

PO-CH/NL/0371  
PART A

Part A.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

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Begins : 28/7/89.  
Ends : 3/8/89.

  
 PO -CH /NL/0371  
  
 PART A

Chancellor's (Lawson) papers:

**INQUIRY INTO THE  
HILLSBOROUGH FOOTBALL  
STADIUM DISASTER**

PO -CH /NL/0371  
PART A

DD's : 25 Years



6/12/95.

*Funcan?*

# ● THE PRESS COUNCIL

No. 1 SALISBURY SQUARE, LONDON EC4Y 8AE

ESTABLISHED 1953  
Tel: 01-353 1248  
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Chairman: LOUIS BLOM-COOPER, QC  
Director: KENNETH MORGAN, OBE

Please quote our reference:

AA17193

Your reference:

Rt Hon. Nigel Lawson MP  
11 Downing Street  
London  
SW1

*ML*

28 July 89

Dear Mr Lawson,

The Press Council has completed its general inquiry into newspaper coverage, particularly photographic coverage, of the Hillsborough disaster.

I thought you would be interested in the Council's finding of which I enclose a copy.

You will see that it is embargoed for publication on Sunday 30 July 89.

Yours sincerely,

*Kenneth Morgan*

Director.

KM/KH

Enc:

# THE HILLSBOROUGH INQUIRY

## Background

Britain's worst football crowd disaster happened on Saturday, 15 April 1989 when 95 people were killed or fatally injured, many of them crushed to death, at Hillsborough Stadium, Sheffield, at the FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest.

There was massive press and broadcasting coverage of the tragedy that evening and for the next two days, and extensive coverage for the rest of that week of the aftermath of the tragedy and public concern about the explanation of it and possible responsibility for it.

On Monday 17 April the government announced that there would be a public inquiry into the disaster by Lord Justice Taylor and two assessors. The same day the Press Council announced that it would hold a general inquiry into photographic coverage of the tragedy by the press. The decision followed widespread and serious public criticism of the publication of pictures of spectators trapped, injured and dead, and of the alleged conduct of some photographers and other journalists. This criticism and direct complaint to the Press Council continued to grow. By 19 May the Council had received 349 written complaints from a total of 3,651 signatories. Among them they named 35 newspapers and included 56 general complaints about the behaviour or contents of the media which did not name specific newspapers.

The complaints went beyond criticism of photographic coverage of the tragedy, and the Press Council broadened the scope of its inquiry to embrace all press coverage.

As well as complaints from individual members of the public, some of them relatives or friends of the dead or injured but others unconnected with the tragedy, the Press Council received complaints from many Members of Parliament on their own behalf or on behalf of constituents. Among organisations which complained to the Council were The Football Association, Liverpool City Council Hillsborough Working Party, Sheffield Methodist District Synod, and the Clergy Disaster Team of the Oldham Division of Greater Manchester Police.

On 28 June the Home Office passed to the Press Council a petition from the Merseyside Area Student Organisation with some 7,000 signatories protesting at one aspect of press coverage, an article in *The Sun*. The petition had been forwarded to the Home Office by Lord Justice Taylor's inquiry. Lord Justice Taylor also ordered the West Midlands Police to make available to the Press Council all evidence given to his inquiry which concerned the conduct or coverage of the press. The Council is grateful.

Newspapers specifically identified in complaints to the Press Council were:

The *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, *Today*, *Mail on Sunday*, *News of the World*, *The Observer*, *The People*, *Sunday Express*, *Sunday Mirror*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Sunday Times*, *The Evening Standard*, *Bedfordshire on Sunday*, *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, *Daily Record* (Glasgow), *East Anglian Daily Times*, *Evening Echo* (Basildon), *Evening News* (Edinburgh), *Glasgow Herald*, *The Northern Echo* (Darlington), *Evening Herald* (Plymouth), *The Scotsman*, *Shropshire Star*, *The Sunday Post*, *Evening Advertiser* (Swindon), *Wales on Sunday*, *Western Daily Press* (Bristol), and the *Yorkshire Post*.

In each case the editor was told of the complaint to enable him or her to reply directly to the complainant, but all national newspaper editors and editors of some regional newspapers which were not referred to specifically in complaints were asked by the Press Council for views on their own and other newspapers' approach to picture coverage of the tragedy and their general views on press coverage of disasters. The great majority responded, often in considerable and helpful detail, for which the Council is grateful.

