

4. *Derailment at Totara*.—This accident, the cause of which is somewhat uncertain, is now the subject of an official inquiry; but from the information we have received it was most probably due to the locking of the buffers of two adjoining wagons, causing one of them to mount the track in rounding a curve.

5. *Derailment at Hillgrove*.—Three wagons were derailed on this occasion. The accident was without question due to a badly loaded timber-wagon, the excess of overhang being much above the regulation allowance. The wagon was sent out from Railway Workshops, Addington, and had been loaded by our own staff.

The cause being clear, no official inquiry was wanted.

6. *Derailment at Sawyer's Bay*.—At this accident, which was due to the engine running into a cow, most of the train was wrecked.

The cause was quite clear, and did not require an official inquiry.

7. *Derailment at Seacliff*.—This is now the subject of an official inquiry, and we offer no remarks in the meantime.

Of the whole of the accidents, not including the derailment at Seacliff, to which we do not refer, as it is now under investigation, each is due to a separate and easily explicable cause. In no case can it be said that it was due to either the defects in the rolling-stock or the track, or to any want of care or foresight in the management.

With proper safety appliances, such as the Westinghouse brake and the electric train tablet, the whole of these accidents would have been absolutely prevented or the results greatly minimised. These appliances are now being furnished as speedily as funds will permit.

The cost of these accidents would have gone a long way towards equipping the whole of our railways.

The officers of the Department are quite as anxious as the public to ascertain the cause of every accident which occurs, and there is no desire to withhold information, or neglect in any way to place the blame, where any exists, on the right shoulders.

We are of opinion that nothing would be gained by an inquiry by a Royal Commission or any other outside tribunal.

JOHN COOM,
Chief Engineer.
A. L. BEATTIE,
Chief Mechanical Engineer.
W. H. GAW,
Chief Traffic Manager.

[Extract from the *Lyttelton Times*, 10th July, 1902.]

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS.

A good deal of attention has been drawn to the subject of railway accidents of late, and we have been told the New Zealand railways enjoy the unenviable distinction of being among the most dangerous in the world. The charge has been supported by a table compiled by Mr. T. A. Coghlan, which shows that during ten years the number of passengers killed and injured on the railways was greater in proportion to the number carried for New Zealand than for any other country in the world, except Canada. There are, indeed, far too many accidents on our lines, but there is no need to exaggerate the danger of railway travelling in this country. Mr. Coghlan's figures were compiled from the latest returns available in 1900, and must be at least three years out of date. The return of the number of passengers killed and injured on our railways last year, which has just been published, is at least reassuring. No passenger was killed, and only four were injured, the total number carried being 7,356,136. We venture to think that few countries in the world could show so clean a sheet. It must be remembered, too, that New Zealand has a very extensive system compared with its population and the number of passengers carried, and, of course, a single fatal accident looks very black in a comparison. There is no doubt that the efficiency and the safety of the service are both improving, and there is little occasion for such sensational criticisms as those that have lately been published.

[Extract from *Otago Daily Times*, 9th July, 1902.]

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS.

While it is satisfactory to know that the Government has decided that an investigation into the causes of the railway accident that occurred last week near Seacliff should be held, it would be infinitely more satisfactory if the inquiry were not what is known as a departmental inquiry. In this present case the inquiry will be held before three officials of the Railway Department, and the proceedings will be private in their character. We venture to think that that is by no means the sort of inquiry that, in the interests of the public, is desirable. Where an accident is obviously avoidable an inquiry such as is contemplated in respect of the Seacliff accident has its undoubted value, for it serves to show upon which of the officials in charge of the train or trains the blame for the occurrence must fall; but where, as in last week's case, the accident may be attributable to causes over which the railway servants who were on the train had absolutely no control, and could not have had any, something more than a departmental inquiry is needed. The accident may have been due to some defect in the rolling-stock. It may have been due to some flaw in the permanent-way. There may be some ground, after all, for the impression that has, notwithstanding the protests which the Railway Department has issued to the contrary, gained currency that the class of locomotive which has lately been introduced is unsuited for traffic on the metals we have in the colony, and that heavier rails are required. There are obvious reasons