

Big Brother's many mansions

CAUSE FOR CONCERN about the work of the secret intelligence and security services is not confined to their role in telephone tapping and mail opening, exposed in last week's **NEW STATESMAN**. The sole accountability of MI5, MI6 and other services to Parliament is through the annual Secret Vote, recently raised to £40m. But this can only be a small part of actual resources allocated. Other funds, we are informed by ex-employees, are 'laundered' away from budgets voted for other purposes: Home, Foreign and Defence.

Between an unquestioned and unquestionable Secret Vote, and the unconstitutional laundering of funds is an enormous void of unaccountability. Many of the security and intelligence agencies' activities – which inevitably, can only be sampled through intense barriers of secrecy and deception – raise deeper problems than secret, unaccountable funds. **DUNCAN CAMPBELL** continues the inquiry into the security state.

He focuses first on bugging operations, which are separate from telephone tapping, but appear to come under even less legal restraint. Bugging must normally involve some kind of intrusion into premises – even, on occasion, breaking and entering. (But, as in the case of phone-tapping, new technologies are emerging which make the intruder's task even easier, and even harder to control.)

Most of the 'secrets' revealed here are secret only from the British public which pays the bills. There is ample evidence that in several cases Soviet and East European intelligence services have penetrated flimsily-assembled 'covers'.

IN LONDON ALONE, the security and intelligence services appear to have exclusive use of eight large office blocks. This alone suggests that their official budget – £40 million – must be a serious deception. We have assembled evidence from many public sources, and confirmed with those acquainted with the security agencies and elsewhere, that all the buildings portrayed opposite are – or were recently – concerned entirely in such activities. From this – undoubtedly rough – assessment, we can estimate the numbers employed in these premises, and gauge the overall cost.

The legitimate work of these services does of course require office premises of some size. But these London offices appear to employ enough people to consume the entire Secret Vote in salaries alone. We estimate (opposite) that the salaries of the 5400 employees in these London offices alone must amount, at the very least, to just under £40 million. Additionally, rates not charged to the Vote amount to £2.3 million, and rental likewise ignored would be over £10 million. Overall, the real budgets for MI5, MI6 and GCHQ could be more than £300 million.

The size and power of the spooks may, we suggest, be indicated by the extent of their real estate, which is larger than has been realised. In many cases, we know little or nothing about precisely what the building is used for. But in the case of one unit, a great deal has been established from public documents, confirmed by police and intelligence sources.

A **JOINT** electronic surveillance and bugging facility for MI5, MI6 and the police is located in a quiet part of South London, at 113 Grove Park, Camberwell, SE5. The site, pictured in last week's **NEW STATESMAN**, is entered by a driveway concealed behind a suburban terrace and overlooking a railway. The only entrance is via an electrically operated steel doorway. Like Tinkerbell, the phone-tapping HQ, this office is operated 24 hours a day.

Officially, although not publicly, the centre is part of C7 division of the Metropolitan Police, which supplies technical services. Occasionally, public advertisements for

recording specialists have referred to the 'Camberwell Tape Laboratory'. The site is marked by a number of high radio masts, many steerable, and capable of receiving a wide range of different radio signals. The role of the centre, a large part of which is said by visitors to be below ground, is confirmed by its entry in the local planning register. It is recorded as a 'wireless receiving station'.

The bugs used by the police and security services are varied in type and facility. Briefly, they enable all conversations in a room or building to be monitored from a distance. The bugs will transmit overhead conversations to a listening centre either by radio or wires – if so, usually telephone wires. The use of a bug is quite distinct from tapping where only conversation held on a telephone can be heard: a bug is intended, at least, to pick up everything. Planting a bug on a 'target' premises requires, almost by necessity, breaking and entering or, at the very least, gaining entry by deception. As much is admitted by ex-Inspector Dick Lee in his published account of the Operation Julie drug case. If the bug works by radio then its signals on a special Home Office frequency band will be picked up from a nearby office, especially equipped van, or one of a number of fixed listening sites throughout London.

