

Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria
ENSAY. VIC.

12th July, 1983.

Dear

We are writing to you because we urgently need your help.

The Victorian Government is under pressure to ban cattle grazing from the high country. It is also under pressure to restrict commercial recreation activities - like trail ride safaris and conducted ski tours.

The pressure being put on the Government is not only selfish and extremist, it is very well organised and effective. If mountain cattlemen and their heritage are to survive and if the high country is to remain open for everyone to enjoy (rather than only for super-fit bushwalkers) then we have to find a way of combating the radical "conservation" line.

That's where you come in. We would very much appreciate your writing a letter to the Land Conservation Council, setting out your own view on the issues, and in your own words. We believe the Council has been swamped by an organised letter writing campaign from the "greenies" and really needs to hear from ordinary citizens if it is to make balanced judgements, otherwise everything could be lost.

Set out below, the facts as we see them. This is to help you write a letter to the Council. If you disagree with anything, you don't have to include that in your letter. Whatever you do will be appreciated; whether you try to cover all the points, some of them, or just one.

Here is the situation as we see it:

BACKGROUND

1. Cattle grazing in the high country has an unbroken 140 year old tradition. It is done today much the same as it was in the 1840's. It is a living link with our pioneering past.
2. Cattle grazing is operated under strict Government controls. Cattlemen pay full rates for the right and adhere strictly to the control procedures. If they don't, they are thrown out. That's fair and we accept it.
3. The previous Government, also under pressure from conservationists, a few years ago ordered the independant Land Conservation Council (L.C.C.) to inquire into the alpine area and make recommendations for its ongoing usage.
4. After an exhaustive inquiry - at which all sides were fully represented - the L.C.C. provided very comprehensive recommendations which the previous Government largely accepted and implemented. These

actions saw cattlemen lose some of their rights and gave the conservationists a number of large National Parks. We accepted it as the Umpire's decision and were told that this would now remain the status quo until the end of the century.

5. The new State Government - after intensive pressure - reneged on this undertaking and ordered the L.C.C. to conduct yet another inquiry with a view to implementing Labour Party policy (itself made by hard-line conservationists). Among other things, Party policy calls for an extensive National Park covering the whole alpine area and for the "phasing out" of cattle grazing in this area.
6. The L.C.C. has just published its Interim Recommendations - which are now open to public comment (by July 26th). After that it will make its Final Recommendations (by Christmas).
7. The L.C.C.'s Interim Recommendations, among other things recommends the continuation of cattle grazing as an appropriate use of the high country. However, it also recommends massive extensions to the National Park network in the areas.
8. The National Parks Service, which will manage this area if it goes into the National Park, is philosophically opposed to commercially operated trail ride safaris and other tours. Some of these tours are conducted by cattlemen and are of great benefit to the public.
9. The National Parks Service is also philosophically opposed to cattle grazing and will undoubtedly make things impossible for mountain cattlemen operating in National Parks.
10. Thus the hard-line conservationists are on the brink of achieving their goals - by the back door. Although the L.C.C.'s recommendations seem fair to all on the surface, the application of Labour Party policy and the National Parks Service's philosophies will probably see the L.C.C.'s wishes overturned at a political level.
11. The only way to avoid this is to put as much pressure as possible on the L.C.C. and Ministers of the Victorian Government, now.

BENEFITS OF CATTLE GRAZING.

1. Cattle grazing is a beneficial and practical use of the alpine area and should be allowed to continue as a major contribution to forest management procedures.

Benefits of cattle grazing cont'd..

2. Alpine cattle grazing is one of the oldest and most respected land uses in Australia. It is part of Australia's tradition and heritage and many Australians - not just mountain cattlemen - have been enriched by and enjoyed that heritage. It must not be allowed to fade into history.
3. I have never seen any serious or long-term damage created by cattle grazing in the Alps, and there is no genuine proof of damage.
4. The presence of cattlemen in the area is of great benefit to visitors - from search and rescue operations to simply giving advice.
5. Mountain cattlemen's huts are a welcome refuge for visitors in an emergency.

WHY NATIONAL PARKS SHOULD NOT BE ENLARGED FURTHER AT THIS TIME.

1. In our opinion the National Parks Service has shown an abysmal record in its alpine operations. It should have to prove itself capable before it takes over more areas from proven managers such as the Forests Commission and Lands Department.
2. Many of the areas outlined by the L.C.C. to be included in the National Parks network are simply not suitable for the present National Park concept, (E.g. very high use areas such as the Howqua River, Bluff and King Billy area, which should be regarded as valuable and true multiple use area and as an access zone to the Wonnangatta-Moroka Park.)
3. They have extremely restrictive regulations that are suited to coastal parks; not large tracts of mountain country where people should be free to enjoy it without severe regulations.
4. We already have valuable and strategically placed National Parks in the Alps. These cover a wide area and we believe the balance of the Alpine area should continue to be managed under a multi-use concept which gives the most compatible benefit to a wide range of interests.

TOURISM.

1. There is a growing trend for cattlemen to become involved in guiding people into their grazing areas both summer and winter. These trips are conducted by cattlemen with a lifetime of experience in the area and who are passing on their valuable knowledge to their guests. Their presence is a large safety factor for other visitors, with summer horse rides and winter nordic tours. These trips are a valuable public benefit and should be allowed to continue.
2. Horses do not cause damaged to the Alpine environment.

We ask that you take half an hour of your time and write a letter in your own words using any or all of the points listed. Please only include the points you agree with, and change the order around to suit your own taste. If you put your letter in your own words and style, adding other ideas, it will have a good impact with the decision makers.

Please address the letter to :

The Secretary,
Land Conservation Council,
464 St. Kilda Road,
MELBOURNE. 3004.

IT MUST BE DONE BY JULY 26TH.

Photostat or carbon copies to the Minister for Forests and Conservation (Mr Rod MacKenzie) and Minister for Planning (Mr Evan Walker), Parliament House, Melbourne, would also help, with a covering letter stating it is a copy of a letter to the L.C.C. and that you are concerned.

If you could managed this and send us a copy also, we would appreciate it. However, if it is not possible to organise copies, the main letter to the L.C.C. will be of great help.

I believe this is the last chance that people with an alternative point of view to that of radical conservationists will have to express that view.

Believe me, we need your help.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Commins,
President
Mountain Cattlemen's Association
of Victoria.