

#### 10 DOWNING STREET

#### Prime Minister

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# PAUL HOUSE



## REVEALED: The Thatcher 'aide' who advised the working miners

A RIGHT-WING columnist on The Times and former bankrupt—described last year as a political adviser to Margaret Thatcher—was active in forming and promoting the National Working Miners' Committee.

The Committee has been hailed at the Social Democratic Party Conference and at last week's Tory conference as a genuine organisation of miners who want to work during the strike.

This "executive" of

three met the following

week—on August 25—at the luxury Hambleton

Hall Restaurant, near

The only other person at the meeting was David

Hart. The restaurant is

owned by Tim Hart,

Bob Copping's minutes record that David Hart

Oakham, Leics.

David's brother.

Mr David Hart attended at least three of the early meetings which spawned the Committee.

This was revealed to me this week by the first secretary of the Committee, Mr Bob Copping. Mr Copping resigned from the Committee after only three weeks because he thought it was "an antitrade union organisation."

### **Appointed**

Mr Copping, 51, a win-der at Houghton Main pit, near Barnsley, says he met David Hart at a meeting at Castle Donington Guest House, near East Midlands Airport.

"I was told before the meeting that he was the money-man," says Bob.

"He was introduced to us as D. H. Lawrence, but he told us after the meeting his name was Hart, though he didn't want it broadcast for obvious reasons."

At another meeting at

## Castle Donington on August 19, Bob Copping's own minutes record that Colin Clarke, a Nottinghamshire miner, was appointed President, John Blessington, from Bevercotes Pit, Notts, Treasurer, and Bob Copping, secretary.

suggested the miners should meet steel union leaders and visit the. docks to meet non-striking dockers.

Clarke and Blessington supported the move, but Bob Copping didn't.

The full committee met again at Castle Donington on August 28. The minutes report "D. Hart present."

David Hart suggested that the miners on the committee who weren't working should be paid £150-a-week out of the fund. He also suggested a £300 "float" for every committee member, to cover expenses.

## Vague

Again, Bob Copping objected.

"Mr Hart said he had access to the Prime Minister and had held up the script for Mr Mac-Gregor in his television debate with Scargill," says Bob Copping.

"I got more and more worried. There didn't seem to be any democracy in it. I tried to meet them about it, but they wouldn't see me.

"They had a meeting in Claridges in London, but I wasn't invited.

"My sole aim was to work through the constitution of the union to get a ballot. I realised the others weren't going that

Mr Copping resigned on September 5.

Mr John Blessington is now secretary. Mr Blessington's mem-

ory of Mr Hart is vague. "I have heard of the guy, I've met him, I think," he told me. "There was a reporter

there who was helping us

with publicity, apparently." Mr Blessington insisted that he'd never been Treasurer, that he has been the only official secretary of the Committee, and

that Mr Copping had re-

signed because he couldn't be secretary.

He said that Mr Copping's minutes were not the official record of the committee.

Asked about the dockers' meetings, Mr Blessington said: "I'm not prepared to comment."

helpful. Four attempts to get him to the telephone in the suite at Claridges, where he spent Monday night, proved futile.

At his office on Tuesday morning, a spokesman said: "He is not available to talk to you, and will not be."

## Denied

Mr Hart, 40, was described in The Sunday Times in November last year as "one of the amorphous group which drifts around Downing Street advising Mrs Thatcher on matters of state."

A Downing Street

DAVID HART: "Access to the Prime Minister . ." Mr Hart was even less spokesman was quoted the next day as saying: "He may very infrequently have consulted him."

In December, Mrs Thatcher denied in the House of Commons that Mr Hart was one of her. official advisers.

## The Coal Board could

not confirm or deny that Mr Hart helped Mr Ian MacGregor, their chairman, in his debate with Arthur Scargill on August

In June, 1975, Mr Hart was declared bankrupt. He had debts of £959,259, most of them because of his fantastic life style.

He had bought a coun-

"I'm afraid I've been very silly." only half his debts paid.

try estate, Rolls-Royce

and BMW cars and he

commuted by helicopter.

Mr Hart told the court:

He was discharged from bankruptcy in 1978 with

### Modest

On September 13, he wrote an enthusiastic article in The Times on the National Working Miners' Committee. He was full of praise and enthusiasm for the new body.

Modest as ever, Mr Hart did not mention his own part in it.

## The grim price of private care

homes.

beach.

see their elderly friends, Percy

Mr and Mrs Moon, who are both 85 and are ill and frail, had moved into The Grange, at Bottisham, near Cambridge, where a week's stay cost them

The Durrants were shocked to find the two old people in a tiny and two beds. The bedclothes were soiled and

Mr Moon had lost his glasses. The Durrants went back two days later. Things had got worse.

They complained to their local councillor. At once, Cambridge county councillor Janet Jones went to

see for herself. She was appalled. Mrs Moons bedclothes stank. "There was only one qualified nurse on duty that day, to care for sixteen patients," she says.

