

ASSH MEMBER MENTIONED IN PARLIAMENT

It is not every day that sports history/sociology of sport is mentioned in Federal Parliament. Recently, Brett Hutchins' (University of Tasmania) book, *Don Bradman: Challenging the Myth* was cited by Mark Latham in connection with Prime Minister John Howard's politicisation of the Bradman memory. The full text of the speech is reprinted here.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MAIN COMMITTEE

Mr LATHAM (Werriwa) (12.30 p.m.)-As a boy I was mad about cricket and was lucky enough to grow up during the Chappell era, as our national team became the world's best. I have always admired Ian Chappell, not only as a wonderful batsman and captain but also as a man of great principle and conviction. Recently he did what few others would dare to do: he criticised Don Bradman for his mean-spirited approach to the players' payments in the 1970s, something which led to the formation of World Series Cricket. This is part of an important national debate now under way reassessing Don Bradman-not his incredible achievements as a batsman but rather his actions and character off the field.

In truth, I believe the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, has erred in trying to politicise the Bradman legend, building up false expectations about Bradman the man, and trying to claim him for the Liberal Party. Not surprisingly, others have had to step in and put the Bradman record in the right perspective. They have had to stop the Prime Minister from rewriting history. Ian Chappell has played a role, as has Brett Hutchins in his excellent new book *Don Bradman: Challenging the Myth*.

While this process may be hurtful to the Bradman family, it is necessary in the name of historical accuracy. Like the rest of us, Bradman had his personal and character flaws-in particular, strained family relationships, questionable business deals and the odd burst of sectarianism. The Prime Minister has gone too far in politicising Bradman's memory and, with the inevitable correction of the record, has brought some distress and grief to the Bradman family and the Bradman Foundation.

My primary concern today, however, is the way Ian Chappell has been pushed off the commentary team for the World Cup, now under way in South Africa. Last year he was bold enough to criticise the Chief Executive of the International Cricket Council, Malcolm Speed. In the circumstances, I believe that Chappell was perfectly justified in speaking his mind.

Last August, Speed dropped a bucket on the players from India and Sri Lanka, who have been holding out for a better deal on individual sponsorships, when he said they had to choose between cash and country. Ian Chappell could have gone for the jugular and pointed out that the reason our cricketers are being asked to put their safety at risk in Zimbabwe is that the ICC has to choose between cash and player safety-and has chosen the cash. The ICC would rather risk player safety by playing in Zimbabwe than

risk its broadcasting rights money from the Global Communications Corporation by changing the fixtures.

In a column in the Hindustan Times last September, Chappell made this sensible point:

Mr Speed has earned a substantial income and enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle in recent times courtesy of the skill and entertainment value of the players, including those he is lecturing.

As a result, Malcolm Speed told the host broadcasters that Ian Chappell is not welcome at the World Cup. I believe this to be a petty action-indeed, quite pathetic. So now Chappelli is sitting at home hosting the Channel 9 coverage from its Sydney studio.

Ian Chappell scored a fighting half-century in the first World Cup final in 1975, and only a run-out from the great Viv Richards stopped him from winning the match for Australia. I do not know where Malcolm Speed was that day, but he certainly was not out there at Lord's with a baggy green cap on, putting his country first. Chappelli is just the latest victim of the establishment's civility correctness-the latest fair-dinkum Aussie to pay a price for telling it like it is. Indeed, the establishment is waging its own battle against good old-fashioned Australian larrikinism.

So, when the World Cup final is played, Malcolm Speed will be in the corporate box at the New Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg, John Howard will be watching at Kirribilli on the big screen plasma television, and this legend of Australian sport-Ian Chappell-will be sitting in a Willoughby studio, pushed aside by a dictatorial cricket administrator.

As a parliament, we should always support freedom of speech and the rights of Australian citizens. Maybe these principles need to be written into the laws governing Australian sport, placing appropriate checks and balances on the excesses of people like Malcolm Speed.