Blast-off at Cal Tech — *California Institute of Technology was the site of an address by* Hardcopy *Publisher George Seldin to DECUS members. The DECUS meeting proceded the initial* Hardcopy-*sponsored industry Roundtable.*

Introducing *Roundtable*

A Hardcopy *magazine-sponsored forum brings users and manufacturers together to discuss issues most pertinent to the DEC community today*

by Leslie Frohoff and Stephen Lawton

Seldin Publishing Inc. CEO George Seldin met in February with DEC industry leaders at the first in a series of *Hardcopy*-sponsored Roundtable sessions aimed at creating an open forum between users and manufacturers. Prior to the session, Seldin addressed DECUS members at a joint meeting of Cal-Tech-based Los Angeles RSX Local Users Group (LUG) and Southern California Users of RT (SCURT), and select manufacturers invited to participate in the following Roundtable session. At the Roundtable, pressing DEC-industry issues were discussed in an open forum as manufacturers reacted to issues explored in the preceding session, including the introduction of the VAXBI

bus and DEC's apparent move to a "closed" architecture, and DEC's licencing policies.

The move to a closed architecture with the introduction of the BI bus was viewed as "a short-sighted move on DEC's part," commented Robert Nathon, SCURT attendee. "DEC is shooting itself in the foot," he continued, citing the CI bus as a recent example of a closed architecture failure.

DECUS members voiced concern that the closing of the bus architecture will restrict the number of products available from third-party manufacturers, and with a show of hands, attendees leveled a near-unanimous vote in favor of a traditional open architecture.

Samuel Lane, marketing

and sales VP for Dyna Five Corp., agreed with LUG and SCURT members, citing IBM's success with the open architecture of its PC line and DEC's failure with the Rainbow. "There was not much (third-party) support for the Rainbow," said Lane.

"You need something to hang parallel systems on," added Nathon.

Unbound Vice President of Marketing Garth Phillipe did not agree. "I think the jury is still out — it's not as closed as you think," he said. Phillipe's comment was in line with DEC's recent reply to allegations of a "closed architecture" on its new systems — the 8200, 8300 and 8800 (previously code-named "Scorpio" and "Nautilus"). According to a DEC spokes-
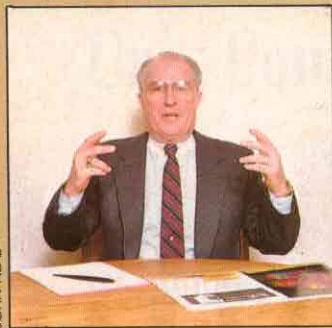
man who was interviewed by *Hardcopy* after the new systems announcement in late January, the introductions are compatible with all Unibus peripherals, as well as the new VAXBI peripherals that DEC anticipates third-party vendors who license the technology will develop.

Dennis Edwards, DILOG vice president of sales, joined Phillipe in support of the BI bus, observing that "the new architecture represents a significant advancement over the previous technology."

Alan Frisbe, chairman of the RSX group, independent consultant and LUG member, leveled vehement criticisms of what he viewed as DEC's migration towards proprietary design and distribution. "Look at the J-11 — if DEC

Dyna Five Corp. — *Samuel Lane, marketing and sales vice president of Dyna Five Corp. (below)*

JOHN NEAL

Unbound Inc. — *Unbound Inc.'s Vice President of Marketing, Garth Phillipe. (above)*

DILOG — *Dennis Edwards, sales vice president of Distributed Logic Corp. (left)*

Publisher's address — Hardcopy *Publisher George Seldin addresses members of the RSX LUG and SCURT members at California Institute of Technology. Industry leaders met with Seldin following the DECUS meeting to discuss DEC market trends. (right)*

GREG HADEL PHOTOS

Roundtable forum — *A group of industry leaders meets with Seldin Publishing Inc. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer George Seldin at the first* Hardcopy *Roundtable. The meeting followed a local DECUS meeting.*

DECUS attendees — *A large audience attends the RSX Local Users Group and Southern California Users of RT meetings. Among those in attendance is Milton Campbell, second row on the right, a member of the SCURT and* Hardcopy *columnist. Sitting next to Campbell is* Hardcopy *Senior Editor Stephen Lawton.*

doesn't like what you're making, you can't get the chips," he said.

While some third-party manufacturers have expressed problems in obtaining J-11 chips and CPU boards from DEC (see "DEC And The [Third] Party's Over," *Hardcopy*, February 1986), Phillipe disclosed at the Roundtable session that Unbound has not. Unbound manufactures mass storage subsystems and a transportable MicroPDP-11/73 and 11/23.

Lane, however, said that when Dyna Five inquired about purchasing CPU boards from DEC, DEC made "a significant inquiry as to what the application would be," and then declined to make the boards available. According to DEC, Lane reports, "Dyna Five wasn't going to be adding enough value to the boards." The product Dyna Five had considered producing, he described, was an enclosure with the CPU board included.

Edwards and Phillipe said that they were surprised at LUG and SCURT members' strong reaction to the closed architecture of the BI bus, and that their respective companies planned to license the technology from DEC for new products. During the recent new systems announcement, a DEC spokeman told *Hardcopy* that "products that fit into DEC's strategic plan for the new systems will get licencing approval for the VAXBI."

Roundtable attendees later questioned if DEC's "strategic plan" included

licensing the bus technology to companies such as Emulex, which might compete with commodity-type products thereby risking DEC a slice of the BI-bus pie. Lane pointed out that DEC is currently competing aggressively against its own OEMs for market share, and is using the licencing issue as an effective tool. "The right to license is the right not to license," concluded Seldin, broaching a subject — judging by demonstrated interest — that will be explored in detail in subsequent sessions.

Manufacturers attending the Roundtable forum noted that DECUS members, although from software-oriented interest groups, were more concerned about hardware and its limitations than with software. Edwards said that, based on expressed needs of this user community, DILOG may reconsider the direction of some of its products currently under development.

Future Roundtable sessions will be held in conjuction with DECUS meetings slated throughout the United States.