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Duncan Campbell reveals that the American 'New Right' is now intervening in British politics

Reagan's hit-team comes to Britain

A SECRET CONFERENCE to teach British industrialists, military figures and right-wing conservatives the election techniques of the American 'New Right' is to take place in London next Monday and Tuesday. The conference features a team of speakers from the Heritage Foundation, one of the key organising groups in the 1980 US Presidential election. A key speaker will be Morton Blackwell, a White House official described as 'President Reagan's Special Assistant for Public Liaison', who will be talking about 'youth politics', 'fund raising' and 'direct mail' techniques of political lobbying. The mailing techniques will be used to 'target' a 'hit-list' of left-wing and Labour MPs.

The conference is organised by a new, right-wing lobby group, the 'Coalition for Peace Through Security', whose name and style are based on the entryist techniques of the Reaganites in 1980, using 'Political Action Committees' and 'Coalitions' rather than party factions on the British model. The Coalition for Peace Through Security was originally set up in October 1981 as an anti-CND propaganda campaign. Two key figures are Thatcherite former Young Conservatives: Tony Kerpel, a Camden councillor, and Edward Leigh, a former GLC councillor. The other sponsors are a colourful American businessman, Francis Leonard Holihan, and Dr Julian Lewis. These have recently been joined by Stewart Menaul, a former RAF officer who runs the right-wing Foreign Affairs Research Institute, based in Whitehall.

The *New Statesman's* Washington correspondent last week inquired about the propriety of a US government official directly interfering in the internal politics of a friendly country. We were told that Blackwell's trip was unauthorised, and that he had not applied to his superiors to take time off, nor asked the State Department to authorise his visit to the secret conference.

After consulting lawyers, Blackwell claimed that he would not be taking 'vacation time' to come to London, and would pay his own expenses. The US State

Department says he has been told not to discuss British politics at all.

The invitation to the Conference on 'American Campaigning Techniques... Fund-raising and Opinion-forming' was sent to about 170 people, including the chairmen of many prominent companies. It was backed up by letters appealing for company directors to attend and support it, from



Francis Leonard Holihan

David Trippier MP, who chairs the Tory backbench defence committee. The invitation tells participants:

The Coalition for Peace Through Security is bringing to this country some of the key figures whose mastery of these new methods helped ensure victory for the Republican Party in the contests for the control of the White House and the Senate. Although the Coalition has been formed to argue the case for Britain's continued membership of NATO and the preservation of the nuclear deterrent, we feel that the [American] expertise is of equal relevance to individuals and

pressure-groups [concerned with other subjects].

Besides Blackwell from the White House, there are six other US speakers, who have worked in lobbies against abortion, homosexuality, controls on campaign contributions, and equal rights legislation. They include Paul Weyrich, who set up the Heritage Foundation as well as the 'Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress', and Connie Marshner, who chairs the National Pro-Family Coalition, and is in the Library Court Coalition, which has lobbied for the control of schoolbooks - particularly in order to inject Christian fundamentalist, anti-Darwinist doctrine.

The Conference, according to CPS Director Leigh, will be entirely 'private' and 'no press will be present'. The conference, he says, is being funded by the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, which annually raises hundreds of thousands of dollars for right-wing political education.

The CPS has also been soliciting funds from and making contact with industrial concerns since its (unannounced) October launch. Invitees to the conference include members of British United Industrialists, Sir John Clark of Plessey, Nigel Broackes and Sir Arnold Hall of Hawker Siddeley. □

The Fruitcake Right: see p.12

Duncan Campbell on press manipulation

Fleet St sings for its supper

THE MINISTRY of Defence is making a mighty effort to massage public opinion into accepting the Trident submarine missile system - at a cost which not even its enthusiasts reckon to be less than £8 billion.

Defence Secretary John Nott is now lavishing secret briefings on the national press. Two weeks ago, he leaked details of 'offset' arrangements for British firms to work on Trident, and got a front-page lead in the *Sunday Times*.

On Wednesday last week he invited a group of Fleet Street editors to a private dinner at his London home, on 'lobby terms'. They were Harold Evans of *The Times*, and the editors of the *Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Daily Express*, and *Sunday Telegraph*. The gov-▶