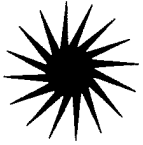


Press Information



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Computers

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Extract from
Daily Telegraph, London.

10 OCT 1983

EASY ACCESS PLAN FOR STATE FILES

By MICHAEL BECKET
City Staff

THE Central Statistical Office and the Patents Office have enormous volumes of invaluable information which the public would pay for but find too difficult to get at, the Government has been told.

Businessmen need figures on exports and imports to tell them of market opportunities, they need the economic indicators to warn them of changes in the direction of the economy; they need to know the volume of retail sales and the amount of capital goods purchased. All of which the CSO has.

Similarly the Patents Office has details on some devices and inventions which could be very valuable if only companies knew about them. All this information is already available, but not in the form that businessmen can use it.

Rapid access

The Technology Advisory Panel suggested that the Government bodies should get together with private sector companies to put the information on to computers.

That would enable managers to interrogate the files with their own computers and have rapid access to selected groups of information.

At the moment the difficulty of getting access to the specific piece of information at the time wanted is deterring use of the figures and facts already collected and available.

This is even more true of the details at Companies House.

Instant access

If, instead of keeping details on companies in cardboard files and piles of microfilm, Companies House put the whole lot on to computers, people from all over the country would be able to have instant access.

That would not only help companies who are not handy for London or Cardiff (where the files are kept) but could improve the administration of the registry.

For a start, the registrar of companies would be able to chase up corporations who were late with filing their accounts, though at the moment most get away with it.

Swifter filing would also enable creditors to have more accurate information on which to base business decisions.

Mr Michael Aldridge, managing director of Rediffusion Computers and a member of the panel, pointed out that the CSO had already done a deal with a computer bureau to make some information available. But there was also the Land Registry and Somerset House to organise, he added.

'Needs packaging'

"The information needs packaging." There were enormous amounts of money to be made from "making available to the public information the public would like to hear." This could net the Government £10 million a year.

"The Government collects vast amounts of it but is embarrassed at the expensive and tedious task of having to file and make it available," Mr Aldridge added. If it got together with private sector companies Whitehall could get easy access to specialist computer knowledge.

Legislative changes would be needed, he said. At the moment Companies House is obliged to make the files available at cost price and if the Government and its private sector partners were to make the changes worthwhile that would have to be arranged.

Extract from
Sunday Times, London.

9 OCT 1983

48pt Headings 48pt Headings

DOWN on the South Coast a firm of solicitors has set up a link with a computer 4,000 miles away in Dayton, Ohio, giving it access to a huge electronic "library".

Lexis, the legal information service, has 40bn words in its data bank. A further 3m are added each week, with reports on criminal, tax and industrial law in Britain, the US and France.

It is controlled from Dayton by Mead Data Central, mainly a computer and in Britain by the law publisher, Butterworth.

Lexis claims to be the world's biggest full-text data retrieval service. "It gives the solicitors far wider access to information at great speed," says UK marketing manager Kyle Bosworth.

Britain is sitting on a goldmine of information, some of which, like Lexis, is being sold commercially. But according to a report issued last Wednesday by the Cabinet Office, there is still more untapped information.

Part of the problem is that the information market is diverse, covering everything from publishing to financial services, and from consultancies to patents.

"Yet not enough people and

firms have given thought to how best to capitalise on what will be a major growth industry," says Michael Aldrich, managing director of Requisition Computers and one of the six members of the Prime Minister's Information Technology Advisory Panel which wrote the report, Making a Business of Information.

The Lexis users in Britain are connected to Dayton via a telephone line. So far, about 5,000 of Britain's 40,000-lawyers use the service. Bosworth is a bit cagey about giving the exact number of law firms on Lexis (he is wary about rivals like Eurolex), but does admit that all the top 12 City firms, all government departments and 50 of the 55 law schools are linked up.

User firms are charged £6,000 a year, including training, equipment and service. If they use it for more than five hours a month, there is an extra £70 an hour charge.

When Shell, ICI or the Greater London Council want details of parliamentary questions, debates, motions and legislation, they use another electronic information service, Polis. Without it they would be dependent on time-consuming library searches.

Polis was set up in 1980 by a computer services firm, Scicon, a BP subsidiary, initially for the House of Commons library. It is still very much used by MPs, "but in the past 18 months we have begun to market it commercially," says Bill O'Reilly, Scicon's manager of information systems.

