

academic (on the left) or a Jewish banker (on the right). Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, a former Stellenbosch University sociologist has almost perfect credentials to lead the party: an incisive speaker with insight into the Afrikaner Nationalist mind as an Afrikaner himself, widely travelled and long groomed as a potential leader. Harry Schwarz (chairman of the executive) is further to the right and is ambitious to be around the conference table when South Africa's white rulers realise some accommodation is needed with the blacks. Schwarz is a military hawk (an ex-Air Force officer himself) and more wedded to liberal capitalism. But if he beats Slabbert a wing of the party (almost certainly including the legendary Helen Suzman) will walk or quietly bow out. Whoever it is, Eglin's successor will have a tough and possibly divisive time struggling to keep the moderate road open.

Axes out at the Mirror

Duncan Cambell writes: The unheralded and low-key announcement, earlier this week, of the premature retirement of *Daily Mirror* chief executive Percy Roberts marks the demise of a second management in the Fleet Street battles over computerised 'new technology'. Roberts had the misfortune to preside over growing difficulties in operating the new system, with severe financial consequences, as reported earlier (NS 25 May 1979). But the changes at the top are much more than cosmetic.

The *Mirror* group of newspapers are part of Reed International, a substantial combine with interests in paper and board production and building materials. The *Mirror* was previously part of the International Publishing Corporation (IPC), a Reed subsidiary running an extensive range of general magazine titles. IPC Magazines, in some contrast to the *Mirror*, has recently enjoyed immense financial success. But much of its output is aimed only at the entertainment market, and those that are not – principally *New Scientist* and *New Society* – have suffered from increasing management interference in editorial policy. The present IPC chief executive, Les Carpenter, will head an IPC-Mirror amalgam which will in effect be a reconstituted publishing division of Reed International.

The new arrangements under Carpenter may result in increasing control of *Mirror* editorial policy by the parent company, in the interests of maximum profitability. *Mirror* journalists are not entirely dismayed by the moves, however. The Reed International axe is expected to fall again during the year, particularly on the other directors responsible for the costly blunder into – and back out of – the computerised printing project.

Whitehall direct rule to enforce health cuts

Christopher Price writes: The current fight between Patrick Jenkin and the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Area Health Authority is the first test of the Conservatives' policy of combining swingeing cuts in public expenditure with rigid cash limits. The AHA had spent the last 12 months in a dispute with David Ennals, Labour's health minister, about overspending of £4m. This was to try to bring their budget within the formula designed to equalise health standards throughout the UK. In the event Ennals set up an enquiry into the structure of the AHA and delayed half the crunch till after the election. Now the authority has been asked to find another £3m., in order to stay within new and stricter cash limits, while paying for substantial *extra* expenditure – in particular increased VAT.

The task is impossible without a cut in services. Though the Conservatives said during the election that they would not cut the NHS, the letter to the AHA from Gerard Vaughan, Jenkin's deputy and a Guys psychiatrist, contradicts this election pledge: 'I do not underestimate the difficulties nor have I sought to conceal the fact that the necessary measures will in some cases be painful and involve reducing the level of patient services currently available.' By 19 votes to five the members of the AHA, from Labour local councillors to the consultants who recently complained so bitterly about Labour's treatment of their hospitals, refused to endanger life by cutting essential services. They rejected a compromise worked out with the DHSS by their officials and a few of their senior colleagues.

On Wednesday, Jenkin insisted that if spending had gone on at its present rate, the money would

have run out before Christmas – with hospitals closing and pay cheques bouncing. He found the AHA were not technically in default until this happened – so he turned to a hitherto unused emergency procedure in the NHS Act under which he suspended all their powers and functions, and handed them over first to the Regional Health Authority and subsequently – 'in a few weeks' – to an unspecified number of commissioners. The RHA is dominated by Kent and Sussex county appointees who know little of the community problems of inner London, and have complained for some time about its overprovision with teaching hospitals. Jenkin insisted that talk of patients dying was 'just hysterical'; but many consultants disagree and he will find it difficult to find a local one to be a commissioner. With all three local councils aggressively uncooperative, he is being pulled inexorably into specifying the detailed cuts himself and instituting direct rule over the NHS in south east London.

Thorpe's juror rights

Bill Morton writes: Last week's publication of an interview with one member of the Thorpe case jury, attracted widespread attention. It was particularly noticed at the National Council for Civil Liberties, who were surprised that the jurors – who are normally subject to a blast from the Lord Chancellor concerning only what they should *not* do – were sufficiently aware of their rights to know that they could add a rider to their verdict about the appropriateness of the charges alleged. Or, indeed, to know that there was no law prohibiting them from discussing the case with the press or anyone else afterwards.

NCCL do produce a free leaflet for jurors which sets out these and other underutilised rights. An investigation confirmed that NCCL's leaflet had indeed been procured in quantity by the woman foreman of the Thorpe case jury – only to be confiscated later by a petulant usher. But the usher was too late to stop the news about jury rights – and this jury's deliberations – getting out. Meanwhile, the Lord Chancellor's department has confirmed that jurors can talk to the press – but they still 'should not' do it.