



10 DOWNING STREET

VC
cc Hartley Booth.

cc MASTER SET

From the Private Secretary

17 May 1985

Dear Phil

The Prime Minister yesterday met Jim Lester, MP, Tom Pendry, MP, Tony Banks, MP and John Carlisle, MP, from the All Party Committee on Sport, to discuss football hooliganism. The Minister for Sport and Mr. Shaw attended the meeting. Mr. Hartley Booth was also present.

Mr. Lester said the Committee welcomed the opportunity for a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss football hooliganism. He asked his colleagues to set out their concerns.

Mr. Pendry thought the idea of a membership card system would help a great deal in combating hooliganism. He believed opposition to the idea stemmed from a lack of recognition of the opportunities modern technology offered. He favoured the experimental introduction of a scheme in a few clubs to demonstrate its potential. He also believed that supporters clubs should have more status and authority. They had a vital role to play in policing a membership card system. On alcohol, he stressed the importance of ensuring that new legislation did not prevent clubs generating income through the provision of drinks in executive and directors' boxes.

The Prime Minister noted that there were differing views about the viability and effectiveness of a membership card system. She hoped that Mr. Pendry would put his views forcefully to the football authorities since they did not at present favour such a scheme. She commented on the effectiveness of the system adopted by some Scottish clubs where travel to overseas matches was organised through making membership of the appropriate travel club a requirement.

Mr. Banks noted that Ken Bates had sent a note to Neil Macfarlane on combating hooliganism which he hoped would be considered carefully. He accepted that the problem of hooliganism had become more serious in recent years and he believed the Government was justified in asking that steps should be taken to put matters right. But the Government also had a duty to contribute to the cost; the game at present contributed enormous funds to the Exchequer.

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Mr. Banks said he believed that some hooliganism was organised. Combating this kind of organised violence require specialised police supervision. There was a need for community policing teams to travel with supporters to away matches to help the local police identify interlopers. Mr. Shaw thought this idea was worth considering further.

Mr. Carlisle also emphasised the costs of bringing grounds up to standard. The Government had a duty to contribute. There was a need, too, to be particularly careful about the safety implications of erecting perimeter fences.

The Prime Minister noted the green code was clear that perimeter fences should only be erected where this could be done safely, and, in particular, where the arrangements for leaving the stands were up to standard.

Mr. Lester proposed that legislation should be introduced to reduce the betting levy by half a per cent. Sixty per cent of the extra funds then available might come to the clubs, with the pools promoters holding on to the rest.

The Prime Minister, picking up the points made earlier in discussion, said that the game as a whole had considerable resources. The Football Trust received £7 million annually from the Spot the Ball Competition. About half of this went to FGIT. FGIT in 1984 had £3.3 million surplus, because there had not been enough call from clubs for help. The surplus had been paid out through retrospectively increasing the proportion of cost met by the Trust from 60-75 per cent. A further £5½ million was available to the clubs through their provision of fixture lists to the pools promoters. TV income, too, was substantial.

The Prime Minister noted that the key point was to ensure all the resources available were put towards securing the required ground improvements. Not all the necessary work might be completed by the beginning of the new season, and in the interim limits on attendance at grounds, or in stands, might be needed. She noted that it might not be a wise use of resources to improve those stands which were rarely used to capacity. It could be necessary for some fixtures to be moved instead. So far as combating hooliganism was concerned, the Prime Minister appreciated the vital work done by the Football Trust, and emphasised the importance of increased CCTV coverage. The work of FGIT too was crucial. She had the previous day met Lord Aberdare, the Chairman of the Football Turst, and Tom Walton, Chairman of FGIT. They were cooperating fully with the Minister for Sport's working group.

In conclusion, the Prime Minister said it was important that the Government should not take over responsibility for running the game, nor for deciding in detail where the resources should be directed. But it was Government's responsibility to set up the basic safety and crowd control

guidelines within which all those involved in the game should work.

I am copying this letter to Steve Pike (Mr. Shaw's Office).

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