

The cattlemen's protest



CATTELMEN, including Peter Faithfull (seated, second from right) who is also facing eviction, listen to speakers at the Bogong protest meeting which was attended by 500 riders and several hundred more unmounted supporters.

THE Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria has mounted a major campaign against the impending eviction of eleven of their families from grazing areas in the high country.

The campaign, announced at the recent annual cattlemen's gathering at Gibbo Park be-

gan on February 27, with a rally at Watchbed Creek on the Bogong High Plains.

The majority of the families to be evicted are from the areas around Tawonga, Omeo and Shannonvale, and in some cases have run cattle on the plains for over 100 years.

Other families facing eviction from other areas at the same time are from Mansfield, Black Mountain and Delegate River.

In recent years the alpine area has been the focus of attention from what the cattlemen see as radical conservationists.

The impending evictions from the traditional grazing areas, referred to as "phase-outs", are a result of a second Land Conservation inquiry into the area, undertaken at the direction of the Labor Government when it first came to office.

The cattlemen are concerned that these evictions are only the continuation of a long line of "phase-outs".

They point out that in 1923 Mount Buffalo was lost to grazing, in 1956 it was Mounts Feathertop and Loch, in 1960 Mount Buller and in 1964 three families on Bogong.

Where 40,000 cattle had previously run on the high country, their numbers are now down to 18,000, and on the Bogongs alone they have been reduced from 15,000 to 4000.

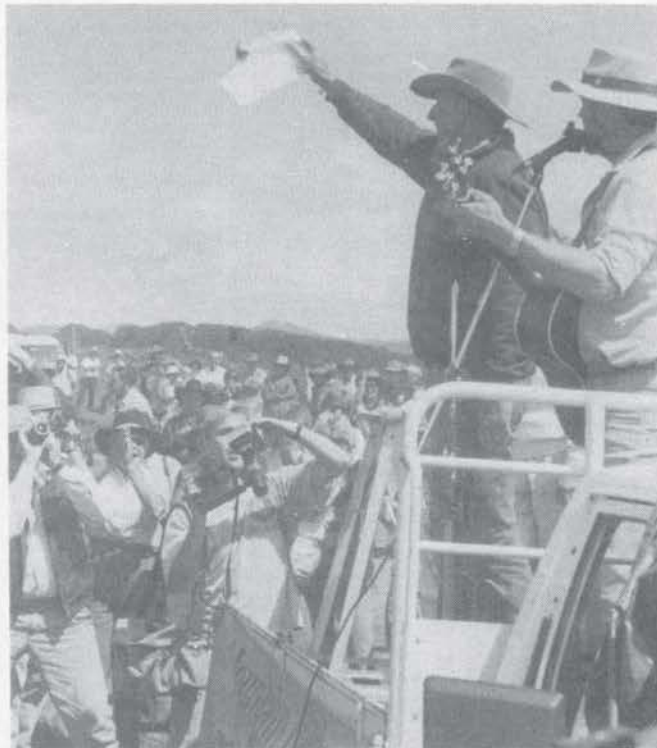
The cattlemen there-

fore reject the claim by the present Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Mrs Kaye Setches, that removal of the 11 families is in order to preserve a small part of the high country in its natural state.

Mrs Setches has defended the evictions with a claim that the result will be only a five per cent reduction in the area grazed in the high country.

The cattlemen, who do not graze cattle over the entire area, have pointed out that it means, in effect, a 10 per cent cut in the area actually grazed, and that ultimately 7.6 per cent of the alpine area would then be subject to grazing.

They also reject the offer from Mrs Setches' department of other graz-



BUFF Rogers of Black Mountain burning his eviction notice at the cattlemen's protest on the Bogong High Plains.

ing areas, believing these areas are unfit for cattle, or would already be in use, or are so far removed from the home base of the families that they would be impossible to access.

The main issue of concern to cattlemen is that all have a long history of care for the high country, and dread the removal of cattle as the forerunner to an ultimate degradation and loss of the area to all Victorians.

They point out that the park is an environmental disaster, and anyone wanting a National Park in the Victorian alpine area should first visit the neighboring equivalent.

President of the Mountain Cattlemen, David

Treasure of Castleburn, spoke at the rally of the risk to the alpine area posed by radical conservationists, and the love of the cattlemen for the areas they used.

"If we were convinced that the high country was being properly managed and would be better off without us," he said, "We would all leave right now."

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