



SUBJECT

a MASTER SET

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

20 March 1985

*Dear Phil,*FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM

The Prime Minister had a private conversation today with Mr. John Smith, Chairman of Liverpool Football Club, and asked him for his ideas about tackling the problems of football hooliganism.

Mr. Smith said that he believed that decisive action needed to be taken against the problem clubs, of which there was four at present: Chelsea, Millwall, West Ham and Leeds United. There was a strong National Front element in these clubs. The particular measures which Mr. Smith suggested were:

- (i) When a club's supporters had misbehaved, they should be banned from travelling to away matches in organised coaches or trains. They could not be stopped from travelling individually but they were less likely to cause trouble if they did not go in a crowd: if they did cause trouble they should be subject to heavy penalties (see below).
- (ii) The use of closed-circuit television should be extended as a priority to those problem clubs where it was not available: the Football Trust would be likely to assist with this.
- (iii) When there had been trouble at a ground, there should be a ban on alcohol for the rest of the season.
- (iv) Fences should be built around the problem grounds: again, the Football Trust would be likely to give priority in their help with this.

These were Mr. Smith's four principal suggestions, but he said that he also favoured other measures:

- (v) Magistrates should impose stiffer sentences and should send more cases to the Crown Court. Unless fines were large, they were ineffective: a more effective penalty would be a requirement to be present at attendance centres on Saturday afternoons.

- (vi) There was much to be said for the police parading the ground with police dogs, as a warning.
- (vii) It should be a specific offence to encroach on the ground.

Mr. Smith said that he was not in favour of identity cards because he thought that large numbers of supporters would fail to present them and would cause trouble outside the grounds when they were refused admittance.

All these measures (except for the ban on organised travel of supporters) were directed at home matches. As regards international matches, Mr. Smith said that he would like to see an offence of behaving in a way likely to bring the nation into disrepute: those detained by the police overseas should be charged with this offence on their return to this country whether or not they had been charged overseas and arrangements should be made for the foreign police forces to come to this country to present evidence. Mr. Smith said that he understood that there were difficulties about removing passports but he would personally like to see passports removed for a limited period in the case of people convicted for such offences.

Mr. Smith said finally that, although the distinction between the Football Association and the Football League made it more difficult to achieve effective action in this country, he believed that the Football Association would take action if given a firm lead. If they needed new rules, it should be possible for them to make them.

I am copying this letter to Hugh Taylor (Home Office), Andrew Allberry (Department of the Environment) and Richard Allan (Department of Transport). Since the Prime Minister assured Mr. Smith that this was a private meeting and she would protect the confidentiality of his advice, I should be grateful if all recipients would ensure that this letter is not copied or passed outside Private Offices.

Yours sincerely,

Robin Butler

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Department of the Environment.