

FARMERS AND FREIGHT

(To the Editor.)

Sir.—On the 9th of December there was despatched to me from Melbourne a 20lb. parcel of grass seeds, by Marrawah to Stanley, and 17 miles by railway from Stanley to Edith Creek. The account runs as follows:—

Price of grass seeds	12/6
Marrawah's bill of lading	/6
Freight by Marrawah	4/11
Wharfage	/3
Agency	/3
17 miles railway and handling	2/9

This little account would be quite eloquent without any further comment. Yet this subject is so vital to Tasmania that no amount of talking on it could be superfluous.

We read every day in the papers depreciatory statements of our population leaving Tasmania, and the pathetic, though ineffectual, call "Come back." People will not "come back" just for sentiment's sake. Remove all the abuses that a Tasmanian citizen, and particularly a man on the land, is subject to, and the sentimental call "come back" would be unnecessary.

Take shipping. Shipping strikes are always looming in our foreground, and we are at the mercy of the omnipotent seamen. And in those short intervals when steamers are allowed to run, the exorbitant freight charges place our primary producer at a great disadvantage, compared with the mainland producer, both in regard to marketing our produce and importing articles from the mainland. I put a great faith in our new organisation—the Agricultural Bureau. No doubt the shipping problem, particularly freights, will be one of the most important for the bureau to tackle, and solve.

I return to my little account. The carriage of a parcel of 20lb. of seeds for 17 miles is charged 2/9. If this is not robbery, I don't know what robbery is. And I ask every honest Tasmanian, will you blame me, if I don't patronise our railways and more, and give preference to private motor lorries and cars? I have not gone so far yet, and still intend to give preference to the railway on equal terms, but I know a number of persons who have already stepped over this sentimental barrier and regard our railways with nothing but contempt. The railway until last March used to charge me from Stanley to Edith Creek 1/- for a full bag of seeds. It was not too low a rate, but I thought it fair. Last March they charged me 2/- for

Smithton cream lorry would bring me that parcel to my very gate for 3d.—
Yours, etc.,

S. SUTCHKOFF.

43lb., and this time 2/9 for 20lb. This is driving railway customers away.

But there is so much to say about our railways, particularly the Trowutta line, that I will trouble "The Examiner" for space later on. Concluding this letter, I believe it would be only humane of me to communicate to my fellow farmers of Smithton district, the existing way to escape the charges I have mentioned. Some might not know, as I didn't before this occasion, that there are "mosquito" boats plying regularly between Smithton and the mainland. My parcel in question could be brought by one of these boats from Melbourne to Smithton for 1/-, or even 9d, and Smithton cream lorry would bring me that parcel to my very gate for 3d.—