and now that the Monopolies Commission is investigating the Lonrho bid for Scottish and Universal Investments, its hands are pretty full. And if Allied play the security of employment card they may succeed in presenting Hattersley as jeopardising the jobs of thousands.

Linwood workers back Peugeot

Ron McKay writes: As speculation grows that rescue of Chrysler in Great Britain would be at the expense of the troubled Linwood plant, the workforce there is still solidly in favour of the takeover of the American corporation's European operation by Citroën.

The convener of the shop stewards, John Carty, said: 'Citroën have made some headway in the motor trade and it must give Chrysler workers confidence that they want to take us over. It gets on my wick when I hear suggestions that this takeover would mean the closure of Linwood. Chrysler UK is an integrated operation. It is absolute nonsense to suggest you can just lop off Linwood. If Linwood goes, Coventry goes.'

At present engines, fascias and lights for the Avenger and new Sunbeam are manufactured in Coventry and shipped to Linwood. Similarly, components made at Linwood are supplied to Coventry. Because of this interdependence the Linwood workforce believe that any potential buyer would have to take the Chrysler operation as a whole. Consequently they rule out the takeover of Linwood by the Scottish Development Agency to build a Scottish car.

'That's just not on,' Carty said. 'Where would you get the engines and other components that we don't make here? Talk about an SDA takeover is lunacy.' Similarly the Linwood men believe that incorporation into British Leyland, while desirable, is not feasible. The new Sunbeam car, they say, was designed for a European launch and Leyland do not have the assets for that. Without European sales, say the men, there is only the tiny British market, already saturated by small saloon cars.

New computer for Special Branch

Duncan Campbell writes: A new computer is shortly to enter service with the Metropolitan police to collate the political and criminal intelligence files of five branches of the force, including the Special Branch. In all, about 1.5 million people will be on it. By 1985 the number will have topped 2 million.

The Home Office has said the new system will store information about 'crime, criminals and their associates, and matters relating to national security'. The specification for the system details the number of personal files which each police unit will wish to store. Most of the files do not concern criminals at all, but their associates or just 'persons' of interest. The largest group of these latter files belong to the Special Branch: 1,230,000 files. The other sections include the National Immigration Intelligence Unit (files on about 29,000 people), the National Drugs Intelligence Unit (about 160,000), the Fraud Squad (22,000 companies and 45,400 people). Only in the case of one small set of files used by the Serious Crimes Squad is it stated that the people concerned are criminals. This is a file on 130 people.

Two years ago, the contract to built the computer was awarded to a British computer company, after a study originating in 1973. Exact responsibility for the project is with the Metropolitan Police, but it appears to come under the wing of a joint Home Office/Police agency for Data Processing, known as JADPU. This agency has taken the lead in pioneering the Police National Computer and experimenting with the present intelligence gathering exercise. As early as 1973, an ICL computer in their charge was pressed into service to record and analyse the personal records from the National Drugs Intelligence Unit. Since a primary source of information for all such collections is lists of 'associates' it was inevitable that even then, two-thirds of the records stored were on non-criminals. These were unfortunates who perhaps had two friends raided by a local drugs squad, generating a black mark by cross-referencing borrowed address books.

The computerisation of the extensive files of the Special Branch – which now cover about five per cent of the adult population – will add a new dimension to the effects of such intelligence gathering. Like the Police National Computer, it will unlock so-called 'suppressed demand' for inquiries from the national data bank at the slightest whim. The original specification for the Met's new computer demonstrates that – until effective privacy legislation governs such presently untrammelled initiatives – there are no limits the police planners will not exceed. Among the 'probable future developments' to the new centre is 'behavioural pattern recognition'.

Computer industry sources have identified the likely location of the computer as a new police centre at Jubilee House, an office block in Putney. At least two medium sized computers have arrived there unannounced in the last eighteen months. The police, naturally, refuse to provide further information on the project, 'on grounds of national security'.