Computerised financial services with information on share prices, currencies and commodities, are growing fast, with firms like Extel, Datastream and Reuters making the running. Twenty years ago only 40% of Reuters' revenue came from financial services. Now it is 90%, a shift which has revived Reuters' fortunes. Last year it made £36m profit on £179m turnover against 1979's £3m profit on turnover of £76m.

The breakthrough for Reuters came in 1973 with its Monitor service. There are now about 50 separate Monitor services, and 13,000 subscribers using 34,000 terminals in 78 countries.

Reuters' next step is into information processing. Later this year it starts its Data Network, which will offer subscribers a package of sophisticated information to help them deal in the complex world currency markets.

Richard Brooks

10 OCT 1983

COMPUTER KEY TO FACTS

By MICHAEL BECKETT
City Staff

THE Central Statistical Office and the Patents Office have enormous volumes of invaluable information which the public would like and would pay for, but finds too difficult to get at, the Government has been told.

Businessmen need figures on exports and imports to tell them of market opportunities; they need the economic indicators to warn them of changes in the direction of the economy; they need to know the volume of retail sales and the amount of capital goods purchased. All of this information the CSO has.

Similarly, the Patents Office has details on some devices and inventions which could be very valuable, if only companies knew about them. All this information is already available, but not in the form that businessmen can use it.

Use deferred

The Technology Advisory Panel has suggested that government bodies should get together with private sector companies to put the information on to computers. That would enable managers to interrogate the files with their own computers and have rapid access to selected groups of information.

At the moment, the difficulty of getting access to the specific piece of information, at the time wanted, is deterring use of the figures and facts already collected and available. This is even more true of the details at Companies House.

If, instead of keeping details on companies in cardboard files and piles of microfiche, Companies House put the whole lot on to computers, people from all over the country would be able to have instant access.

That would not only help companies who are not handy for London or Cardiff (where the files are kept) but would improve the administration of the registry. For a start, the registrar of companies would be able to chase up corporations who were late with filing their accounts. At the moment, most get away with it.

Amounts of money

Mr Michael Aldridge, managing director of Rediffusion Computers and a member of the panel, pointed out that CSO had already done a deal with a computer bureau to make some information available. There was also the Land Registry and Somerset House to organise, he added.

"The information needs packaging. There are enormous amounts of money to be made from making available to the public information the public would like" he said. This could net government £10 million a year.

"The Government collects vast amounts of it, but is embarrassed at the expensive and tedious task of having to file and make it available. Mr Aldridge added. If it got together with private sector companies, Whitehall could get easy access to specialist computer knowledge.

Legislative changes would be needed, he said. At the moment Companies House is obliged to make the files available at cost price, and if government and its private sector partners are to make the changes worth while, that would have to be changed.

Extract from
Sussex Business Times, Shoreham

-- OCT 1983

Keeping in Touch

4526
Mike Aldrich, head of Rediffusion Computers, has installed Teleputers in his home and Crawley Office - which enables his wife Sandy to see what he is doing and book him for further engagements.

His diary is on the system, his secretary runs his busi-



Sandy Aldrich and daughter Philippa can see father's business and home schedules on the Teleputer

ness schedule and his wife runs the home end. For good measure there is a third Teleputer in Rediffusion's London Headquarters.

INTERNATIONAL PRESS-CUTTING BUREAU
Lancaster House,
70 Newington Causeway, London, S.E.1

Extract from
Computer Talk, London.

17 04 1983

Govt told how to cash in on public information

Vast sums of money could be made by the government if it co-operated with private industry and made available, via computer links, the enormous amounts of information stored by certain public bodies, according to a report.

In a survey of new opportunities in information technology called 'Making a Business of Information', the government has been urged by the Information Technology Advisory Panel (ITAP), to capitalise on the information stored by the Central Statistical Office (CSO), the Patent Office (PO), and other public bodies. Presently much of this data is held on manual records which are difficult to access.

ITAP member and Rediffusion Computers managing director, Michael Aldrich says: 'The information held by these public bodies needs packaging. Enormous sums of money could be made by making available to the public information the public would like to hear.'

Such a service could net the government £10 million per year.

According to Aldrich: 'The government collects vast amounts of information but is embarrassed at the expensive and tedious task of having to file it and make it available. If it got together with private



Aldrich: 'Enormous sums of money could be made.'

sector companies, Whitehall could get easy access to specialist computer knowledge.'

