

up to £4 billion a year, has emerged in an undercover investigation by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Its findings will be presented by ministers to the motor trade tomorrow - along with details of a proposed crackdown on the cowboys.

Consumer Minister Melanie Johnson will unveil plans for a Good Garage scheme, a Government-backed but voluntary code setting out minimum standards for the industry to put its house in order.

The scheme will be backed up by regular undercover checks to ensure garages in the scheme comply with these standards.

Around four in ten garages - from franchised service centres to backstreet one-man-bands - visited by DTI investigators are understood to have provided unacceptable servicing and repair work.

The undercover investigators found examples of mechanics billing for work that hadn't been done, failing to do work that had been paid for, charging for parts that had not been fitted and overcharging on labour costs.

Windscreen wiper blades were replaced unnecessarily and huge bills submitted for engine repairs.

A DTI insider said: 'One estimate put the cost to the consumer at around £170 million, although a random survey of garages suggested a far higher figure - up to £4 billion a year.'

Miss Johnson said: 'Car repairs need to be brought up to scratch. The buck stops with the motor trade. We spend £9 billion

to produce specific legislation to 'license' garages.

But they are prepared to bring such measures in if the voluntary scheme fails to show results.

They want the Good Garage scheme to be funded by the motor industry rather than the taxpayer.

But motor retailers fear the Government will impose a bureaucratic system - the costs of which will have to be passed on to motorists.

The UK has some 31,000 car servicing and repair businesses, of which three-quarters employ fewer than five staff. A third are one-man operations.

Representatives from major car manufacturers, independent garages and garage chains have been summoned to meet ministers and DTI officials tomorrow.

Their trade associations - which run their own codes of

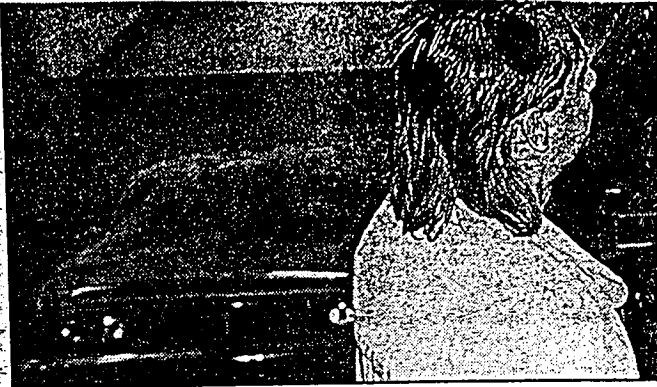
### 'It would mean higher prices'

practice - have not been invited.

These include the Retail Motor Industry Federation, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, and the Scottish Motor Industry Association. They had refused to submit their garages to a system of independent inspection.

Matthew Carrington, incoming chief executive of the Retail Motor Industry Federation, said his association already had in place measures to regulate its 9,000 members.

'We do not need an immensely



Sorting out a problem: But many of Britain's 31,000 gar-

expensive and bureaucratic self-regulating system,' he claimed.

'If the Government increases the costs to the industry, it will have to be passed on to the consumer. And that means higher prices.'

'This could deter people from getting their cars serviced.'

The DTI findings are largely in line with an investigation by the Office of Fair Trading, which found that 40 per cent of garages were providing a poor service on repair and servicing and forcing customers to pay extra to rectify mistakes.

The OFT estimates that up to 1.3 million customers a year complain about car servicing, repair, garages and petrol.

Complaints to trading standards departments have doubled since the first OFT report on the sector in 1985.

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## Every day could be your lucky day

THE national lottery is to be drawn every day in a bid to boost sales.

Camelot - the operator of the lottery, renamed Lotto - is also planning new ways to buy tickets, including at supermarket checkouts and at 'hole-in-the-wall' cash machines.

A Camelot spokesman said: 'We are putting together some plans for a daily game, but this is not imminent. We are looking at next year at the earliest.'

Church leaders, already worried that the lottery has increased gambling, are expected to protest at a Sunday Lotto draw.

For daily lottery draws to be a success, Camelot needs to get the BBC to agree to broadcast them. It currently screens the Wednesday and Saturday draws.

