COPY

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR SCIENCE

AP

2, Richmond Terrace, Whitehall,
London, S.W.1.

Telephone: TRAfalgar 6371

16th August, 1960

Dear Tony,

Immediately on my return from leave yesterday a Mr. Swann of Ferranti's Computer Department came along to see me following up a talk which the Minister had had with Mr. Sebastian D. Ferranti. Turnbull wrote to you about the Authority's requirement for an "Atlas" computer, to which Hitchman replied.

Ferranti's were somewhat disturbed by the Authority's recent announcement of the arrangements for hiring "Stretch". Swann said that, from the point of view of other potential purchasers of "Atlas", it would seem that the Authority preferred hiring the American machine to buying an "Atlas".

He was aware that the Authority had in mind the possibility of buying an "Atlas" some time in the future. Swann indicated that he thought "Atlas" would be ready in about three years, and that, while they full realised that they could give no guarantees about the performance of the "Atlas", they would hope that the Authority would be willing to place a provisional contract, which would include clauses to protect the Authority against the uncertainties of performance and of the Authority's own requirements. I pointed out that, whatever the protective clauses, the Authority would have made a provisional commitment, which might leave them open, if something were to go wrong with "Atlas", to criticisms by the P.A.C.

Ferranti's seem to attach so much importance to the psychological value which would result from an order placed by the Authority that I thought I had better convey their suggestion to you. There are obvious difficulties in this suggestion, and perhaps we can have a word to see what might be done to help Ferranti's.

Yours ever,

(Sgd.) Michaels

A. E. Drake, Esq., O.B.E.,
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority,
11, Charles II Street,
London, S.W.1.

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