Apart from the CSO, which has computerised some of its information, and the PO, Companies House stores a mass of information which might be sold profitably if it were computerised. To make this possible, Aldrich says legislative changes are needed.

By law Companies House can only charge cost price for the information that it makes available. Consequently if any joint government-private sector data computerisation project is to be financially viable, legal charges would have to be made.'

The ITAP report points out that money can also be made out of the archives held by such august bodies as the British Library, the British Museum and other major museums.

It states: 'Much of this information is valuable to scholars and authors from all countries. The introduction of new methods of mass storage of information, like optical discs coupled with rapid facsimile transmission systems, will enable this material to be accessed from the UK and other countries, for an appropriate fee.'

ITAP advises the Cabinet on matters pertaining to IT.

Behind the News - Back Page.

INTERNATIONAL PRESS
CUTTING BUREAU

Extract from:
COMPUTER NEWS
-London-

13 OCT 1983

The pen is still mightier than the screen

Dear sir,

4866
It is a sobering thought that in this age of electronics and the media—of video, instant communication by broadcast, telephone or cable, and retrieval and manipulation of information—that there is still nothing to beat a good read in the traditional ink-on-paper sense.

The printed word is a 500-

year-old technology that hangs on because, as people, we find it easier to read off paper.

There is no good news for the trees in advancing technology and office automation, any more than there is in the renewed avalanche of computer publications.

Computer News, which is a good and welcome new read, should keep firmly in mind

that what interests most people is not the technology, but rather what the technology can do.

The paper is off to a good start, so may the presses roll for another 500 years.

*Michael Aldrich,
Managing Director,
Rediffusion Computers,
West Sussex.*



INTERNATIONAL PRESS-CUTTING BUREAU
Lancaster House,
70 Newington Causeway, London, S.E.1

Extract from
The Times, London.

25 OCT 1983

10 years to go to the new office

4876
■ If tomorrow's office is slow to arrive, don't blame the machines, blame the people, writes Roger Woolnough. That was the message from Michael Aldrich, chief executive of Rediffusion Computers, when he addressed the Midland Association of Building Societies.

All the technology for integrating data, text, graphics, voice, image, information handling, storing and processing is already in place, he said. The main constraint to introducing the integrated office is the lack of people among users with the experience to design, instal and implement it.

He put the timescale for integrated office systems at 10 years. Even then old habits would die hard, and results would still be printed on paper. "There is no good news for the trees with office automation," Aldrich said.

NATIONAL PRESS-CUTTING BUREAU
Lancaster House,
Pwington Causeway, London, S.E.1

Extract from
Computer Talk, London.

17 OCT 1983

NEWS



Leading lights: Included in the Panel are Mullard's Ivor Cohen, Information Technology's Tony Davies, CUC's David Hartley and Charles Read of the Post Office.

Information at a price — Britain's big chance?

concentrated on the rapid advance in technology, rather than information. Now, says an influential body within government circles, it is time to redress the balance. MIKE SAWYER

reports

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher set up the Information Technology Advisory Panel (ITAP) - in July 1981 to keep her and government informed of key issues within the IT industry.

And now the Panel has published its second report which makes strong recommendations to the government to take action in the form of copyright law and incentive for industry while Britain still has the chance to gain world leadership in the information market.

The Panel is made up of leading lights in the British business and academic world. Among the members are the managing director of Rediffusion Computers, Mike Aldrich; Ivor Cohen, md of Mullard; Tony Davies, md of Information Technology Ltd; Colin Southgate, chief executive of Thorn EMI Information Technology; Charles Read, director of IT for the Post Office; and last but not least, Dr David Hartley, director of Cambridge University Computing Service.

A new addition to the team is Sir Henry Chilver vice-chancellor of Cranfield Institute of Technology who joined last week.

With this kind of business and commercial background, the title of the Panel's report to the PM, 'Making a business of Information,' is unsurprising.

In the report, the panel has concentrated on the commercial aspects of information handling, on its future, and on how public attitudes need to be altered to make this new commercial sector the 'tradeable information sector'.

The Panel rightly points out that this tradeable information sector, comprising the supply of financial and business

industries, is expanding beyond all its boundaries.

Figures for the sector's growth are scanty but no survey of the market's future has denied that the growth will be dramatic. One survey reckons that the market will be worth over £900 million by 1985. This same market was worth just £80 million in 1980.

