

LUCKY IT WAS STEEL!



Slipping down a P. & T. trench, an Upper Hutt bus came out of control on the Taita Gorge Road recently. It came to rest at a precarious angle but the seven passengers and driver were all able to scramble out of the driver's door shaken but unhurt. The nine ton Ministry of Works crane was successful in easing it back on to the road and the bus itself, apart from one broken window, was undamaged and was driven away.

What a tribute to the safety of steel! Ask any of those passengers—they would be profoundly emphatic on the safety of steel bus bodies.

SAFETY DEMANDS ALL-STEEL BUS BODIES

Safety experts are unanimous in their approval of all-steel construction. The Managing Director of New Zealand Motor Bodies Ltd.—the largest omnibus and coach body builders in New Zealand—said in a recent interview: "The protection afforded by wooden construction cannot be compared with steel. Our steel frameworks are tested to strains far greater than would ever normally be expected of them. The bodies built by this company have

an all-steel framework constructed from pressed steel sections of our own design and welded together in special jigs into one unit of enormous strength. Not only does this provide the type of protection for passengers indicated by the incident shown above, but the all-welded construction means freedom from rattles and squeaks which are inevitable where bolts and screws are used in the assembly of the framework."

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Background for Conscription

NEXT week's referendum on conscription will allow New Zealanders to declare themselves on an issue of national importance. There are divided opinions, as there always must be in a country where thought is free; but the opinions should be expressed on the ballot paper as well as in public and private discussion. People who feel strongly about conscription, one way or the other, are certain to vote. There may be some, however, who are not sure where they stand, or who stand on the edge of apathy; and perhaps they should be reminded that a referendum is being taken because the Government requires an unequivocal indication of public opinion. The verdict cannot be satisfactory unless it comes from a heavy poll. Moreover, the decision should be reached carefully. Both sides of the argument are being presented on the platform and in radio broadcasts. People are told that conscription is necessary if we are to meet our defence commitments. They are also told that preparation for defence is in essence a preparation for war. These two themes have many variations, some of which are vague and irrelevant, or even fantastic. The plain man must not be expected to adopt esoteric viewpoints. He knows about war, and he knows that he is living in a world which is a long way from "lasting peace." If the world shows no sign of becoming safer, it is reasonable to be ready for trouble, even though it may be in the unpredictable future; and recent experience has shown that trouble comes swiftly in modern warfare. There is always room for the conscientious objector, a term used here in its widest sense. But if the objector is a nation, its people must be sure of their moral position. They must be certain that they want to dissociate themselves from defence measures for the right reasons. It is not enough to say that war is madness, and that we prefer to be sane. This sort of madness can come by invasion: a sanity which is no more than a lucid interval before extinction is at best a sacrificial gesture. If there is to be disarmament, the initiative must be taken by the strong. Weak nations do not escape embroilment in war by informing the world that they will not defend themselves. There are some who believe, with obvious sincerity, that New Zealand could set the larger countries a moral example. They believe that if a nation refuses to give its young men military training it will help, by announcing its pacifism, to relieve the tension which in the postwar world has been mounting dangerously. If this view is endorsed in New Zealand, we must be ready to take the issue to its logical outcome. We must, in fact, say that we are ready to stand alone. We cannot remain inside the Commonwealth defence system—or any other system—unless we share the cost in money and effort. There would be no moral value in a pacifism which could exist only because other nations protected us. If we share the Commonwealth's defence obligations, we must share them with maximum efficiency. And this cannot be done unless we accept the need for universal training. Few people in New Zealand want peacetime conscription. But we dare not reject it because we want to be comfortable, because we want more money for other purposes, or because we want to forget that we live in a world that is divided and armed. The individual may have pacifist convictions, and be ready to justify them in theory and action. But a nation cannot vote for pacifism—which is not the same as voting for peace—unless the people are sure in their hearts that in an hour of danger they would lift no hand to defend themselves. And there is no point in lifting a hand which is unskilled in the use of weapons, or in lifting it too late.

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