

MFJ

Home Affairs

7 February 1983

The Prime Minister has now seen your Minister's letter of 4 February about approach to soccer violence. She was interested to hear of the success of Mr. Macfarlane's meeting with his European counterparts last week and was grateful to be kept informed.

TIM FLESHER

Warwick Smith Esq
Department of the Environment

(W)



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
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My ref:

Your ref:

4 February 1983

The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1

Dear Prime Minister:

Thatcher *Mr* *the Minister*
JR
4/2

You will have been as concerned as I was to hear of one or two fresh outbreaks of violence recently at Football League grounds. I have received first hand reports of the incidents; it is clear that the available guidelines on crowd control were not followed. I have therefore taken various opportunities in the last week or two to express through the media the Government's condemnation of loutish behaviour of this kind and to remind clubs and authorities of the steps that should be taken. In particular, I have persuaded Jack Dunnett, President of the Football League, to circulate a letter of mine to the Chairmen of all 92 Football League Clubs. This reminds clubs of the existing guidelines, highlighting the two major points. I attach a copy.

I remain particularly concerned about our image abroad. Involving my officials in the all-important planning before key matches concerning British clubs has proved effective in preventing trouble. I shall continue to take such precautions. The next example is a match in Turin in March, in the European Cup, between Aston Villa and Juventus. You will recollect the violence during a match in that city three years ago. My officials are in Turin next week to discuss the preparations and I will personally check that all is well on the eve of the match.

I was able to get my European Ministerial colleagues together round a table in Paris last week, to discuss a paper of mine on soccer violence. I am glad to say they agreed my approach: officials are now to produce a European Convention on Violence in Sport, in a Working Group. I look for early agreement to this and believe that it should be a very promising development.

I am copying this to Willie Whitelaw and Francis Pym.

Neil Macfarlane
NEIL MACFARLANE



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
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My ref:

Your ref:

J J Dunnett Esq MP
President
The Football League
Lytham St Anne's
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3 February 1983

See Jack:

You, Bert Millichip and I are all deeply concerned at the recent return of crowd violence at some league matches. That it is continuing to afflict some clubs is a matter of grave concern to me. You offered to circulate a reminder letter to the 92 League Club Chairmen as a matter of some urgency.

The Football Association has, in the past, circulated useful guidance on crowd control to the affiliated clubs. The current difficulties primarily affect the professional league clubs. It seems to me essential to remind clubs that there are precautions which must be taken, and to highlight two particularly sensitive points. In doing so, I must pay tribute to the efforts which our clubs have made in recent years in trying to uphold law and order in and around the grounds. I also do not seek to pre-empt the work of the Liaison Group, or the proposed Council of Europe Working Group, both of whom are working on detailed advice which we hope to receive shortly.

Experience, both here and abroad, has shown that adherence to the available guidelines effectively limits crowd violence. There appear to be two key requirements:

- a. segregation - which must be effective: this means working out the right measures for each stadium, terrace and stand;
- b. careful and detailed preparation and planning, especially with the Police. This will involve a rigorous on-site assessment by both clubs well in advance of all matches involving sides with a history of violence by a minority of their supporters.

These guidelines are not new, nor may they be exhaustive, but I hope clubs will make use of them until we have the detailed recommendations of the Liaison Group. As we are both aware, no such guidelines can represent a panacea to make our major winter sport once more the family entertainment we all want it to be. We are all saddened by recent events, which make it plain that a reminder of the basic "rules" cannot be out of place. I urge clubs to look again at their procedures and precautions so that we can prevent further outbreaks of violence in the weeks to come.

Neil Macfarlane
NEIL MACFARLANE

4.1.1983

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