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RUGBY, RACISM AND FEAR:

The Reaction of Invercargill People to the 1981 Springbok Tour of New Zealand

A dissertation submitted for the partial fulfillment of the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) for the History Department, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1998.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
<td>Citizens Association for Racial Equality</td>
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<td>FOL</td>
<td>Federation of Labour</td>
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<td>HART</td>
<td>Halt All Racist Tours</td>
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<td>ICC</td>
<td>Invercargill City Council</td>
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<td>NZRFU</td>
<td>New Zealand Rugby Football Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPIR</td>
<td>Society for the Protection of Individual Rights</td>
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<td>SRFU</td>
<td>Southland Rugby Football Union</td>
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INTRODUCTION

When the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU) invited a South African national team to tour in 1981, many people were thrilled at the prospect of some world-class rugby action. They looked forward, as one correspondent to the Southland Times gushed, ‘with eager anticipation to the sight of those big, mobile ‘Bok forwards streaming down the field in full cry, supported by the brilliant parry and thrust of a back-line loaded with talent and studded with stars. Each and every game promises to be a thriller.’1

To the disappointment of many New Zealanders, in rural and provincial New Zealand especially, this tour, the first by a Springbok team in more than fifteen years, was not destined to be remembered for rugby matches. When the South Africans eventually arrived on New Zealand soil in July 1981, they encountered a different society to that which had traditionally ‘hated’ the team as the All Blacks’ number one rugby rivals. This time anti-Springbok sentiment went far beyond rugby, leaving the game itself as an often largely irrelevant fact, loosely connected to what was really going on. What was at face value just the visit of a rugby team had become an issue that dominated the media and the minds of an extraordinary number of New Zealanders. Opinion was split sharply about the tour at all levels, between and within groups, and where individuals stood on the tour issue labelled them as belonging to one of two opposing camps - ‘us’ or ‘them’. The nation was gripped, not by rugby fever, but by a storm of controversy which raged over the issue of playing sport with South Africa, an

international pariah due to its apartheid system.

The cauldron of fury stirred up by this division inevitably spilled over into a type of confrontation almost completely alien to New Zealand, leaving most of the country stunned and bewildered. Over the next two months New Zealand experienced outbursts of anger and violence that grabbed world attention. The Springbok team and management travelled from venue to venue between July and September 1981, heavily protected by the police, cocooned by the NZRFU and the provincial Rugby Unions. Many thousands of people all over the country protested against the team's presence, marching under the banner of anti-apartheid organisations and supported by church leaders, Trade Unions and Maori groups. Particularly in the larger centres, attempts to stop the tour often turned into violent clashes between anti-apartheid groups, and police, who were frequently accused of brutality. Although there were no fatalities, many were injured and hundreds arrested. The most dramatic scenes occurred at Hamilton's Rugby Park, when the second match of the tour was cancelled after protesters occupied the field prior to the game, and a pilot threatened to crash a stolen plane into the grandstand.

In the end the tour proceeded, but it left many deep scars. The frustration and resentment that poured out as a result of the tour have been viewed as a symptom of rising social tension in New Zealand during times of increasing economic hardship. The tour controversy has also been linked to racial issues within New Zealand, with many Maori especially perceiving a connection

between the blatant racism of the apartheid system in South Africa and the less obvious Pakeha dominance and prejudice at home. In this way, the tour helped to shatter myths about New Zealand’s social consensus and racial harmony, effectively debunking many accepted ideas about what sort of a nation New Zealand really was in the latter part of the Twentieth Century. The tour has therefore been widely viewed as a defining moment in the country’s history, a time when New Zealanders lost their innocence and were forced to question embedded ideas about themselves, their nation and its place in the world. It sliced right to the core of at least three very sensitive issues - race relations, New Zealand’s image on the world stage, and rugby, a sport which is almost a cliche to describe as the nation’s religion.

The anger and frustration aroused by the 1981 tour does not make much sense without an understanding of just how central rugby was to life in Aotearoa. Rugby had enjoyed a long and invulnerable reign as the ‘game for all New Zealand’, but it was not only dominant in a sporting context. It was also the most powerful feature and symbol of a male-dominated culture that encompassed many of the myths about equality that New Zealanders had long clung to. The phrase ‘rugby, racing and beer’, which described the obsessions of the archetypal Pakeha ‘bloke’, also became the slogan for an entire framework of social relations. According to Geoff Fougere, ‘the cultural freight carried by rugby’ was closely linked to the deep emotions generated by the tour. Not only this, however, ‘it also helps explain why it was so difficult to articulate what was at stake: nothing less than the defence of a pattern of individual and collective identity, a symbolisation of a way of life, suddenly felt
threatened.'

The effect of the Springbok tour on Invercargill, New Zealand’s southernmost city, has not been covered extensively by any historical study. Why should it be? As a relatively small and isolated city in the ‘Deep South’, and a stronghold of pro-tour sentiment, Invercargill was never going to be the nerve centre of radical protest or even mass demonstrations. From the moment the Springboks touched down at Invercargill airport, most Southlanders treated them just as they would any other international rugby team-like royalty. The ‘Friendly City’ was friendly territory for the Springboks, and they knew it. ‘It is easy to feel at home here,’ the Manager of the Springboks commented upon arrival. When an enthusiastic crowd watched the visitors beat Southland at Rugby Park on August 8, it was only the ‘stirrers’ from out of town causing any trouble, the local anti-tour group having been silent for weeks.

The fact that Southland has remained relatively untouched as the subject of tour-related writing is therefore not surprising, especially considering that nearly all national studies to date have been protest histories, notably Geoff Chapple’s 1981: The Tour, and Tom Newnham’s By Batons and Barbed Wire. Studies of other regions, such as Victoria University’s occasional papers and Juliet Morris’ Christchurch study, have likewise mainly revolved around

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the activities of anti-tour groups. Although Victoria University’s research does include material on the role of the police, churches and the parliamentary National Party, one really has to look to Ross Meurant’s *The Red Squad Story* and Don Cameron’s ‘rugby’ book, *Barbed Wire Boks*, to elicit a perspective on the tour other than that of anti-apartheid organisations. Like other writing about the Springbok tour, many of these works also have the disadvantage of being heavily match-orientated, and do not really provide an analysis of the building tensions from well before the Springboks’ arrival.

So something is missing. To neglect those New Zealanders who supported the tour, those who chose not to engage in active protest and those who did not care is to push aside a large proportion of the population. It means one can forget how potent a force rugby was and is in the lives of many New Zealanders - while the controversy surrounding contact with South Africa made inroads into the doctrine of ‘rugby as religion’ in the 1980s, for many, allegiance to the game was strengthened by the Springbok tour. It can also obscure a largely invisible, intolerant minority with deep-seated prejudices. It can even have the effect, as Malcolm McKinnon put it, of turning the history of the tour into ‘a story of good and evil, or at least virtue and folly, in which evil and folly are vanquished.’ Trying to fill in the blanks does not entail trying to present the ‘rugby public’ as the real heroes. It is more a case of

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trying to represent them at all, rather than leave them as the anonymous mass inside the rugby ground as protests raged on the outside.

Most studies of the Springbok Tour of 1981 naturally emphasise its most striking effect - the intense and often violent clashes it provoked when anti-tour protesters came face to face with police. In reality, most New Zealanders, particularly those outside the main centres, did not even come close to these scenes, and only experienced them through their television sets. Furthermore, much tour-related violence came in the form of the outbursts of individuals angry that protests were threatening their game of rugby, rather than in the course of confrontations between structured groups of protesters and police in riot gear. Batons and barbed wire, so often seen as the symbol of the Springbok tour of 1981, will hardly make an appearance in the story of the way Invercargill reacted. But this in no way detracts from its significance. The Springbok tour will naturally be remembered for the ugly, angry clashes on city streets and the dramatic scenes at the Hamilton match. For many New Zealanders, however, first-hand memories of the tour are of debates in living rooms, pub arguments, the way it divided New Zealand, not neatly in half, but along a wavy line that splintered at every point so that at times it seemed like the whole country was disintegrating.

With these issues in mind, the purpose of this study is to examine the nature and strength of the reaction to the 1981 Springbok tour in Invercargill on both sides. In doing so, it will present a case study of the divisive effect of the tour on a
community deep in ‘Heartland’ New Zealand, from the time the invitation to the South Africans was issued. Invercargill is an interesting setting insofar as it typified public opinion in provincial cities and towns, where pro-tour feeling was strongest. Moving beyond this, however, Invercargill took on the role of ‘haven’ for the Springboks - twice. While most locals preferred to attribute their willingness to host the team to good-natured ‘Southern hospitality’, this view obscured the climate of fear which had existed in Invercargill since the cancellation of the Hamilton match. Friendly arguments had turned nasty, and violence had broken out as frustrations boiled over. The local leaders of the anti-tour movement had disappeared from the public eye after a backlash against their peaceful and orderly marches. People had become too scared to express their views, or to sign their names to letters to the local newspaper. The police and most of the City Council had become fixated on maintaining law and order even when it was clear that local anti-tour feeling had largely been silenced. Upon closer inspection Invercargill looked more like a ‘red-neck town’ (as one protestor from Christchurch dubbed it), even perhaps a refuge for what John Minto described as ‘deeply embedded racism’, than the ‘Friendly City’ of its publicity brochures.

The first chapter sets the scene, placing the tour in its historical context. It also presents a background to Invercargill and Southland, with particular emphasis on the split in public opinion. Chapter Two traces the debate in Invercargill from 1980, focussing on the anti-tour movement prior to the Springboks’ arrival. Chapter Three examines the change in atmosphere after the Hamilton match, and has pro-tour activities, both organised and

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9 Southland Times, 10 August 1981, p. 1; Quote from anonymous protestor in Morris, With All, p. 63.
unorganised, as its main focus. Chapter Four covers the period of the Springboks’ visits to Invercargill. The fifth chapter compares and evaluates explanations of Invercargill’s reaction to the tour. The Conclusion concentrates on the aftermath of the tour and its legacies.

The major sources used for this study are the local newspaper, the Southland Times, and oral history sources, since the size of Invercargill and the nature of its reaction to the tour mean that other written sources are scarce. The Southland Times was the major ‘formal’ arena for debate amongst ordinary citizens, and it reported local activities extensively, whether pro or anti tour. Interviews for this study include people on both sides of the controversy, at varying levels of involvement, as well as the Police Officer in charge of the Invercargill operation. These interviews are invaluable as they provide a window inside the minds of the actors involved, bringing events to life and going some way toward recreating the atmosphere in one small city at a tumultuous time in New Zealand’s history.
It would be an understatement to assert that the history of sporting relations between New Zealand and South Africa has been chequered. On the rugby field, competition between the All Blacks and the Springboks has always been intense. The apex of the rivalry was marked by the Springbok tour of 1956, the year New Zealand went ‘rugby-mad’. ‘Like everyone else in New Zealand, or so it seemed, I lived in a fervent of excitement for the three months in the depths of that winter,’ Warwick Roger later remembered. ‘We read everything we could about the tour (and newspapers gave it massive coverage), listened to every word on the wireless, discussed it endlessly, rolled it around in our imaginations. It was a time when the entire country was united in a common cause to beat the ‘Boks.’

By 1959, the focus of sporting contact between New Zealand and South Africa had moved out of the rugby ground. Moral questions that arose over playing sport with teams representing the white-dominated South Africa, which severely oppressed its black and ‘coloured’ citizens under its system of apartheid, began to place New Zealand governments in a dilemma. In 1959 the ‘No Maoris No Tour’ controversy had been sparked by the NZRFU’s decision to continue bowing to South African wishes by including only white players in the 1960 All Black touring side. With New Zealand’s image of racial equality under threat, thousands protested and signed petitions, although the tour proceeded unhindered. The Springbok tour of New Zealand in 1965 was, in contrast, largely free.

1 Warwick Roger, Old Heroes: The 1956 Springbok Tour and the Lives Beyond, Auckland, 1991, p. 10
of political protest, although what Graeme Barrow describes as a ‘sword of Damocles’ hung over future All Black tours to South Africa. As opinions on racial issues were changing world-wide, moral condemnation of apartheid was mounting.

In 1970, Maori players toured South Africa with the All Blacks as ‘honorary whites’. For many people this concession from the South Africans was victory enough, the idea of a complete sporting boycott of South Africa being without a broad base of support until the early 1970s. With anti-apartheid organisations such as Halt All Racist Tours (HART) growing in strength and support, New Zealand Prime Minister Norman Kirk pressured the NZRFU into ‘postponing’ the 1973 Springbok tour until such time as a genuinely merit-selected team was available. In 1976, however, the All Blacks went to South Africa. The tour became a public relations debacle for the National Government that outraged world opinion and culminated in a boycott of the Montreal Olympics by a number of African states.

With the signing of what became known as the Gleneagles Agreement at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 1977, many hoped that the controversy had ended. The New Zealand Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, was one of its architects, promising 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’. However, individual governments were left to decide how best to fulfil their

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3 Quoted in McKinnon, Independence, p. 244.
obligations under Gleneagles, a crucial proviso that was Muldoon’s major contribution to the agreement. Muldoon’s interpretation left sporting bodies with the final say, and the National Government able to maintain its policy of non-interference in sport.

