

Voice of the Mountains

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CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA



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Featuring the
Ecology of High
Mountain Grazing
and Protective
Burning

Voice of the Mountains

Official Journal of the Mountain District Cattlemen's
Association of Victoria

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"THE LYRE BIRD"

- By W.J. Wye.

Blithe bird with the song that is born of the mountains,
Thy minstrelsy springing from all that is free,
The waterfalls leap from the rugged rock fountains,
With its echoes one hears in the singing of thee.
Dame Nature, with pride in her artistry, fashioned
Thy picturesque plumes in a musical lyre,
A symbol of melody rare and impassioned,
Befitting thy role in the earth's feathered choir.

Thy lays with the dawn, from the musk grove resounding,
Awaken the stillness of valley and hill,
And lend a wild charm to the wallaby bounding,
and the red dingo loping along at his will.
In the lone midnight hour, in the blizzards appalling,
Fidelity surely is found at its best.
From thy watch on the cliffs, as the snow-flakes are falling,
They love-call rings out to thy mate on her nest.

Thy mimicry born on the roving winds swelling,
From revelry sung on the mound by the stream,
That charms the bush singers, their love-songs excelling,
Since thou, of all mimes, in the world, art supreme!
Sing on, O wild bird, in thy haunts of the ranges,
Blithe spirit of liberty, sunshine and song.
A being apart from the changes and changes,
Besetting the lot of the world's feathered throng.

(With compliments from Jack Treasure).

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MOUNTAIN DISTRICT CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

Policy Statement on Grazing in the High Country



Introduction:

The Association was officially formed in November, 1969 with the objective to preserve and maintain good relations and understanding within the cattle industry and between that industry and all bodies and organisations with which the industry is associated in the spheres of Government, land use and marketing.

The association represents an industry which has been the principal form of land use over much of the High Country for more than 120 years. Its members are practising conservationists with an intimate and practical knowledge of the High Country and its ecology.

Fundamentals of Policy:

Association policy and attitude towards the use of the High Country (High country included Forestry Commission areas and Bush Runs and Crown Leases) of Victoria for grazing is based on the fundamental belief that:

1. The correct and appropriated definition of conservation for the *High Country* is "wise use of natural resources".
2. Conservation and protection of soil and water values are of paramount importance and that, to the extent that is consistent with this priority, the area must be managed to provide grazing for stock, wood products, wildlife habitat and public recreation.
3. Large scale single use of the area is inimical to the best interest of the community. The Association believes that large areas managed for a single use are not fully serving the community if used exclusively for a purpose which could also be achieved in combination with other uses.
4. Fire is a natural factor in the ecology of the area and if the devastating effects of wildfire are to be minimised then effective management of fire is essential. This must involve both the scientific use of fire to achieve specific objectives and successful suppression of wildfires.

Importance of Grazing:

Whilst on a National Scale the number of cattle grazed in the High Country is relatively small, such grazing is integrated with the management of low country freehold and is essential for the well being of the families and communities which depend on such freehold.

Grazing in the High Country is also essential to alleviate distress and hardship during drought.

Pattern and Effects of Grazing:

Cattlemen are well aware of the dangers of overgrazing and it is in their own interest to ensure that fodder and soil are properly conserved.

The economics of beef production dictate that cattle must be grown quickly. This cannot be achieved if pastures are overgrazed or mismanaged. The pattern of grazing today is for fewer cattle to be grazed in the High Country for shorter periods.

Compatibility of Grazing:

Grazing of cattle is compatible with other forms of land use in High Country. In the past graziers provided much of the access and transport for the early miners, skiers and foresters. Today cattlemen's huts, tracks and knowledge are used by bushwalkers, fishermen and other outdoor recreationists. Cattle have been so long part of the scenery that they are a tourist attraction.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Perhaps we are fortunate to be living in a country of abundance, yet abundance without character is the surest way to destruction. We are wasteful. Wasteful of our material resources; wasteful of time and wasteful of manpower and finance.

Within our social structure now is the false reasoning that any circulation of moneys, in any project that creates employment - regardless to necessary production - is beneficial. This does not seem to be known as waste; yet the resources of our country which is the integrity of our nation is being undermined by this false reasoning. Therefore a stupendous task is ahead of us to re-educate and re-direct the footsteps of the general public and our generals in leadership to embark on a new line of thought which is based simply on the unit family economy. This is very basic because it is the unit family that cannot survive if it wastes its own sustenance.

This basic principal applies even to a group of unit families that go to form communities and in turn to the communities that unite to form the nation. The family is corrupt that wastes its resources and the nation is corrupt that wastes in the same manner.

Government controls and controls by bodies create new opportunities for the jobless unemployed and in turn each takes the seat and holds the reins only to dig deep into the flesh of his own survival with the spurs that he rides with.

Weakened then is the unit system. And weakness is the system of leaders who will promote anything to gain the votes of the unsuspecting citizen who votes that leader into power.

If we are to govern properly as a democracy we must learn to govern as a family unit based on the principal of the conservation of our resources and not to waste by the promotion of unproductive enterprises. There is a price to pay for everything and the price must find a balance.

It has been said that the most powerful deterrent to the destruction of mankind is the footsteps of the farmer. Our food, our clothing and our resources are farmed by him; be it on the ground, in the root systems of production or deep in the earth's structure of natural storage, the footsteps of the farmer is the strength of the nation. Individual and creative, and on incentive based, his character is born through the ages of time. And the character of the nation owes him its power and strength. When in strife, he is something worth while to defend, be it internal corruption or a threat from outside, these individuals will arise and unite then disperse again to till the soil.

The surging advance of bureaucratic control is becoming the master of destiny where waste without restraint is a disease of our land: Abundant waste. Waste of precious man hours lost in the swirl of interdependent productiveless tragedy. Waste of materials of all nature, devoured by a sprawling monster that ejects its pollution into the earth's atmosphere; while from this symbolic serpent comes its direction to further eliminate, progressively the foundations, the historic traditions and the ecological provenance of rural enterprise.

The mountain cattlemen are at the receiving end of this thrust. The thrust is to eliminate them, as witness, to the growing - visualized - potential of our mountain regions for the ultimate furtherance of bureaucratic controls, metallic and inhuman under the direction of dictatorial wastefulness, bereft of any interest in the farmer's good ecological husbandry of the land.

I appeal again to the farmers, graziers and others interested, to support the mountain cattle industry, the Association and the principals which it upholds. I also wish to thank the Associate members for their interest and support.

-S. J. Treasure

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NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

One of the most pleasing events over the last few months was the outcome of the Association's meeting with the Committee of Management of the Baw Baw Alpine Reserve. The result reflects a meeting between reasonable men with an understanding of each other's problems; a knowledge of the mountain areas and an attitude of co-operation and mutual trust. It seems so long since the Association had men of this type that it was feared the breed was dying out. May the Rogers case show a similar understanding and appreciation of the cattleman's position.

Whilst the matter is moving slowly it appears that "Mount Eadly Stoney" will be officially named as such and there could probably be no better memorial to our late member than for his name to be perpetuated in the area he knew so well and where he was so well and favourably known.

The Land Conservation Council is in most member's minds at the moment and it is perhaps fitting that this Statement of Procedures should be well known and they are published in this journal for members information.

We are advised that it was as a direct result of your Association's representations that the Police in mountain regions are to be equipped with four wheel drive vehicles. We are fortunate in having at the Sale

Police Station a Sergeant of Police with a sound knowledge of the Alpine areas and he has asked for the co-operation of all members in noting car numbers of all strange vehicles. One of their major problems is that they hear of complaints quite often some time after the event and if they have a list of vehicle numbers in the area at that time they have a good source of enquiry. It may well be that the occupants of a car noted by a member could have witnessed some actions in which they were not concerned and not particularly interested in, but their information could be vital to Police enquiries.

The North Eastern Branch has sent some interesting comments in relation to Forests Commission Burning - so interesting in fact that they are quoted as follows:

Forest Commission Burning

During late autumn 1972 Forests Commission staff burned the crests along the Buffalo, Dandongdale and Rose Rivers. Spring inspection showed pretty good re-growth of feed in these areas. During the spring 25,000 acres of crests between Little River and the Catherine were burned.

