

THE ZB's BROADCAST WAS A "BYRD"

Efficient Organisation Brought Details Of Antarctic Expedition Clearly To Listeners

THE ZB organisation swung quickly and efficiently into action to cover the unexpected arrival in Wellington recently of Rear-Admiral Byrd's ship *The North Star*. Like newspaper boys out for a "scoop," the ZB team, comprising Peter Hutt, Brian O'Brien and Kingi Tahiwī with Engineers Roy Neate and Don Rushworth, descended on the ship almost as soon as she berthed and in no time had the various personalities made ready to be interviewed, the technical arrangements perfected and all the ZB Stations hooked up. The broadcast was carried out from three points—the fo'c'sle, the recreation hall and the galley—the commentary being switched from point to point without a second's delay.

It was just one of those opportunities all real broadcasters pray for, and the ZB organisation made the most of it. The broadcast was recorded in its entirety and re-broadcast by Station ZB at night for the benefit of those listeners who were unable to hear the actual broadcast during the day. This recording will be a valuable addition to the ZB's library of historic recordings.

Once in a while an expedition with a universal flavour about it touches our shores, and makes us aware that we are in some ways a country isolated from much that is happening in the world of scientific progress. The other day through the banks of mist and driving rain, a ship appeared at the entrance to Wellington Harbour, which carried the United States Antarctic Service Expedition under the command of one who is well-known to New Zealanders, Admiral Richard E. Byrd. Admiral Byrd is making his third trip to the Antarctic and has under his command a total personnel of 139. Seventy-five of the members of the crew and the scientific and specialist staff are in Admiral Byrd's ship *The North Star*, and the remainder are in the other ship which is the famous *Bear*, formerly known as *The Bear of Oakland*.

Public Relations Officer

Immediately the expedition's arrival became known the Commercial Broadcasting Service set out to prepare for what proved to be one of the most absorbingly interesting broadcasts to date. The man responsible for the success of the broadcast was the Public Relations Officer of the expedition, Roger Hawthorne. He it was who at Peter Hutt's request sought out the important folk on the *North Star* and arranged for them to broadcast the details of their own particular departments of the expedition.

For example there was Dr. Paul A. Siple. Dr. Siple is one of the foremost scientists in America. He hails from Philadelphia and is President of the American Polar Society. This will be Dr. Siple's third expedition to the far south, and he will be in charge of the West Base, to be located at the one hundred and fiftieth meridian, at or somewhat to the east of where Little America was. From the West Base Dr. Siple will be doing all kinds of field work in various scientific fields.

Dr. Siple is a tall smiling fellow, with that rangy build one associates with most Americans. He is dark and he has deep-set smiling eyes.

The Snow Cruiser

Then there was Dr. T. C. Poulter, also a veteran of Antarctic expeditions. He was with Admiral Byrd on his previous visits south. Dr. Poulter is the inventor of the snow cruiser. This is an enormous machine of the auto-motive type, some 25 feet in length over all and 15 feet wide. It is specially built to enable the members of the scientific side of the expedition to carry out research work on the snow. It has specially built tyres which are 10 feet in diameter—enormous things said to be the largest tyres in the world. In the hub of each wheel are independent driving units to enable the huge structure to manoeuvre more easily. It has a control room poised over the engine room. It has also a galley 8 feet square, living quarters which measure 12 feet by 15 feet, and is driven by two Diesel engines. Dr. Poulter claims that the machine will be wide enough to travel over the softest snow and to negotiate crevasses up to fifteen feet wide. Dr. Poulter is another of the expedition who is impressive, not only by his charm of manner, but also by the fluent way in which he is able to make the specialised facts of his scientific calling understood by anyone to whom he is talking.



22B personalities photographed with personnel of the U.S. Antarctic Expedition aboard the "North Star." Note "Rikki" the big Labrador huskie

Enormous Load of Food

In charge of the food arrangements on board is Sigmund Gutenko. He has the important job of working out the food requirements of each man during the whole of the expedition's stay in the Antarctic. He told listeners that the amount of food on board was approximately 90 tons. A staggering total sufficient to last the party for two years.

Among the items he listed were 40,000 lbs. of flour, 35,000 lbs. of sugar; 10,000 lbs. of butter; 61,000 lbs. of meat, and about 6 tons of dehydrated foods, which when prepared would yield a food value of almost 7 to 1.

Then, too, there are two 'planes aboard the *North Star*. One is a Condor-Curtiss of the heavier type, and the other a Beechcraft. The latter is to travel atop the Snow Cruiser and has a safety range of 1,200 miles without the need to refuel. Its top speed is 240 m.p.h., and its cruising speed 186 m.p.h. This information was volunteered by Jim McCoy, the expedition's chief pilot, and Mr. Petras, who will fly the other craft.

In Charge of the Dogs

Bryan O'Brien, who was a member of Admiral Byrd's last expedition, renewed a number of acquaintances with the crew—and in particular with one of the most picturesque, Finn Ronne. He is in charge of the dogs, which are most important units in any such undertaking. Sixty-four dogs there are; mostly recruited from the north coast of Labrador. There are twelve dogs which were in the last expedition, and seven of these were born in the Arctic. A source of much interest were the twelve puppies on board. Some were not more than a month or two old. Three of these were born after the *North Star* had left American waters. Finn, like most of his colleagues on board, was a fluent and

informative talker, and his particular session of the broadcast was listened to with keenest interest.

Then there was Fred Dustin, another of Bryan's associates when last Admiral Byrd went south. Fred is the owner of a big Labrador Huskie named Rikki, which was born in Dustin's bunk at the South Pole their last time down.

Among the other interesting folk who gave their valuable time for the broadcast were Vernon Boyd, the master mechanic on whom the efficiency of all the mechanical equipment depends, and Mr. Morency, one of the army tractor and tank drivers, as well as various members of the crew who have special duties to perform.

Those Bamboo Rods

A great many guesses were made as to the probable purpose of a large number of bamboo rods on board, but no one arrived at the correct answer. Mr. Hawthorne, the Public Relations Officer, who arranged the broadcast and acted throughout as a most entertaining compère, finally explained that the bamboo rods will be sawn into three-foot lengths when the expedition is under way, and will then be split into very fine strips for the purpose of using them as flag standards in the snow. On each strip an orange flag will be attached, and when any work is being carried out on the snow, these orange flags will be dropped every third of a mile to mark the route taken. Mr. Hawthorne explained that the orange colour is very easily and quickly seen in the snow. In this way routes will be mapped out and marked. It was explained that the flags remain clearly visible for many months.

One remarkable feature of the broadcast was the competent and unhesitating manner in which every "interviewee" delivered his facts, and summed up the work for which he was responsible in a way which gave a very clear picture of the whole work of the expedition.