When the NZRFU decided to go ahead and invite the Springboks to tour in 1981, most New Zealanders therefore already had an opinion about the prospect of a visit from the South Africans. Most anti-tour people justified their opposition on the basis that the apartheid regime was immoral, and that the sporting boycott was a legitimate way to put pressure on South Africa for internal change. New Zealand’s image would be profoundly damaged by allowing the tour to proceed, they believed, and there was a strong likelihood of violence and civil disorder. Anti-tour people viewed the decision of the NZRFU as anything ranging from selfish and ignorant to implicitly racist.

Many anti-tour people also tied oppression in South Africa to the oppression they felt at home. According to Spiro Zavos, there was an ‘underlying cultural revolution’ within the protest movement, in that ‘young people, church people, Maori and women linked the protest against apartheid in South Africa with their exclusion from the establishment and the mainstream of New Zealand life.’ The prominence of these groups in the anti-tour movement was symptomatic of a fundamental reaction against the dominance of the ‘rugby, racing and beer’ culture, seen as Pakeha and masculine. It was also part of a broader wave of protest which had begun in the 1960s, and included the peace movement, the rise of feminism and the political reawakening of Maori.
On the other side, most pro-tour people pleaded that politics should be kept separate from sport, and that sporting bodies should be at liberty to make their own decisions. The freedom of individuals to play and watch sport with whoever they wished, the pro-tour faction argued, should be kept sacrosanct. Besides, they claimed, the way to effect real change in South Africa was through building bridges rather than putting up fences. Many felt that New Zealand was being singled out whilst other countries had sporting contact with South Africa, and was being ‘bullied’, especially by African nations in the Commonwealth. Arguments to the effect that South Africa should be allowed to deal with domestic issues in any manner it chose were less acceptable in mainstream pro-tour opinion than they had been previously, reflecting a genuinely widespread aversion to the apartheid system.

However genuine the distaste for South Africa’s harshly discriminatory racial laws, to sacrifice rugby between the All Blacks and South Africa was a very big ‘ask’. As New Zealand’s most ‘significant sporting contact’, rugby was naturally the major battlefield for any dispute over the implications of Gleneagles. To the Muldoon Government, with full knowledge that an election was scheduled for the same year as the tour the rugby public so eagerly awaited, the Gleneagles obligation to take ‘every practical step’ translated into efforts to dissuade the NZRFU that were at best half-hearted. Muldoon, following previous National strategy, put into action the strategy Geoff Chapple named after the Roman god with two faces. Under ‘Operation Janus’ the Government employed two different voices. One pandered to world opinion, vigorously
denouncing apartheid while pleading the right of sports
organisations to make their own decisions. The other was directed
at marginal seats in rural and provincial New Zealand, where anti-
apartheid sentiment came a distant second to rugby.⁴

Southland occupied an intriguing position in 1981, as two of
its three elected Members were the most prominent features on the
two faces of Janus. There was Brian Talboys, the Minister of Foreign
Affairs, whose moderate and reasonable appeals to the NZRFU were
seen by many as the Government’s liberal facade, designed to placate
world opinion. Then there was straight-talking Norman Jones -
impossible to describe without using the word ‘colourful’, back-
bench Member of Parliament for Invercargill, and Muldoon’s
mouthpiece in Heartland New Zealand. For Jones, the tour issue
was simple. ‘Those that don’t want to [watch the Springboks play]
can stay at home, that’s all there is to it. If I can’t go and watch 15
guys kick a bit of leather around the paddock there isn’t much left is
there?’⁵

In his Southland constituency, as in much of rural and
provincial New Zealand, Norman Jones found a willing audience.
New Zealand’s southernmost province was in 1981, as it had been
for much of its history, a primarily rural area. Invercargill, its major
centre, was a small city with a population of just under 50,000, which
served as a base for the surrounding farming districts.⁶ Founded in
1856, Invercargill had been populated in its early days by Scots, who,
according to Clive Lind, ‘sought a different sort of lifestyle to what

⁵ Southland Times, 15 April 1981, p.3.
they had been used to 'back home', but still felt comfortable with familiar Scottish names such as Dee, Tay and Esk for some of the main streets.' This Scottish heritage was reflected in the fact that a high proportion of Invercargill’s residents, nearly a third, belonged to the Presbyterian church.8

'Southlanders so took to the game [of rugby] that it has been unchallenged in the province for its 100 years as the number one sport,' wrote Lynn McConnell in his history of the Southland Rugby Football Union (SRFU).9 Southland was hardly alone amongst New Zealand provinces in boasting of its love for rugby, but the game was genuinely extremely strong there in terms of its following. At the height of the tour controversy, many letters to the Southland Times earnestly discussed the fortunes of the Southland rugby team and the All Blacks - a testament to the popularity of rugby in the 'Deep South'. As well as this, most Invercargill people were never going to be receptive to the message of the anti-tour organisations many perceived as dangerously radical or even communist-inspired. ‘Solid, sensible Southland’, as former Prime Minister Sidney Holland had described the province at its centennial celebrations, was not the place for mass movements or radical political action.10

In 1981 Invercargill was defiantly pleased with its down-to-earth, pragmatic reputation. Southlanders often boasted of their self-sufficiency (with under 4 per cent of New Zealand’s population, Southland’s agricultural products were earning 12.5 per cent of the

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8 The 1981 census showed that 16.7% of New Zealanders considered themselves Presbyterian, whilst in Invercargill that figure was 36.3%. *New Zealand Census 1981*, Bulletin 9, p. 136.
national export income) and almost relished their isolation. ‘If the rest of New Zealand drifted off and joined Sydney,’ said the Deputy Mayor of Invercargill in 1980, ‘Southland would one day notice that there used to be something north of Gore, but would relax and say the drift was not such a bad idea anyway.’

If the rest of New Zealand perceived Southland and its capital Invercargill as politically and socially conservative, insular and dreary, Southlanders were often proud to have a distinctive identity that separated them from the big cities further north. The tour issue was to be no exception. A poll taken by the Southland Times just prior to the tour put the level of tour support in the province at 50 per cent, with 30 per cent against and 20 per cent undecided. Men, National voters, those professing to be ‘rugby followers’ and those without a tertiary education were shown to be more likely to support the tour, as was the case elsewhere. The level of pro-tour sentiment ran higher than the national feeling at that stage, with a national poll in May 1981 showing 43 per cent of respondents opposed to the tour and 41 per cent in favour. Later polls registered significantly more support in Southland for the tour once it actually got underway and was threatened by the anti-tour movement. All in all, there was considerable evidence for the claim that, as Norman Jones had warned his leader, if the Government called off the tour Muldoon could ‘say good-bye to the Invercargill seat’.

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11 Ibid., p. 3.
13 The poll surveyed 500 people in Southland and was regarded as the only comprehensive test of public opinion on the Springbok tour issue. Southland Times poll, Southland Times, 6 July 1981, p. 1.
The letters written to the *Southland Times* over the period of the tour controversy support the idea that Invercargill was a stronghold of pro-tour opinion. Of the letters published between 15 September 1980 and October 1981, around two fifths expressed anti-tour sentiment. Naturally, a large proportion of these letters mentioned the writer’s aversion to apartheid. Some also expressed disgust at the attitude of the NZRFU, which they viewed as pig-headed and intolerant, concerned only about the possible financial gain from the tour and caring nothing for the division its stance was causing in New Zealand. That division and the possible international repercussions were also mentioned by many as reasons to oppose the tour, and this moderate anti-tour stance was also adopted in *Southland Times* editorials. Most anti-tour letters were moderate, and many distanced themselves from HART, which was seen by a significant number on both sides as radical and promoting violence. Relatively few openly criticised Muldoon or National Government policy, supporting the results of the *Southland Times* poll, which showed that only 62% of those against the tour felt that the government should intervene to stop it. By mid 1981, when the trickle of letters turned into a flood, those with anti-tour views were claiming they were the majority.

It was evident, however, that pro-tour supporters felt that most New Zealanders were on their side also. In Invercargill they had a case. In the same period over half of all tour-related letters to the *Southland Times* were in support of the Springboks’ visit. Many of these followed the well worn pattern of arguing that an individual’s right to watch rugby overrode any moral question.
concerning apartheid in South Africa—and many in fact did express concerns about the regime. There was a definite feeling, however, that New Zealand in general and rugby supporters in particular were being singled out for criticism. A number of letters recalled the past military and sporting links between the two nations, and continued the familiar refrain that building bridges to South Africa was the best way to aid the dismantling of apartheid. Well before the Springboks arrived, many correspondents expressed concern that the team would be ill-treated, and would get a bad picture of the country, and especially the province.

As anti-tour protest action grew more strident outside of Invercargill, a definite desire emerged amongst many to distance themselves from the activities of the ‘rabble’ up north. ‘Sir, I only hope Invercargill, small as it is, will have enough decency, pride and common sense not to retaliate as far as protesting goes. Let’s keep our city clean.’ By mid-1981 an increasing amount of anger, frustration and contempt was directed at anti-tour protesters, including those based locally. Many people saw the anti-tour faction as a militant, disruptive minority of ‘stirrers, bleaters and do-gooders’ with left-wing or even communist sentiments. As tensions built, many letters criticised the news media, including the Southland Times, echoing voices around the country that claimed the media had an anti-tour agenda.

Many of the moderate pro-tour letters, which made up the majority, took it for granted that opposition to apartheid was universal. Robin Watson complained, ‘I have never heard a single New Zealander say they are in favour of apartheid, but if anyone

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dares to speak out in favour of the tour they are immediately accused of being so.' Watson was not listening hard enough - a significant number of letters showed at least implicit support for the apartheid regime. Some even expressed it immediately after the mandatory 'I don’t support apartheid, but...'. For instance, one writer asserted that ‘apartheid is and always will be a grave injustice,’ but two sentences later asked, ‘how many countries have we seen where the black man has taken over from the white man and mass murders and the deterioration of the country have taken place?’ Many letters claimed that South African blacks were fortunate compared with indigenous peoples elsewhere on the continent, and argued that they were not forced to live in the Republic. ‘The blacks in South Africa are in much better condition than those in other parts of Africa,’ wrote one person, ‘you don’t see any starving ones in South Africa.’ While most were content to assert that South Africa should be left to mind its own business, and argued that there were a number of other countries with lamentable human rights records, a small minority openly supported the South African system. Some echoed the seemingly benevolent paternalism of the South African propaganda machine, stating that because of inter-tribal differences and lack of education, black South Africans were just not ready to have a say in government. Many of these letters viewed non-white South Africans as ‘a happy but primitive black race who wouldn’t have a clue what to do without a white man’s help.’ Some went further. For instance, one writer sarcastically

20 Over a fifth of all pro-tour letters to the Editor of the Southland Times between 15 September 1980 and 31 October 1981 (45 letters in total) either explicitly supported South Africa's racial policies, or suggested that New Zealanders should accept them without protest.

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commented, 'it just makes me nauseous listening to how the blacks are mistreated, for example, being segregated from the whites, and horror of horrors, they are not allowed a vote - what an earth-shattering disaster!'24

The Reverend Selwyn Yeoman identified the growing trend of pro-apartheid letters in the Southland Times in July 1981, viewing it as 'a real disappointment to those who have genuinely tried to keep sport and apartheid separated.'25 While many of the opinions of those with extreme pro-tour sentiments came across as deplorably ignorant at best, some 'evidence' to support them was available in newspapers in 1980 and 1981. This was mainly in the form of a steady stream of what HART's chairman, Trevor Richards, termed 'things are changing' stories. These articles claimed that the South African situation had progressed to a state where sport was more integrated and progress was being made in other areas.26 'Bridge-building' views were backed up by a visit from the information officer from the South African Consulate in February 1981, who said that 'some people argue that South Africa must be isolated, but I can't see how any new ideas can be given if there is no contact'.27 The Southland Times published interviews with pro-tour people who had lived in South Africa, such as Wayne Cody. Cody claimed that 'if Nelson Mandela is imprisoned on Robben Island, then he must be there for a good reason. I am also amazed that New Zealanders can believe Steve Biko was killed by police.'28

While the Southland Times also published a series of anti-apartheid

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articles by such people as Donald Woods and Barry Streek, no doubt the pro-South African stories had an impact, if only to lend support to already entrenched views and prejudices.

The 1981 season was to be dubbed the darkest in the history of Southland rugby. The Maroons experienced a dismal run in the provincial championships, and Southland was exiled to the backblocks of the South Island’s Second Division. That is the story the rugby books will tell. Meanwhile, a controversy raged in Invercargill and the rest of New Zealand, that had nothing, and at the same time everything, to do with rugby.
The main voice of pro-tour sentiment in Invercargill in 1981 was Norman Jones, Member of Parliament. Jones' support of the tour actually contradicted his party's policy, as the National Party officially disapproved of sporting contact with South Africa. Jones made a number of inflammatory pro-tour statements, both within and outside the House of Representatives. He portrayed HART members as 'using apartheid as an excuse' to further the cause of communism, and argued that the organisation could not be trusted to carry out peaceful protests. In an election year and a marginal seat, Jones read the feeling of many pro-tour people in Invercargill well. He appealed particularly to older residents, who had lived through the Second World War, joining their chorus of nostalgia for a time when South Africa was seen as an ally. 'I'm not going to kick my World War II desert comrades in the stomach,' Jones insisted.