Yet although bugging would appear of necessity to involve officially blessed law-breaking no warrants are needed to employ bugs on any police investigation. In the Metropolitan Police, bugging is generally authorised by a Deputy Commissioner. But this is no real difficulty, according to one police source, as authority to bug 'can be obtained in five minutes'. The Camberwell centre has been involved in important cases where bugging has been necessary and indeed publicly acknowledged – such as the Spaghetti House and Balcombe Street sieges, and other terrorist disturbances. But such cases form only a small part of the centre's work. According to former police and intelligence officials, much of Camberwell's bugging capabilities are used not by the police for criminal investigation, but by the intelligence agencies.

The Metropolitan Police have been closely connected with the intelligence services in the



Sir Francis Brooks Richards, a Deputy Secretary in the Cabinet Office. His role of Co-ordinator of Security and Intelligence removes the accountability of the security services from government ministers.

COI (1974 portrait)

use of electronic espionage for a long time. According to documents now in the Public Records Office, the Camberwell centre – then known as 'Grove Park' – was operated by Metropolitan Police staff in the 1920s and 1930s to intercept radio signals from foreign embassies in London. It supplied information to GCCS, the forerunner of GCHQ (the vast codebreaking and monitoring agency now based in Cheltenham). Later, the bulk of this activity, still in the hands of the police, moved to Sandridge near St Albans. After the war, Sandridge was taken over as a GCHQ listening station. Teams of mobile eavesdropping vans for use throughout Britain were stationed there in the 1950s and early 60s. The police connection continued, and Sandridge has now been taken over by the Home Office as a police research centre.

Sandridge continues to develop surveillance and other technical equipment for the Camberwell centre and MI5, according to former senior police officers. One of these is the spectacular laser monitoring device which can detect conversations at long range by reflecting a laser beam off a window pane or, better, an object inside a room. MI5 placed a security clamp on development of this device by commercial companies in the late 60s, according to one former intelligence agent. On a recent visit to Sandridge, I recognised laser equipment being tested on the centre's roof.

The Post Office is also closely involved in bugging. As reported last week, the R12 division at Martlesham Heath near Ipswich manufactures (and has demonstrated) miniature bugs which attach to a telephone or transmit by radio. The R12 division is closely connected with GCHQ and the security services. One estimate of the extent of bugging comes from a Post Office employee, with knowledge of the quantities of miniature printed circuits and other parts ordered by the division. Four hundred were ordered in one year. But the Home Office refuses to give any figures for the number of bugging authorisations made for police or the security services.

Other government departments are involved in the manufacture and use of bugging equipment. The Joint Services Electronics Research Laboratory, near Baldock, has

been claimed to be the source of bugs used by military intelligence in Northern Ireland. GCHQ and the Foreign Office jointly run the Diplomatic Telecommunications Maintenance Service, based at Hanslop Park near Milton Keynes and in London. DTMS provides both bugging and debugging specialists who regularly check government offices and embassies for bugs. But they also specialise in installing bugs, and have allegedly done this in No 10 Downing Street during Wilson's administration.

Post Office staff are seconded to DTMS for work in Britain and abroad. According to former intelligence officials, members of DTMS or the Post Office's Chelsea tapping centre may instal bugs by posing as Post Office engineers repairing telephone installations. This allegation was also made by a senior official of a Post Office union who explained how, once bugs were installed on a private phone, official records were doctored to ensure that no ordinary engineer visited the premises and discovered the bug. Each telephone line has a 'Fault Card' maintained on it at the local exchange, he explained, which is consulted before an engineer makes any visit. Once a phone installation is used for bugging, the card will be marked 'refer to Special Services'. Special Services is a section in each telephone manager's office which deals with security liaison.

