

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

cc Pops  
Vf.



Prime Minister. ②

For information. You will note the statement is now down for Wednesday, not Thursday. We have a meeting on Wednesday, which will preclude your sitting in.

HOME OFFICE  
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22 July 1985

Dear Mr Graham

POPPELWELL INQUIRY: INTERIM REPORT

MEA 22/7

I must sign  
Good statement out

In his letter of 16 July the Home Secretary explained his plans for responding to the interim report. It is now expected to be published on Wednesday 24 July.

... I attach drafts of the oral and written statements the Home Secretary proposes to make which have been agreed in broad outline between officials. I would be grateful if you could confirm at your earliest opportunity whether your Secretary of State is content.

I am copying this letter and its enclosures to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President, the Lord Privy Seal, the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Minister for Sport, No 10 and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely  
Walter Fittall

W R FITTALL

J S Graham, Esq

## HOME SECRETARY'S STATEMENT ON SAFETY AND CONTROL AT SPORTS GROUNDS

With permission, Mr Speaker, I should like to make a statement. The Government has today published the interim report of the Inquiry into safety and control at sports grounds under the chairmanship of Mr Justice Popplewell, established following the tragic fire at Bradford City football ground and the events at Birmingham City on 11 May. My right hon friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are both deeply grateful for the speedy, clear and thorough way in which the Chairman and his two assessors have tackled this difficult and important task.

The Inquiry concludes that the Bradford fire was probably caused by the accidental dropping of a lighted match or cigarette or tobacco onto accumulated rubbish below the stand; that had the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (the 'Green Guide') been complied with, the tragedy would not have occurred; and that the riot at Birmingham - which the police could not reasonably have foreseen - was caused by spectators bent from the outset on violence. No one reading the report, or who followed the public hearings in Bradford, can doubt that the Inquiry has investigated these matters as thoroughly as possible.

The Inquiry make 32 recommendations, 8 of which are provisional. They fall into 2 groups: those concerned with safety and those

/concerned with control.

concerned with control. I am making available separately a written statement dealing with each of the recommendations.

The safety recommendations include a number designed to improve arrangements at sports grounds by, for example, improving evacuation procedures, the training of stewards, the provision of fire fighting equipment and increasing the scope of safety certificates. In all these cases the Government will be inviting the local authorities, the police and the sports authorities to respond immediately to the spirit of the recommendations. The Government will issue a fresh edition of the 'Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds', the 'Green Guide', in the light of the Inquiry's final report. But it will also ask certificating authorities and the police in exercising their powers to take full account of the recommendations for amending the Green Guide, before the issue of the new edition of the Green Guide.

So far as crowd control is concerned, the Inquiry has made a number of important recommendations concerning membership cards and closed circuit television, the creation of new criminal offences relating to smoke bombs and the throwing of missiles and the need for a more suitable police radio.

On membership cards, the Inquiry recommends that urgent consideration be given by football clubs in England and Wales to introducing a membership system so as to exclude visiting fans. Also recommended is that closed circuit television be introduced at League football

/grounds.

grounds. The Government strongly supports the television recommendation and has also already made clear its support for a scheme of membership cards to help exclude troublemakers. A Football League working party is looking at the options and I would urge the football authorities to take heed of the recommendations of the Inquiry by seeking to reach positive conclusions at the earliest practicable date.

It is also proposed that new offences should be created making criminal the possession of smoke bombs in football grounds and the throwing of missiles. This proposal will be carefully considered for possible inclusion in the public order legislation which the Government hopes to bring forward next session. The Directorate of Telecommunications at the Home Office will also consider, as a matter of urgency, whether it is possible to meet the concern expressed about the personal radios used at Bradford.

In its provisional conclusions the Inquiry indicates that it is minded to recommend changes to the provisions of the Fire Precautions and Safety at Sports Grounds Acts; that the police be given additional powers of search and arrest; and that consideration be given to the creation of a specific offence of chanting obscene or racist abuse at a sports ground. We shall of course consider with care any recommendations which the Inquiry makes on these and other points in the final report.

/I hope it will

I hope it will also be convenient for me to bring the House up to date on matters relating to safety and control since my statement on 13 May.

First, under the Safety at Sports Grounds Act I have designated all the qualifying grounds of clubs in Divisions 3 and 4 in the Football League in England and Wales, as well as in Divisions 1 and 2 of the Rugby League. The necessary Order was laid on 19 July and comes into force on 9 August. From the latter date clubs will be required to apply for safety certificates before admitting any spectators. I have made it clear to the certifying authorities that the expectation is that they will work swiftly, normally by means of issuing interim certificates. In some cases the best way of providing immediate protection - while also reducing the costs of implementation - may well be to restrict attendance ceilings in grounds or parts of grounds.

My rt hon friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has decided for his part not to proceed by extending designation in Scotland beyond its present limits. However, he has arranged for all non-designated clubs and all governing bodies in sport in Scotland to conduct an urgent review of ground safety in co-operation with their local fire authorities.

Secondly, all uncertificated grounds of the third and fourth divisions of the Football League, of the first and second divisions of the Scottish Football League, and of the first and second divisions of the Rugby League have been inspected

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as a result of the request that I and my rt hon friend made to Chief Fire Officers and Firemasters. In addition accommodation for spectators at the larger cricket grounds, rugby union grounds, race courses, motor racing tracks, greyhound tracks, tennis clubs and athletics grounds has been inspected.

Chief Fire Officers and Firemasters have sent copies of their findings to the management of the sports grounds indicating what remedial measures have to be taken. In some cases this will involve the complete closure of a stand until rebuilding or remedial work has been completed; in other cases strict limits are being placed on the number of spectators allowed into the stand. My hon friend the Minister of Sport will be looking further at the financial implications with the interests concerned in his working group on the financing of safety improvements. Managements have responded in a co-operative way and have either set necessary work in hand or are considering how to comply with the requirements. Local authorities and local fire authorities have sufficient statutory powers to ensure that essential fire safety requirements are complied with. These will in no way be affected by the separate proposals directed towards streamlining the present law on fire precautions published yesterday in a consultative document and which I am inviting the Inquiry also to consider in the context of their work.

My rt hon friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are grateful to Chief Fire Officers and Firemasters for the prompt,

/efficient and careful

efficient and careful manner in which this survey has been carried out. A digest of the reports will be submitted to the Inquiry.

Thirdly, the House will of course be aware of the rapid passage through both Houses of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Bill. It will be in force by the beginning of the football season.

Fourthly, steps have also been taken to enhance police effectiveness next season. In England and Wales the Association of Chief Police Officers has introduced a new system for exchanging information about the conduct of fans which should assist in anticipating and preventing trouble. Three of the Home Office photographic vehicles will be available to be deployed at football matches, together with 2 experimental high-definition tripod mounted cameras. This is in addition to the £500,000 worth of equipment purchased through funds provided by the Football Trust.

Fifthly, my hon friend the Minister for Sport has helped to promote and draw up a Council of Europe Convention on Spectator Violence [which was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers yesterday].

There is no single, simple method of making sports grounds safe and free from violence, but I believe that the steps taken in the last few months, coupled with the implementation of the important recommendations of Mr Justice Popplewell's inquiry, have already made and will make a significant contribution towards preserving football as a major spectator sport.