

From: Linda Rushton
APS/Mr Howarth
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cc: Mr Michael
Mr O'Brien
Lord Williams
Mr Omand
Mr Boys Smith
Ms Wheldon
Mr Middleton
Mr R Evans
Mr Pugh
Mr Edmundson
Mr Butler
Ms Clifford
Mr Warner
Mr Owen

25

12 February 1998

Home Secretary

HILLSBOROUGH

As requested, Mr Howarth met Jane Kennedy and Peter Kilfoyle yesterday evening to discuss the handling of the publication of the Hillsborough scrutiny and the Home Secretary's response to its recommendations. They agreed the following:

- ◆ They would try and ensure that all local MPs were 'on message' (ie. would support the Government's position once the report is published) without revealing to them the conclusions of the report in advance.
- ◆ They would also try to neutralise the local media in advance of publication and the Home Secretary's statement. Jane Kennedy will speak to Granada; Mr Howarth will speak to the Liverpool Echo and Radio Merseyside and it would be a good idea for Ed Owen to speak to his contact at the Daily Post. This would obviously require revealing the slant of the report however without entering into the details of the report.
- ◆ They also felt that if there is a debate on the Hillsborough report it would be a good idea for Mr Howarth to perhaps wind up the debate in view of the fact that he is a local MP and a Home Office Minister.
- ◆ It was considered that Ed Owen should prepare questions for Paddy Tipping to distribute to Merseyside MPs to ask during the debate following the Home Secretary's statement covering in particular the issue of the missing video tapes; action regarding police disciplinary process and action regarding Coroners inquests following disasters of this kind.

2. In addition, Mr Howarth has seen Sarah Clifford's submission of 11 February regarding the media handling of the publication of Hillsborough scrutiny and has commented that if the Home Secretary does not wish to pen the article for the Liverpool Echo he would be willing to do so.

Linda Rushton

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