

internal opinion, that real change had come about. It can only be a country so impervious to moral persuasion that could assume that world attitudes and standards do not evolve through time.

The question is often raised: but sport has changed, why now penalize sportsmen and women? The answers are suggested above: sport cannot be isolated from its parent society; and the Pretoria regime is making propaganda capital out of 'normal' sport in order to make its apartheid menu palatable to international bodies. SACOS is a beleaguered minority vulnerable to government repression and the blinkered reasoning of powerful capitalist vested interests. Its links with the Supreme Council of Sport for Africa and thereby to the OAU and the United Nations are vital; and the current rethink by the Commonwealth on

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the Gleneagles Agreement could be conclusive. The admission of Sri Lanka as a full member of the International Cricket Conference has closed the cricket door emphatically, leaving South Africa's allies isolated. Even on the domestic front sponsorship is now being made available to

non-racial sport by courageous firms such as United Tobacco (now threatened by a boycott by South African Defence Force personnel).

Countering these trends are conservative elements such as the British Freedom in Sport organization under Lord Chalfont and wealthy South African business interests. In a recent appeal, Joe Pamensky of the SACU even asked for government finance. It is not conceivable, however, that South Africa forever will be able to buy literally the best of the world's sportsmen. Commonwealth and United Nations action will gradually restrict the ability to bring rebel sports tours and persons to South Africa. There is little doubt that reviewed in historical perspective decades ahead, the tactics of SACOS will look realistic and its strategy morally defensible.

## **SPORTS BOYCOTT** by Jill Wentzel

### **2 A more agonized viewpoint**

**T**HE SLOGAN 'No normal sport in an abnormal society' explains the majority thinking behind the current sports boycott: but not everyone would agree that it 'encapsulates the non-racial attitude'.

Non-racialism and all-or-nothing tactics do not necessarily have anything to do with each other: indeed many people whose attitudes are non-racial are uneasy about tactics which do not reward creative dissidence within our society and which therefore might contribute more to racial polarisation than to the cause of non-racialism.

It might be that uncompromising boycott tactics, resulting in increasing isolation for white South Africa, will hasten the day when whites decide, or are compelled, to abandon apartheid and call a national convention, but this would only happen if boycott on every level, especially economic, was orchestrated with efficiency and complete international cohesion, which seems unlikely.

In the meantime, the all-or-nothing tactic governing current boycott policy has created a situation of stalemate, which classically drives people to seek strong-arm and unconstructive solutions — in this case, bribery of international sportsmen. The linking of sport to all the ills of our society has rendered sportsmen of all races powerless to make their own specific contribution to progress.

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So it is that the recent no-normal-sport-until-armageddon tactic has driven into the arms of the government significant numbers of sports administrators, sportsmen and businessmen who would have preferred to work for non-racialism through sport, and some of whom would have been prepared to use sport as a springboard to wider inroads into apartheid outside the field of sport.

The current situation is dead, providing victory to no-one, semi-defeat to everyone. It is, however, the result of an inexorable process and it is hard to think how one could find a way out of it.

The non-racial Liberal Party saw sports boycott as a vividly educative measure which could contribute to a process of change but which obviously was not in itself able to produce the basic changes necessary to create a normal society.

Believing that some degree of non-racialism in sport would be at least one effective weapon against granite apartheid its members co-operated

closely with SANROC (South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee) and eventually the successful sports boycott campaigns were led by Peter Hain, whose parents had been energetic leaders in the Liberal Party. His original idea was to force specifically sporting changes on the apartheid regime, thus making a dramatic inroad into apartheid which hopefully would initiate an unstoppable process and spread to economic and political fields.

**Far from no normal sport in abnormal society being the objective, the idea was to influence and slowly reform the abnormal society by means of thin-end-of-the-wedge tactics and by demonstrating the naturalness of non-racial contact.**

In January 1980 the Stop All Racist Tours Campaign, of which Peter Hain was chairman, presented, through the British Sports Council the following demands to South Africa, in summary: that sports be non-racial from top to bottom, including a law which would insert in the constitution of every club a requirement that the club be open to all races; that school sports be mixed; that laws be passed to take apartheid out of sport in regard inter alia to the liquor act, group areas and pass laws in so far as they applied to the playing of sports fixtures. **These demands did not go beyond the field of sport.** But the South African government failed to respond quickly enough and lost for all time the opportunity to do so. By the time they met most of these demands, it was already too late.

Peter Hain commented to me recently that the logical consequence of no normal sport in an abnormal society would be not to play sport with Russia either. However, he felt it was correct for Hassan Howa's committee to take an intransigent line because, he said, they are operating in South Africa against a ruthless regime.

