



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

7 January 1986

Dear Willie,

UP
The file is being fwd to me tomorrow. MENT 7/1

POPPELWELL REPORT:
CONTROLS ON ALCOHOL IN EXECUTIVE BOXES AND RESTAURANTS

In my letter of 15 December about the Final Report of Mr Justice Popplewell's Inquiry into Safety and Control at Sports Grounds, I said that I proposed to accept his recommendation that the provisions of the recent alcohol legislation be reviewed so as to permit the sale and possession of alcohol in executive boxes and restaurants at football grounds. I said that I proposed to bring forward an amendment to the alcohol legislation in the Public Order Bill, and was working out the form the amendment might take. I am now writing to set out my proposals on this.

The obvious way of permitting alcohol in executive boxes and restaurants within sight of the pitch is to extend the exemption order scheme established by the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc) Act 1985. This would however require some complicated amendments. The exemption order scheme at present applies only to the sale of alcohol, whereas at some clubs alcohol is brought in by box-holders beforehand, and no sale takes place. It would be necessary to introduce a new exemption order scheme to cover this situation, which would break new ground since the exemption would have to cover all the occupants of the relevant boxes (who would vary from match to match) instead of (in the case of sale) applying solely to the person selling the alcohol.

I am therefore inclined to take a different approach. The controls on the sale or possession introduced by the 1985 Act apply during a period from 2 hours before the match to 1 hour afterwards. In the cases of boxes and restaurants within sight of the pitch (but only in those cases) I propose to reduce this to a period from 15 minutes before a match until 15 minutes afterwards. Outside this period box-holders would be able to possess alcohol, and it could be sold (if a licence had been obtained). Inside the period no alcohol could be sold or possessed. The significance of this change would be that, while the ban would be retained during a match, box-holders would be able to entertain clients with a meal and a drink before a match, or afterwards, and the loss of revenue to clubs would be reduced. I would further propose to include in the Bill an order-making power which would enable me to reduce the period of control still further in later years (eventually to nothing) if the initial reduction, as set out in the Bill, were not abused and did not give rise to difficulties. This would provide an element of flexibility. It should also give some leverage in obtaining progress from the football authorities, for example on membership cards.

The Rt Hon The Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC

If these proposals are acceptable to colleagues I would propose to refer to them, in general terms, in my oral statement on the Popplewell Report next week. I should therefore be grateful for any comments from colleagues by 13 January.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, other members of H Committee, Richard Tracey, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir George Engle.

Yours,

Douglas,



HOMG AFFAIRS PT4

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM