

# On the campaign trail



Mountain cattlemen rode the campaign trail into Ringwood last Friday to highlight their protest against proposed Labor legislation to turn their grazing leases into alpine parks.

But the state president of the Australian Democrats, Mrs Janet Powell, dubbed them "willing stooges of the Liberal Party".

"The cattlemen's willingness stems from their own self interest because they want the Alpine National Park Bill blocked," Mrs Powell said.

"This is to their advantage and not for the thousands of people who will be able to enjoy the park in years to come."

Willing to debate her on the point were the 120-odd riders who departed from Eastfield Park, Croydon, on a journey to Eastland shopping centre, Ringwood in an effort to gain the attention of the Nunawading electorate voters, who will decide the balance of power in the Upper House.

At the invitation of the cattlemen, Jo Chandler of The Mail mounted up to obtain a first hand "view from the saddle".

As the procession made it's way from

Report: Roth Jones and Jo Chandler  
Picture: Steve Tanner

Eastfield Park, residents emerged from their homes, many cheering on the riders in their uniform of oilskins and wide-brimmed hat.

"I know who to vote for now", yelled one woman, flanked by her two delighted young children.

Motorists, whose normal reaction to a delay in their progress would be impatience, wound down their windows to accept pro-cattlemen "propaganda" and cheer on the riders.

"Eighty per cent gave us the thumbs up, 15 per cent just wanted us out of the way and a small minority jeered," summed up cattlemen's campaign co-ordinator, Graeme Stoney.

As instructed, the riders remained "ladies and gentlemen" during the ride, obviously winning favor from many onlookers through their joviality and friendliness.

However, the riders were keen to emphasise the seriousness of their campaign.

Kevin Kelly is a fourth generation cattleman who hopes to pass on his lifestyle to his young grandchildren.

"According to the Government, I'll lose my run in 1991," said Kevin, who is allowed to run 300 head of cattle on his 16,000-acre lease.

What will he do if the plans go ahead?

"Sheep farming I guess, but I hate bloody sheep. I'm a cattleman," he said.

Conversation waived as he turned to smile and cheer to Australian Conservation Foundation protestors, who made their point dressed as native animals.

The "animals" good-naturedly waved back.

"We are the true conservationists," said John "Buff" Rogers, regarded as almost a living legend.

His colleagues tell of the number of lost people he has found in the mountains he knows intimately.

He expressed the belief held by the cattlemen that they are "conservationists in attitude, aware more than anyone of the need to maintain a balanced environment".

Cattlemen said the benefits of alpine grazing included:

- Assisting in fuel reduction and fire prevention;
- Good land management in keeping pasture short and green;

● The opening of alpine access tracks by the cattlemen; and

● The cattlemen's contribution to search and rescue work.

They reject claims such as those made by Mrs Jane Powell that their campaign was spurred by selfishness.

President of the cattlemen's association, Mr Jim Commins, said they were protecting the mountains for everyone to enjoy as they wished.

Mr Graeme Stoney said the ride was an outstanding success.

"We swamped the media for four days. I'm sure everyone knows how we feel with the proposed legislation to remove us from the high country," he said.

Graham Proctor, director of the Victorian National Parks Association, said: "The alpine park is important to all Victorians because it contains 25 per cent of the state's water catchment."

"It is an important recreational resort for the state, and a crucial flora and fauna refuge and home."

"One hundred and twenty families graze the alps, their leases cost \$1.75 per season while commercial leases cost 15 times more. Only five per cent of the area they graze will be lost to them."

# Liberals favored in poll

by Simon Kinch

primary vote, which included the "donkey" vote which goes with top position on the ballot paper.

But only 52 per cent of Democrat voters followed the party's how-to-vote recommendation. The remaining 48 per cent gave second preference to Liberal candidate Rosemary Varty.

This must throw doubt on the ability of the Democrat vote to tip Saturday's result in favor of the ALP candidate, Bob Ives. The Australian Democrats, however, claim to have mounted a much more effective campaign this time.

Six additional minor candidates may tend to reduce the size of the Democrat vote and the Liberals appear likely to gain most of the preferences of the "other six".

Call to Australia candidate Pastor Al Watson's direction of preferences to the Liberals could prove significant if he repeats his 5.6 per cent share of

the vote he obtained in Waverley Province in March where he outpolled the Australian Democrats candidate, although that percentage included the "donkey vote".

The ALP's Bob Ives, who has campaigned vigorously, has an advantage over his Liberal opponent in his ballot paper position this time.

He drew bottom position in March.

The effects of the strange campaign introducing the Alpine Park and East Gippsland forest wood-chipping as issues is hard to predict.

The Australian Conservation Foundation and Wilderness Society's efforts to help the Democrats and Labor and the counter-offensive by the Mountain Cattlemen's Association to aid the Liberals is another extraordinary feature of unprecedented local campaigning.

In racing parlance, the Liberals took favorites at a shade of odds-on, but favorites are rarely certain.

Knife bandits strike  
- P3

New mayor looks ahead  
- P5

Women '85  
- P22

Motoring  
- P47-50

The traditional anti-government swing revealed in almost all by-elections makes the Liberals logical favorites for Saturday's Nunawading Province poll.

Few governments winning a general election in March could be expected to score again in an August by-election in an extremely marginal seat.

But the extraordinary circumstances surrounding all aspects of Saturday's contest make it a far from normal by-election.

It will be preferences of the minor candidates which will decide the result.

Biggest question mark for analysts, is the likely size of the Australian Democrats vote and, how many Democrat voters will follow the party's direction of preferences to Labor?

When only three candidates stood in the province in March, Australian Democrat Michael Nardella gained just over eight per cent of the