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Minister of State

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
Parliament Street  
LONDON SW1P 3AG

*cc Press.*

19<sup>th</sup> February 1981

*Prime Minister*

*Dear Geoffrey*

*mt*

*You may like to be aware of the publication next week of a CSD report about introducing word-processors.*

*MAP 20/2*

WORD PROCESSORS

Some months ago Paul Channon corresponded with you about the difficulties which some Departments were facing with their unions in introducing word processors while we were still conducting trials to test their productivity in typing pools.

... The report on the trials has now been completed and I enclose a copy. The conclusions are summarised in Section 3 on pages 2-4. You will see that the trials have shown that the relatively high cost of this equipment is justified where staff are carefully selected and properly trained, and where there is careful selection of the work for which they are to be used, in particular for reports and work where standard paragraphs can be used. While the equipment should not be introduced in a haphazard way without the cost being carefully worked out (and substantial increases in productivity are required to achieve value for money) I consider it very important for departments to get ahead with cost/effective applications. This will make an important contribution to our aim of increasing the efficiency of the Civil Service.

We shall be publishing the report on 26 February. We are asking Departments to continue to look for areas where the introduction of word processors would be sensible. There are already over 300 word processors being used in the Civil Service, but there is clearly scope for many more. We are now initiating trials of the more advanced uses of word processors, for example in transmitting documents between offices - a form of electronic mail - and various other electronic devices, as part of a general programme to introduce electronic technology into Civil Service offices as quickly as is consistent with the availability of reliable and cost/effective products and the ability of staff to become familiar with them.

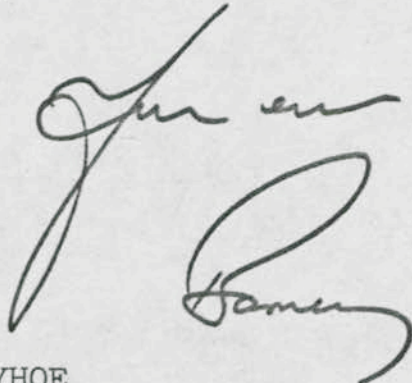
As you know we have been trying to conclude with the Civil Service unions a National Agreement covering the introduction of all new technology. The prospects for this remain uncertain, and I shall

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of course keep colleagues informed of any developments on this front. However we have, for some time, been consulting CPSA at national level about proposals for screen-based word processors and CPSA have given us their full co-operation in the running of the trials mentioned in paragraph 2. We are consulting the unions concerned on the various personnel issues which the report raises and aiming to reach agreement with them on these issues by April. We shall continue to consult the CPSA at national level on word processor applications pending the conclusion of these discussions.

In the absence of a new technology agreement, and before the conclusions of the discussions on the word processor report, there may be difficulties with the introduction of some word processors. We are now discussing with the Treasury Solicitor the legal implications of requiring staff to operate the new machines and shall issue guidance shortly. In the meantime if difficulties do arise no doubt your officials will be in touch with mine.

I am copying this letter to all members of the Cabinet, to the Minister of State for Information Technology and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Barney Hayhoe', written in dark ink.

BARNEY HAYHOE



Civil Service Department  
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ  
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Minister of State

Mrs Lynda Chalker MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary  
of State  
Department of Health and  
Social Security  
Alexander Fleming House  
Elephant and Castle  
LONDON SE1 6BY

26 March 1981

*Dear Lynda,*

WORD PROCESSORS

Thank you for your letter of 10 March. I am glad to see that you are pressing ahead with some of your computer projects notwithstanding the union problems.

The discussions with the CPSA nationally will be concluded towards the end of April. Given the current problems over pay and the failure to reach agreement on new technology generally, our prospects for reaching agreement with the CPSA alone on word processors are not good and anyway we are sceptical of CPSA officials' ability to carry their Executive or Conference with them on terms which are acceptable to us. One particularly difficult issue will be the question of "no compulsory redundancy". We will continue with our talks but it would be unwise to pin too much hope on their success.

We should be ready, therefore, if the talks fail to produce agreement, to introduce equipment where necessary and I agree that our officials should discuss what progress can be made in advance of the conclusions of the discussions.

I am copying this letter to all members of Cabinet, to the Minister of State for Information Technology and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Barney Hayhoe*  
*Barney*

BARNEY HAYHOE

27 MAR 1958

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*From the Joint Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

Barney Hayhoe Esq MP  
Minister of State  
Civil Service Department  
Old Admiralty Building  
Whitehall  
London SW1

10 March 1981

*Dear Barney*

WORD PROCESSORS

Patrick Jenkin has asked me to write to you about your letter of 19 February to Geoffrey Howe.

Although currently we have no plans for the introduction of multi-station machines, we are anxious to press ahead with the introduction of a number of stand-alone word processors. We hope, therefore, that the consultations between CSD and CPSA at national level will be concluded fairly soon. Meantime, DHSS officials will be getting in touch with your officials to see whether progress can be made in advance of the conclusion of these discussions.

You may also wish to know that we are going ahead, by administrative action, with three modest projects involving existing computers. Two are enhancements of existing programmes: the third relates to the running of a new programme. The best judgement we can make in a volatile industrial relations situation is that Unions will probably not instruct their members to co-operate: if they do, the TRD procedure will be applied.

I am copying this to recipients of your letter.

*Yours ever*  
*Lynda*  
MRS LYNDA CHALKER

12 MAR 1981

