



Registered in Northern Ireland. Registered Office: 20 Windsor Avenue



FROM NIGEL HAMILTON
PERMANENT SECRETARY



89

Mr Don Allen
Chairman
Sports Council for Northern Ireland
House of Sport
Upper Malone Road
BELFAST
BT9 5LA

th
20 August 1999

Dear Don,

I am writing to you in the wake of last Wednesday's match between Northern Ireland and France, which was so unfortunately marred by the appalling behaviour of a section of the crowd. Those who attended, and those who watched the game on television were extremely disturbed and offended by the chanting and sectarian abuse. This is of major concern in terms both of the offence caused and the unfortunate image of Northern Ireland portrayed, not least given the presence of the visitors including the visiting Minister for Sport from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

I know that the Sports Council and the Football Association have clearly defined policies which are aimed at removing sectarianism in any form from sporting events and that you have taken a high public profile on this matter. The Department has been strongly supportive of the implementation of action taken in support of these policies. But in the light of Wednesday night's events, I am anxious to review the effectiveness of the steps currently being taken to prevent such behaviour, and also to open up consideration of what further steps might be taken to put additional pressure on those perpetrating this offensive behaviour. Part of that approach may involve legislation, but I am also keen to see if there is other action open to us.

I suggest that as an initial step in this process the Chief Executive of the Sports Council and the IFA, together with a representative from Belfast City Council should meet Peter Holmes. My intention is that this would serve as a precursor to a meeting with the Minister, John McFall, when he returns from leave, which might also involve the Chairman of the Sports Council and the IFA to whom I have also written.

I shall ask Peter Holmes to make contact with Eamonn McCartan and David Bowen, and to discuss with Brian Hanna how the City Council can best be represented.

I am copying this letter to Eamonn McCartan, David Bowen and Brian Hanna.

Yours sincerely

Nigel
NIGEL HAMILTON