With a view to creating greater interest in the N.E. Branch, on Tuesday, October 3 at 2 p.m. Dr A. Evans, Chief Vet. for North East with Department of Agriculture came along and gave members a talk on diseases which trouble local cattlemen, e.g. Pink Eye, Cancer Eye and Bloat. He talked for 1-1/2 hours, then stood up to

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almost an hour of questioning. Those who attended learned quite a lot, but the attendance was very disappointing.

Dr Evans and staff would consider running a Cattle symposium next year providing sufficient interest is indicated.

East Gippsland Branch formed

About 40 persons attended a meeting at Orbost, at which an East Gippsland branch of the Mountain District Cattlemen's Association was formed. Mr J. Mulligan, of Cann River, was elected president. Mr J. Connley is branch secretary.

At the formation meeting, Mr Bruce Evans, M.L.A., warned that there was a lot of emotionalism associated with the present urge for "conservation." He said local people should have more say in land usage before the Land Conservation Council made up its mind.

Cr E. Smith, who presided at the meeting, said Orbost Shire Council was very worried regarding land conservation in the shire. If conservationists got their way, a licence would be needed to go down the coast. They were fanatics, and it was hard to deal with fanatics, he said.

Even more in the mountain cattle country than
anywhere else . . .

IT HOLDS ON WHERE OTHERS FADE AWAY!

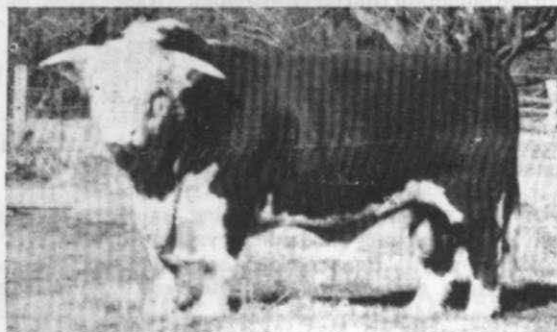


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HIGH PLAINS CATTLEMEN MISUNDERSTOOD IN THE PAST



By—
JIM
CUMMINS

Generally speaking, the stockmen of the mountains and their methods of management have, in past years, been misunderstood to a very large extent, not only by the urban dweller but also by some government department officers whose experience may have been in country where cattle graze, but whose primary interest was taken up by other matters. The unfortunate thing is that the viewpoint of almost everyone other than the cattlemen is commonly publicised without any question or refutation. Undoubtedly, most of the comment made over many years concerning grazing is open to question and I believe the reason for many of these comments going unquestioned is twofold -

Firstly, the average bush grazier of the past has had little formal schooling and does not feel equipped to take to task his more educated city cousin; and

Secondly, he is too busy minding his own business of trying to make a living to go on a crusading campaign.

We all make mistakes, but I'm a great believer in the old saying "He who never made a mistake never made anything". Over the long years -

more than a century - of grazing practice, undoubtedly mistakes have been made. They have been made, on the one hand, by individuals and, in more recent years, by groups and perhaps large groups. Individuals have, more often than not, paid for their mistakes while those around them have gained from their experience. However, when a group makes a mistake the effect is magnified, and the larger the group the larger the cost.

I am convinced that any subject as close to nature as grazing needs many years of study and research before fair conclusions can be drawn, but all too often we hear of strong recommendations being made after four or five years - or less - of study have been made. An example of this may be seen around this State where our usually conservative Department of Agriculture conducted trials on improved grazing land over a few years to test the sheep carrying capacity. The result was to recommend stocking rates in excess of what was hitherto the considered optimum, and though I am sure the much drier years since then would cause officers of that department to amend or at least qualify their findings, unfortunately many people, encouraged by falling wool prices, eagerly adopted these rates to their own properties and dramatically increased the size of their flocks. With years of very low rainfall since this heavy stocking system has been introduced, the result has been that many farmers are now probably on the verge of bankruptcy. Had those departmental experiments been continuing today instead of concluding after a few years, we would be gaining the benefit of very much more worthwhile experiments.

There is this tendency right through the other fields also. It has been the experience of graziers in the high country - the leasehold country - that the findings of people who have done some research over a limited number of years have been adopted and their work taken as a reference of high standing, with the result that rather unfortunate conclusions have been drawn.

