

members when the House was broadcasting. When censorship was applied the light went out. During some of the war debates the Speaker's hand was on the switch continually, ready to signal for the microphones to be cut off.

Sets of instructions were supplied to the engineer and all members, showing them how to deal with censored subjects such as the names of ships, shipping movements, the strengths and movements of troops, sites of military camps, aerodromes, and fortifications. The engineer had authority to cut off anything he thought should, in the country's interests, be deleted.

### The Cat Nearly Escaped

One evening, when the House was quiet and relaxed, a member spoke about farm products. He referred to what he called the slowness of ships in turning

### ON OUR COVER

Our photograph shows a microphone as it appears to a Member of Parliament when he is speaking from the floor of the House. There are seven such microphones, suspended on wires above the Members' heads.

round. One ship he knew of, he said, had taken a certain time to do it.

"What," asked another member, "was the name of that ship?"

A split second before the first speaker gave it, the engineer turned up his switch, the Speaker giving his signal at the same moment. The system worked so well that there is no record of Speaker or engineer having been just too late.

At times, during the war, the House was off the air more often than it was on, for statements judged to be of possible use to the enemy came out of debate without warning. During the whole of one evening at least the broadcast lasted for only a few minutes.

A fault in the equipment once caused consternation. In a secret session the Prime Minister informed the Speaker that there were "strangers" in the House. The strangers were the engineer and the newspaper representatives. All withdrew. Then it was noticed that the red light was burning brightly, indicating that the session was being broadcast.

The Sergeant-at-Arms was sent to call the engineer back but, because he was not allowed in the House during a secret session, he had to be asked for instructions how to douse the light. Actually the broadcast had ended. Something had gone wrong with the relay switch. It had become self-magnetised, holding the red light on. The Clerk of the House tried unsuccessfully to extinguish it. The session went on and the light went out a little later of its own accord.

### Overseas Interest

The NBS has had inquiries from overseas about its methods of broadcasting. Parliament, England, America, Canada, and Australia have shown interest. Recently C. J. A. Moses, general manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and R. J. F. Boyer, chairman of the commission, visited New Zealand with the sole purpose of seeing how we do it. They studied not only the technical aspects but the reactions of listeners and the effect of broadcasting on the quality and length of debates.

Experience has shown that discretion must be used in returning to the studio and playing recordings during a spell such as a division of the House, for an unintentional association of ideas can cause amusing but awkward moments. But this applies to other forms of broadcasting also. Once, just after a broadcast of a State luncheon, it was noticed that a record scheduled to be played was the farcical "Running Commentary on the Annual Dinner of Slate Club Secretaries." A hurried change was made to something more suitable.

The average time given to broadcasting Parliament each year for the nine years is 750 hours. Complete tests of the equipment are made half-an-hour before each session — microphones, circuits, amplifiers, and land lines being tried out.

### How Many Listen?

We asked the engineer if he had any idea how many people listened to Parliament.

It was hard to judge, he said, but some idea could be got from the debate on the future of the New Zealand Forces. When the debate started at 7.30 p.m. there was only a sprinkling of people in the galleries. The Prime Minister announced that for reasons of security the House would go off the air. By 8.15 p.m. the galleries were full, showing that a large number of people must have been listening.

We suggested that as a good deal of the work of Parliament is done by the select committees, before the more spectacular part comes on and is broadcast, it might be possible to give a short resume of the committee work at 7.20 p.m.

That, the engineer agreed, would certainly make listeners more aware of the vast amount of business transacted and dispel any idea that Parliament was just a "talking-shop."

As for the engineer himself, his job does not consist merely of listening to debates and throwing a switch now and then. He keeps a complete log of the names of all speakers and the times of their speeches for record purposes.

—Staff Reporter.



STEWART DUFF, New Zealand sales manager of the Commercial Division of the NBS, who has returned to duty after a period with the R.N.Z.A.F.



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