

By Albert Sewell

# BETWEEN OURSELVES

Programme Editor

IF Britain's Football administrators still doubt that the game is heading towards large areas of self-destruction, the following points are offered for their consideration:—

(1) Bolton Wanderers and Notts County, two of the Football League's original members, talk of threatened closure if their gates do not improve; Northampton Town, who were playing Chelsea for First Division points only seven seasons ago, reported on Monday that they are losing £500 a week and need £50,000 quickly if they are to survive. In contrast, Tottenham Hotspur have financial problems of a different sort. Listen to their chairman, Mr. Sydney Wale: "*Unfortunately* (my italics) Spurs made a considerable profit last season (subsequently announced as a record £223,000) mainly because we went through the financial year without buying a player. If we don't do that or improve the ground, the tax people get more out of our profit than we do."

(2) Already this season the League has lost a million spectators compared with a year ago. Watch out any day now for an attendance below 1,000. It could happen at Workington today.

(3) While more than two-thirds of the League clubs are operating at a loss, the combined profits of Littlewoods and Vernons last season totalled £43,000,000, and, between them, the six major Pools companies had record takings of nearly £169,000,000. The tax man took more than £56,000,000 of it. How much did the Football League receive for the use of their fixtures which made those multi-millions for the Pools firms and for the Government? Something like £900,000—or less than the season's two biggest individual Treble Chance pay-outs put together. It is a ridiculous share-out among 92 clubs.

(4) England, beating Wales in Cardiff last week, maintained their average of one goal per match over the last seven Internationals. On the same night, in Dusseldorf, West Germany delighted a 70,000 crowd by beating Switzerland 5-1. Gerd Muller scored four goals. The last player to score four for England? Jimmy Greaves in the 6-1 win in Norway in May 1966. Since then, in 64 matches, Geoff Hurst is the only player to score an England hat-trick, and he's done so twice—in the 1966 World Cup Final, of course, and three goals (two of them penalties) when France were beaten 5-0 at Wembley in March 1969.

(5) Without getting out of one's armchair, it is now possible to see on TV the most exciting excerpts of up to five First Division matches—nearly half the programme—on Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. They do it so well, the TV boys. Skilful editing keeps the dull parts off our screens (some of the bookings, too, it has been noticeable lately) and if, for example, the cameras had been at Stamford Bridge two weeks ago to project Chelsea v. Leicester instead of Raquel Welch, the opening 15 minutes plus two good goals could have been presented as a classic, which those of who were here know it wasn't.

Is television good for Football? Yes. It's *too much* television that threatens the game, just as Football itself is now threatened by, among other things, too much football. So the question is: What can Football do—what WILL Football do—to solve problems that have become so much more urgent since the season opened less than four months ago. We'll talk about some possible solutions next time we meet on this page. Meanwhile, let us all rejoice that Chelsea have decided they want no part of the extra fixture clutter that will accompany this season's re-scheduled Anglo-Italian Tournament running from February to June inclusive, and have declined the invitation to take part.