



● Some of the riders seeking support for cattle grazing in the alpine national parks.

Police slam cadet 'juggle' claim

By BRIAN WALSH

THE Police and Emergency Services Department has reacted angrily to claims by Glen Waverley MLA Ernest Ross Smith that recent police recruitment figures had been "juggled."

Mr Smith said that 43 of the 54 cadets now completing their 18-week course at the Glen Waverley police academy were sworn in as constables three days before the intake commenced their training.

He said the 43 recruits were sworn in on June 28, while they were still civilians, three days before the July 1 course commenced.

"This was not only dishonest, it was meant to deceive the public," Mr Ross Smith said.

"The mind boggles at what could have happened had one of the recruits, with all the powers of a police constable, suddenly decided to act irrationally and start a wild spree of illegally arresting people and generally acting irresponsibly.

"I am sure this was not likely to have happened but why did the Government order these cadets to be sworn in?

"I can only conclude that it was done to bolster the police figures for 1984-85 and juggle the books.

A spokesman for the Department of Police and Emergency Services said the decision was one made by the police force and was not a Government matter.

"Mr Smith should be condemned for not checking his facts before he shoots off his mouth," the spokesman said.

A police spokesman said that 43 police officers were sworn in on June 28 to commence their training.

"This was done to ensure that the police department achieved its authorised strength of 6700 for the financial year 1984-85," the spokesman said.

"This was a decision by the police department and not the Government, and was normal practice for this time of year.

The spokesman disputed Mr Smith's suggestion that recruits could abuse their power and act irresponsibly.

"It has always been police policy to swear in police recruits on the first day of their training, which was done on this occasion," he said.

"There have been no problems with this procedure in the past."

Mountain men come to town

BY DAVID HENRY

IN cowboy movies when the bad guys rode into town with guns blazing, honest folk, more often than not, locked their doors and hid.

But last Friday, when about 200 mounted horsemen and women rode into Ringwood, the locals waved, cheered and called out their support.

The riders were in town to support the Liberal Party at next Saturday's Nunawading election. They believe an ALP-controlled Upper House will ensure more alpine national parks with restricted access for cattle grazers.

Of course, the riders, complete with police escort, hadn't come to shoot up the town or ride roughshod over their opponents, which probably explained the warm reception from the townspeople.

However, they did have some fighting words for conservationists who oppose them and are support-

ing the Australian Democrats at the election.

A group of Australian Conservation Foundation members, dressed as native animals, actually met the procession face to face on a street corner but it was a minor show-down and the riders swept on through Eastland shopping centre.

They completed a circuit of Ringwood then rode out to Eastfield Park in Croydon for a rally and barbecue.

As the cracks gathered to the fray, president, Mr Jim Commins, got up to speak. He said the Mountain Cattlemen's Association was not normally a political organisation.

"But on this occasion we are," he said.

"We are left with no alternative but to ask the people of Nunawad-

ing to vote for Mrs Varty. If the Government holds Nunawading they will control the Upper House and go for more national parks.

"If that happens the freedom of all Australians will be curtailed as never before. The Democrats want to kick cattle out of the national parks and we are not going to take that lying down."

The association's publicity officer, Mr Graeme Stoney, had some strong words for conservationists.

They were "living in cuckoo land," he said.

"You saw them down there (Ringwood). They think timber comes from timber yards.

"But seriously, they are exerting a tremendous, undue influence on the community. They are a small, selfish, miserable band of people plotting to change the face of Australia and Australian heritage.

"They want legislation passed in the spring and that will be just the start. After that they will start

turning the screw tighter and tighter."

The conservationists followed the cattlemen out to Eastfield Park but the two groups stayed a respectable distance from each other.

The Australian Conservation Foundation spokesman, Mr Roger Smith, said the cattlemen's campaign on behalf of the Liberal Party was motivated by self-interest.

"The days of Banjo Patterson are over," he said.

"Cattle are grazing on expensive public land and damaging a national asset at taxpayers' expense.

"By opposing the national parks, the cattlemen are attempting to protect their own greedy interests ahead of everyone else in Victoria.

"The Alps should be treated as an irreplaceable national asset, not just a back paddock."

Mr Smith said cattle grazing damaged highly sensitive mossbed communities, polluted drinking water and caused soil erosion.