



Prime Minister,

Mr.

10 in

ms

PERSONAL

Mr Whitmore

You told me that the Prime Minister had in mind to ask Mr Heseltine to take on the Ministerial coordination job discussed in Cabinet yesterday.

I see the arguments in favour of it.

The D o E is a good base from which to do the job, and Mr Heseltine has the qualities and attitudes for the job.

But there are two 'buts', one small and one big:

- (1) The D o E is a large department and itself a full-time job (that's the small one);

(2) There is some inconsistency between what MH is doing on local authority expenditure and what he would be doing in his job, which would both bring his credibility in question and diminish his ability to be effective.

MH is distrusted and disliked in the local authority world. He is, moreover, on collision course with the authorities whose help he would particularly be seeking and needing, in the context of his 'revision of budgets' exercise. With one hand he is trying to dobber them — and, being MH, doing it with zest and panache — and with the other he would be trying to woo them, and get help — and money —

out of them. And again, being MH, he
will naturally do that pretty head on. Can
the one man really be credible and
effective in both jobs? My fear
is that his nomination would be attacked
and criticised, and his effectiveness
undermined.


The only alternatives seem to me
to be Mr Prior and Lord Soames.

Both have the advantage of having
departments which are not themselves
(or need not be) full-time jobs.

JP would be better at moving local
authorities and others, and probably
at persuading his colleagues to find
the money he would need. The risks

obviously is that he would be better at the
soft words than the vigorous action. But
it has to be said that in purely
departmental terms he is regarded as
an effective Minister. The other risk
is the political significance that would
be read into his ~~app~~ nomination. But
he would not bring with him the
disadvantages under which MHI would
labour.

I know you think that CS does
not apply himself. That is at least
partly because he does not much
care for what he is doing. He
used to apply himself in his old
MAFF days - and in Brussels -



and he can be an effective political operator. If he believed in what he was doing, he would do it with a good deal of effectiveness. And he is an effective public speaker. But the 'image' is against him — both the patrician and the gubernatorial image.

None of these nominations ~~is~~ would be without disadvantage or objection. But I worry about MH, not because he would not do it well, but because I think that it would be extremely difficult even for him creditably and effectively to combine it with what he is already doing.

RCA 10. vii. 81