

Thrilling Midnight Broadcast of City Fire

At about 11 p.m. last Saturday night, listeners to 2YA were thrilled to hear the announcement that the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company's building, a block away from the station studio, was on fire, and that 2YA would stay on the air to broadcast a commentary. The description which followed, given by Mr. Clive Drummond, station announcer, was above criticism, and must have kept thousands of listeners from their beds.

A MICROPHONE was placed on the parapet of the main studio window, and by leaning out over it the announcer could command an excellent view of the burning building—about fifty yards away and on the opposite side of the street.

The building, which occupies the greater portion of a roughly triangular-shaped block, was soon surrounded by a mass of theatre-goers and others who had seen the fire from a distance and had driven or walked to its location. With characteristic promptitude, the fire brigade was soon on the scene, but it appeared to the onlookers that the hold the fire already had, coupled with the high wind which was blowing, would render hopeless any attempt to save the building.

The broadcast commenced to the accompaniment of the shrilling sirens of the fire brigade engines, and the excited hubbub in the street below of people and cars hurrying to the scene of the fire. A fascinating description was given of Featherston Street—a fairyland of motor lights and, near the fire, a seething mass of curious spectators.

Though the fire broke out on the side most remote from the studio, the flames could be seen leaping into the air above the building. Early in the broadcast, two of the station staff were given roving commissions to collect any possible news and report at intervals to the studio.

Thus listeners were able to hear how firemen with hoses were raised on the ends of telescopic ladders above the level of the blaze, and how from these vantage points hissing streams of water, under terrific pressure, were directed in the centre of the

holocaust beneath. Because of the heat of the advancing flames and the thick billowing clouds of smoke, which often completely enveloped the fire-fighters, it was necessary from time to time to shift the ladders with their burdens to less precarious positions.

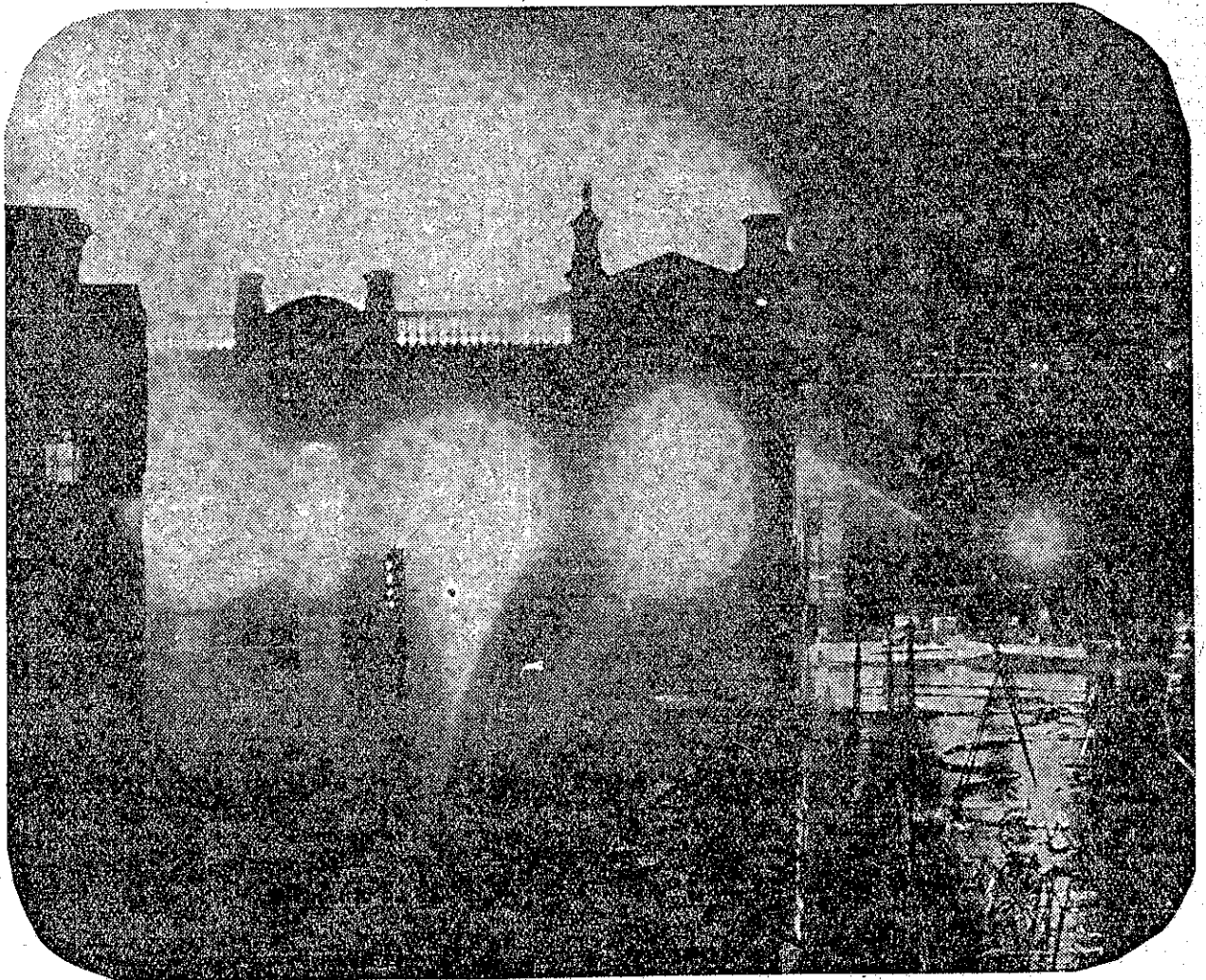
As the outside walls of the building are of brick, these fortunately were in no danger of collapsing, but their presence, assisted by the strong northerly wind, caused such a draught that the flames ferociously licked and roared skywards.

The bitumen streets, wet and glistening

black, were, as Mr. Drummond commented, criss-crossed by a maze of hose leads, and over all was a thin haze of spray, forced out at minute crevices in the joints by the terrific pressure within.

AT about 11.35 p.m., the position seeming to be unchanged, the sporting summary was presented, and a few minutes later the announcer once more took up his position at the studio window.

By this time the flames, despite all efforts, had spread toward the front of the



A view of the fire taken shortly after 11.30 p.m. on Saturday night. On the right, in Ballance Street, can be seen a telescopic ladder from which firemen can be seen directing a hose through one of the upper story windows. "Dominion" photo.