



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Press Secretary*

Neil Macfarlane Esq MP  
Minister for Sport  
Department of the Environment  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1

18 June 1985

*Dear Mr Smith,*

I am sorry that John Smith, Chairman of the Sports Council and of Liverpool FC, mentioned that I had seen him yesterday before I had a chance to write this note to you.

The meeting originated with Mr Smith's visit to No 10 in the immediate aftermath of the Brussels disaster. I was then on holiday, but Mr Smith leant heavily on the advice given to him by No 10 Press Office, and more especially by Iain Murray.

On my return from holiday, Iain Murray suggested that it might be a good idea if I met Mr Smith since it was important that he should understand that, while No 10 Press Office wished to be helpful, it could not act for the Sports Council - and must not be seen to be doing so.

It had originally been arranged that I should see Mr Smith at the Reform Club last week. This was re-arranged and, rather to my surprise, he suggested we should meet yesterday at the Football Association in Lancaster Gate. The two of us did so - without anyone else present - from 3.30 to 4.10pm. I did not see anyone from the FA during my visit.

I made it clear that my main purpose in meeting him was to try to be helpful. But if No 10 Press Office was to be helpful, I said it was crucial that we did not go behind the backs of either the Sports Council or the Department of the Environment, or get wires crossed.

Mr Smith immediately said that he had asked the Sports Council's press office to keep in close touch with us. I said that I hoped this would not be broadcast. I added that Robin Butler, the Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary, knew that I was meeting him and that I would give you an account of our discussion.

I told Mr Smith that I felt the FA/FL cut a poor figure before the Prime Minister at their second meeting. Indeed, I formed the

*Mr Butler*

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view they were probably less inclined to do anything after 94 deaths (55 Bradford; 38 Brussels; 1 Birmingham) than before. There seemed to be a crisis of leadership in the football authorities. He agreed.

I added that because of this, and the Prime Minister's involvement, I was deeply concerned about how the approach to the opening of the next season was to be handled. She had welcomed my offer to write a paper on this. But before I did so (and you will be sent a copy) I would like to try out some ideas on him.

First, it seemed that whatever the Government or police did - and together it would add up to an impressive amount - it would carry less impact if the FA/FL and clubs were seen to be half-hearted or sullen. Thus I believed that as a very minimum each individual league club, from top to bottom, needed to make it clear in the immediate approach to next season and on the opening day that:

- i. football must get rid of violence, hooliganism, intimidation and unruly behaviour which, as was seen last season, had led to deaths of innocent spectators;
- ii. if it didn't, its very existence was at stake;
- iii. accordingly this club wants to serve notice on the public that, so far as it is concerned, it is going to take every possible measure to stamp out hooliganism; enough is enough;
- iv. the club will give the police their full backing in taking firm action against any who transgress; will fully support a determined and thorough policy of prosecution; and hopes that the courts will deal out heavy punishment;
- v. from now on, no hooligan can expect any quarter on this ground from the police, the club and, we hope, decent fans; and as a demonstration of our purpose we have asked the police to eject anyone who goes on to the pitch without authority.
- vi. we expect the highest standards of conduct by our players;
- vii. finally, this game which we all love has got to be cleaned up on every league ground in the country, and the clean up starts now.

Mr Smith said he would go along with all this, and indicated he was planning something similar at the opening match - though with an act of atonement as well - involving the Archbishop of Liverpool.

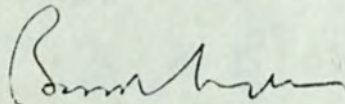
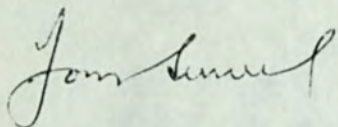
I said that, emboldened by his support, I would write a paper for the Prime Minister advocating a clear demonstration of determination by clubs to stamp out violence and hooliganism.

The rest of the conversation involved:

- i. a duet of headshaking about the shortcomings of the FA/FL; Mr Smith said he was proposing to try to fuse the two to create a unified - and united - authority;
- ii. Mr Smith's ideas for fund raising in sport generally and more particularly in soccer, notably by raising registration fees for players in the 40,000 affiliated clubs; it was no use soccer arguing it had no money when this one example of fund raising had not been tapped.

I ended by reiterating my concern that our relationship should take account of my need to avoid problems, whether of amour propre or substance, between the Sports Council and the Department of the Environment on the one hand and No 10 on the other. Mr Smith agreed, though I am bound to say that I think No 10 Press Office will have to work at this because Mr Smith seems anxious to keep on tapping advice which he has found reliable.

I hope this record is helpful. I am copying to Robin Butler.



BERNARD INGHAM