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Duncan Campbell on the Thames Valley network that gives access to police computer secrets.

Officer suspended after NS exposé

A THAMES VALLEY police officer who is alleged to have passed confidential police computer data to a private detective was suspended last Thursday following a report in the *New Statesman*. The private detective identified in last week's article, Mr Malcolm James of James Investigation and Security Services in Windsor, was held for questioning even before the *New Statesman* was published, and a report is now being prepared for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

We have since obtained further information which suggests that James - himself an ex-Thames Valley policeman - obtained confidential police information from a network of at least seven police officers, and even used their off-duty services as part of his private police force. We have learned that on more than one occasion James, in the company of serving police officers, repossessed cars on which hire purchase or rental payments were owed to his private client. It is not yet known whether the police officers used their police credentials on these occasions.

We have also established that James had access to the Thames Valley Police Intelligence computer. The day before he was exposed by this writer and Mr Julian Jacotet, a member of the Thames Valley Police Authority, he had sought extensive personal information on an individual living near High Wycombe. Thames Valley police claimed last week that although their investigations were 'incomplete', James 'has no access' to the Thames Valley Police Computer. We have established that, in fact, some time before his exposure James had obtained criminal record information from precisely this source.

Following a meeting last Wednesday with the acting Deputy Chief Constable, a police inquiry has been set up under Chief Superintendent Ray Tilley. The next day, PC David Wastell of Burnham police station, whom we had named in our allegations, was suspended from duty.

The *New Statesman* has now obtained details of conversations between James and others in which he outlined a wide-ranging network of police contacts, including a woman in the Special Branch, who were on tap for information. Other contacts included a Detective Inspector and a Detective Chief

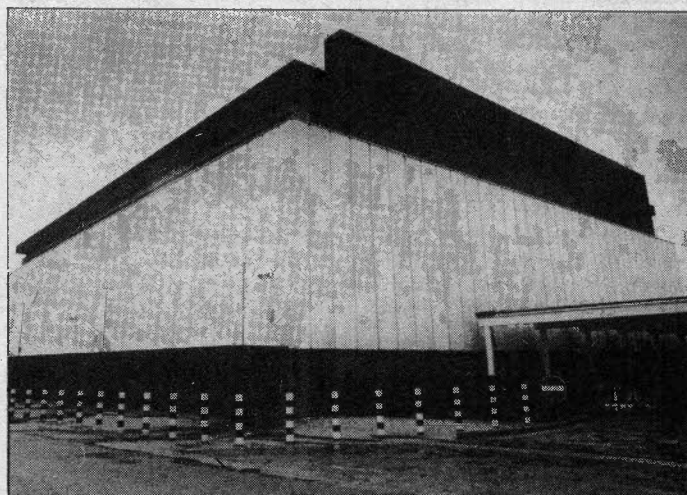
Inspector, as well as four lower-ranking police officers. Another private detective in the Thames Valley area has also been obtaining confidential police information from at least one of these officers. Full details of these fresh allegations have been given to Thames Valley Police.

The conversations also reveal that another policeman, PC Ray Watters of Windsor, had been closely assisting Malcolm James up to the moment he was exposed. James had begun a private investigation of a Mr Terence Smith, who lives at Bledlow Ridge near High Wycombe. James had already obtained details of Mr

the checks done late at night. 'Why, the police computer,' he replied. He was also asked:

How much are you paying Ray for all this help, is he doing it just on the side?
 James: He's done a hell of a lot of work for me on this, he really has . . . and Dave Wastell, and all these blokes, the CID have been helping me, a Detective Chief Inspector's been helping me, he says, if you've got any more problems . . . come to me and I'll get it sorted out there.

ON ANOTHER OCCASION, James explained that his normal first move in checking on an individual like Mr Smith would be to go to the Thames Valley Criminal Records Office (CRO). This is the only place where information can be obtained from the Police National Computer, and the Thames Valley Police computer simultaneously. There are only six



Michael Abrahams (Network)

The police National Computer building, at Hendon, north London. For the third time in two years, confidential information has leaked.

Smith's recent conviction for a large theft.

Two weeks ago, he visited Smith's neighbour Mrs Joan Kelsey and asked her to write down the numbers of cars going to Smith's cottage, for further 'checks'. (Mrs Kelsey did not oblige). Then, just the day before he was exposed, James got PC Watters to make a series of further police inquiries about Mr Smith. These included getting out a criminal investigation file from High Wycombe police station, a 'CID81' which is a form used to request full details of previous convictions, and a 'check on known associates', which is information specifically recorded on the Thames Valley Police Intelligence Computer.

