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SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

7 January 1986

Dear Douglas

POPPLEWELL REPORT

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 19 December to Willie Whitelaw about the Final Report of the Popplewell Inquiry. WITH MGA

I confirm that I am content with the general approach that you propose. As regards extension of the controls under the 1975 Act, it seems to me that I should now bring the Scottish Football League (SFL) fully into line for safety purposes with the position of the Football League and not wait on the extended timetable which I agree we should adopt for bringing other soccer, rugby and cricket grounds under the controls. I therefore propose as a minor modification of your proposals to introduce as soon as practicable an order designating appropriate grounds of clubs in the first and second divisions of the SFL.

I agree that, for the reasons you summarise, it would be less than satisfactory to proceed at this stage with the extension of designation under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 that the Report recommends. So your concept of proceeding in accordance with the spirit, if not of the letter, of the Report seems to be a reasonable solution. There are, however, two points that may be worth noting. First, we are as yet still in the consultative stage over revision of the present system of fire safety certification; a number of the main interested bodies have not yet responded; and it is not at all certain that the weight of opinion will be in favour of the changes we have proposed. It would, I suggest, be prudent to word any statement on the Popplewell Report in terms which did not give the impression that the outcome of the consultation on the future of the 1971 Act was a foregone conclusion, regardless of the views made known in the consultative process.

Secondly, and following from this, it might be helpful, as a means of avoiding any charges of undue delay, if a clear signal could be given to sports authorities even at this stage that, whatever the outcome of the Government's wider consideration, their premises will be brought within the scope of either the 1971 Act system or whatever arrangements replace it.

E. R.

Most of the recommendations on crowd control do not apply to Scotland, where our breach of the peace offence is satisfactorily wide enough to deal with the various kinds of behaviour mentioned. I am content that you should not accept the recommendations relating to England and Wales and, in particular, I am glad that you are against the unfettered police power of search: I agree that we should not go further down this road in relation to football spectators than we have done for other and arguably more serious circumstances. I do not, however, see any need in Scotland to adopt your proposed amendment on alcohol in executive boxes.

I note that you will let me see an advance copy of your proposed statement and, in all the circumstances, I am content that it should cover Scotland as well.

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

Yours truly,
George

HOMB AFFAIRS P.S.



FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM