17 May 1976

World Telecommunication Day

"Telecommunication and mass media"

On 17 May World Telecommunication Day will be celebrated by the 148 Member countries of ITU. This year the theme is "Telecommunication and mass media". We publish below two articles on this subject. Other short articles on the use of telecommunications by press agencies will be published next month.

Telecommunications and the press

The IPTC

The International Press Telecommunications Council (IPTC) was established in September 1965 to safeguard and promote the telecommunications interests of the world's press. Through its members the Council represents more than 7000 newspapers throughout the world and most of the international and national news agencies.

Its formation was prompted by the conviction that modern telecommunications technology—and the communications satellite and the computer in particular— would have far-reaching effects upon the collection, retrieval and dissemination of news, whether in graphic or pictorial form. The press required a strong and united voice wherever and whenever international telecommunications were being discussed or regulated—and the voice became and remains IPTC's.

One of its first initiatives was to seek recognition as an international organization by the CCITT and the Council has been represented at meetings of many CCITT Study Groups including those of Study Groups I, II, III, IV, VII, XIII, XIV and Special A.,

The IPTC has also been accorded observer status by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and maintains close relations with other organizations such as the Communications Satellite Corporation (COMSAT), the European Space Agency (ESA), the European Communities and most organizations concerned, whether directly or indirectly, with the problems of international telecommunication.

In its attempts to represent the interests of the press the IPTC has been quick to recognize that newspapers are nothing without the reader—just as telecommunications are nothing without the user. It therefore seeks to contribute to CCITT recommendations which will encourage the press to serve its readers not only more comprehensively but with greater speed and economy.

An early and dramatic demonstration of the implications of modern technology for the press was the successful transmission of a newspaper page from London to San Juan, Puerto Rico by a communications satellite in 1967. This experiment sponsored by the IPTC pointed the way to the use of spatial communication and of rooftop antennae not only for remote printing but for the dissemination of news and pictures in either analogue or digital form. Such benefits in terms of greater and possibly more economical

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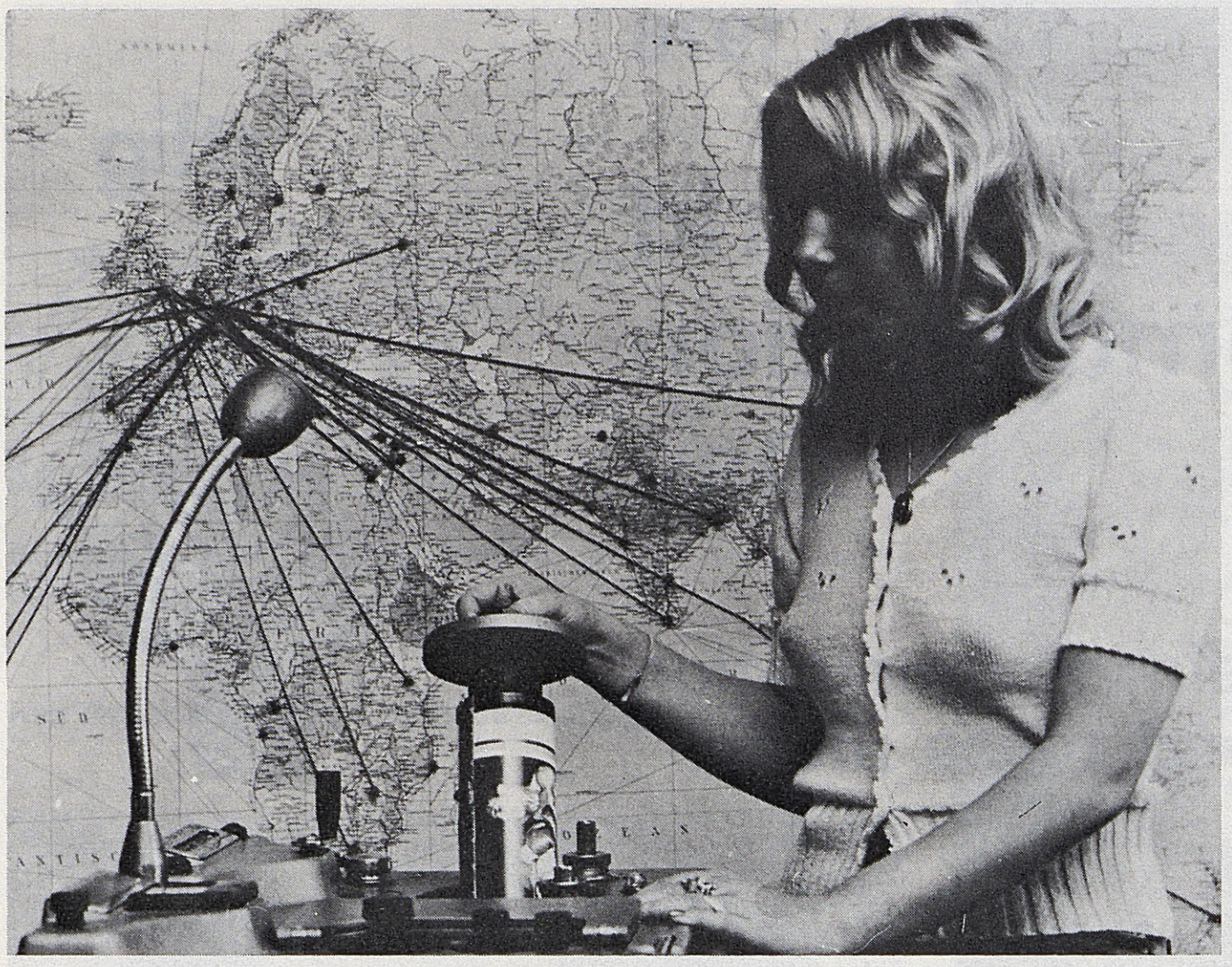

