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## Introductory Remarks

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## Introductory remarks

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On behalf of the Royal Society, I have the honour of warmly welcoming this large and distinguished international audience to our discussion meeting 'Telecommunications in the 1980s and after'. We welcome the Chiefs of Telecommunications Administrations: Sir Edward Fennessy heading Britain's Telecommunications Business (within the Post Office), and Herr Elias heading that of the Federal Republic of Germany. We welcome Britain's fine telecommunications supply industry in the person of the President of the Telecommunications Engineering and Manufacturing Association, Mr Corfield. We welcome outstanding engineers, technologists and applied scientists from the United States, France, Italy, Canada to help us discuss the future of that technology which is perhaps most international in its nature and has most to contribute to international relations. From Britain we welcome engineers and technologists from the Research and Development Department, from the Systems Strategy Department and from many other branches of the Post Office Telecommunications Business. We welcome speakers from three of the great companies making up Britain's telecommunications supply industry, and from two university departments specializing in telecommunications technology. In our audience we warmly welcome engineers and scientists and technologists both from the telecommunications field and also from many other areas of industry.

During this century the operations of every industry have been transformed by the great developments in telecommunications technology. This transformation, furthermore, is a continuous process; and there is a strong demand from engineers and technologists in almost all major industries to have an opportunity such as we will be giving them here: an opportunity to discuss with world leaders in telecommunications technology how new developments in the foreseeable future will further transform the ways in which each of those other industries operates. The Royal Society has borne in mind these considerations throughout the long process of organizing this Discussion Meeting.

I emphasized the word 'foreseeable' just now, because it is of course tempting after all the meetings in 1976 that looked back over the first 100 years of telephony to think of attempting here to look ahead towards what may happen during the following 100 years. From the outset, however, the organizers of this Discussion Meeting (helped in the early stages by Dr F. E. Jones, F.R.S., by Mr L. R. F. Harris, and by Dr W. J. Bray, Mr May's predecessor as the Post Office's Director of Research) put any such idea behind us. We recognize of course that the telecommunications industry is one in which planning times are (relatively speaking) long, so that planning may look forward not just one decade but two or three – or even four – albeit with dwindling certainty. From the point of view of the likely impact on other industries, however, it is the relatively more clearly foreseeable *medium-term* developments that may most helpfully be discussed. The telecommunications industry already discusses short-term developments with potential customers in the usual way of business. The very long-term future may

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

be too uncertain to be worth attempts at detailed analysis. To sum up, then, the principal demand is for discussion with widely representative engineers and technologists of the *medium-term* future developments, and that is why we called this Meeting ‘Telecommunications in the 1980s and after’.