

subject as marked

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cc Hartley Booth



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 April, 1985.

The Prime Minister, accompanied by the Home Secretary, Secretary of State for the Environment, Minister for Sport, Mr. Renton, Mr. Mitchell, and Mr. Ancram met representatives of the Football Association and Football League earlier today. The Football Association was represented by Mr. Bert Millichip, Chairman, Mr. Les McKay, Chairman of the Football Association's Disciplinary Committee, and Mr. Ted Croker, General Secretary. The Football League was represented by Mr. Jack Dunnett, President, and Mr. Graham Kelly, Secretary of the League. Mr. Booth was also present.

The Prime Minister welcomed Mr. Millichip, Mr. Dunnett and their colleagues, and thanked Mr. Millichip for the Association's paper. The Government's aim was to restore football to its former place in society. The action taken in the past had manifestly not been enough to deal with the problem of football hooliganism. The Government could and would provide the necessary legislation as a fall-back, but it was up to the football authorities how far this would need to be used. Any measures would need to be selective; some matches and some grounds were much more prone to trouble than others. It was important to address the problem of overseas matches, some of which had gravely tarnished the reputation of the nation abroad. The Prime Minister noted that the FA's memorandum did not say what action they proposed to take. She asked the FA and the League to describe in more detail what measures they had in mind.

Mr. Millichip regretted that the situation required the meeting to take place. The Association, like the Government, wanted to tackle the problem vigorously. One key issue was that under existing rules clubs could not be found guilty for incidents of violence if they had taken "all reasonable precautions". The Association had, however, taken counsel's advice on the possibility of amending their rules, so that clubs could be held absolutely liable. The legal advice was that this could not be done. Mr. Millichip made available copies of the advice received.

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The Prime Minister commented that there was no necessary requirement to make clubs absolutely liable; all that might be needed was to remove the existing qualification. The important point was to give more flexibility to find clubs liable, as well, of course, as to encourage the use of the existing powers. Furthermore, counsel's advice seemed to accept that Rule 31 did require alteration. Mr. Croker acknowledged that many felt the clubs needed stronger powers. But ultimately the problem was one of individuals behaving violently, and that had to be a matter for the courts to deal with. Stiffer sentences were needed.

Mr. Dunnett affirmed the League's wish to eliminate the scourge of football violence in conjunction with the Association and the Government. Over the years he had lobbied successive Home Secretaries without effect. He had also co-sponsored a bill to tackle the problem. The most important need was to stop potential trouble-makers breaking the law. One way of doing this was to increase the police presence at matches. The problem here was the cost. If Government contributed more, it would be easier to provide sufficient police cover to deal with unexpected outbreaks of violence. The police also needed more assistance: they required effective barriers they could control (and the height of barriers should be increased if the club had a bad record); segregation of supporters should be ensured on every ground; and there should be more use of closed-circuit television and video-recorders. The proper punishment of offenders was also important, and the charges currently being pressed were inadequate.

The Prime Minister said the Government would be introducing legislation of the kind already in place in Scotland, and ban alcohol in designated grounds. There had been none of the dire consequences which many had predicted, and in fact, gates had increased since the change. The aim was not to stop people going to matches, but to encourage people, particularly families, back to the game. The Prime Minister noted that clubs would need to continue to pay towards the cost of policing, but agreed to look further at the point Mr. Dunnett had raised. The Prime Minister noted that the introduction of CCT needed to be accelerated, and Mr. Macfarlane would get in touch with Lord Aberdare of the Football Trust accordingly. The Prime Minister agreed it was important for the police to collect evidence to make more serious charges stick. The Home Secretary was considering how this could be encouraged. He was also reviewing the Public Order legislation, and that review would be taking account of these points. He expected to be publishing the White Paper within the next few weeks. In a number of important respects there would be proposals for changes in the law which should help to tackle football violence. He would also look into a point raised by Mr. Kelly that Chief Constables were concerned about a possible reduction in their right to search, under the new provisions of the Police Act.

Mr. Dunnett agreed that the current punishments being received by hooligans were totally inadequate. A fine of £10 was neither here nor there. Much more use should be made of attendance centres, preferably away from the individual's home so as to prevent him going to any ground. Mr. Dunnett also believed that clubs should be involved, where appropriate, in the prosecution of the offenders. At present, this was undertaken entirely by the police, and many clubs were reluctant to act with them.

On the question of membership cards, Mr. Dunnett reported that he had studied this question carefully. The main problem was that very large numbers of spectators went through the turnstiles before a match, and weeding out those without cards, or with invalid cards, would pose severe practical difficulties. Furthermore, electronic checking of cards, on a comprehensive basis, would be very expensive. Mr. Croker thought such a system might be practicable for individual terraces, but many football spectators were casual visitors, and it was important not to make it impossible for them to attend. The Prime Minister thought that modern computer systems should be able to cope with the need to cross-reference tickets issued by different clubs. Season cards, authorised by the FA, might be provided for those who wished to attend matches on a more casual basis. Mr. Dunnett noted that sometimes the police seemed to prefer clubs to allow unruly spectators into the ground, rather than be turned away at the gate and, possibly, rampage through the town. The Home Secretary noted that, if it were made clear that valid cards would be required for entry, such difficulties should not happen on a regular basis. Furthermore, if the trouble-makers were to commit crimes outside the grounds, the police should have the powers to deal with this and be willing to use them. The Prime Minister asked Mr. Millichip to review the possibilities offered by a system of membership cards and to submit conclusions within six weeks, and also whether tickets for matches likely to be troublesome should be available only at the match ground.