Mountain graziers are relatively few in number and their methods and



management problems are not fully understood even by their fellow graziers who depasture their livestock on improved or semi-improved and fenced land. It is one thing to round up your cattle in a paddock and quite another to muster your cattle which may have disappeared into the bush like so many needles in a haystack.

Probably many people when they hear the size of many of the areas under grazing licence - which could run into a good many thousands of acres sometimes - think these blocks are too large, but they probably don't realise that the average stocking is usually somewhere between six and ten beasts to the square mile. In the past few days we've gone over country which has some of the heaviest stocking rates in the whole alpine regions.

Visitors to the mountains on this occasion are viewing those areas with the heaviest concentration of grazing in all the alpine regions and under the driest conditions for 34 years at this time of the year, and perhaps the driest in living memory. I'm sure these visitors will be impressed by the persistence of wildflowers, herbage and pasture. It is very dry, but all those plants are still there - not nearly as showy as they were this time last year, but nevertheless they are there and have been there for years and years in spite of everything. These species are surviving where trees - which are certainly not affected by grazing - are dying. We didn't see so many trees dying in the areas we travelled yesterday, but when you go further east you can find plenty of places where it has been drier this year; the pasture conditions are rather similar but you find places where trees are dying out because there has not been enough water to sustain them.

On the places less favoured for grazing there are vast areas which do not carry even one beast to the square mile where all the primitive wilderness can be observed as it was centuries ago. We saw quite a bit of that in the last couple of days. As far as grazing and other commercial activities are concerned, most of these areas are likely to remain that way for ever. I agree that grazing can cause some changes in pasture composition but would not agree that this is detrimental. The profusion of white clover usually to be seen in the cattle country in the highlands, while an exotic species, is surely an attractive and welcome legume to assist the natural fertility build-up brought about by grazing. This has been mentioned by several speakers during the last couple of days and is a fact that can't be denied. This produces by the most natural means a more satisfactory land to live in, and all the while a pleasing balance with native flora is seen to be maintained.

One often hears a lament about the changes in environment, and I would agree that changes are likely to create problems that must be overcome, but big changes in the environment have been necessary to maintain a population of three million now living in Victoria compared with mere thousands this section of the continent was able to sustain 150 years ago.

Primary industry has had to cope with great change and enormous problems. I believe it has, and thanks to the perserverance of the individual it has coped marvellously well, and ways have been devised to deal with the great problems of the past.

With all this change and regular grazing of the bushland since the very first settlement of the white man, there still remains literally millions of acres of land on which cattle grazing is practically non-existent. Not even rabbits have invaded these areas in any significant numbers, yet all imaginable wild life - birds and animals and native plants continue to live there as they have in the past. When such areas exist I often wonder why there is so much clamour for areas to be gazetted as National Parks. They are undoubtedly there without any need for parliamentary decree. They've been that way for ever and ever: they'll never be any different.

Some people may suggest that timber interests will desecrate these places, but on a very great area of this type of land probably will never take place. Where it does - and I agree that a freshly logged area is a scene of almost unbelievable devastation - inevitably regeneration takes place, and in a few years, the inexperienced eye would not know timber had been cut out of the area. We passed a few places like that in the last few days, but if you go back there in five or six years' time, unless you really knew and were pretty observant, you'd pass by and wouldn't recognise they had been logged out.



Many opinions have been expressed on the question of burning, but we must face up to the practical realities of this dry land. Fires in the countryside are as much a part of the natural scene as are the marsupials and the eucalyptus trees. The earliest explorers of this country reported seeing smoke when they first sighted our coast line - you can check this by reading Captain Cook and Sir Joseph Bank's journals which are very interesting reading. They reported seeing smoke arising on the horizon and these fires must have been started by aborigines or by lightning. In either event, it is reasonable to assume that no attempts of any significance were made to extinguish them. This type of burning must have been going on for untold ages and plant life has adapted itself very well to this aspect of the natural environment, though the forested areas in higher al-

titudes having been developed in cooler atmosphere with generally higher rainfall and cloud conditions - factors that are normally less conducive to the spread of fire - are much more easily destroyed if a hot fire does eventuate.

