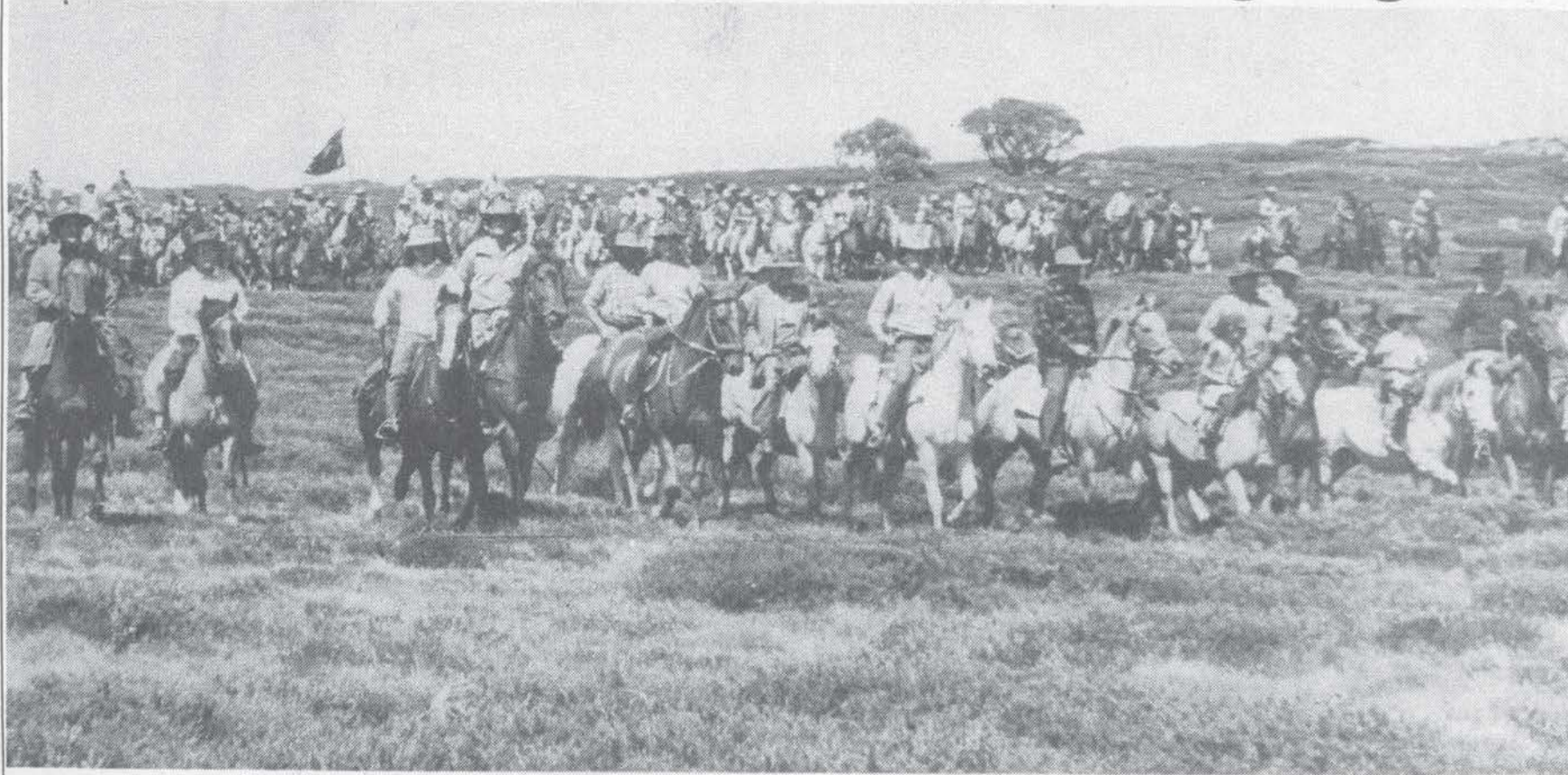


Cattlemen "link Australia to pioneering origins"



Mountain cattlemen listen at a rally yesterday to speeches criticising the State Government's decision to evict 11 families from the high country.

President of the Victorian Mountain Cattlemen's Association, Mr David Treasure, told a rally attended by 1,000 persons on the Bogong High Plains on Sunday that the heritage represented by the mountain cattlemen was Australia's only existing link with its pioneering origins.

"It was cattlemen who first found this high country; it was cattlemen who first struggled to understand its unique demands, just as we continue to do to-day; it was cattlemen who first husbanded and managed its resources, just as we do to-day.

"It was cattlemen who first cut and maintained

the tracks and kept them open for all users; cattlemen built the huts and shelters and stocked and maintained them as refuges for any needy travellers; and it was cattlemen who first brought others into the mountains, showing them the way and rescuing them from their own mistakes — just as we do to-day," he said.

Cattlemen had continued the husbandry of the Aborigines by lighting protective burn fires, cleaning up the dangerous build-up of fuel on the forest floor.

And cattlemen and their controlled grazing methods had kept the high plains lush and

green and growing.

Mr Treasure said the results of the stewardship which had continued for so many years was evident for all to see.

"The grazed high country has never looked better. It is the cattlemen who are the true conservationists of the high country," he said.

"Yet the reward for the older cattlemen and women, who have dedicated 60 and 70 years to the mountains, is to be cast shamelessly aside. The 40 and 50-year-olds who have raised families in the traditions of the high country are to be told to forget it.

"Our families have been fighting a losing

battle over the Victorian high country for 30 years. During this time we have given up over half our alpine grazing area," Mr Treasure said.

He said that if evictions of 11 families from the high country, proposed by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, went ahead, cattle grazing would continue in only 8.7 per cent of Victoria's high country.

"The Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Mrs Kay Setches, has claimed that these families can be relocated elsewhere, but the fact is that there is nowhere else to go," Mr

Treasure said.

The M.C.A.V. president claimed that in its 20-year span the conservation movement had undergone dramatic change.

"The radicals have taken over and subverted this once great movement.

"Where once we could have discussed genuine conservation issues, now we are faced with huts being burnt down and spikes being spread along horse tracks and fire access trails.

"How knowledgeable is a government-funded rent-a-crowd that bobs up all over Australia on

any pretext of a conservation issue?" Mr Treasure asked.

It was these radicals who were the genuine threat to the 11 families listed for eviction and these same radicals and their misguided policies who posed the real threat to the well-being of the high country itself, he contended.

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

"Our concern, our fear, is not for ourselves.

"All of us, with the ex-

perience of 150 years behind us, believe that current management practices and trends constitute the greatest threat to the high country environment in thousands of years.

"We make the strongest possible appeal to any Australian concerned with conservation.

"Please hear us. Listen to our case, and then judge us.

"We do not want your sympathy; we want your support — not just for ourselves, but for the long-term conservation of the high country," Mr Treasure told the rally.