Although the Council studied and considered separately the picture coverage of all national newspapers and many regional newspapers, including all listed above, it decided as it was conducting a general inquiry not to make separate findings on each or to identify the photographic coverage of individual newspapers except as examples to indicate types of photographs on which it intends to comment.

The freedom to comment embraces publication of deliberately challenging and provocative views, but editors should weigh carefully how far to exercise that freedom in the face of deep tragedy when it may appear distasteful. National tragedy or disaster is not an occasion for writers to exercise gratuitous provocation, but it was within the discretion of the editors of the three newspapers to publish the columnists' articles they did.

#### Cartoons

Three cartoons which gave offence to some readers were drawn to the Council's attention. They were drawings by Gaskill in *Today* comparing the price of stadium safety with the cost of a star player; Mahood in *The Daily Mail* showing the FA Cup running over with woe; and a black picture by Garland in *The Independent* of a goal net torn in skull-like holes.

Cartoons are not always intended to amuse or to poke fun. Artists have often used them to make a sharp or bitter point and the Press Council accepts that they were free to do so on this occasion.

\* \* \* \*

In the course of the Council's inquiry it was greatly assisted by many of the letters from members of the public. It was also helped by the ready response of editors in explaining the decisions they made. The Press Council will consider whether it would be useful to publish some of these in a record of the inquiry.

is to exercise the maximum possible care and understanding for the feelings of all those involved.

### **On TRUTH**

An article which gave particular offence to readers, including the 7,000 who signed the Merseyside Area Student Organisation's petition, occupied the front page of *The Sun* on 19 April four days after the tragedy, headlined THE TRUTH. Its subsidiary headline alleged "Some fans picked the pockets of victims. Some fans urinated on the brave cops. Some fans beat up PC giving kiss of life." The article and its headline provoked many protests to the Press Council, some with multiple signatures, that it was offensive, distressing and insensitive. Appearing as a news story, it reported serious allegations about the behaviour of Liverpool fans by a named Member of Parliament; by policemen, one of them named and three anonymous; a named nearby resident, and an unnamed neighbour.

Although it said the named policeman stressed that only a small minority of Liverpool fans behaved "so badly", the article was generally one-sided, offering no other counter to the allegations it included. Whether or not any of these allegations can be sustained, the article was unbalanced and its general effect misleading. The headline THE TRUTH was insensitive, provocative and unwarranted. *The Sun's* own ombudsman declared that the article should not have been published in the form in which it appeared. The Press Council condemns its publication.

Although *The Sun's* article attracted particular criticism similar allegations were reported, sometimes with a lack of sensitivity, in other newspapers.

### **Comment articles**

Three examples of another type of article which were the subject of specific criticism to the Council were those by Edward Pearce and Auberon Waugh in *The Sunday Times* and *The Sunday Telegraph* respectively, and by Richard Littlejohn of the *Evening Standard*. All three were clearly comment articles giving the writer's own view of the events to which they referred. The Council has said as a point of principle that columnists and observers are free to comment on affairs and newspapers free to publish their comments, making clear that this is what they are.

### **General principles**

It is the job of newspapers to report news including tragedy and horror and sometimes to awaken public conscience or determination that tragedy shall not be repeated. There cannot be a comfortable or pleasing way of doing that when those near to the events will be under deep grief or emotional stress.

The Council accepts the assurance of many editors that they considered carefully how far it was right to publish photographs which might serve a public interest by arousing concern and focussing determination to avoid a similar tragedy but would also distress survivors and the families and friends of those who were killed and were likely to be offensive to other readers. The decision was hard in very many cases: in most of them the Council believes editors were justified in publishing the pictures they did.

The Council considered carefully, as it has done before, whether colour reproduction made such a difference to the impact of pictures that it might have been justifiable to publish some of them in black and white but was tasteless or offensive to do so in colour. It decided that in the case of these pictures and the circumstances of this tragedy there was no ethical distinction to be drawn between colour and monochrome reproduction.

Similarly, it concluded that no distinction was warranted by whether a particular picture was published on Page 1 or on an inside page.

The Council decided that no distinction could properly be drawn in this instance between newspapers which used certain pictures on the day of the disaster, the next day in the Sunday newspapers, or on any of the following days, though these were distinctions cogently argued by some editors.