On overseas matches, Mr. Croker reported that the FA's system of restricting attendance to those who were members of the authorised travel club had not been successful. Attempts to get the names of those arrested abroad, through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, so that an individual's FA authorisation was withdrawn, had not proved effective. The only effective option seemed to be to clamp down on the sale of tickets generally, and to ensure that entry to matches, where appropriate, was by advance ticket only. It was not possible to ask European countries to change their ticket system just because the match happened to be against a British side. Other countries' main concern seemed to be to ship back the trouble-makers as soon as possible. Mr. Dunnett thought it would be very difficult to stop other countries selling tickets on the day matches took place. A further difficulty was that travel agencies often wanted the business generated by running "football specials". The National Front was also a major cause of difficulties at

foreign matches.

The Prime Minister did not accept matters could not be improved at overseas matches. They had to be. She would like the Football Association to consider, in their review of membership cards, how these might help control violence at matches abroad. The Home Secretary noted that it might soon be possible for those convicted abroad to serve their sentences here, and this might encourage foreign countries to prosecute properly. He foresaw difficulties in endorsing the passports of those convicted of football offences. The Government would see how the Diplomatic Service might help in identifying hooligans, and consider what could be done to discourage travel agents from setting up special travel arrangements to matches. The Government would also be looking with other European Governments at the Council of Europe Agreement on combatting violence. Meanwhile the FA should consider with the UEFA the possibility of tightening up on the sale of tickets at grounds.

Summing up the discussion, the Prime Minister noted that it was no longer a question of whether something should be done to deal with the problem of football violence, but what should be done, and by whom. For its part, the Government was prepared to take the following action:

1. The Scottish legislation on alcohol would be extended to England and Wales. It would provide the Government with powers to designate any ground, but it would be used discriminately.
2. Under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act, problem grounds in the Third and Fourth Divisions could be designated. This might ultimately be applied to all such grounds.
3. A White Paper would be published shortly on the outcome of the review of the Public Order legislation.
4. Consideration would be given to how the police could be encouraged to make fuller use of their powers, and how sentencing could be made more appropriate for the crimes involved.
5. Discussions would take place with other Governments about what could be done to deal with organised travel to matches abroad and arrangements for travel to matches within the UK would also be examined.

The Prime Minister then summed up the points the Football Associations had been asked to take forward:

1. Clubs to ensure effective perimeter fencing at grounds with bad records

2. Accelerate the installation of closed-circuit television, with the assistance of the Football Trust.
3. Investigate the use of membership cards. The Association to report within six weeks.
4. For clubs with a bad record, consideration to be given to entry being solely by tickets which can only be bought at the ground where the match is to be played. Also consideration should be given to extending family enclosures.
5. Consider the possibility of changing Rule 31, to remove the "all reasonable precautions" let-out.

The Prime Minister agreed to write to the Associations this week summarising the outcome of the meeting, and setting out what the Associations and the Government had agreed. The Government relied on the Associations to do a great deal. The more they were prepared to take on, the less need there would be for Government action. The game had to be saved, and it was important that all concerned were seen to be taking effective action. Players particularly should set a good example on the field. The Prime Minister noted that, after the meeting, the Home Secretary and Environment Secretary would be giving a press conference.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Rachel Lomax (HM Treasury), Hugh Taylor (Home Office), John Graham (Scottish Office), Richard Allen (Department of Transport), Phil Dykins (Office of the Minister for Sport), and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*X well  
C. W. W. W.*

(Mark Addison)

Andrew Allberry, Esq.,  
Department of the Environment.

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The Prime Minister, accompanied by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Environment, today met representatives of the Football Association and Football League about measures to combat soccer hooliganism.

The FA was represented by Mr Bert Millichip, Chairman; <sup>2c</sup> Les McKay, Chairman FA's Disciplinary Committee; and Mr Ted Croker, General Secretary of the FA.

The Football League was represented by Mr Jack Dunnett, President; and Mr Graham Kelly, Secretary of the Football League.

Mr Neil Macfarlane, Minister for Sport; Mr David Mitchell, Department of Transport; Mr Michael Ancrum, Scottish Office; and Mr Tim Renton, FCO.

The Prime Minister, in opening the meeting said the Government wanted to restore football to its former place in our society, so that ordinary families would want to go to matches, thereby increasing football's income.

The Government had been horrified by the extent of football hooliganism inside and outside grounds. Whatever had been done in the past had clearly not been enough to tackle the problem. We must now tackle it in no uncertain way.

The Government hoped soccer clubs would shoulder their responsibilities. It was prepared to legislate for back-up powers, but the extent to which that legislation might be used would depend on how successful the football authorities were in combatting the problem; particularly in certain grounds.

Soccer hooliganism was giving the game and Britain a very bad name and it must be dealt with effectively. What was happening was a disgrace.

The FA and Football League explained their viewpoint. Mr Millichip said many of them felt that the FA needed stronger powers and they were taking legal advice about this. The Prime Minister urged them to do so as a matter of urgency.

Mr Dunnett said they were at one with the FA and the Government in trying to stamp out the problem. It was important to increase the deterrent power of the police.

They must have:

- perimeter barriers they can patrol; and which must be raised where grounds have trouble
- segregation of supporters at all clubs, including Third and Fourth Divisions, regardless of whether the two lower divisions were designated for purposes of control
- closed circuit television and video recording
- more effective charges to be brought by the police which give teeth to Magistrates
- tougher sentencing and greater use by Magistrates of attendance centres which prevent hooligans from going to matches
- greater willingness on the part of clubs to prosecute offenders themselves
- policing to be provided free of charge as a service to the community.

Mr Millichip added that they were ready to ban the sale of alcohol on football grounds.

The Prime Minister asked the football authorities to investigate further and report within <sup>Six weeks</sup> ~~a month~~, on the possibility of introducing membership/season ticket cards which could be withdrawn from offenders.