Malcolm McKinnon claims that active opposition to the tour was actually 'at odds with the party's political culture. It aligned National with what were seen as radical pressure groups, not to mention the Labour Party.' According to the Invercargill HART Chairman, Michael Roche, Invercargill Labour Party members were

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1 In actual fact, a report prior to the tour suggested that there were as many as thirteen National Members, including two Cabinet Ministers, in favour of a Springbok visit. Southland Times, 21 May 1981, p.1.
indeed opposed to the tour, but for different reasons. For some, it was out of genuine anti-apartheid sentiment, and others because of their opposition to the Muldoon Government.5 The Labour Candidate for the Invercargill seat, Dougal Soper, in his single statement on the matter, claimed the National Party was using the tour to divert attention from the ‘real issues’ facing the country, such as unemployment.6 Soper was a Trade Union leader, and Jones’ recurrent remarks about HART being a dangerous communist-influenced organisation were possibly designed to destroy some of his appeal to the electorate, as well as to shift the focus of tour debate from apartheid to law and order.7 This was probably a major reason why Soper confined himself to just one public comment, as did the Social Credit candidate, M. J. Radich. Radich denounced the ‘politically organised slavery’ of apartheid and expressed concern at the damage a tour would do to New Zealand’s reputation on the world stage.8 By the time the Springboks arrived in New Zealand, however, the strategy of quiet anti-tour sentiment was already proving ineffective in winning over the Invercargill public. Polls showed Labour only commanded 15 per cent of voter support in the Southland area, with Social Credit placed at just 13 per cent, and the National Party far ahead on 44 per cent.9

Invercargill City Council (ICC) members were also sharply

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5 Interview with Michael Roche, 8 July 1998, Gore.
7 McKinnon, ‘Resolution and Apprehension’, p.28.
8 M. J. Radich, quoted in *Southland Times*, 30 June 1981, p. 4. After the election, Radich admitted attending the Springbok game at Rugby Park, but stated that that did not mean he supported the tour. *Southland Times*, 30 November 1981, p. 3.
9 Southland Times poll, *Southland Times*, 6 July 1981, p. 1. The *Southland Times* noted a large number of respondents would not declare their preference, which may have reflected a ‘suspicion of polling’, which had not previously been done extensively in Southland.
divided on the issue. Many were reluctant to openly declare their stance on the tour, prompting accusations of ‘fence-sitting’ by the anti-tour organisations. Well before the tour, however, ICC members were forced to show where their sympathies lay. The issue was brought to their attention by Councillor Neil Boniface. Because of his aversion to apartheid, and because of the divisive effect a visit by the Springboks would have on the community, Boniface was ‘totally opposed’ to the tour. In December 1980 he brought a Notice of Motion asking the Council to express concern at the forthcoming Springbok visit. In a move that Boniface described as an ‘act of cowardice’ the ICC, acting on legal advice, decided that the motion was outside the scope of its activities. According to Boniface ‘the majority of Councillors were pro-tour…[and] there were some that thought it was not the Council’s business to make a stand on this particular issue.’ Closer to the time of the tour, the tour issue was actually debated when Boniface put forward another motion, this time asking the ICC to withdraw all its services and facilities from the Springboks. The initiative received little support. While several other councillors declared their opposition to the tour, it was clear the majority would never support an anti-tour move by the ICC. One member even declared that he would be happy to billet a Springbok, and offered his car for transport.

Neil Boniface recalls his disappointment at people who

10 Interview with Michael Roche.
11 Interview with Neil Boniface, 10 July 1998, Invercargill.
14 Ibid.
15 This motion was actually doomed from the beginning, as the Race Relations Conciliator had ruled that such a move would be illegal, responding to similar attempts by other local body representatives. Southland Times, 2 May 1981, p.4.
expressed their opposition to the tour, 'but when it came to the crunch, they watered it down.'¹⁷ This reluctance to stand up and be counted was a recurring feature of Invercargill’s reaction to the Springbok tour. A fear of the possible side-effects of public opposition, for instance loss of business, undoubtedly had an influence.¹⁸ Michael Roche claims that many anti-tour people remained 'sympathisers under the surface who weren't prepared to come out...and you couldn't blame people for that because there was absolute pure hatred.'¹⁹ The widespread unwillingness to publicly express anti-tour views became more intense as the tour drew nearer.

Trade unions in Invercargill occupied an ambiguous position. Nationally, the Federation of Labour (FOL) had declared its opposition to the forthcoming tour, and trade union officials were well represented in the ranks of anti-apartheid organisations.²⁰ The FOL’s President Jim Knox, however, acknowledged that ‘feeling for rugby’ had affected the level of support for anti-tour activity by union members.²¹ This was evidently also the case in Invercargill. Michael Roche acknowledges that the Coalition Against the Tour had the support of trade unions, ‘except for some of the rugby people.’²² Indeed, some angry letters to the Southland Times followed the FOL’s decision to publicly state its opposition, claiming that the organisation did not speak for the many thousands of paying union members who were looking forward to the rugby

¹⁷ Interview with Neil Boniface.
¹⁸ Ibid.
¹⁹ Interview with Michael Roche.
²² Interview with Michael Roche.
matches. In Invercargill, several individual trade unions considered tour related issues. The only really significant local decision was that made by employees of the Grand Hotel, where the Springboks were to stay. The staff voted 35 - 6 in favour of providing services to the team.23 This showed a much greater willingness to serve the Springboks than in places such as Christchurch, where hotel services were refused.

Educators in Invercargill, however, were one occupational group which strongly opposed the tour. While bodies such as the Post Primary Teachers Association were unwilling to be 'branded' with anti-tour affiliation, many individual school teachers joined the anti-tour movement in Invercargill.24 The Southland Times reported in December 1980 that there was 'disquiet' among Southland principals due to the proposed tour. In a move spearheaded by two Southlanders, the Otago-Southland Secondary School Principals Association wrote to the NZRFU expressing its collective concern.25 The widespread opposition by educators to the tour supported Wellington figures, which show the largest group of anti-tour protesters came from educationally based professions.26 However not all teachers were against the tour - Michael Roche, himself a teacher, notes that when he 'got absolute hell' from his students, very little support was received from most of the staff.27 The generally strong support from this professional group, and the relative lack of involvement by rank and file trade union members, also lends weight to the view that the anti-tour movement in

26 King, 'A Social Analysis', p. 9.
27 Interview with Michael Roche.
Invercargill was largely middle class. According to Michael Roche, most of the anti-tour people in Invercargill had a tertiary education.28 This is supported by the Wellington study, which showed that the majority of anti-tour protesters there came from what is termed the ‘liberal middle class’, characterised as ‘standing at one remove from the capitalist system. They are professionally concerned with discussing or transmitting ideas, and they tend to be well-informed about international affairs.’29

Two other groups of people who were very prominent in the anti-tour movement nationally were relatively quiet - women and Maori. While Michael Roche estimates that about half of all anti-tour protesters in Invercargill were women, women’s groups in the city were silent on the issue.30 When the National Federation of Country Women’s Institutes decided to provide hospitality for a group of South African farmers in New Zealand to support the Springbok tour, however, several local members disassociated themselves from the decision, which was apparently made without the consultation of the Southern South Island Branch.31 Maori groups too had little to say on the issue. The Otago-Southland organiser of HART, Francesca Holloway, was quoted in April 1981 as saying that the Invercargill anti-tour movement had the ‘formal support’ of both Maori and Pacific Island groups. Even so Michael Roche claims that most Maori in Invercargill were ‘very, very pro-tour’ (a fact that surprised the anti-tour group), even to the extent of being involved in the backlash against the protesters. One man did

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28 Ibid; The 1981 census showed 27% of men and 21% of women in the Invercargill City area had attended a tertiary institution of some kind. New Zealand Census 1981, Bulletin 9, p. 124.
30 Ibid.
write to the *Southland Times* expressing his sadness at the ‘decision of our people to extend a welcome to [the Springboks] in Gisborne,’ claiming that ‘Te Mana of our people will be at stake over this.’

This reflected the split at a national level between those Maori who supported the tour and the strong Maori representation in the anti-tour movement. So Invercargill Maori, like Invercargill women, had little distinct identity as a group in relation to the Springbok tour issue, a trend that was out of step with the situation in the larger centres. This may be related to the fact that Maori made up well under 10% of the population of Invercargill city, and they were not a prominent group.

It is rather less surprising that rugby administrators in Invercargill tended to favour the tour. The SRFU passed a motion backing the proposed tour in November 1980. All the sub-unions in the Southland area also lent their unanimous support, reflecting the enormous popularity of the tour at rugby grass-roots level. The SRFU’s chairman, Jack Smith, asserted that ‘if the tour was to become a moral issue rather than a game of rugby, it was up to a higher power to stop the tour.’ Furthermore, according to the captain of the Southland Rugby team, all the provincial representatives were keen to play the Springboks.

Being a ‘rugby person’, however, was not synonymous with being pro-tour. Victoria University’s study showed that a significant number of Wellington protesters were also involved in playing or

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34 Jack Young states that ‘one or two’ members of the SRFU were privately against the tour. Interview with Jack Young.
coaching rugby, and this was also the case in Invercargill.37 Former All Black and Southland representative player Robert Burgess, who in the 1970s had made himself unavailable to tour South Africa, expressed his opposition to the tour in the Southland Times. ‘By playing rugby against South Africa we are condoning apartheid. It’s not good enough saying you oppose apartheid but support rugby contact with South Africa.’38 Furthermore, the Rugby Club of Southland Boys High School, a very strongly rugby-orientated school, had voted against an SRFU motion calling for support of the tour.39 This opposition by school rugby coaches fits in with the stance on the tour of teachers generally.

If the rugby establishment had put its weight firmly behind the tour, most church leaders of all denominations were just as adamant about condemning it. Opposition to apartheid was universally expressed by church leaders in Invercargill. Many leaders encouraged Christians to express peacefully their opposition to the tour, and the Council of Churches officially called on the SRFU to oppose the invitation to the Springboks in September 1980.40 In Invercargill the anti-tour movement received huge support from most churches, which joined the Invercargill Coalition Against the Tour. Church leaders were divided, however, over how best to express their opposition to apartheid. For instance, there were calls for Christians to welcome the team to Southland in a courteous manner and to seek opportunities to ‘challenge in a friendly manner the team members on any support they may give to

their government's apartheid policy', a strategy which echoed 'bridge-building' ideas.41

Church congregations were far from unified on the issue. Michael Brown’s analysis of the Presbyterian church’s response to the Springbok tour issue gives evidence of a wide range of opinions within the church, and he asserts that this led to ‘internal friction’.42 In Invercargill, the opposition of most of the clergy to the tour was not shared by a substantial proportion of churchgoers. At least one Minister experienced a hostile backlash, according to Michael Roche, simply for using church buildings for anti-tour meetings.43

Although about ten per cent of anti-tour letters to the Southland Times between 1980 and 1981 had mentioned Christian belief as a motivation, an equal number denounced the involvement of the church with groups such as HART, and argued that it was not the place of the church to comment on political issues. ‘I deplore my church interfering with my right to watch any other country playing rugby,’ wrote one correspondent.44 A study of church involvement in Wellington indicated that the division caused by the tour issue caused a reduction in numbers of churchgoers.45 The strength of pro-tour feeling in Southland, combined with the above evidence, suggests that this also occurred in Invercargill. Prayer vigils organised under the banner of the Coalition did not draw large numbers. For instance, one held in July 1981 attracted only three

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41 Southland Times, 11 April 1981, p. 3.
43 Interview with Michael Roche.

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people. This demonstrated that opposition to the tour in Invercargill, while Church-supported, was primarily secular.

The main contributor in the fight against the tour in Invercargill, and the most vocal group on tour issues generally, was HART, which had joined with other groups, churches and individuals in the Coalition Against the Tour. The Coalition was formed in line with the creation of the South Island Coalition Against the Tour, which held its first conference in March 1981.

The leader of HART in Invercargill, and the Coalition’s spokesperson, was Michael Roche, an Irish-born school teacher whose opposition to apartheid was backed up by personal experience of discrimination as an Irishman, and first-hand knowledge of the conditions Kenyan blacks lived in. Roche had been involved with the movement since meeting Trevor Richards in the early 1970s, and the Invercargill movement had evolved from around that time. In the early days it comprised only ‘a dozen to twenty people’, who used to meet every few months, more frequently when anti-apartheid issues were prominent. According to Roche, the movement in Invercargill at that time was not strong. During the 1970s the members’ activities had comprised small-scale marches, and letters to the local newspaper to express their opposition to continued sporting contacts with South Africa. Momentum and membership did build up, however, as the most serious and divisive issue in the history of New Zealand’s sporting relations with South Africa arose. The reaction to news of the proposed

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47 Victoria University’s study showed that religious belief did not appear to be one of the Wellington protesters’ major motivations. King, ‘A Social Analysis’, p. 10.
49 Interview with Michael Roche.
50 Ibid.
Springbok tour amongst Invercargill HART members was 'absolute indignation - we were horrified that the rugby people should be so insensitive to world opinion, and so insensitive to the plight of the Africans.'