### **Specific complaints**

More than thirty national and regional newspapers published broad pictures, taken from a distance, showing a large section of the crowd through the high steel fence, the front row crushed against it, many of them recognisable and in attitudes of distress, pain and fear. Inevitably such pictures will have distressed many who saw them: there was no means of telling how many of those shown died or were seriously injured. Nevertheless the Press Council believes that publication of these pictures was justifiable. They were horrific; they

portrayed an horrific event. They reported the event accurately and brought home vividly the danger of a dense crowd under pressure packed behind an immovable fence. These photographs showed the horror of the tragedy without isolating in close-up individuals who were facing death or serious injury. The serious public interest was served by their publication, which was within the discretion of editors despite the added distress it would cause.

In the Press Council's view the same cannot be said of a smaller number of photographs which it has seen published in a few newspapers. In these the focus was on a single individual or very small group crushed against the fence, sometimes with features cruelly distorted by its steel mesh. They showed graphically the terror and in some cases the torture of the persons concerned in images of which the mind cannot rid itself. Although it can be argued the public interest would be served by their emphasis on the danger of crowd and fence, in the Press Council's view in these pictures the intrusion into personal agony and grief was too gross to be justifiable. The Press Council concludes that these were pictures which editors ought to have chosen not to publish, particularly as most newspapers had available the general pictures which the Press Council believes they were justified in using. In those circumstances to use intrusive pictures of individuals as well as or instead of the general pictures was to accentuate unacceptably intrusion into grief.

A third category of picture widely published showed single, often clearly identifiable, individuals lying on the ground, being treated, or being carried away. In some cases they appeared to be dead, in some the caption implied that they were dead. Newspapers are free to show the injured being treated and it is right that they should, but editors should approach the possibility of picturing the dead with great care.

There are rare occasions when a newspaper may justify publishing an identifiable picture of a fatal casualty of an accident or incident but this has to be judged on the circumstances of each case. Despite the public nature of this disaster, there was no such justification here for publishing individual pictures of men or women who were known or thought to be dead or dying. Their use was insensitive and the decision of some editors to publish them was an error of judgement.

It was thoughtless of a few newspapers, some of them the subject of separate complaint, to identify stories about the disaster by the use

of a stylised logo echoing a published picture of a fatal casualty. These victims may have been identifiable to family or friends: in any event to use such a picture for such a purpose was to trivialise death.

### **Conduct of photographers**

Decisions about which pictures to publish lie with editors and have been the subject of much criticism in public comment and complaint to the Press Council, but there has been widespread criticism, too, about the alleged conduct of photographers on the scene.

These allegations cause the Press Council concern and should cause newspapers concern, but they have been in general terms only. The Council has received no evidence that enables it to identify any particular photographer or journalist or the representatives of any particular newspaper as behaving improperly.

There is, however, clear evidence that to people involved in the disaster the behaviour of some photographers at the scene appeared unhelpful or insensitive. There was serious public concern and even anger at the impression that photographers were concentrating on obtaining close-up pictures of those in danger and distress even at the risk of hampering rescue work. It is understandable that this should have been the perception but the role of a press photographer at any incident however tragic is to take pictures of it, not to take part in it - just as the role of a reporter is to write about what he sees, not to become caught up in the event.

This could not relieve a journalist from the humane duty of rendering aid to someone in serious peril if he were able to do so and no one else could. Nor would any journalist argue that it should relieve him of that obligation, but that is not usually the position at major disasters of this type.

There the duty of the journalists on the scene is to record the event without impeding rescue efforts, but they and their editors also have another responsibility. They should be aware of the danger that photographers going about their proper work of taking pictures of the injured, dead or distressed may appear callous or insensitive to those involved and by doing so add to their distress.

The duty of editors in the instructions they give and of photographers in the way they behave generally in covering major disasters

## THE HILLSBOROUGH INQUIRY

Press coverage of the disaster  
at Hillsborough Stadium, Sheffield  
on 15 April 1989

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1989



# THE PRESS COUNCIL

No. 1 SALISBURY SQUARE, LONDON, EC4Y 8AE  
Telephone: 01-353 1248

## Members 1989

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LOUIS BLOM-COOPER QC

**Vice-Chairman**  
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Complaints Secretary  
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CONFIDENTIAL

2/8/89

MP



CHIEF SECRETARY	
REC.	- 8 AUG 1989
ACTION	Mr M. Turner
COPIES TO	CX, FSI, Mr Ashton, Mr Monk, Mrs Case, Mr S. Wood, Mr Cotmore, Mr Westwater.

