

The Battle for British Telecom



The story of the British Telecom unions' fight against the Bill to privatise BT

**The unions whose story
this is:**

The six trade unions within British Telecom acted together as the British Telecom Union Committee (BTUC). The unions also took their own, independent, initiatives to enhance the campaign.

The BTUC unions, whose story this is, are listed below:

**Post Office Engineering Union
(POEU)**

**Union of Communication Workers
(UCW)**

Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) (P and T Group)

**Society of Telecom Executives
(STE)**

Communication Managers' Association (CMA)

**Society of Civil and Public Servants
(SCPS) (Telecom Group)**

Towards the end of the campaign, the Telecom Group of the SCPS merged with the STE.



**British Telecommunications Unions Committee,
14/15 Bridgewater Square, London EC2Y 8BS.**

How the battle began



ON OCTOBER 20, 1982, the 250,000 members of the six staff and management unions in British Telecom had a Day of Action which focussed public and media attention on Government plans to sell to City and foreign investors 51 per cent of the shares in BT. It was the day the unions fired their warning shots:

★ A warning to the public that once public service was replaced by

private profit as a motivating force, services would suffer.

★ A warning to BT's employees and suppliers that huge job losses and deteriorating conditions of service would follow.

★ A warning to the Government that Telecom workers, both management or staff, were going to fight the privatisation proposals by mounting a campaign, the like of which had never been seen before.



The Day of Action saw marches and demonstrations all over Britain.

The biggest campaign ever mounted

THE CAMPAIGN to protect public services by opposing the Telecommunications Bill was a success in terms of what could be achieved. It was always positive, showing specifically why services to the public were threatened.

The campaign was three-pronged; publicity, political activity and industrial action where necessary. The POEU and the UCW, with their Labour links, could mount a direct onslaught from the Opposition Benches by making effective use of their sponsored MPs. The BTUC collectively worked with outside groups to bring together Cross Bench and all-Party concerns about specific services at risk.

The BTUC campaign against the privatisation of British Telecom was an integral part of the struggle, which started with the election of a Conservative Government in May 1979, to protect public services.

The unions charted new ground: in industrial action, in lobbying and parliamentary briefing, in using professional public relations and advertising expertise.

Two of the three original political



The London march was fronted by union General Secretaries and national officers.

objectives were achieved: fundamentally changing the Bill, and delaying the first Bill in Parliament so that it failed to become law before the June 1983 General Election.

Above all, the campaign used vigorous local lobbying, often using local media to great effect, providing the basic foundation of broad public concern about privatisation which caused MPs and Peers to pay heed to the thorough and professional lobbying at national level.

The campaign was the biggest and one of the most expensive ever mounted by a trade union group costing over £1.5 million on direct publicity costs in less than two years, with additional expenditure by individual unions.

The Telecommunications Bill, which sought to privatise BT, eventually arrived on the Statute Book, but it was a quite different Bill from the one the Government had intended to pass into law.

The Bill in its final form incorporated practically all of the unions' demands,

other than the central one of defeating the Bill outright.

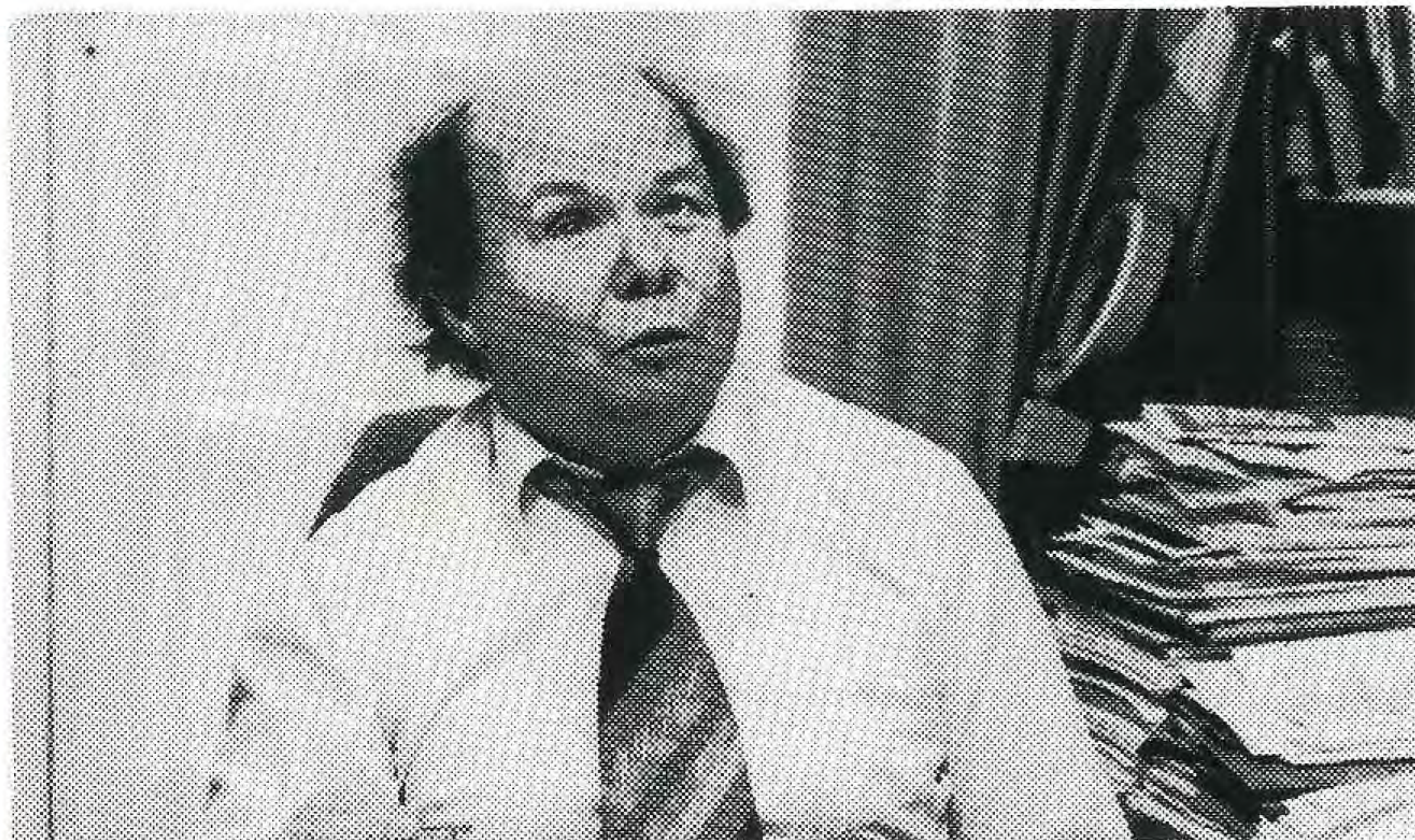
The shares in BT will go on sale. But speculators will be buying into a company quite different from the one they had hoped to lay hands on.

The campaign was decisive in showing why the American experience of breaking up a successful telephone monopoly has been disastrous for ordinary telephone subscribers. From pointing out the "successes" of the American experience, the Conservative Government has been reduced to making increasingly desperate efforts to show why the United Kingdom *will not* be doing the same thing.

This booklet looks at what the BT unions have achieved – and tells how the victories were won.

But the fight to protect a public telecommunications service for all will continue, for how the Telecommunications Act is put into practice will be as important as opposing the Bill itself.

Thank you!



I DON'T THINK there is an independent observer anywhere who will not concede that the British Telecom unions have notched some notable victories in their campaign.

On behalf of Britain's blind and disabled, I would like to draw your attention to just one. And I especially address my remarks to those of you who may be feeling low after 18 exhausting months.

The 16,000 blind telephonists in Britain want to thank you for safeguarding their jobs. You forced the Government to accept that all new switchboards – from the UK or abroad – should be adaptable for blind people.

And the rest of Britain's blind and disabled community want to thank you for safeguarding other essential services – including the free Directory Enquiry service – which the Government was at first prepared to see taken away.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you. If your campaign had achieved nothing else but these things, it would have been eminently worthwhile.

Michael Barrett, General Secretary, National League for the Blind and Disabled.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?



We shifted public opinion

THE CAMPAIGN brought a dramatic shift in public opinion. This was a significant achievement, which gives hope to others facing privatisation and has long-term implications.

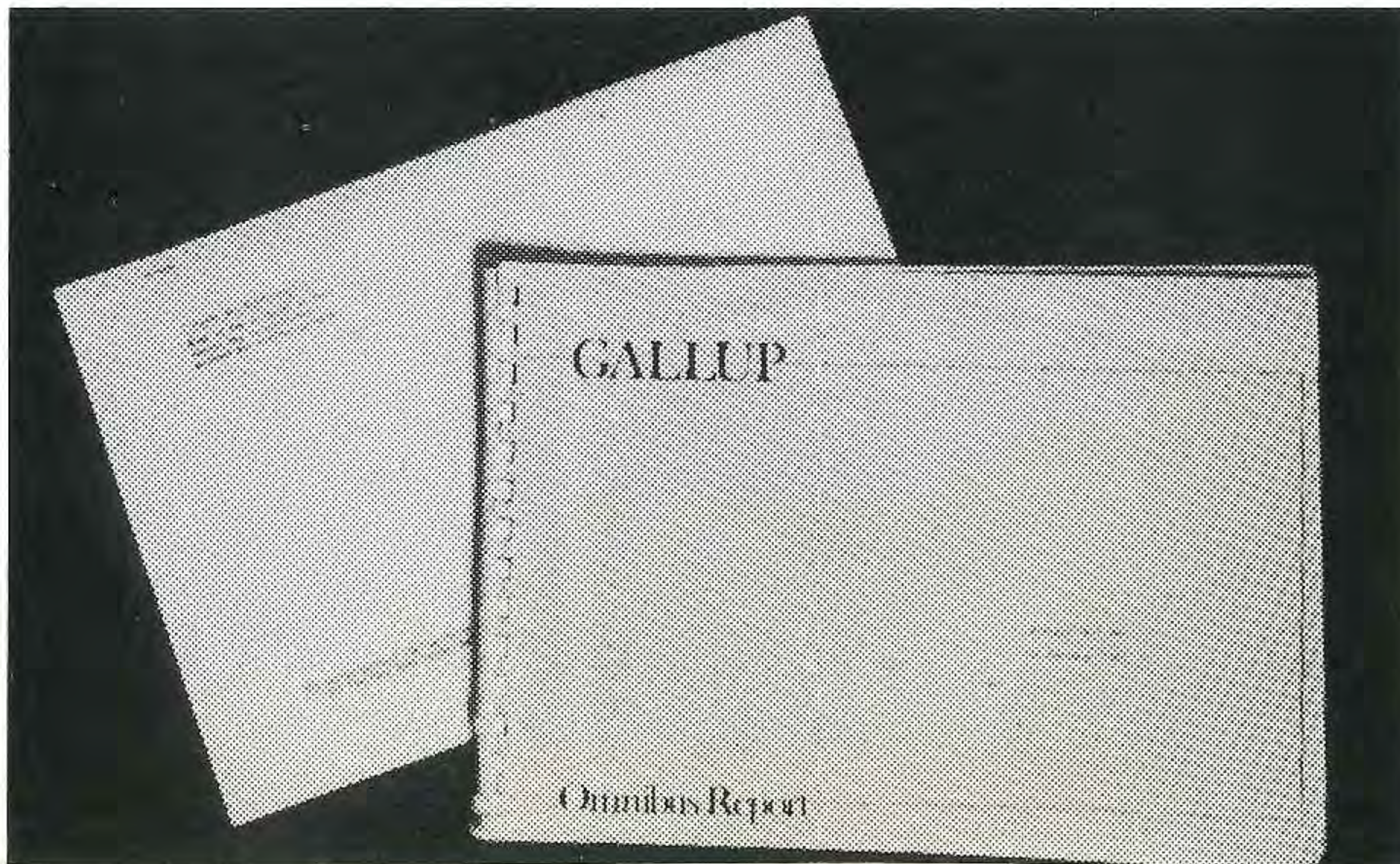
In December 1982, at the outset of the campaign, Gallup conducted a national opinion poll for the BTUC and this showed the majority of the public in favour of BT's sell-off.

