Perhaps Brazil would have more clout if it turned itself into a US corporation

NOTEBOOK

Hamish McRae

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Dowty buys into a computer brainwave

By Peter Large, Technology Correspondent

A WAY of teaming microchips that might make the computer as a home communications has been taken up by the Dowty group in a £250,000 research investment.

The idea came from two lecturers at college of further education, Mike Anstey, aged 38, and Dave Brown, aged 32, who earlier this year gave up their jobs and formed their own company, ICDC, at Wokingham. Yesterday, ICDC put on a matchbox-size chip-packed public display at an exhibition in Centre Point, London, organised by the Institute of Physics and Inventors.

Simple microelectronic systems, such as a home computer, are essentially two dimensional and huddler combichips are slotted into one board, which provides the connections between them. But multi-million-pound computers are able to handle hundreds of millions of calculations per second, always three-dimensional physically and can be multi-dimensional in operation as well.

The central processing units — the calculating hearts — of such computers consist of multiple interconnecting layers in which chips are buried by those above. The closer the chips are to each other, the quicker the electrons can be situated about, and the faster the computer will work.

The problem is to stop the chips melting in the frenzy — it's a bit like trying to air condition a rushhour Tube train.

Those computers can also process in further dimension — processing information in parallel, rather than in a single train/system in sequence. Evil that's all very well, but the human mind does it every second of every day.

What the Anstey-Brown invention might do is bring some of that speed and flexibility down to the home computer level — a single chip computer — into small-channel, multi-dimensional, overdrive as an integrated circuit.

This would open up the Dowty investment — it might be possible to build a cat's cradle of such chips to work in a single chip to work.

This would open up exciting possibilities. The art army might be given a common intelligence by its programming. It might only select the best combinations of its own resources for a particular job but find the optimum routine.

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Liberty's threat to striking blacks

By Margaret Pegum

Liberty Life Association of South Africa, the country's largest insurance group, threatened to sack 300 of its black clerical workers if they did not return to work by 3pm yesterday.

But last night the 300 staff, who went on strike on Tuesday, were still protesting against Liberty's failure to recognise their newly-formed black trade union and American Union of SA.

Last night employers and union representatives met in Johannesburg in an attempt to end the dispute.

Liberty management at the Johannesburg office said in a statement it had told the 300 staff they would be sacked unless they returned to work by 3pm.

The LAU was elected last year and now has between 1,000 and 1,500 members. The Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of SA, and the Insurance, Banking and Allied Workers Union of SA, have also been recognised by Liberty management.

But earlier this week, the non-striking members of Liberty removed their names from the LAU membership roll in protest at the union's decision to pay the striking workers their salaries.

Space deal

THE European Space Agency confirmed the signing of a contract with the Australian company Aerospace Technologies of Australia to launch its Ulysses spacecraft in August, 1990.

Unctad commodity plan flops

A United Nations plan to set up a common fund to stabilise prices of commodities such as coffee, cocoa and tin has now been put off indefinitely.

A conference for the UN Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad) ended in Geneva last night without any agreement on the proposed fund.

The plan, intended to stabilise prices of primary commodities, would have been financed by contributions from countries which produce and consume the goods.

The conference failed to reach agreement on the scheme's main objectives.

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