Mrs Jones is writing an angry report to the East Anglian Health Authority. "These private homes have sprung up because of a desperate shortage of council-

run homes," she says. "My great concern is that they do not give adequate medical care and are not properly monitored."

The administrator of The Grange, Mr Pat Mungrew, vigorously defends his nursing home.

a commode, one upright chair nurses and about seven auxiliary nurses," he said.

He described the Moons as "difficult patients" and complained that their friends had visited them "at the busiest time of day."

Mr Mungrew says he has a law degree, and is a member of the Institute of Directors. He is also a State Enrolled Nurse, though not a State Registered Nurse.

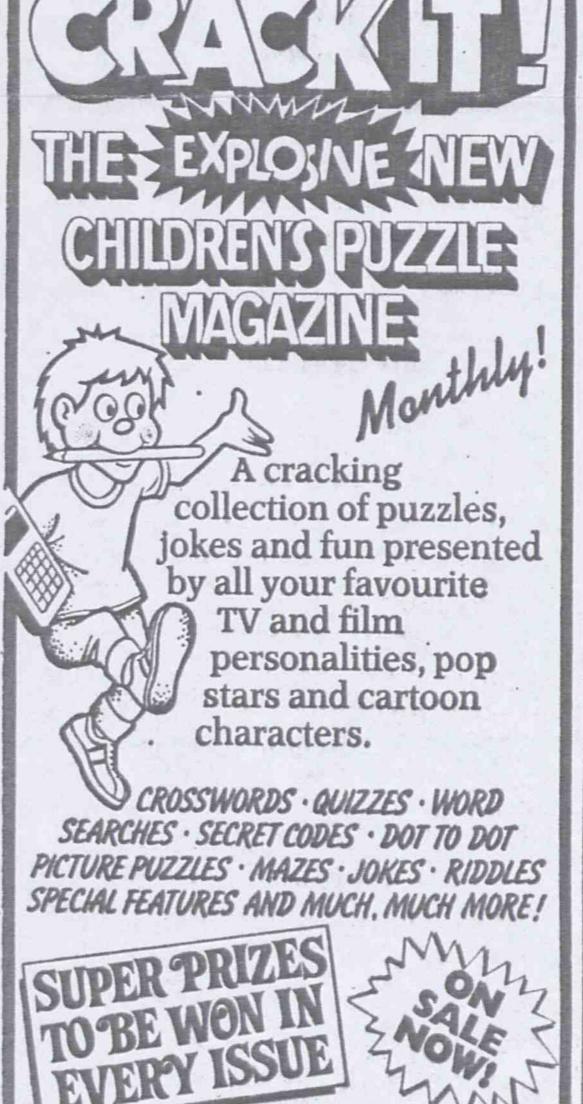
Department of Health rules insist that anyone in charge of a nursing home should be at least a State Registered Nurse.

A fantastic boom in private homes has been eiled by enormous dollops of public money to help pay the fees. In 1979, old age pensioners in nursing homes age filters of Directions. ing homes got £10m of DHSS money, £18.04 per resident.

In 1983, they got £30m; £75.25 per resident.

IF YOU have something you think I ought to investigate, write to me at the Daily Mirror "I have eight or nine qualified or ring me on 01-822 3365.

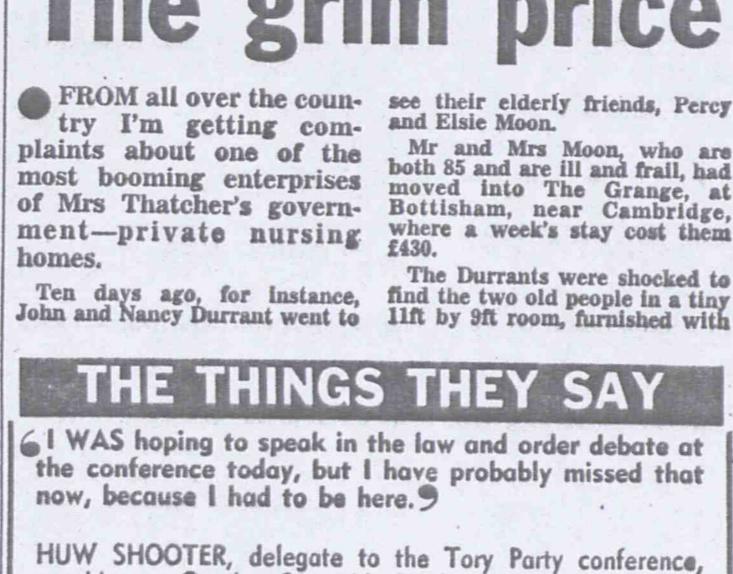
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speaking on October 8 outside Brighton Magistrates Court,

where he had been fined £200 and ordered to pay £100

compensation for criminal damage. He and a gang of forty

law and order fanatics from the Young Conservatives had

smashed up a mock submarine put up by CND on Brighton