at the assistance being given brown players by white, and at the way black and brown players were now accepted on the white man's rugby fields.

But he was also appalled – at the poverty among the plenty; at the casual white acceptance of racial injustice; at the way black hardship was either ignored or taken for granted ...²⁵

Tauroa also commented that the anti-tour media did not show that many South African blacks were prosperous and rather than call outright for the cancellation of the tour, he suggested it be postponed.²⁶ While there is no information directly linking these comments to the Rugby Union, and Councillors were not permitted to discuss politics in their meetings, Ron Don pointed out that: 'I am sure Councillors in their personal capacity read the news media reports...'²⁷ Both Bassett and Tauroa were expected to come out strongly against the tour after their return from South Africa. However, both admitted they were surprised at the level of integration in sport.

By using Kirk's Statement as a defence, the Rugby Union showed they believed that the Springbok team coming to New Zealand was selected on merit. Bryan Wilson's 'fact-finding mission' to South Africa appears to have been an important influence on the Rugby Union. The Freedom In Sport organisation also appears to have been an acknowledged source of support for the Rugby Union and its arguments. Bassett and Tauroa's 'fact finding missions' would also have encouraged the NZRFU because, while they both damned the policy of apartheid, their attitudes were more favourable towards the level of integration in South African sport. The Rugby Union was wary of the New Zealand media and the comments put forward by these individuals, while not necessarily forming opinions, would certainly have given the Rugby

Union more confidence in defending their decision to invite the South Africans to New Zealand.

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- ¹ J. Nauright, "Rugby, Race and Politics: New Zealand and South Africa 1921-1993", *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*, 26:3 1993, p.21.
- ² Trevor Richards, *Dancing on Our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1999, p.216.
- ³ Norman Kirk quoted in "The Rugby Union's Case for the Bok Tour", *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1980, p.10.
- ⁴ *ibid.*, p.10.
- ⁵ Trevor Richards, *Dancing on Our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1999, p.203.
- ⁶ "The Rugby Union's Case for Bok Tour", *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1980, p.10.
- ⁷ Graham Mourie, *Graham Mourie: Captain*, Auckland: Moa Publications, 1982, p.28.
- ⁸ Graham Mourie, Interview by Andre Russell, 27 October 1999.
- ⁹ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Freedom In Sport: The Way Forward*, Dublin: The Chairman, International Steering Committee, Freedom In Sport, p.10-11.
- ¹² Tommie Campbell, "Freedom in Sport - Why?", *Freedom In Sport: The Way Forward*, Dublin: The Chairman, International Steering Committee, Freedom In Sport, p. 6.
- ¹³ "The Rugby Union's Case for Bok Tour", *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1980, p.10.
- ¹⁴ Bryan Wilson, *Sport in South Africa: The Facts of the Matter*, c.May 1980, p.2.
- ¹⁵ *ibid.*
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Bryan Wilson, *For Tonight Show Radio New Zealand Sport*, 23 May 1980, p.1.
- ¹⁹ Ces Blazey, "The Rugby Union's Case for Bok Tour", *Evening Standard*, September 26 1980, p.10.
- ²⁰ Brian Talboys, *NZPD*, vol. 435, 4 November 1980, p.4663.
- ²¹ *ibid.*
- ²² "The Rugby Union's Case for Bok Tour", *Evening Standard*, September 26 1980, p.10.
- ²³ Ces Blazey, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 52, c.1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.
- ²⁴ Graeme Barrow, *All Blacks Versus Springboks*, Auckland: Heinemann, 1981, p.173.
- ²⁵ *ibid.*, 175.
- ²⁶ *ibid.*
- ²⁷ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

4. PLAYERS

At the forefront of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union were the players, without whose support rugby would not have been played against the South Africans. The New Zealand Rugby Football Union said that rugby was a democratic game and that if players felt they were unable to play against the Springboks they had every right to pull out.¹ However, the Rugby Union's job was to do what was best for rugby. Many current and former All Blacks came out in favour of the tour. If a number of All Blacks had decided they were not going to play the Springboks this almost certainly would have influenced the decisions of individual unions and in turn the New Zealand Rugby Football Union.

For some playing for the All Blacks was enough reason in itself. Hika Reid summed up the sentiments of many players when he stated: 'I've got to be selected first but give me an All Black jersey and I'll go on that field and play them.'² Graham Mourie, the current All Black captain, decided he would not play. Mark Donaldson, struggling to hold a position in the starting All Black team, was asked to comment on whether or not he would play. His answer was: 'I hope Dave Loveridge [Donaldson's opposition] follows Mourie's lead and pulls out so I can play. I'm a definite starter.'³ Gary Whetton made his test debut against the Springboks. In retrospect he made the comment that 'I love my rugby and I'll play against the Springboks anywhere and anytime – but not at the cost of what it did to New Zealand and New Zealanders and to rugby. At the same time I'm very proud to have worn the All Black jersey against them.'⁴ The allure of the All Black jersey was clearly a significant factor in many of these players' decisions to take part in the tour.

While the honour of playing for the All Blacks was enough for many players it was not the only reason many of them decided to continue playing in such a difficult time. It was not just present All Blacks that joined the debate as to whether the tour should go ahead. Past All Blacks were often asked to comment and many of them did. One of the most common arguments they used in favour of the tour was that they had been to South Africa and seen

what was happening, but still believed sporting contacts should continue. For example, Bryan Williams, a former All Black, commented: 'Speaking as a player with coloured blood who has visited South Africa three times I say I want the Springboks to tour. And I don't condone or support apartheid which is a detestable system.'⁵ Williams used the fact that he had visited South Africa as justification for his comments.

Allan Hewson was one current All Black who had visited South Africa. He did so in 1974 with his club side Petone. Hewson drew on his own experiences there to help make a decision. Unimpressed with the media's representation Hewson stated:

I've visited South Africa and though the country has problems, they were perhaps not quite as bad as that painted by television. I'm not surprised so many people wanted to protest, for there wasn't one sympathetic word for the country. One could paint an equally grim picture about any country if one really wanted to.⁶

Many players who had played in South Africa also made the point that media representation of the country was misleading. Some players saw one-sided reporting as contributing to anti-tour sentiment in New Zealand. Andy Haden commented that 'thousands of people in New Zealand were in the streets demonstrating against something they knew of via the selective whims of the media.'⁷ Haden saw some protesters as being genuinely misguided about the situation in South Africa and tried to talk to a group of protesters to discover what they really understood.⁸ Haden distinguished what he termed 'genuine protesters,' those who were 'familiar with the politics and laws of the Republic [of South Africa]...'⁹ Hewson has stated that he 'acknowledged the anti-tour people's right to protest within the law.'¹⁰

In 1981 the cold war was still very much alive and had got colder following the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the election of Ronald Reagan. In Eltham onlookers were reported to have yelled at protesters: "'Traitors! Look, they've all got beards! Go back to Russia you Communist pigs.'¹¹ The Returned Servicemen Association's annual conference passed a resolution put forward by the Taumarunui branch that HART should be declared illegal.¹²

Most of the players came from backgrounds that were relatively conservative politically and certainly strongly anti-Communist. It is not surprising, then, that many players saw the threats they received as coming from a small section of protesters who were merely Communist troublemakers trying to infringe on their personal rights. Dalton questioned: 'You have to ask yourself what is the motivation of a fraction of our population who would go to any lengths to get their own way. If the downfall of South Africa is their objective then it's only communism which can gain from that.'¹³ Gary Knight and John Ashworth, Andy Dalton's front row team mates and co-contributors to a biography, both were reported to:

... remain convinced that far more sinister elements were involved in the 1981 protest than just a group of idealists revolted by the injustices of apartheid. One question they both raise is how so many student and people either without jobs or not wanting jobs could have the finance and means to travel the country so easily in order to disrupt the tour.¹⁴

Mourie saw the Communist issue as a 'bit of a red herring.' He said this because: '...if you look at the fact New Zealand attracts a very small Communist vote, probably in the low hundreds in terms of our elections and yet we had many thousands of people out protesting.'¹⁵ While Mourie did not see the protesters as Communist he still saw the sides of the tour argument following left and right political leanings.¹⁶

The reaction to the pressure placed on the players by protesters was not unlike that of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union Council. Dalton, Knight and Ashworth all 'became more determined to continue playing their game for what they saw as an essential reaffirmation of their basic democratic rights and freedoms.'¹⁷ Stu Wilson's response was: 'I was not prepared to be told by people – many of whom had other more insidious axes to grind, I'm sure – where and with whom I could play my sport.'¹⁸ Allan Hewson also 'earnestly defended his right to play against anyone.'¹⁹ Bryan Williams joined the fray when he commented: 'I cannot deny the fact there are going to be problems. But we should not bow to pressure.'²⁰ However, Gary Whetton commented that he believed the tour came at a cost too high for New Zealand. Mourie also commented that the disruption the tour was going to cause New Zealand was

the main reason he did not take part. He suggested that if the tour was to South Africa he might have gone.²¹

There appears to have been overwhelming feeling among the All Blacks that it was just a game of rugby. In fact, in Dalton, Ashworth and Knight's collective biography the chapter that deals with the South African tour is entitled 'Just a Game'.²² Murray Mexted, angry that the Wellington City Council had denied both the All Blacks and the Springboks use of their grounds, stated: 'To me it was irrelevant whether the council disagreed with South Africa's politics. This was a Springbok rugby team, a gathering of individuals many of whom to my knowledge also disagreed with their country's system.'²³ Asked if he would play against the Springboks, John Spiers commented that: 'It's only a game of rugby and I would certainly be available. Getting selected will be the hardest thing.'²⁴ Spiers' comment is indicative of many other statements that were made by past and present players at the time.

