

**M**ILLIONS of words have been written to the glory of Jeremy Thorpe's political career. But its eclipse began with just fifteen: "I am being hounded by people just because of my sexual relationship with Jeremy Thorpe." This was the sentence, blurted out by Norman Scott in a Barnstaple court room in January, 1976, which started months of allegations and denials — and the gradual revelation of evidence. Months in which seemingly random incidents became linked as a top-level police investigation got under way. More than two and a half years later, in August, 1978, Thorpe was charged. And yesterday he was finally convicted at the Old Bailey. Thorpe, who always sought the greatest of prizes in politics, now has the dubious distinction of being the centre figure in the greatest political scandal of modern times.

## The sordid truth of the craving he couldn't control

Exclusive dossier compiled by  
**ROB GIBSON and PAUL HOPKINS**

**THE** Right Honourable Jeremy Thorpe revelled in the high life — driven by a passion for power.

But he revelled also in a pitiful low life — driven by an even more powerful passion for sex.

Thorpe tried desperately to keep his love for just a secret.

He confided only in another young Liberal M.P., Peter Bessell, because they shared an insatiable sexual desire.

"With me it was women," said Bessell. "With Jeremy it was young men."

Bessell's intimate knowledge of Thorpe's homosexual promiscuity created a strong bond between them.

### Careful

Bessell said: "I had lots of women and I had to be very careful in case rumours leaked back to my constituency."

"After Jeremy told me he was an active homosexual I felt a great sympathy with him. One breath of scandal could have ruined us."

"Our sexual drives meant that we were both putting our careers at risk almost daily."

At night, Thorpe would cruise the kerbs of Chelsea and lurk in the shadows of London parks.

Once he picked up a man

in the King's Road, Chelsea, and drove him to his flat. The young man stayed for three days.

About a year later Thorpe picked up the same man again — once more in the King's Road. Yet Thorpe didn't even recognise him.

Throughout the court hearings, and in the months before, Thorpe issued carefully worded statements in which he tried to make the public believe he wasn't homosexual.

But if he had continued his pretence in the witness box the prosecution were ready to provide damning evidence.

One of Thorpe's casual King's Road pick-ups was waiting in the corridors of the Old Bailey to give evidence.

Mr. S. was in his early 20s when Thorpe drove up to him in his battered car.

The young man accepted Thorpe's offer of a lift and a nightcap.

Mr. S. stayed at Margham Court, then they spent two nights in Manchester before the affair fizzled out.

Thorpe did not want to see Mr. S. again, but he heard from him. Mr. S. wrote to the newly-elected Liberal leader in a thinly disguised blackmail attempt. He asked for a loan of £150.

Thorpe ignored the letter and never heard from Mr. S. again. The affair would have remained a secret except that Thorpe gave the letter to Bessell.

Bessell, facing bankruptcy and possible fraud charges, fled the country and didn't have time to tidy up. Work-

men, renovating his office, found the letter in a cupboard.

Norman Scott, the scorned lover who forced Thorpe's shadowy life into the spotlight, also told of the politician's kerk-crawling.

He said: "One day I was walking in St. James's Park wearing a new overcoat that Thorpe had never seen."

"A car came up behind me and tooted. The driver was obviously trying to pick me up. It was Thorpe."

That was the beginning of the end for Thorpe's relationship with Scott.

Before then Scott had been a kept man-like a mistress in a flat of his own.

### Confident

Thorpe expected Scott to meet his needs wherever and whenever it took his fancy.

So confident did Thorpe become that he even allowed Scott to make speeches for him in his constituency.

Then he considered them setting up home together in North Devon.

But there was to come in the words of a leading local Liberal supporter.

She told Thorpe: "We don't want your hip-wiggling boyfriend embarrassing us."

"If you want to set up a love nest, don't do it on your own doorstep."

"Get the hell out of the constituency into Cornwall or Somerset. Just get him out of North Devon."

The secret love of Thorpe was no secret any more.

Thorpe's sexual frolics changed the course of British politics.

Only now can the real story of the strange goings-on at 10 Downing Street in February, 1974, be told.

Ted Heath had called an election during a three-day week caused by the miners' strike.

Labour won the largest number of seats, but not an absolute majority.

The Liberals therefore held the balance of

power and Thorpe visited Heath.

Could the Liberals form a coalition with the Tories?

Thorpe's price was high — a top place in the Cabinet, probably Foreign Secretary.

### Criticised

The talks broke down and both parties issued statements saying the other side was asking too much.

Heath appeared to dither, and he was

criticised for his apparent reluctance to leave No. 10 to make way for Harold Wilson.

But it has now become clear that the Prime Minister was considering secret intelligence reports on Thorpe.

Both the British M.I.5 and the United States F.B.I. told of Thorpe's homosexual relations.

The report from M.I.5 detailed Thorpe's affair with Scott and also warned that the Liberal

leader was wide open to blackmail.

The F.B.I. dossier revealed that the United States authorities were on the verge of prosecuting Thorpe during a visit to America — but they ordered him out of the country and told him not to return.

### Resigned

A Foreign Secretary who could be black-mailed and who could not visit the United States was out of the question.

Heath resigned and

his failure cost him the Tory leadership.

Thorpe's chance of power was doomed for ever. And Wilson took Labour back to government, giving the party a chance to improve its position in the October 1974 election.

It is thought that Wilson's attempts to protect Thorpe during the early stages of the Scott affair stem from this time.

Wilson was returning a favour because Thorpe's indiscretions gained the Labour Party power.

# The Right Honourable Rotter



**Did Thorpe cause Heath's downfall?**