Roche estimates that the number of people actively supporting the Coalition had grown to between 100 and 150 by 1981. More than half of these people were middle aged or older. This is reflective of public opinion in Southland, with polls showing that younger people were more likely to favour the Springboks' visit, but it is out of line with the idea of protesters as young radicals. In Wellington the movement had been spearheaded by people in their late twenties and thirties, and even this was thought to be older than the popular image of protesters. The Invercargill movement's much older make-up is probably at least partly due to Invercargill's lack of a University or a large student population, with students being one of the largest groups of protesters in Wellington, for instance. It also probably had an impact on the nature of anti-tour protests in Invercargill, which were moderate in style compared with larger centres. 'My philosophy wouldn't go along with ripping down fences, getting involved with big fights....I was completely opposed to any confrontations that would promote violence or provoke it,' commented Michael Roche. According to Neil Boniface, most of the Invercargill group were not experienced protesters, and the meetings had an almost 'family-orientated' feel.

51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 King, 'A Social Analysis', p. 6.
55 Ibid., p. 9.
56 Interview with Michael Roche.
57 Interview with Neil Boniface.
There was an element within the Invercargill movement, however, pushing for more radical tactics, and Roche's moderate views meant he 'came under a bit of flak from some of them.'\(^{58}\) This division does not appear to be as serious as that within the Dunedin movement, where differing views over tactics caused, according to Jillian Dempster, 'a form of factionalism' to develop.\(^{59}\) The Invercargill Coalition was often at pains to stress that it wished to mobilise everyone who was against the tour, regardless of whether or not they approved of some of HART's more radical tactics in other centres, and protesters in Invercargill pledged to march peacefully.\(^{60}\) Despite this, they were not immune from the 'rent-a-demo' labels that anti-tour groups received in other places. Roche personally came under fire from Norman Jones, who painted him as a dangerous, and possibly violent, subversive who fortunately lacked sufficient support to cause any real trouble in Invercargill.\(^{61}\)

The Coalition Against the Tour in Invercargill worked in close cooperation with the South Island Coalition, and the national executive of HART. The national organiser, Pauline McKay, had been in Invercargill as early as February 1980 to promote the early stages of HART's campaign to prevent the tour.\(^{62}\) In April 1980 HART supporters in Invercargill delivered leaflets outlining their objections to the tour, and asked people on the street to sign a telegram to Prime Minister Muldoon, calling on him to cancel the

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58 Interview with Michael Roche.
proposed tour.\textsuperscript{63} When the campaign got into full swing during 1981, there were regular visits from both Francesca Holloway and HART’s South Island organiser, Steven Bayliss. A general invitation to pro-tour people to air their views at meetings held with these people was often issued in the early months of 1981 - sometimes they did, apparently without any unpleasantness.\textsuperscript{64}

Invercargill was also a stop on the speaking tours of several prominent anti-apartheid activists, such as banned newspaper editor Donald Woods, Canon John Osmers, and the Chairman of the South African Non-racial Olympic Committee, Sam Ramsamy. Despite the credentials of the speakers, HART meetings in Invercargill drew extremely modest numbers, (only a dozen for Sam Ramsamy’s visit in October 1980), prompting the scorn of Norman Jones in Parliament, and his assertion that ‘HART cannot get enough people in Invercargill to support it, that is for sure.’\textsuperscript{65} Jones himself had turned down an invitation to attend one such meeting, saying ‘HART can go to hell. They can find someone else to earbash.’\textsuperscript{66} Michael Roche agreed that the number of protesters was very low compared with the number of pro-tour people.\textsuperscript{67} It is important to note, however, that lack of public anti-tour protest did no: necessarily imply pro-tour feeling, as many people were concerned about the repercussions of protesting. Many people also chose to make a stand by simple, unofficial protest such as withdrawing their children from school rugby, as Neil Boniface

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Southland Times}, 2 March 1981, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{67} Interview with Michael Roche.
This was itself symbolic of the way support for rugby was often seen as support for the tour, and likewise being anti-tour was often equated with being anti-rugby.

The first protest march in Invercargill against the 1981 Springbok tour was on Friday 1 May 1981, called a day of national mobilisation by HART but dubbed ‘Communist Day’ by Norman Jones. The march attracted 300 people, and made its way through Invercargill’s main streets in a peaceful and orderly fashion. Some marchers carried banners, with slogans ranging from ‘Remember Biko, Crime Against Humanity’, to ‘Rugby, Racism and Beer’. Most participants interviewed by the Southland Times mentioned abhorrence of apartheid as their main motivation. The turnout was relatively low compared with other centres around the country. Nevertheless, march organisers hailed it as a clear indication that there was a substantial body of opinion against the tour in the city. Michael Roche claimed that if the tour went ahead ‘in the face of the view in ‘Conservative Invercargill’, it will show the Government is not running New Zealand how the people want it.’

By that stage, with the fate of the tour still very much uncertain, the Coalition did not plan to organise any other march. However, when the tour actually did go ahead, the Coalition planned another demonstration in line with protests around the country to coincide with the Springboks’ first match in Gisborne (dubbed the ‘Day of Shame’). Like the other marches sponsored by

68 Interview with Neil Boniface.
69 Southland Times, 15 April 1981, p. 3.
71 Ibid.
the Coalition, it was publicised mainly by word of mouth and the
distribution of fliers, as well as exposure in the Southland Times.74
‘The march will symbolise the theme of regret,’ said Ian Lamont,
one of the organisers, ‘there will be no banners or placards. They
will be replaced by black arms bands and a slow pace, as the marchers
will be expressing the sense of tragedy which we believe follows the
decisions which have been made - or rather those which have not
been made.’75 The march began at the Civic Theatre and finished at
the gates of Rugby Park, although, as the organisers had been careful
to stress prior to the march, no attempt was made to enter the
ground.76 The protest was orderly and peaceful, with some 130
people marching quietly.

Their silence contrasted markedly with the constant barrage
of verbal abuse they were subjected to from hecklers who observed
them from the footpath. Bystanders threw eggs, and a motorist
intimidated marchers by driving up behind the group and braking
suddenly. The Southland Times reported that the voices of the tour
supporters ‘joined in a crescendo of vulgarity.’77 ‘Some of these
chaps across the road used to go to the pub with me before,’ said one
marcher, ‘and now they hurl abuse and won’t even talk to me.’78 It
was symbolic of the way the tour issue had divided the city of
Invercargill, and the entire country. Tensions were building by 22
July, and they were about to boil over. The next match on the
schedule was the Hamilton match, the cancellation of which was to
heighten the already charged atmosphere. It is interesting to note

74 Interview with Michael Roche.
75 Southland Times, 20 July 1980, p. 3.
76 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
that despite the obvious pro-tour feeling in the city, a pro-tour group was not organised until that point. After Hamilton, the focus shifted away from the anti-tour group to the angry pro-tour majority.
Possibly the most startling and poignant scenes of the 1981 Springbok tour occurred on Saturday, 25 July 1981, the day of the match between Waikato and the South African team. Unlike the first match at Gisborne, the focus was on-field, but the Springboks were not able to play one second of rugby. Around 350 protesters from all over the North Island rushed onto the playing area, linked arms, and stood strong, under pressure from dazed police and an increasingly hostile crowd. ‘The whole world’s watching!’ the protesters chanted, a catch cry that seemed to cut right to the heart of what many New Zealanders were feeling. In the end, the crowd was left stunned and bitter, the match having been cancelled before it began, with the threat of an aircraft flying into the grandstand proving the pivotal factor in the police decision.¹

More happened at Hamilton than the cancellation of a game of rugby. In the aftermath, national opinion on both sides of the issue crystallised and hardened, polarising the country even further. A Herald-NRB survey taken between 25 July and 30 July showed that 49 per cent of respondents believed the Springboks should not have toured, 42 per cent approved of their visit, and only 9 per cent had no opinion. Comparing this poll with a similar poll taken in May 1981, gains are registered for both sides nationally. The anti-tour gain was actually greater, with the most significant figure being the one showing that the proportion of undecided people had

¹ See Chapple, 1981, pp. 79-131, for a detailed account of the events at Hamilton from the demonstrators’ point of view.
dropped by 7 per cent. The two camps were now more distinct and people were more willing to align themselves.

This polarisation was sharpened by the vehemence of the pro-tour backlash in Hamilton the night after the cancellation, and beyond. Hamilton was similar to Invercargill in that, as Geoff Chapple commented, 'it was basically a service centre for the surrounding Waikato farms, and was stamped with that provincial conservatism and rugby patriotism.' Rugby supporters vented their fury on the anti-tour people, often savagely, with many injuries occurring. The rugby public's inability to fathom what was motivating the protesters, many of whom had travelled from larger centres to demonstrate at Rugby Park, had turned from frustration into blind rage. Hamilton had made the gap between pro and anti into a gaping chasm. According to Tony Reid, many pro-tour people were puzzled by the events there. 'Once upon a time city and country were the same - once upon a time you weren't a Kiwi unless you stood by rugby.'

The great divide created by Hamilton stretched across the whole country, and in Invercargill, at the opposite end of New Zealand, it was particularly profound. 'Nowhere in New Zealand,' wrote Tom Newnham of CARE, 'except in Hamilton itself, was the backlash so ugly after the Waikato match was cancelled.' While Newnham possibly overstates the extent of the reprisals, several events on the night of 25 July gave the tour issue a much more menacing flavour in the Deep South. Michael Roche and his wife

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3 Chapple, 1981, p. 79.
5 Newnham, By Batons, p. 43.
were sitting ‘half-awake’ in bed about 1.30 am. ‘The next thing this car drove, up....And you wake up and go, ‘What? what was that?’ And then these bottles came hurling through the window I was sleeping under, and the shower of glass! You’re scared to death, I don’t mind telling you....I’m a bloody coward, I can’t stand that sort of thing. I pulled my trousers on and went charging out in my bare feet, and cut my feet on the glass on the way out.’6 Whoever had flung the bottles had disappeared, never to be identified.

Meanwhile, anger was erupting in another part of Invercargill, this time directed at Dean Roche, Michael Roche’s 24 year-old son. ‘My son was absolutely neutral,’ Michael Roche asserts, ‘He couldn’t care less...but his name was the same as mine.’7 The same name was enough. Bricks had been propelled through a large plate glass window in the uninsured house Dean Roche was building, and several thousand dollars worth of damage had been inflicted on the interior.8

Ian Lamont, another previously prominent anti-tour figure, also experienced the wrath prompted by Hamilton first hand. On the same night, he had been involved in a ‘friendly’ discussion about the cancellation. One man had been talking to Lamont for half an hour, before striking him, breaking his nose. ‘He gave no warning at all, just ‘boof’, no ‘step outside’, or anything,’ said Lamont.9 It was reflective of the way the mood in Invercargill had suddenly deteriorated. Given the unpredictable, volatile situation that existed all over the country, especially where pro-tour feeling ran high, it was little wonder that Hamilton provoked many appeals

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6 Interview with Michael Roche
7 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
for calm and to reason.

Although these incidents were the most obvious explosions of tension in the city after Hamilton, there were other signals of increasing agitation. Michael Roche had received abusive and threatening anonymous telephone calls since well before Hamilton, but the cancellation provoked a fresh spate.\(^\text{10}\) (Apparently, Norman Jones' telephone also rang 'red hot' that weekend, with people 'from all walks of life' condemning the protest action, and urging that the tour be continued).\(^\text{11}\) There were also reports of car tyres being slashed.\(^\text{12}\) In the week following Hamilton, 'Support the Tour' was sprayed in towering red letters across the roof of a school building opposite the classroom where Michael Roche taught.\(^\text{13}\) While this type of activity occurred in other centres, and may seem tame compared with the Klan-style posters which appeared in Dunedin at the beginning of the tour, the feeling of persecution was real.\(^\text{14}\)

The anti-protester atmosphere was accompanied by a perceptible shift in public opinion. Previously, many letters to the *Southland Times* had been anti-protester in character, but their tone had been dismissive, asking the public to 'turn a deaf ear to those stirrers, bleaters and do-gooders who for far too long have monopolised the news media headlines.'\(^\text{15}\) Hamilton changed that, providing another reason to view demonstrators as a subversive, anarchistic minority. As HART was now perceived as being more than just a potential threat to the tour, many more letters

\(^{11}\) *Ibid.*
\(^{12}\) Interview with Neil Boniface.
\(^{13}\) Interview with Michael Roche.
condemned the organisation and its supporters.\textsuperscript{16}

From the point of view of the Government and many people all over the country, the protest faction was now viewed as a challenge to law and order, not just to rugby.\textsuperscript{17} Previously, fears of unrest had been a reason to oppose the tour. Now they were part of the pro-tour armoury, increasing the bitter determination to cling to the tour, not just for the game, but as a symbol of the victory of the ‘ordinary New Zealanders’ who wanted to watch it, over ‘mob-rule’. There was a nationalistic, anti-communist feel to letters in this vein to the \textit{Southland Times}, expressing such sentiments as ‘Kiwis will lick Commies any day.’\textsuperscript{18} Norman Jones hastened to join the chorus, loudly proclaiming that the country was being held to ransom by ‘urban guerrilla tactics’.\textsuperscript{19} People on both sides of the debate put the police under close scrutiny, questioning their role as guardians of civil order, and their ability to carry it out. It was pro-tour people, however, who were the most disappointed by the police strategy at Hamilton. ‘They seemed to think their job was to protect the unwashed rabble from the crowd rather than to remove them to allow play to begin,’ wrote one angry correspondent. ‘Given a free hand the younger members of the crowd could have done the job in ten minutes.’\textsuperscript{20}

A \textit{Southland Times} editorial published the Monday after the game criticised the ‘hard core of anti-tour protesters’, saying that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} There were over fifty letters to the Editor of an ‘anti-demonstrator’ character published in the \textit{Southland Times} between 15 September 1980 and October 1981, making up nearly a quarter of all pro-tour letters. In August alone, following the events at Hamilton, there were 23 ‘anti-demonstrator’ letters, comprising over 41\% of pro-tour letters.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Chapple, 1981, p. 130.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Kevin Kelly letter to the Editor, \textit{Southland Times}, 4 August 1981, p. 4.
\end{itemize}
their actions 'will have alienated the sympathy of many people opposed to the tour on moral grounds.' In contrast to the overall national feeling, there was evidence that this did indeed occur in Invercargill to some extent. The same poll which showed gains in both camps nationally following Hamilton put Invercargill pro-tour opinion at 68 per cent, with just 22 per cent against the tour, making it the most heavily pro-tour centre in New Zealand by a significant margin. Admittedly, the national spread restricted the number of respondents in a smaller city like Invercargill. Even allowing for this, however, it still amounted to a significant swing in opinion from the poll taken in early July which placed support for the tour at 50 per cent, with 30 per cent against it. A further complication is that the post-Hamilton poll surveyed Invercargill residents only, and not the rest of Southland (unlike the earlier poll). Presumably, pro-tour sentiment in the rural areas was higher, so the swing in opinion is more significant. In contrast to the national trend, the post-Hamilton poll did show a significant number (16 per cent) remained undecided on the issue, but again this had dropped since the pre-Hamilton survey. This general shift demonstrates that the renewed surge of pro-tour sentiment was by no means confined to the types of people who were inclined to write letters to the Editor.