Facsimile equipment forms an important link in the process of getting a story into print Here Siemens equipment is being used to transmit a photograph of a sporting event

The radio room of the liner "Queen Elizabeth II": in this ship a fully "made-up" version of the British "Daily Telegraph" is received daily by facsimile from London. On board ship the paper is printed and distributed to the passengers

means of telecommunications promised not only benefits generally to nation States but more especially to the developing nations. The use of systems of this kind is already under study by the press in the United States where the cost benefits of satellite communication are being reflected in sharp tariff reductions.

Although the IPTC is particularly receptive to technologies and policies which will make the business of international telecommunication more accessible and less of a luxury to people all over the world, it is equally concerned with questions of equipment standards and transmission specifications. It has made a number of contributions to the search for compatibility between document facsimile apparatus of different kinds and manufacture now before CCITT Study Group XIV. It is taking a keen interest in the parameters for the international data network of tomorrow which is the concern of Study Group VII. Its submissions to the CCITT have ranged from the need to uphold peak levels on circuits used for photo-telegraphy in the interests of news photo quality, to the value of night rates in the international telephone service as a means of easing congestion and of generating new revenues for PTTs.

In its participation in the work of the CCITT, the IPTC has been quick to recognize the value of this Committee as a place where those who furnish the telecommunications service and those who use it can work together in making the world a smaller place. The IPTC recognizes the ITU as unique in being this meeting place of such minds on a world scale. This is not the least of its many valuable functions.

The IPTC looks forward to a continuing and closer liaison with ITU in their mutual task of uniting mankind by improving world communication facilities, and thereby informing nation States of each other's problems and viewpoints.—*IPTC*.

Telecommunications and the mass media in Australia

The remoteness of Australia from the great centres of world population has produced in the Australian people a strong interest in the events, issues and activities of other people in overseas countries. This interest resulted in the early development of international telegraph communication a little more than a century ago and the Australian press was quick to develop its coverage of overseas news. With the greater freedom of movement and interchange of people

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which has come with improvements in transport, so also has the coverage of overseas events been extended from this early press telegraph communication to all the facilities which are now available to the media: leased teleprinter and telex lines for all types of news, data transmission for specialized news such as stockmarket and commodity prices, and phototelegraph and facsimile transmissions of illustrative material.

The early submarine telegraph cable has been superseded and wideband submarine cables, earth stations and satellites enable the press to give an extensive and simultaneous coverage of world events. With this range of facilities the international press has instantaneous access to many points on the Australian continent several thousand kilometres apart. Australia is very conscious of these achievements made possible by the efforts of so many administrations, private operating authorities, and manufacturers through the International Telecommunication Union.

