

HAVE just returned from what one very rugged mountain man called 'God's own country', The Howqua River Valley, 45 minutes from Mansfield, behind Timbertop Mountain.

Five lovely days were spent with the other R.R., Geoff Pullar and Neil Kerr at a mountain cabin, high in those beautiful mountains that are heading for destruction if the men sitting in their offices in the cities have their way.

The mountain men and their families who have lived all their lives in this beautiful country are desperate for support to save their livelihoods for themselves and future generations of Victorians.

Fishing in the fast flowing creeks was good; the weather after the first day was quite cool with a few showers, which really did not do too much to upset the days.

One day was spent on an 80 km drive which took in some of the most spectacular scenery one could ever see, over roads where only a 4WD could pass. Very tiring for the driver as timber trucks had to be watched for along the winding roads.

All this could go if the mountain cattlemen do not get our support to preserve this immensely

rich heritage.

Grazing cattle in the mountains is still hard work, challenging, romantic and sometimes dangerous — it was 150 years ago. But now the future of the 120 mountain cattlemen's families is threatened and in a year that is significant as the 150th Anniversary of European settlement in this State, the mountain cattlemen are fighting to survive.

Government policy and radical conservationists have combined in a determined effort to remove the men from the mountains that have been their domain since 1835 when cattlemen first drove stock south from the Monaro Plains.

This struggle makes a mockery of the objectives of Victoria's 150th Anniversary Council, which, in official terms are to: "Provide an opportunity for all Victorians to learn of, and have access to, their history and heritage and encourage its preservation."

There are many facts and figures to support the cattlemen and the work they do in the high country and they believe that there is room for all, not to be organised into National Parks which allow authorities wide powers over visitors.

The question is, if most of the best and useful mountain country is taken over by parks, where can people go to 'get away from it all'? and exercise their basic freedom and initiative?

Anyone interested in obtaining more information about this very vital problem can either phone or write to Jim Commins, Ensay, President M.C.A.V. (051) 573232 or Graeme Stoney, Mansfield, Liaison Officer M.C.A.V. (057) 752212.