But a second Gallup poll conducted a year later, asking exactly the same questions, showed that the months of campaigning had paid off.

The majority of the public now said that privatisation was a bad idea, there *would* be fewer kiosks and there *would* be poorer services.

The second poll was conducted for a leading Fleet Street paper. The results were not what the newspaper had hoped for – so the second poll was not published by them. The unions obtained a copy and published it.

The two polls proved that a *positive* campaign for public services could swing public opinion *against* privatisation.



The two Gallup Polls showed a significant swing.

We protected uneconomic services

THROUGHOUT the campaign the unions' pointed out that socially desirable but uneconomic services provided by BT as a public service were under threat. A privatised BT, pushing to maximise profit for shareholders, would scrap them, scale them down, or price them out of the reach of disabled and disadvantaged groups.

The Government first refused to take action, but following intense pressure from rural, disabled and community groups working with the BTUC, the Government had to give way.

We got the Bill amended to provide explicit protection for telephone kiosks, rural services, the emergency 999 services, Directory Enquiries, the elderly, special services for the disabled, maritime services and research and development.

Rural services will now be protected against price discrimination – an extremely important achievement.

Special facilities for the disabled will continue after all.

Directory enquiry services have been protected, and they will continue to be free for, at very least, all blind and other disabled people.

But we will need to be vigilant, and continue working with these pressure groups.



The campaign to retain a free Directory Enquiries service was joined by prominent personalities like actress Susan Hampshire, herself dyslexic, and resulted in the saving of thousands of telephonists' jobs.

We protected thousands of BT jobs

BY PROTECTING a range of services that would have otherwise been cut back or even abolished, the campaign has protected thousands of British Telecom jobs.

About 21,000 telephone operators are employed in the UK on Directory Enquiries. In the United States, when Directory Services were charged for demand fell and 75 per cent of operators lost their jobs. The unions' victory in ensuring a widely available DQ service has helped to protect some 15,000 telephonists' jobs and many jobs of the support staff (canteens, personnel and so on).

The BTUC sponsored amendment protecting rural areas from price discrimination (ie much higher but more 'realistic' prices for country districts) effectively holds BT to the continuation of a universal telephone service which Britain has enjoyed for so long. Had the amendment not been forced through, many rural services would have been run down and thousands of engineers and support staff made redundant.

The support and active assistance of influential rural groups such as Rural Voice was extremely important in getting this amendment through Parliament, and we



It was in this booklet that the BTUC explained to community groups how many BT services were at risk. The booklet was in huge demand and helped the unions create interest

Sorry, you've been cut off



This was one of the messages on adverts. It led to the protection of services.

will need to continue working with them to protect services and jobs.

The interests of BT Employees

Written into the Act, are crucial safeguards for existing BT employees.

Contracts of Employment

All existing contracts of employment will be carried over as BT becomes privatised. There will be a

continuous employment record spanning both BT Corporation and BT plc.

Pensions

There are specific guarantees in the Act that the Government will stand by all existing BT employees' pension rights at the time of privatisation. These are fully protected in Law.

We stopped the break-up of BT



BRITISH TELECOM has been preserved as one unit, despite vigorous attempts by the Tory right-wingers to break up and sell-off the service in pieces so that it can never be brought back into public ownership.

We pointed out that breaking up BT would harm the ordinary consumer. This weakened the case of those arguing for more competition which would have resulted in the break-up of BT.

This was a very important victory, with long term implications.

Fighting off those who wanted to go even further than the Government has been as important a part of the campaign as protecting public services. Local lobbying, particularly of Tory MPs, combined with the thoroughly researched report on the American experience of breaking-up AT&T, helped kill the Government's myths about the USA and forced them to re-think.

We protected the consumer

THE GOVERNMENT planned to abolish POUNC, (the telephone customers' watchdog) and put nothing effective in its place.

The BTUC campaigned for the setting up of effective bodies to protect consumers, and attracted widespread support from such groups as the Women's Institute, National Farmers Union, the Child Poverty Action Group and local authorities. Politicians of all parties backed us.

As a result of our campaign new *independent* advisory bodies, appointed by the Secretary of State, will watch over the interests of consumers in general and special groups like the elderly, disabled and small businesses, in particular.

These councils will themselves protect services, protect BT's research and development activities – and jobs.

The Government has recognised consumer concern, but will need to be constantly reminded of it *before* and not *after* decisions are taken affecting public services. Our campaign has provided a framework for the expression of concern and this will need to stay vigilant and active.

*The unions won
watchdogs for
householders, the elderly,
disabled, and small
businesses.*



We made a privatised BT accountable to Parliament

THE GOVERNMENT wanted to sell-off BT and let it get on with maximising profits.

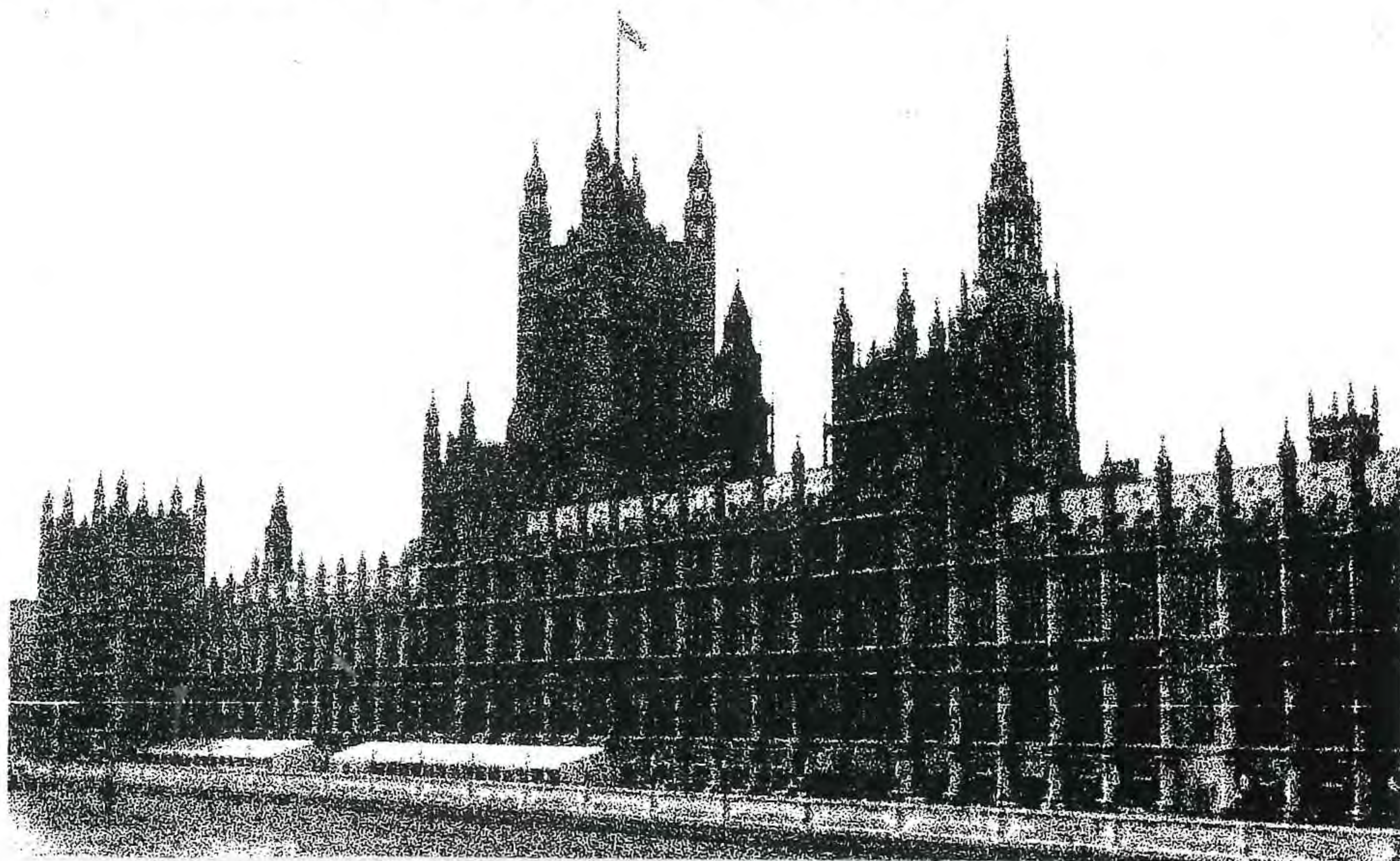
All the traditional accountability to Parliament would be lost.

The BT unions saw that this separation of British Telecom from Parliament would be disastrous.

Shareholders would be able to do very much as they pleased, and MPs representing constituents, would be able to do little about it.

After intense lobbying from the unions, the Government agreed with the central demand of a BTUC-sponsored amendment: that the new licence under which a privatised BT would operate should be laid before Parliament for scrutiny and debate.

This effectively allows the continuation of Parliamentary accountability and gives a way to express continuing concern to protect public services.



We defended UK manufacturers

THOUSANDS of jobs in British companies manufacturing telecommunications equipment have been protected, thanks to the BTUC campaign.

Two new sub-paragraphs, forced into Clause 3 of the Telecommunications Bill after intense parliamentary lobbying in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, will help protect UK manufacturers from dumping and from other unfair competition from overseas. As it originally stood, the Bill would have allowed foreign equipment to flood into Britain while other countries continued to ban telecom imports. That has now been changed.

Over 95 per cent of BT's equipment is made in the UK at present. There are 85 factories in the UK employing 75,000 workers engaged in the manufacture of BT equipment, and a further 75,000 people work in companies supplying these factories. We had to do something on their behalf. As many as thirty-five thousand jobs were at risk.

Local campaigns on this theme drew the attention of those workers and their unions to the threat they faced and helped to widen and unite our campaign throughout the trade union movement.

Alan Chamberlain, secretary of the BTUC, spoke to many trade unions about the job loss threat.



It's bad enough when your friends and neighbours are unemployed. But now your job may be on the line too.

There is a Bill going through Parliament now that will turn British Telecom into a private company, owned by a select band of City investors. They will buy shares solely to make profits. At present, under public ownership, 95% of British Telecom equipment is British-made. Made by you and your community to the most advanced standards in the world. But not for much longer. British Telecom's present 'Buy British' policy will almost certainly be thrown out. Under private ownership, contracts for equipment, vans and materials will go to the Far East, or other cheap labour markets, which means that jobs in your area will go. And work created by the new communications technology will leave Britain.

Selling off British Telecom, one of Britain's most profitable enterprises, will have other effects too. No guarantees can be given about the future of public services under private ownership. It could mean:

- Fewer public phone boxes
- Reduced services to rural communities
- Fewer aids for the disabled
- Higher charges for household and small business users

What can you do? Phone the House of Commons (01 219 3000) and tell your M.P. that you're against the selling of your telephone system. Do it now, while you still have a job left to protect.



HANDS OFF TELEPHONES! BTUC British Telecommunications Unions Committee
14-15 Bridgewater Square, London EC2Y 8BS

This advert proved a timely warning



We brought telephone tapping under the law

ALTHOUGH the issue is not central to the main provisions of the Telecommunications Bill, the Government defeat on telephone tapping – engineered by the BTUC – will be seen in the future as a major civil liberties reform.

For years, the unions, particularly the Post Office Engineering Union, have tried to bring telephone tapping within the law, so that there are recognised controls, agreed procedures and the right of appeal to the courts.

But vested interests have blocked progress.

A BTUC-sponsored amendment was carried in the House of Lords after a carefully planned public relations campaign on this issue.

The Lords agreed to withdraw the amendment after the Government promised to introduce its own, detailed legislation on this issue.

Telephone tapping – this is a scene from a film – has now been brought within the law: a significant victory.



HOW WAS IT ALL ACHIEVED?



The first five harnessing



The hat has the message: public service not private profit. Members went out to capture the public's imagination and support. They won both.

THE GOVERNMENT announced its intention to privatise BT on 19 July 1982. Within a month, the BTUC Campaign Against Privatisation (CAP) had been started. It was formally launched at the TUC Congress on 9 September 1982.

The Committee organising the campaign worked out a very specific strategy. It was to be three-prolonged; publicity, political activity and industrial action where appropriate.

Crucially it was quickly accepted that it was no good simply talking to friends in the Labour and Trade Union movement. Nor were the telecom unions likely to get much response from direct approaches to the Government. We had to harness the support of all interested groups to whom the Government would listen.

Outset

At the same time it was acknowledged from the outset that for this to be done most effectively the main thrust of the Campaign had to be out at local level through area BTUCs setting up local CAP committees. The contribution made by these committees proved one of the most crucial and impressive features of the campaign.

The objective was to bring, through publicity and lobbying, massive pressure to bear on the Government as the Bill went through Parliament and, if possible, to defeat the Bill outright. All MPs, including Conservative MPs, are influenced by what their constituents are saying to them.

There was another vital reason why the

months: support



All over the country membership seminars were held, like this one in the North West.

campaign had to be effective. Behind the Government's plans, was a powerful, well organised and well financed group of Right Wing Conservatives who were prepared to use every opportunity to weaken BT. The CAP Committee recognised that this attack had to be blocked.

So the CAP Committees, national and local, set about convincing a huge array of voluntary organisations, rural groups, consumer groups, pensioners' organisations, charities representing the disabled, tele-

com equipment manufacturers, financiers, local authorities and civil liberties groups that the Telecommunications Bill would be harmful to their interests.

The slogans, tailored to appeal to the public, were 'Hands off Telephones' and 'Public Service not Private Profit'.

The literature was colourful; the case against privatisation always carefully argued.

The campaign was carefully planned and co-ordinated. Union views, in detail



On the streets across the country, not for one day but for months.



Jeannie Drake who leads the Post and Telecoms Group of the CPSA.

and in summary, were sent to all MPs and a wide range of interested pressure groups.

A variety of publicity material was prepared. Union activists got detailed briefings. The Hotline Newspaper sketched out the campaign framework to the members. Local campaigns began to form. The time came to grab the headlines.

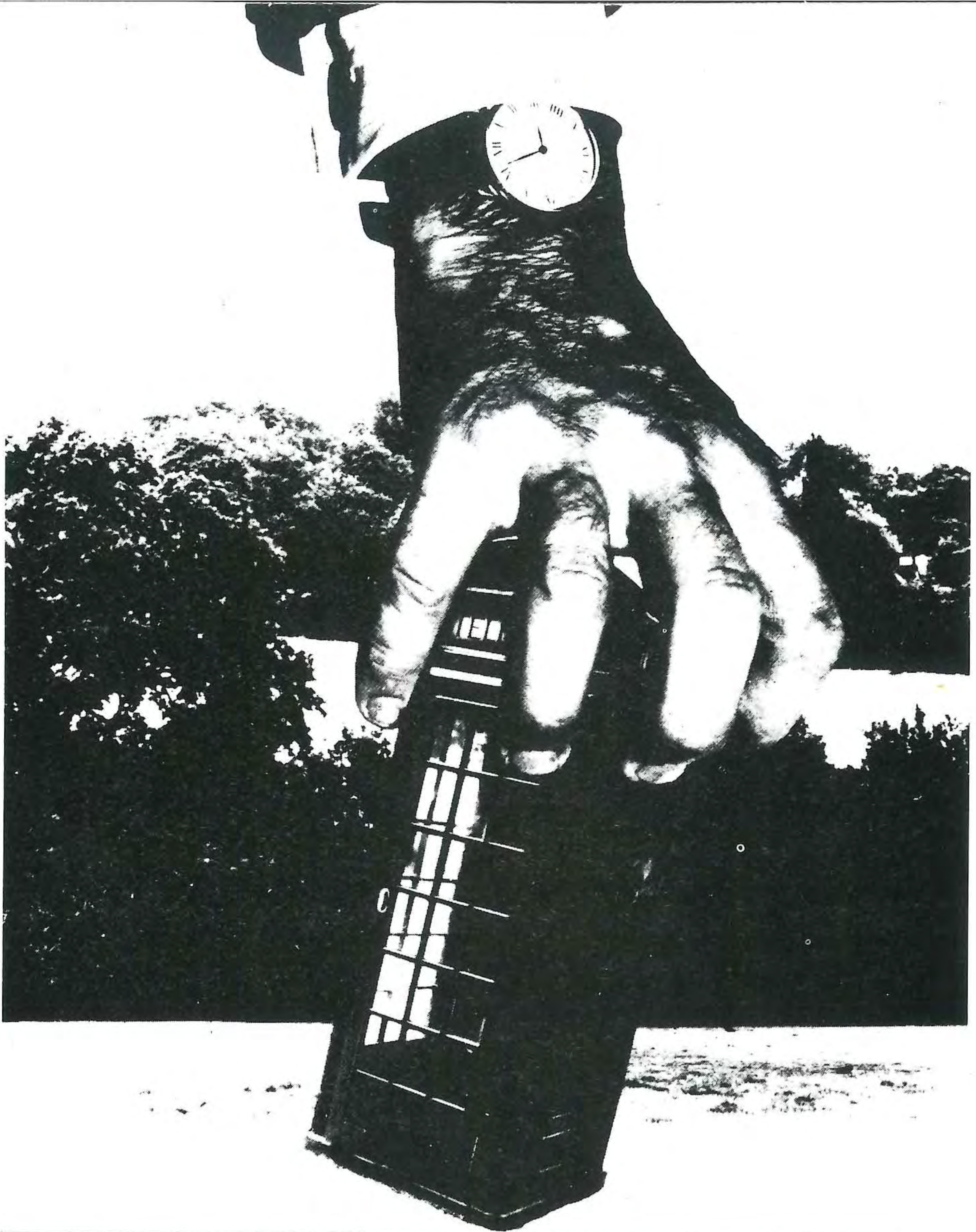
The first stage of the campaign culminated with the Day of Action on October 20, when there were marches and rallies, leafletting and lobbying, all over the country, drew media attention to the issues. The great success of that day surprised and worried the Government.

The fact that the Campaign started immediately and was so effective so early was vital because the Government was still drafting the Bill. It had not yet been published. We know that because of the mounting tide of criticism unleashed by the Campaign, the Government was forced to redraft the Bill several times before it was

published on 19 November 1982.

So the campaign was already paying off before the Bill was even debated in Parliament. It had laid the foundations of the battle to defeat the Bill in Parliament.

This was reinforced by the CAP Committee deciding to augment their efforts so far by bringing in a team of professional journalists, PR and advertising specialists working with and committed to the trade union movement. One of the lessons of the campaign was that to be effective in communicating with the public, professional expertise is essential.



HANDS OFF TELEPHONES!

This dramatic advertisement was the forerunner of a whole ad campaign.

Then the moves into



THE Parliamentary Campaign against the Bill had three objectives. To defeat the Bill. To alter it as much as possible. To delay the Bill so that it would fall if a General Election was called.

Although the Bill was not ultimately defeated, the campaign was very successful in the other two objectives.

In the House of Commons, the opposition to the Bill was led by the Labour Party. The Committee Stage of the Bill was fought Clause by Clause and line by line during the day and often throughout the night. A continuous series of Labour Amendments ruthlessly exposed the Government's plans as inept and badly thought out.

The POEU and UCW sponsored MPs – John Golding, Roger Stott and John McWilliam of the POEU; Charles Morris and Harry Ewing of the UCW – played a vital role in the Campaign, underlining the value to the unions of these political links.

The Government's majority within the Committee before the election was shown to be wafer thin as Tory MPs pressurised by worried constituents sided with Labour, the Alliance and Welsh Nationalists to carry key Amendments.

Throughout this period, the POEU and the UCW, who are affiliated to the Labour Party, continuously provided detailed briefing material, directly linked with the publicity campaign on the Bill. Shadow Ministers said afterwards that it was the most thorough and detailed briefing ser-

campaign Parliament



vice they had seen from the Trade Union movement. BTUC used it to build up opposition, locally and nationally, from all parties.

This is where the publicity and political sides of the campaign came together. The immense pressure from public opinion generated by the campaign was skilfully used by Labour MPs to force a series of important concessions from a hostile Government. These MPs also provided

Two mammoth petitions against privatisation, one from employees and one from the public, were handed into Parliament by the BTUC. Sponsored MPs John Golding and Charles Morris received the petitions, which were transported to Parliament in a portable telephone kiosk, used in the publicity drive.



