

# THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

## Summary on Grazing Fees April, 1984.

THE worrying problems of setting equitable rates for grazing licences after an initial move to raise fees to an untenable level is currently being studied by our Association, the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association and the Ministry of Conservation, Lands and Forests with a view to resolving the matter in the near future. An attempt to outline some of the matters for consideration is set out below, but the subject is far too complex to fully explain in one page.

IF denied grazing runs for cattle, most graziers seeking a maximum financial return would, if they have sufficient freehold land, transfer to activities such as sheep and wool growing when a higher Dry Sheep Equivalent can be supported safely in an operation that is not so drastically affected by drought. Many mountain cattlemen have continued for generations with a relatively small area of freehold grazing land which has been supplemented by a Crown Land grazing allotment and have continued until recent years with no reason to believe that there would ever be such pressure for all the radical change that is being promoted.

IT is thought by some people that runholders have an unfair and inequitable advantage over non-runholders, if this is so then why is it that runs have been left vacant in recent years?

EVIDENCE is clear to see during the Minister's recent inspection in April, how the grazing value of the runs deteriorates when left ungrazed, and without protective burning. Invariably these unstocked runs are in far worse state of fire protection than the occupied and well used runs. Because of this there are now runs unstocked and virtually valueless for these reasons. For example, one of the respondents to our economic survey who had no cattle on his run noted, "as my run has been no good for 4 or 5 years, I have been paying rent and rates for no return".

A first rate example of unstocked runs is between Mt. Elizabeth (near Ensay) and Buchan where one of the major fires of last year burned and it is regrettable that time and distance prevented the visiting party from seeing this. Following the good season after the fire, the regrowth of grass and undergrowth is enormous and a huge fire hazard has re-developed. During that growth period, the Government should have actively encouraged as much cattle grazing there as possible. The result could have been that the areas favoured for grazing that are now the most overgrown and dangerous fire hazards, would have been in reasonably safe condition.

THERE could have been grazed valleys and selected areas that affectively retard or stop a fire in a far more economic and pleasing way than by deliberate burning and bulldozing.

IF an enterprising cattleman were to take on and stock an area such as this (which is very unlikely if he had to pay more than a token amount), and after say ten or twenty years of work and worry, achieved a vastly improved environment and reduced fire hazard, would it be just to say he had an unfair advantage over a grazier without such a run?

A formula is being worked out to try and establish a reasonable level of charges for grazing runs, after taking into account the exceptional circumstances surrounding the issue.

With best wishes,

JAMES A. COMMINS,  
President.