Nortel sales to Hong Kong

Northern Telecom Ltd. is breaking new ground in the Asian telecommunications market with a $1.7-million contract to supply a data switching setwork to Hong Kong Telephone Co.

The company has already supplied other telecommunications products to the Hong Kong market, but the SL-10 pocket switching network is the first public packet network sold in Asia by Northern Telecom International Ltd., a Northern Telecom subsidiary. The system will be manufactured at Northern Telecom's data networks division in Belleville, Ontario.

"This sale is significant because, as our first public packet switch in Asia, it provides Northern Telecom with an operating public network in the Asian market we can use to demonstrate the capabilities of the SL-10," said Harold Rosser, managing director of Northern Telecom (Asia) Ltd. The SL-10 is a computer-controlled digital switching system that bundles data into packets and sends the packets to individual destinations.

The Hong Kong network will be ready to go into operation this summer. Northern Telecom Sl-10 networks are already operating in Canada, the United States, Britain, Portugal, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Ireland and West Germany.

Bell-Northern wins US contract

Ottawa's Bell-Northern Research Ltd. (BNR), the research and development arm of Northern Telecom and Bell Canada, has signed a research and development contract with NYNEX Material Enterprises Co. of New York.

Under the agreement, BNR will prepare a signalling specification that defines the transmission of digital information between the telephone company's digital central office switches and the digital private branch exchanges (PBXs), which channel calls through businesses and other organizations.

At present, these digital signals have to be converted to an older, less efficient technology, called analog signals, before they are transmitted. New York Telephone wants to encourage PBX and central office manufacturers to develop digital interfaces so that voice and data messages can be transmitted between PBXs and central offices switches more quickly and efficiently.

Company converts records to computer packages

Many large companies want to convert their dusty filing cabinets into computer bits, and a Canadian engineering firm could soon become the leader in this fast-growing market.

"Converting to conversion" is the gospel at Monenco Ltd. of Montreal, said to be one of the world's top ten consulting engineers' firms, with annual sales of nearly $200 million. "We're sitting at the forefront of this," boasts Charlie Rabie, the computer services manager. "We're running second to no one."

Among larger firms that can afford full conversion to digital record-keeping, utilities are obvious prospects. Two major United States utilities have begun the switch. Monenco landed both projects.

Monenco was selected among 100 companies to run a pilot project for United Telephone Co., based in Atlanta, to computerize customer records. This expanded into a $2-million contract to convert 18 telephone exchanges and the total could reach 80. The utility serves five million customers in Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

Not only did Monenco beat all competition, but the company's key personnel on the project are Canadians. A Monenco subsidiary, Baymont Engineering Co. of Clearwater, Florida, is managing the contract.

Utilities, already a specialty for Monenco engineers, have a lot to gain by computerizing their records, says Monenco's Franco Grasso. A telephone company has a complex network of poles, cables, manholes and exchanges, not to mention phone sets and customers.

Files have to include type of equipment, date of installation and maintenance schedules. Each department such as accounting, billing and maintenance must keep separate records, and each time a telephone is installed or a wire moved, records must be updated.

Monenco developed its own software for record-keeping, as well as converting records. What Franco Grasso dubs "super software" is the final package that speeds up the labour-intensive job of converting manual records to bits and bytes.

A Monenco team based in St. Catharines, Ontario worked about six man-years on the super-software, and Franco Grasso believes that "no one in this world has mastered what this system can do".

Monenco got into computers the way any company does — for its own use. It was the first engineering firm in Canada to adopt CAD — computer aided drafting and design — in 1978. Now used by most major engineering firms, the video screens have revolutionized tedious blueprint drawings.
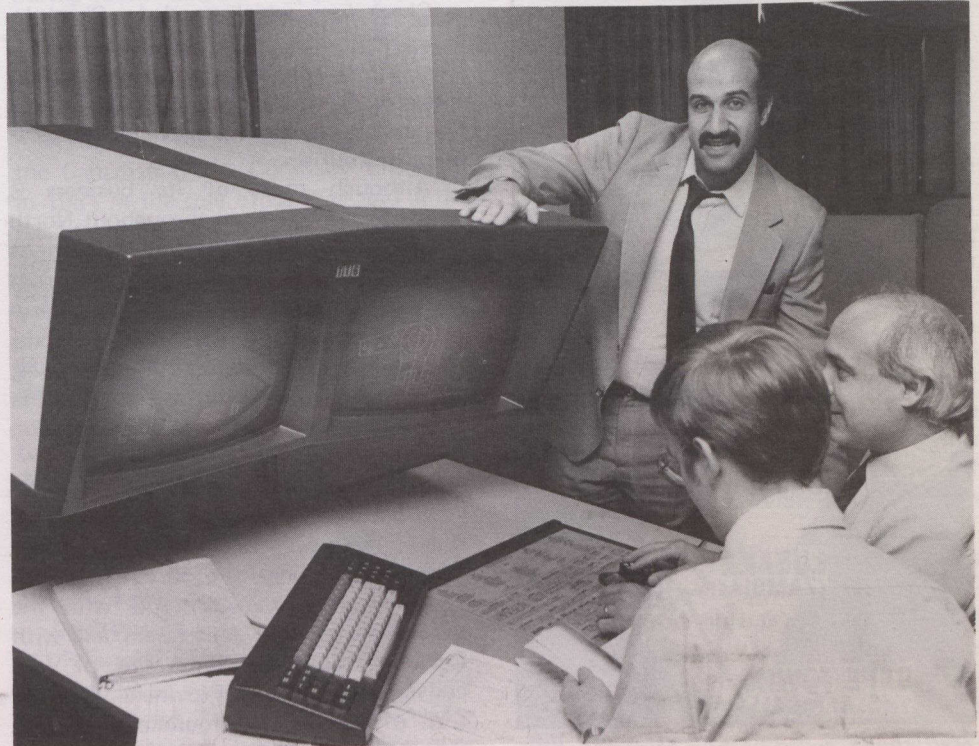
Monenco's computer services manager Charlie Rabie with computer-aided stations.