On 21 March 1983, seven days before the Telecommunications Bill left the House of Commons, the BTUC unions held demonstrations outside British Telecom buildings all over the country. The unions called on BT's senior management to declare themselves against the Bill. Outside BT's headquarters in Gresham Street, London, 2000 BT workers gathered in their lunch hour to listen to union General Secretaries demanding that Sir George Jefferson, BT's Chairman, speak out. Afterwards, the General Secretaries

vital feedback in the success of the campaign and key advice on new initiatives.

Direct political involvement through sponsored MPs proved invaluable in protecting the industrial and occupational interests of Union memberships when legislation took BTUC into an unavoidably 'political' fight.

The way the Government was rushing the Bill forward was revealed when the Government repeatedly failed to produce BT's all important Licence. This is the document which shows precisely the conditions under which BT plc would operate. Without the Licence, debate on the Bill was largely meaningless.

Every MP wanted to see the Licence,

but despite promises, the Government would not, or could not, reveal its contents. A version was finally produced on 25 January 1983, Labour, other Opposition and some Tory MPs reacted angrily. As the Union Campaign had said, the protection to be given to many vital services was extremely uncertain. The Government was both confused and confusing.

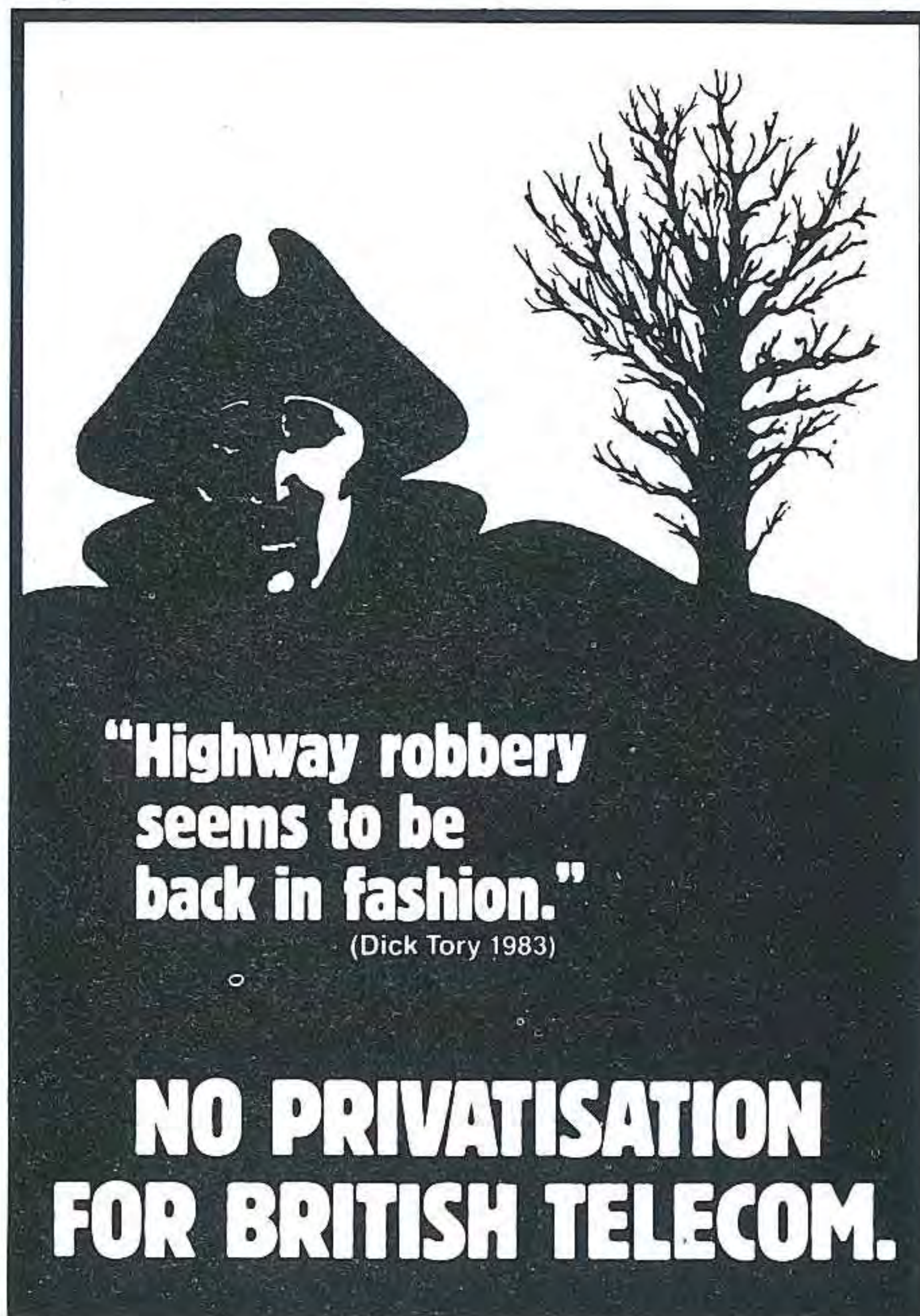
So it tried once again to answer its critics on 7 February 1983 when it issued a secret Government study called the Littlechild Report. This purported to show protection for the customer on key questions such as how far prices would be increased. Yet more confusion and anger resulted.

This is the background to John Golding,

a POEU sponsored MP, making his historic 11¼ hour speech on 8 February 1983. It lasted all night. The speech gave the Labour Party's first detailed response to the important Littlechild Report which had only been produced the day before.

Debate in the Commons was guillotined by the Government. It eventually was carried by the Government on 29 March 1982.

Important concessions were made on key definitions, social service obligations, long-term financial stability, research and development, exports, help for disabled,



enforcement orders. Above all, the Government had to concede that it would completely redraft the key Clause 3 which deals in particular with uneconomic but socially desirable services. The new draft gave a whole range of new safeguards for the telecommunications service.

This first crucial Commons debate on the Bill badly shook Government confidence in its own Bill. As a result of the BTUC campaign, linked with intense Parliamentary Opposition, the Conservative Government knew they were not going to have an easy political victory. They were now, and were to remain, on the defensive.

**'Direct political
involvement
through sponsored
MPs proved
invaluable in
protecting the
interests of union
memberships.'**

Target Area and lobbying

WE'RE ON TARGET

Something special is happening in your area. Full details inside.

The Target Areas where things will be happening during April and May.



PLANNING for the second phase of the campaign started at the beginning of the year. By the time the Bill left the Commons, on 29 March 1983, planning for the Target Area campaign was well under way.

This campaign, which commenced on 7 April, was concentrated on 20 carefully selected Target Areas in the UK. And it featured just four issues: fewer kiosks, services for the blind and disabled, higher telephone charges for householders and either rural services (in rural areas) or jobs (in areas where there are factories producing telecom equipment).

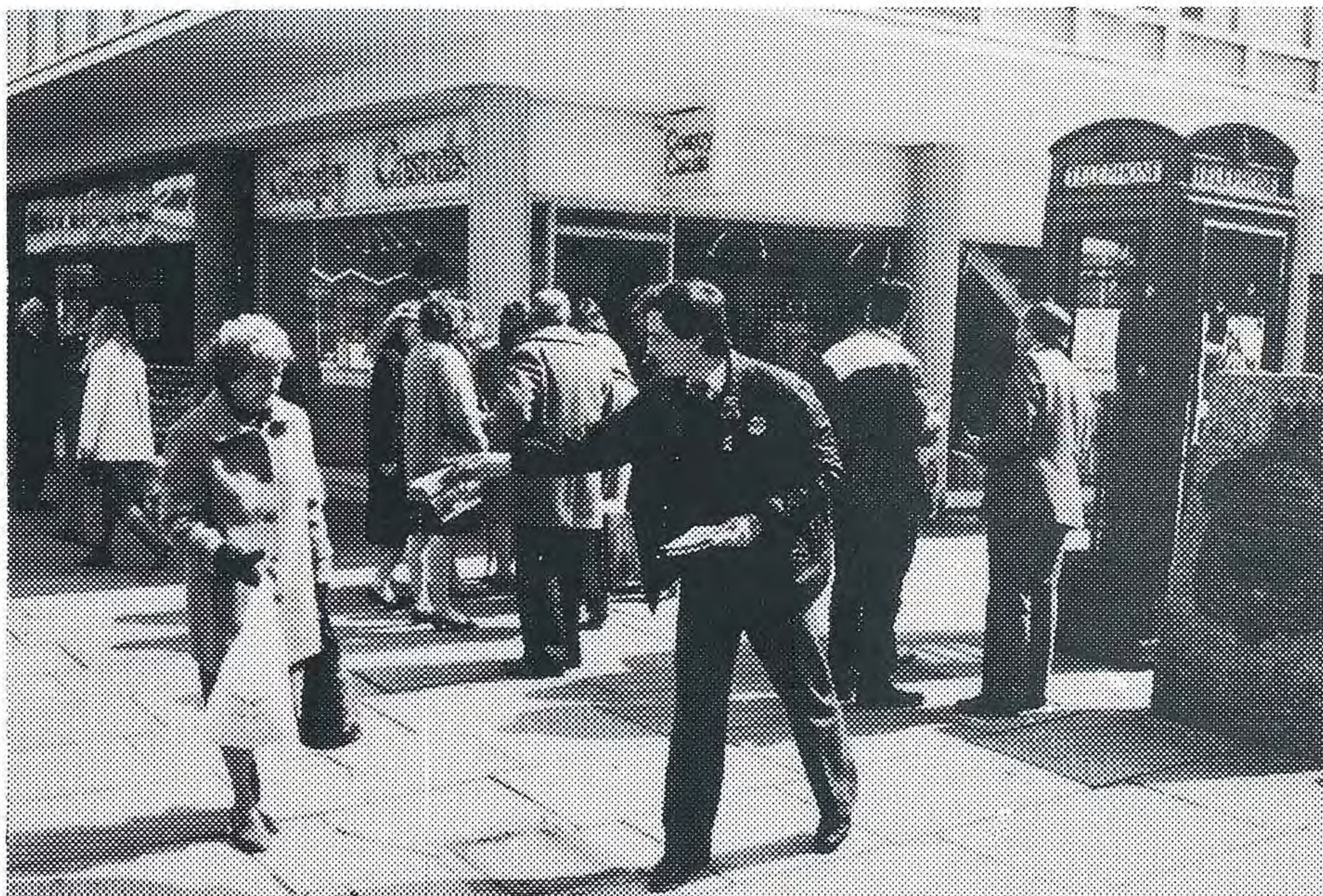
The first eight months of the anti-privatisation campaign, it was felt, had unleashed upon the public a wealth of information about how the sell-off would hurt them. What was needed now was to concentrate the public's mind on a *limited number* of issues which had shown to be of most concern to the public.