The night before, James had got PC Watters to do one or more checks on vehicles which had been at Mr Smith's address. The next day, James was asked how he got

terminals to the PNC at the CRO office in Kidlington, near Oxford, compared with 34 Thames Valley Police computer terminals there and throughout the force's area. James has explained his actions thus:

What we do on a CRO is get one done on Thames Valley, and then we get one done at NSY (New Scotland Yard) as well. There's two separate phone calls, we do one to the local area, and then they phone up NSY. . . My mate, he gets one through the Thames Valley, he does a TVP check which covers the local area, and if there's no joy on that he phones up NSY. . . They've got a computer there - they've got the villains on from all over the whole country. . .

And if the matter was of security interest:

Well I've got somebody in the

Special Branch . . . I could ask her if she could have a look for me and see. . . It could be a bit dicey.

POLICE INVESTIGATORS have now been given tapes made by this writer while posing as a video games company manager, in which James was asked for and supplied details of individuals and vehicles from the Police National Computer. Because of the involvement of serving police officers, no arrests or charges can normally be made until the Director of Public Prosecutions has reviewed the re-

port which is now being prepared. Mr Julian Jacotet, the Thames Valley Police Authority member and Labour County Councillor for Abingdon, who witnessed the conclusion of our inquiry, said last week that he was impressed by the 'speed and determination' with which the police inquiry had begun. 'But I am deeply disturbed that only a few days later the police were again issuing complacent statements about the Thames Valley computer, if not the PNC. The lesson of what has happened is that no private information is safe.' □

Steve Walker reports on the bureaucracy involved in government plans to find out the foreigners

DHSS plans check-ups on nationality

HALF THE ten hospitals selected to carry out a survey into the use made of their facilities by overseas visitors had almost completed the exercise by the time the health services union COHSE instructed its members not to co-operate with the survey.

The Department of Health restricted knowledge of the survey by liaising directly with hospital administrators and by-passing Area Health Authorities and Community Health Councils who could have raised objections. These tactics allowed the government to short-circuit any potential union obstruction. (However, at the West Suffolk hospital in Bury St Edmunds, health service workers in NALGO and NUPE positively support the idea of charging overseas visitors for treatment under the National Health Service.)

The other nine hospitals are: Addenbrookes, Cambridge; Hillingdon, Middlesex; Queen Mother's, Glasgow; Royal Gwent, Newport; Royal Northern, London; St Bernards, Ealing; University College, London; Warwick General, Leamington; and Wythenshawe, Manchester. Hillingdon and Wythenshawe have just completed the survey, with the remaining three at West Suffolk, Ealing, and University College, due to finish within the first two weeks of November.

Clerical staff, mainly non-union,

have been used to question patients who were seeking emergency treatment, a scheduled admission, or out-patient treatment. The first question asks whether they live here permanently, whether they have lived in Britain for the last three years, and whether they or their spouse work in this country.

The ten hospitals were carefully chosen because the particular catchment areas they service contain or have access to lots of potential future paying customers. For instance Warwick General Hospital is near Warwick University which has a large overseas student intake; the Royal Gwent is close to Newport docks; Hillingdon hospital's catchment area includes Southall and is near Heathrow airport; and the Royal Northern is right in the middle of a large, mixed ethnic community in North London.

The DHSS first contacted the hospitals in mid-September following the government's announcement at the end of June that a working party was being created to examine the best method of charging overseas visitors for NHS treatment. On 20 October the new secretary of state for social services, Norman Fowler, re-iterated the government's intention to introduce a system of charges next year.

Results from the survey have to be in by November but it seems they will not contain the evidence the government is looking for to justify applying discriminatory criteria in deciding who receives free health care, or for adding yet another layer of bureaucracy to hospital administration. Most of the ten hospital administrators contacted by the *New Statesman* last week said that only a fraction of patients questioned did not live in the UK permanently.

If a national scheme were introduced some 17 million people in casualty and out-patient departments would have to be questioned every year at a cost in excess of extra revenues the scheme would bring in. □

Robin Cook measures new unilateralist forces

Councils against nukes

LAST AUTUMN, Manchester City Council lobbed a snowball at Whitehall by passing a resolution opposing the manufacture or deployment of nuclear weapons within its boundaries, and inviting other authorities to do similarly to form 'the groundwork for the creation . . . of a nuclear-free zone in Europe.' As our list shows, the snowball has turned into an avalanche: 108 councils have confirmed their opposition to nuclear strategy (see below).

