



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

21 May 1985

Dear Phil

Report from Football Association on Membership Cards

Your Minister's letter of 17 May enclosed a copy of the FA report. The Prime Minister considers that, for the present, it will be best if Mr Macfarlane carried forward the discussions with the Association. She would particularly like the question of membership cards in the context of overseas matches to be addressed.

I should be grateful if you would keep us informed of developments.

I am copying this letter to John Ballard (HM Treasury), Jon Sibson (Home Office), Gerard Hetherington (Scottish Office), Alistair Harrison (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Tony Poulter (Department of Transport).

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Mark Addison

Mark Addison

Phil Dykins Esq
Department of the Environment

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:
Your ref:

The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

17 May 1985

Dear Prime Minister,

I mentioned to you on Wednesday, when we met Morys Aberdare and Tom Wharton, that the Football Association had sent me a paper on membership card systems, as they had been asked to do when you met them on 1 April; I also mentioned that, on a cursory examination, the paper seemed to have some shortcomings.

/ I know you will want to see the paper, so I am attaching a copy. Having now read it closely, I am confirmed in my view that it is not satisfactory. I would have expected the FA to research and then describe in detail how a national scheme might work, perhaps with the collaboration of a potential manufacturer; the report admits that such a scheme is not impossible. They would then have been able to set out clearly the advantages and disadvantages, and reach a judgement in the light of that analysis. They have not done this. They have not looked closely at any of the existing schemes run by individual clubs; they have not considered at all the overseas matters. I fear that their failure to adopt a sufficiently analytical approach may be due to their approaching the task with insufficiently open minds.

If you agree, I will discuss the issue with the Association. We do not want to tell them their business; but we should expect a more thorough and convincing analysis of an option which continues to be advocated by many people. In the meantime, you may want to write to them yourself, warning them we would like more work done. I personally believe that a card scheme for our matches on the continent may be essential - and I think the world of football agrees.

/ I attach a draft for you to consider. As Mr Croker is the FA's Secretary, the letter might alternatively be sent by Robin Butler.

I am copying this letter to Patrick Jenkin, Giles Shaw, Allan Stewart, Tim Renton and David Mitchell.

(PWS)

(VANS)

(HO)

(50)

Yours,

NEIL MACFARLANE

(Approved by the Minister and signed in his absence)

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

LIMITED

Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
President: H.R.H. THE DUKE OF KENT
Chairman: F.A. MILLICHIP

General Secretary:
E.A. CROKER



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16 LANCASTER GATE, LONDON W2 3LW

Our Ref: EAC/PFS/376

Your Ref:

14th May 1985.

Mr. N. Macfarlane, M.P.,
Minister for Sport,
Department of the Environment,
2 Marsham Street,
London, S.W.1.

Dear Neil,

Further to our previous correspondence and discussions about crowd problems, we were requested in the letter from the Prime Minister dated 4th April, to report back to you about a Membership Card System. We have now investigated this possibility and submit herewith our report.

You will see that it is the unanimous opinion of those within football with whom we have discussed this subject, that a national scheme will be totally impracticable.

I have just received confirmation from Mr. Anderton, the Chief Constable of Manchester, that the Association of Chief Police Officers have also discussed this possibility in depth and have reached exactly the same conclusion that we have.

We are continuing our investigations on the other points that were raised at our meeting with the Prime Minister and your colleagues and will report back on these in due course.

Yours sincerely,

E.A. croker
General Secretary

IDENTITY CARDS FOR FOOTBALL SPECTATORS

A REPORT TO THE PRIME MINISTER

At their meeting with The Prime Minister and colleagues held on 1st April, 1985, the football authorities were asked to consider a number of issues connected with misconduct among football supporters. The Prime Minister attached particular importance to the consideration of proposals which had been put forward for the introduction of a national Identity Card system for those wishing to attend football matches. She asked the football authorities to give the matter urgent attention and to report back to her on the subject within six weeks. This document constitutes that report.

We have approached the subject from three angles:

- 1 The practicalities involved
- 2 The desirability of such a scheme in the purely practical terms of whether or not it would produce better behaviour.
- 3 The effect on football of such a scheme.

1 PRACTICALITIES

The Football Association and The Football League have received much correspondence over the years from members of the public advocating the introduction of a national Identity Card system. The fact that so many people have privately and independently conceived of the same solution to the hooligan problem has led both The Football Association and The Football League to give careful consideration to these proposals.

