

# Cattlemen's protest ride was justified

from G. Stoney, for the  
Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria

To set the record straight, the letter from Mr Evan Walker and Mr Rod McKenzie (8/9) must be answered.

Before the cattlemen rode to Melbourne they were aware that the Government intended to allow grazing within the proposed contiguous park.

We acknowledge the commitment of this Government to that fact, and we note that they view the management techniques of the cattlemen to be sound and environmentally responsible. However, despite this, we decided to ride for two reasons.

First, we wished to tell the people of Victoria that the creation of this massive park is not in the

best interests of Victoria and its existence will create the framework to enable future Governments to eventually place the cattlemen and many other present alpine pursuits in jeopardy.

Second, we wished to draw attention to the selfish and elitist position adopted by the Government subsidised Australian Conservation Foundation (and other groups) towards the alpine question.

The presence of 307 riders and horses, two waggons, and four dogs in the city did just that. On ABC radio and in newspapers the following day the ACF revealed its true intentions.

In its predictable manner it attempted to turn its selfish philosophy into a conservation issue. The cattlemen were branded as "arrogant", our heritage as a "gross conceit", and we were told in no uncertain terms that we were "to be got rid of".

As the leader of the conservation movement made his statements, our reasons for riding were justified, as no empathy was conceded to a young nation striving to preserve the heritage of its pioneers.

The sentiments expressed were totally alien to the cattlemen's attitude of friendliness, caring and sharing the high country.

We rode, because we know that once this large park is created the conservation movement will not rest until the last cattleman leaves the Alps and our heritage (which belongs to all Victorians) is buried for ever.

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Mansfield.

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