

Duncan Campbell

Leaky police discharged

TWO POLICE OFFICERS have been discharged from Thames Valley Police following an official investigation of the leakage of police computer information. Six months ago, the *New Statesman* established that a Windsor-based private detective and former Thames Valley policeman, Mr Malcolm James, had extensive access to police computer checks and files for his private business. He even took one policeman onto his payroll in order to repossess stolen cars, and paid 'wages' for this purpose as well as for providing information.

PC Ray Walters of Windsor had been on medical leave since the original NS report, and has now been compulsorily retired. PC

David Wastell of Burnham faced a disciplinary hearing at the end of last month; he was found guilty of disobedience to orders through his participation in private business activities, and admitted improper disclosure of information.

Although both information and money changed hands, the Director of Public Prosecutions decided that neither corruption nor Official Secrets charges were justified.

During the course of the *New Statesman's* investigation, Mr James sold information obtained from the Police National Computer to us at £4 an inquiry. He could also obtain a wide range of information from other police record systems, including Scotland Yard and Thames Valley Police's own computer — which Thames Valley Police claim isn't leaky. But a policeman who passed the security checks to get onto one computer could get onto each of the others. □