Regeneration following a damaging fire is invariably rapid. An interesting point that botanists have made is that much of the seed of indigenous plants will lie on the ground for many years and will not germinate until a fire has passed over it. That is a simple observation that every bushman knows is true. In the alpine ash country, especially, it is very quickly regenerated. Last night we had a most interesting slide session with Athol Hodgson who made these points in a much more able manner than I can.

The cattlemen's part in this natural phenomenon has generally been misunderstood. During much of the past fifty years there has been a conflict of opinion between the run holders and officialdom who, during that time, began to take a more active interest in the mountains. The lighting of fires was outlawed. Very little official credence was given to the fact that a fire could start from a lightning strike. Virtually all fires were blamed on the cattlemen. Graziers were forced to discontinue their long held practice of burning, and in the course of this time very severe lessons were learnt. Departmental people - the Forests Commission in particular - are alive to this; they have learned a lot in the last forty years.

A great deal of damage was done in early 1939 when we had those disastrous fires. Only the week before last a lot of you may have read in *The Age* "The Year Victoria Caught Fire" which listed quite a lot of the disasters and tragedies that occurred. It quoted the Royal Commission and Judge Stretton's report following the Commission over which he presided. I didn't have the opportunity to get Judge Stretton's report and study it or get a copy of his findings; I have just taken it from *The Age*, but I remember at the time that journalists and arm-chair critics made a lot out of his report and all of them put the cattlemen in a very poor light. A lot of people who write leading articles on the environment in the metropolitan dailies should take a bit of time and follow an expedition such as this; they would learn a little more and be a bit better versed in what they are trying to put across. Unfortunately, they don't seem to do that but take the Stretton Report and the works of people who have done a year or two of study and write something up from that.

The Stretton report listed three things as the cause of fire and in this order -

- 1 Settlers burning off to clear land or, ironically, for their own protection.
- 2 Graziers burning off to promote grass growth.
- 3 Miners and prospectors clearing bush.

These were the worst offenders the Commission found, for they lit fires deliberately and did not supervise them properly; but sportsmen, campers, tourists, forest workers and road workers all added their own contribution.

It was a very searching enquiry, yet if there was any reference to lightning it was very little - it certainly didn't rate a mention in the

Age article - and I know, at the time, it was not considered a reasonable factor. The graziers, as I said before, were put in a very poor light. Reporters wrote all sorts of things about them; even the radio script writers wrote plays where the graziers were the big bad beasts of the piece and so on. All this has not helped our cause one bit and it still lives on to this day.

Lightning, as we who live amongst the bush in the country areas know, is a very real cause of these fires and in the last month (over in the eastern area anyway) I think the officers of the Country Fire Authority and the Forests Commission would agree with me, that a major proportion of the fires - perhaps 90% in our area anyway - have been lightning strikes and there have been quite a lot of them. There's a very big difference today from the situation thirty odd years ago, with the communications, access roads and equipment that is available to deal with these outbreaks.



There's another factor - the wind. Recently, when quite a few fire were going in the east and they were a big worry to all concerned, Nature treated the situation rather more kindly than it could have done, in that the wind kept changing. It would be a north wind in the day then it would turn around to a good stiff southerly in the evening. But with all the technology and equipment that was available, if the wind had kept blowing solidly from the north and kept hot day and night we might well have had another situation similar to 1939 this year. We are not out of the wood yet, with all the technology and know-how that is available today.

I feel that all means of fire control, not only mechanical ones, must be closely looked at. That is where we come into it, not that grazing is the answer to everything but it is a significant help. Today there is more understanding, in official circles, of the graziers' viewpoint.

As many years of dry litter build up, there are large areas of land that have not been devastated by fire or successfully fuel reduced. The only practical way to safeguard the commercially valuable forests and grazing interests, and also to preserve the bushland as it once was, is to burn as much litter as possible in the more temper-



ate and milder months of the year. If a deep accumulation of dry grass, sticks and bark catches fire in adverse conditions during the hot summer, the heat generated will ignite the eucalypts in the leaves above and very great damage is caused. When a conflagration like this takes place, the updraft of heated air takes with it smouldering bark and leaves which commonly light fires, often miles away, downwind from the original fire, thus multiplying the devastation.