In any event, the educative boycott barely got off the ground. Lumbered with a reluctant government, South African sports administrators never managed to get ahead of the demands made on them; but while they limped behind they did make changes during the time that international sport was still played. In stages the boycott movement forced non-racial selection of teams and the mixed accommodation of spectators and motivated more sports fields and coaching and sports scholarships in black areas and schools.

But alongside these victories on the sports front the apartheid system strengthened itself on other fronts. Each parliamentary session produced harsher laws, punishment without trial increased steadily, the pass and resettlement policies intensified in their cruelty. Concessions made in the sports field, though not inconsiderable when seen against a background of granite apartheid, seemed piffling by comparison with the profound suffering of millions of people. As an expression of anger and impotence, the one weapon that could be used against white South Africa, boycott in all its forms, became punitive and was no longer perceived to be a creative tactic.

Overall, the sports boycott put the South African political situation and the nature of apartheid on to the agenda of ordinary people overseas who were immediately able to relate to it within a field in which they had tremendous interest. In its early phase, the sports boycott succeeded dramatically in encouraging sportsmen to try to move away from sports apartheid. In its present all-or-nothing form (administered not only by SACOS but by an immensely powerful overseas lobby) it is an almost daily reminder to white South Africans that they are perceived by all the world to be wicked. It is about the only way to penetrate their smugness and their determined ignoring of the sufferings caused by apartheid.

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Thinking people of all races, however, might at least ponder the sterility of the present situation. Even if there do not seem to be any immediate solutions, human rights organizations like the Black Sash are surely duty bound to think carefully about tactics which reject gradual reform and disable our society from changing itself non-violently — and should also remember how many crucial human advances like the abolition of slavery and capital punishment and the achievement of universal suffrage were brought about step by step as a result of painful and plodding effort.

It is a thankless task and requires more than moral posturing, to retain respect for human rights and human individuality in the context of an unpromising environment. In this regard the equity boycott (which in any case punishes thinking people of all races within South Africa more than it punishes ordinary whites) can be seen as a tragic denial to South Africans of the civilising effects of good literature, especially of the benefits of ideas generated in free and therefore more creative societies. The overseas artistic and intellectual dialogue could be tremendously helpful in countering and taming the ignorant and dangerously violent clichés which proliferate in isolation (among all shades of political opinion). •

The trouble is that the real problem facing us all the time is that of violent white intransigence which inter alia imprisons moderate leaders and unfairly puts the onus of preventing violent con-

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frontation on those who already suffer it. An answering intransigence is not only a satisfying punitive weapon but is more importantly a means of building up cohesion and strength among opponents of the government (overwhelmingly black and voteless) whose only weapon is their numbers. The failure of last year's soccer tour demonstrated to black communities that they can wreck the best efforts of big business combined with the government.

No one in his right mind would want to see this process weakened. It is hard to know if it would necessarily be weakened by the use of carrot and stick tactics which could result in a series of victories as opposed to the semi-defeats occasioned by bribery.

However, against a background of our past history it is not easy to argue the merits of negotiation or moderation: for far too often have liberals encouraged reasonableness on the part of blacks (who let it be said have out of sheer niceness been as inclined to reasonableness as their 'liberal hangers on') with the result that blacks have time and again been tricked out of their positions of potential strength.

But perhaps a weakening in the white position is changing this scenario. It might be that as white power declines and as government opponents gain in strength there will be situations within commerce and industry, within politics, within boycott, when push-pull strategies might come into their own, orchestrated not by liberal 'hangers on' but by powerful black constituencies.

There are no easy answers, and precisely because there are no easy answers, democrats should watch what they are doing and guard against making refusal to co-operate with anything associated with the apartheid regime into a moral obligation so compelling that it precludes any future use of creative tactics, so vitally important to the cause of non-violence.

Recently an article on the new constitution in **Work in Progress** (August 1982)\* provided thoughtful new direction which is relevant to all anti-government strategy.

*'These changes in the political climate associated with the introduction of the new dispensation create new possibilities for struggle, which must be debated on the basis of tactics rather than principles . . . . Democrats also need to consider whether there is merit in trying to make the operation of the system impossible, as the Labour Party did with the CRC and whether it might be helpful to have spokesmen in parliament with the immunities against banning and detention which such positions would imply.'*

And on community councils:

*'Community organisations should be able to exact a series of gains for their residents by keeping up the pressure on the new institutions, while at the same time discrediting them by continually revealing their limitations. Their demands can be pitched always one step further than the authorities are ready to go . . . .'*

\*Written in August last year, this article bears no relation to and must not be seen as an endorsement of the LP's precipitate decision to enter the new constitutional dispensation.