Not all have copied Manchester's exact wording, but in our list 'nuclear-free' is interpreted as a commitment against weapons. There are some other authorities—Hereford City Council for instance—who have affirmed 'total opposition to energy policies which lead to the creation of nuclear waste', but remain silent on defence policy. And some lists passing around the peace movement contain major errors: when we approached Worthing Council we found them incensed at reports that they opposed nuclear weapons. Indeed, they had adopted a resolution 'deploring the pacifist policy of the Manchester City Council' and pledging 'support for 'HMG's' defence policy.

Because our list is based on written confirmation, we believe it

is the solidest available. But it may not be exhaustive. There are reports of another dozen or so anti-nuclear councils where corroboration is still awaited.

The variety in the list is even more impressive than the total. The North-East, traditionally regarded as moderate territory, produces the thickest crop of unilateral authorities outside London.

Nor is the list exclusively Labour. Wigtown District Council contains only Independents, and at Inverness Labour is outnumbered 3-1 by Independents. Wigtown has adopted Manchester's resolution, and Inverness 'deeply sympathises' with a similar one circulated by Glasgow. Lobbying by Grimsby CND has produced adoption of the Manchester resolution by Cleethorpes Borough Council though only 14 of its 41 members are Labour.

Few local authorities have actually declared themselves 'nuclear free zones'. The Manchester resolution does not do so, but its anti-nuclear stance does imply policy commitment in two areas of local authority responsibility: civil defence, and planning permission for MoD projects, such as expansion of the Coulport arsenal to accommodate Trident missiles.

How far councils can be uncooperative over civil defence without default on statutory duty remains unknown. It is, on the other hand, quite clear that the MoD can always override local planning powers. But anti-nuclear campaigners in each case believe that local authority resistance can be a focus for unilateralism. □

The councils that said no

ENGLAND & WALES

Afan Boro; Allerdale District; Barnsley Met. Boro; Barrow-in-Furness Boro; Blackburn Boro; Blaenau Gwent Boro; Blyth Valley Boro; Bradford City; Brecknock Boro; Bristol City; Burnley Boro; Bury Met. Boro; Ceredigion District; Cambridge City; Carlisle City; Chester-le-Street District; Cleethorpes Boro; Cleveland Country; Crawley Boro; Corby District; Coventry City; Crewe & Nantwich Boro; Darlington Boro; Derby City; Derbyshire County; NE Derbyshire District; Derwentside District; Durham County; Dwyfor District; Dyfed County; Forest of Dean District; Gateshead Met Boro; Glyndwr District; Gwent County; Harlow Urban District; Humberside County; Hyndburn Boro; Ilswyn Boro; Kingston-on-Hull City; Kirklees Met Dist; Knowsley Met Boro; Lancashire County; Langbaugh Boro; Leeds City; Leicester City; N.W. Leicestershire District; Liverpool City; Greater London Council; London Boros of Brent, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Newham, Waltham Forest; Manchester City; Greater Manchester Council; Merthy Tydfil Boro;

West Midlands County; Newcastle-under-Lyme Boro; Newcastle-on-Tyne City; Newport Boro; Nuneaton & Bedworth Boro; Ogwr Boro; Oxford City; South Pembrokeshire District; Peaddle Boro; Preston Boro; St Helens Met Boro; Sandwell Met Boro; Scunthorpe Boro; Sedgfield District; Sheffield City; Stoke-on-Trent City; Torfaen Boro; Tyne & Wear County; Walsall Met Boro; Watford Boro; Welwyn Hatfield District; Wigan Met Boro; Wolverhampton Met Boro; Wrekin District; Wrexham Maelor Boro; South Yorkshire County.

SCOTLAND

Aberdeen City; Clackmannan District; Clydebank District; Clydesdale District; Cumbernauld & Kilsyth District; Cunningham District; Dumbarton District; Glasgow City; Inverclyde District; Inverness District; East Kilbride District; Kyle & Carrick District; East Lothian District; Lothian Region; West Lothian District; Monklands District; Motherwell District; Renfrew District; Stirling District; Strathclyde Region; Strathkelvin District; Western Isles; Wigtown District.

