SYDNEY.-A radio transmitter 20 times more powerful than any previously used will keep the Sydney-Hobart yacht race entrants in constant touch with the mainland this year. The 650-mile blue-water classic is due to start off Point Piper, Sydney Harbor, at 11 a.m. on Boxing Day. The radio has been lent by Qantas Empire Airways, and will be installed in the mother ship, Lauriana, which will maintain constant contact with the entrants and the mainland. It will be operated by Qantas radio officer John Amos, of Beverly Hills, who will go to sea for the first time, though he has flown over many seas. Communications director Tom Jacobs said yesterday the Lauriana would give four progress broadcasts daily through station 2SM. With twin engines for emergencies, the vessel will carry medical supplies and extra provisions for any of the 18 entrants who may strike trouble. At least 12 of the 18 yachts are expected to have two-way radio. Father Christmas will probably be delivering to two of the entrants this year. Sydney University lecturer Brian O'Brien will have his wife and children, Corrine (4) and Roderick (3), aboard the 57 ft. ketch Wraith of Odin, Newcastle skipper S. G. Keaton expects to have his wife, her sister and a nurse and two children in his crew of 17 on the 63-ft. cutter Nirvana.

Aggregate value of the 18 I yachts competing is estimated at about £100,000. Dave Allworth, secretary to the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, which promoted the contest, said yesterday the lowest value of any boat in the fleet was £2000, and some of the bigger craft cost over £10,000. The veteran Launceston A G -ft. schooner Wanderer, skipper by veteran Eric Massey, arrived Sydney yesterday morning, and is in Rose Bay. It is her sixth attempt to secure the honours.