Measuring up the spooks

Using 1:1250 Ordnance Survey plans, we calculated the floor space of all the known London offices in use. The grand total is just over 100,000 square metres. The Property Services Agency, which provides and maintains all government offices, say that as a first estimate they allocate 200 square feet (18.4m²) of gross office space per head in London accommodation. The buildings discussed here will therefore accommodate about 5,400 people.

The *Supply Estimates 1979-80* gives the overall salary costs, including superannuation, of each central government department. The security and intelligence services probably offer similar remuneration to the Foreign Office (average cost £9,984 yearly), or the Cabinet Office (£7,350). Even on the lower figure, staff costs alone would not leave much change out of the £40 million 'Secret Vote'.

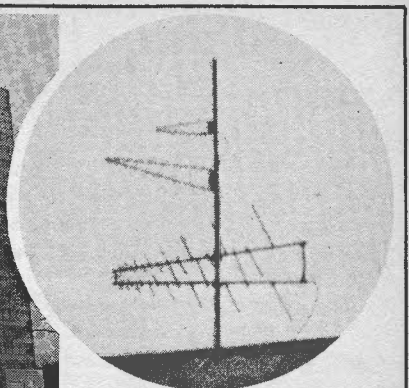
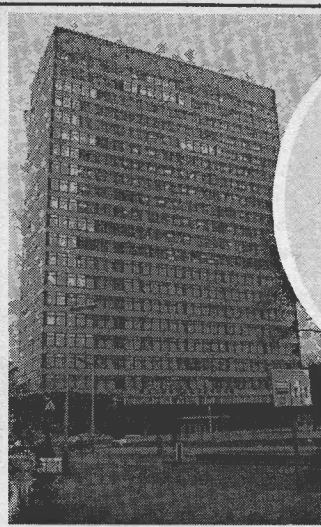
The cost of providing the buildings, met directly by the Property Services Agency, would begin with about £2.3 million in rates. Rents at normal commercial levels would be at least £10 million, but probably more than £15 million (some nice real estate is involved).

Operating costs, of course, only begin with salaries. In the case of the Foreign Office, total costs are about 2.5 times salary cost. For other departments, the ratio is much smaller, but spies hardly come cheaper than diplomats. So long as we have to guesstimate, it seems reasonable to put the costs of MI5 and MI6 together as being rather more than £100 million a year.

GCHQ, which is much bigger than either and has a large network of complex listening posts to maintain, is likely to be more expensive than either. After a lengthy account of its technical capacities (NS 2 February 1979) we estimated that it could not cost less than £200 million. But this total of £300 million for the major identifiable secret departments is still likely to leave out many substantial costs.



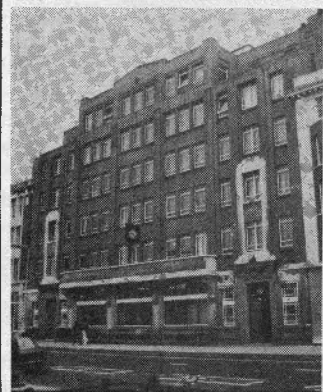
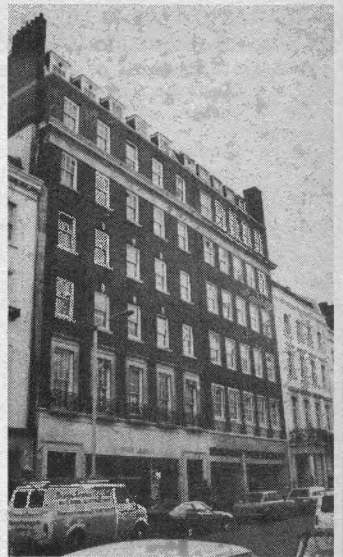
MI5's front office, 14-17 Great Marlborough St. W1.