The main argument from those players that had visited South Africa was that maintaining contact with South Africa was helping to break down apartheid. Hewson again drew on his experiences in South Africa in saying: 'I appreciate why many people oppose contact with South Africa, but would the abandonment of a rugby tour promote the cause of the oppressed people there? I would say rugby contact has done more than isolation would have.'²⁵ Bernie Fraser even suggested that the black people wanted the All Blacks to tour:

I don't believe in the political system [apartheid] but I do believe we can achieve more understanding by staying in contact. I spoke with many Black and coloured people when I was there and they believed that depriving the white people of their sport was a crazy way of protesting at a political system because it deprived Black and coloured sportsmen much more seriously at a time when they are emerging through multi-racial competition.²⁶

Brian Lochore, the All Black captain in 1970, had been to South Africa three times. He, too, spoke of his personal experiences in South Africa.

Sport and particularly rugby, has done more than anything to break down apartheid in South Africa. Rugby has opened many doors for

blacks in South Africa that were previously closed... I believe the only way there will be a peaceful solution to South Africa's problem is through sport.²⁷

Graeme Thorne went to South Africa as an All Black in 1970, when for the first time those New Zealanders classified by the South African Government as having coloured blood were allowed to tour with the All Blacks. He commented:

He [Bryan Williams] played the best rugby I've ever seen anyone play on a rugby field. He was magnificent, and he was just god to the coloureds and blacks. And there lies a story too, because the whites didn't really like it. Here was the first black ever to play for New Zealand in South Africa and he played marvellous rugby. It was God's will, without a doubt that he should play this rugby. And they were really a bit upset.²⁸

His comment suggested that he believed sporting relationships with South Africa provided an example for blacks, in terms of having something to which to aspire. The last part of his comment indicated he felt competing against the white South Africans was right and showed them that coloured people were as capable as they were.

The players were all very much aware of the continuing participation of South Africa in world sport. The black African nations were threatening to boycott the Commonwealth Games, to be held in Australia in 1982, if the South African tour went ahead, and understandably many Australians were concerned. Comments from a few of the players were directed at Australia in particular. Perhaps this was because Australia was seen, as one newspaper article put it, 'making few friends in this country as he [its Prime Minister] obsequiously courts Commonwealth approval for his role as elder statesmen at the expense of an old friendship.'²⁹ Another possible reason was that the close proximity of New Zealand to Australia meant New Zealand rugby players had greater contact with Australians than any other country. Stu Wilson wrote one response:

The luxury hotels of South Africa are full of tourists from damn near every country in the world; racing drivers, tennis players, golfers,

boxers flock there for their sport. And a rugby player from little old New Zealand is going to wreck the Commonwealth Games or the Olympic Games because he has played in South Africa. When we were in Australia with the Wellington team we were asked, specially in Queensland, how we could bring ourselves to play South Africans when it could wreck the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane. I pointed out to one group of people that, according to that morning's paper, an Australian team was going to South Africa to compete in the world surf life-saving championships. They either didn't know or, knowing, didn't care or didn't want to know.³⁰

Andy Dalton told a story of being in Australia and being confronted by a similar question and informing his questioners that Australia was also competing with South Africa.³¹ Andy Dalton also commented:

And nobody seemed to see much wrong in the round the world yacht race having a stopover in Cape Town for several weeks. I say good on them. I'd have liked to have been there. Cape Town's a lovely city. But it does seem odd that the yachtsmen get a ticker tape parade down Queen Street whereas it seems to be the end of the world if a rugby player so much as wants to play a social match in South Africa.³²

Another All Black, Graeme Higginson, stated: 'Why pick on us?'³³ This seems to have been the attitude of many players.

Many of the players were also conscious of the political situation in other countries and saw it as relevant to the issue. Again, Australia came in for some criticism, particularly from Bernie Fraser, who wrote: 'I stand off the Australians and listen to the hypocritical garbage they go on with about South Africa while they treat their own native people like animals.'³⁴ Doug Rollerson was reported as saying 'he was sure the situation in South America was more depressed than South Africa, yet New Zealand maintained close ties with Argentina without much hassle.'³⁵ Dalton pointed out:

There are atrocities going on in New Zealand too, and perhaps we should concern ourselves with solving them. I was surprised the churches got so involved in the 1981 tour when there are so many problems here – glue sniffing, people who would sooner be on the dole

than working even when jobs are available, people who go on strike whenever they don't get their own way. We have our own ingredient for Brixton-type riots.³⁶

In response to the way people decided to protest against South Africa rather than other countries Dalton commented:

What I saw in Romania was what I expected to see and didn't in South Africa when I was there in 1979... Those people who are concerned about others being oppressed and living in fear should have a look at the communist states, like Romania. The poverty there was incredible, as was the black market rate for US dollars. The meals were so sparse that while there I lost a stone and a half. I valued the experience of going there but was saddened by what I saw.³⁷

Andy Haden also demonstrated he was aware of what was happening on the African continent. Haden commented on the situation in Zimbabwe, where he believed the Prime Minister Mugabe was undertaking the extermination of all the males of the opposing tribe. Haden stated:

I was concerned about people like Chris Laidlaw who was our embassy representative in Harare where Mugabe was progressing his campaign against the Matabele under the very nose of our embassy and all they were concerned about was what was happening in South Africa.³⁸

Haden also illustrated how being involved with international rugby made the players aware of different countries and cultures. Haden was in Tonga when protesters invaded Rugby Park in Hamilton, forcing the game to be called off, and he made the comment:

Only the *New Zealand Herald* was available in Nuku'alofa, giving a leftist and somewhat biased report of events. What information was available through radio broadcasts prompted the brother of the King of Tonga and many other Tongan citizens to come to me, voluntarily, and ask me to convey to the people back home their support for the tour. I wondered how many of these people who spoke to me had been victims, in some form or other, of discrimination while in New Zealand.³⁹

This is the type of experience that many of the All Blacks reported from their international travel.

Many of these responses from the players, whether they were conscious of them or not, mirrored those arguments put forward from the NZRFU. The Rugby Union was concerned that sport was the main method the Black African nations had decided to utilise in their bid to isolate South Africa, to try to force South Africa to remove apartheid. This concern was also demonstrated by some of the players. Allan Hewson commented:

I don't support South Africa's policies, in fact I abhor apartheid... but I cannot see the logic in people trying to halt rugby matches when each week dozens of New Zealanders fly to South Africa on holidays, when annually we engage in millions of dollars' worth of trade with that country, and when other sports maintain links with South Africa.⁴⁰

Stu Wilson also could not understand the logic of not playing sport with South Africa but trading with them:

When some of us accepted invitations to go to South Africa to play in the Western Province Rugby Union celebrations we were suddenly not allowed to go there through Australia. But Australians are happy to go to South Africa as tourists. The tourist trade is booming. So it's OK for a wealthy Aussie to put on his slouch hat with the corks hanging from the brim, bid a tearful farewell to his tube of Fosters, and go to South Africa loaded with overseas bucks, take in all the tourist – route sights and wallow in Sun City. But it's horrid, nasty and morally outrageous for a group of young sportsmen to go there and play a game.⁴¹

However, the attitudes of past and current players towards the tour of South Africa were by no means united. Several ex-players made statements indicating that they were worried about the trouble the tour could cause to New Zealand. Fred Allan, All Black Captain in 1949, made the comment that: 'My concern is for the innocent bystanders who could be caught up in any possible disruptions...' he added however: 'But I still want to see the South Africans come and if they do, I only hope there are not too many disruptions.'⁴² Wilson Whineray, All Black captain in 1960, was totally

against the tour for the reason that 'the tour would not be in the interests of New Zealand as a nation nor in the long term interests of New Zealand rugby.'⁴³ Whineray also questioned whether the Rugby Union was right to go against the wishes of parliament:

It is, in my opinion, no longer a political issue in that all three parties in parliament are opposed to the tour taking place... There are times when we must listen to our representatives, specially when they are speaking with one voice. I believe this is one of those times.⁴⁴

Graham Mourie was the current All Black captain when he decided to make himself unavailable to play the Springboks. One reason Mourie decided to step down was he felt that the tour would not be good for New Zealand.

Mourie stated: 'Whether it should happen or not is not the question. It is going happen and do we need it?'⁴⁵

Mourie is an interesting case because his whole approach to the South African issue was very different from most other players and the NZRFU. Bruce Robertson was the other All Black who decided he could not play against South Africa. Mourie, being the captain, attracted the most attention. He was one of the few All Blacks who had not been to South Africa. An offer was made to him to visit South Africa after he had pulled out of the tour. Mourie would have liked to have gone, but saw the conditions placed on him as too stringent.⁴⁶ In his biography he addressed the issue in a very different manner to other All Blacks. Mourie displayed an impressive understanding of the historical background of sporting contact between New Zealand and South Africa, whereas other players were content with putting their case forward based on the then present-day conditions.

