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cc H. Booth

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

13 June 1985

Dear Sir

The Prime Minister, accompanied by the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Secretary of State for Transport, the Minister for Sport, Mr. Tim Renton, Mr Allan Stewart and Mr. Wyn Roberts met representatives of the Football Association and Football League yesterday. The Football Association was represented by Mr. Bert Millichip, Chairman, and Mr. Ted Croker, General Secretary. The Football League was represented by Mr. Jack Dunnett, President, and Mr Graham Kelly, Secretary. Mr Hartley Booth was also present.

The Prime Minister welcomed Mr. Millichip, Mr Dunnett and their colleagues. Since the last meeting in April, the dreadful events at Bradford, Birmingham and Brussels had taken place. The UEFA and FIFA bans had been imposed on English teams. There was therefore an urgent need to take stock of the progress which had been made since the last meeting, and to identify what further measures needed to be taken.

The Government had decided to accelerate the programme of action it had agreed at the April meeting. The Prime Minister summarised the measures taken so far:

- (1) The Government proposed to introduce, if possible this Session, legislation similar to that contained in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980. That Act makes it an offence to be drunk, or possess alcohol, on football coaches, on entry to grounds and in most areas of grounds.
- (2) The Government would proceed next Session with the new legislation on public order. The proposals on assemblies in the open air would permit the police to impose limits on the numbers of people attending football matches if they anticipated disorder. The police already had full powers to take the necessary steps to deal with criminal activity inside grounds.
- (3) Mr. Justice Popplewell would continue with his enquiry into the events at Bradford City and Birmingham football grounds on 11 May. He would also be taking into account any lessons to be learned from the events in Birmingham on 29 May. It was hoped to receive his interim report before the end of July.



(4) The Home Secretary had set in hand the procedure for designating under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 all clubs in divisions 3 and 4.

(5) The Government had considered with the police measures to improve their effectiveness in dealing with football violence. The police had confirmed they would bring serious charges whenever the evidence was available. The police would be discussing with the Government and the Football Trust the outcome of the CCTV experiment; in particular, they would see if more sophisticated equipment could be provided, capable of taking pictures which could be used to collect evidence as well as for crowd control. Two more hoolivans would be purchased. ACPO had agreed that the British Transport Police should be provided with multi-channel radio sets to give them access to police radio communications. The police aimed to introduce for next season new arrangements for collecting and disseminating information about behaviour at matches. They would be discussing with the football authorities arrangements to ensure that they were able to search people entering grounds as a condition of entry.

(6) The Home Secretary was drawing attention to the Court of Appeal guidelines on sentencing violent offenders and encouraging magistrates to make full use of their powers.

(7) The Government would continue to co-operate in developing international measures to deal with hooliganism. The Sports Ministers from the Council of Europe would be re-convening at a meeting on 27 June. The hope was that the existing Council of Europe recommendation on reducing violence at football matches could be strengthened into a binding convention. Furthermore an agreement with UEFA would be sought to require that the arrangements for international matches should comply with certain conditions. The drafting of the convention would need to be considered carefully.

(8) After the events on 29 May in Brussels, the Government had indicated that we were willing to extradite to Belgium any individuals against whom a prima facie case could be made in accordance with our requirements on evidence. We were also prepared that they should serve their sentences here, and it was hoped that this would encourage the Belgian authorities to press the appropriate charges.

In discussion on these points, the FA agreed that in advance of the new public order legislation, they would arrange with the clubs to ensure that police advice on attendance at matches was followed. The football authorities agreed that safety at grounds needed to be considered in the round and, for instance, in the case of perimeter fences, it was important to ensure easy and quick exit from stands was available. The Football Association would continue its discussions with the Football Trust to encourage the introduction of CCTV as widely as possible; special attention needed to be paid to picture quality. The League agreed that agreement to police search should be made



a condition of access to grounds.

Mr. Croker said that a new offence should be created on unauthorised access to the pitch. The Home Secretary believed the simplification and modernisation of the legislation on public order would encourage the police to bring charges of, eg, threatening behaviour where this was called for following an invasion of the pitch by fans. He agreed, however, to consider the idea of a specific new offence in consultation with the police. On the suggestion of Mr. Dunnett, the Home Secretary also agreed to consider the possibility that clubs should be provided with the names of those who had been convicted of offences relating to football hooliganism, to help them keep out those with a record of violence.