Highlights

The issues would be highlighted in news stories (released not only within the 20 areas but also nationally so there would be a nationwide spin-off), regional press advertising and mass leafletting. A fortnight was to be devoted to each of the four issues.

The objectives were first to increase public awareness on these issues in large areas of the UK (and thus help to bring about a change in public opinion). Secondly, to get lobby groups and the people in the selected areas to put pressure on the Lords to secure further amendments to the

campaign the Lords



The portable telephone kiosk used in the film 'Local Hero' was taken across the UK.

Telecommunications Bill (just one amendment would send the legislation back to the Commons where the Government could run out of Parliamentary time), thirdly to begin to make the privatisation of BT an election issue in the 20 areas.

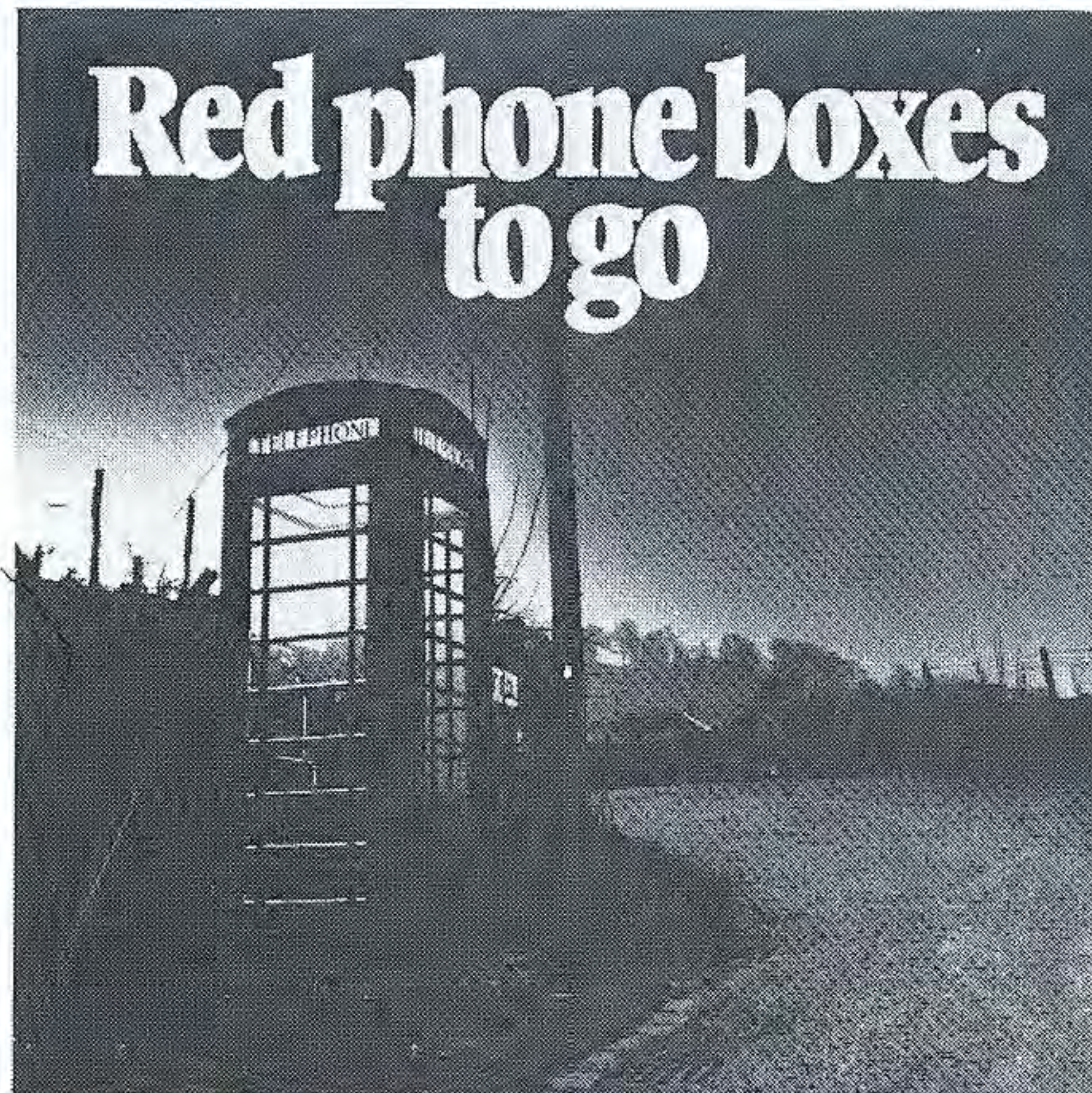
The 20 Target Areas were selected, therefore, not only because they were rural in nature or had telecom equipment factories, but because they contained a number of marginal constituencies where

it was vital the Tory candidate was defeated.

The media coverage was enormous, the advertisements (reaching eight million homes) were powerful, and six million leaflets were distributed either in town centres or door-to-door.

To help gain extra television coverage, the portable phone kiosk used in the film Local Hero was hired from the film studios and taken round Britain and used in

Advertising in the regional press covering the 20 Target Areas highlighted the loss of kiosks, higher phone bills, the special needs of the day and disabled – all pictured on these pages – as well as the threat to jobs and the threat to rural services.



Do you remember the plan to paint every phone box yellow? If that struck you as pointless, how about the latest idea – scrapping thousands of them entirely?

That could be the result of the Bill that's going through Parliament now, to turn British Telecom into a private company.

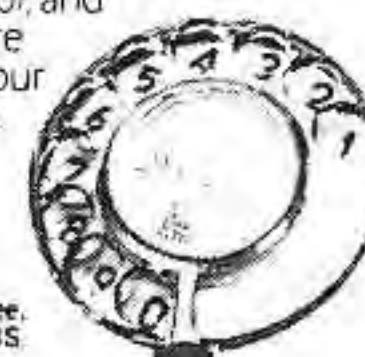
A select band of City investors, such as banks and insurance companies, will take most of the shares. Their object – to make profits. As phone boxes lose £77 million a year, how many will a private company keep going?

Next time you need a call box in an emergency, it may not be there any more. Selling off British Telecom, one of Britain's most profitable enterprises, will

have other effects too. No guarantees can be given about the future of public services under private ownership. It could mean:

- Higher charges for household and small business users
- Reduced services to rural communities
- Fewer aids for the disabled
- Job losses from equipment contracts going abroad

What can you do? Phone the House of Commons (01 219 3000) and tell your MP that you're against the selling of your telephone system. Pop into a phone box now (while it's still there!)



HANDS OFF TELEPHONES! **BTUC** British Telecommunications Unions Committee, 14-15 Bridgewater Square, London EC2Y 8BS

'stunts' in each of the TV regions.

Local BTUCs played their part with a variety of imaginative ventures.

While the Target Area campaign was going on the POEU and UCW continued to advise and provide briefing material for Labour Peers. However, because of the different political composition of the House of Lords, the lobbying campaign changed emphasis so that it could appeal to a broader political base. So through the BTUC, the unions began talking to Lords of all Parties explaining why it was essential that the Bill should be changed in a number of respects. Particular attention was paid to the Liberal, SDP and Crossbench (independent) Peers.

A committee of all interested groups wanting change in the Bill was convened by the BTUC, and representatives of a wide range of rural, disabled and other organisations gathered in the House to plan how to best use their combined leverage.

By the time the Bill was to be placed before the Peers, on 18 April 1983, all was set. The BTUC and allied pressure groups agreed on the amendments they were all

going for. Local BTUCs all over the country encouraged local Peers to act.

On 19 May a half-page advert (paid for by the BTUC) appeared in the Times. In it, Britain's blind organisations appealed to the Lords to support three amendments which had been tabled to the Bill.

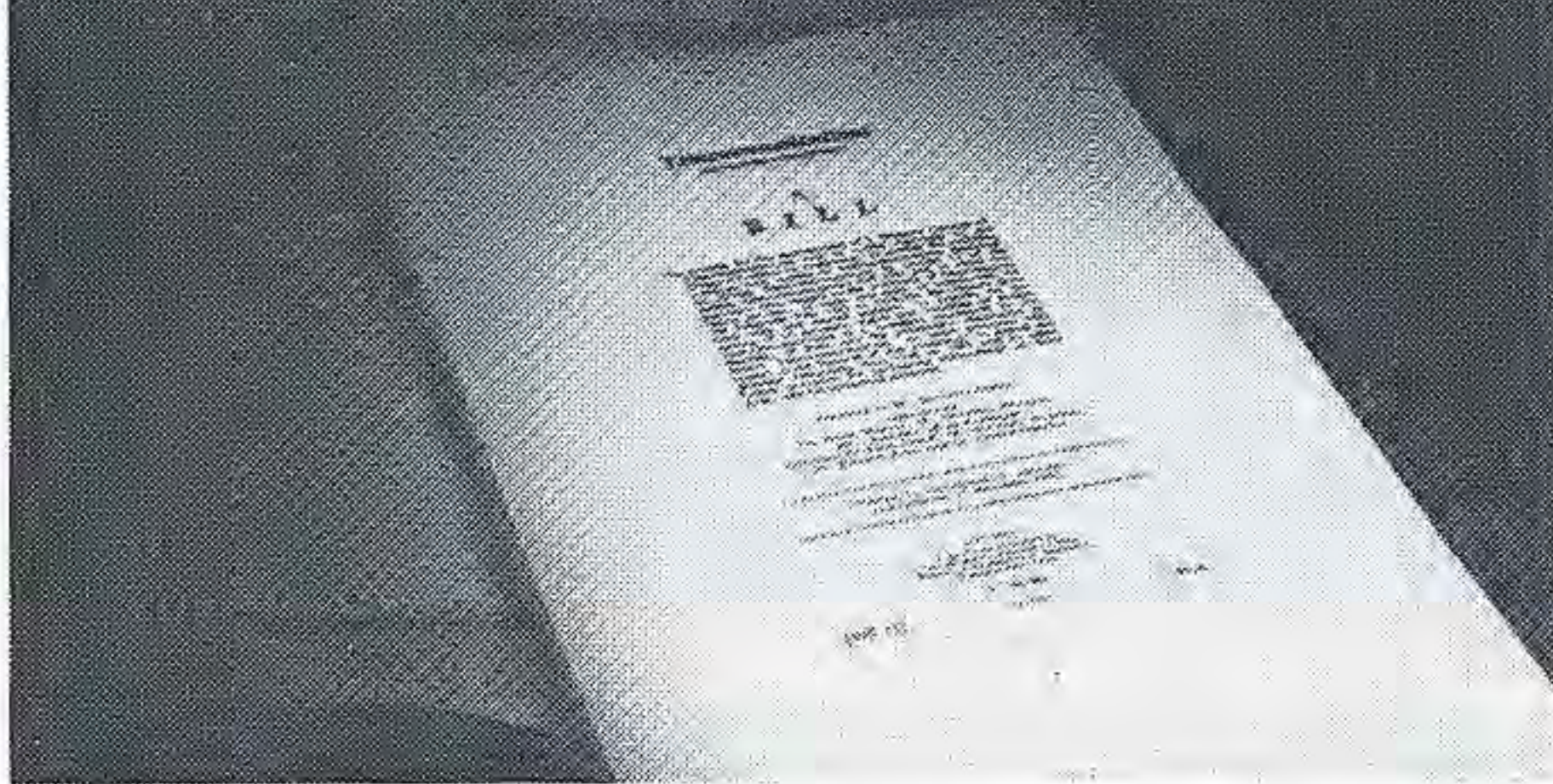
That morning there were hurried discussions in the Department of Industry. (The blind organisations were later called in and offered all the guarantees they cared to ask for!) A few hours later, the Prime Minister announced that she was calling a General Election to be held on June 9.