Camelot has been working hard to reinvigorate interest in the lottery, launched in November 1994.

In August ticket sales fell to their lowest ever level.

During one week last month just £39 million was spent on tickets, compared with weekly sales averaging £120 million three years ago.

## Shipman case expert heads hospital probe

AN expert who worked on the case of mass murderer Harold Shipman is to head an inquiry into the deaths of 13 patients at a hospital.

There are fears that some who died at Gosport Royal Memorial Hospital in Hampshire between 1997 and 2000 may have been killed by a drug overdose.

Files on several of the cases are being sent to the Crown Prosecution Service although there is no suggestion that any of the patients was harmed deliberately.

The investigation began after families raised concerns that their relatives may have been given overdoses of drugs including diamorphine.

Professor Richard Baker of Leicester University has been commissioned to study the deaths. He analysed death rates at GP Harold Shipman's practice in Hyde, Greater Manchester.

Shipman is serving life for murdering 15 patients but has been blamed for killing 200 more.

## Chips eating away at the fresh potato

SALES of processed potatoes are overtaking those of the fresh vegetable, according to the British Potato Council.

Ten years ago almost 80 per cent of sales were fresh through greengrocers or supermarkets.

Now, for the first time, crisps, chips, frozen and tinned potatoes and other forms have drawn level, with the fresh variety declining at two to three per cent a year.

Some 30 per cent of processed potatoes are eaten as crisps, ten per cent dehydrated or tinned, and the rest as chips, frozen or in other products like waffles.

The news has increased concern over the UK's unhealthy diet. Chips, crisps and processed food are often criticised for adding to the growing problem of obesity.

Rob Burrow, marketing information manager at the BPC, said the pattern of sales in Britain is the same as it was ten years ago in the U.S. where obesity is now a serious health concern.

He said overall potato consumption was stable at an average of 242lb per person a year.

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# Ps on target to become the shooting party

ng the parlia- by the British Shooting and n sent out invi- hundred MPs trips to edu- out, the sport- amized by the the response- ny more, sur- rural ability of MPs to hit al- by aimed at MP for Sher-

wood, tops the new Labour shooting gallery which includes Alun Michael, the Minister for Rural Affairs, who is charged with deciding the future of hunting, Jack Cunningham, Martin Salter, David Drew and Peter Bradley. Sandra Gidley, a Liberal Democrat MP, is the only woman MP to have tried her hand so far, although it is understood that three more women MPs, all Labour, have agreed to take part. Mr Tip-

ping, who is chairman of Labour's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, stunned experts at Cockett Farm shooting ground in Nottinghamshire. He hit four targets in a row on his first attempt at the notoriously difficult high tower. Mr Tipping said: "I wish my political aim was as good as my shooting aim. I'm going to go again." Mr Tipping, who opposes foxhunting, said he would

have no moral objection to shooting wildfowl instead of clays because shooting had a conservation value. "I just don't see any role in hunting," he said. The former Commons deputy leader said he hoped the shooting field trips would set a precedent for MPs who should "get out more often". As the furore over foxhunting reaches fever pitch this weekend with the planned countryside march through

London, the Government is desperate to make clear that its policy is not to restrict shooting, wildfowling and fishing. Mr Michael, the minister charged with overseeing a ban on hunting, was given his first shooting lesson last month and, according to his "coach", has the makings of a very tidy shot indeed. At a press briefing a few days later he again confirmed his delight in shooting and

gave an assurance that the Government was perfectly happy with it. "There will be no change over shooting," he told journalists. However, the shooting lobby group, which has 120,000 members, many of whom will take part in the countryside march, are still edgy. By persuading MPs of the joys of shooting, the group believes it can ensure that any talk of a ban does not get past first base.

