

General take place solely in the courtroom: their department takes policy decisions on the desirability of enforcing certain laws and on proper ways for government to put policy into action. It should be seen to be accountable for its actions.

Inside the 'Snuffbox'

Duncan Campbell writes: Last week, the *Guardian* revealed that the Immigration Service receives instructions on security suspects from a mysterious Box 500.

Box 500 is MI5's lace curtain, one of a number of aliases which it affects – not to the public, where circumspection might be justified, but to ministers and other Whitehall security departments. Secret reports on such trade union leaders as Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon went to Edward Heath's ministers, and to Harold Wilson, from Box 500. Likewise, correspondence from MI5 to other government departments is headed only by a crown and 'Box 500, Parliament Street, London SW1'. MI5 formerly had a Whitehall telephone number to match this cover; on moving recently to its present headquarters at Curzon Street House near Berkeley Square, it abandoned this for an ordinary Mayfair number. Its telex is acknowledged by the answer-back code 'Snuffbox'.

Another cover address which has long since been known to hostile intelligence services but is still used is 'Room 055' at the Old War Office Building of the Ministry of Defence. In the Sixties, this address was used to try to recruit university students as informants and potential agents. Last year, MI5 technical specialists registered for a scientific conference as being from Room 055.

As last week's report commented, Box 500's list of organisations whose members immigration officers should closely watch consisted mainly of well known cold war Soviet fronts. But MI5/Box 500 also have their own section of the Suspects Index, the little black book which immigration officials check to see if a person is of interest. Besides basic particulars, these contain an 'Action Code' for each person. The codes include 'EXO' for people already deported from the UK, 'UC' or 'NC' to indicate undesirable characters to be excluded, and other codes specifying limitations to be applied to length of stay or employment. There are, however, around 1,000 British or commonwealth names with Action Codes 'A' or 'AA'. These are 'security suspects', who need not be stopped entering or leaving, but should be cross-examined in detail on their movements or travel plans. Immigration officials are told to report everything they learn immediately to Special Branch officers at the airport, and then by telephone to the 'Box 500' Duty Officer.

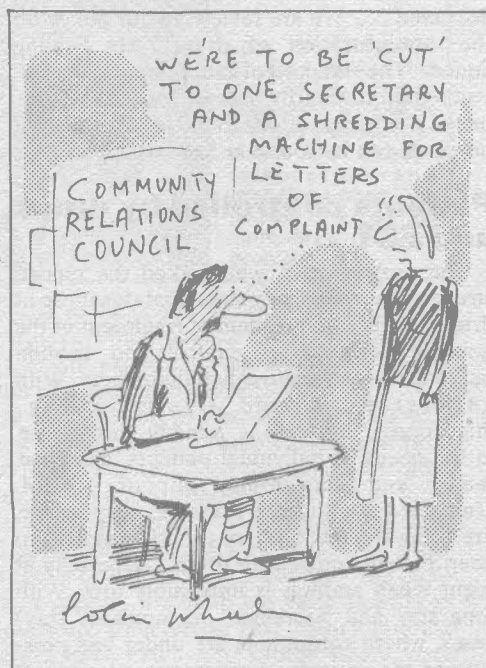
The top category, 'A', could include 'suspect members of the British Communist Party', other political activists or anyone else regarded as subversive by MI5. 'AA' is less important, and immediate notification is not required. Roughly 1,000 of the 10,000 entries in the British and Commonwealth section of the Suspect Index are As and AAs. Some 600 to 700 of these are people whose movements are of permanent interest to MI5.

Chelsea sacks Haseler

Mike Hoban writes: Kensington and Chelsea Labour Party decided last week to expel two of its most prominent members, Stephen Haseler of the right wing Social Democratic Alliance and Roger Fox, a former leader of the Labour group on the Borough Council. A motion of severe censure fell by 19-12 but a motion for expulsion was passed 19-1 with one abstention. The 11 who voted against expulsion had been in favour of censure, so the SDA was rejected even by the Trade Union Campaign for Labour Victory and found itself without any support at the meeting. Those who balked at the ultimate sanction were uneasy at mimicking the Right's expulsions of the Fifties. Fox and Haseler were charged with attempting 'in an underhand way to demoralise the Labour Party during the General

Election through the use of the mass media and attempting to dissuade Labour supporters from voting for selected Labour candidates'. (They had accused certain left wing candidates of 'totalitarian tendencies'.)