The Telecommunications Bill fell, and further Lords initiatives, and the final two weeks of the Target Area Campaign, were abandoned.

By delaying and undermining Government confidence in the Bill in the Commons, the Opposition had ensured its downfall. A second of the three objectives of the political campaign had been achieved.

The Bill was dead, and with the General Election looming, the Telecom workers had the chance of seeing it killed once and for all.

Who will be paying for this telephone Bill?



Your future phone bills might soon be a lot higher than they need to be. At present household and small business users are heavily subsidised: £254 million last year from rentals alone. From the profits British Telecom makes on big business and international calls. But not for much longer.

There's a Bill going through Parliament to turn British Telecom into a private company, owned by the big City investors. They will demand profits in all areas, and the subsidy for households and small businesses — which has already been reduced — will go. That will hit you hard. The Government says vaguely that price increases will be controlled, but since the whole point of turning British Telecom private is to take it out of Government

control, how long can this predicament last? No guarantees can be given about the future of public services under private ownership. It could mean:

- Fewer public phone boxes
- Reduced services to rural communities
- Fewer aids for the disabled
- Job losses from equipment contracts going abroad

What can you do? Phone the House of Commons (01 219 3000), and tell your M.P. that you're against the selling of your telephone system. Do it now, while you can still afford the call.



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Deaf to the needs of the blind



Disabled people rely on their telephone as a lifeline. British Telecom has spent millions of pounds to provide specially designed equipment for the blind and deaf and the handicapped.

But now the Telecommunications Bill is going through Parliament. It will change British Telecom into a private company, in which a select band of City institutions will invest to make profits.

So, loss-making services — like aids and research for the disabled — may be priced out of people's reach. One person in every ten is handicapped or disabled in some way, and many of them will be lost without a suitable telephone.

Selling off British Telecom, one of Britain's most profitable enterprises, will

have other effects too. No guarantees can be given about the future of public services under private ownership. It could mean:

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What can you do to stop the disabled being hurt? Phone the House of Commons (01 219 3000) and tell your M.P. that you're against the selling of your telephone system.



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One of the 20 Target Areas was Northern Ireland where BT workers worked hard to get the messages understood. Here some of them take part in the May Day march. The special effort in Northern Ireland paid handsome dividends.

Election: the Tories

**At least
they agree on
one thing.
(Well, almost)**

AGAINST PRIVATISATION OF BRITISH TELECOM	FOR PRIVATISATION OF BRITISH TELECOM
Labour Party. Liberal Party. SDP. Scottish Nationalists. Plaid Cymru. Democratic Unionist Party. SDLP. Ulster Popular Unionists. Communist Party.	Conservative Party. Monster Raving Loony Party.

Every political party except the Conservatives (and the Monster Raving Loony Party) agrees it would be wrong to sell off British Telecom, Britain's highly profitable telephone system.

Britain would lose the profits which British Telecom makes - money to re-invest in B.T., money for schools, hospitals, old age pensions.

The new owners would want to reduce uneconomic, but publicly necessary services, such as special telephone aids for the blind and disabled.

That's why every political party except the Conservatives (and the Monster Raving Loony Party) is opposed to privatisation. They know how much it could hurt you.

Say NO to privatisation.

British Telecommunications Unions Committee, 14-15 Bridgewater Square, London EC2Y 8BS

IT WAS ESSENTIAL that a Government opposed to the sell-off of BT was returned, and the BTUC acted with renewed vigour to do what they could to help bring this about.

The emphasis was on advertising which was quickly and easily organised.

An advertising campaign began in the regional press covering the 20 Target Areas, followed by advertisements in the national press during the run-up to the General Election.

The travelling kiosk was sent out once again to key constituencies where candidates would be invited to come and be filmed and state their position on privatisation. And there was to be a new series of leaflets for members, reminding them and their families where their interests lay.

Local issues

The regional press advertisements were geared to local issues. For instance, in Coventry, Liverpool and Belfast the threat to major telecom equipment factories was stressed, while in Birmingham the possibility of a privatised BT buying its vans from abroad rather than from BL was highlighted.

The national press campaign featured ads which hammered home the fact that only the Tory Party and the Monster Raving Loony Party supported the sale of BT.

In Northern Ireland, the local BTUC managed to win the support of almost all political groups, including the Democratic and Ulster Popular Unionists. This widespread support was to be doubly important

everyone but and Loonies

Don't hurt us tomorrow.



An appeal by Michael Barrett, General Secretary of the National League of the Blind & Disabled.

There are 130,000 blind people in the U.K. Our biggest single source of employment is the office switchboard.

Fortunately, all switchboards supplied by British Telecom are made by British manufacturers, and are easily adaptable for the blind.

But this may soon change. The Conservatives have said that, if they win power, they will reintroduce the Telecommunications Bill, which would sell off British Telecom to City investors.

The new owners would want the telephone system run for private profit, not for public service. The current 'Buy British' policy is likely to be abandoned - British Telecom has already

said that, after privatisation, it would buy from anywhere in the world at the right price.

But if switchboards are bought from the Far East and other cheap labour markets, the equipment is unlikely to be adaptable for the blind. The extra work involved is expensive - and foreign suppliers, competing with each other, will ruthlessly cut costs.

Perhaps you hadn't thought that the privatisation of British Telecom was a key issue with you - but with us, it's crucial.

It could hurt us terribly. Please remember that.

AGAINST PRIVATISATION OF BRITISH TELECOM	FOR PRIVATISATION OF BRITISH TELECOM
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Say NO to privatisation.

The National League of the Blind & Disabled, in association with the British Telecommunications Unions Committee
14, 15 Bridgewater Square, London EC2Y 8BS

Pure gold telephones for sale



British Telecom is one of the biggest and most profitable organisations in this country. A pure gold asset for Britain.

But the Conservatives have said that, if they win power they will reintroduce the Telecommunications Bill, which will sell off British Telecom to City investors.

That would be disastrous. For a start, Britain would lose the benefit of the profits which British Telecom makes - money to re-invest in schools, hospitals, old age pensions. Last year these profits were £600 million. If British Telecom had been

owned by private shareholders, it's been estimated that they would have taken £350 million of that total. Secondly, a privatised British Telecom would lead to the new owners wanting to reduce un-economic, but publicly necessary services, such as special telephone aids for the blind and disabled, services to rural communities, and public telephone boxes.

That's why every political party, except the Conservatives (and the Monster Raving Loony Party), is opposed to privatisation. They know how much it could hurt you.

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if there was a 'hung' Parliament as many predicted there could be.

But it was not to be. While the sell-off of BT was raised as an election issue in many areas - particularly those where hundreds of thousands of jobs were under threat and a local press campaign achieved extensive press, radio and TV

coverage - the post-Falklands mood of the country dominated, and Mrs Thatcher's Conservative Government was returned with a massive 144 seat majority.

The sell-off of BT, the Government warned, would be the first issue of business in the new Parliament. The new Government was indeed to act quickly - and ruthlessly.



A new new Bill,



The specialist publications for key audiences.

THE GOVERNMENT'S huge majority meant that there was no chance of persuading enough Tories to rebel against their Party. While the new Telecommunications Bill was a substantially re-written version (taking into account much of what the unions and opposition parties had been saying) major changes were still required.

One major problem was that the election result, and Government majority, encour-

aged those who wanted to go further than the Bill towards "free for all" competition and a split-up BT. Two battles had to be fought.

The strategy was to encourage friends of the Conservatives (the City, big business) to tackle the Government about their own fears, to achieve rewording of the Bill during the Commons committee stage, and then to go for more radical changes in the House of Lords, while at the same time

Government, and a 'hit list'

blocking those who wanted to make the Bill worse.

The objectives: to amend the Bill, protect services, and thereby save jobs. And to keep BT as one unit.

A 'hit list' of 800 opinion formers and decision-makers in industry, the City, the Civil Service and the media was drawn up.

This was used to give instant responses to Government statements and to disseminate new information vital to any sensible discussion of the Bill.

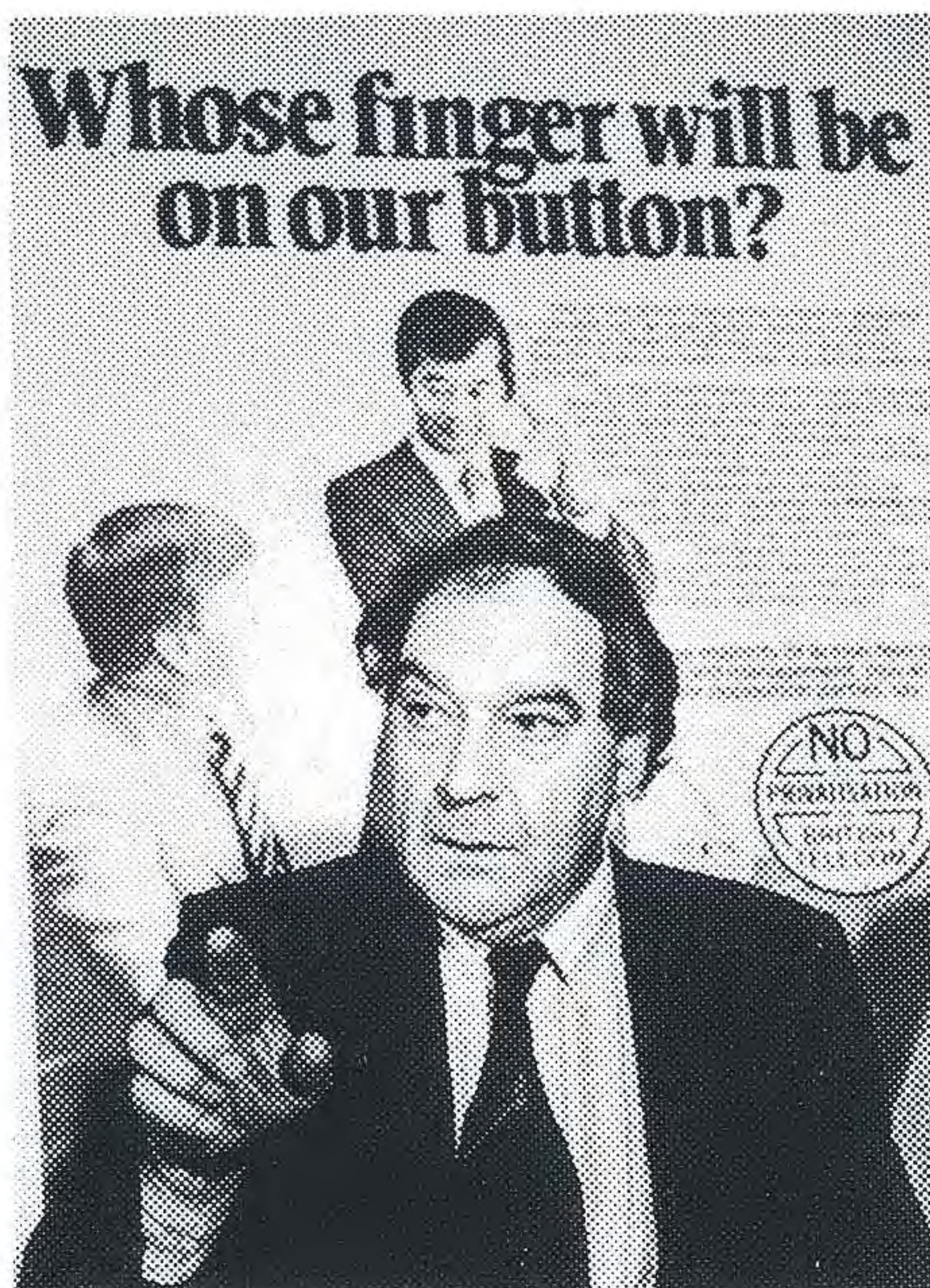
A colourful, punchy booklet encapsulating BTUC's case ('British Telecom: How selling it off will harm Britain') together with a leaflet summarising the nine reasons why the sell-off should not go ahead were produced for mass distribution.