This sector is going to grow beyond all bounds. The major advantage of information technology is that it can bring all sources of information, books, films, articles, cassettes, software, business and commercial information, onto the electronic screen.

With the cabling of Britain about to get underway and with satellite communications all over the world, Britain is well equipped to handle electronic information in its own backyard and well able to sell these services abroad.

The Panel argues that to make a business out of information, government has a major role to play in setting guidelines for the emergent industry to follow. One of these guidelines will be copyright law but the report rightly criticised the government for being slow to respond to the threat felt by film makers and software writers who are losing millions of pounds each year to pirates who copy their work and then sell it at knock-down prices.

Video and software piracy would be a major threat to the health of the new information industry.

Quite how the government plans to introduce the new law is being decided at the moment, but the report recommends that the new legislation should be well drafted, so that it will be applicable up to the year 2000 and well enforced, overseas as well as in the UK.

Assuming Britain had a tough and enforceable copyright law, the report says that the export potential in this industry is boundless.

'The information business suits the

guage which is the first or second language of commerce, science and technology, and the first or second language of virtually all the world.'

Government could greatly stimulate the spread of information technology, said the Panel, if it were to introduce new methods of handling information itself, namely new electronic means of handling information.

Among the regular correspondents with various government departments are banks, building societies, local authorities, and private companies. If the government chose to accept information from these organisations in machine readable form then this would be a great stimulation to the growth of IT in these same companies and it would also mean, as the report points out, that these companies could also take information in electronic form from external information services.

The report concluded by recommending the setting up of a single government body, a Ministry of Information perhaps, which would have the main responsibility for the development of the tradeable information sector. At present within government, there is no single body to co-ordinate the different means of information handling.

Libraries are administered by the home office, and responsibility for computer hardware and software falls within the boundaries of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Government could also, through this one body, seek links with private sector companies to handle the dissemination of government information, company records, patents, trademarks, Press information etc.

Thus, points out the report, the re-definition of government information processing and output would serve as an important stimulus to an emerging industry.

However, as result of all this re-defi-

the 'tradeable information sector' a viable commercial entity.

First among these alterations would have to be the public attitudes to video and software piracy, which the Panel hopes, perhaps ambitiously, would be adequately curtailed by the new tough copyright law.

Second, the Panel argues that public attitudes towards information must be altered.

School education should 'inculcate the concept that information has value and that this value is the foundation of much economic activity. This may have consequences which fit ill with current practices, for example, an end to illicit photocopying. But the value to the nation of a proper regard for information and its commercial worth would far outweigh these.'

It would be a strange world, if, as the Panel hopes, teachers in school classrooms began teaching kids the value of information and how important a commodity it is. How many of the kids would look around the classroom, at the shortage of books and the mass of photocopied material which the teachers have 'pirated' because their departments have no money to buy books?

The third alteration will come about after the public realises that electronic information always has a charge on it.

The public, as the Panel rightly says, is used to large amounts of free information, libraries etc, or information with a very small, and insignificant charge placed on it, ie, the phone call to the railway station to check train times.

Margaret Thatcher is therefore advised that electronic information will only become widely used when either the charges are hidden, ie, in paying £50 for a year's membership on Prestel and get all pages free, or, when the public learns to accept the concept of information as a valuable commodity, with a value attached.

The applicants include familiar names like Rediffusion, Thorn-EMI and Visionhire, which already operate existing cable networks and powerful candidates like British Telecom and Racal. However, many of the consortiums also include unlikely investors brought in to add "star quality" or local appeal. Thus Ringo Starr, the former Beatle, is involved in the Merseyside Cablevision consortium which is pitching for the Liverpool franchise while Raman Subba Row, the former England batsman, has joined Croydon Cable.