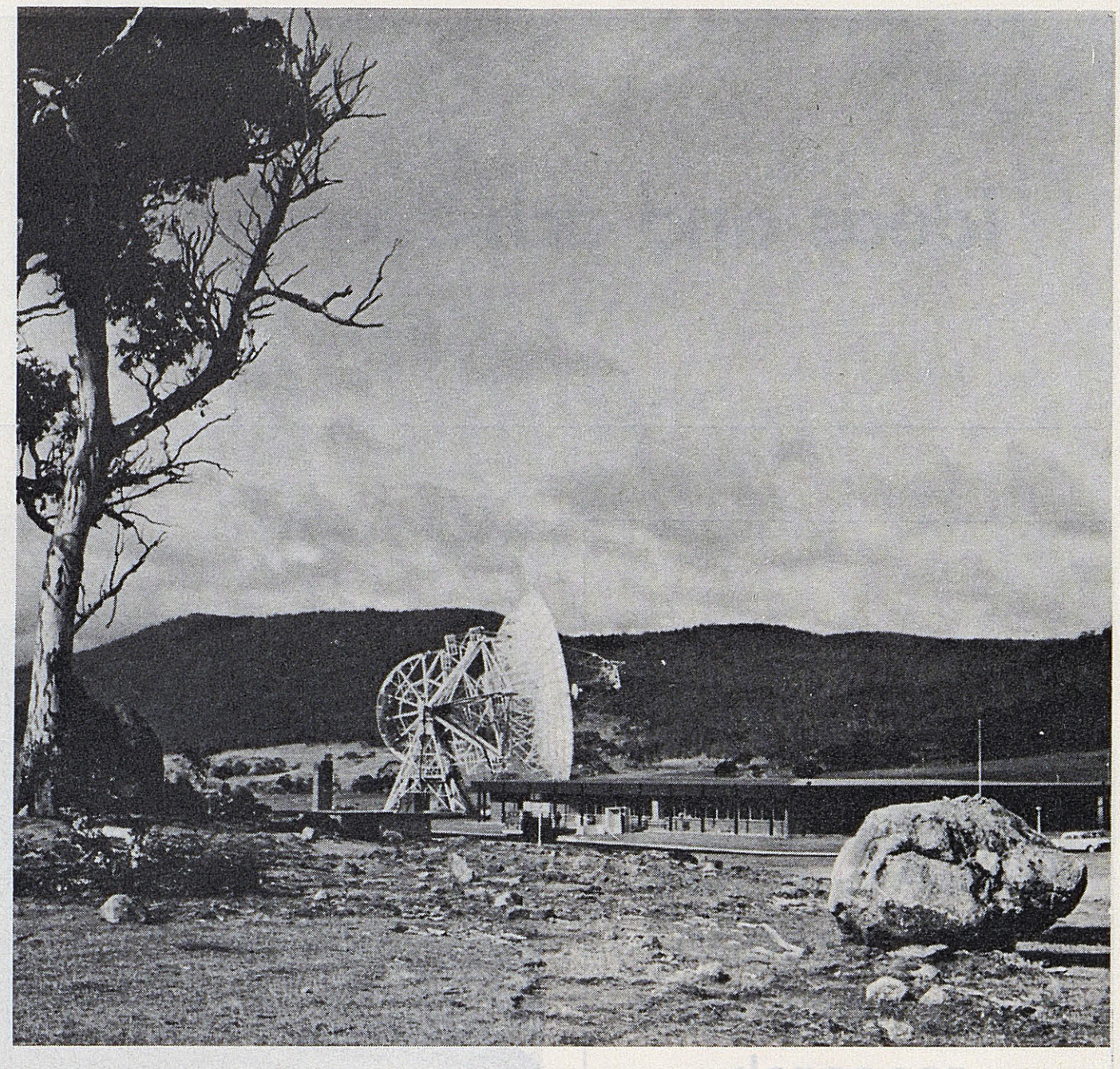
In 1923, sound broadcasting commenced in Australia and introduced a new era in mass media. From these early days medium frequency broadcasting has expanded with over 200 stations spread throughout the country. The Australian MF system is, basically, a dual system—with about 50% of the stations being national (government owned and operated) and the remainder privately operated.

Recently a small number of public broadcasting stations have been established by community groups providing educational, community, ethnic, music and other special interest type non-profit programmes and services.

Whilst, presently, sound broadcasting in Australia is dominantly in the medium frequency band, high frequency services have long been established and recently a start was made on the introduction of VHF/FM services. Domestic high frequency services are used, in the main, to provide broadcasting and telecommunications in the more remote parts of Australia where the provision of medium frequency services is not feasible on economic grounds.

All the national services, and the overseas service (Radio Australia) are programmed by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) and Telecom Australia (the telecommunications authority) provides and operates the transmitting stations. Planning of the Australian broadcasting and television system is the responsibility of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board.

Looked at in its broadest sense, the sound broadcasting and television services of Australia, whilst predominantly entertainment media, nevertheless provide a variety of material, in addition to news bulletins, to inform and educate the public of all ages on a wide range of subjects embracing both the domestic and overseas scene.



The NASA tracking station at Honeysuckle Creek near Canberra which was officially opened on 17 March 1967 to support the "Apollo" project. It is through earth stations like these that the Australians are kept abreast of world developments as they happen

In the field of formal education a very significant service to schools is provided by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. School's radio programmes occupy more than 2 hours each weekday and extend from the pre-school programme kindergarten, with its accompanying talk to parents, through to legal studies, current affairs programmes and literary studies for senior secondary classes. Special programmes are being developed to assist migrant children and children with reading disabilities.

"Television for schools", which began in an experimental way in 1958, has built up a strong tradition in Australian schools, both as a supplement to schoolwork, and by stimulating viewers to further reading, research and other creative work.

In the sparsely populated areas of Australia's vast outback communications are maintained through the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) of Australia.

The service was established originally to provide economical medical aid to remote outpost stations using aviation and radio facilities. There are now 2500 privately owned outpost stations and 12 base stations operated by the RFDS.

The RFDS radio network, which uses single side band in the high frequency band, is also used to handle the transmission of telegrams, dissemination of news and information between outposts, emergency communications during national disasters, and search and rescue operations and "school of the air" broadcasts.

Many children living in remote areas in Australia are not able to attend normal schools and receive their basic education from correspondence schools operated by their State education authorities. This service is supplemented by the school of the air which serves 1000 children between the ages of 5 to 12 years.—*Telecom Australia.*