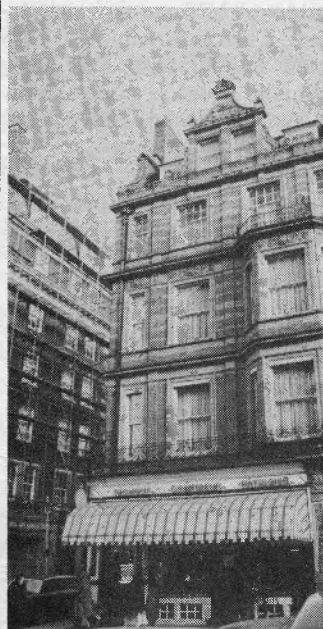
Century House, 100 Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 - the headquarters of the Secret Intelligence Service, MI6; inset, eavesdropping aerials on the roof, directed at London's embassy land.



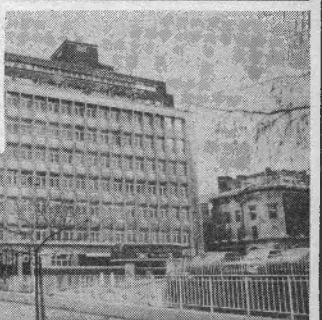
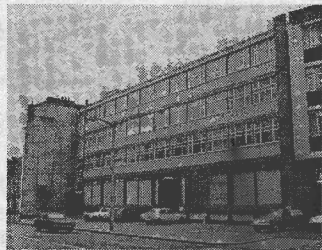
Above, GCHQ's London Office, 2/8 Palmer St, SW1; right, MI5 centre at 71/72 Grosvenor St, W1.

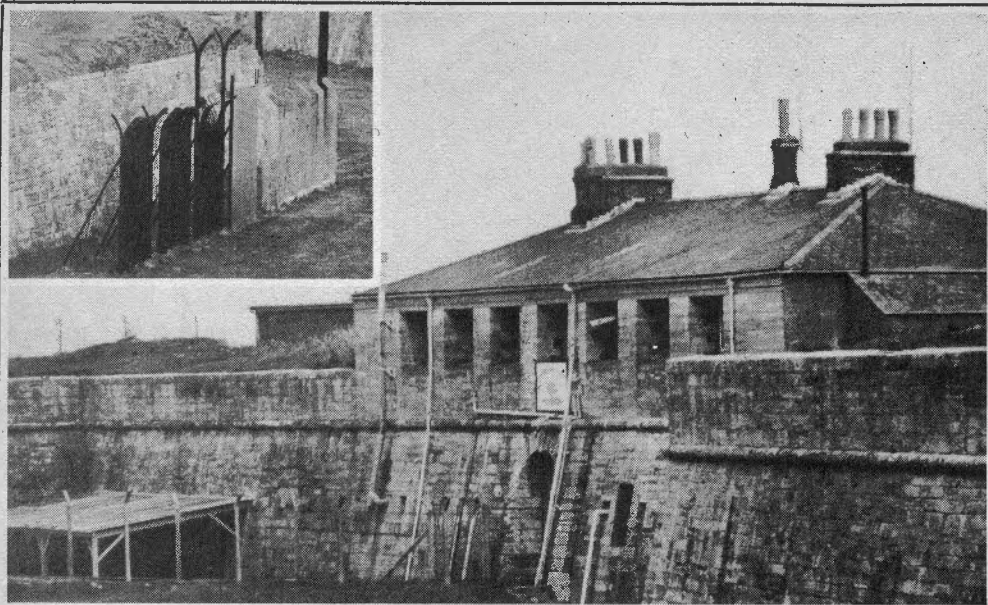


Above, the MI6 'London Station' at 60 Vauxhall Bridge Road, SW1; right, MI5 Headquarters at Curzon Street House, Curzon Street, W1.



Below, MI5 undercover office at 41 South Audley Street, in Mayfair W1; centre, MI6 training centre at 296-302 Borough High Street, SE1; right, MI5's old HQ at Leconfield House, Curzon Street, W1; below right, joint MI5/MI6 offices at 140 Gower Street, WC1.