Unlike other All Blacks, Mourie also directly challenged many of the arguments put forward by the Rugby Union. Mourie criticised the Rugby Union's stand, claiming that it was the South Africans who first introduced politics into sport with apartheid.⁴⁷ Mourie agreed that New Zealand was being singled out but said that was because:

Rugby in South Africa is one of the bulwarks of Afrikanerdom and to South Africans, New Zealand represents the great rival. The links with

New Zealand are prized by South Africans above any others. The severing of these links, therefore, would have a far greater effect than being black listed in the United Nations or of being thrown out of the International Wrist Wrestling Association or whatever. New Zealand by wanting to maintain those links in the face of world condemnation, singles itself out.⁴⁸

Mourie was also in disagreement with the argument that there were other countries the All Blacks played against whose politics were just as disagreeable. Mourie commented: ‘... South Africa remains the only one [country] where laws disqualify a person from representing their country. Is there another country where legislation says colour rather than quality is the main criterion for national selection?’⁴⁹ Mourie believed and saw it as important that South Africa had not been competing in other countries.⁵⁰

While the Rugby Union was not prepared to back down to protesters Mourie stated: ‘I actually saw it coming and climbed the tree before it got here.’⁵¹

The Rugby Union was apparently unconcerned with Mourie’s decision not to play. They described rugby as being democratic and if a player chose not to play then that was his decision and there would be no repercussions. However, Ron Don, a councillor on the Rugby Union at that time, admits that he did try to convince Mourie to play.⁵²

Stu Wilson perhaps sums up how the majority of the All Blacks were feeling when he stated: ‘I see New Zealand and especially rugby, being made the scapegoat of the broad sporting relationships with South Africa of many countries.’⁵³ This does not mean that the pro-tour players were any less aware of apartheid or that they supported it. Personally, Andy Haden gave an insight into the way that he felt when he stated that the most influential aspect that encouraged him to play was:

The fact that so many of our fathers fought for the freedom to choose in wars before us and that the basic right that we were so lucky to have in this country, which was the freedom to choose was denied South Africans. Probably this was as big a motivating factor as anything.⁵⁴

Haden also gave an indication of the intensity of feeling the All Blacks had

towards apartheid:

South Africans tend to become arrogant after a victory and we had the feeling that many of them would use success in New Zealand as an argument in support of their political system... Andy [Dalton] found little difficulty motivating his team such was their common, unspoken feeling that more was at stake than just rugby results.⁵⁵

Targeting players may have been seen as a deliberate method by protesters to stop the tour. Whether or not this was the case considerable pressure was applied to players before and during the Springbok tour. One All Black, Stu Wilson, recollected:

They [the protestors] threatened to burn John Ashworth's home down; the farmers were told their stock would be killed; policewomen were stationed with Ashworth's wife. Players who had unlisted telephone numbers did not escape.⁵⁶

Andy Dalton, who filled in as captain during the tour, also commented on the pressure:

It was a very trying time for our families... It was especially hard on Pip as we had just moved out to our farm in the Bombay Hills. There was a lot of pressure not only from crank calls but also from the media and that's where I personally felt the greatest pressure. They wouldn't leave it alone. They were ringing at all hours.⁵⁷

Players and police perceived the threats from protesters to be very real, real enough, that John Ashworth's wife had police stationed with her. Andy Dalton told a story of working out the back of his farm when a helicopter suddenly landed nearby:

There were a lot of stories going about at the time of players becoming hijacked ... On this day I was in one of our back blocks fencing by myself. Suddenly there was a terrific noise as a helicopter emerged from the nearby bush and landed no more than 20 metres away. The adrenaline really started pumping. I had a hammer behind my back and I gripped it tightly as these two blokes got out... It turned out they were genuinely lost and were looking for another block. But it gave me a

hell of a fright and little was I to know that it was only a fraction of what was to come.⁵⁸

Despite the pressure and what they perceived as putting their lives and those of their families in danger, the fact remains that only two All Blacks pulled out of the tour.

Ian Gault, author of Hewson's biography, stated that 'as a footballer regularly under attack from critics, it [the pressure from protesters] was just another obstacle to overcome.'⁵⁹ It could be argued that with becoming an All Black came an enormous amount of pressure. These people were used to dealing with it and had to fight hard to make it that far. It makes sense then, that when these players had made up their mind on whether to play or stand down that they were not going to be swayed from this position by pressure, whether it came from protesters, rugby supporters, the media or the rugby administration. Players from both positions demonstrated that, at the time, they were very aware of the situation and how they interpreted it.

¹ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

² Hika Reid quoted in "'Come and See Call To Mourie,'" *New Zealand Herald*, 18 November 1980, HART Files Box 17, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³ Mark Donaldson quoted in "Graham Mourie Stands Alone", *Wanganui Herald*, 18 November 1980, p.10.

⁴ Gary Whetton, *Brothers in Arms: The Alan and Gary Whetton Story*, Auckland: Moa, 1991, p.56.

⁵ Bryan Williams quoted in Richard Shears and Isobelle Gidley, *Storm Out Of Africa: The 1981 Springbok Tour Of New Zealand*, Auckland: Macmillan, 1981, p.29.

⁶ Allan Hewson quoted in Ian Gault, *For the Record: The Allan Hewson Story*, Auckland, Rugby press, 1984, p.86.

⁷ Andy Haden, *Boots 'n All*, Auckland: Rugby Press, 1983, p.194.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.196.

⁹ *ibid.*, p.200.

¹⁰ Ian Gault, *For the Record: The Allan Hewson Story*, Auckland, Rugby press, 1984, p.74.

¹¹ Trevor Richards, *Dancing On Our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1999, p.213.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Andy Dalton quoted in Lindsay Knight, *The Geriatrics*, Auckland: Moa, 1986, p.198.

¹⁴ Lindsay Knight, *The Geriatrics*, Auckland: Moa, 1986, p.198.

¹⁵ Graham Mourie, Interview by Andre Russell, 27 October 1999.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Lindsay Knight, *The Geriatrics*, Auckland: Moa, 1986, p.198.

¹⁸ Stu Wilson, *Ebony and Ivory: The Stu Wilson and Bernie Fraser Story As Told to Alex Veysey*, Auckland: Moa Beckett, 1984, p.154.

¹⁹ Ian Gault, *For the Record: The Allan Hewson Story*, Auckland, Rugby press, 1984, p.74.

²⁰ Bryan Williams quoted in "All Black Skipper's New Dilemma", *Sunday Times*, 23 November 1980, HART Files Box 17, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

- ²¹ Graham Mourie, Interview by Andre Russell, 27 October 1999.
- ²² Lindsay Knight, *The Geriatrics*, Auckland: Moa, 1986, p.196.
- ²³ Murray Mexted, with Alex Veysey, *Mexted: Pieces of Eight*, Auckland: Rugby Press, 1986, p.107.
- ²⁴ John Spiers quoted in "Graham Mourie Stands Alone", *Wanganui Herald*, 18 November 1980, p.10.
- ²⁵ Allan Hewson quoted in Ian Gault, *For the Record: The Allan Hewson Story*, Auckland, Rugby press, 1984, p.74.
- ²⁶ Bernie Fraser, *Ebony and Ivory: The Stu Wilson and Bernie Fraser Story As Told to Alex Veysey*, Auckland: Moa Beckett, 1984, p.153.
- ²⁷ Brian Lochore quoted in "All Black Leaders Divided Over Tour," *Evening Post*, 18 November 1980, p.48.
- ²⁸ Graham Thorne quoted in Finlay McDonald, *The Game of Our Lives: The Story of Rugby and New Zealand and How They've Shaped Each Other*, Auckland: Viking, 1996, p.93.
- ²⁹ "Final Decision With Rugby Union", *Evening Post*, 7 July 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
- ³⁰ Stu Wilson, *Ebony and Ivory: The Stu Wilson and Bernie Fraser Story As Told to Alex Veysey*, Auckland: Moa Beckett, 1984, p.153.
- ³¹ Andy Dalton, *The Geriatrics*, Auckland: Moa, 1986, p.200.
- ³² *ibid.*
- ³³ Graeme Higginson quoted in "Graham Mourie Stands Alone", *Wanganui Herald*, 18 November 1980, p.10.
- ³⁴ Bernie Fraser, *Ebony and Ivory: The Stu Wilson and Bernie Fraser Story As Told to Alex Veysey*, Auckland: Moa Beckett, 1984, p.153.
- ³⁵ "Graham Mourie Stands Alone", *Wanganui Herald*, 18 November 1980, p.10.
- ³⁶ Andy Dalton, *The Geriatrics*, Auckland: Moa, 1986, p.200.
- ³⁷ *ibid.*
- ³⁸ Andy Haden, Interview by Andre Russell, 19 October 1999.
- ³⁹ Andy Haden, *Boots 'n All*, Auckland: Rugby Press, 1983, p.192.
- ⁴⁰ Allan Hewson quoted in Ian Gault, *For the Record: The Allan Hewson Story*, Auckland, Rugby press, 1984, p.85-86.
- ⁴¹ Stu Wilson, *Ebony and Ivory: The Stu Wilson and Bernie Fraser Story As Told to Alex Veysey*, Auckland: Moa Beckett, 1984, p.153.
- ⁴² Fred Allan quoted in "All Black Leaders Divided Over Tour," *Evening Post*, 18 November 1980, p.48.
- ⁴³ Wilson Whineray quoted in "All Black Leaders Divided Over Tour," *Evening Post*, 18 November 1980, p.48.
- ⁴⁴ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ Graham Mourie quoted in Stephen J. Tew, *New Zealand and South African Rugby Exchanges 1960-1981: A Study of a Sporting Relationship with Far Reaching Consequences*, Victoria University, 1982, p.145.
- ⁴⁶ Graham Mourie, *Graham Mourie: Captain*, Auckland: Moa Publications, 1982, p.36-38.
- ⁴⁷ Graham Mourie, Interview by Andre Russell, 27 October 1999.
- ⁴⁸ Graham Mourie, *Graham Mourie: Captain*, Auckland: Moa Publications, 1982, p.36.
- ⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.35.
- ⁵⁰ Graham Mourie, Interview by Andre Russell, 27 October 1999.
- ⁵¹ *ibid.*
- ⁵² Ron Don, an interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.
- ⁵³ Stu Wilson, *Ebony and Ivory: The Stu Wilson and Bernie Fraser Story As Told to Alex Veysey*, Auckland: Moa Beckett, 1984, p.153.
- ⁵⁴ Andy Haden, Interview by Andre Russell, 19 October 1999.
- ⁵⁵ Andy Haden, *Boots 'n All*, Auckland: Rugby Press, 1983, p.196, 197.
- ⁵⁶ Stu Wilson, *Ebony and Ivory: The Stu Wilson and Bernie Fraser Story As Told to Alex Veysey*, Auckland: Moa Beckett, 1984, p.154.
- ⁵⁷ Andy Dalton, *The Geriatrics*, Auckland: Moa, 1986, p.197.
- ⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.208.
- ⁵⁹ Ian Gault, *For the Record: The Allan Hewson Story*, Auckland, Rugby press, 1984, p.74.

5. FINANCIAL ISSUES

For an amateur organisation like the New Zealand Rugby Football Union the financial implications of the Springbok tour were huge. The Union was proceeding with the tour in the face of large opposition. Those who opposed the tour were looking for reasons why the NZRFU would continue with it and the importance of the revenue created by the Springbok tour was an issue that protesters used to explain that. Some pro-tour rugby writers also saw it as a factor.

