

# High country anger

President of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, Mr David Treasure, said on Sunday that the conservation lobby had as its policy the imposition of a total ban on alpine grazing.

Mr Treasure was speaking at a rally on the Bogong High Plains, attended by 1,000 persons.

He said the conservation lobby was working with the objective of support for:

- A total ban on all alpine grazing, making the mountain cattlemen truly an "endangered species".

- A total ban on all trail riding operations.

- A total ban on all four-wheel drive activities.

- A total ban on all mining.

- A total ban on all timber harvesting.

- No management at all in the high country.

- No fire access trails.

- No preventative burning.

- Locked gates all around to prevent access, so that only a privileged few would have any access to 1,730,000 acres of the State's high country.

Mr Treasure said this "extraordinary and extremist manifesto was being implemented via a series of seemingly innocent steps.

Firstly, he said the conservation lobby had pushed for the creation of a huge Alpine National Park, promoted as a seemingly sensible move to protect the high country from supposed exploiters.

Secondly, a gradual tightening of management policy within the Alpine National Park had been promoted.

Thirdly, steps were being taken to have the park listed as a world heritage area, removing it from any further influence by the Australian public, or government.



The mountain cattlemen's rally on the Bogong Plains on Sunday attracted about 1,000 persons. Inset left: Kevin Kelly, of Omeo, is one the cattlemen affected by the eviction. Inset right: Graham (Rusty) Connley has his say on the subject.

"In short, their answer to the pressing and complex management needs of the high country is simply to ban everything in it.

"The radical conservationists have sought to keep every user group in the mountains on the defensive.

"They have portrayed everyone who works in or uses the bush as a ruthless exploiter of public land.

"They have concentrated their efforts in Melbourne where people have no intimate knowledge of the high country and put their trust in anyone who appears concerned with the environment.

"They have continually paraded prejudice as if it were fact; and after constant repetition it has become accepted as fact by those who have no means of knowing the truth.

"They have produced their own scientists, who have adopted the narrowest view of individual plant species, without any concern for the wider eco-system.

Mr Treasure said the pressure was being applied to reduce grazing.

Huts were being pulled down, or when burnt down, were not allowed to be replaced.

Four wheel drive tracks were being closed off progressively and fire

access trails were not being maintained.

Mr Treasure said the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands was in a difficult position.

They are caught between the extreme radicals on one hand and the need for practical conservation strategies on the other.

"In simple terms, they do not have and can never have the personnel and financial re-

sources to properly manage 1.7 million acres of high country. No government could ever afford to do the job properly.

"For years we have been saying and demonstrating that cattle grazing is a cost-free management tool.

"All of us — cattlemen, trail riders, bushwalkers, timber harvesters, miners, four-wheel drivers, hunters and fishermen — can as-

sist in the management and conservation of the high country.

"Under proper management plans, so much of the work that so desperately needs to be done can be achieved at no cost at all.

Mr Treasure claimed that what had happened in Kosciusko National Park was an "horrific example" of what was wrong with radical conservation policies.