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Prime Minister

FOOTBALL VIOLENCE

In preparation for your meeting with the football authorities next week, you may like to have the following progress report on the elements of our programme of action which fall within my responsibilities. I have just seen Neil MacFarlane's minute of yesterday which covers some of the same ground.

ACTION TAKEN

The Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc) Act completed its Parliamentary passage earlier this week and received Royal Assent today. I will tomorrow lay the necessary Order designating the grounds and events to which the controls in the Bill will apply. As I announced on Second Reading I shall designate all Football League clubs, Wembley Stadium and any other stadium used for international matches, and non-League grounds when they are used for matches with League clubs. The designation order will come into effect on 9 August - the day before the FA Charity Shield match at Wembley between Everton and Manchester United.

My Department has ordered 10,000 posters on the theme of "Don't Take Drink to the Match". 5,000 of these will be sent to Football League clubs and Wembley Stadium and the rest distributed to the transport industry.

I made a statement to the House about Mr Justice Popplewell's interim report yesterday. His recommendation on CCTV is in line with our own thinking. His support for a membership card system is welcome, and should strengthen

our position in pushing the football authorities to introduce one, either on a club basis, as he recommends, or nationally. I have also undertaken to consider his recommendations for the creation of two new criminal offences in relation to the possession of smoke bombs and the throwing of missiles.

Under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 I have now designated all the qualifying grounds of clubs in Divisions 3 and 4 of the Football League in England and Wales, as well as in Divisions 1 and 2 of the Rugby League. The necessary Orders were laid on 19 July and come into force on 9 August.

The new police information system will be in place for the beginning of the new season. We shall also have available three of the photographic vans to assist the police, together with two prototype tripod mounted evidential cameras. These mobile resources will supplement the permanent CCTV installations which are already in place or are being installed using the £500,000 allocated by the Football Trust. My officials and Patrick Jenkin's have been in touch with the Trust and I understand that it is hoped to have six additional CCTV systems installed by the beginning of the new season, and two upgraded systems. Other systems will follow as they are approved by the Trust.

I understand that the Football League has accepted my suggestion that clubs should refuse admission to anyone who refuses to be searched by the police. I understand that this will be incorporated in the model ground regulations commended by the League.

Arrangements have been made by the Home Office Directorate of Telecommunications for British Transport Police contingents travelling on trains to football

matches to have multi-channel radio sets capable of establishing contact with the police radio network.

ACTION IN HAND

We shall be ready to introduce the public order legislation at the beginning of the next session. The new controls on assemblies in the open air will considerably strengthen the hands of the police. I am also considering the Popplewell recommendations for new criminal offences.

More immediately the FA has supplied a list of problem fixtures over the first few weeks of the next season. My officials have discussed this with the police, and it is being sent to all the chief constables in whose areas the matches listed are being played. It will then be for them to decide how the matches should be policed, taking into account their own information as well as that of the FA. The chief constables concerned are being invited to ask for the deployment of one of the photographic vans or tripod mounted cameras, so that these resources can then be deployed to maximum effect.

OTHER MATTERS

At your meeting with the football authorities on 13 June you also agreed to consider some suggestions which they put forward, concerning the availability of information about trouble-makers and the possibility of making it an offence to encroach on the pitch. All the uglier forms of encroachment are already caught by the criminal law and in practice the creation of a new offence would have the effect only of extending the law to the less harmful forms of encroachment (such as congratulating the goal scorer) and the problem of enforcement (for example in the face of a mass invasion at the end of the season to celebrate promotion) would remain. Moreover, making encroachment

an offence might well have the undesirable effect of shifting the onus for preventing pitch invasion from the clubs to the police. I am not therefore at present persuaded that it would be right to create a new offence of this kind, but Popplewell says that he will be looking at this in his final report, and we should defer a final decision until we see what he has to say.

So far as information about trouble-makers is concerned, criminal records are confidential and I do not think it would be right to disclose them to football clubs. There would be even greater difficulty about the disclosure of information which has not been tested before the courts. I see no reason why the clubs should not establish their own lists of trouble-makers rather than pushing this off onto the police. If they have the will to take action themselves I am sure that they could develop means of effectively excluding those responsible for disorder. But if they are to exclude those responsible they need to develop a mechanism for doing so - for example by the introduction of a membership card system. Such a system would then open up other possibilities which the lack of an effective enforcement system precludes. For example, there are in principle considerable attractions in giving courts the power to issue orders prohibiting those convicted of offences in connection with football matches from attending future matches. But this cannot practically be done unless the football authorities do their part by introducing a membership card system. Without such a system the Orders could not be enforced successfully, and the law would be brought into disrepute. If the football authorities are now prepared to give a firm commitment to an effective membership card system, we could give courts the necessary powers in the public order legislation next session; but there are no signs of the necessary commitment as yet.

So far as information from the clubs is concerned, the football authorities may well need to set up a central data bank if they decide to establish a national membership card system. But the police are not in favour of establishing their own central point. Under their new arrangements for the collection and dissemination of information a dossier will be built up by each chief constable on the record of clubs within his area, both home and away. This dossier will then be made available to other chief constables as required. The police see no need in these circumstances for a central point of their own. Any information which the clubs wish to pass on can be given to the police Football Liaison Officer or the divisional Chief Superintendent.

Giles Shaw will be writing to you in the next day or so about the points arising from the Huddersfield v Leeds video which you saw earlier this month.

I am copying this to George Younger, Patrick Jenkin, Nicholas Ridley and Neil MacFarlane.

L.B.

25 July 1985

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