The Sarratt 'Nursery' of John Le Carre's fictional Secret Service appears to correspond to this real life sabotage, demolition and agent training centre: Fort Monkton, at Gosport in Hants. Inset, a variety of British and foreign government security fences are part of the trainees hurdles.

THE MAJOR TARGETS of the British bug teams appear to be political. As revealed by the *Sunday Times* last week, a massive intelligence attack was mounted last autumn against Patriotic Front delegates to the Lancaster House conference. Every surveillance resource was employed to try and monitor the conversations and discussions of Nkomo and Mugabe, at all times. Their Special Branch guards – ostensibly provided for protection – were required to find out about their plans for changing hotels, meeting rooms, and pass on details to the intelligence services. The operation was, according to a senior intelligence source, authorised directly by the Prime Minister and Lord Carrington.

Although the intelligence agencies, by means of monitoring all phone calls, diplomatic communications, and bugging meetings, sought to discover each delegation's strategy, they were hardly even-handed. In order to interpret the African languages and dialects used by the PF delegates, Rhodesian security personnel were directly employed in the operation.

It was not the first time that such methods had been employed against the PF leaders, according to the same sources. Critical meetings during last year's non-aligned conference in Havana were bugged by American agents. The information was then passed to Britain through the international link between GCHQ and the National Security Agency, NSA. On her visit to Washington, Mrs Thatcher made a particular point of thanking President Carter for this technical assistance.

A former intelligence official who has worked at one of London's phone-tapping centres last week described the targets of intelligence bugging and tapping operations:

Embassies, all of them... including the Americans... trade union leaders and offices all the time... journalists, not very many, we've got enough information from inside... shipping companies, they're a very valuable source of information... a few MPs...

As has been suggested since last week's revelations in the *NEW STATESMAN*, targets of this surveillance have included Labour ministers such as Judith Hart. Their political aides in the last Labour government, have also had

their telephones tapped, one intelligence source stated.

THE EXTENSIVE properties of the intelligence and security services, shown here, are only part of a much larger scene. Of the three main agencies, MI5 (Security Service), MI6 (Secret Intelligence Service), and GCHQ (Government Communications HQ), only MI5 is concentrated in London. Many MI6 personnel are, naturally, based overseas under diplomatic cover. GCHQ's main buildings are in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, where they occupy considerable premises (see NS 2 February 1979). Most of GCHQ's personnel, and cost, is borne on the Defence budget, and the cost of operating either GCHQ or its overseas UK and overseas monitoring centres is not distinguished in Defence or Foreign Estimates presented to Parliament.

Of the offices shown, nine are currently in use by one or other of the services (one of them, in Great Marlborough Street, is being refurbished). From ordnance survey maps, the floorspace available in each block may be calculated, leading to our estimate of budget and personnel.

The headquarters of MI5 are now at Curzon Street House, Curzon Street, W1. They formerly occupied another block just along the street – Leconfield House, a stone's throw from the Hilton and the Playboy Club. When Leconfield House's owners planned to modernise the block, MI5 resolutely refused to move out.

Curzon Street House is a solid fortress, built as such during the last war, from which they can adequately resist unwelcome pressures for change.

Several other substantial Mayfair properties swell MI5's portfolio. No. 71/72 Grosvenor Street, which once housed many of the Security Services' political files, is still in use. Like so many of their offices its cover is blown by contrasting two public directories – a street directory which lists the premises as occupied by MoD (Army), and a civil service directory which fails to mention the place in its MoD (Army) section. A ground floor Estée Lauder cosmetics shop fails to distract attention from obvious government fittings, heavy lace cur-

tains and tight security.

At 41 South Audley Street, W1, a smaller office which lies above a patisserie not far from the US Embassy, MI5's cover appears a little better. Unfortunately, they are not helped by the Post Office, who refer enquiries about their telephone number – cunningly listed in a private name, for once – to 'Special Services'. Callers are told: 'That means it's probably a government department'.