Given the increasingly charged, pro-tour atmosphere, and the repercussions against protest action based within and outside Invercargill, it is not surprising that the local anti-tour movement all but disappeared from the public eye following Hamilton. Since the violence of 25 July, Michael Roche and his family left their home on the advice of the police. Ian Lamont remained at his
home, reluctant to leave for fear of setting up a sitting duck for vandals. The size of Invercargill was one feature which contributed to the antagonistic climate. One pro-tour *Southland Times* correspondent ominously wrote, ‘No doubt there will be some houses on the market as it’s a small town and the anti-faction are soon known.’ The leaders of the anti-tour movement at least were living in fear. Their names and photographs were no longer prominent in the *Southland Times*. According to Michael Roche, the lowering of his profile was a deliberate act in response to the way he was seen as the ‘villain’. ‘You couldn’t go into a club, walk down the street without getting insults hurled at you.’

The anxiety was not confined to outspoken anti-tour activists. More and more letters to the *Southland Times* used pseudonyms, some of them even stating that it was fear of identification that forced them to do so. If the possible repercussions had discouraged people from making an anti-tour stand previously, the aftermath of Hamilton must have sealed it. There was also a more general silence from the Coalition itself. After Hamilton, the suggestion of a protest outside Rugby Park on the day of the match in Invercargill seemed ‘suicidal’, according to Ian Lamont. ‘We have had two very quiet marches, which have obviously stirred up a lot of hatred. Southland being what it is, we are not going to indulge in what has been going on in the North.’ This decision won the praise of at least one *Southland Times* correspondent, who commended the anti-tour movement’s prudence in not wishing ‘to

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26 Interview with Michael Roche
provide a Roman holiday for thugs.’ 28 If the last march in the city, on the day of the Gisborne game, had provoked a ‘spill over of hatred, intolerance and prejudice’, as another correspondent wrote, what would happen if protest action threatened the Invercargill match? 29

Despite the local anti-tour group’s silence, just four days after Hamilton the ICC took the unusual step of banning marches, rallies and demonstrations on the day of the Invercargill game. The decision grew out of the suggestion of a council member who was shocked at the events in Hamilton. Councillor D. B. Burgess claimed that ‘if the pro-tour people start marching from Rugby Park, and the anti-tour from the Civic Theatre, it would end up at the cemetery.’ 30 The underlying fear was clearly that pro-tour forces, organised or not, would clash with protesters. The call was supported publicly by Norman Jones, and the Southland Police District Superintendent Tommy Thomson, who claimed that for pro and anti-tour factions to meet head on would ‘be a direct indictment of an already explosive situation’. 31 The move was not unanimous, with a number of Councillors claiming that the refusal of permits would amount to a suspension of democracy. 32 This was echoed by several correspondents to the Southland Times. ‘It is already blatantly obvious that the majority of Southlanders support New Zealand’s contact with a racist state,’ wrote one, ‘do they also now support the beginnings of a police state?’ 33

33 Cathie Cahill letter to the Editor, Southland Times, 1 August 1981, p. 17.
Although the City Council's move seemed like something of an over-reaction, within days it was made clear that other branches of HART would be in the city to protest, ignoring the ban, at the match on 8 August. The Council's preemptive strike had failed. South Island HART officials were searched by police when they were seen investigating Rugby Park, Invercargill airport and the Grand Hotel. At a meeting during their visit, local anti-tour people made it clear they would not support the use of violence, or even further protest. This reflected the moderate line taken by the Invercargill Coalition, as well as dread of pro-tour reaction. HART representatives publicly stated that protest action in the city would be 'low-key', and 'few, if any, Southlanders would take part.' Nonetheless, 'bus-loads' of demonstrators from Dunedin and Christchurch were expected.

Hamilton also acted as a spur to prick the sides of pro-tour intent. Previously there had been no organised activity in Invercargill in support of the tour. This was in contrast with other centres - a pro-tour march held in Timaru in April, for instance, had drawn more than 3,000 marchers - and was surprising, considering the strength of pro-tour feeling. Perhaps pro-tour people had not felt a show of strength was needed, or perhaps it lent weight to the traditional argument that Southlanders simply were not the 'type' to make their feelings publicly known. Whatever the reason, such moves did not occur until after Hamilton. Even then, organised activity was limited in size and scope.

36 A march to counter the May 1981 anti-tour mobilisation had been threatened by pro-tour individuals. Michael Roche letter to the Editor, Southland Times, 27 April 1981, p. 4.
Bill Mortlock, the Rugby Liaison Officer for the pro-tour Society of the Protection of Individual Rights (SPIR), an organisation with a significant following nationwide, had been in Invercargill as early as April to drum up support amongst people involved in rugby. A membership drive for a local branch, however, did not begin until the end of July, just over a week before the Springboks were due to arrive. It was initiated by ‘a group of pro-tour Southlanders’ and was designed to channel pro-tour energy into a constructive forum. The preliminary meeting, with about sixty people in attendance, passed a resolution which sent out a murky warning. ‘HART you must realise that if you thumb your nose at a large segment of the population you must accept that the feelings of some people will boil over.’ The group expressed its concern at the way HART was, in their view, forcing its point of view on others, and the effect that the South African boycott could potentially have on international sport. Spokesperson Barry Hayes stated that the group ‘did not plan to stage any protests because we are not out to interfere with others’ rights but merely to protect our own.’ SPIR members concentrated instead on showing support for the tour by attending the game in Invercargill, as well as sending telegrams and flowers to the Springbok team when it arrived.\footnote{\textit{Southland Times}, 31 July 1981, p. 10.}

The desire to make the Springboks welcome in Invercargill was also the motivating factor for two independent women, who embarked on a similar initiative, writing a letter to the Springbok team which read: ‘We wish to emphatically disassociate ourselves from the unruly behaviour you have encountered in other centres throughout New Zealand. We pray that your stay in Southland will be rewarding and memorable, and that your journey home will be a
safe one.' In canvassing support on the streets of Invercargill, few people declined to sign the letter, according to one of the writers, Carolyn Clearwater, and 'the feeling of the people who signed was so good, so warm.' The signatures collected eventually totalled nearly fourteen hundred, and the letter was subsequently described by the Springbok manager as a 'wonderful gesture' that reflected the feelings of New Zealand's 'rugby people'. This initiative was the only organised, pro-tour action with numbers on its side, and little was heard from SPIR during the Springboks' visit.

So despite the belated wake-up call of Hamilton, the majority of pro-tour people in Invercargill remained largely dormant. Although SPIR had attempted to create a legitimate face for local support of the tour, and to justify that support philosophically, most pro-tour people evidently planned simply to attend the match at Invercargill. (By 25 July, the game was expected to have a very high attendance, with an 'unprecedented demand' for stand tickets.) 'Legitimate' pro-tour activity was therefore largely swamped by the other sort - the underground, anti-demonstrator rather than pro-tour, unofficial, antagonistic behaviour, justified on the basis of love for rugby, that was, except for the most sensational actions, not often in the public eye. For instance, many of Michael Roche's students now refused to listen to him. 'They used to sneer and jeer and shout at me in corridors...I was anti-school, anti-rugby, anti-New Zealand because I was anti-apartheid.'

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38 Southland Times, 1 August 1981, p. 3.
39 Ibid.
42 Interview with Michael Roche.
In the week prior to the Invercargill match, an explosive device was discovered in a public toilet within 400 metres of Rugby Park, although there was no direct evidence to link it to either pro or anti-tour factions. There were calls for calm on all sides. The Police Superintendent appealed to the citizens of the city to ‘exercise common sense, restraint and concern for the rights of others.’ With anger mounting amongst rugby supporters, local anti-tour people fearing for their own safety, and hundreds of HART members on the way from places north, the ‘Friendly City’ hardly looked likely to live up to its name when the Springboks’ plane touched down on 6 August 1981.

'The Springbok rugby team will arrive in Invercargill this afternoon to what most people are predicting will be a traditionally warm Southland welcome,' reported the Southland Times on Thursday, 6 August 1981. The expectation that ‘Southern hospitality’ would be the distinctive characteristic of the city’s reception of the South Africans was fulfilled. From the time their chartered Air New Zealand Friendship landed in what was anticipated to be friendly territory, the security which had cocooned the team elsewhere was immediately relaxed. It was plainly evident that the crowd gathered at Invercargill Airport was composed of well-wishers. ‘This was something new to us, quite new....There was also an absence of protesters. It is easy to feel at home here,’ said a delighted Johannes Claassen, the Springboks' Manager. The scene was reminiscent of previous, untroubled rugby tours, with players signing autographs and chatting with eager onlookers, instead of being whisked away directly from the tarmac by bus. Then, in an unprecedented move that was the pride of the Southland rugby community, the Springboks walked through the airport building. According to the Police Superintendent, Tommy Thomson, this had been planned in advance. ‘We said, they’re in Invercargill, this is our place, they’re guests, they’re going through that terminal, come what may.’ Rugby writer Don Cameron experienced the atmosphere at the airport, saying ‘it was just like old times, cheers, clapping, autographs....Typical Southland, and Southlanders.’

3 Interview with Tommy Thomson, 09 July 1998.
4 Cameron, Barbed Wire, p. 164.
The only sign that this was neither 'typical Southland' nor a routine rugby tour was the sizable contingent of police officers on stand-by. Even that failed to dampen the buoyant mood, which persisted outside the Grand Hotel, where the Springboks were to stay. Another party of 200 had gathered, and greeted the players with loud applause when they disembarked from their bus and entered the hotel. The most enthusiastic reception was reserved for Errol Tobias, the only 'coloured' player on the team. An occupant of a building opposite the hotel had hung a banner which read 'Haere Mai'.

There was not a whisper of opposition, and once again the police guard seemed the only anomalous feature to distinguish this event from the arrival of any other international sports team. From then on, Invercargill, not unexpectedly, was an acknowledged Springbok sanctuary. Whether their willingness to host the team stemmed from traditional 'Southern hospitality', from genuine support for the tour, or even from acceptance of apartheid, most Southlanders viewed the 'haven' label as an accolade rather than an indictment.

The SRFU spearheaded the crusade to ensure that New Zealand's southernmost city left the Springboks with pleasant memories. In fact, little effort was required. According to the SRFU's President, Jack Young, the South Africans 'were so free in Invercargill that they just walked around the town.' During various organised activities, such as a trip to Bluff, children surrounded the group, asking for autographs and to have pictures taken with team members. Springbok training runs were also

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6 Interview with Jack Young, 10 July 1998.
popular with Invercargill rugby followers, particularly the young.

None of these events were atypical of a visit by a touring rugby side. In fact, the last Springbok team to tour, in 1965, had been met by an estimated 10,000 Southlanders at Invercargill Airport.7 That tour had been much less controversial. In 1981 the warm welcome extended the Springboks in Invercargill echoed the ‘rugby-mad’ New Zealand of old, and was out of step with the rest of the country. Invercargill residents went to unusual lengths to make sure the South Africans knew they were wanted in the ‘Deep South’. SRFU Chairman Jack Smith received many offers ‘to take the team members out for meals, to show them around the province and even to provide beds for them.’8 There was a greater force at work than simple, unquestioning ‘Southern hospitality’. The almost unnecessarily enthusiastic reception was undoubtedly also a political statement in support of the tour, but the defiant, red-carpet welcome went beyond that. It was also a self-conscious move, designed to preserve the city’s ‘friendly’ reputation, and to set it apart from other New Zealand centres remembered less fondly by the Springboks.