Despite many delays since May to allow Fox and Haseler to be present to defend themselves and despite procedural guidance from John Keys, the top Labour Party official in the London region, Haseler opened his defence by saying the meeting was invalid. His criticism was that the constituency's executive had expressed a view on the matter earlier and had therefore prejudiced the outcome. In the question and answer session, Haseler did most of the talking, Fox having 'flu. Most of his remarks consisted of self-congratulation about his record in the party, vilification of the charges ('rather like a police statement') and fearsome warnings about entryism in the Labour Party. He has promised to take his battle to Conference and then to the High Court. With much of the Right of the party eager to begin expulsions of their own against Trotskyists, Haseler and Fox may yet win support from that quarter.



Crack-down on radical CRCs?

Howard Sharron writes: A hefty row is brewing inside the race relations industry as negotiations reach deadlock between the Commission for Racial Equality and Community Relations Councils on the length and flexibility of the purse strings which join the two. A White Paper published in August sought to authorise the Commission to end its present automatic funding of CRCs and divert more money to ethnic organisations of its own choice. In one sense, this ought to be a welcome development: the aims of the CRCs are so contradictory (promoting 'racial harmony' is not the same thing as improving the lot of black people); and many of the Councils are so dozy that it has been hard to justify funding them automatically, at the expense of groups more directly keyed in to the needs of ethnic minorities. But what is worrying the ASTMS group of CRC staff is that the CRE's record to date suggests that any increase in its power over the CRCs will make matters worse – and will merely lead to a crack-down on the more enterprising ones.

Several 'troublesome' CRCs have already found themselves in deep water with the Commission. Scunthorpe CRC came under attack recently from newly elected Tory MP Michael Brown, who complained to the Commission's chairman David Lane that the Council was 'political' and involved with the

Anti-Nazi League. Following an interview with Lane, Mr Michael Brown was able to report to the press that the Commission was to launch an investigation into the CRCs – although in the end no investigation took place.

In Bradford, the Commission issued a press statement jointly with the local authority attacking the town's CRC and its chairman Mr Mohammed Ajeeb, for remarks he made against the education department's policy of bussing Asian children to different schools to disperse them. This was despite an admission by the CRE that the policy was racist and illegal.

The most blatant piece of political interference occurred in Walsall. Charles Boxer, Director of the CRE's Community Affairs and Liaison Section backed by David Lane, threatened to withdraw funding from the local CRC after Tory MP David Shepherd complained about an observation in the annual report of its Community Relations Officer John Mastrantone, that Conservative immigration policy was racist. A previous agreement by the CRE to appoint additional staff to the Council has, unaccountably, remained unfulfilled.

The Commission is clearly worried about government expenditure cuts and about the likelihood that many CRCs will continue to offend the Tories over their race relations policy – especially over Whitelaw's new nationality law. Charles Boxer has told CRC staff that he will not permit negotiations on the content of the White Paper's proposals, only on their implementation. The National Association of CRCs has advised its members not to hold meetings with Commission staff who are being dispatched around the country to 'explain' the White Paper to them. Industrial relations have so deteriorated that the ASTMS Community Relations Group has asked the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service (ACAS) to step in and investigate.

More power for Scottish police

Felicity Jones writes: The Government is planning to introduce a Bill in the next session of Parliament which threatens the very fabric of civil liberties in Scotland. Many consider that the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill, which is not expected to differ vastly from that which was introduced by the Labour government in October 1978 based on the recommendations of the Thomson Committee in 1975, will be much worse than the English 'sus' laws.

The main provisions of the proposed Bill would give police powers to detain suspects for several hours in the police station and also on the street without any charge having been made and without providing access to a solicitor or advisor. They would also be empowered to search suspects and their clothing without a warrant and even to arrest witnesses to an alleged offence. Such grave threats to the rights of the individual should warrant public discussion. But the Tories do not agree. The Under Secretary of State at the Scottish Office Malcolm Rifkind has already said that the time for debate is past and has refused to publish a Green Paper to enable full discussion of the issues involved.

Discussion of the Bill is still very much in the dark, as the Tories have not yet produced their version. But it is feared that it will prevent courts from demanding that police explain grounds for suspicion, because the Thomson Committee has admitted that such suspicion might 'take into account matters that could not be put in evidence at all'. This could only lead to detention on hunch.

A confidential document recently leaked to the *Scotsman* newspaper revealed the existence of secret registers of 'offenders' who have never been charged or tried. A Crown Office circular sent to procurator fiscals on 3 May this year enables them to issue written or verbal warnings to detainees which, unless positively denied by them, will be recorded on a local register. The circular mentions the Crown Office's intention to keep a national register eventually.