

WANGANELLA STORY

THE story of the grounding of the inter-colonial liner Wanganella on Barrett's Reef, Wellington, on Sunday night, January 19, of the work of the engineers in refloating the vessel, and of her final dramatic berthing at Aotea Quay on the night of Thursday, February 6, was told to listeners throughout the Dominion by the NZBS in a series of broadcast commentaries which tellingly emphasised the suitability of radio for on-the-spot news reporting. Both divisions of the Service kept a constant watch on the liner during the critical days when she was aground, and the series of commentaries made has now been filed "for the record."

From the time the first passengers came ashore at Queen's Wharf on the morning after the mishap, when Station 2ZB got off to a good start, both YA and ZB commentators were on the job reporting as it developed each new move in the work of refloating. National link-ups were arranged, and whenever the state of the tide or the disposition of the tugs suggested that a major effort might be imminent, announcers stood by. In addition, a general round-up of news was compiled for broadcast each evening.

Through the courtesy of the Wellington Harbour Board, and of the Post and Telegraph and Army Departments, vantage points on Beacon Hill, Mount Victoria, and Aotea Quay were used for the eye-witness broadcasts. Station 2ZB had the additional help of a keen listener living at Breaker Bay, within sight of the ship. This enthusiast kept his field-glasses trained on the liner for hours at a stretch, and telephoned the station whenever he saw any signs of unusual activity on board or on the tugs.

Though the long spell of what came to be called "Wanganella weather" helped the observers as well as those working aboard the ship, the station technicians had plenty of other outdoor work to cover as well. There was a long schedule of sporting events to be broadcast, and the arrival of the new inter-Island ferry steamer Hinemoa was also covered thoroughly.

But the Wanganella remained the big news until her safe arrival at the wharf. And at that point in the story the radio news-service was nearly too good. The flash which told that the ship was safely off the reef and on her way up-harbour brought such a throng of listeners to Aotea Quay that the 2YA commentator could not fight his way through the crowd, and the final commentary had to be taken over at a moment's notice by a technician.



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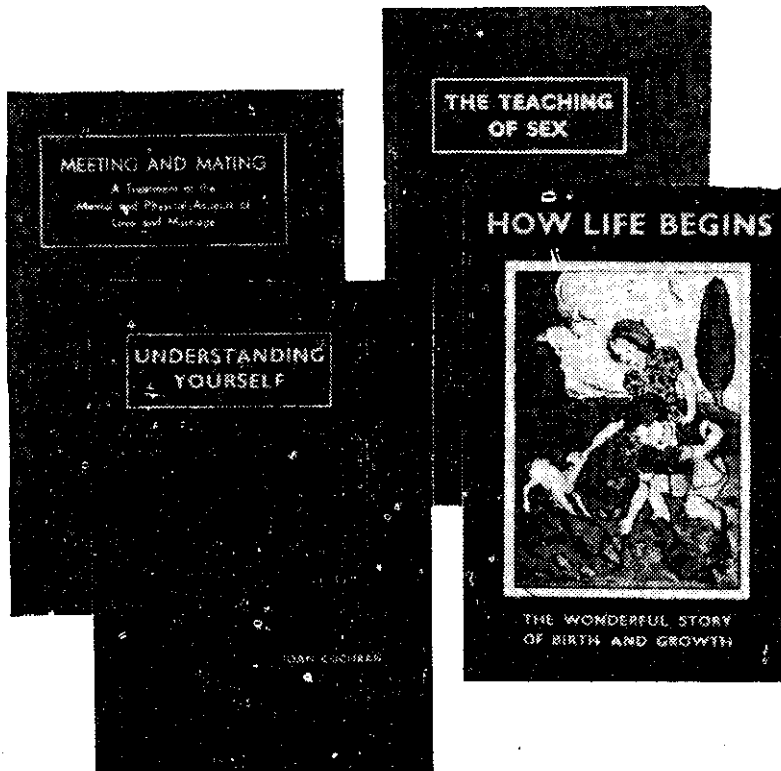
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