

CIRCULAR HEAD TIMBER TOLL.

To the Editor.

Sir,—In the beginning of July last year there were issued by laws for the municipality of Circular Head, regulating the use of roads within the municipality for the carriage of timber. The sense of the by-laws is that a toll of 2/6 per 1000 superficial feet of timber is to be levied for carting it along the roads. Whether it is wise or otherwise is open to dispute. But we are living in the age when aim justifies means. And the municipality badly wants money.

The maker of these by-laws is the municipal council. Now, the municipality for the time being can rightly boast of having the best people in the council. The members of the council are the best-intentioned and the most able people of the municipality. Taken separately, every member seems to be full of commonsense. Yet in a body, as a council, they repeat the usual mistake of all the other collective bodies: overawed with the sense of public duty, they fail in their commonsense.

These by-laws, as every other laws and by-laws of the world, are open to abuse. When formulating them it was clearly meant to levy on sawmilling timber, the timber having marketable intrinsic value. But when the municipal council came to interpret the word "timber" it found with awe that this word covers almost anything that could be carried from the bush. It didn't take a long time to stumble upon the practical application of the by-laws. A farmer at Edith Creek took a contract to supply a certain amount of firewood for the railway at the price of 9/ per ton. Considering the size of firewood, it was cheap. One couldn't make a living wage at this price, but for a farmer any timber taken from his ground means clearing the ground, and this combination made it possible for the farmer in question to take the contract. As a matter of fact, he offered to the Railway Department free all firewood on his farm, and free use of his spring dray to take it to the station, if the department cared only to do the work of making firewood. But the department declined it.

to do the work of making firewood. But the department declined it.

Now, can one imagine his surprise when, after completing a part of his contract, he was presented by the council's official with the demand for timber toll at the rate of 2/6 a ton? It was outrageous. It meant such a big loss that he declined to pay, and is going to be prosecuted by the council.

The position is ridiculous indeed. Firewood is this part of the country

has no intrinsic marketable value at all. Almost every farmer would give away free millions of tons of it. Its market value is exactly equal to the labor for making it. When sawmilling timber is taxed its intrinsic value is sufficient to pay the tax, and laborers don't suffer. But when firewood is taxed the tax must come either from a laborer or a consumer. A laborer would not do work unless he can make full wage, so that the consumer is, after all, the one that will pay the tax to the council of 2/6 per ton. That firewood never was meant when the by-laws were formulated is clear from the absurd and unjust way of measuring firewood, comparing with that of logs. Measuring logs by the conventional way, they don't measure the actual volume of the solid substance, which is greater than it is accepted to count. Measuring a stack of firewood, they count the full volume of the stack, which, moreover, is not solid substance throughout, but contains at least one-third of air in it. The absurdity doesn't end here. If the council wants to be consistent it will have to tax almost every farmer for using his own firewood, because most of the farmers cart firewood along the public road for own use and occasionally for sale to the neighbors who have cleared farms. No matter that they cart only a few hundredweights on a spring dray that could not possibly damage the road. The above-mentioned farmer at Edith Creek carted just as well only on his spring dray by the light horse, carrying three hundredweights at a time, and it was actually not carting along the road, but crossing the road from his pad-

but crossing the road from his paddock to the station.

As far as the railway is concerned, it is evident that it will not buy any more firewood in this municipality, and will import it here from the other parts of the State, and a few firewood workers will be driven out of the municipality.

It is the dead end to which the Circular Head Municipal Government has successfully arrived. Whither now?

I am sure that the commonsense of the council will after all prevail, and the council will rectify its error,—and an onlooker will not gain the impression that the municipal government is vying with the State to make life in Tasmania as uncomfortable as possible.

—Yours, etc.

S. SUTCHKOFF.

Edith Creek.