More recently, a number of companies have made approaches, offering to supply identity cards, in some cases accompanied by sophisticated checking systems. The football authorities have looked carefully at all of these proposals and have met representatives from some of the companies. Demonstrations have been arranged at Lancaster Gate. A list of the 19 companies who have approached The FA is appended. (Appendix A)

In assessing the various proposals, the football authorities have been mindful of the following considerations:

- 1 Where, when and by whom would cards be issued? At football grounds, police stations, or from a central office? Would a card be issued as a one-off, for a period or for an indefinite length of time?
- 2 Could supporters write for cards, or would they be required to make personal application?
- 3 Would cards carry a photograph and would supporters need to prove identity before issue? Would the issuing authority have the right to refuse to issue a card, and under what circumstances?
- 4 What information would be carried on the card? Name and address, age, sex, etc?
- 5 Would cards be applicable to all matches, or could a selective system be applied?
- 6 Who would pay for the costs of establishing the system and on-going costs? Would the card-holder be expected to pay a subscription and/or administration fee?
- 7 What would be the legal and practical implications of refusing entry into a ground to a non-card holder? Who would bear the cost of the extra police required to supervise turnstiles?
- 8 Under what circumstances might a card be confiscated? Would the police have the power to search for and remove cards from football supporters - or ordinary citizens - apprehended away from a football ground? Who would decide whether an offence was football related?
- 9 Could a system be evolved to prevent supporters whose cards had been removed from re-applying under a false name?
- 10 How many cards would need to be produced? A recent survey by Target Group Index (Appendix B) has indicated that as many as 5.7m people attend at least one football match of some description during the course of the season.
- 11 Would the system be operated by the football authorities, by the police or by the company providing the service? Would one company or more be involved?

- 12 Should admission to football matches be by identity card only? If so, cards would have to be issued not only to spectators, but also to Directors, Executive Box guests, Officials, Stewards, Referees and Linesmen, Players, Press, Photographers, TV and Radio Personnel.
- If this were considered unreasonable, an agreed list of exceptions would require compilation.
- 13 Which matches would the system apply to? Proponents of such schemes clearly intend matches in the Canon League to be included, together, no doubt, with games in the FA Cup and Milk Cup. But what is intended in relation to International matches, club games against foreign sides, matches overseas, reserve and youth team matches?
- 14 How far down the pyramid of football should the scheme extend? There are 40,000 clubs registered with The Football Association. Only 92 take part in the Canon League - and 4 of these are Welsh. If a scheme was to apply only to Football League clubs, how would it deal with the common situation of a match in the FA Cup involving one team from The Football League and another from outside it?

2 WOULD IDENTITY CARDS PRODUCE BETTER BEHAVIOUR?

The introduction of a universal Identity Card system will only show benefits in terms of improved behaviour if the potential miscreant is likely to be caught, if his card can then be removed and if it is then impossible for him to obtain a new card by other means.

It is the contention of the football authorities that the scale of the effort which would be required to police an Identity Card scheme would be enormous in terms of the likely return.

The practical considerations listed above give, in our view, a clear indication of the problems involved. A scheme that fudged any of these important issues would undoubtedly lead to abuses and to widespread contempt among those whose behaviour it aimed to control.

There is also the very real possibility that the need to check people entering football grounds would produce irritation, leading to misbehaviour from a wider section of football supporters than those currently likely to cause trouble and to confrontations with the police which might attract politically motivated elements from outside the game. Potential trouble-makers refused entry to a ground might be tempted to cause disturbances in the vicinity, thus deflecting police manpower away from the ground.

While these might be seen as short-term drawbacks to be tolerated in the interest of finding a long-term solution to a difficult problem, there is the strong possibility, as we shall examine in the next section, of permanent damage being done to the game of football in the meantime. There is also absolutely no guarantee that the hooligan will not go and perpetrate his misdeeds elsewhere.

3 THE EFFECT ON FOOTBALL

It seems possible that the technology exists to establish a nationwide Identity Card system. Given sufficient finance and manpower, it is possible that such a system could be made to function. We do not believe, as a result, that there would be a significant improvement in behaviour. We are convinced, however, that the short-term effects of the introduction of compulsory identity cards would lead to long-term damage for the game of association football.