The Service's front office, until it moved to the new HQ (apart from their mystifying postal address of 'Box 500') is at 14-17 Great Marlborough Street, W1, opposite Carnaby St. MI5's legal adviser, who attends trials and meets provincial policemen on their behalf, was based there until recent refurbishing began.

Surveillance of political and 'subversive' activity in the London area is mounted from a number of smaller offices. One such office is the landmark Euston Tower building. The DHSS, who occupy most of the building's first 20 floors (the Post Office have the top half) confirmed last week that the 12th and 16th floors were leased elsewhere. The 16th floor is noticeably surrounded by heavy curtains, unlike the others. Equally noticeable, until last year, was a mysterious high power scrambled radio signal, probably used to keep in touch with official cars. The signal, from a permanently manned communications centre at the very top of the building, causes considerable interference in the vicinity, including to TV and radio studios on the ground floor.

One of MI5's more notorious surveillance offices was a large garage at 1-8 Barnard Road, Battersea. Any secrecy attaching to it was fairly thoroughly blown when two East European 'diplomats' were caught trying to break into it in 1968. All the same, MI5 did not give up using it for another ten years.

Another office block at 26-28 Mount Row, Mayfair appears to be part of the MI5 portfolio. It is listed in local records as central government offices, but the address does not appear in any published civil service directory. A phone book, clearly stamped SECRET, is on display at the building's reception desk. This suggests that the offices are unlikely to belong to any orthodox department of central government (not even the MoD's ordinary internal phone book attracts such high classification).

THE SECRET SERVICE, MI6, has to endure less salubrious facilities. It was banished during the late sixties to Century House, a 20-storey tower block near Waterloo. This is listed publicly as the site of the Foreign Office 'Permanent Under-Secretary's Department', which is the FO's liaison with MI6. Their mail is variously sent to 'Box 850' or to a non-existent Mr G. H. Merrick of the Foreign Office. The third floor of an adjacent annexe houses the service's computer centre.

A variety of training centres meet the personnel requirements of MI6 and a number of foreign secret services. The principal training department is a stroll away at 296-302 Borough High Street, SE1. More colourful subjects – sabotage, demolition and general mayhem-raising – are taught at an undercover establishment in Gosport called Fort Monkton. This centre, in a Napoleonic fort opposite Portsmouth Harbour, sports a fine selection of security fences, in order to broaden the espionage recruit's experience. All are clearly visible from the adjacent golf course.

One veteran of the Fort Monkton course is the former Norwegian military intelligence agent, Major Sven Blindheim. He told us that he was taught sabotage skills there before being employed by British and US intelligence to train teams of right-wing Finns for operations inside the USSR. (Many of the Finns failed to return, and Blindheim quit the job when he concluded that it was 'illegal'.)

Fort Monkton's secrets are withheld only from the British public. The Russians have been well-informed about it since 1951, when Kim Philby attended a course there. Officially described as an 'Army Training Establishment', it seems to conform fairly closely to the 'Sarratt' training centre in John Le Carré's novels. TV cameras guard the entrance, and track the movements of inquisitive visitors.

ANOTHER UNACKNOWLEDGED department, the Cabinet Office Joint Intelligence Staff provides overall direction for all three secret services. The person in charge (under the Secretary to the Cabinet) is Sir Francis Brooks Richards, Co-ordinator of Intelligence and Security. His position is a powerful one: he need answer only to a few committees of officials, and to the Prime Minister. Inquiries into the Cabinet Committee structure by the NEW STATESMAN in 1978 did not reveal (under Labour) any ministerial committee for the oversight of intelligence and security, although regular reports were – and presumably are – made to the committee handling defence and foreign affairs. Brooks Richards's immediate predecessor was Sir Leonard Hooper, a former director of GCHQ.

The possibility that the intelligence and security services might drift into political 'dirty tricks' has not been lessened by the

appointment of an extremely right-wing minister to liaise with the Co-ordinator. Angus Maude, the Paymaster-General, has this role, together with an overt responsibility for government 'information policy' – bluntly, propaganda. The role has some similarities with that given to George Wigg by Harold Wilson in the sixties. (Maude's job was to have gone to the late Airey Neave.)