The plan was succeeding. If hospitality produces guilt in the receiver, Professor Johannes Claassen claimed, then the visitors were feeling ‘very guilty’.9 Not everyone, however, was as happy about the invited guests. ‘I am sorry to see that Professor Claassen feels at home in Invercargill,’ one letter to the Editor complained. ‘He might well feel that he is in a comfortable environment, but unfortunately the large numbers of police, flood-lit, patrolled rugby grounds, stories of guards on rugby premises around the clock and

9 Southland Times, 10 August 1981, p. 3.
houses being damaged have made me feel uncomfortable in my own city. Tension remained under the surface. Despite the fact that local opposition had effectively been quelled, threats of large-scale protest from people based outside the city were being taken seriously by police. 'We will do our darndest to ensure that law and order prevails,' said the Chief Inspector, L. J. Harris, at a press conference the day before Southland played the Springboks.

For several weeks prior to the match the police had been working in close cooperation with the SRFU to achieve that aim. As well as more than a hundred officers from other districts, two specialist squads, Blue and White, were also in Invercargill. The paramount concern of the police was that protesters from out of town would invade Rugby Park. This accords with Louise Greg's study of the police and the tour. Greg cites the cancelled Hamilton match as having a deep impact on police, because it had 'aroused emotions and created a common purpose not just to police the tour, but to reassert police authority and restore social order.' The fear of a repeat performance was not unjustified - Rugby Park was by no means impenetrable. While the perimeter fences around the ground were high, they were not unyielding, and the low fences inside them would not have been very difficult to scale. The Army took charge of placing barbed wire between the ground and the spectator areas, the first time this had occurred on the tour, again reflecting the heightened awareness of security. This measure was thought unnecessary by the SRFU executive, especially since the

10 'Agog' letter to the Editor, Southland Times, 8 August 1981, p. 4.
11 The controversial Red Squad did not come to the city.
13 Interview with Tommy Thomson.
wire blocked the dead ball line. Nevertheless, it was put in place, and extra precautions were planned for the ground entrance to ensure no ‘suspicious’ items were brought in.

HART’s resolve had not been daunted either. As it was the first stop on the South Island leg of the tour, anti-tour groups were determined to make a strong showing at Invercargill, and police had word that similar tactics to those used by North Island protesters. Rumours that HART would bring a thousand protesters to Invercargill, perhaps even to storm the ground, provoked threats by local rugby clubs to form a vigilante group comprising triple that number to ‘march against them.’ According to Tommy Thomson, in order to subdue these threats, he promised that no protester would get into Rugby Park. Instead, for two weeks prior to the match, members from various rugby clubs patrolled the ground. Furthermore, since the anti-tour movement outside Invercargill was intent on demonstrating in spite of the ICC’s ban, the police negotiated with HART to restrict protest action to no closer than within two blocks of Rugby Park. This was supposedly arranged with the safety of marchers in mind, probably with good reason. If protesters had made an attempt on Rugby Park, according to Jack Young, ‘these rugby club people would have just said, this is another game of football, let’s get in.’ The uncompromising anti-demonstrator attitude, and the fierce determination of the mainstream rugby community, was evidently particularly strong in Invercargill, despite the public emphasis on being agreeable hosts.

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14 Ibid.
16 Interview with Tommy Thomson.
17 Interview with Jack Young.
18 Interview with Tommy Thomson.
19 Interview with Jack Young.
This was highlighted by Don Cameron, who wrote that ‘it would be a brave demonstrator who tried to separate a Southlander from his rugby. Hard words, but said with the quiet smile of Southlanders.’

Despite the threats from outside the city, no sign of anti-tour protest, local or imported, had been heard by 7 August. But the signals were there that the out-of-town contingent would be large - Dunedin HART had had a ‘fairly good response’ to an advertisement in the *Otago Daily Times* asking people to make contact if they wished to travel to Invercargill to protest. Before dawn on the day of the match, outside protesters began converging on the city. Thirty-eight men and women, mostly students who represented a Dunedin-Christchurch joint action anti-apartheid group, began chanting and blowing whistles outside the Grand Hotel at around 5.30 am. A confrontation arose with police when, according to Geoff Chapple, ‘Ghost Squad’ (as they called themselves), charged the hotel. Several protesters were injured in the clash, including HART’s leader, John Minto, who was allegedly singled out for especially rough treatment by the police. Twenty-four arrests were made, including Minto, with four charges later being laid. The protesters claimed that police treatment both during and after the incident was ‘ruthless’ and ‘unjustified’, with one student later laying a complaint for brutality and the denial of medical treatment. According to Juliet Morris, however, this was not exceptional - Christchurch protesters found Invercargill police

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25 Ibid., pp. 1, 3.
attitudes consistent with those all over the South Island. A feeling nonetheless existed among the Christchurch protesters, that they were in hostile territory. One of those at the Grand Hotel criticised the local movement, saying ‘they had nothing planned’, and called Invercargill a ‘redneck town’. The protesters from out of town were indeed the only people looking for action. The only word from any Invercargill people while the Springboks were in town was a ‘neutral’ prayer vigil the day before the match, in which Christians of all denominations were invited to pray that there would be no violence at the following day.

By the time 350 assembled at an anti-tour rally in Queen’s Park, while the match at Rugby Park got underway, it was evident that the out-of-town protesters overwhelmingly outnumbered the local marchers. The *Otago Daily Times* estimated that only around 50 of the protesters were from Invercargill. According to Geoff Chapple, the local people could be distinguished by their dress - many were wearing suits, separating them from the crash helmets, thick clothing and heavy boots of the new arrivals. This reinforces the idea that Invercargill’s anti-tour movement was largely composed of professional, middle-class people who were not seasoned protesters. The low local turnout disappointed at least one marcher, who claimed that a larger local contingent would have ‘dwarfed the rowdy student element into insignificance.’

It was clear that the fear of backlash was once again a

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26 Morris, *With All*, p. 63.
significant factor discouraging local anti-tour people from protesting, perhaps even more so during the Springboks’ visit to the city, as tension was at its peak. The day before, Dunedin HART leader, Francesca Holloway, had urged local people to join the demonstration ‘in spite of the terrific amount of harassment they are facing.’ In such a small city, the fear of public denigration was particularly acute, especially since the hecklers often knew the protesters by name. One local protestor described her shock and dismay at ‘people that you’d thought were quite reasonable, and all of a sudden they were hurling this abuse at you.’ Nevertheless, at least one protestor, a Roman Catholic sister, cited the harassment of the anti-tour people in Invercargill as her reason for joining the protest. At the rally itself, Aucklander Father Terry Dibble, paid tribute to the local protesters who were ‘prepared to stand up against mindless criticism.’ ‘I have been to Invercargill before,’ he said, ‘but there is very little good about the city today.’

When the rally became a march for the most part it was orderly and quiet, tightly controlled by marshals. Moving through Invercargill’s main streets, the protestors sang, waved banners and placards and chanted ‘Two Four Six Eight, Racist Tour - Police State!’ , reflecting the heavy policing. Indeed, the roads were lined with police, and the progress of the march was monitored by a police helicopter and detectives in unmarked cars. Squads of police in riot gear waited at a number of intersections on the march route, preventing any attempt to change course. It was clear that the anger of pro-tour people on the sidelines had meant that the marchers

32 Interview with Margery Simpson, 10 July 1998.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
were relying on the police for protection. Correspondingly, there was no sign of the vociferous anti-police feeling that had existed among the demonstrators elsewhere.\textsuperscript{36} Despite several lengthy pauses, no attempt was made on police lines, and leaders negotiated and cooperated with Tommy Thomson until the march's end, 200 metres short of Rugby Park.\textsuperscript{37}

The backlash against this protest was more intense than against previous demonstrations in the city, probably due to its timing. Instead of just eggs, clods of soil and rocks were also thrown at the protesters, and large 'rowdy groups of hecklers' followed the march throughout its length.\textsuperscript{38} Several onlookers had to be restrained by police, although apart from the missiles there were no acts of physical violence.\textsuperscript{39} March leaders John Minto and Steve Bayliss were targeted especially for verbal abuse, most of which and attempted to categorise and marginalise the protesters in some way. 'Get off the marijuana for a while!', 'You've run out of words, you communists!', and even 'Black lovers!' were included among a variety of shouted insults directed at the marchers.\textsuperscript{40} A war of words ensued, with the protesters shouting back, much more vocal than the locally based protests had been. A man had brought his son along to watch, saying, 'I'm educating him - I want him to see all the wankers on the street.'\textsuperscript{41} One protester from Christchurch described a man shouting at the marchers, his face 'ugly with fury. The gist of his remarks seems to be that we are communists and parasites.'\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{36} Interview with Tommy Thomson.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Quote from anonymous protester in Morris, With All, p. 58.
The intensity of the backlash is surprising. Presumably, committed rugby followers were at Rugby Park, providing them with a convincing alibi. The question of who the hecklers were on the day of the match is therefore quite mystifying, but the fact that they cannot have been so very attached to the game fits in with the nature of their abuse, again clearly more anti-protester than pro-tour. It was clear that the protesters were more widely thought of as outsiders, fighting an ill-advised, futile battle against a strong current of opinion. ‘They’re misfits, aren’t they?’ said a policeman on duty.43

While HART had committed itself to a ‘peaceful, non-violent’ demonstration in Invercargill, leaders were not ruling out the possibility of an invasion of the ground up until the day of the match.44 But in retrospect, there was no realistic chance of Invercargill turning into another Hamilton. While not completely invulnerable, Rugby Park was never going to be an easy target, and to willingly encounter the fury of rugby supporters inside would have been a huge undertaking for any protester. Furthermore, the heavy policing and other hard-line measures meant that Invercargill was ‘sewn up’, and Tommy Thomson believes this played a significant role in discouraging an assault on the ground.45 Furthermore, the limited and passive role of the local anti-tour people, combined with the remoteness of Invercargill from other centres, meant numbers were never going to be big enough to overwhelm the police. The fact that the march was unable to get closer than two blocks to Rugby Park was cited by leader Steven

45 Interview with Tommy Thomson.
Bayliss as ‘another indication of the police bias against the anti-apartheid movement.’

Meanwhile, inside the ground, the ‘Crowd Got what it Wanted’ as the Southland Times headline read the following day. If the spectators had wanted to see Southland beat the Springboks, they were disappointed. Nevertheless, the goal that was much more vital to them, to see a rugby match, was achieved unhindered. By the time the gates opened, the cues of rugby fans had stretched well beyond the ground, and the stands and terraces had filled quickly. Among the spectators was the Mayor of Invercargill, along with Norman Jones, who suggested that if Christchurch was to prove too troublesome as a test venue, the first match between the All Blacks and the Springboks should be held in Invercargill. The crowd had, however, at 15,000 not been as high as expected. Rugby Park had been by no means full to capacity. The match between Southland and the Springboks in 1956 had attracted a record crowd of 22,000 spectators. This lends weight to the argument that a significant number of people quietly showed their opposition to the tour by deliberate non-attendance at a game they normally would have watched.

Security at the ground was tight, but inside the gates, ‘there was little to suggest this was part of the most controversial rugby tour to be made of New Zealand,’ according to the Otago Daily Times. Again, the police presence was heavy, with about seventy-

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46 Southland Times, 10 August 1981, p. 3.  
48 Ibid., p. 17.  
49 McConnell, Something, p. 77.  
five police inside the ground.\textsuperscript{51} Two people, a male and a female, apparently did make a half-hearted and unsupported attempt to interrupt the game, but they never came close to the field.\textsuperscript{52} Besides, Tommy Thomson had given the orders to ‘rugby club people’ to space themselves around the edge of the seating and prevent anyone from getting across.\textsuperscript{53} For some, the barbed wire was too stark a reminder of the conflict outside, although it never interfered with the game. In Lynn McConnell’s history of the SRFU, the wire is described as an ‘horrific fact that annoyed many Southland rugby supporters.’\textsuperscript{54} Don Cameron echoed the calls that the barbed wire was an overreaction, writing that in ‘rugby-mad’ Invercargill it amounted to ‘almost an insult’ and ‘security gone mad.’\textsuperscript{55} When the match proceeded unhindered, and those who felt that some security measures had been unnecessary in Invercargill felt vindicated. ‘The victory in the end was undoubtedly the game of rugby that everyone had come to enjoy,’ wrote a Southland Times reporter, paraphrasing a rugby cliche and placing it in a new, highly politicised context.\textsuperscript{56}

At the after-match function, the Springboks paid tribute to the hospitality shown to them during their stay in Invercargill, and the day was hailed as a great success by the SRFU. The police too were more than pleased with the way their operation, one of the biggest ever in Invercargill, had gone, with no tour-related arrests apart from those at the Grand Hotel. Invercargill had lived up to its image as a stronghold of pro-tour feeling. By that time, rumours

\textsuperscript{52} Interview with Jack Young.
\textsuperscript{53} Interview with Tommy Thomson.
\textsuperscript{54} McConnell, Something, pp. 305-306.
\textsuperscript{55} Cameron, Barbed Wire, p. 167.
\textsuperscript{56} Southland Times, 10 August 1981, p. 1.
were circulating that the Springboks would return to Invercargill to prepare for the first test match, as Christchurch’s reception of the touring team was shaping up to be much more hostile. When the rumours proved true, and the team arrived back in Invercargill from Dunedin on 12 August, once again no demonstrators were in sight. The Springboks’ return was not expected to cause any major problems for Invercargill police, despite the fact that they were without reinforcements from other centres, and security was kept tight but low-key.