If we examine the statistics of football attendance, we find evidence that something less than half of the people attending Canon League matches on any one Saturday are regular supporters of the staging club. With aggregate attendances running at 400,000+, this means that little more than 200,000 spectators per Saturday are regular attenders. As clubs play at home once every two weeks, we may assume that there are some 400,000 committed supporters. If the Target Group Index survey is to be believed, that leaves some 5.3m people who are not regular supporters of a Football League club, but who do, at some point during the season, go and see a football match. Travelling support may be fairly assessed at around 50,000 per week - an estimate based on an average of 1,000 per Canon League match. As this is the section of football followers from which a high proportion of trouble-makers come, then for every hooligan we attempt to control through an identity card, there must be at least 100 well-behaved supporters and for every committed fan, there are more than 14 "casuals."

It is our contention that forcing all supporters to go through the process of obtaining identity cards would alienate a very substantial proportion of the well-behaved and non-committed.

It should also be noted here that many clubs now derive much needed income from spectators from overseas. Arsenal, for example, are visited at each home match by more than 1,000 fans from Scandinavia, and there is no evidence of misconduct involving these supporters.

Many supporters who would applaud any measures taken to rid the game of the damage inflicted upon it by a minority of spectators would nevertheless not register because of philosophical objections to divulging personal information which might find its way onto a circularised computer list.

Many companies providing substantial sums to clubs through the hire of Executive Boxes would be reluctant to continue an association with the game if their guests, who vary from match to match, were required to obtain cards.

SUMMARY

Football is beset by the problem of hooliganism and the football authorities are committed to giving open-minded consideration to any ideas aimed at providing a solution.

Many clubs have already instituted or considered instituting limited membership schemes for their supporters, often at some expense to the clubs concerned, and the football authorities fully support their efforts. Many grounds already have family and/or season-ticket enclosures. It is a certainty that this trend will continue. Some clubs, with a higher than average percentage of regular support, may become "Members only."

It may be that clubs will be able to secure dispensation from any future all-fencing measures by ensuring that certain sections of grounds are reserved for card-carrying members.

The football authorities and the clubs, however, are convinced that a nationwide Identity Card system would do little to solve the underlying problems manifested through football hooliganism and that its introduction could well have a seriously adverse effect on association football as a spectator sport.

A meeting was recently held between The Football Association, The Football League and the following clubs: Arsenal, Chelsea, Derby County, Leeds United, Leicester City, Luton Town, Manchester United and Millwall. Those present at the meeting unanimously concurred with all of the opinions stated above.

E A CROKER

GENERAL SECRETARY
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

13 May 1985

APPENDIX A

Companies approaching The Football Association
with identity card proposals:

Essex Business Forms

Time & Data Systems International Ltd

Tann Synchrome

Panda Press

Sperry

Knowles Micro Systems

Guardian Card Systems Ltd

De La Rue General Services Ltd

Holcon Monitoring Systems

Vanguard Securities

Polaroid (UK) Ltd

Print Lamination Plastics Ltd

Falcon Computer Bureau Ltd

Business Mail Data Services Ltd

Wotherdown Ltd

Colour Activated Transillumination Systems Ltd

Petra Promotions

Wooton Jeffreys

TMC Communications (UK) Ltd

APPENDIX B

So who says soccer is losing out?

A RECENT survey by Target Group Index, the national research company, suggests that there are none so far out of step as the soccer 'knockers'.

Using attendances as the yardstick, T.G.I. discovered that 5.7 million adults will watch a football match compared with its nearest rival cricket with 1.7 million. With over 20 million Canon League and Milk Cup attendances last season, many spectators obviously attend regularly.

T.G.I. then turned their attention to soccer itself. Including recorded matches, 14.9 million watched it on television, 9.9 million read reports, 8.7 million bet on football pools and 5.7 million attend all types of football matches.

That's not all. The average attendance of 22,468 in the First Division of the Canon League for 1983-84 was exceeded in the First Divisions of the leading European countries only by Italy and Spain.

Spain	33,205
Italy	32,215
England	22,468
West Germany	21,070
Scotland	11,140
France	10,152
Belgium	9,945
Holland	8,996
Switzerland	5,820

First Division attendances this season, up to the end of January, showed an increase of 12 per cent and Milk Cup figures, excluding the semi-finals, were up by four per cent to an average of 10,300 per match.