Mr. Millichip accepted the need to clarify the application of the UEFA and FIFA bans. But his particular concern was the danger that the first match played by the England national team in Europe would lead to an outburst of violence. This could well result in the England team being banned from the World Cup, for which the draw took place in May 1986. The difficulties of preventing supporters from this country being able to buy tickets on the day at matches abroad should not be under-estimated. Mr. Macfarlane noted that this was why there was a need for an European initiative, such as was currently under way.

The Football Association and the League said they remained concerned about organised hooliganism, particularly at matches overseas. They already pursued arrangements whereby no tickets were made available to UK supporters for these matches. But it was difficult if not impossible to prevent fans travelling on their own initiative. The Prime Minister noted that in the case of Mexico it had been suggested to the Government there that visas should be obtained in advance. The Government was pursuing this. This, again, emphasised the need for proper controls on overseas matches through the appropriate international forum.

The FA and the League said that identifying the hard core of those responsible for inciting others to hooliganism was difficult. Though the Association and the Clubs had much information, it could not be used to pin down the culprits because there was no central co-ordinating point. The Home Secretary noted that the new police arrangements for collecting and disseminating such information would help. He also agreed that the police should nominate a specific department to whom all such evidence could be referred. This would enable a data bank of information to be developed cumulatively. He would consider further with the police how this might best be arranged.

The Prime Minister then turned to the action the FA and the League were now proposing to take on the points identified at the earlier meeting as falling within their area of responsibility. The Prime Minister took the view that improving the control over access to football grounds



was essential. The trouble-makers had to be isolated and dealt with. Membership cards were a feasible way of doing this. Some clubs were already experimenting with them. She accepted the difficulties of introducing a national scheme immediately, but it was important that any systems which the clubs set up should not only be effective in controlling access to all parts of the ground but should also be compatible between one club and another. Unless the systems were compatible, clubs could spend large sums and access to away matches could still prove impossible to control. The Football Association and the League agreed urgently to consider jointly with the Government, in a working group under the chairmanship of the Minister for Sport, the details of a scheme of membership cards initially at club level but bearing in mind the need for compatibility, and to offer advice accordingly to the clubs as soon as possible.

On travel arrangements for supporters, it was noted that the recent decision by British Rail not to offer cheap fares on football trains might increase the use of private transport. This could make it more difficult to control consumption of alcohol en route to matches. The FA pointed out that there was generally less trouble at matches where stations were close to grounds and they confirmed that this would be a factor in their consideration of which grounds should be used for certain matches. The FA and the League agreed to continue their discussions with the Minister for Sport on these matters, and on the arrangements for issuing tickets. The FA would also continue their discussions with the Football Trust about improving the arrangements for seating in grounds, and introducing family enclosures. The Prime Minister noted that controlling the issue of tickets both at home and away matches would be considerably more effective as a control if membership cards needed to be presented before tickets could be bought. In conclusion, the FA and the League agreed that they would keep in close touch with the Government on all these matters.

Summing up, the Prime Minister noted that ultimately clubs were responsible for the safety of those using their ground. That was a responsibility which could not be evaded. The clubs, the Association and the League therefore had to set action in hand which would protect those who wished to attend matches to watch the game, and to forestall those who went to cause trouble. The alternative was the collapse of football as a spectator sport.

After the FA and the League representatives had left the meeting it was agreed that the Home Secretary would consider the possibility of taking powers to close clubs whose supporters had a bad record of violence. This might be required if the football authorities proved unwilling to take the radical steps to combat hooliganism which were now required. The FA already had such a power, but had proved unwilling to use it or to amend its rules to enable it to be deployed more effectively.



I am copying this letter to Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Hugh Taylor (Home Office), Rachel Lomax (H M Treasury) John Graham (Scottish Office), Richard Allen (Department of Transport), Phil Dykins (Office of the Minister for Sport), Colin Williams (Welsh Office and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Len*

*Mark Addison*

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Miss Sue Vandervord,  
Department of the Environment