The South Africans did witness their first anti-tour demonstration in Invercargill the following night, when a small group of local anti-apartheid people stood outside the Grand Hotel, most silently, some holding placards. ‘We didn’t want the Springboks to think they could stay in Invercargill without any protesters at all,’ said a spokesperson for the group.57 Soon an opposing faction of about twenty young men lined the edge of the footpath, shouting pro-tour slogans. Several verbal exchanges took place between the groups, but police separated them, preventing the tension from escalating. As the Springboks’ Manager and Assistant Manager entered the hotel, the anti-tour faction cried ‘Shame!’ as the pro-tour people hurried to shake the men’s hands.58

The SRFU’s relationship with the team was just as warm on their second visit. ‘He was Professor [Claassen] the first time, but ‘John’ the second,’ said SRFU Chairman Jack Smith of the Springboks’ Manager.59 But there were suggestions, even from rugby quarters, that the courtesy being extended to the Springboks

58 Ibid.
59 Quoted in McConnell, Something, p. 306.
was starting to wear thin. The team’s return painted Invercargill in the country’s view even more as a refuge for the Springboks, conservative thought and possibly even racism. While there was considerably evidence to suggest that this was at least partly accurate, it was not an image that many, even outside anti-tour ranks, were happy with. ‘The welcome extended the visitors last week was a reflection of the basic courtesies that prevail in the province for any visitors,’ according to a rugby columnist in the Southland Times, but the return of the Springboks was ‘unfair on Southland’s image and tradition.’ If the Springboks’ visit had been a triumph for the police, the SRFU, the rugby public and ‘Southern hospitality’, it was a hollow victory. Local anti-tour people had, in a sense, lost, but in reality they had not even tried to play the game, preferring to take the safe option in an unfavourable climate. New questions were being asked about Invercargill’s image, and whether it had been damaged, altered or merely reinforced by the reaction to the Springboks’ visit to Invercargill.

Invercargill’s reaction to the 1981 Springbok tour reflected its status as a small, provincial city. A national poll taken in May of that year clearly showed that people in provincial cities and towns or in rural areas were more likely to be pro-tour, although support for the tour was highest in the lower South Island.¹ These areas were the conservative stronghold of National Party support, which was also closely linked to pro-tour sentiment. Like Invercargill’s residents, most people in smaller cities, such as New Plymouth for example, welcomed the Springboks.² Furthermore, a limited degree of anti-tour activity was also typical of rural and provincial New Zealand. The strong social pressure against those who publicly opposed the prevailing view in small places naturally discouraged others from protesting. As a city that was relatively remote from larger centres and lacked a large population, Invercargill did not have the resources or numbers to support a large-scale protest movement, even if the anti-tour view had dominated. This, combined with the lack of a university, contributed to the fact that while Invercargill’s small anti-tour group was a radical band of ‘misfits’ in the eyes of most of the city’s residents, it retained a mild flavour.

Invercargill’s reaction, therefore, was not exceptional. The city did, however, emerge with a distinct identity in the context of the 1981 Springbok tour. It was the place where the Springboks had received what was perhaps the most enthusiastic welcome, it was a

‘safe house’ for the team and a stronghold of pro-tour feeling. Around the country many people, particularly those with anti-tour views, obtained the impression that the city was more pro-tour, reactionary, socially backward, and possibly more racist than any other area in New Zealand. They required an explanation. The city’s residents agreed that Invercargill was largely pro-tour. In dismissing the idea that Invercargill was racist, however, and replacing ‘reactionary’ and ‘socially backward’ with their own labels, Invercargill people also invoked a number of myths about themselves.

The ‘No Racial Prejudice’ Myth

In his speech at the anti-tour rally on the day the Springboks played Southland, HART’s leader John Minto described Invercargill as a city of ‘deeply embedded racism’.3 His comment was seen as an attempt to explain why the city had been so welcoming of the South Africans, and was loudly rejected by pro-tour locals. Norman Jones was one of those who rubbished the claim. His evidence amounted to the fact that a ‘good proportion’ of the guests at the after-match function had been Maori - and besides, Jones himself had Maori first cousins!4 Minto’s name was already a profanity amongst most Southlanders, and the comment had hardly served to make him more popular. Rather than proving Minto was wrong, rejections of his allegation turned into personal attacks. For instance, SRFU Chairman Jack Smith asserted, ‘if this is the most racist city in New Zealand, I’ll eat my hat. [Minto’s] a fanatic. He doesn’t apply a common sense view at all.’5

5 Quoted in McConnell, Something, pp. 305 - 6.
Others, both inside and outside the city, shared John Minto’s views. For some anti-tour people, the fact that the Springboks had returned to Invercargill was enough to prove it was a racist stronghold.\(^6\) Invercargill HART’s Michael Roche asserted that support for the tour was not simply a synonym for pro-rugby, for ‘there was deep-rooted colour prejudice’ at work beneath the surface.\(^7\) Others too linked ‘redneck’ attitudes with the ‘rugby public’, decrying the ‘lynch mob mentality of the racist rugby law and order stalwarts.’\(^8\) One Wellingtonian correspondent to the \textit{Southland Times} outlined her view of Invercargill. ‘Surely Invercargill must now be known as the most racist city in New Zealand....Could it be that this lack of caring, thinking people accounts for the fact that Southland remains a dreary backwater?’\(^9\) This reflected the deterioration of Invercargill’s already less than sparkling image in the eyes of many New Zealanders as a result of its reaction to the tour.

Invercargill had one final chance to remove the stain on its reputation. HART member Dave Sinel, reacting to Minto’s comments, organised a march for the day of the last match of the tour, 12 September. This demonstration had the formal support of both the Coalition Against the Tour and SPIR, being designed to unite both sides of the debate in a public stand against apartheid. The Coalition’s support was qualified, however, as the march was timed so that pro-tour people ‘would be able to get home to watch


\(^7\) Interview with Michael Roche.


Despite the all-encompassing nature of the march, only 70 people attended, as opposed to the 1,000 predicted. There was, however, even representation from both sides, a low police presence, and a virtual absence of hecklers. While this perhaps went some distance towards dispelling some of the antagonism of the tour, the low turnout had not placed beyond a doubt the idea that Invercargill was a haven for racism.

If pro-tour New Zealand did contain a racist element, then it makes sense to claim that in places with a stronger pro-tour feeling racial prejudice was probably more common. Invercargill was, according to the polls, more pro-tour than any city in New Zealand, and the claim that racism existed to a significant degree in the city in 1981 was supported by informants on the anti-tour side. This was reinforced by the letters to the Southland Times, which showed evidence of covert racism and paternalistic pro-apartheid sentiments, as well as pointing to an underlying current of racial intolerance in the community. Furthermore, a report by the Pacific Islands Church published during the tour showed that racism did exist in Invercargill, and was 'at least a contributing factor' in the difficulty Pacific Islanders encountered in finding employment. There was a definite grain of truth to John Minto’s comment.

In 1980, the Deputy Mayor, Michael Deaker, claimed Southland had not yet perceived that it was multicultural, and there were 'no signs in the city' to demonstrate this. Nevertheless,
there was little concrete evidence to support the idea that overt racism was found in much higher quantities in the 'Friendly City' than in other areas of New Zealand. Despite the conclusions of its report, the Pacific Islands Church maintained that racial discrimination really remained 'only a minor problem' in Invercargill.\textsuperscript{14} The majority of the pro-tour community were not supporters of apartheid, and outwardly supported the tour for other reasons. The letters to the \textit{Southland Times} demonstrate that pro-apartheid feeling was seemingly based largely on ignorance rather than on deep-seated race hatred. Furthermore, the lack of a widespread, vocal, anti-apartheid counter-view probably served to exaggerate the prevalence of pro-apartheid views.

The idea that Invercargill's support for the Springboks had nothing to do with racism, however, was shown to be plainly false. By forcing into the newspapers what people would normally say in the privacy of their kitchens, the tour had helped to debunk the myth that no New Zealanders were in favour of apartheid. According to Sandra Coney, the Springboks' visit had pushed 'that ugly spectre, racism, into the centre field, declaring 'he wears a rugby shirt.'\textsuperscript{15} As a bastion of pro-tour feeling, Invercargill was perhaps more affected by this than most places in New Zealand. Just as the link between the racist policies of South Africa and racism at home was exposed, disturbing elements of prejudice in the Invercargill community had surfaced. The idea that Aotearoa was a Utopia of racial harmony was crumbling, and, despite its monocultural veneer, Invercargill was along for the ride.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Southland Times}, 2 September 1981, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{15} Sandra Coney, 'Women Against the Tour' \textit{Broadsheet}, September 1981, p. 11.
The ‘Rugby-mad’ Myth

Despite the veiled racist component, support for the tour in Invercargill, and the rest of the country, had to a greater degree been a by-product of rugby’s dominance. This was supported by the Southland Times poll taken at the beginning of July 1981, which showed that interest in rugby was a significant indicator of tour support. The Sydney Morning Herald claimed that New Zealand’s ‘rural electors find the politics of apartheid a good deal less riveting than a first class rugby match.’ In short, many pro-tour people were content to keep politics out of sport without even considering the links between the two. ‘They didn’t agree with what was going on in South Africa as far as black and white was concerned, but they were keen rugby people, they supported rugby football for what it was worth,’ said SRFU President Jack Young. Rugby had become the convenient substitute for a moral justification. ‘We were concerned with racism, they were concerned with rugby,’ said Michael Roche, ‘they translated it into people interfering with their rights.’ Most support for the tour did not flow explicitly from an acceptance of apartheid, as most pro-tour people never arrived at the stage of evaluating the tour philosophically. ‘I have tried to be fair, I have read and listened to both sides,’ complained C. D. Anderson in a letter to the Southland Times, ‘but I still cannot understand how 15 men in Springbok jerseys on Rugby Park will in any way affect the progression of the 20 million black people in South Africa.’

18 Interview with Jack Young.
19 Interview with Michael Roche
Rugby overrode other concerns, and divided groups of people who might otherwise have been expected to share similar views, for instance Christians and Maori. In Invercargill, commitment to the national game was heavily predominant, even among anti-tour people. The anti-rugby 'bugger rugger' sentiment, which had emerged among some female protesters, was not visible in the Invercargill movement. Although pro-tour people denied any racist element among them, they agreed that it was rugby, and not political philosophy, that was the ultimate deciding factor for most pro-tour people. This also probably contributed to the lack of organised activity in support of the tour in Invercargill, and the very limited strength of SPIR, which campaigned on a moral pro-tour platform.

Invercargill was hardly exceptional as a New Zealand city that boasted of its dedication to rugby. While in 1981 the city was described as 'very rugby conscious', the same could be said for the nation in general. For instance, out of a total population of 3.2 million, over one million people watched the last test between the Springboks and the All Blacks on television. In provincial and rural areas such as Southland, where rugby was strongest, conservative, masculine rugby culture was undoubtedly more dominant. To ascribe the warm welcome extended the South Africans by Invercargill purely to a love of sport, therefore, obscures the strong power of rugby culture to shape behaviour. The core of pro-tour sentiment in Invercargill was undoubtedly based in rugby circles, and in this context any opposition to the tour would have

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21 King, 'A Social Analysis', p. 12; Interview with Margery Simpson.
23 A McNair Survey estimated television figures for the Third Test at 1,062,000. Southland Times, 16 October, 1981.
been enormously difficult to express. Lynn McConnell, in his history of the SRFU, stated that one of his concerns about Southland rugby was that 'the pressure to be one of the boys in a team can be great.'\textsuperscript{24} It is reasonable to claim that this pressure extended beyond players. If rugby was the nation's religion, being anti-tour was viewed by many of the faithful as blasphemy. Involvement in an anti-tour march meant, according to one protester, that 'people seemed to think.... you were anti-rugby and anti-decent behaviour.'\textsuperscript{25}

Furthermore, the tour had caused the demarcation of rugby followers as a distinct group. Previously, 'the rugby-loving public' had been synonymous with 'New Zealanders'. To be anti-tour meant losing one's status as a member of this group, and therefore losing identification as a 'real Kiwi'. 'The fact that [male protesters] were subverting the natural course of the pursuit of rugby and putting a non-bloke issue like rugby first,' writes Jillian Dempster, 'targeted them for hostility from tour supporters.'\textsuperscript{26} Dempster also notes that many women were also reluctant to be publicly anti-tour as they were 'perhaps fearful of the power of the rugby religion in which their husbands, Fathers and partners believed.'\textsuperscript{27} Neil Boniface believes that the pressure to conform to the dominant view meant that many anti-tour people who were also rugby supporters buried their views.\textsuperscript{28} This pressure was also illustrated by Jack Young, who stated that while 'one or two' SRFU members were privately against the tour, they attended the match in

\textsuperscript{24} McConnell, \textit{Something}, p. 311.
\textsuperscript{25} Interview with Bob Simpson, 10 July 1998.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{28} Interview with Neil Boniface.
Invercargill anyway.\textsuperscript{29} If rugby was crucial in deciding who would support the tour and who would not, it was not solely due in the form of a desire to see the Springboks play. Rugby as culture had an influence, along with rugby as mere sport.