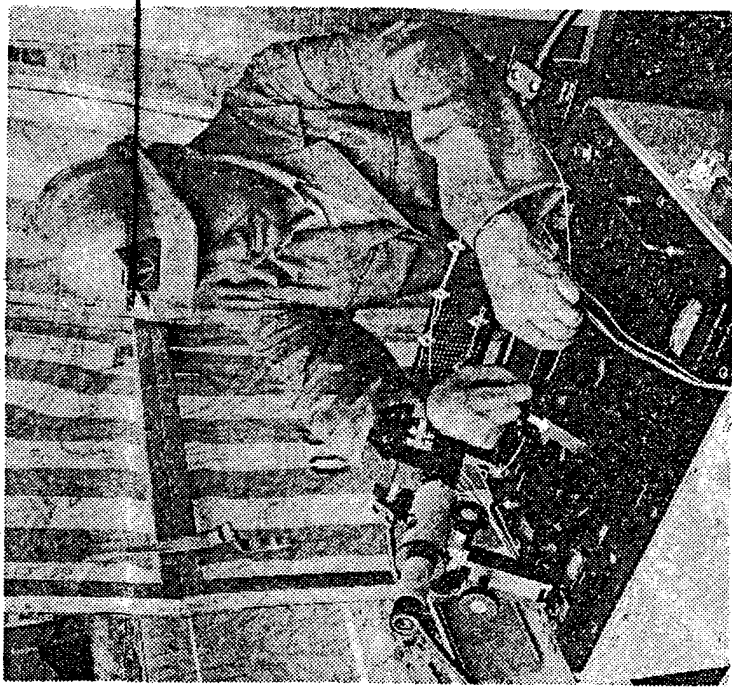
The early enthusiasm for the new ventures will soon turn to harsh financial reality for those which succeed. It is estimated that it will cost about £30m to put in a complete cable television system to serve 100,000 homes. The gamble is whether British householders are prepared to pay between £6 and £9 (plus vat) each month for a basic cable service which will offer music, sports and general entertainment channels.

Critics argue that half of the homes in Britain will have video cassette recorders within the next two years and may be reluctant to pay for cable television services. Yet American experience shows that cable operators can make money after five or six years and after that British franchisees which can last 20 years could easily become licences to print money.

For its part the Government has done all it can to make sure that Britain has the chance to try out the cable television experiment as quickly as possible, and before European rivals begin to cash in on the new markets which will arise. It is estimated that it will cost between £3,000m and £4,000m to recable just half Britain's 20 million homes. The Government is excited about the employment opportunities that will follow. The construction industry alone could benefit from 2,000 new jobs to lay cable in the first instance. Additional

pro-casualty policy. The publication of the Hunt report paved the way for the decision to allocate the 12 interim cable franchises which are up for grabs now, with future franchisees to be allocated by a newly established Cable Television Authority which will be created by legislation due to be introduced shortly.

The Government is keen to encourage the recabling of Britain with optical fibres, which use signals transmitted by pulses of light rather than electric current to offer a



● Installing the new generation of telephone lines requires skills closer to microsurgery than to traditional cable laying. In the picture above, British Telecom technician John Guile joining up two pieces of fibre optic cable beside the A5 in Bedfordshire. Telecom is laying the latest "monomode" fibre between Luton and Milton Keynes. A pair of these glass strands, each thinner than a hair, carries up to 2,000 phone calls.

The ends of the two strands must be lined up to within one twenty-thousandth of a millimetre before they are fused together on Telecom's splicing machine. That accuracy is even greater than a microsurgeon's joining severed nerve fibres.

commercial pressures to dictate the recabling of Britain. Effectively this means that the most attractive areas of the country will be recabled with optical fibres first in order to build a commercially viable base for further expansion. At the same time British Telecom and Mercury will lay optical fibres on trunk routes, through existing and new ducts, and eventually link the new systems to individual cable networks.

A further development is the expansion of the services provided by the existing cable services to 2,500,000 homes. Operators like Visionhire and Rediffusion had virtually decided that with little prospect of expanding their cable services there was no future investing in the projects. But with the new-found enthusiasm for cable television those subscribers are being offered new services in more than 100 areas.