The Springboks and the British Lions were the two teams that brought in the most money when touring New Zealand and if the Springboks had not come in 1981 the Lions would not have been able to fill in, as they only came every ten years.¹ The Springbok tour was only sixteen matches but was expected to earn more revenue than the Lions did with eight more matches in 1977.² Bob Stuart commented that if the 1981 Springbok tour had been cancelled and a replacement tour organised, it would have been only around six matches long, as had been the case when England had filled in on a previous occasion.³ This was unlikely to have been satisfactory for rugby administrators, who were reported to have been unhappy that the Springbok tour was not going to be 24 matches, which would have meant Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch would have had three games.⁴

The provincial unions did need the financial windfall from the tour. Bob Stuart indicated that most provincial unions relied on tours to break even.⁵ Buddy Stevenson, the Wanganui Union's deputy chairman, was reported to have said that if the Springboks did not go to Wanganui the local union would be in real trouble financially.⁶ Wellington recorded a loss of \$9460 in the year preceding the tour.⁷ The experience of these two provincial unions were probably indicative of the financial trouble of other provincial unions. It was also suggested that apart from Eden Park 'there wouldn't be a ground in the country that is not in debt to the Union, either directly or indirectly.'⁸ These unions also would have felt the strain when Norman Kirk's Labour Government intervened and prevented the Springboks touring in 1973.

The New Zealand Secondary Schools Rugby Council was presented with a different problem by the 1981 tour. For this council, the prospect of a 1981 Springbok tour made it difficult to gain sponsorship. The Chairman, John McDougall, stated that the directors of two major companies had reluctantly declined to sponsor secondary schools rugby because of public feeling against the Springboks.⁹

However, the provincial unions do not appear to have had that sort of trouble. Cable Price Toyota sponsored Wellington to the value of \$25 000.¹⁰ The Canterbury Savings Bank continued its association with Canterbury and the Choysa Company, which had been the official sponsor of Auckland, was even outbid for the position.¹¹ The NZRFU itself also seemed to have had no problems securing sponsorship. Lion Breweries retained its financial contact, along with the Thorn-EMI organisation and Cable Price Toyota.¹² On the issue of sponsorship Ces Blazey commented that: 'Of course, we would be concerned if the withdrawal of sponsorship became widespread, but at the same time it is not good administration to change course because of such things.'¹³ This comment from Blazey indicated that the Rugby Union was resistant to any feeling that it might be dictated to by sponsors.

Comments from former councillors Ron Don and Bob Stuart indicated that sponsorship was not a major concern to the Rugby Union.¹⁴ Ron Don also stated that revenue from television was minimal.¹⁵ The Government cut a \$10 000 rugby grant, but Muldoon stated that: 'They [the Rugby Union] are very very much a separate entity [financially] from anything the Government is involved in.'¹⁶ Blazey himself commented that: 'We've [the Rugby Union] been extremely modest in our request to the ministry since it started this scheme.'¹⁷ The Rugby Union was financially independent of the Government and it is likely that because of this they were better able to act against the Government's will, unlike athletes who were persuaded not to compete at the Moscow Olympic Games through threats that funds to their sporting bodies would cease.¹⁸

Lion Breweries were reported to have spent \$100 000 on rugby, but even that, in the context of what a major tour by a rugby team could bring in, would appear to be small. In 1977, the year of the 24-match tour by the British Lions, the Rugby Union made a net profit of \$732 000, compared to only \$143 000 in the proceeding year. In 1980, the year preceding the tour, the Rugby Union made a loss of \$296 000.¹⁹ Sponsorship was available to the NZRFU every year, but it was in the year the Lions toured that the Rugby Union made the large profit.

The Rugby Union had \$844 900 out on loan to provincial unions and another \$301 800 on loan to local bodies.²⁰ One person suggested that the NZRFU did have assets but that they would have been whittled away if the Springbok tour was cancelled and 1980's loss repeated.²¹ John Nauright also gave the tremendous revenues gained from series with South Africa as one of the main reasons the Rugby Union continued with the tour.²² One journalist suggested:

So very many of you believe the stories you hear that the NZRFU has a ton of money, millionaires, in fact. On paper that could be a fact. Apart from Eden Park, perhaps, there wouldn't be Rugby Ground in the country that is not in debt to the Union either directly or indirectly.

And if various unions find they cannot pay their peppercorn interests every year, there is no way that Ces [Blazey] will foreclose. Liquid cash is in very short supply throughout the country, and nowhere more than at the Rugby Union.²³

What the journalist is referring to by 'peppercorn interests' is the fact that the Rugby Union lent money at very low interest rates. According to Bob Stuart these interest rates were substantially lower than those charged by banks.²⁴ When the New Zealand Secondary Schools Rugby Union was having trouble raising money through sponsorship, the NZRFU offered to lend the schools money at only 2.5 percent, with the condition that the money was paid back within two years. The Secondary Schools Rugby Union turned the money down as they saw themselves as being unable to make the repayment deadline of two years.²⁵

In turning the loan down the Secondary Schools Union must have foreseen a lot more pressure from the Rugby Union than the journalist who suggested there was no way the Rugby Union would foreclose on one of their loans to the provincial unions. The fact that the Rugby Union put a definite time limit on the loan would suggest that they were possibly short of 'liquid cash'. It is possible that by lending money out at such low interest payments the Rugby Union required quick payment. Pat Gill suggested, however, that:

Well, the actual thing with loans was that normally the majority of loans were written off as they came along. So no union was ever pressurised to pay loans money and I was on the finance committee at the time so I don't believe that was anywhere near true. There was no basis for that.²⁶

Paul Mitchell also suggested that pressure was not applied to repay loans:

Every ground had been developed with low interest money and the method of repayment resulted from the gates that were produced from major tours. It was a very very friendly relationship between unions and local bodies, who shared in the exercise, and the Rugby Union. It was not probably a business decision...²⁷

Paul Mitchell denied that the Rugby Union put pressure on unions to repay their loans but did state that the Rugby Union relied on the profits from gates that were produced by major tours. Mitchell believed, however, that it was 'stretching the credibibility' to suggest that individual unions needed the tour to pay back the NZRFU.²⁸ Mitchell suggested that

... it wasn't really "the" consideration. I mean, the rugby people said we want to play against South Africa, this is the ambition of every rugby player to play against South Africa and that came through very clearly from the rugby people which included the support we got at every venue that we had, the full grounds.²⁹

Ron Don does not deny that the revenue created by the Springboks touring New Zealand was important:

...we had to make the game pay. We had to balance the books and the thing we needed here in New Zealand at the other end of the world from the five nations was international tours from which we gained

finance. Yes, finance was important, all-important...³⁰

Ron Don stated that the NZRFU relied on the revenue from gate takings to keep rugby operating in New Zealand. He also stated, however, that tours were organised ten years in advance and that the revenue created by the Springbok tour was not a major factor in inviting them because he believed that the revenue issue applied to all teams.³¹ Ces Blazey stated that: 'Financial implications do not enter into this matter [the tour] at all.'³² Gill felt that the financial aspect of the tour was not a major one: '...at that stage the Rugby Union were fairly well financially off...In fact they had reserves at the time I think exceeding three million dollars, which was a lot of money back 15-17 years ago...'³³

While the Rugby Union was backing up from a year in which they suffered a financial loss, it would seem incorrect to attribute the Rugby Union's willingness to host the Springboks to the possible financial windfall. The individual unions did enjoy the benefits of a major tour. The Rugby Union was financially strong enough, however, to have been able to survive without the Springboks, as they did, when forced to, in 1973. Pat Gill perhaps best summed up the position of the Rugby Union when he said: 'I believe the union voted unanimously because it was the business of the Rugby Union to promote tours inward and outward from the country and they were just going about their normal day-to-day business, that's what I believe.'³⁴

¹ Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

² Paul Elenio, "How the Springboks will Help NZ's Rugby Unions", *Evening Post*, 23 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³ Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

⁴ Paul Elenio, "How the Springboks will Help NZ's Rugby Unions", *Evening Post*, 23 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁵ Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

⁶ John B. Phillips, "Policeman Not Needed at Rugby Meeting", *Wanganui Herald*, 18 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁷ Paul Elenio, "How the Springboks will Help NZ's Rugby Unions", *Evening Post*, 23 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁸ "Boks Will Tour - Of That I'm Sure", *Rugby News*, 8 April 1981, p. 16.

⁹ "Bok Tour Scares Off School Sponsors" *Wanganui Chronicle*, 30 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁰ Paul Elenio, "How the Springboks will Help NZ's Rugby Unions", *Evening Post*, 23 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹¹ "Lion Will Stick With Its Rugby Sponsorship", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 31 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹² *ibid.*

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- ¹³ Ces Blazey quoted in "Sponsorship Loss Would be Serious", *Evening Post*, 30 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
- ¹⁴ Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999 and Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.
- ¹⁵ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.
- ¹⁶ Robert Muldoon quoted in "State Axes \$10,000 Rugby Grant", *Evening Post*, 26 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
- ¹⁷ Ces Blazey quoted in "State Axes \$10,000 Rugby Grant", *Evening Post*, 26 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
- ¹⁸ Paul Elenio, "How the Springboks will Help NZ's Rugby Unions", *Evening Post*, 23 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*
- ²⁰ *ibid.*
- ²¹ *ibid.*
- ²² J. Nauright, "Rugby, Race and Politics: New Zealand and South Africa 1921-1993", *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*, 26:3 1993, p.21.
- ²³ "Boks Will Tour - Of That I'm Sure", *Rugby News*, 8 April 1981, p. 16.
- ²⁴ Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.
- ²⁵ T. P. Mclean, "Majority of Teachers Against Tour", *New Zealand Herald*, 31 March 1981, p.3.
- ²⁶ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.
- ²⁷ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.
- ²⁸ *ibid.*
- ²⁹ *ibid.*
- ³⁰ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.
- ³¹ *ibid.*
- ³² Ces Blazey quoted in "Blazey Ready to Accept Rugby's Difficult Reins", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 28 March 1981 HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
- ³³ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.
- ³⁴ *ibid.*

6. COUNCILLORS

The Council is an influential component of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union. The representatives of the 26 provincial unions around New Zealand elect its 18 members. In making the decision to continue with a tour, the provincial unions first voted and then the Council had the final vote. As a result of the position they were in during the tour, the councillors came under pressure and criticism. Commentators saw the way councillors dealt with the media as inadequate. Protesters targeted councillors as they saw them as able to call the tour off. The Council also had to deal with pressure from other groups such as schools, trade unions and churches. Despite the immense pressure the Council was under, they were able to absorb it and allow the tour to continue.

