

Mercury Office, Fri.

WORDS are rationed on windswept, volcanic Marion Island, South Africa's weather-spotting outpost on the edge of the Antarctic.

When any of the other eight male inhabitants wishes to use his quota of 100 words a week on a letter to some relative or friends in the Union he must go to 19-year-old Louis van der Westhuizen, the island's radio operator.

Louis taps out the letter in Morse. It is taken down by an operator of Civil Aviation Telecommunications sitting beside a radio set in the Cape.

This operator writes it on an "aerogram," which looks like a telegram form printed in blue on white paper.

The "aerogram" is then posted to the person in the Union to whom it is addressed.

Twice A Year

LONG letters written by the men on the island can be "posted" only once every six months—when the twice-a-year relief ship calls.

The frigate *Transvaal* recently returned from her latest voyage to Marion. Relatives and friends in the Union have been receiving the long-awaited mail.

I have been reading a batch sent to broadcaster George Moore, who visited Marion Island last April.

They provide some interesting glimpses into the minds of one of the world's loneliest groups of men, their interests, way of life, reactions to exile.

46 Deg. Yesterday

DOWN there a tough winter is at last over although, at 8 a.m. yesterday, when Louis van der Westhuizen radioed the first of the twice-daily weather reports, the temperature was only 46 degrees and clouds were right down on the ground.

Of the winter Louis wrote home: "It has not been as cold as we expected. Gantoo Lake has frozen up once."

But there has been snow.

This "baby" of the islanders ends his letter with "Give my love to all the pretty girls in Durban. Yours till the tar melts on Durban's roads . . ."

"Regards To Girls . . ."

SUNSHINE and the company of womenfolk are much in the thoughts of the men of Marion.

Bernie Schaaf, carpenter and handyman, aged about 26, writes:

"Give my regards to all the pretty little girls lying in the sun on the South Beach . . . until we meet again in good old sunny South Africa, Yours etc."

Bernie, on the island for two years, thinks the winter just past worse than his first one.

"Today," he goes on, "Bob (Bradley) our cook, dentist, etc., John (Borain) the Met. man, and I went for a hike to Boot Rock, about eight miles there and back. We feel very tired but enjoyed every minute of it."

All Greatly Changed

BORAIN, about 22, weather expert, confesses in a letter, "I came here as a child but return a man of the world."

To George Moore he says: "You would find the men all greatly changed. Man is subject to many strains under these abnormal conditions and at times reaches breaking point. Their various reactions have proved most interesting.

"Our time has been taken up by various jobs of work such as painting the cat-walk



"A typical South African converted to a Marion islander"—self-caption provided by John Borain. (See story.)

(landing stage) and the buildings, building a larger sheep pen and other maintenance work. In what spare time we have had—photography, reading and billiards.

"Bernie Schaap, the carpenter, helped us make a few picture frames . . . making it more like home."

Glad He Went

BORAIN continues: "Our tinned food has become very uninteresting. Our fresh potatoes lasted four months . . . All are looking forward to some greens when the ship comes. Our 'sarg' (Bradley) has proved a pretty good cook as far as cakes and bread are concerned.

"All have been eagerly awaiting the arrival of the ship with letters and parcels from home, not forgetting new



"It seems that Monsieur Anthony Eden has been having another worrying meeting with those Middle East diplomats . . ."

periodicals and magazines. We shall all be happy for quite a while . . .

"This adventure has certainly proved a great success as far as I am concerned. I would not have missed it. Although at times it's been mighty tough, the good times make it worthwhile."

Glider Boys Off

SOON after five o'clock this afternoon a big black American car, pulling a nar-