# Families prompt hospital deaths inquiry

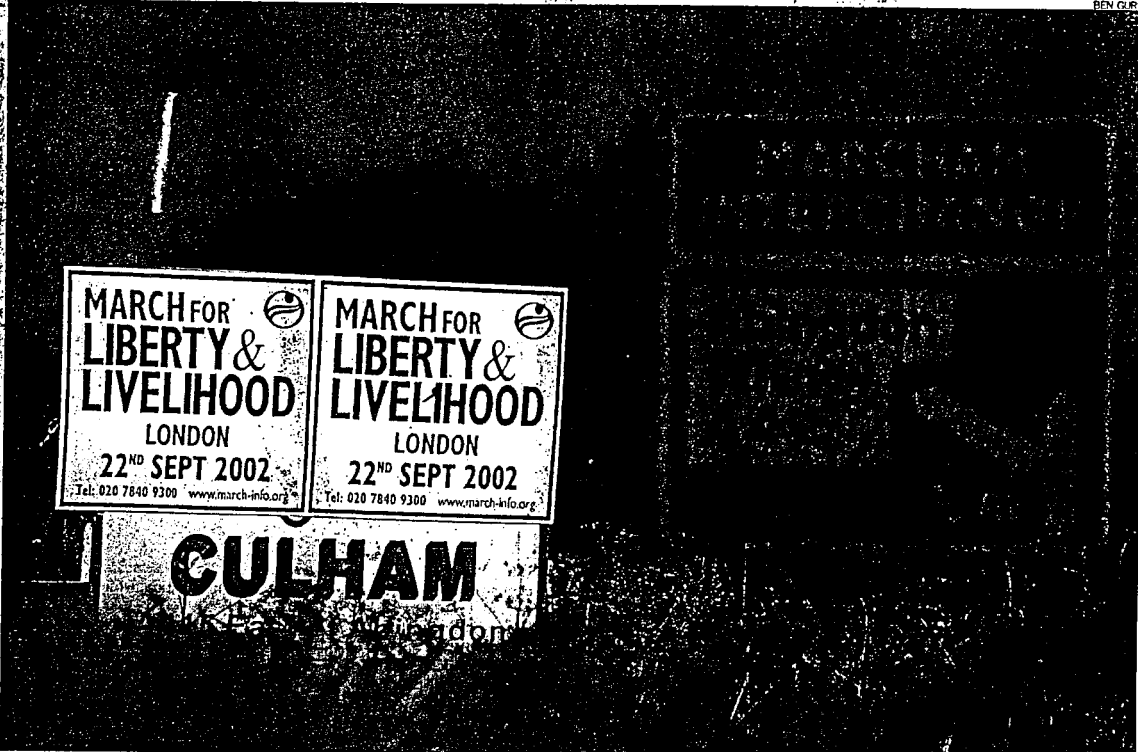
By Helen Danel

FAMILIES are hoping to uncover the truth about the deaths of elderly relatives at hospital after the Government ordered an investigation. Sir Liam Donaldson, the Chief Medical Officer, has ordered the inquiry into death rates at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in Hampshire. It is only the second time that he has ordered such an investigation: the first was in the case of Harold Shipman, the doctor who killed hundreds of his patients. Sir Liam said an audit of medical records and interviews with staff would be carried out to establish whether "patterns of death were out of line with what would be expected". Hampshire police are investigating whether any criminal intent was involved. Complaints have been received from up to 13 families of patients who were admitted between 1997 and 2000. They fear mistreatment or overdoses of powerful painkillers may have been involved. "There has to have been something wrong for this many people to complain," said ~~Marjorie~~ ~~Bulbeck~~ of Emsworth, Hampshire, whose mother, Dulcie Middleton, 85, died in September 2001. She said: "I am pleased this has been set up because we have been struggling for this. We have got elderly people who are frightened to go into hospital."

An audit of hospital records will be carried out by Richard Baker, a Professor of Clinical Governance at Leicester University. He conducted an analysis of Shipman's career which led to the public inquiry. In July, government inspectors criticised the Portsmouth Healthcare NHS Trust, the authority that ran the hospital until April, for excessive use of pain-relieving drugs. Patients were put at risk, but inspectors would not say whether anyone had died as a result of their treatment. The inspectors' report was triggered by allegations from the family of Gladys Richards, 91, that she was unlawfully killed in August 1998. Professor Baker will draw on medical records, staff rotas, times of death, the amount of drugs given and condition of each patient who died to establish if there are any links. Ian Piper, chief executive of the Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust, the health group that oversees the running of the hospital, said: "I sympathise with the relatives. We want to do everything we can to find some answers for these families." Many changes had been made to procedures at the hospital since 1998, he said.