The Council's job was to run the day-to-day business of the Rugby Union.¹ However, councillors saw their role in different ways. One councillor, Bob Stuart, who had been on the Council since 1974, claimed: 'Once we got the directive from the annual general meeting in '80 we had to proceed... Suppose the Council said no, it's not coming. The AGM. would have thrown us all out and elected a Council that would have. They had every right to do it.'² Paul Mitchell was a relatively new councillor in 1981, who admitted to having been surprised at being elected on his first attempt in 1979. He saw the Council as having more freedom:

There is room between annual meetings for unions to submit their views on any issue which the Council will then consider and make a decision on. If the decision is not supported by the people we represent then they have the opportunity to vote us out of office at the next election...there was every opportunity for a person who opposed the tour to make that view known or to represent the body of opinion who were against it and if they decided they would take the side of the protest movement they could express that view...³

The vote to invite the Springboks to New Zealand was unanimously supported by the 26 provincial unions. However, the Council vote in favour of the tour was not unanimous but by a large majority.⁴ This would suggest that the

Council did have the ability to make their own decision, but as one councillor put it : ‘The main thing was that the Council continually report back to the [provincial] unions.’⁵

Graeme Barrow has criticised the Rugby Union for not adequately articulating the pro-tour cause. Barrow stated:

Its chairman, Ces Blazey – as sincere a Christian as could be found anywhere - spoke well and sensibly when afforded the opportunity, but these were few and far between. It was as if the union had decided to say as little as possible because any statement would give the anti-tour persons something to reply to. If this was so, it was a tactical mistake, because the media allowed the anti-tour people to make statements almost daily anyway.⁶

The Rugby Union was not trying to say as little as possible, but merely sticking to the long-established policy of only having one spokesperson. Paul Mitchell explained:

It is the rule of the Rugby Union that the Chairman is the spokesperson for the Union and because of the sensitivity of the issue at the time and with some members of the Council not as well trained as Ces Blazey it was absolutely vital that we maintained that position and were not issuing conflicting statements. So, it’s just normal rugby and it was honoured almost to a man.⁷

Ces Blazey was retired but had been ‘the number two man’ for the AMP Insurance Company in New Zealand.⁸ The Rugby Union, rightly or wrongly, perceived the news media as biased against them. They were conscious of the need to present a unified image and used the experienced Ces Blazey to speak for them. There is certainly one example of a journalist seeking a response from councillors but being referred to Ces Blazey.⁹

Barrow stated that it was almost as if the union had decided to say as little as possible. Tony Reid has been quoted as calling it a ‘Conspiracy of silence... No-one would talk about it.’¹⁰ Ron Don, on the Council since 1971, offered another reason as to why it appeared the Rugby Union said so little:

So, the public of New Zealand were fed a lot of nonsense by the news

media who were very happy to write and report on television and radio everything the protesters said but nothing that the New Zealand Union wanted to say in rebuttal. I remember receiving numerous complaints from pro-tour people who wrote to the newspapers but the complaints to me were that the newspapers never ever published their letters.

As late as 1996 Ron Don stated: 'When is TV 1 going to devote the same amount of time to those of us who firstly would tell the truth and secondly supported freedom in sport.'¹¹ Ron Don also made the accusation that reproductions of the photograph of protesters occupying the Rugby Park ground in Waikato were incorrect. Don claimed that a Communist banner that was there that day was not present in reproductions.

While this view of the media is an extreme and undoubtedly partisan view, it was born from a frustration with the news media. Barrow hints at the news media bias towards the Rugby Union when he said Ces Blazey spoke well when afforded the opportunity. Blazey was the only authorised spokesperson for the Rugby Union and if he was not being afforded the opportunity to put forward the Rugby Union's argument often enough then it would appear there was a conspiracy of silence.

Barrow commented that: 'Apart from Blazey, the only rugby person who spoke out in favour of the tour was the chairman of the Auckland Rugby Union, Ron Don.'¹² Ron Don made it clear, however, he was not speaking on behalf of the Rugby Union:

I did make a lot of comments about both the tour and South Africa in various speeches and interviews by the news media and on every occasion I would preface my remarks by saying they were my personal opinions and I cannot and did not speak for the New Zealand Rugby Union.¹³

About Ron Don's comments, Barrow claimed: 'However, his statements lacked force to many people because some of them were not just pro-tour but pro-South Africa.'¹⁴

Having been to South Africa himself, Don was unhappy at the way the

country and its policies were being portrayed by the news media:

Having been there six times I considered at that time that I knew a fair bit about South Africa. I was not an expert, but, I certainly knew a great deal more than the protesters, most of whom had never been to South Africa. The same applies to the news media and editors of papers throughout New Zealand, who, for some strange reason, were all anti-tour and anti-South Africa but knew very little of anything about what they were talking. That was the thing that amazed me. That so many lies were deliberately told about South Africa or if I was a kinder man I would say they were innocent errors but they were so concentrated they were the left-wing views of people who simply didn't know.¹⁵

Ron Don believed that to comment on South Africa a person had to know the country first hand:

I've had the pleasure of being there on five different occasions and while I don't pretend I'm an expert on South Africa, having been there I know a little about it. And the contrary view would be for someone to ask me to give a speech on Niue where I've never been, so I would just decline to say anything.¹⁶

Whether these views of Ron Don were correct or not, the impact of Don's perception of the situation in South Africa may well have been important. While the Councillors were not permitted to discuss politics in Council meetings, these opinions formed privately about South Africa would almost certainly have influenced their voting in Council.

The news media is one forum that could be expected to have been a source of great pressure on the councillors. However, the councillors tended to disregard it. Pat Gill, who had been on the Council since 1974, stated that, 'the press at that time were prepared to blow anything out of proportion in relation to the Springbok tour.'¹⁷ Ron Don went so far as to say: 'I get fed up with the nonsense by the media. I deal with facts and it's a pity they don't and it's a pity they don't get their facts right.'¹⁸ One newspaper wrote under the large heading Defectors Plan Own Rugby Union:

PROMINENT RUGBY administrators and players are planning to opt out of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union and set up an alternative administration for the game if the union does not stop the Springbok tour, a vice-president of the Wellington Rugby Union, Mr Ron Evans, revealed today.¹⁹

The newspaper considered this important enough to run as a front-page story. Underneath the large article on the proposed defectors was an extremely small reply from the Rugby Union. This sort of incident was seen as an example of the biased way the Rugby Union was represented by the media.

Pat Gill was a member of the same club as Ron Evans and commented on Evan's claim: 'I do recall at the time that there were some movements through the press in regard to this but I don't believe it had any real substance or had any chance of surviving or getting off the ground and that proved to be the case.'²⁰ Paul Mitchell considered it: 'A threat without substance at the time.'²¹ Bob Stuart regarded it as a nil issue.²² Andy Haden, while not a councillor, was a leading player and very active in the Rugby Union and he had no idea who Ron Evans was, dismissing him as a 'nutter from the Wellington Rugby Union.'²³ The newspaper offered this as a major issue for the Rugby Union. The councillors saw it, however, as a non-issue. Neither was it an issue which they could have discussed. Ron Don explained:

We did not take into account the position or opinion of individuals. If Mr Ron Evans, or anybody else, had been able to persuade their provincial union that the Springbok tour should not go ahead we would certainly have taken their opinion into account.²⁴

The Rugby Union also believed it could not allow itself to be seen to be concerned about threats and not let itself get caught up in issues over which it had no control. Threats were being made by a number of groups, including the trade unions.²⁵ Bob Stuart stated that if these threats were 'for political or trade reasons that was the Government's decision.'²⁶ In response to the Ron Evans issue, Don also commented 'I would say that round about the time of the tour both before, during and after many people told deliberate lies in pursuance of their own personal opinions.'²⁷

The policy of only being answerable to the 26 provincial unions enabled the Council to release itself of much of the pressure that it would have been under. By filtering the pressure through the provincial unions, the Council effectively delegated responsibility and shared the load. By increasing the number of people involved in the decision making, the Council could also be confident they were making decisions of which their constituents approved. Paul Mitchell explained: 'It [inviting the Springboks] wasn't a decision made by a small group of people. It went back to our members to find out what they wanted us to do...'²⁸

A case could also be made that the media was putting unfair emphasis on those clubs that voted against the tour. In one Christchurch paper there was a brief mention of three Auckland clubs' decision to vote for the Springbok tour.²⁹ One paper in Wellington, however, ran a half-page article on a local club's decision to oppose the tour.³⁰ Admittedly, these were different papers and it's likely that local content would normally be larger than national stories, but even with these factors taken into consideration the difference in the two articles was remarkable. The publicity given to clubs opposing the tour had the potential to place more pressure on the Council. Dealing with provincial unions, though, enabled the Council to again spread the pressure. Pat Gill explained: 'Well, the Council basically didn't have any direct contact with clubs but if any union passed on to the Council the protests or concerns of any club in its area, the Council did then discuss the matters.'³¹ Having the provincial union as a buffer gave the Council the opportunity to offer the reasonable argument that if the club was unable to make an impact on their provincial union they did not warrant consideration by the Council.

