

Nov 11

PRIME MINISTER

THE SUNDAY PRESS

For what it is worth, I do not think Michael Heseltine will stand after reading the Sunday press.

First, there is no sign of the stalking horse, credible or not, that Heseltine so badly needs.

Second, the message coming through much more clearly is that he won't stand in the first round but would in the second.

Third, Sir Geoffrey Howe is the key. While he is to speak this week about the "substantive" reasons for his resignation, there is no sign he will provide what The Correspondent describes as "the dream ticket" in which Howe forces a second ballot and then Heseltine moves effortlessly to win the leadership. This begs the question as to whether Sir Geoffrey is content always to be the bridesmaid.

Fourth, there is the clearest sign in The Observer's report that Heseltine has already begun rehearsing his reasons for keeping his powder dry and meeting the charge of cowardice.

Alan Watkins, Observer, thinks Heseltine won't stand.

Having said all that, the press is doing its best to stir up a challenge.

The Mail on Sunday, after praising you to the skies in the first half of its leader, then says the party needs another leader.

The Sunday Express is entirely supportive and does not think Heseltine has established his credentials for leadership.

The Correspondent says the country needs a leadership election and Heseltine should show leadership.

The Independent says Heseltine must stand.

Other Points

Richard Needham's indiscretion is extensively covered. The Independent reveals that you were told by Murdoch about his proposal to join up with BSB.

There is some evidence of increasing belligerence on the part of the press over the Gulf and Maxwell, in the Sunday Mirror, is gung ho.

The NUM look like rejecting industrial action on Thursday.

You must read Peregrine Worsthorne who takes to task the Independent in particular and others who denigrate Britain and talk up France and Germany (while ignoring their shortcomings) and says that you, with your belief in Britain, are needed to handle the critical issue of Europe.

BERNARD INGHAM
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