# to try dry

commitment to g will be in- n's Speech that rural same con- the towns issues are sport afford- od. Hospitals the gov- countryside increasingly march this come a focal discontent. march, when he Environ- joined - the will be no is year. th, the Com- said that march, as the Liber- ral affairs



Hitting the road: posters in fields and on roadside verges across England and Wales get the message across for this Sunday's big march in London

# Hunt hotheads plan disruptive action

By Valerie Elliott  
Countryside Editor  
MILITANT hunt supporters are planning to disrupt life in the cities and to inconvenience the public in a desperate attempt to save their sport. One plan is to immobilise a motorway by covering a stretch with a ton of pop rivets that would slash vehicle tyres. Other ideas include dumping sand into sewers to block drains, and pouring dye into Welsh reservoirs that supply the Midlands. Severn Trent Water has stepped up its security. Such action, and a massive campaign of civil disobedience, is expected to follow any government announcement to ban or curtail hunting. The hotheads are operating under the loose banner of The Real Countryside Alliance and have issued leaflets and a poster




Duke: among those who thinks Alliance is too soft

too close to Labour. It has links with all 300 hunts in England, though its main recruitment ground is in Yorkshire. Edward Duke, a former Alliance chief executive, has admitted placing an advertisement depicting a freed IRA terrorist and an imprisoned huntsman. He said that RCA stands for Real Country Action. A member of the Bramham Moor Hunt and a businessman, he told *The Times* yesterday: "I placed the order for the ad, but I didn't pay for it. I was acting for others." Mr Duke has been forced to admit his involvement after a complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority by the League Against Cruel Sports. It is clear there are people determined to become martyrs for hunting, though the majority would refuse to take part in violent action. Richard Morley, a farmer and the mas-

ter of the Belvoir Hunt, favoured by the Prince of Wales, is one. Aged 58 he has never been in trouble, but said yesterday: "I am prepared to go to jail for it." He was certain there would be a mass rising of civil disobedience. "We are honest, law-abiding and hard-working people and such a ban is going to put thousands out of work and mean the destruction of countless hounds and horses." He spoke out as the latest hunt mascot, Lazarus, the huntsman painted on carpet that appeared first on the Kilburn White Horse in the Vale of York, was rolled out in fields near the M1 in the Midlands. A hunt supporter from Yorkshire, who does not wish to be named, said yesterday: "All the talk is of civil unrest. If ministers do not listen to the people on the march or to the thousands of letters that have been

written to MPs then people are going to cause their own disruption." Peter George is director of Countryside Action Network, which she says has 3,500 members, though critics put the figure closer to 750. It is a mixture of hunts people, shooters and fishermen. Mrs George, 52, founded the group with Peter Hole, a retired bank manager from Halifax, and Peter Gent, a retired businessman, from Usk, South Wales. She said: "We would never commit violence or criminal damage... But people are very angry." The threats of civil disobedience are being taken seriously by police and water authorities. Severn Trent Water, for example, has increased security at its five reservoirs in the Elan Valley, mid-Wales, which provide 70 million gallons a day to Birmingham.

  
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# Farmers unite in milk protest

SUPPLIES of milk could be disrupted next weekend after a mass protest by farmers outside the 150 milk distribution depots (Valerie Elliott writes). The action is planned for Thursday night and, for the first time, farmers throughout the country have united to demand higher prices for milk. They are asking for at least 10.5p a pint instead of the 7p to 9p they are paid, the lowest in Europe. Farmers receive more than 14p a pint in Italy, over 12p in Germany, and 11p in France. Jim Walker, president of the Scottish National Farmers' Union, was the first to name September 19 as a day of protest. The move is now being supported unofficially by the National Farmers' Union, the Farmers' Union of Wales and the militant organisation, Farmers For Action. They are also demanding higher prices for milk that is used in cheese and other dairy products.

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