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NBPM chit chat

My ref:

You are big fine

Your ref:

Known.

7 January 1986

MSA 7/1

Jim Taylor,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 19 December to Willie Whitelaw setting out your proposals for handling the final report of the "Popplewell" Inquiry into Safety and Control at Sports Grounds.

I have no comments on your proposals regarding timing of publication, method of announcement, the safety recommendations and those to do with new legislative measures to combat hooliganism.

However, I am concerned about your proposal to announce, during the oral statement, that you will be bringing forward an amendment to the alcohol legislation in line with the report's recommendation about lifting restrictions on alcohol availability in executive boxes. There may be a good case for such an amendment, but I think its timing is worth considering.

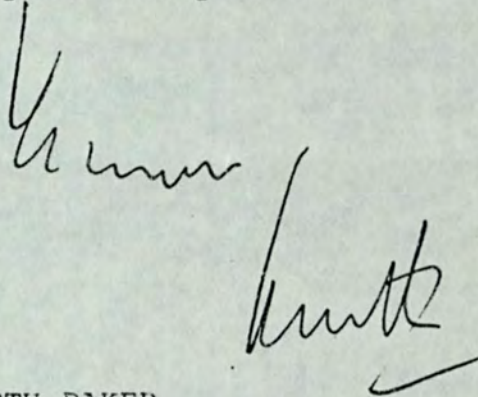
Dick Tracey and Giles Shaw have been discussing the desirability of delaying an announcement on this issue in order to put further pressure on the football authorities to make quicker progress with membership cards. There is no direct link between alcohol availability in executive boxes and membership cards or hooliganism. However this appears to be our one remaining lever for pursuing better progress on membership cards.

The loss of leverage afforded by possible changes in the alcohol legislation, coupled with the leadership vacuum within football as a result of their restructuring discussions, would make it all the more difficult to achieve the progress which we continue to seek on membership cards. It would also let the Football League off the requirement recently laid on them by Giles Shaw to provide comprehensive and convincing evidence of the adverse financial consequences of restrictions on executive boxes before we considered amendments to the legislation.

I understand that our officials have had preliminary discussions on these issues and on the most appropriate method of eventually amending the alcohol legislation to lift the restrictions. I gather that there are various possibilities still needing exploration, and this is another reason for delaying an announcement.

Given these concerns, I should be grateful if you would reconsider your proposed announcement of acceptance of this particular recommendation at this stage. I would prefer you to say that you will examine the question further.

A copy of this letter goes to recipients of yours.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Baker', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the typed name.

KENNETH BAKER

Home Affairs : Football Hooligans in PT5