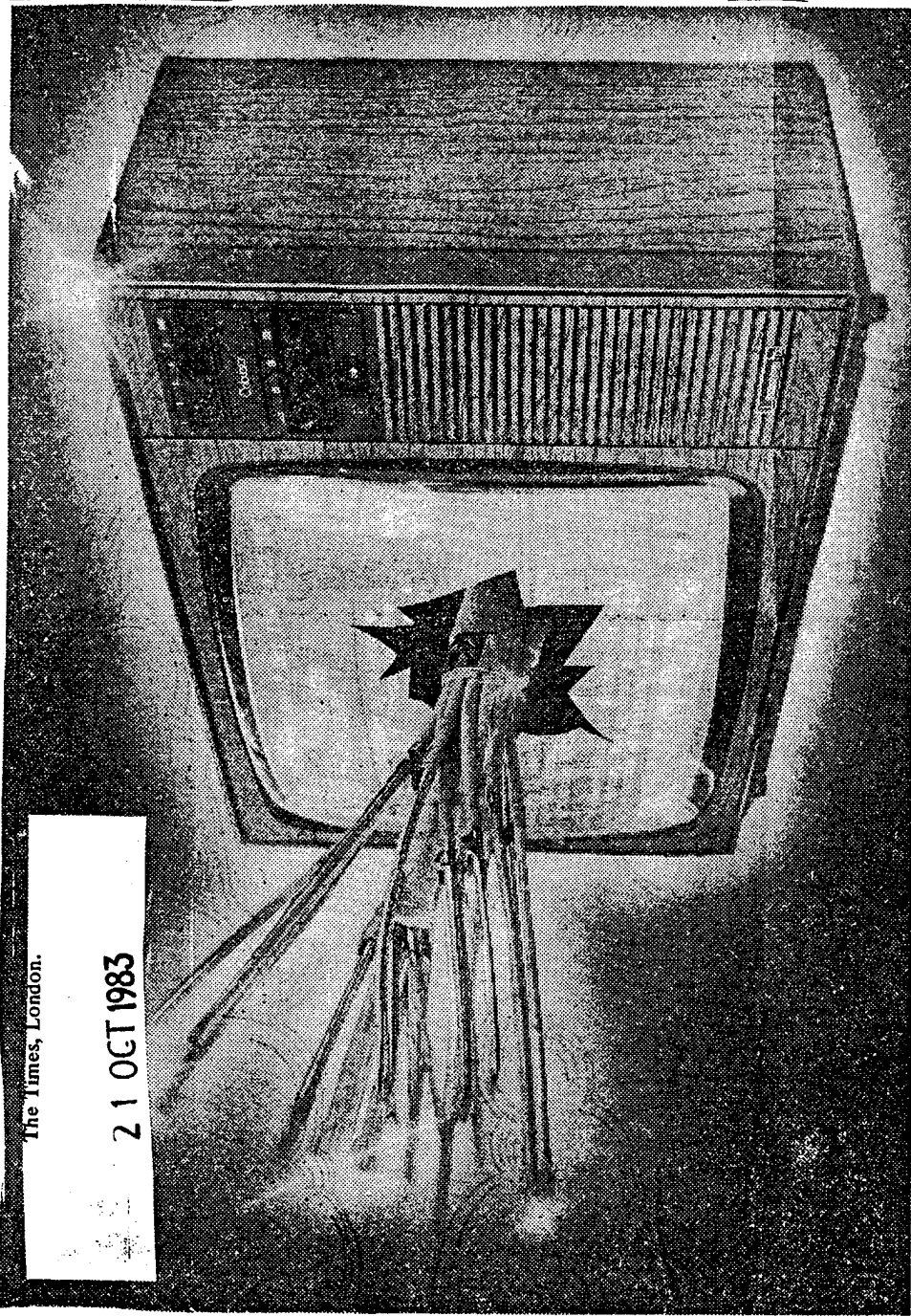
Although these existing networks will only be able to carry between four and six channels on their old fashioned copper cable, against a minimum of 25 channels on the new system, which use coaxial cable or optical fibres, the operators do stand an early chance of reestablishing a presence in areas which previously had been neglected.

As the optical fibre manufacturers and cable television companies gear up for the new markets which are emerging from advent of the cable television, some sectors of the industry are already anticipating using the know-how they gain in different areas.

In the meantime the cable manufacturers expect that the rewiring of Britain will have gained full momentum by 1987 as the entertainment-led demand for cable services provided by the new cable television services translates into more widespread demand for each house to be linked to a whole range of information and business services, piped via the new cable networks.

The Times, London.

21 OCT 1983



Will cable pay its way?

Within the next few weeks the Government will be ready to announce the winners of the battle between rival consortiums bidding for the rights to set up the first of a new generation of cable television stations throughout the country. Initially the Home Office and Department of Trade and Industry will decide on the award of 12 interim franchises to operate multi-channel cable

a big programme of cable installation.

By January 1982 the ITAP report was ready and recommended that the go-ahead should be given for the widespread recabling of Britain as quickly as possible if the full industrial benefits were to be realized. In March a three-man team of inquiry was established under the chairmanship of Lord Hunt to report on the impli-

capacity 11,000 times greater than traditional copper cable of the kind used in most applications at present. But a decision to insist on the installation of optical fibres instead of cable would prove costly in the short term and delay the widespread introduction of cable television.

Consequently the Government will not require the use of optical fibre for some years.