



## ***EMERGENCY CALL***

TWO YOUNG South African doctors, Dr. Montague Solomon and Dr. Arthur Bane, have established a unique emergency 'radio call' service in London, employing many doctors and a fleet of cars equipped with Marconi VHF radio sets.

Designed to relieve London's over-worked general practitioners of night and weekend calls from patients, the service is proving very popular. Initially covering West London, it has been extended since its inauguration early last year to cover almost the whole Metropolis.

Under the National Health Service, doctors must give a twenty-four hour service. At busy periods this often means working thirty or thirty-six hours at a stretch, or night after night of disturbed sleep. This is particularly the case where

the supply of general practitioners is unequal to the demand, as in London, and many doctors become seriously over-worked.

Dr. Solomon and Dr. Bane spent months studying the best way of giving an after-dark service that would relieve doctors—and their wives—of the worry of night calls, and at the same time speed the treatment of the patient. During this time Dr. Bane visited New York to study schemes successfully operating to this end in America.

Their answer to the problem was the Emergency Call Service as it is now known. This is a Limited Company, but does not operate in the commercial sense. The profits, if any, are donated to charities decided on by members. A doctor who joins the service can close

his surgery for the night, or for the weekend, and obtain adequate rest, in the knowledge that his patients are in good hands, and that urgent calls will receive immediate attention.

A telephone call from a patient to a doctor who has closed his surgery for the night, or weekend, is automatically switched to the headquarters of the Emergency Call Service in Fulham. The operator there notes the details, and transmits them to a 'duty doctor' patrolling the streets in a radio car. At quiet periods the duty doctors wait, fully dressed, for calls to come in.

Often, only a minute or two elapses between the receipt of a patient's call at headquarters and the arrival of the



*'Nordoc Calling.' A phone call for medical aid has come in to headquarters, and the details are transmitted to a doctor patrolling in his Marconi-equipped radio car*

*LEFT: Fast cars—ready packed with medical equipment—are waiting outside the headquarters for the two doctors to start the evening's patrol*

*BELOW: A call is answered. Within a few minutes of receiving this patient's call for aid, Dr. Montague Solomon, one of the two founders of the scheme, is at her bedside*



doctor at his bedside. The use of radio eliminates delays and is sometimes instrumental in saving lives.

The service deals with all kinds of ailments. The radio doctors are never annoyed if called, even to a trivial case, at any time of the night. Says Dr. Bane: 'To the patient, even a trivial thing can be an emergency—in the middle of the night.'

Every day more doctors realise the value of the scheme and are applying to join. 'For the first time since we were married,' says one member-doctor's wife, 'my husband can take me out to the theatre without the fear of being called away in the middle of the evening.'

Because of the increasing demand, there is now a Marconi VHF transmitter sited in North London and controlled from the Marconi-equipped headquarters in Fulham. With further extensions to the scheme, more substations will be established.

Dr. Solomon and Dr. Bane believe that the success of the scheme will lead to its being widely adopted elsewhere in Britain. [Photographs by *Illustrated*]