17 May 1981

World Telecommunication Day

"Telecommunications and health"

Reports are now coming in to ITU headquarters on the celebration of World Telecommunication Day in the different Member countries of the Union. We publish below a résumé of one of these reports.

Liberia

National observation of World Telecommunication Day throughout Liberia was declared by the Head of State.

The day was marked by the first rural television broadcast, which enabled the rural population to participate fully in the celebration.

The Radio Amateur Association also played a very active role and participated in the contest for the ITU Trophy, organized by the *Liga de Amadores Brasileiros de Radio Emissâo* (LABRE).

The official celebration of World Telecommunication Day on 17 May included:

— national speech by the Head of State of Liberia;

— a panel discussion on "Telecommunication and health" was broadcast by sound radio and television;

— inauguration of a rural television service via a television link over the Liberian section of PANAFTEL.

Emphasis—Telecommunications and health

The emphasis for the Day was placed on Telecommunications and health with specific reference to communications in health emergencies, epidemic and national health and communications co-ordination for national development.

Liberia had a serious epidemic of Lassa fever which was discovered in a remote area of Liberia, Zorzor, Lofa County, which did not have access to the direct communications link. This disease took the lives of many including medical personnel. The epidemic was arrested through the help of an amateur radio operator, who realizing the danger sent out a distress call on his radiocommunication set. This call was picked up by an amateur in the capital city, Monrovia, who made immediate alarm contact with the medical centre which took measures to arrest the spread of the disease. But unfortunately the disease could not be identified because it was not known to Liberia. The situation became alarming and the Amateur Radio Association of Liberia organized an emergency network with International Amateur Radio Operators (IARO). Through the emergency network, an amateur in the United States broke in and remembered that a disease of similar symptoms had been discovered in Nigeria, and treated, and that a vaccine was available somewhere in the United States. Immediate search by radiocommunication began. Within forty hours, the doctor who had treated the disease for which the vaccine was developed, identified the Liberian outbreak as Lassa fever.

The doctor along with the vaccine was flown to Liberia from the United States and the vaccine administered. Through this effort of communications, the epidemic was arrested and many lives were saved.

This experience motivated research into Lassa fever and its control, encouraged rural health conscientiousness, and co-ordination between communications and health services by radio, etc.

The observance of World Telecommunication Day 1981, with the theme "Telecommunications and health", helped to bring home to the people the importance of national development in health and communications.

Ideas and Achievements

Cargo data system introduced by British Telecom

A NEW computer-controlled data system covering both export and import cargo has been brought successfully into service by British Telecom.

Initially it operates at London Heathrow and Gatwick airports, controlling the movement of about 30% of the United Kingdom's overseas trade.

It is known as *ACP80* (air cargo processing in the 80s) and is operated for nearly 350 participating organizations—38 airlines and transit shed operators, 300 freight forwarding agents and the national Customs and Excise Department—by the national data processing service (NDPS), British Telecom's commercial computing arm.

ACP80 carries out a variety of tasks. It:

— handles through one bureau inventory control of imports and exports for 32 airlines and transit shed operators;

— provides an interface to the internal computer systems operated by six major airlines;

— allows airlines and agents to report export consignments to the Customs Department;

— provides access to the Customs import clearance computer system;

— generates export and import figures for inclusion in national trade statistics.

ACP80 uses British Telecom's packet-switched data service (PSS). The PSS network carries cargo information between the ACP80 computers and the separate computer systems operated by British Airways, Trans World Airlines, Pan American, KLM, Alitalia and Flying Tiger—and located in places as far apart as Los Angeles and Rome.

The total bureau network currently involves more than 450 VDUs and 400 printers, in offices and cargo sheds. They are linked directly to the computers over private leased circuits.

Agents can book space for cargo through the system and follow its progress up to departure.