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<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top; padding: 5px;"> (21) International Application Number: PCT/GB00/01744 (22) International Filing Date: 5 May 2000 (05.05.00) (30) Priority Data: <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">99303672.2</td> <td style="width: 33%;">11 May 1999 (11.05.99)</td> <td style="width: 33%;">EP</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9919095.1</td> <td>12 August 1999 (12.08.99)</td> <td>GB</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9930373.7</td> <td>22 December 1999 (22.12.99)</td> <td>GB</td> </tr> </table> (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): BRITISH TELECOMMUNICATIONS PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY [GB/GB]; 81 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AJ (GB). (72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): COTTER, David [GB/GB]; 23 Moorfield Road, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 4JN (GB). LUCEK, Julian, Kazimierz [GB/GB]; 52 Wellesley Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1PL (GB). (74) Agent: WELLS, David; BT Group Legal Services, Intellectual Property Department, 8th Floor, Holborn Centre, 120 Holborn, London EC1N 2TE (GB). </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top; padding: 5px;"> (81) Designated States: AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG). Published With international search report. </td> </tr> </table>			(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB00/01744 (22) International Filing Date: 5 May 2000 (05.05.00) (30) Priority Data: <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">99303672.2</td> <td style="width: 33%;">11 May 1999 (11.05.99)</td> <td style="width: 33%;">EP</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9919095.1</td> <td>12 August 1999 (12.08.99)</td> <td>GB</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9930373.7</td> <td>22 December 1999 (22.12.99)</td> <td>GB</td> </tr> </table> (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): BRITISH TELECOMMUNICATIONS PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY [GB/GB]; 81 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AJ (GB). (72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): COTTER, David [GB/GB]; 23 Moorfield Road, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 4JN (GB). LUCEK, Julian, Kazimierz [GB/GB]; 52 Wellesley Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1PL (GB). (74) Agent: WELLS, David; BT Group Legal Services, Intellectual Property Department, 8th Floor, Holborn Centre, 120 Holborn, London EC1N 2TE (GB).	99303672.2	11 May 1999 (11.05.99)	EP	9919095.1	12 August 1999 (12.08.99)	GB	9930373.7	22 December 1999 (22.12.99)	GB	(81) Designated States: AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG). Published With international search report.
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(54) Title: OPTICAL COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK													
(57) Abstract A node in an optical communications network receives optical packets at its input. It determines a priority assigned to each optical packet. When the optical packet is a transit packet destined for another node then, if the packet is determined to have a relatively higher priority, it is output from the node via a continuous-flow transmission path. Other transit packets having relatively lower priorities are sent via an alternative transmission path that may include queues or buffers resulting in a variable delay.													