PRIME MINISTER

HILLSBOROUGH INQUIRY

I have now discussed the interim report of Lord Justice Taylor with colleagues most closely involved.

2. The report has to be presented to Parliament and I propose that it should be laid at 11.00 a.m. on Friday. At that time Lord Justice Taylor proposes to hold a press conference. The press will have embargoed copies at 9.00 a.m. My response will be by way of a statement issued from the Home Office immediately following that press conference. Neither the Minister of Sport nor I see advantage in holding a press conference ourselves.

3. We agreed at my meeting that in this statement I should welcome unreservedly the broad thrust of the report; announce that circulars were being issued by the Home Office and Scottish Office with strong encouragement for all concerned to get on with implementing relevant advice; and indicate that a more considered response, including possible subordinate legislation, would follow consultation required by law. A copy of my proposed statement (which covers a copy of the circular) is attached.

4. Criticism is directed at Sheffield City Council for shortcomings in their enforcement of the Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975. In the short term this is dealt with by the interim recommendations. In the slightly longer term the powers we have proposed in the Football Spectators Bill will permit the licensing authority to supervise the way in which local authorities carry out these responsibilities. Taylor specifically indicates that he will deal in his final report with the need for some national oversight or inspection of local authority certification procedures. Some criticism is also directed at Sheffield Wednesday Football Club, including its technical adviser, for inadequate arrangements for crowd safety and control. In my view these are inextricably linked with the shortcomings of the licensing authority.

5. But the most severe criticism is directed at the South Yorkshire Police; Taylor concludes that the main reason for the disaster was the

2.

failure of police control. The actions of individual senior officers, especially Chief Superintendent Duckenfield, are criticised; reference is made to poor operational orders, lack of leadership, and evidence of senior officers given to the Inquiry is described as defensive and evasive. It would be for the Chief Constable, and perhaps the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Police Complaints Authority, to act on the conduct of individual officers.

6. We are arranging for the bodies criticised, namely the South Yorkshire Police, the Sheffield City Council and the Club to receive confidential copies of extracts of the report relating to them tomorrow afternoon. I will report to you again about the police aspect before the report is published.

7. I am sending copies of this minute to colleagues on H Committee, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment, and Sir Robin Butler.

*Douglas Hurd*

2 August 1989

CONFIDENTIAL

HILLSBOROUGH TRAGEDY

DRAFT STATEMENT BY THE HOME SECRETARY

Commenting today on the publication of Lord Justice Taylor's report, the Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Douglas Hurd, CBE., MP., said:

"I am grateful to Lord Justice Taylor and his team for completing the first part of his inquiry in time to produce an interim report before the start of the football season.

It is an excellent report which pulls no punches about the causes of the disaster.

The Government welcomes the broad thrust of the report and supports the principles of the recommendations. They include a number of matters which should be dealt with without delay pending the longer-term findings of the inquiry which will be published in the final report.

A Home Office circular\* is to be sent out immediately to local authorities, the police, football clubs and others concerned with the organisation of football matches, urging them to take action on the report's recommendations so as to put as many of them into effect as possible before the beginning of the season. Similar steps are being taken by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

I am satisfied that the interim report has not identified any major shortcomings in the law on safety in sports grounds, though clearly the Government will look at the Safety of Sports Grounds Act and the Home Office and Scottish Office guide to safety at sports grounds (The Green Guide) in the light of the inquiry.

Most of the problems which contributed to the disaster at Hillsborough had been recognised in the past. The report reveals serious shortcomings in applying those lessons on the part of the police, of the club and of the local authority responsible for the safety certificate.

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\* A copy of this circular is attached

The report reveals clearly that there are major deficiencies in the layout and organisation of the Hillsborough ground which should have been recognised and corrected.

#### The South Yorkshire Police

It will be for the Chief Constable in the first instance to consider the conduct of individual officers and the South Yorkshire police collectively in the light of the inquiry and the investigation carried out by the West Midlands police. I shall look to the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire initially for a report on the action he proposes to take.

#### Supervision of Safety Certificates

Powers recently proposed by the Government in the Football Spectators Bill will permit the setting up of a new authority with powers to supervise the way in which local authorities carry out their responsibilities for the safety of sports grounds if in due course this is considered necessary in the light of Lord Justice Taylor's final report.

The tragedy would not have occurred if lessons learnt in the past had been properly applied. It is for everyone concerned to ensure they are applied in the future."