The run holder suffers very severely from this sort of fire as much of the best land available to him is ruined for grazing for many years by the almost impenetrable regrowth of scrub and young trees. A light fire causes pasture and regrowth to be temporarily more palatable to livestock, but its greatest benefit lies in the prevention of an excessively hot and damaging fire. Graziers are as fire conscientious as anyone, not only because they value their livestock and don't want them incinerated but because they don't want their good grazing land ruined, which it is if the fire is too hot.

I am not very familiar with the high plains country, like the Bogong High Plains. It was very interesting to travel through there yesterday and observe the scrub growth and the grass balance. But it does appear to me that, there again, low intensity burning would be more helpful than harmful, because I am sure that scrubby growth is much more of a fire hazard. When the scrub burns there are only a few root systems in every square yard and it takes a long time for that to recover and regenerate, whereas if there is a greater grass content in the area - and I don't see why a reasonable balance could not be maintained - in the event of it burning (and some day it must surely do that because lightning is a far greater force in the whole question of burning than people seem to take notice of) - it has a multitude of root systems in every square yard which will shoot up perhaps even before it rains and you have cover immediately, whereas the regeneration of scrub takes much longer and there's much more bare ground to erode if sudden heavy rain follows.

In areas of land lightly timbered with snowgum, sallee wood trees

and small forest growth, grass usually grows prolifically between the trees and forms some of the best grazing. The trimming of pasture by livestock and the development of white clover, not only makes a very attractive park-like scene but practically removes the need for preventative burning in those places. Without the grazing, vast areas of over-grown dry grass, tussocks and bracken, would present an unlovely and formidable fire hazard. A reasonable analogy may be drawn between the alternatives of this situation and the many unkempt cemetery allotments one sees around the countryside with their ungrazed natural vegetation compared with the well-kept farms and gardens nearby.

For those interested in the original unchanged wilderness, there will always be, as I have pointed out, interspersed with this grazing land, great tracts of land which will remain a wonderful reserve of unchanged wildlife at its primitive best. Those of you who travelled through the mountains in the last couple of days could see - especially in the high spots - a vast area of steep and rugged country where cattle don't graze. It's just too difficult to manage them there and it's too sour and unpalatable. They don't particularly like it. But it is the home of endless wildlife. Many species commonly thought to be extinct are undoubtedly still living there and there is a vast area of that type of land. It is just the same as it has always been. We can have the best of both worlds without the need for a change in the administration of land use. I don't see why there should be a public outcry for any great change.

Although the terms of reference do not include the subject, I feel this paper would not be complete without some reference to water catchments. Again, the practice of grazing has been the subject of much malignment by people who have not studied the subject sufficiently. There is plenty of land erosion to be seen when one travels around Victoria but it is mostly on the foothills of the Great Dividing Range, where a number of factors are responsible for its development. The major one is the almost uncontrollable rabbit population became very bare especially in dry times. Gullies started and erosion started and that is where the dams are being filled from, not from the high country.

One sees nothing like this occurring on the Victorian mountain grazing runs. The water flows as clearly after a storm as it has ever done, in all the places I know. Any contribution by cattle to the erosion is infinitesimal compared with the engineering efforts of man and his machines. It is so small, I maintain, that from a practical standpoint it does not exist, at least in the places with which I am familiar.

Much has been made of the damage to moss beds. There are endless numbers of them to be seen flourishing no less than they ever about 25-odd years ago before myxomycosis. Many of the people here can remember what it was like. Rabbits were beyond control in most places and added very much to the erosion problem because people still had to live and they were trying to carry stock along with rabbits. Much of the land was overstocked as a result of this and the land

did, in spite of heavy concentrations of cattle in some places. They are unpalatable to livestock and cattle don't like them because of their boggy nature. In a very dry summer, if a fire starts in dehydrated branches of this plant, a considerable amount can be burnt. Fortunately this is a combination of circumstances which does not arise frequently though the climate is right for it at the moment and if a fire got going under some of these high tops and got out of control, the moss is dry enough to burn. But in 19 years out of 20 it is very hard to burn because of its greater moisture content.

