

10. The Passport Division's main proposal is to replace the majority of the manually operated Elliot-Fisher flat bed typewriters, used to write passports, with Flexowriter machines. Before this conclusion was reached a number of alternatives were examined to ensure that a better machine or system was not overlooked. Two of these are described under the heading "Alternative Equipment". Before examining these it should be stated that the machine now in use is no longer available, except as a custom order, and at a price considered prohibitive. In addition to this non-availability factor there is the factor of machine age. The average age of the machines now in use is 9.5 years - of these, four are 15 years old. With advanced machine age, breakdowns occur more frequently and this creates an insolvable problem if new parts are required, since they can no longer be purchased. Therefore, machine obsolescence and non-availability of either new machines or parts leaves no alternative but to find another type of equipment, preferably with greater capacity, speed and reliability. Since the issuance of passports is an essential public service any slow down or interruption in this service could have very serious repercussions.