Relented

For City and business leaders, there were briefings, a publication: 'How selling of BT will harm British Business and the Economy' (distributed at the CBI conference and elsewhere), and advertisements in magazines like Management Today and the Institute of Directors' journal, who refused to accept an ad at first but relented after BTUC pointed out what a good national press story that would be.

The STE, representing 20,000 BT managers, produced its own weighty, detailed document on the pitfalls of privatisation.

Big business became increasingly nervous about the effects of the Government's proposals, and Lord Weinstock



The defence threat to Britain of foreigners buying heavily into British Telecom and having boardroom access to State secrets was raised at a press conference chaired by Bryan Stanley, General Secretary to the POEU and Chairman of BTUC.

chairman of GCE, described it as a 'bad Bill'.

Further specialists leaflets were produced for target audiences.

To rural communities the message was 'don't be discriminated against on price'. (In the event, they weren't. A BTUC-sponsored amendment on this was successful.)

To consumers: 'with POUNC going, you'll be unprotected, so complain!' (They did – another BTUC-sponsored amendment in the Lords caused the Government to bring in advisory councils).

To trade unionists: 'British telecom manufacturers need some protection'. (They got it, again thanks to union pressure).

To the blind and the disabled: 'don't let your services go, campaign for free Directory Enquiries'. (They did – a BTUC-sponsored amendment saw the Government concede).

What the BTUC was doing was to

strengthen alliances made earlier, and help groups pressure and lobby.

For advertising and press stories, the BTUC looked for fresh issues and found them in the questions of defence (the selling of BT shares abroad was a security risk) and the actual flotation of the shares (a mammoth task as the Government was looking for £4,000 million of investment – double the amount of all the money invested by the City in a single year).

Both stories caused a stir.

By this time, opinion was flowing in the unions' favour. The vast majority of BT's own staff management had decided (according to an opinion poll commissioned by British Telecom itself), that privatisation was bad news.

The Government was getting increasingly concerned and put pressure on BT's board to speak up for the sell-off. The Government also suffered from another reshuffle. With Tebbit following on from

STOP THE PIRATES!



Continuing the broad-based campaign, the BT unions took the long-term privatisation fight to both the Labour Party and TUC conferences. To give new interest to the campaign after the Election the slogan of 'piratisation' was launched. These POEU 'pirates' grabbed media attention, and the BTUC put on exhibitions while union leaders persuaded the TUC to launch an all-union anti-privatisation campaign to continue the campaign beyond the Bill to reverse Government policies and oppose 'privatisation'.

Joseph, Jenkin and Parkinson as the Bill's godfather.

But the board was itself feeling nervous about where the new Government legislation was taking it.

The Government was forced to put out its own literature stating its case, and time after time Government spokesmen pointed to the United States: if we had a telephone system like theirs, they cried, Britain would be better off.

That was plainly untrue, and in a devastating review of the scene in the States, (a detailed and scholarly study written by American experts was commissioned by the BTUC), the Government's case was demolished.

That review, 'The American Experience', was later to be seen on Conservative benches in the House of Lords during debates. Indeed that publication was crucial in showing why the American experiment of breaking up a successful telephone monopoly has been disastrous for ordinary telephone subscribers, and in defeating right wing moves to break up BT.

Another BTUC publication that harmed the Government's position was 'Licence to Neglect?', a critical examination of the Government's long-awaited draft Licence under which a privatised BT would operate.

Renewed

The renewed battle to defeat the new Bill in Parliament began in the Commons on 18 July 1983 with the Government declaring from the outset that it would steamroller it through regardless of any other consideration. The Labour opposition, despite being depleted in numbers, again resisted the Bill line by line throughout the Committee Stage. This again meant the Committee had to have all night sittings.

The Opposition was able to use the renewed BTUC campaign by pointing out the increasing doubts being expressed about the Bill from all quarters. The POEU and UCW sponsored MPs showed yet again the weakness of the Government's case, and sustained local lobbying showed that Labour MPs were not alone in worrying.

But the Government drove the Bill relentlessly on, and by the Christmas

If this little piggy went to market, all the other little piggies would have none.



The average total cash available each year on the equity market is £1½ billion. If British Telecom is floated as a private company in 1984, it will probably sell at £4 billion. Where will the money come from? Other companies seeking equity will be 'squeezed out', and forced to borrow more expensively elsewhere. The money supply – the key to Government economic policy – will increase substantially, according to leading City stockbrokers. There will be other dramatic effects too. City analysts expect interest rates to soar, and there will be upward pressure on Sterling, worsening our trade position. The money supply will be rising, interest rates rising, the value of the pound rising – even inflation rising – but the only thing that should be rising is opposition to the Telecommunications Bill. And it is.

A majority of the British public, the staff and management of British Telecom, and all the major opposition parties, say:

The problems of the flotation of BT were raised in ads.

recess it had left the Commons and was ready for the Lords to debate when Parliament reassembled in January 1984.

The year 1983 ended in smouldering controversy. British Telecom had been running a series of TV commercials telling the world how its services were good, and were here to stay. That was debatable, to say the least. The unions' case was that privatisation put many of these services at risk.

The BTUC sought to reply with its own commercials. They were scripted very carefully – factual, and only as 'political' as the BT ads.

But the IBA turned down the script. The General Secretaries of the BT unions lodged a protest. It was a further example of media bias.

But an official complaint by BTUC's own advertising agency about the BT newspaper advertisements fared better as the Advertising Standards Authority ruled they were political.

Victories in services and

WHEN the Bill moved to the House of Lords for the second time, the BTUC was presented with an excellent opportunity of achieving some radical changes to the Bill.

Much of the activity over the previous three months had been directed towards the Lords battle.

All the Lords had been lobbied both nationally and locally. They knew the arguments, but would they support the cause?

The BTUC compiled amendments to the Bill that the unions would like to see carried. Twenty-seven amendments were drafted.

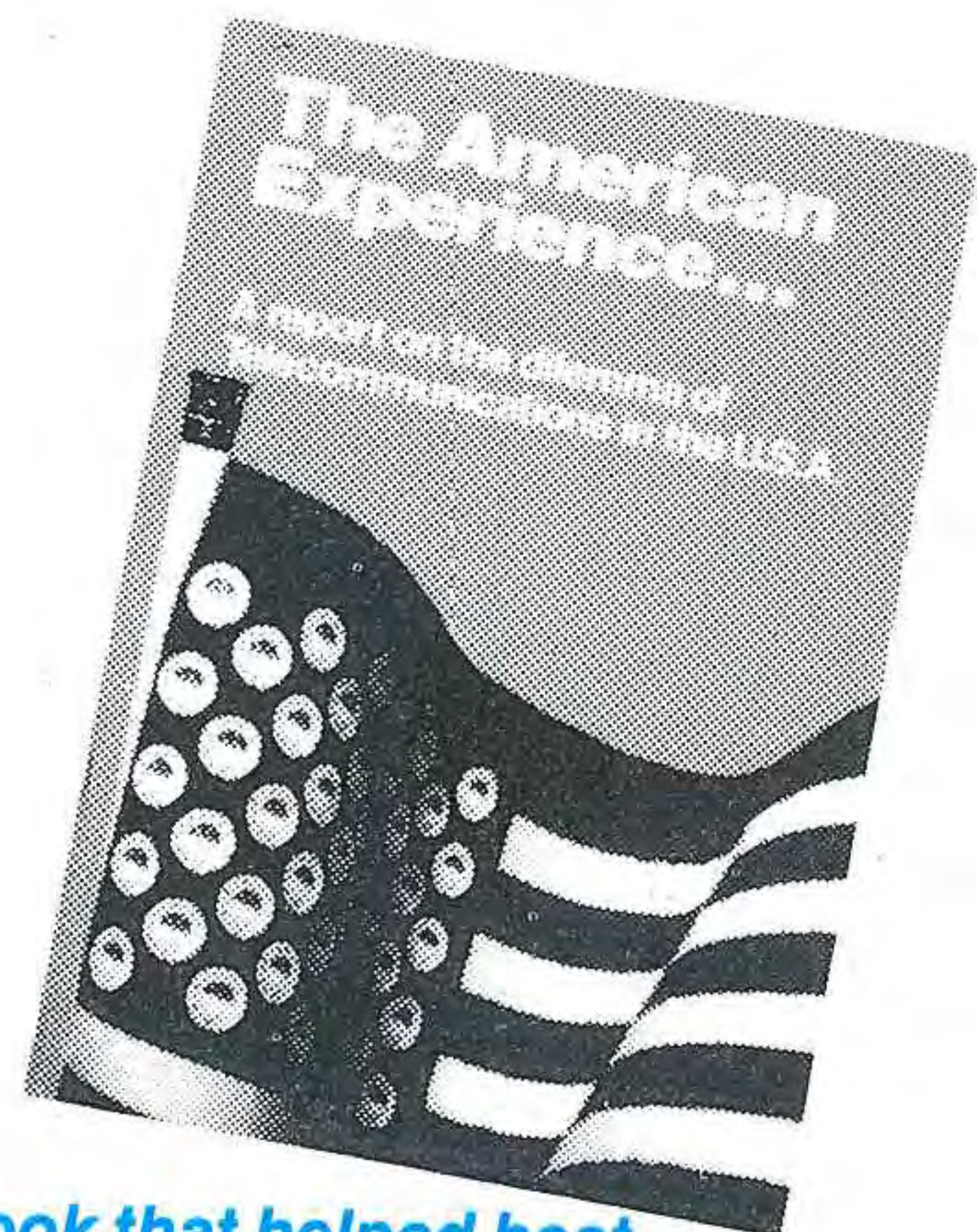
A booklet listing the amendments and explaining why they were necessary was sent to every member of the House of Lords.

