

THE sterling service rendered the New Zealand public by the YA stations following the earthquake is past all value.

At 3 p.m. on Tuesday, four hours after the devastating upheaval took place, all stations were on the air broadcasting official bulletins to an anxious and sorrow-stricken public. Throughout the afternoon and evening, not closing down until midnight, frequent communiques received from Mr. G. McNamara, Secretary of the Post and Telegraph Department, and appeals for assistance and co-operation from numerous local organisations were put over the air.

As soon as the first tidings of the earthquake were made known supplies of food and clothing and numerous offers of motor-cars for transportation purposes were instantly forthcoming from people eager to help in any possible way.

Throughout the sad days that followed, the broadcasting authorities, fully realising the tremendous service which only radio could render, greatly extended the transmission times of all stations. For instance, on Wednesday 2YA came on the air at 10 a.m., and with only a two-hour break at 12.30 a.m., continued transmitting until midnight. Apparently never-ending lists of dead and missing, more joyful reports of those safe, urgent requests for nurses and doctors, and appeals and instructions from the Government and all concerned in the relief of these survivors were repeated again and again.

The immediacy of the response to each and every request bore eloquent testimony to the great work of humanity which was being performed by broadcasting.

TWO remarkable achievements in broadcasting were accomplished during the night of February 5, when successive accounts of the earthquake were broadcast throughout the networks of Australian and American stations.

At the request of the general manager of the Australian Broadcasting Company, and with the co-operation of the engineering officers of the G.P.O., Wellington, Mr. John Ball, editor-announcer of the R.B.C., spoke to Australian listeners for fifteen minutes from the Chief Telegraph Engineer's office. The salient features of the earthquake and its consequences were fully covered, and according to reports received the broadcast was remarkably successful. The Australian rebroadcast by five of the principal "A" class stations was clearly heard by Wellington listeners, fading and static being noticeably absent. Mr. Ball's voice could be readily recognised. Communication with the short-wave station 2ME, Sydney, was effected by means of the trans-Tasman short-wave radio telephone service, and from there the talk was relayed by land-line to 2BL and 2FC, Sydney; 4QG, Brisbane; 3LO, Melbourne; and 5CL, Adelaide.

Earlier in the day the Wellington Post Office authorities received a request from America asking them to co-operate with the postal authorities in Australia in the conducting of a short-wave relay from New Zealand.

This was promptly acceded to, and at 12 p.m. ZLW, the Wellington Government short-wave station, went on the air once more, and through 2ME, Sydney, established immediate contact with W2XAF at Schenectady, New York.

Once again Mr. Ball delivered a comprehensive summary of the facts concerning the earthquake, and at the conclusion of this replied to a number of questions concerning the disaster put by the American announcer. The broadcast was thus two-way, though owing to the unsuitability at that particular time of the night of the wavelength used by 2ME, Sydney, communication from New York to Wellington was direct.

This broadcast to the other side of the world was a far greater success than those concerned had hoped for—a fact which speaks volumes for the efficiency of the recently inaugurated trans-Tasman radio-telephony service.

Short-wave Broadcast to two Continents

Inestimable Service by YA Stations

By medium of the vast coast-to-coast network of stations through which Mr. Ball's talk was relayed, millions of American people heard the true story of New Zealand's terrible disaster.

At the conclusion the officials at Schenectady expressed their grateful thanks to the authorities at Wellington and Sydney for making such a rebroadcast possible.

The wisdom of unduly advertising such a catastrophe will no doubt be questioned by many, especially those who are interested in attracting tourists to these shores. It must be remembered, however, that almost invariably reports on such occurrences are in far-off countries distorted and exaggerated. It is far better to let the world know definitely that the earthquake was fortunately confined to a restricted portion of the country than to let them believe the wild speculation sometimes indulged in by newspapers.

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