

AP

Sir William Penney

Atlas Computer

You will know of the correspondence between Hitchman and Turnbull about the Atlas computer.

Ferranti's have been somewhat disturbed by the Authority's recent announcement of their arrangements for hiring Stretch and have approached the Office of the Minister for Science with a proposal that the Authority should place a provisional contract for an Atlas which would include clauses to protect the Authority against uncertainties of performance; Ferranti's realise that they could give no guarantee about the performance.

London Office considered that, as the proposal raises difficult problems (for example criticism by the Public Accounts Committee if we made a provisional commitment for Atlas and anything went seriously wrong with the development of the computer), they will have to consult the Chairman about how we reply to it. The Chairman will undoubtedly wish to know the views of the Computer Policy Committee and you may wish to raise the matter at the Committee's next meeting.

I am copying this minute to the Harwell members of the Committee, together with a copy of the letter from the Office of the Minister for Science which sets out the proposal from Ferranti's, so that you could if you thought advisable seek a Research Group view without waiting for the next meeting of the Committee.

T. B. Le Cren

29th August, 1960.

c.c. Mr. E. H. Cooke-Yarborough
Dr. W. M. Lomer
Dr. J. Howlett ✓