The protest groups were another group which applied pressure to the councillors. The Council did not dismiss the protest group outright. Pat Gill attended a meeting with Ces Blazey and Tom Cunningham. At this meeting the Prime Minister, religious representatives and leaders of protest groups were present. Gill pointed out that the Council 'always had our door open to meet these people.'³² The Council did ultimately, however, dismiss the protest

groups. Mitchell commented that:

Really they [the protest movement] were just hire-a-mob protesters and they were the ones that disappointed me, particularly with a lot of young people who hadn't thought of the issues at all. But I acknowledge there were some very sincere people with very strong beliefs and we respected their views.³³

Tom Johnson, also a councillor, stated that: 'In my contact with anti-tour people over the years I have been appalled by their fanaticism, their arrogant moral superiority and their conceited attitude of monopolising intelligence.'³⁴

Ron Don saw the protests as being organised by Communists who had no real interest in rugby at all. Don also saw the participation of Maori gangs as proof there were other issues at stake in the protests. Don saw the protesters as 'wanting to flex their muscles against the establishment and take on the police.'³⁵

The presence among the protesters of these people was not the only concern that Ron Don had. He acknowledged that there were some genuine protesters but saw their protests as a phase:

South Africa was, how can I put it, the flavour of the year. Everybody, well not everybody, all the left wingers wanted to get their views heard and publicised, but a few years later the attention was drawn to say France because of the ship that was sunk in Auckland harbour and so the left wingers move from country to country. Selective morality. They were quite happy to criticise South Africa only because there was a rugby tour, and it was mainly for political reasons, whereas the human rights issues the protesters eventually turned to were carrying on in most countries in the world. I could name just a few to illustrate my point, what about the wrongs of China, for instance. Indonesia is prominent right now but the wrongs in that country have been going on for years and years. No one said a word until we've had the present trouble. I repeat, selective morality for political purposes.³⁶

Many people would argue that just because we wrongly had an active relationship with these countries doesn't make having an active relationship with South Africa right. What this statement from Ron Don does illustrate

though, is that he felt strongly about what he saw as the hypocrisy of the situation. For a person surrounded by the culture of rugby the inconsistencies of the protest against South Africa were enough for him.

Some elements in the protest movement also subjected the Councillors to personal threats. Bob Stuart had blood and the insides of a rat smeared over the door of his house.³⁷ That seems fairly minor compared to Ron Don, who had a shotgun fired into his home.³⁸ Ces Blazey, then Chairman of the Rugby Union, was a prime target for abuse. Ron Don told how: 'well he [Ces Blazey] managed throughout the tour despite the terrible indignities he put up with, with their [protesters'] phone calls, obscene phone calls and letters.'³⁹ Sue McTaggart also described an experience she had while interviewing Ces Blazey:

... the voice comes as a shock. It is so thick with venom that the words glue up. A woman's voice? Hard to tell. It comes anonymous, from behind the fence, with such vehemence that it dries the mouth before the brain de-scrambles the message. "YOUmakemeSSS-ick!" it snarls.⁴⁰

Paul Mitchell, deputy Mayor of Wanganui as well as being a councillor, believed that his stand on the tour cost him dearly at the next election. He also explains the sort of pressure put on the councillors in their private lives. Our life was restricted enormously. I suffered a lot of personal abuse in Wanganui. I was concerned because at that time I had an elderly mother living in my home. When I was away at rugby matches she was unprotected. The police were very good. They kept a watch on the property, which concerned me that that was necessary but they consulted with me and said they believed it was necessary.⁴¹ Bob Stuart summed up the situation when he said: 'It was a very very difficult time.'⁴²

The approach of the protesters would not have helped persuade the councillors to alter their stand. It was argued that if the Council was to be seen bowing down to such tactics it would be expected with future controversial issues.

Ron Don argued:

'...I would imagine it was unanimous to continue with the tour once it

had started. I don't think that ever arose. There was too much at stake and I don't think anyone bowed down to the protesters in the way they handled themselves and made it into a political issue whereas we the New Zealand Union regarded it as only a rugby matter – amateur sport.⁴³

The Council, in particular, came under enormous criticism from the media for being stubborn and old-fashioned, 'sticking its collective grey head in the sand for ever and ever amen'.⁴⁴ The Council was criticised for being too old and out of touch with the society of the day. However, the NZRFU was an amateur organisation that relied on the time given by volunteers to run it. It is no surprise that only those who were totally committed to the game, like Ron Don, served on the Council. No job was harder or took more time than that of the Chairman. Ces Blazey summed it up when he said: 'I am not complaining [about the increased work load] mind you but as things stand at the moment it would be impossible to deal with the tour issue and a full time job.'⁴⁵

Councillors believed that the Rugby Union would have forced a greatly increased workload and many more problems on itself if it allowed itself to be influenced by politically motivated groups. Tom Johnston stated:

...over the years rugby administrators charged only with the responsibility of administering their sport in the interests of participant members have been featured as intransigent, obdurate and fossilised in their thinking. The fact remains that the responsibility for political decisions lies solely with governments.⁴⁶

The councillors did believe that they were looking after the interests of those people they represented. Mitchell commented:

I mean, the rugby people said we want to play against South Africa. This is the ambition of every rugby player to play against South Africa and that came through very clearly from the rugby people which included the support we got at every venue that we had, the full grounds. So, there were those views coming through strongly that the people that we were answerable to supported what we were doing. There was an element outside of rugby who protested at what we were

doing but they were not our influence, we were not answerable to those people and I think that was really the attitude of rugby administrators at the time that we did what our rugby people wanted us to do.⁴⁷

Just as leaders of the protest movement talked about tens of thousands of anti-apartheid supporters, the councillors saw the fact that there were capacity crowds as confirmation they were making the right decisions. Ron Don also stated:

So, all these threats came to nothing, and in my opinion, the New Zealand Union did certainly what all our rugby people wanted, and perhaps in this context perhaps what the majority of the people wanted. After all, I think I would be correct in stating that at every match they played there was a capacity crowd present. Well, that doesn't indicate to me that the people were against it.⁴⁸

By making themselves unavailable to play against the Springboks, Graham Mourie and Bruce Robertson, had the potential to place enormous pressure on the Council. Graham Mourie was captain of the All Blacks at the time and a well-respected player. When he decided he was unable to play he would have made a number of rugby people look more closely at their position on the tour. The Council, though, seemed to have held few reservations about these players making themselves unavailable. Ron Don did try to talk Mourie into playing.⁴⁹ Mourie commented, however, that 'Ces Blazey was understanding and tolerant of my decision, a gentleman as always.'⁵⁰ Pat Gill stated that the only concern the Council had was that: 'I guess it's a concern anytime you can't put your first fifteen out for any reason whatsoever and that was the only concern I ever heard expressed.'⁵¹ Paul Mitchell pointed out that there were players who refused to play on Sundays and the Council saw those players that made themselves unavailable for the tour in the same way.⁵² There were no repercussions for those players. Bruce Robertson retired, but Graham Mourie toured Romania and France with the All Blacks at the end of the year. Ron Don commented: 'We're not interested in politics. In a team of thirty players there will probably be members of seven or eight different political parties. That is their business but rugby is our business.'⁵³

The opposition to the tour by secondary schools was one issue on which there was a difference of opinion shown by the Councillors. Mitchell claimed that:

That was the surprise. The teachers, almost as a group, would totally oppose the tour and that opposition hadn't been evident before. It came through much much later and I think there was probably an influence of public opinion on their thinking.⁵⁴

This comment from Mitchell was backed up by John McDougall, the Chairman of the New Zealand Secondary Schools Rugby Council. In 1981 McDougall stated: 'Delegates have changed their position since the last meeting when they were about 50-50 in favour of the tour. The feelings are much stronger now. As a result of delegates working in their areas they have shifted their ground.'⁵⁵

Mitchell implied that the Rugby Union may have reconsidered had they known the depth of anti-tour feeling at secondary school level. Ron Don was concerned that 'these misguided people were successful in withdrawing teams from rugby.' He saw it though as a 'tiny minority.'⁵⁶ In his opinion then, the opposition at secondary school level was not a major concern. Bob Stuart saw clubs taking over secondary school rugby anyway.⁵⁷ Pat Gill said councillors were concerned about the situation in secondary schools but in the end they had to make a decision and he felt the right one was to invite the Springboks.⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that out of all the councillors mentioned only Paul Mitchell felt that rugby suffered as a result of the anti-tour feeling in secondary schools.⁵⁹

A key issue for the Council was the fact that the 26 provincial unions unanimously voted for the Springbok tour to proceed. These provincial unions accounted for a considerable percentage of the population of New Zealand. The Council, then, saw the universal support from these unions as an indication of the level of support the tour had throughout the country. When many churches condemned the NZRFU for inviting the South Africans, there were different responses to this from the councillors. Both Stuart and Gill indicated that the protest from the church groups was noted but that it was a

rugby decision. Ron Don used the unanimous support from the unions to weaken the churches' argument. Ron Don offered this argument in retaliation to the Catholic Church's opposition to the tour:

A great part of rugby in New Zealand are the numerous Marist clubs throughout the country and within those clubs I'm sure they had some wonderful donnybrooks but they were, the majority of their players, their coaches, their administration were for us and the protests were coming from people outside rugby, and I stress that, who had no part in our game whatsoever. They just wanted to do it for political reasons.⁶⁰

Don also dismissed the Anglican Church's opposition:

...many loyal people in the Anglican Church discontinued their membership of that church. I know a man in Hamilton, I don't mind naming the city because the man concerned has passed away, and he gave annually a very substantial donation to the Anglican Church. He went and saw the churchman concerned and told him that his donations were now finished and they were.⁶¹

Ron Don used the knowledge of unanimous support coupled with personal experiences as a basis for his argument that a majority of the people of New Zealand were in support of the tour. At one stage the Prime Minister was quoted as saying he thought the majority of New Zealanders opposed the tour. In response Ron Don commented: 'I don't know why he [Robert Muldoon] said that – I'm finding tremendous support for the tour where ever I go.'⁶² Ron Don made many statements like that.

