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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

28 March 1985.

Dear Andrew,

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM

The Prime Minister held a further meeting this morning to discuss the proposals in the Home Secretary's minute of 27 March about domestic matches and your Secretary of State's minute of 27 March on matches abroad, in preparation for the meeting with the football authorities on 1 April.

The Home Secretary, introducing his paper, said that the police felt strongly that they should not bear the full burden of action and that maximum pressure should be put on the football authorities to take action themselves. With that proviso, however, his minute contained a number of specific and practical measures, some of which could be taken whether or not the football authorities took action themselves.

In discussion of the proposed measures in the Home Secretary's and your Secretary of State's minutes, the following points were made:-

(i) Alcohol

While the football authorities should be urged to forbid the sale of alcohol on their premises and the bringing of alcohol into grounds, back-up legislation should also be taken in England and Wales on similar lines to that which already applied in Scotland. This should be included in the Public Order Bill to be introduced in the following Session, despite the slight risk of extending the ambit of that Bill. As in Scotland, the legislation should include powers to search for and confiscate alcohol; to ban alcohol on coaches to football matches; to take proceedings against owners of coaches on which alcohol was found; and similarly ban alcohol on trains going to football grounds. However the Secretary of State for Transport did not think it necessary to adopt the Scottish legislation which banned the sale of alcohol on all Express coaches.

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(ii) Safety of Sports Grounds Act

The Football authorities should be urged, with the help of the Football Trust, to see that effective perimeter fencing was installed at all problem grounds. With that end in mind, the Government should tell the Football Association that it was prepared to designate all third and fourth division grounds under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act, and the Home Secretary would consider whether the guidelines issued under that act needed sharpening up. In particular he had it in mind to include a provision that clubs should accept and pay for a police presence in the numbers thought necessary by the Chief Constables. It would be important to ensure that the guidelines could be applied discriminatorily, so as to guard against the risk that third and fourth division clubs might say that they would be forced out of business if all of them were obliged to introduce the safeguards required by the guidelines.

(iii) Public Order

The meeting welcomed the proposed controls on public assemblies which would be introduced in the Public Order Bill. However, the Secretary of State for the Environment said that his legal advice was that it would remain difficult for the police to collect evidence unless it were made a specific offence to be a member of a riotous group. The Prime Minister asked the Home Secretary to consider further whether the law needed any further strengthening to assist the police to deal with crowd misbehaviour, and in particular to consider whether it should be made a specific offence to encroach on to a football pitch. She would send the Home Secretary an interesting letter which had been addressed to her by a former police officer. |

(iv) Arrangements for collecting and disseminating information about behaviour at matches

It was agreed that, with the help of the Football Trust, the Football Association should be encouraged to promote the use of close circuit television at problem grounds, both as a source of evidence and as a deterrent. In this respect the Home Office surveillance vehicles had a valuable part to play, and the Prime Minister asked the Home Secretary to consider how quickly the availability of vans could be increased.

(v) Sentencing

It was noted that Magistrates had recently been giving stiffer sentences and that the Home Secretary would take steps to encourage the use of attendance centres: however, there was evidence that attendance centres were not regarded as an effective deterrent in the most difficult cases.

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(vi) Membership cards

The banning of troublemakers from grounds might be welcome to the football authorities and would be greatly assisted by membership cards. Membership cards would also be useful in controlling fans attending overseas matches (see (vii) below). However, it would be oppressive if casual attendance at football matches were made difficult or impossible by the absence of a card. From this point of view, there would be advantage if the cards were issued by the Football Association rather than by individual clubs

(vii) Overseas matches

One possibility was to make football hooliganism an extra territorial offence so that breaches of the law overseas could be tried in this country. However, such extra-territorial offences were normally the subject of an international agreement and, without such agreement, it would be difficult to get witnesses to this country. Further consideration should be given on proposing an international convention on this matter. Another approach would be to arrange that those convicted overseas could be required to serve their sentences in this country: this would remove the present disincentive to overseas authorities in bringing proceedings against British hooligans. The Home Secretary would consider whether this could be brought within a convention now under consideration.

(viii)

The Minister for Sport reported that the Football Association had agreed to transfer the England v Scotland match on 25 May to Scotland.

Summing up the discussion, the Prime Minister said that the present group of Ministers, or their representatives, should join in meeting the football authorities on the following Monday. A speaking note should be prepared setting out specific propositions to be put to the football authorities, including a ban on alcohol in football grounds; effective perimeter fencing and extended use of close circuit television at problem grounds; the issue of membership cards to control entry to grounds; and a ban on organised travel by supporters of troublesome clubs to away matches, whether at home or overseas. The speaking note should also set out the action which the Government was prepared to take to back up or reinforce actions of the football authorities, including legislation on alcohol on Scottish lines; designation of third and fourth division football grounds; amendments to the public order laws; discussions with police about the collection of evidence, the greater use of Section 188 of the Licensing Act, the use of attendance centres, the use of their powers to prevent people travelling when there was likely to be a breach of the peace and communications with the British Transport Police; and discussion with other governments about a convention which would introduce effective mutual action against hooliganism. The speaking note on these lines should be prepared by officials of the Departments concerned and circulated to Ministers by close of play tomorrow, Friday 29 March. The Government would then have to be prepared to say publicly, at the end of the meeting with the football authorities, what propositions it had put to the authorities and what measures it was considering

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taking itself.

I am copying this letter to Rachel Lomax (HM Treasury), Hugh Taylor (Home Office), John Graham (Scottish Office), Richard Allan (Department of Transport), Phil Dykins (Office of the Minister for Sport) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

Robin Butler

(F.E.R. BUTLER)

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