Farmers

Discussions were held with the Labour, Liberal and SDP Peers, with individual Tory Lords and with a number of important independent 'Crossbenchers'.

On February 7, two days before the first committee stage debates, the BTUC held a meeting in the House, chaired by the Countess of Mar (independent), herself a former BT employee.

The most powerful lobby in the Lords is the National Farmers Union and various landowners associations. Throughout January 1984, therefore, the BTUC homed in on this key group –



The book that helped beat the Tory right wing.

with news stories, syndicated features in the farming press, syndicated radio interviews, and advertisements in the farming journals.

The strategy worked – the 'rural discrimination' amendment was carried.

A new series of advertisements appeared in The Times, backing the Lords campaign, and ads in the popular press underlined the unions' commitment to the struggle.

As the Lords debates went on it became clear that the Telecommunications Bill had hardly a friend in the House. The Government, speaker after speaker said, was simply selling BT to raise cash which it needed to fund the dole queues. But the Government was

the Lords: jobs saved



The Countess of Mar, who hosted a Peers briefing meeting, with Alan Tuffin, General Secretary of the UCW.

able to pull in Peers from the shires for crucial divisions, some of which they won by only four or five votes.

But the continuous and relentless parliamentary pressure on the Government started and maintained in the House of Commons, had to prove successful in the Lords. There were some decisive victories for the unions and the Peers ranged alongside them. On some issues the Government suffered straight defeats. On others, Ministers, sensing the mood of the House, backed off and compromised.

There were victories on uneconomic services, services for the blind and disabled, Directory Enquiries, the defence of UK manufacturers, rural

prices, bringing BT's licence before Parliament, advisory councils for consumers and telephone tapping. And attempts to break up BT were thwarted.

There was one other victory: the right to strike had long been officially denied BT workers. To strike was, according to the Statute Book, a criminal and civil offence. Faced with union pressure which attracted wide support the Government agreed it should no longer be a criminal offence and the law was changed.

Our action in the Lords achieved a great deal. But none of it would have been possible had it not been for the magnificent support we received from members in branches and areas all over the country.

Local action and 'bloody



This dramatic float produced by Martlesham was at the Ipswich and District fair. Ipswich MP Ken Weetch is pictured here with Mick Corston, local BTUC secretary.

LOCAL BTUC campaign committees took various forms, but were sustained to the very last minute through the long months from July 1982 to Easter 1984.

Millions of leaflets, badges, beer mats, car stickers, balloons, T-shirts and carrier bags were distributed. And help came from all quarters: 'we leafletted at weekends, roping in the kids. They loved it,' one area declared.

There were meetings with MPs, Lords ('some of them didn't appear to have met a real live trade unionist before' one secretary reported), local councils and community groups. All these meetings took time and devotion.

All round the country, pressure on public opinion was kept up. The piles of press cuttings became a mountain. Listing every activity and every area and branch

imagination hard work'

involved would take an encyclopedia. The campaign's achievements are their success.

Many area committees ensured they spent time putting the case to local businessmen.

The POEU and UCW videos were shown at public meetings. Many areas took to the streets to petition shoppers and businessmen. 'We found it was a good idea to make it obvious who you are from a distance, otherwise people tend to avoid you thinking you are a religious crank or after their money,' one area commented.

There were rallies, processions, marathon walks, sponsored walks, and floats like that of a large hand crushing a kiosk, and even a sponsored parachute jump..

Public debates were held, and local advertising space paid for.

Very often, members were surprised at the response they got. 'In the heart of a Tory-held rural area, people actually voluntarily queued up to sign our petition,' one area reported.

Most local BTUCs established good relations with the media – 'we were happily surprised at the response of local papers' was a Canterbury comment echoed elsewhere. But the biggest breakthrough seems to be with local radio. 'Now they just ring us up for comments every time a BT story goes out,' Coventry area said.

Above all, most area committees agreed, it was 'bloody hard work'. But worth it.



London saw this unusual leaflet distribution – on roller skates.



The Bedford BTUC held a sponsored walk which brought media attention – and some sore feet.



This march through Chester saw 500 members taking to the streets. Private phones mean higher prices . . . our jobs, your phones. These were the messages Chester people were to hear over and over again.

Thank you



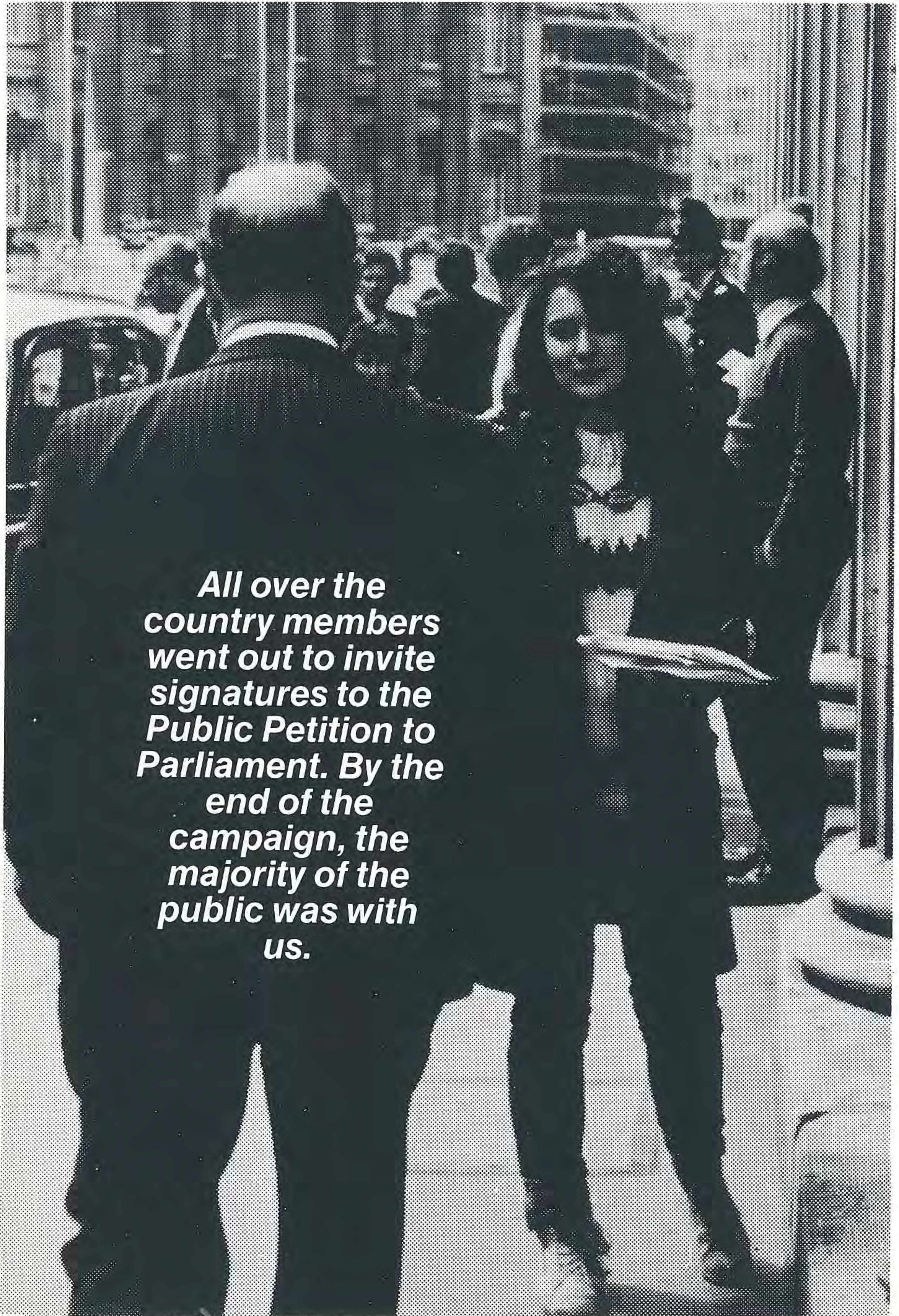
We would like to say thanks and pay tribute to all those union members all over the country who have dedicated their time, energies and resources to the campaign.

In reversing public opinion, substantially rewriting the Bill, protecting services and saving jobs we have given a lead to all other unions faced with the threat of privatisation.

What are the major lessons we have learned?

- A campaign can only work if there is action at both national and local level.
- Unions need political funds to campaign, lobby, sponsor MPs and fight for their industry and protect their members' interests.
- Unions can benefit enormously from professional press, PR and advertising skills.
- No union or group of unions can run a totally successful anti-privatisation campaign on its own. A TUC campaign involving the whole Movement is absolutely essential.
- A public campaign had to appeal in a way which is relevant to the public – how it will affect them, how they win or lose out.
- A campaign must understand and take into account public opinions and attitudes and be carefully planned to make positive use of those opinions. The public is, and continues to be, concerned about services and we must build on that concern to protect services from whatever attacks may come in future.

KIM MCKINLAY,
CHAIRMAN, CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE.



All over the country members went out to invite signatures to the Public Petition to Parliament. By the end of the campaign, the majority of the public was with us.

Another scare story from the British Telecom Unions?

We've been saying for many months that it's wrong to sell off British Telecom to private investors. Norman Tebbit doesn't agree with us. He says that we're putting out 'scare stories', and told us to 'look at the facts'.

But who can we rely on for those facts?

Luckily, his own Department of Trade & Industry has produced a report about the future of telecommunications in Britain. The public were not meant to see this document, but a national newspaper got hold of a copy of it.

Unlucky Mr Tebbit! His Department's secret report confirms many of the things that we've been worried about. We now know that the poor and disadvantaged – and particularly rural areas – will suffer if British Telecom is sold to City institutions, who are interested in profits above all else.

Mr Tebbit's own people admitted that we were right all along. No wonder it was a **secret** report – it's a real 'scare story'.

A majority of the British public, the staff and management of British Telecom, and all the major opposition parties, say



British Telecommunications Unions Committee,
14/15 Bridgewater Square,
London EC2Y 8BS.

**This was the best
received of a series of
advertisements that
appeared in the
popular Press.**

