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THE PRIME MINISTER

17 June 1985

Dear Mr. Millipip

I am grateful for the useful discussion we had on Wednesday. Since our last such meeting on 1 April we have witnessed the dreadful events at Bradford, Birmingham and Brussels. I am glad we are agreed on the urgent need for radical action to restore the good name of football and of our country.

At our meeting, I noted the Government had decided to accelerate the programme of action it had agreed at the April meeting. I summarised the measures taken so far:

(1) The Government proposed to introduce, if possible this Session, legislation similar to that contained in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980. That Act makes it an offence to be drunk, or possess alcohol, on football coaches, on entry to grounds and in most areas of grounds.

(2) The Government would proceed next Session with the new legislation on public order. The proposals on assemblies in the open air would permit the police to impose limits on the numbers of people attending football matches if they anticipated disorder. The police already had full powers to take the necessary steps to deal with criminal activity inside grounds.

(3) Mr. Justice Popplewell would continue with his inquiry into the events at Bradford City and Birmingham football



grounds on 11 May. He would also be taking into account any lessons to be learned from the events in Brussels on 29 May. It was hoped to receive his interim report before the end of July.

(4) The Home Secretary had set in hand the procedure for designating under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 all clubs in divisions 3 and 4.

(5) The Government had considered with the police measures to improve their effectiveness in dealing with football violence. Serious charges would be brought whenever the evidence was available. The police would be discussing with the Government and the Football Trust the outcome of the CCTV experiment, in particular with a view to providing more sophisticated equipment. Two more photographic vans would be purchased. Radio communication links between British Transport Police contingents travelling on trains and local forces would be provided. The Police aimed to introduce for next season new arrangements for collecting and disseminating information about behaviour at matches.

(6) The Home Secretary was drawing attention to the Court of Appeal guidelines on sentencing violent offenders and encouraging magistrates to make full use of their powers.

(7) The Government would continue to take the lead in developing international measures to deal with hooliganism. The Sports Ministers from the Council of Europe were holding a special meeting on 27 June. The hope was that the existing Council of Europe recommendation on reducing violence at football matches would be strengthened into a binding convention. Also that an agreement with UEFA would be concluded to require that the arrangements for international matches should comply with certain conditions. You and the Football League will of course be consulted on the drafting of both documents.



(8) After the events on 29 May in Brussels, the Government had indicated that we were anxious to give the Belgian authorities every possible assistance in bringing to justice people from this country who had committed offences. We were willing in particular to give them every assistance to meet our evidential requirements in extradition proceedings. We were also prepared, if suitable legal arrangements could be made, that they should serve their sentences here, and it was hoped that this would encourage the Belgian authorities to press the appropriate charges.

In the course of our discussions on Wednesday we also agreed to consider the following suggestions which you and your colleagues put forward.

- i) Nominating a central point to which clubs and others could refer information about trouble-makers. This might enable a cumulative data bank to be developed which could help in the identification of those responsible for football violence.
- ii) The merits of introducing a new criminal offence to prohibit unauthorised access to the pitch.
- iii) The possibility that clubs be provided with lists of offenders to help them keep out those with a record of violence.
- iv) The Mexican Government will be approached to try and ensure that visas should be obtained in advance for those travelling to matches.

In our discussion you identified the following areas where you would be taking action:



(1) The Football Association and the Football League would urgently consider, jointly with the Government, on a working group under the chairmanship of Neil Macfarlane, the details of a scheme of membership cards and the other matters referred to below. Mr. Macfarlane had already seen a feasible system of membership cards; you noted that you were proposing to see a system being demonstrated as well. Once the working group has considered the matter you will be giving instructions or advice accordingly to the clubs.

(2) On travel and ticket arrangements, you have agreed to make more use of all ticket matches for the future. For matches abroad where an English team is playing you are taking steps to discourage travel by supporters.

(3) When it is considered possible that a match would give rise to hooliganism you would consider whether there was a need to change the location.

(4) You are discussing with the Football Trusts and the Football Grounds Improvement Trust the wider introduction of closed circuit television at grounds. The Football Trust had already allocated £500,000 this year for that purpose. You are also considering with the Trusts the provision of more family enclosures and the improvement of seating arrangements.

During our discussion you also agreed:

i) To consult with the clubs to set up arrangements to ensure that the police were able to search people entering grounds, as a condition of entry.



ii) In advance of the new legislation on public order, to press clubs to act on police advice on attendance at matches.

You and the Minister for Sport will be keeping in close touch on all these matters through the Working Group. My particular concern is that by the beginning of next season the football authorities should have taken, and be seen to have taken, a real step towards improving the clubs' ability to prevent potential trouble-makers from getting into the grounds. A scheme of membership cards, compatible between one club and another, offers a feasible way forward, and I particularly welcome your willingness to discuss this urgently with the Minister for Sport. I believe you should aim for your instructions or advice to be available to the clubs in good time before 17 August, and I have accordingly asked Neil Macfarlane to report to me on the progress that is being made.

I am grateful to you for all the co-operation you are offering on these points, and I am glad you and I share the view that major steps must now be taken if football is to survive as a spectator sport.

I am copying this letter to Mr. Jack Dunnett.

Yours sincerely

Nargant Dhalita

Bert Millichip, Esq.