

Ungentlemanly spy at the Travellers

A SECRET undercover recruiting operation for the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) is being run by a man who is careless enough not to pay his bills on time.

Colonel Francis Hyde 'Jim' Scobie, a veteran of 21 years in the army, now runs one of Britain's most unusual recruiting agencies. He is a front man for the 'Friends' — the gentlemanly codename for SIS employees. His recruiting agency, F. H. Scobie and Associates, operated until recently from the top two floors of a plush office block at 28/29 St James's Square, London SW1. It even has a licence from the Department of Employment to operate an employment agency, although this expires at the end of this month.

Scobie's former landlords at St James's, Scan Am Ltd, say that the colonel left without paying the rent, or for the furniture he took with him. Nor did he leave a forwarding address. However, after the *New Statesman* had provided Scan Am's solicitors with Colonel Scobie's home address, Scan Am confirmed earlier this week that the colonel had now paid up.

Colonel Scobie has now moved his office to 23 Warwick Square, also in the St James's district. There he remains conveniently close to SIS's own centre for recruiting secret agents. This is in a huge white Georgian mansion, No. 3 Carlton Gardens, directly opposite the Foreign Secretary's official residence.

The *New Statesman* has obtained copies of letters written by SIS to prospective recruits found for them by Colonel Scobie. 'It has been suggested to me,' one letter says, 'that you might be interested to have a discussion with us about appointments in government service in the field of foreign affairs which occasionally arise in addition to those covered by the Diplomatic Service Grade 7 and 8 competition.' This is a heavily veiled reference to the Secret Service. The letters bear an official crest and the heading 'Co-ordination Staff — Foreign and Commonwealth Office.' In fact, there is no such department inside the Foreign Office. The letter is signed, illegibly, by a 'Recruitment Officer.'

Colonel Scobie's candidates are then given a preliminary interview in gentlemanly style — a series of expansive lunches at the Travellers' Club in St James, a well-known SIS watering hole. SIS's interviewer on such occasions, Mr Mike Reynolds, is well known to generations of Oxbridge graduates who have been fingered by certain of their dons as likely SIS operatives.

The Travellers' Club, however, don't think that Colonel Scobie is entirely a gentleman. When the

New Statesman rang to ask after him last year, the Membership Secretary told us that they too had been looking for him. It was just a small matter — several lunches for SIS recruits, after which he had walked out of the club without paying his bill.

Colonel Scobie was not available at his home earlier this week to comment on these allegations. His telephone number continuously gives an 'unobtainable' tone and is, according to British Telecom, 'barred' to prevent unwelcome incoming telephone calls.

Duncan Campbell

New SWP breakaway formed

ANOTHER new socialist grouping has arisen out of the re-organisation of the British Left. In Bradford, a



Andrew Wiatard Report

Rebellion against SWP leadership of Tony Cliff (above)

Socialist Federation has been set up following a conference of 60 ex-members of the once-dynamic Socialist Workers' Party. The Federation is to be a loose umbrella organisation of independent campaigning groups.

The conference was held last weekend, with ex-members arriving from London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle and the Midlands as well as Bradford. Amongst those attending was Bill Kay, a founder member, and Terry Farrar, who had been a SWP activist at Metal Box.

Farrar was one of six members of Bradford SWP who were expelled last July. A further nine branch members then resigned. Efforts to find out their original crime have failed. According to the SWP the six constituted a 'subconscious faction'. Immediately before the expulsion the branch had been told by Yorkshire full-time organiser Andrew Strouthous to stop all race work. According to members present, he said 'racism was irrelevant