

## ● Government's Surprise Choice

# £4m Computer Orders Won By "Outsider"

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**C**OMPUTER orders amounting to about £4 million have gone to Condata—a fully owned subsidiary of the American computer company, Control Data Corporation.

News of the orders—collectively the biggest ever granted in Australia and large by world standards—has shocked market leaders in Australia.

The orders comprise a computer network of £1.5 million for the C.S.I.R.O. and a network of £2.3 million for the Bureau of Census and Statistics.

The Treasurer, Mr H. E. Holt, and the Minister in charge of the C.S.I.R.O., Senator J. G. Gorton, announced the letting of the contracts last night.

Mr Holt said a Control Data 3600 computer would be installed in the bureau in Canberra.

Senator Gorton said the contract for the C.S.T.R.O. provided for the installation of a 3600 computer in the new C.S.I.R.O. scientific computing laboratory being built in Canberra.

Four subsidiary computers would be installed in C.S.I.R.O. research laboratories in Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney.

Senator Gorton said the chairman of the Australian Universities Commission, Sir Leslie Martin, had also announced that the commission would propose that satellite computers for this system be acquired by certain Australian universities during the period 1964-66.

### Now In The Top Three

Control Data is a small but profitable company by world standards—it is one of two companies successfully making a profit out of computers, though it has had only one other order in Australia.

The P.M.G.'s department has ordered a small computer to be installed in Melbourne early next month.

Most computer companies conceded Control Data a good chance of getting the order for the C.S.I.R.O. network but it was not generally thought that the company was in the running for the census order.

From being a comparatively small computer company, Control Data has now probably joined the American giant IBM and the English company I.C.T. in the top three of the Australian market.

It is understood that delivery of all the computers has been promised in 12 months' time. The hitch here could be that the C.S.I.R.O. and the Bureau of Census will not be ready for the machines, as the present dearth of trained computer personnel is certain to become more acute.

Both have attempted to train electronic data processing staff for their installations but

will have to recruit the majority of e.d.b. personnel from the United States because of the shortage here.

Big teams of systems men will be needed to service and supervise installation of the computers in Australia.

Intense lobbying preceded the granting of the orders to Control Data and it is no surprise that there is much bitterness among many of the manufacturers about losing both orders.

Some manufacturers have alleged that Control Data submitted a joint proposal at a price which would not return a profit but would give the company a foothold in the fast developing Australian market.

### Mumblings Of Dissension

There are also mumblings of dissension about the manner in which it has been learnt that both orders were going to the same company.

Other computer manufacturers point out that tenders were called at different dates and that they should have been in

no way connected. It is felt, they say, that the C.S.I.R.O. has brought pressure to bear upon the Bureau of Census to order the same equipment in order to get a better deal from the company.

A spokesman for Control Data in Melbourne told the "Review": "It is not the practice of our company to sell computers at a price not expected to show a profit as shown by our successful overseas business.

"We did not submit a joint tender on the orders."

The spokesman said that, apart from military orders in the United States, it would be one of the biggest ever gained by the company.

Losing manufacturers have further criticised the successful company on the grounds that, although possessing fine "hardware" (computers) the company lacks in "software" (the programming and support which follows machine installation).

Whatever the truth, it seems that there will be much shouting about the manner in which the orders have gone to one small company.

Several companies which had been depending on the orders for survival will now probably withdraw from the Australian market.



● MR HOLT

... Census order announced

with virtually only one university (Sydney) turning out trained computer staff, there is a good chance that there will be shortages of staff.

In fact, the inadequate provision of Commonwealth money for university training is fast emerging as the greatest drawback to industry growth in this country.

It appears certain that Control Data, with a staff of about eight,