

POLITICAL GIMMICK

THE extent to which the Government now reacts politically to most situations is clearly reflected in the announcement appointing a commission to inquire into the desirability of establishing a television service.

If it were not so acutely conscious of the political aspects involved, it would have announced — after all, this is the latter part of the 20th century — that TV would be introduced and that the commission it was setting up would merely investigate the technical problems and the best way of operating the service. But no; the Government, which used to pride itself on its *kragdadigheid*, has become fearful politically that, like the legendary *hippede*, it hardly knows which foot to put forward first.

Ministers are constantly reminding us that South Africa, after 21 years of Nationalist rule, is the most highly developed and industrialised country in Africa. They point to the backwardness of other African States; but for many years most of these have had the advantages of a television service about which the South African Government is still unable to make up its mind.

It can't, or won't, make up its mind simply because it is fearful of the political consequences.

In appointing a commission to inquire

into the desirability of establishing a TV service it is passing the buck. Too timid to make a decision, it has left it to a commission which, if it decides that we should have TV, will have to bear the brunt of the attack that will assuredly be launched by the *Herstigte Nasionale Party*.

Countering this attack by the "little black box" Herzogites, the Government will be able to make the excuse: "But it wasn't our decision, it was made by a commission headed by Dr. P. J. Meyer." And who could possibly accuse him of being *verlig*?

It is not surprising that the Government's manoeuvring on the television issue has been stigmatised by the Opposition as a "political gimmick" — an attempt to please those voters at the forthcoming general election who would like to have TV, and to offer some hope that there won't be TV to those who, like Dr. Hertzog's followers, believe that the "little black box" will strike a deadly blow at the heart of *verkrampte* Nationalism.

On TV, sport and other issues the Government now seems doomed to a politically schizophrenic existence, which is perhaps why it looks as though it is about to burst from a complex of internal tensions.

MIND-READING CABINET

IT would be a matter of regret if we failed to appreciate the true worth of our Cabinet Ministers. So far as we know they are unique; no other democratic country can claim to have a Cabinet of mind-readers.

Not so long ago, the Prime Minister, reading the minds of the M.C.C. selectors, stated categorically that they had included Mr. Basil D'Oliveira in the team to tour South Africa solely for political reasons.

No matter what assurances the M.C.C. gave about members of the touring team having been selected on their cricketing ability alone, Mr. Vorster knew better. He was adamant — Mr. D'Oliveira had been put into the team for the sole purpose of causing "political embarrassment to South Africa." He was, of course, not going to stand for this — and the M.C.C. tour was cancelled.

Happily, Mr. Vorster is not the only member of the Cabinet who is able to do some mind-reading and so reveal the sinister political motives that lie behind so many seemingly innocent actions of sportsmen and sports bodies.

Mr. Frank Waring, Minister of Sport and Recreation, has also indulged in some mind-

reading, with the result that he has been able to warn us that the American Negro tennis player, Mr. Arthur Ashe, wants to come to South Africa "to engage in political activity" rather than to play tennis.

But for Mr. Waring's timely warning, the members of the South African Tennis Players' Association, many of whom have played with Mr. Ashe and know him well, would have been hoodwinked. They were anxious that Mr. Ashe, who is one of the greatest tennis players in the world, should come to South Africa, for they were under the impression that he merely wanted to try to add our national championships to the long list of tennis titles he already holds. Now, thanks to Mr. Waring, they know differently.

Once again we should be grateful to a mind-reading Minister for having prevented us from falling into a political trap set by a sportsman.

The only snag about all this Ministerial mind-reading is that it is likely to get us kicked out of every international sports organisation. And, of course, if there is any more mind-reading about the motives behind the selection of the All Blacks side, that will be another tour cancelled.