DRAFT CIRCULAR

1. The Chief Executive  
County Councils  
Metropolitan District Councils  
London Borough Councils  
Common Council of the City of London  
Fire and Civil Defence Authorities
2. Chief Officers of Police
3. Chief Fire Officers
4. Chief Ambulance Officers

Dear Sir

HO Circular /1989

INTERIM REPORT OF THE HILLSBOROUGH INQUIRY

Introduction

The Interim Report of the Inquiry set up by the Home Secretary into the tragic events at Hillsborough football ground Sheffield on 15 April has now been published. A copy of the Report is attached. Further copies are available from HMSO bookshops.

2. The purpose of this circular is to inform recipients of the contents of the Report and to urge them to take required action without delay in order to implement, as necessary, the Inquiry's recommendations to improve safety arrangements at sports grounds.

Government Response

3. The Home Secretary has welcomed the broad thrust of the Interim Report and supports the principles of the recommendations which he believes should be dealt with without delay pending the longer term findings of the Inquiry which will be published in its Final Report.

### Scope of the Recommendations

4. Although the scope of recommendations is wide they are aimed primarily at football league grounds and the international stadiums used for soccer and rugby where there are liable to be large, densely packed crowds on terraces. Recipients should nonetheless consider their application to other designated sports grounds and sports grounds at which large crowds are in attendance.

5. The 43 recommendations are in paragraph 316. They are in two categories: the 28 asterisked are those requiring implementation before the start of the new football season or immediately thereafter; the remaining 15 are those which, although requiring immediate action are likely to take longer to put into effect. The Home Secretary nevertheless urges recipients to take urgent action on both categories so as to put into effect as many of the recommendations as possible before the start of the season.

### The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds

6. It is anticipated that the Guide will be amended to reflect the Inquiry's findings in due course after consultation with appropriate bodies. Any changes will take account of the Final Report's recommendations. If there is any doubt as to the nature of crush barrier testing described in Annex C of the Guide advice can be obtained from the Home Office 01-217 5352.

### The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975

7. Consideration is also being given to any necessary enforcement of the Report's recommendations by means of a Statutory Instrument under section 15A of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (the 1975 Act) requiring safety certificates to include mandatory terms and conditions. Consultation as required under section 18 of the 1975 Act will first be carried out before any such Order is made.

### Football Clubs

8. A copy of this circular together with the Report has been sent to all 92 football league clubs and the international stadiums in the expectation that they will co-operate fully. Should co-operation not be forthcoming local authorities are reminded of their powers under section 10 of the 1975 Act for use if there is judged to be a serious risk to spectators in any part of the grounds.

Resource Implications

9. While it is acknowledged that local authorities will need to examine current priorities in order to act on the Inquiry's recommendations, it is not envisaged that there should be significant long-term resource implications for them. The cost of any additional policing and/or provision of ambulance services at football grounds is expected to be met by the clubs or ground operators themselves.

Other

10. Any enquiries about this circular except barrier testing (see paragraph 6 above) should be addressed to Mr A Brown (01-217 2765).

11. Copies also go to those bodies on the attached list.

Yours faithfully

A H TURNEY  
Fire and Emergency Planning Department





Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG  
01-270 3000

3 August 1989

Kenneth Morgan Esq OBE  
Director  
The Press Council  
1 Salisbury Square  
LONDON EC4Y 8AE

*KMP*

*Dear Mr Morgan*

The Chancellor has asked me to thank you for sending him a copy of the Council's findings following its inquiry into press coverage of the Hillsborough disaster. He read this with interest.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*Duncan Sparkes*

DUNCAN SPARKES  
Assistant Private Secretary



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

*mp*

CONFIDENTIAL

3 August 1989

CHIEF SECRETARY	
REC.	- 2 AUG 1989
ACTION	Mr McEimer
COPIES TO	Cx, Mr Anson
	Mrs Case

Dear Peter,

HILLSBOROUGH INQUIRY

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of 2 August.

I would be grateful if you could ensure that the following is seen only by those with a clear need to know.

This is to confirm our earlier telephone conversation. The Prime Minister is content for the report to be published on Friday and for the Home Secretary to issue a statement and circular along the lines proposed. However, she considers that the statement should welcome the thoroughness of the report and its recommendations rather "than the broad thrust of the report," given the criticisms it makes of the police.

I am copying this to the private secretaries of members of H Committee, Roger Bright (Environment) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,  
*Carole*

CAROLINE SLOCOCK

Peter Storr Esq.  
Home Office