

MR. SANDERS

At the Lobby this morning I was pressed very hard indeed to react to the passage in the President's State of the Union message announcing measures to secure the registration of 18-26 year olds for military draft.

The Lobby wanted answers to two things:

- i. what did we think of the idea (and by implication, were we going to follow suit?); and
- ii. had the President coordinated his position with us in advance, bearing in mind all our guidance over the last few weeks about the need for consultation.

On the first point, I said firmly and insistently that there would be no reaction from No. 10 at this stage. I drew attention in this context to today's debate in the House on defence and, more obliquely, to the statement on Afghanistan, etc.

On the second point, we indicated that many of the main points of the message would have been known about by the diplomatic community and press corps in Washington in advance, but we had no guidance to offer as prior consultation on the "conscription" text.

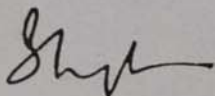
It seems likely that both points will be raised in Prime Minister's questions and perhaps in the Afghanistan statement and the defence debate.

We have alerted Press Offices in FCO and Defence.

(Subsequently, I drew the Lobby's attention to the attached paras from the Daily Telegraph which indicate the contingency

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nature of the President's action. I said that, while we did know, along with the press, about most of the President's points, we were not informed in advance on "conscription" and would not have expected to be.



B. INGHAM

24 January, 1980