

PRIME MINISTERLEGISLATION ON ALCOHOL AT FOOTBALL GROUNDS

The Legislation Committee will be discussing the Bill to control alcohol at sports grounds next week with a view to immediate introduction. Points to note are the following:

- (i) the Bill will not be brought into effect before 10 August which would breach the normal rules about requiring a 21-day period between the laying of a statutory instrument and its coming into force. There are precedents for this, however, and the Opposition seem likely to agree.
- (ii) the Bill applies only at present to 'football specials' i.e. rail and coach services specifically designed to take football supporters to grounds. There may be pressure for provision to cover normal, scheduled services. But buses already exist for this purpose.
- (iii) you will recall that the Home Secretary wanted to make an exception from the ban on alcohol for "fully enclosed rooms" at football grounds, i.e. sponsors' boxes. The Opposition will not agree to that, however, and the Home Secretary has had to fall back on banning alcohol in any part of the ground with a direct view on to the pitch. If they wish those relatively few clubs with sponsors' boxes could redesign them to provide a closed off bar.
- (iv) there may be pressure to extend the Bill to sales of alcohol in the immediate vicinity of football clubs. The police do, however, have the power under the Licensing Act 1984 to apply to magistrates for pubs and off-licences near football grounds to be closed at the time of matches.

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