The Council did not believe that they should take notice of the trade unions speaking out in opposition to the tour. Gill pointed out: 'You then had to weigh up whether they had any right to oppose it...So, you could argue what business was it of the trade unions what the Rugby Union did.'⁶³ The official line that the Council took was that trade issues were the job of the Government. Privately, though, councillors have expressed doubt as whether a vote was taken amongst these trade unions and how accurately they represented their members. Mitchell stated:

No, we didn't [believe the unions accurately represented their members] because a large number of their members were also rugby people and we were getting strong vibes and, in fact, written and verbal information from members of those unions that they totally supported what rugby was doing.⁶⁴

The councillors came under enormous pressure before the tour began, and during it. The New Zealand Rugby Football Union as a whole operated in a way that took pressure off the Council. They devised an adequate method of dealing with what they regarded as a hostile press. A good working relationship with the provincial unions also enabled them to be confident they were correctly representing their members.

¹ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

² Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

³ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁴ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁵ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁶ Graeme Barrow, *All Blacks Versus Springboks*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1981, p.180.

⁷ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁸ "Blazey Ready to Accept Rugby's Difficult Reins", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 28 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁹ "Ron Don Calls in Anti-Tour Promises", *Evening Post*, 7 July 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁰ Tony Reid quoted in Ron Don, Notes made by Ron Don in response to an unknown television program, 2 July 1996.

¹¹ Ron Don, Notes made by Ron Don in response to an unknown television program, 2 July 1996.

¹² Graeme Barrow, *All Blacks Versus Springboks*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1981, p.180.

¹³ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

¹⁴ Graeme Barrow, *All Blacks Versus Springboks*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1981, p.180.

¹⁵ Ron Don, Interview of Ron Don by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

¹⁶ Ron Don, Transcript of Interview of Ron Don by Unknown Interviewer, c.1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

¹⁷ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

¹⁸ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

¹⁹ "Defectors Plan Own Rugby Union", *Evening Post*, 7 July 1981, p.1.

²⁰ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

²¹ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

²² Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

²³ Andy Haden, Interview by Andre Russell, 19 October 1999.

²⁴ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

²⁷ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

²⁸ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

²⁹ "Clubs Back Bok Tour", *The Press*, 14 November 1980, p.24.

³⁰ "Anti-tour vote from Titahi Bay", *Evening Post*, 10 December 1985, p.35.

³¹ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

³² *ibid.*

³³ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

³⁴ Tom Johnson, "Moral Self-Righteousness and Intellectual Superiority", *New Zealand*

Times, 27 January 1985, p.8.

³⁵ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

³⁸ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Sue McTaggart, "Ces Blazey: Creature of habit", *Listener* 110: 2366, 1985, p.18.

⁴¹ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁴² Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

⁴³ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁴⁴ "Cicero's Viewpoint", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 15 December 1980, HART Files Box 17, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁴⁵ Ces Blazey quoted in "Blazey Ready to Accept Rugby's Difficult Reins", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 28 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁴⁶ Tom Johnson, "Moral Self-Righteousness and Intellectual Superiority", *New Zealand Times*, 27 January 1985, p.8.

⁴⁷ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁴⁸ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Graham Mourie, *Graham Mourie: Captain*, Auckland: Moa Publications, 1982, p.28.

⁵¹ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁵² Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁵³ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁵⁴ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁵⁵ John McDougall quoted in "Bok Tour Scares Off School Sponsors", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 28 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁵⁶ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁵⁷ Bob Stuart, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 September 1999.

⁵⁸ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁵⁹ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁶⁰ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁶³ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁶⁴ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

7. CES BLAZEY

Ces Blazey performed the vital role of Chairman during the 1981 tour. It was vital because the Chairman was the front man for the Council. He handled the media, was in charge of Council meetings and needed to be able to manage being in the public eye.

Blazey mainly ensured that the Rugby Union's position was carefully and reasonably expressed. Ron Don stated that Ces Blazey never expressed his personal views at Council meetings.¹ Members of the Council held very strong and forthright views on the South African situation. It was important for the Chairman of the Council to hold the respect of the councillors. Without the respect of the councillors, the Chairman would have found it extremely hard to keep control and provide the image of unity. Ces Blazey also had to make sure he was the only one speaking to the media on behalf of the Rugby Union. The more people who spoke to the media the greater the chance of contradiction and it was seen as important the Council displayed a united front. Many rugby people might not have considered the tour worth it if the Rugby Union's public image had dissolved into extreme statements and endless bickering. Blazey had to have sufficient respect from councillors for them to allow him to be the sole spokesperson.

Trevor Richards saw Blazey as the leader of what he referred to as the realists. Richards wrote: 'The realists [are] led by sometimes athletics boss, sometimes rugby boss, sometimes supporter of the Olympic principles, sometimes cosmetician for apartheid, Ces Blazey. Cautious, deceptive... Blazey has been trying to adopt a low key ...'² There can be no argument, though, that Ces Blazey was very highly respected by his colleagues and those within the Rugby Union. Graham Mourie stated: 'In rugby circles, Ces Blazey was understanding and tolerant of my decision, a gentleman as always.'³ Mourie may not have been on the Council but demonstrated what appears to have been a common feeling towards Blazey by those associated with him. Ron Don, perhaps the most outspoken councillor, explained why he always made sure the media knew he was not speaking for the New Zealand Rugby

Football Union: ‘...indeed none of we councillors dared try to speak on behalf of the New Zealand Union or the wrath of Ces Blazey would be down upon us.’⁴ Pat Gill, who was the Council’s liaison with the police for the tour, worked closely with Blazey. Gill commented: ‘Ces Blazey was a leader and he was respected by the Council.’⁵

Discipline was an attribute on which Ces Blazey had very definite views. Blazey had served in the armed forces and was the ‘boss’ of the New Zealand Third Division. He commented on discipline:

I believe it is the most misunderstood word in the English language. My definition is that it is something you can be taught, so that when you are in a difficult situation you proceed in an orderly fashion. You don’t rush off because you think somebody’s going to hit you over the head. You do not get unduly excited in very difficult circumstances. You think logically.⁶

Blazey took these comments on discipline and put them into action during the tour. It has been suggested that Blazey was pro-tour because of the fact he prepared the Rugby Union’s news releases himself. Paul Mitchell, however, offered a different view:

What most people don’t know is that he [Ces Blazey] personally did not favour the tour, but once the Council had made a decision to invite the Springboks and continue with the tour he, as a proper rugby gentleman, was obliged to carry out the instructions of his Council and he never wavered from that for one moment and gave a public impression that he was totally behind the tour. But I know his personal views were the opposite and I feel sorry for him because he suffered badly.⁷

Ces Blazey did not allow himself to become unduly excited by the Springbok tour and kept his personal views hidden. Even at Council meetings Blazey never offered his personal opinions.⁸ Blazey regarded it as his ‘duty as the spokesman of the NZ union only to express the view as finally decided by the union.’⁹ To express his own personal opinions would only confuse the issue, so he disciplined himself to keep his opinions out of the equation.¹⁰ If Blazey had of used his high standing to try and persuade the Rugby Union not invite

the Springboks it would have almost certainly led to great acrimony within the organisation.

Blazey was experienced in dealing with pressure. He had been 'the number two man' for the AMP Insurance Company in New Zealand.¹¹ It appears, however, to have been his background in the armed forces that equipped him with the skills and attitudes he used to manage the pressure he came under during the tour. Blazey told how at Army District Headquarters for nine months he tried to look after two full-time appointments. He was under considerable pressure, which caused him to lose sleep:

... after a while of this [waking up in the middle of the night] I realised that it wasn't getting me anywhere at all. So I decided on a very simple philosophy ... I realised there was no point in worrying and I decided right then as a quite conscious decision I would never worry again...¹²

Blazey was asked: 'So all through the years the pressure of being Chairman, the 1981 Springbok tour, you never got worried.'¹³ He replied: 'No. Got to bed and got to sleep and stayed asleep.'¹⁴ When questioned further on how anybody could not worry in the atmosphere the 1981 Springbok tour created, Blazey responded: 'Well I'm sorry but it just happens to be a fact. And so far as pressure is concerned and what I've just been saying about not worrying was a conscious decision achieved. But I don't feel pressure.'¹⁵

As Chairman of the Council, Blazey was seen as its leader and therefore came under significantly more pressure than other Council members. This is another area where Blazey seems to have drawn on his army experience. He commented:

I shall always remember the Quartermaster General when I was being sent over to join the New Zealand Third Division as the boss. He said to me: You're going to be very lonely over there. Realise that before you go. Because if you don't you're going to be very unhappy.¹⁶

It was in this capacity as the boss of the Council that Blazey was placed on a 'black list' prepared by the South African Non-Racial Olympic committee. The black list contained the names of people the South African Non-Racial Olympic committee deemed were leaders in playing sport with South Africa.

Those on the list could be barred entry into countries or locked up and deported once there, as happened to three English tennis players.¹⁷ Blazey responded to this encroachment on his personal freedom in a restrained way: ‘...if it is intended to have some relationship to good citizenship I am content to be judged by the people in New Zealand who know me.’¹⁸

Seen as the leader of the Rugby Union, Blazey also attracted domestic pressure in the form of obscene phone calls and threatening letters.¹⁹ Blazey perhaps used the Quartermaster General’s advice when he decided to continue as Chairman and resigned himself to the pressure and loneliness that was going to come. Blazey refused to take his name out of the telephone book, believing that: ‘...if people wanted to talk to me then I must be available to them, that was part of my responsibility.’²⁰ Ces Blazey not only kept his telephone number readily available but also attempted to reply to all letters that he received.²¹

Perhaps the most important aspect of Blazey’s job was his role as the sole spokesperson for the New Zealand Rugby Football Union. Blazey had to be able to present the Rugby Union’s case. Poor press releases could have proved extremely detrimental to the Rugby Union. One journalist explained how Blazey’s media releases had helped the Rugby Union’s cause:

Another factor that has made it harder to come round to isolationism is that the New Zealand Rugby Union has handled its end of the arrangements rather more articulately on this occasion. The veteran chairman Ces Blazey hasn’t spoken often on the subject, but when he has it has been to the point, and covered the objections of traditional protesters.²²

Blazey also had to have the confidence of the Council in dealing with the media. If the councillors did not think that Blazey was articulating adequately the Rugby Union’s cause, they might have been tempted to talk to the media individually, which would inevitably have led to contrasting opinions being voiced. Mitchell explained how Blazey performed this role:

[It was] absolutely vital we had an administrator who had the capacity to remain cool, calm and collected, to work under enormous pressure

and give sound and positive and clear statements to the press every time he fronted and we had the utmost admiration for the way he handled the issue and he deserves more credit than he got.²³

Blazey used personal pronouns in circulars and press releases. For instance, in a circular to the provincial unions he stated: 'I do not like nor, I am sure, does the average New Zealander like...'²⁴ and 'I do not believe that the vast majority of people...'²⁵ Blazey stated that because he was the spokesperson for the Rugby Union. He felt he was unable then or later to put forward his own position on the tour as that would have created confusion over what the official position of the union was. However, by not putting forward his own personal opinion and using personal pro-nouns, Blazey began to personify the Rugby Union. One article referred to the Council as the 'Blazey Council'²⁶ while another stated: 'Because of the proposed tour and the institution he symbolises in many ways Blazey has also been on the receiving end...'²⁷

Ces Blazey was himself extremely principled. He showed this when he stated:

I would like to be remembered I hope as a person of integrity ... I've often said to people, I'm not prepared to lie for myself and I'm not prepared to lie for you or the organisation or anybody else. And I guess that's the most important thing to me. My integrity.²⁸

Ron Don described Blazey as being 'straight down the middle.'²⁹ Because of the high emphasis he put on integrity, Blazey was very careful how he conducted himself, which was an important asset for the Rugby Union. One example of this was Blazey's relationship with his South African counterpart, Danie Craven, which was reported to have been largely businesslike.³⁰ Ron Don also explained how Blazey's diary was instrumental in enabling them to take a consistent line:

His memory of rugby events was improved, that's possibly the wrong word, because of a diary he kept going back I wouldn't know how many years and if he didn't know the answer to a particular question or a problem he could always look up his diary which he did from time to time and tell we, Council members, what happened say, ten years ago and how we handled it.³¹

Blazey performed a vital role on the Council. While he did not discuss his own personal views at meetings, he clearly had an influence on proceedings with his knowledge of precedents set by previous Councils. He was experienced in dealing with pressure situations and displayed this throughout the tour. Blazey's experience in the armed forces provided him with the necessary man management skills and his experience at AMP insurance helped him to adequately deal with the media. A less competent or short-sighted person could have severely damaged the Council's argument. The Council was not united in their decision to allow the tour to proceed, yet Ces Blazey was able to keep the Council focused and unified, which in the atmosphere of 1981 was a remarkable feat.

¹ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

² Trevor Richards: *Dancing on Our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1999, p.204.

³ Graham Mourie, *Graham Mourie: Captain*, Auckland: Moa Publications, 1982, p.28.

⁴ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁵ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁶ Ces Blazey quoted in "Ces Blazey: Creature of habit", *Listener* 110: 2366, 1985, p.19.

⁷ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

⁸ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

⁹ Ces Blazey, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 11, 1 August 1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ "Blazey Ready to Accept Rugby's Difficult Reins", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 28 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹² Ces Blazey, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 10, 1 August 1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

¹³ Unknown Interviewer, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 10, 1 August 1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

¹⁴ Ces Blazey, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 10, 1 August 1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ Ces Blazey, "Ces Blazey: Creature of habit", *Listener* 110: 2366, 1985, p.19.

¹⁷ Ces Blazey speaking for the NZRFU in New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Circular to Unions, No 81/41, 9 April 1981, p.5-6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹⁹ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

²⁰ Ces Blazey, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 12, 1 August 1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

²¹ Ces Blazey quoted in "Ces Blazey: Creature of habit", *Listener* 110: 2366, 1985, p.18.

²² "To and Fro On Africa", *Dominion*, 1 December 1980, p.2.

²³ Paul Mitchell, Interview by Andre Russell, 21 October 1999.

²⁴ Ces Blazey speaking for the NZRFU in New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Circular to Unions, No 81/41, 9 April 1981, p.5.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.4.

²⁶ "Cicero's Viewpoint", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 15 December 1980, HART Files Box 17, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

²⁷ "Blazey Ready to Accept Rugby's Difficult Reins", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 28 March 1981,

HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

²⁸ Ces Blazey, Transcript of Interview of Ces Blazey by Unknown Interviewer, Tape 53, c.1990, New Zealand Rugby Museum, Palmerston North.

²⁹ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

³⁰ "Blazey Ready to Accept Rugby's Difficult Reins", *Wanganui Chronicle*, 28 March 1981, HART Files Box 18, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³¹ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

CONCLUSION

There was not one, but a number of reasons the Rugby Union decided it was in the best interests of New Zealand rugby to proceed with the tour. However, the key issue for the Rugby Union was that they were there to administer rugby for those who were members of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union and those members and the wider rugby community, showed itself overwhelmingly in favour of the tour.

The culture surrounding rugby had an effect on the way the Rugby Union interpreted information and, was therefore, a factor in the decision to invite the Springboks. It appeared the Rugby Union did miscalculate the violent nature of the protests. However, had the Rugby Union known that there was going to have been such violent protests, it is unlikely that they would have called the tour off. Abraham Ordia's threats to New Zealand were seen by a local newspaper as having the opposite effect on average New Zealanders than Ordia was intending.¹ HART also threatened the Rugby Union and warned it not to linger in making its decision.² What was clear was that such implied or stated threats were unlikely to have the desired effect on the Rugby Union, because the unremitting culture of rugby would not have allowed the Rugby union to back down. The Rugby Union illustrated this when they stated: 'I do not like nor, I am sure, does the average New Zealander like being required to make decisions based on threats.'³

The Rugby Union was receiving information from sources outside the Rugby Union, such as Bryan Wilson's report and the Freedom In Sport organisation, and appeared to place some importance them. These sources confirmed for the Rugby Union many key issues. The most important point that these sources illustrated for the Rugby Union was that discrimination in sport in South Africa was ending and that since 1977 mixed trials were being held for the Springbok rugby team. The presence of Freedom In Sport also gave the Rugby union confidence that there was international support for their decision to proceed with the tour. The Rugby Union believed that the Springbok team was merit selected and that they had every right to play against them.

The Rugby Union claimed that they were not interested in politics, that their job was to administer rugby. It was for this reason that they refused to take into account the Gleneagles Agreement. The Gleneagles Agreement was drawn up and signed by the heads of state in the Commonwealth and the Rugby Union saw it as having little relevance to them. While the Rugby Union made it clear that they did not want to become involved in politics, they seem to have been aware of the political debate. Ces Blazey released a press release which talked about how Ronald Reagan's election was increasing the criticism of the tour. The councillors also seem to have been influenced by the fact the Government said the tour could go ahead. The ill-discipline by members of the National Government and Muldoon's failure to convince rugby people that he was against the tour were also factors.

The players were an important part of the Rugby Union. Most of the players came out strongly in support of the tour. Many of the players had been to South Africa and used that experience to justify playing. However, players were also well informed of other international issues such as the ongoing trade with South Africa. The councillors claimed not to have been influenced by Graham Mourie and Bruce Robertson's refusal to play. However, if the issue of playing the Springboks was going to divide the team severely, it is unlikely that the rugby public would have given the Rugby Union so much support.

The Council of the Rugby Union was determined not to stray from its job, which it saw as administering rugby. There was abundance of publicity being given to individuals within Rugby administration and clubs that spoke out against the tour. However, the Council only took notice of the concerns of provincial unions. If those individuals and clubs could not influence their respective provincial unions the Council would not discuss it. This enabled the Council to share much of the pressure with the provincial unions. The Council also thought the involvement of more people in the decision making would mean the decision was a true indication of the feeling of people involved with the sport.

Ces Blazey's role as Chairman of the Council was an important factor in the Rugby Union's decision to continue with the tour. Blazey appeared not to have favoured the tour proceeding, yet he saw his role as making sure the Council stayed focused on rugby matters. Members of the Council had strong personalities and opinions on the South African issue. It was the Chairman's job to make sure that they stayed focused on rugby and he had enough respect from members of the Council to ensure this happened. The fact that Blazey refused to state his position on the tour was also a large factor in the Rugby Union's ability to proceed with the tour. If Blazey had tried to argue against the tour he may not have changed the Council's decision but could have created enough division to make rugby people wonder if the tour was worth it.

Many people, both pro-tour and anti-tour, saw the revenue that the tour could generate as a reason the Rugby Union was proceeding. The councillors acknowledged that provincial unions did rely on the revenue that was brought in by a major tour and that many provincial unions did owe the Rugby Union money. Councillors interviewed, however, rejected any claims that any pressure was ever put on any provincial unions to pay that money back. They implied that loans were mostly not paid back in full. The Rugby Union was also reported to be financially well off at the time of the tour.

Pat Gill perhaps best summed up the position of the Rugby Union when he said: 'I believe the Union voted unanimously because it was the business of the Rugby Union to promote tours inward and outward from the country and they were just going about their normal day-to-day business, that's what I believe.'⁴ This does appear to be the underlying reason that the Rugby Union went ahead with the tour. The Rugby Union was united in bringing the Springboks to New Zealand. Ron Don pointed out:

In rugby itself there is tremendous controversy. There's club versus club, there's union versus union, there's union versus New Zealand Union but in 1981 we were united. We were unitedly in favour of the Springbok tour. In 1982 we recommenced scrapping among ourselves on fairly minor issues.⁵

The Rugby Union decided to go ahead with the tour because it believed its job

was to administer rugby, that the Springboks had fulfilled their obligation by fielding a merit selected team and that rugby people wanted the tour to proceed.

¹ "To and Fro on Africa", *The Dominion*, 1 December 1980, p.2.

² Trevor Richards, *Dancing on Our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1999, p.206.

³ Ces Blazey representing the NZRFU in New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Circular to Unions, *No:81/41*, 9 April 1981, p.5.

⁴ Pat Gill, Interview by Andre Russell, 28 October 1999.

⁵ Ron Don, Interview by Andre Russell, 6 October 1999.

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