The ‘Strong, Silent Type’ Myth

Despite the heavily pro-tour atmosphere in Invercargill, polls showed that a significant proportion of the city’s residents - 22 per cent at the lowest estimate - were anti-tour.\textsuperscript{30} This was not reflected in the numbers of protesters, with the largest march held by the Coalition Against the Tour attracting only 300 people.\textsuperscript{31} The city’s residents preferred to attribute the low turnouts to what they perceived as a Southland trait. ‘The old Southlander, he’s pretty laid back, he’s not the protesting type,’ said Tommy Thomson. ‘This isn’t the area for tense feelings.’\textsuperscript{32} Thomson typifies the opinion of many Invercargill people on both sides in explaining low anti-tour turnouts. ‘We’re not always demonstrative of how we feel about things,’ said Neil Boniface.\textsuperscript{33}

Southland trait or not, as an explanation of why relatively few people in Invercargill were prepared to protest, the ‘strong, silent type’ argument is plainly inadequate. This study has presented considerable evidence that intimidation, and the climate of fear that existed following the cancelled Hamilton match, discouraged people from expressing their feelings on the tour issue.

\textsuperscript{29} Interview with Jack Young.
\textsuperscript{32} Interview with Tommy Thomson.
\textsuperscript{33} Interview with Neil Boniface.
The fact that local anti-tour activities ‘fizzled out’ prior to the Springboks’ arrival in Invercargill was primarily due to the perception that any continuation would be ‘suicidal’. This was recognised by people outside the province. At several large anti-tour rallies in Auckland, Tim Shadbolt had asked the crowd to ‘spare a thought for those that are standing up in those other places. It’s bloody hard to be a protester in Hawera, or New Plymouth, or Invercargill.’  

Instead of ascribing a reluctance to openly express feelings as something inherent in the Southlander’s make-up, it is therefore probably more accurate to say that a deep dislike of anti-tour protesters existed in the province. This was not confined to the ‘Deep South’. Geoff Chapple noted that ‘New Zealand didn’t like the protester. The polls which indicated a rough 50-50 split in pro-tour and anti-tour opinion were no measure of protest support.’

As Invercargill was a politically conservative city, the anti-protester feeling was particularly high. Home-grown protest action had occurred, however, on other occasions. In 1978 a group of Southland farmers had gained national attention, and overwhelming local support, when they slaughtered 300 emaciated sheep on an Invercargill main street as part of an industrial dispute. Furthermore, an ‘anti-strike march’ in Invercargill four months prior to the Springbok tour had also been well supported. It was the anti-tour protester that Invercargill would not tolerate. This was reflected in the nature of the abuse directed at the protesters by people on the side-lines. The ‘hecklers’ are another

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34 Quoted in Newnham, By Batons, p. 43.
example of section of the community who certainly did not seem to have any trouble expressing their feelings, being reactionary rather than silent. Furthermore, the fact that several hundred people in d.d voice their opposition to the tour, in a small place with a hostile dominant group, showed they were prepared to sacrifice much to express their views. The stereotype of the strong, silent Southlander did not hold water.

The 'Friendly City' Myth

The rationale for the red-carpet treatment of the Springboks in Invercargill, as articulated by the citizens themselves, was the institution of 'Southern hospitality'. According to tradition, Southlanders supposedly prided themselves on making visitors welcome. Previous Springbok teams had indeed experienced a warm Southland reception. 'The people of Southland are nothing if not hospitable', stated a contemporary account of the 1965 Springboks' visit to the province.38 One correspondent to the Southland Times quoted a saying that she claimed was internationally known - 'the further south you go in New Zealand the friendlier the people are'.39 Whether or not this was true, it was certainly widely believed in the Deep South. In accordance, Invercargill had proclaimed itself the 'Friendly City'. Sweeping divisions between pro and anti-tour people aside, Southlanders were supposedly tolerant of different backgrounds and viewpoints, taking each person on his or her own merits. 'It is said that there is more compassion for the old and unwanted in Southland....and we don’t try to shatter people if we don’t agree with them,' wrote

38 Urbahn, Fourth Springbok Tour, p. 53.
another *Southland Times* correspondent.\(^40\) According to Tommy Thomson, ‘if you’re a good joker, you’re a good joker,’ in Southland, ‘it doesn’t matter if you’re pink, white or polka-dot.’\(^41\)

Time and time again during the tour debate, the city’s residents invoked the ‘Friendly City’ myth, calling on locals to forget their differences and welcome the South Africans as good hosts should. ‘They would be guests in our country and they deserve the courtesy one extends to a guest,’ wrote a pro-tour local.\(^42\) In an increasingly unstable environment, appeals to reason were frequently replaced by appeals to ‘Southern hospitality’. For instance, the Southland Council of Churches considered a ‘neutral’ call to receive the Springboks in a spirit of ‘Christian fellowship’ and invite them into private homes.\(^43\) It was this widespread, overriding dedication to ‘Southern hospitality’ that was supposedly responsible for Invercargill’s eagerness to welcome the Springboks. According to the myth, any group of visitors would have been extended the same courtesy. Invercargill’s reception of the Springboks had been purely the result of good manners and a neighbourly disposition. It had nothing to do with support for the tour, let alone support for apartheid.

The ‘Friendly City’ explanation is inadequate to explain why Invercargill was a ‘haven’ for the Springboks. It is a whitewash that attempts to cover up any political motive behind the reaction of Invercargill citizens. The convenient fiction of ‘Southern

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\(^41\) Interview with Tommy Thomson.


\(^43\) The motion was not carried on the pragmatic grounds that there would be little opportunity to do this during the Springboks’ visit. *Southland Times*, 11 April 1981, p. 3.
hospitality’ was a political tool, used as a statement of conservative support for the tour that avoided a more overt stance. The racist element, the abuse directed at anti-tour people and the hostile atmosphere that prevailed during the tour had no place in the ‘Friendly City’. Attributing Invercargill’s treatment of the Springboks to its welcoming tradition swept under the red carpet many features of which the city’s residents were less than proud. Furthermore, the idea that tolerance was also supposedly part of the Southlander’s make-up was badly shaken by the harsh reaction towards protesters despite an avowed common abhorrence of apartheid. By invoking the ‘Friendly City’ myth, Invercargill people were also attempting to disassociate themselves from the disruption, division and violence that was occurring elsewhere. ‘It is very heartening to know we live in a province of law abiding and friendly people and don’t have the certain types of northern centres.’ wrote a pro-tour resident.44 The locals wished to ensure that Invercargill, at least, left a good impression on the Springboks.

To some degree they achieved this aim. Touring New Zealand as a 1956 Springbok, John Claassen said he ‘would always remember the friendliness, hospitality and warmth of the New Zealand people.’ In 1981, however, as the Springboks’ manager, he ‘encountered a less friendly face from a New Zealand vastly different from the one I remembered.’45 Invercargill, however, was the exception. ‘The bottom of the world is tops is kindness, friendliness and hospitality....We are feeling ten feet tall because we are amongst friends.’46 In the midst of a ‘social earthquake’ that had shaken the

45 Quoted in Roger, Old Heroes, pp. 187 - 188.
country, Invercargill had managed to put on a smiling mask, imitating New Zealand as it used to be. It was a facade that hid deep cracks just below the surface. If, as Geoff Fougere suggests, the Springbok tour helped destroy rugby’s ability to mirror New Zealand society, Invercargill still saw its old reflection. Remote and insular as it was, however, the city was not immune to the ripples of change that were unsettling the nation.

Fougere, ‘Sport, Culture and Identity’, p. 120.
Invercargill felt the major short-term effect of the Springbok tour of 1981 in the General Election held on 28 November of that year. True to form, both as an historical indicator of the national result and as a pro-tour, marginal National seat, Invercargill voters reelected Norman Jones. Jones increased National’s majority in the Invercargill electorate from just 256 at the last election to 1592, with the other two Southland seats also reclaimed by his party. Publicly, Jones claimed that the fact that Labour’s Candidate, Dougal Soper, was a Trade Unionist had aided his victory. Generally, however, most people agreed that it had been the sitting Member of Parliament’s high-profile stand on the tour issue that was the pivotal factor. ‘Like Steven Pokere weaving through a cluster of defenders at Rugby Park,’ wrote a Southland Times reporter, ‘[Jones] was playing to a home crowd.’

Overall, Norman Jones’ party won four more seats than Labour in 1981. National’s policy on the tour was a decisive factor in its victory in provincial ‘urban’ seats, which had been classed as marginal and were therefore crucial in determining the election result. Prime Minister Robert Muldoon himself admitted the

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3 Southland Times, 30 November 1981, p. 3.
5 Norton, New Zealand Parliamentary, p. 6.
Springbok tour had been a ‘major vote catcher’ for the National Party in other provincial areas. The platform of non-interference had been vindicated as a political strategy.

Despite the terrifying divisiveness and the hostile climate that had prevailed in Invercargill for much of 1981 the embers of the tour cooled relatively quickly for the majority of the city’s residents. ‘After the traumatic effects of the tour,’ said a Southland Times editorial, ‘people are more than willing to bury such issues because they have, quite simply, had enough of them.’ Perhaps Invercargill residents wished to forget about the dizzying few months of the tour in a place where rapid change was an alien concept. Perhaps many felt that the profound cracks exposed in Invercargill’s exterior should be filled in again, part of a conspiracy of silence which was identified elsewhere in the country. Whatever the reason, little was said about the tour after it was over. ‘I think everybody was pleased to see the end of it,’ said Tommy Thomson, claiming that the strife caused by the 1981 tour meant that even most pro-tour people were not eager to see a repeat. Thomson also believes that, for the police at least, the Springbok tour left a positive legacy. Like any large-scale successful operation, the tour operation ‘was a big morale boost to the police’ in Invercargill.

While the barbed wire had vanished from Rugby Park by seven o’clock the morning after the match in Invercargill, other dividing lines were more permanent. For Michael Roche, the

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8 Interview with Tommy Thomson.
9 Ibid.
stigma attached to him as a once-prominent anti-tour leader lingered for years after the tour was over. For instance, some months after the tour a pro-tour person wrote a letter about Roche to the Southland Times, insinuating that, because of his stand against the tour, Roche was not fit to teach children.\textsuperscript{10} According to Roche, the hostile climate he found himself in took a long time 'to simmer down slowly. There was that underlying current for years - you knew that if you were in certain company, you came across people at social gatherings, there was a sort of hatred - it was awful.'\textsuperscript{11} Years later Roche moved to Gore, and there encountered a fresh resurgence of the backlash against his anti-tour stance. Other people who had been actively against the tour also experienced the unfavourable social climate for years to come. 'I think it took months, if not years, for some of the antagonisms to drop.' said one protester.\textsuperscript{12}

Along with the increasing popularity of soccer, the violence associated with rugby and the decreasing success of the All Blacks, contact with South Africa was viewed as a threat to the game nationally in the early 1980s.\textsuperscript{13} In Invercargill, according to Jack Young, the Springbok tour of 1981 had no perceptible impact on numbers of rugby supporters or participators. 'It didn't lose [rugby] any people....it was just another tour.'\textsuperscript{14} Although 'side issues' such as the Springbok tour had made inroads into rugby's dominance nationally, in the places where it was 'the population's winter

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item A defamation suit brought by Roche against the writer of the letter was not successful. Interview with Michael Roche.
\item Ibid.
\item Interview with Bob Simpson.
\item Interview with Jack Young.
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reason for being', such as Invercargill, the game proved more enduring than most of the rifts it had caused.15 ‘Let's put aside all the bitterness and all the side issues,’ pleaded one letter to the Southland Times towards the end of the tour. ‘Rejoice and be glad that Steven Pokere has made the All Blacks.’16 The game endured even amongst those who had seen 1981 as more than 'just another tour'. Within a couple of years, Neil Boniface was taking his children to rugby practice again.17

It is almost a cliche in the context of the 1981 Springbok tour to claim that it caused deep divisions in New Zealand society. All over the country, families, organisations, ethnic groups, churches, and communities were shaken by the controversy and split by the issue. In Invercargill, the major rupture was between a minority group of 'misfits' opposed to the tour, and the pro-tour 'rugby-loving public', which comprised the mainstream of the city. The tearing of the social fabric all over the country reflected the disruption caused by transformations occurring in New Zealand society in 1981. For many New Zealanders, entrenched ideas about the society they lived in were being updated and replaced. Cultural myths about Gallipolli and the 'Invincibles' were being pushed further back in their minds by the social upheaval of protests over Vietnam and the Springboks. The cultural preeminence of 'rugby, racing and beer' was being challenged. The idea that New Zealand was a tolerant nation of 'good jokers' on another planet from the apartheid regime in South Africa was being shattered.

16 'Two Old Timers' letter to the Editor, Southland Times, 8 September 1981, p. 4.
17 Interview with Neil Boniface.
In Invercargill, however, as in much of ‘Heartland’ New Zealand, many people desperately clung to the old idealised notions. ‘We are the classic example of a rear-vision society,’ said Deputy Mayor Michael Deaker in 1980. Deaker claimed that Southlanders imagined they were living in the present and developing for it, but were really looking back one or two generations the whole time. ‘The back view is much more comfortable for Southlanders.’

Invercargill’s response to the tour in 1981 had been reminiscent of the ‘rugby, racing and beer’ society which had gone mad over a Springbok visit a quarter of a century earlier. Support for the tour in the ‘Deep South’ did have an underlying current of racial intolerance, and the smothering rugby culture, combined with a climate of fear, had helped to ensure the conformity of most of the city’s residents. By acting as a haven for the Springboks under the banner of the ‘Friendly City’, however, the people of Invercargill were really grasping in vain at a lost era, and a time when rugby was always the winner on the day.

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18 Michael Deaker’s speech at a social services seminar, quoted in Southland Times, 31 March, 1980, p. 2.
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RUGBY, RACISM AND FEAR 84


