

Defence

cc Mr Gow
Mr Butler
Mr Coles *WA 94.*
Mr Shrimley, CCO

CANDIDATES' CONFERENCE

Mr Heseltine is thinking of dealing with the Defence/Disarmament and Cruise issues at the candidates' conference on Saturday and may make arrangements to get it fully covered to compete with a women's CND conference in Central Hall that day, to be attended, among others, by Julie Christie.

I mentioned at his meeting on Monday that the Prime Minister would be speaking the previous evening and was already thinking about what she might say, in view of election speculation.

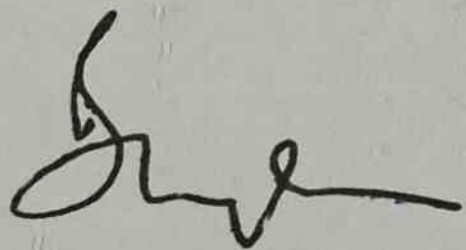
It was agreed that it might be useful if the Prime Minister could get in a preemptive strike before the women's conference and MoD stand ready to help with copy. Although the conference is private I said consideration was being given to briefing about the Prime Minister's remarks.

Such briefing need not preclude a short, sharp press release on the disarmament issue.

I would recommend such a press release if it were to fit in with the Prime Minister's plans. Its release could be so arranged to catch the evening news bulletins as well as morning papers.

Consideration would of course have to be given as to whether a release on defence/disarmament at a candidates' conference would unduly project the issue into the election. But Mr Heseltine intends to deal with defence/disarmament substantively in any case.

Could I leave Mr Gow to pick this up in consultation with Private Office and MoD?



B. INGHAM

13 April 1983