

1X INDIVIDUALS:South African Visas

The following question on two applications by South Africans for visas to visit Australia, and the answer of the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs relates to Australian policy concerning South Africa (Hansard, Debates, House of Representatives, 2 March 1984):

SOUTH AFRICAN VISITORS: VISAS

Ms McHUGH - My question is addressed to the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. Can the Minister tell me whether the Government has made a decision on the South African visitor's visa applications by Mr Durr, National Party member of parliament, and Mahmoud Rajab, Indian member of the President's Council?

Mr WEST - The Government has made a decision on those two visitor's visa applications. The Government, after consultation between the relevant Ministers, has decided not to issue visas. The stated purpose of the visit was for Mr Kent

Durr, a National Party member of parliament, and Mr Mahmoud Rajab, a member of the Indian Members Presidential Council, to address conferences, arranged by the South African Embassy and entitled 'South Africa Today and Tomorrow', in Canberra, Sydney and Perth between 23 March and 31 March.

I have a copy of a letter from the South African Ambassador to various people in Australia which sets out some of the topics to be covered by Mr Durr. Presumably this is an outline of the addresses to be given. Mr Durr was to address the conferences on questions such as the importance of the Cabinet Committee on Blacks, South African policy towards South West Africa, or Namibia, the Republic of South Africa's defence capability, its sporting scene, and South Africa's internal priorities. It asks whether Australians can make a contribution. Quite frankly, I am not sure what contribution any Australian could be expected to make to the South African Government's Cabinet Committee on Blacks.

I have been informed by my Department that, if visas were granted, it would be the first visit by South African members of parliament for many years. I understand that the former Government did not grant any such visas. Indeed, that would be consistent because the attitude of the former Government towards sporting contacts was well known, as is our attitude in government. Our policy on sporting contacts is well known, as revised last year and as explained by the Foreign Minister. I put it to the House that it is entirely consistent with that policy to refuse entry to members of parliament who have responsibility for the devising and implementation of South African policy. We do not think that it is appropriate to allow such people into Australia to promote South African Government policy.

I conclude by informing the House that every application concerning controversial visitor entry, including such matters as the entry of members of parliament from South Africa, will be treated on its merits in future, according to the purpose of the visit.