M15 is now run by Sir Howard Trayton Smith, a former ambassador to Moscow and one-time 'British government representative in Northern Ireland'. Since the British Government does not need diplomatic representation in Northern Ireland, this may be read as a euphemism for the security co-ordination job now publicly assigned to Sir Maurice Oldfield, former director of MI6.

Sir Arthur ('Dickie') Franks, reputedly a hard-liner with Thatcherite ideas, now runs MI6. Formerly he was deputy to Oldfield, who was regarded by the standards of the intelligence world as something of a liberal. Dr Brian Tovey, a tall, bespectacled scientist, heads GCHQ.

WHAT HOPE IS THERE that sovereignty over all these lush but shadowy empires might be returned to Parliament? In the short term, not much. Curiously, the fact that almost every penny of secret-service expenditure was until recently illegal has come to light only as part of the attempt to reassert Parliamentary authority. Robin Cook MP, who is introducing later this month a Bill to legalise M15 and make it accountable, has unearthed the formidable Civil List and Secret Service Act of 1782, which prohibited the government from spending more than £10,000 a year on secret service. This Act was only repealed in 1977, after nearly two centuries of illegal over-

spending.

In legalising M15, Cook's Bill would make its Director-General report to Parliament. It will unquestionably fail because the government whips object. But the move does re-inject into our culture the idea that parliamentary democracy might be something more than a phrase to be mouthed while the security agencies pursue their own vision of what 'national security' consists of.

Just now, MI5 is authorised to withhold any details of its activities from ministers, let alone Parliament, unless it considers they have a 'need to know'. That, of course, is a charter for writing your own cheques, taking over any premises you fancy, phone-tapping, bugging and generally snooping on any sections of the population who don't share the Cabinet Office view of life.

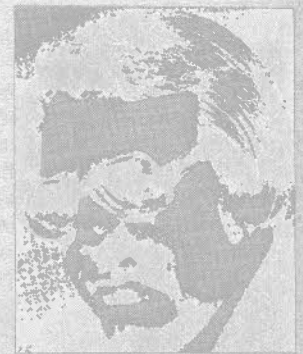
The Labour Party's Home Affairs Study Group on the intelligence services has finally got under way after Tony Benn's much-publicised initiative of a year ago. In the past Labour has never tackled the issue really seriously, and certainly has not taken advantage of its periods of office to submit the secret agencies to any democratic oversight. But the realisation may be spreading that the new technologies of surveillance make the challenge genuinely urgent: that unless they are legally defended, our traditional liberties will not long survive.

NEXT WEEK

The NEW STATESMAN's inquiry into the security state is continuing through this month. Next: Corruption and accountability in the operations of Britain's intelligence services.

"It's for you to decide"
says Llew Gardner.

On Tuesday 12 February at 11.40 pm, I'll be chairing a television debate at the Ironmongers' Hall in the City of London. Nicholas Scott MP will propose the motion that "Conservative Industrial Relations Work". He'll be opposed by the Rt Hon Eric Varley MP.



They're both experts. Nicholas Scott was formerly Under Secretary of State for Employment, while Eric Varley, Secretary of State for Employment in the last Labour government, is now opposition spokesman on employment.

When they've finished speaking, I'll open the floor to contributions from the audience, unionists and employers with practical experience of the problems of industrial relations.

But the results of the debate will be in your hands. Industrial relations is an important subject, and we would like to know what you think. So we're asking you, the viewers, to cast your votes for or against the motion. We'll announce the result on our next programme. Because when the chips are down, it is your views which matter.

THAMES DEBATE
"Conservative Industrial Relations Work"
Tuesday 12 February at 11.40 pm on Thames



Send your vote to:
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Thames Television,
306 Euston Road,
London NW1 3BB.