When cattle make tracks to water they invariably do so on the best grade available and would not even contemplate going straight up or down hill if there is any possible alternative - which is more than can be said for many of the road builders who, in ten years, have probably caused infinitely more erosion than almost one and a half centuries of grazing. The wheels of man's motor vehicles leave a continuous ready made water course, while the tracks of animals are like miniature dams and tend to conserve the water.

To conclude this paper, I would urge two things. One, that any changes should be made slowly and that they should be long and thoroughly examined before they are made. All too often they are made in undue haste resulting in wrong decisions. The second is that, as far as livestock management is concerned, it should remain in the hands of those who are best equipped and capable of managing it. The vast majority of run holders have not made great fortunes from bush grazing; they are very responsible people with long background of experience. From a national point of view they are by far



the most qualified to manage the varying complexities of each grazing allotment.

I believe it has been very satisfactorily demonstrated during this tour that cattle grazing is a worthwhile aid to fire control. In the broad view it is an aid to the ecology and no detriment to the native flora and fauna. Their presence makes the way easier for any person to enjoy the existence of the latter two especially if he is prepared to get close enough to nature to travel on foot or on horseback.

Lastly, but not least, cattle grazing on the Crown Lands of Victoria has in the past been a valuable contribution to the nation's food store and the export industry. With a rising population, by the end of this century it will be much more valuable. Let us hope it is then still being managed by people who, persevering for generations through difficulties and discomfort, have made it their way of life.



MOUNTAIN SAFARIS OF GIPPSLAND



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LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Statement of Procedures

1. The primary function of the Land Conservation Council is to carry out investigations and make recommendations to the Minister on the future use of public land in order to provide for the balanced use of land in Victoria.
2. The Land Conservation Act 1970 specifies the procedures which the Council must follow in respect of the notification of areas to be investigated, the publication of reports, the lodgement of submissions and the making of recommendations on the future use of public land in the State.
3. When the Council proposes to conduct an investigation of an area notice to this effect must be given in the Government Gazette and in a leading newspaper and a local newspaper circulating in the area.
4. On the completion of an investigation the Council is required to publish a report and give notice in the Gazette and in the same newspapers as above, and then at the same time invite submissions from the public. From the date of publication of a report there is a period of 60 days in which persons and organizations may make submissions to the Council on the future use of public land in the area investigated.

The report sets out to describe and assess the natural resources of the public land in the area investigated and provides a factual basis upon which members of the community may base their submissions to the Council. It ensures that all those persons and bodies who have an interest in public land in the area can obtain and study the basic information which the Council itself will study, and so make informed and constructive suggestions to the Council. Copies of reports may be obtained from the Land Conservation Council, 464 St Kilda Road, Melbourne at a cost of \$2 per copy.

5. At the end of the period the Council considers all submissions received and prepares its proposed recommendations. A copy of these recommendations is sent to all those who have lodged a submission.
6. There is then a further period of 60 days in which those who previously lodged a submission may make a further submission in respect of the proposed recommendations.

7. At the close of this period the Council considers these submissions when preparing its final recommendations on the future use of public land in the area concerned. These recommendations together with a copy of all submissions received are forwarded to the Minister. Copies of these recommendations are tabled in Parliament.
-

DARGO GOLF

I have carved from the scrub a stringybark club
And a ball from the punk of a tree.
Other items are spurs, a whip and a dog
And a bottle top stop for a tee.

The course is up hill where bulls roam at will
And fences a good mile away.
Through bracken and bogs where snakes live on frogs
And the eagle swoops down on his prey.

It's two miles and back from the Pub to the Gap
And with all these hazards between;
I tell you "I'll win" before we begin,
'Cause those bulls are awfully mean.

You will need bring your best, plus fours and the rest,
All your clubs of various breed.
In case of mishap near the top of the Gap,
Bring a compass, a map and a feed.

Your ego will fall if a snake grabs your ball,
Or a birdie swoops down on his prey.
I'll line up a 'roo, as its bounding through,
Lob a ball in its pouch, might I say.

