

Hong Kong charges start

Duncan Campbell writes: Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has brought 17 charges of deception, theft and bribery against the former Ministry of Defence official Eric Garland, who was one of the subjects of a *New Statesman/Daily Mirror* investigation in May.

Garland was MoD Land Agent in the colony, responsible for oversight of accommodation and other facilities for employees of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) intelligence agency, which runs the Little Sai Wan listening-base. NS reports (16 and 23 May) included articles by a former



GCHQ official, Jock Kane, describing how Garland and a senior GCHQ official named Frank Wilks combined to run a hotel business for civil servants while Garland was still with the MoD.

Such malpractice was first reported to GCHQ ten years ago, but the organisation has consistently covered-up — most recently, by inspiring the government claim that all our revelations were 'old', and had been diligently 'investigated'. ICAC's view appears to have been different: ICAC officials have written thanking us for information which led directly to the charges against Garland.

The charges relate to recent dealings: ICAC, because of a local indemnity, cannot investigate events earlier than 1977. The NS therefore sent papers dealing with Garland's earlier activities to the Director of Public Prosecutions in London who tried to pass the buck back to Hong Kong.

The Foreign Office has admitted that GCHQ tipped-off Frank Wilks about the *NS/Mirror* inquiry. We have evidence that a similar official tip-off was passed to Garland — but his evasive action was not wholly successful. He is now confined to the colony, and his case will be heard in the autumn.