

UK PUT UP £4m TO GET SECOND CRUISE BASE

A SECRET £4 million subsidy has been provided to the US Air Force by the British government in order to persuade the USAF to build two cruise missile bases — Molesworth as well as Greenham Common — instead of one. But to avoid embarrassment, the money has been hidden from public and parliamentary view by a special MoD 'laundering' operation. DUNCAN CAMPBELL reports

LAST YEAR the Ministry of Defence did admit unofficially that Britain had agreed to pay some US costs but claimed (to the *Observer* in August) that the amount of taxpayers' money involved was 'pennies'.

and Defence Secretary Francis Pym believed that by creating as many bases as possible, the government would reduce protest activity, by dispersing it. Unsurprisingly, this view is no longer in favour in Whitehall. The US position was then that a single base at Greenham Common would be ideal.

Ministry of Defence information shows that the men most closely involved in the costly mistake were Mr Michael Quinlan and Mr Ewen Broadbent. Both men have since become Permanent Secretaries, and have been knighted. Sir Ewen Broadbent has recently retired, but Sir Michael Quinlan, a Thatcher protege, now runs the Department of Employment.

The secret subsidy to the Americans has been concealed from the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons. It breaches



David Sillitoe

Lady Olga Maitland with servants, at Molesworth this Easter

Asked this week to acknowledge that the penny pile was somewhat more substantial, MoD officials asserted that all aspects of the cruise missile deployment are 'regarded as classified by both governments', and would only admit to a quite separate payment to NATO funds.

The British government agreed to accept the deployment of 160 cruise missiles in December 1979. Discussions to select suitable sites took place between then and June 1980. At that time, senior officials

the longstanding arrangement whereby, although the US gets all its land rent-free from the MoD, it pays for all facilities, services and construction costs.

In fact, the Molesworth subsidy has been provided to the USAF by not charging for work done constructing and renovating married quarters and other facilities.

Recently, when it became obvious that the construction of two cruise missile bases would create rather more difficulty with protestors, the MoD tried to back out of the agreement. But the Americans refused to budge, arguing that Greenham Common was now no longer sufficiently large or secure to accommodate all 160 missiles.

But the British government's U-turn and subsequent argument on the issue did alarm US Congressional committees who after hearing classified evidence 'froze' construction funds. They wanted assurances that the British 'dual-basing' concept was still valid before construction started. ●

(See also Polly Woolley on Molesworth p14)

MISCELLANY

Dora Russell break-in

Police are taking 'very seriously indeed', as well they might, a break-in at Dora Russell's Cornish home on 1 April which included the rifling of her desk and card-index, the theft of £10 from her handbag — and a personal attack on her as she lay in bed, which has left her with bruising and a strained ankle. Odd circumstance, if the above isn't thought odd enough against the background of Hilda Murrell (NS 29 March etc) and the Woolf break-in (NS 22 February), is a fact recounted by Dora Russell's housekeeper. After the police had been and gone a car without lights drew up at 5.10 am and stood outside the house for a while, engine running, before driving off. Anyone can think of a dozen innocent reasons, but... The veteran socialist takes the broad view: 'If they're busy searching my house at least it's less harassment for others'.

political rallies in parks throughout mid-Sussex. For, as councillor Ken Holder asks: 'What are you going to do if people like the National Front and Sinn Fein come in?' We thought of phoning Sinn Fein to see if they had any rallies planned for Haywards Heath... somehow it didn't seem worth it.

A veil of silence

Our political editor's area has been on the receiving end of a 'Liberal Focus' leafletting exercise. All sorts of local Lib worthies are quoted saying how wonderful they are. One name, however, is missing: Richard Kennard, the Liberals' local GLC candidate in 1981, and recent vice-chair of the Hornsey Liberals. Admittedly, it's a bit difficult to parade Kennard in front of the voters these days. He's just started a three-month jail sentence for blackmail.

Smashing coincidence

If it weren't so serious it would be bloody funny. After making unnumbered protests about police inactivity over complaints of racial harassment, Bradford's Bowling



Action Group (the reference is to a district, not the sport) got the top cops to come and talk on Tuesday night 2 April at the Asian community centre. Bricks promptly smashed through the windows. Chief super Cooper from Wakefield HQ and Insp Wooler of Bradford community planning office charged out — to return half an hour later, breathless and sweaty, empty-handed. Yes, said the super, this did rather confirm that damage is being done to Asian property.

Ample-means testing

Panic spreads in UK boardrooms as the NS Politics of Envy Unit probes ever deeper. Phone call to Lonrho board member Paul Spicer fails to elicit copy of accounts. Intrepid reporter gets one by going to Lonrho Towers (aka Cheapside House) and asking the doorman for it. So. Well. Chief exec 'Tiny' Rowland's salary is up 22 per cent at £322,861, but that's neither here nor there: his estimated dividend income is £7 million. His share options are worth a potential £271,500. Elsewhere in the benefits stratosphere, continuing our ample-means testing, the Unit contact BP. They really panic. BP send us a 4 kilogram package containing 18 copies of their accounts — perhaps in the hope we'll be too worn out lugging it upstairs to work out the share option scheme. But we have the muscle. BP chair Sir Peter Walters' share options are potentially worth £40,812 (modest, at the stratosphere), but his salary's up 32 per cent to £241,547. If BP contributions to directors' pensions are divided equally between the seven managing directors, they equal £181,219 each. That puts the £2.30 postage on the 18 copies of the accounts into perspective.



Sir Peter, 32% inflated

First cuckoos of spring

Irish republicanism is tightening its grip on the ultra-respectable Sussex town of Haywards Heath. And militant British Nationalism isn't far behind. We owe this timely warning to Tory-controlled Mid Sussex District council who have 'slapped a ban' (as the local paper has it) on a proposed Labour Party Arts Festival and rally in one of the town's parks. For good measure they've outlawed

Tenterhooks

UNDER TV arc lights and a considerable Fleet St turnout the London Lesbian & Gay Centre was duly opened this week (NS 5 April) by GLC women's committee chair Valerie Wise, but still — as we go to press — without DoE consent to the £130,000 that was to have paid staff. Centre fundraisers reckon that proposed public cash equals 'only 13p a year per lesbian and gay ratepayer'.