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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

31 May 1985

Dear Phil,

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM

Mr. Robert Maxwell came to see the Prime Minister today on another subject but put forward a number of ideas on football hooliganism. He warned the Prime Minister against expecting too much from the Football Association and the Football League. They were internally divided, had no machinery and no resources and their ability to implement anything was extremely limited. For example, as a representative of a rich and successful club, Mr. John Smith was unable to speak for the many small clubs. The FA and the League would be only too ready to allow the Government to take responsibility. The Prime Minister agreed that those running the game should be made to take responsibility.

Mr. Maxwell had a number of specific suggestions to make. First, the FA should take the lead in withdrawing English clubs from European competition before they were excluded by UEFA. Secondly, the police should take over full responsibility for policing within football grounds rather than being hired agents of the clubs. The police would then take charge of who was admitted and who could go where within the ground. Once they had full responsibility, the police would bring all their resources to bear on identifying and apprehending the troublemakers. The money saved on police fees should be paid over to the FA and devoted to ground safety. Thirdly, the FA's levy on transfer fees should be raised from 5 to 15 per cent and the proceeds also devoted to ground safety.

Finally, he suggested a committee of inquiry to look at the way forward for football in this country. This should involve the FA, the League and the Minister for Sport, and should be chaired by some-one with a knowledge of the game but who was able to take an independent view. He volunteered to take this on himself if no-one else could be found. He suggested that he, Mr. John Smith and Mr. Jack Dunnett should get together to discuss the possibilities. He would be happy for Mr. Robin Butler to take part in these discussions. He put forward the suggestion of a committee of inquiry because he felt that, having given a lead, the Prime Minister should be able to step back and leave further action to those directly involved. The Prime Minister noted this suggestion.

The Prime Minister was concerned that measures had to be in place by August for the start of the next season. Mr. Maxwell cautioned against trying to achieve too much too fast. He did not believe it was reasonable to achieve more than the proposals he had put forward.

I am copying this letter to Janet Lewis-Jones (Lord President's Office), John Ballard (Department of the Environment), Peter Ricketts (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Hugh Taylor (Home Office).

*Yours sincerely  
Andrew Turnbull*

ANDREW TURNBULL

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