*'The new constitution is thus likely to mark the start of a new political era for both the dominant groups and the democratic opposition in SA in which opportunities for legal, peaceful political activity which have been absent for two decades are likely to emerge. The implications need to receive wide debate and a creative response. The new institutions will pose new dangers, but they will also create new possibilities.'*

Finally, let us remember that an organisation like the Black Sash, which aims to be a catalyst for civil rights and liberties is not necessarily able to provide the best tactical answers, nor is it in a position to carry out major opposition strategies. Its role is to point out those trends in our society which inhibit human rights. In the early sports boycott days we needed to point to the anomalies of normal sport in an abnormal society. Now that the slogan 'No normal sport in an abnormal society' is in the ascendancy, it would be appropriate to give sober thought to its conflicting advantages and disadvantages.

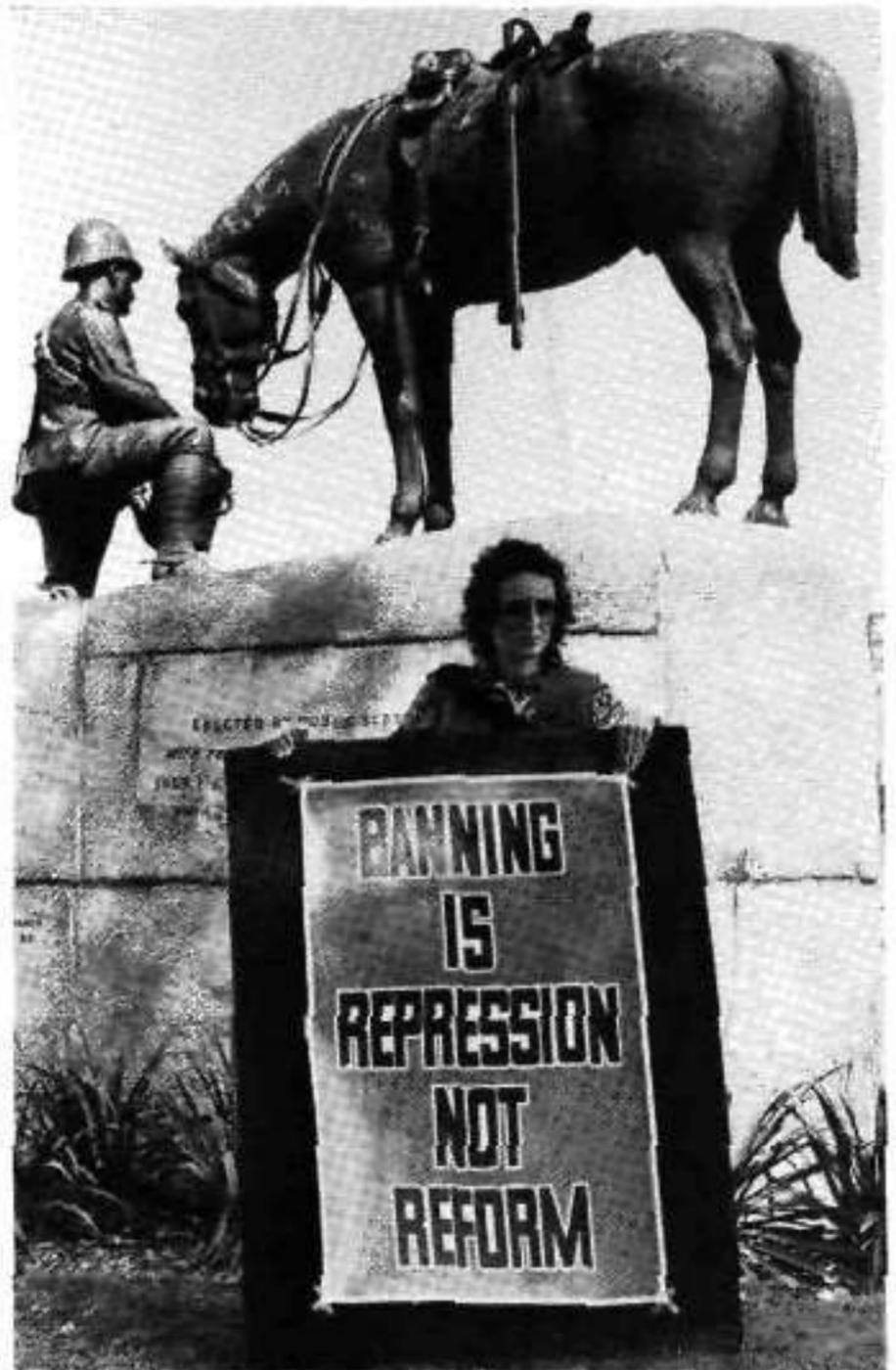


Photo: Mike Vincent, courtesy of EP Herald

A member of the Port Elizabeth branch of the Black Sash mounts a silent vigil at the Horse Memorial in Cape Road to protest against banning, in particular the recent re-banning of Dr Beyers Naude.