

SPECIAL BRANCH QUIZ PRIVATE EYES ON MURRELL MURDER

SPECIAL BRANCH detectives investigating the murder of Mrs Hilda Murrell have been questioning private detectives about the surveillance of anti-nuclear power protestors. Three detective agencies have been approached by the Special Branch, reports DUNCAN CAMPBELL

THE NEW LINE of enquiry follows the BBC's *Crimewatch* programme two months ago. A researcher on *Crimewatch* received an anonymous telephone call from someone alleging that private detectives were involved in the murder. Following up the allegation, Detective Chief Inspector Pickens and Detective Sergeant Palmer of the West Mercia Special Branch went first to two private detectives, Denis Byrne and Gary Murray, who have been conducting a campaign to clean up the private eye profession. Both were members of a private detectives trade union, the Institute of Professional Investigators (IPI).

The *New Statesman* has obtained a recording of the Special Branch interview with Murray last month, and other tapes and documents concerning the activities of IPI members and their employees.

The three agencies approached by the Special Branch were Zeus Security, run by Peter Hamilton of Bury St Edmunds, Sapphire Investigations of Long Stratton near Norwich, formerly run by the late Barrie Peachman, and Contingency Services of Colchester, run by Victor Norris.

The tapes and documents show that besides making covert enquiries about the Sizewell Enquiry protestors, Norris has claimed to have set up a national network of fake CND groups, to have a team of 'imitation lefties' available to infiltrate trade unions, to have recently worked for the NCB, and to have undertaken 'Home Office' operations 'a bit too precarious or dirty' to be done directly.

Secret commission

Central to Special Branch investigations was the late Peachman, who committed suicide last year. He was at the time the principal of the IPI, whose motto is 'Honour, integrity, and learning'. According to documents discovered after his death, Peachman secretly accepted a commission on 21 January 1983 from Hamilton's company, Zeus, to investigate the Sizewell

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16 February 1983

AH/OB

Dear Barrie

SIZEWELL "B" ENQUIRY

I acknowledge with thanks receipt of your cheque in the sum of £67 and I ask if this is satisfactory and I can assure you it is and I had pleasure that it would be.

Letterhead of Norris's Colchester-based agency

protestors. He hired Norris.

After an investigation lasting just six days, almost all the information reported back by Norris and Peachman to Hamilton was in fact openly available. None of the information referred to Mrs Murrell.

Vic Norris, who made the enquiry, went to Sizewell posing as a conservationist. One of his targets was Jennifer Armitage, the *New Statesman's* correspondent. But the *New Statesman* was tipped off about the secret surveillance soon after it happened and Armitage then rang Peachman. Peachman's own notes now record that he lied to her.

Norris runs his Colchester detective agency, 'Contingency Services', under the alias of 'Adrian Hampson'. Under his real name, he previously helped found two Nazi organisations, a satanist sect, and was sent to gaol for six years in 1969 for six sex offences involving procuring his own daughters.

After the original Sizewell surveillance operation, Norris's enthusiasm remained unabated. In a letter to Peachman on 14 February 1983, Norris proposed that there would be 'other (wealthy) sources who have a vested interest in seeing CND discredited'. He added:

I have set up three dummy organisations apparently sympathetic to CND, all run by trusted friends of mine. One is in Lancashire (Accrington), one in Kirkcaldy, Scotland, and the third in Ipswich. The one in Lancashire has already made contact with numerous 'peace groups' and is accepted as a bona fide 'peace group' itself.

Since Barrie Peachman's death, his son Mark has continued to be involved in political surveillance operations. In January, he was hired by the Tory leaders of Waveney District Council, Lowestoft to spy on

a Labour councillor who was making street collections for the miners.

'Imitation lefties'

In January 1985, as part of his campaign to clean up the IPI and private detective profession, Murray telephoned Norris to ask about the range of his anti trade union activities. Norris boasted that:

We've got a couple of very good imitation lefties who are extremely convincing. They know the score, they know the patsis that these people use. . . They can drop names, they have connections. We can infiltrate all right.

He added 'in confidence' that 'we've recently been doing something for the NCB'. But both the national office and the Midland district of the NCB this week said that they had 'no knowledge' of having hired detectives.

Norris also boasted that he could 'take care' of union trouble makers by unexplained methods. 'The best thing is that you didn't know', he told Murray. 'We have our own methods but the less you know about them the better, in your own interests.'

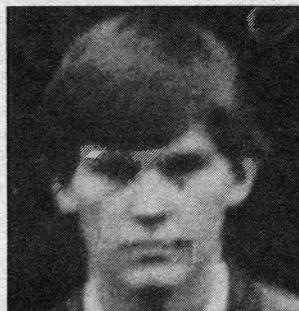
West Mercia Special Branch have now reported back to their HQ, who said this week that the detectives had found 'no connection (with the Murrell killing) and no information was obtained to assist in the investigation'. During the interview with Murray, however, they admitted that they were baffled about the murder because the person responsible was 'not somebody who is acting rationally. We have to put our hands up and say "we have scaled the length and breadth of this country and the M.O. (modus operandi) has not come out". No one has come forward and said "I know of a similar murder"'. ●

Research: Patrick Forbes

New academic horizon for Harrington?

PATRICK HARRINGTON, the National Front activist whose presence at North London Polytechnic has brought chaos to the institution, is understood to be considering continuing his academic career at another British university. One of the places to which he has applied for a place as a postgraduate philosophy student is Birkbeck College, part of London University.

Birkbeck is of particular interest to Harrington because the second in command of the philosophy department is Roger Scruton, the well known right wing guru. Scruton — a former external examiner on North London Poly's philosophy



Patrick Harrington

course — has been particularly vocal in his criticisms of the students who have opposed Harrington's presence at the poly. In his *Times* column Scruton has referred to Harrington as 'lone and defenceless' although he has not endorsed his political views.

Despite Harrington's less than glittering academic record and the

sort of references that North London Poly might be expected to give him, he's expressed interest before in continuing his studies in philosophy. Until now though, he has spoken of going to South Africa or North America to do so. But it's by no means certain that he would be acceptable to the South Africans, who have no particular desire to give a home to the world's fascists.

With his final exams only three weeks away, Harrington has withdrawn from the outside world, only goes occasionally to the Poly and refuses to speak to the press. His solicitor Tessa Sempick tells the *NS*: 'Mr Harrington says that any application he may or may not have made to a university is between him and that university, and he will not comment or confirm or deny that he has made such an application'.

Jolyon Jenkins