There'll be two holes in one when we get on the run,
For I'll herd the 'roo back to the Pub.
Fair through the bar door as you're screaming out "fore!"
And cursing my stringybark club.

S.J. Treasure, Dargo.

Policing the High Country

Some time ago, the Cattlemen's Association outlined the urgent need for police in East Gippsland to be equipped with four-wheel drive vehicles.

Discussions were held with police officers, and earlier this year, the Chief Secretary (Mr J. F. Rossiter, M.L.A.) had talks on the proposal when he visited a number of police stations in remote parts of the region. Mr Rossiter said there was a clear need for the provision of four-wheel drive police vehicles in the alpine areas of the State.

It was later announced that two vehicles would be provided initially, one to be stationed at Bendoc, and the second at Omeo.

It is anticipated that additional vehicles will be placed in strategic positions throughout East Gippsland as further allocations of funds are made available.

In their discussions on the subject, cattlemen stressed the need for regular patrols in alpine areas. Remote regions have become more and popular in recent years, with the advent of four-wheel drive vehicles, trail bikes, and all terrain vehicles.

In many cases, those entering the mountain areas have little knowledge of bushcraft, and in areas where sudden changes in weather can drastically alter road and stream conditions, it was felt important that police should be equipped to move into the area with a minimum of delay.

There is also the aspect of the need to detect the small, irresponsible minority of visitors to mountain areas who seem intent on causing damage. Shouting by irresponsible persons has caused the loss of a number of cattle. Association members believe that the knowledge that mountain tracks would be patrolled by police on a regular basis would be a deterrent to the would-be trouble maker.



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ESTATES

Excerpts from the Writing of Oliver Moriarty

On top of the Range the old fence which divided sheep grazing from cattle grazing still existed. There was no lessening of wild flowers where sheep had grazed. Photographs (slides) were taken to show the state of vegetation. The profusion of wild flowers depended wholly on the rock and soil formulation and on whether the land had been grazed or not. In places there were thick beds of flowers suited to the soil conditions, in others there were different flowers or only grass.

Everywhere heavy grazing had brought better growth of grass and clover and flowers. The lushest growth was where sheep had grazed in the past. Conditions before grazing was excluded, are described by Beryl Heather in the Cooma-Monara Express, April 19, 1937:-

"...range after range of enchanting mountains is... a vast wonderland carpeted with luxurious snow grass and clover and mile after mile of field flowers of every delicate shade and hue."

What grows in any area depends on the environment of that area and not on whether the area is grazed or not.

This is seen very clearly on the Bogong High Plains and Dargo High Plains where grazing has never been excluded. In places there was a complete cover of wild flowers, in others of grass.

In January, 1972, parts of these High Plains were a carpet of colorful daisies. In February the daisies had ceased blooming except on sheltered southern slopes where the snow was still melting. In the paddocks around the Treasure Homestead the golden Everlastings grew more prolifically than anywhere in the shut-up areas of the Snowy Mountains. It was evident that manuring by stock caused a prolific growth of wild flowers. Yet these paddocks often carry very high concentrations of stock.

The snow daisies had bloomed in profusion on parts of the Plains a few weeks earlier, but their season of blooming was past in February.

With Ted Fletcher and Douglas Clarke I observed the prevalence of bare patches and incipient erosion on the Range above White's River. For 20 years the country has not been grazed or burnt off. The snow grass grows rank in large tufts. The snow kills the tuft and a patch of bare ground is left. If there had been young shoots of grass after burning off or grazing the snow would not have killed the grass.

A part of the false propaganda of the "conservationists" is that stock cause the bare and eroded patches by selective hard grazing. This is untrue. The bare patches are caused by snow killing the vegetation. If there is no alteration and checking of the hysteria of "Conservation" the catchment areas which are the subject of microscopic, myopic "scientific" investigation, will be brought to macroscopic devastation and erosion. Sedimentation and siltation of the water reservoirs will be multiplied thousands/fold.

The Victorian Alpine stockmen are fighting to save and preserve their heritage and birthright, fighting for the country they know so intimately and love so deeply. May they win the fight, and thus lead the way for the return of their birthright and heritage to the descendants of the pioneers of the Snowy Mountains.

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