## UNITED LANDHOLDERS & CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

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July 17th, 1983

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

Dear Sir,

We have read your "Proposed Recommendations for the Alpine Area," and would like to make some comments on it.

We are mainly concerned for the future of the mountain cattlemen. The 140 year traditions of these fine pioneering families is something that is very highly valued by all Australians. It is something quite unique to this country, and should be conserved and fostered by those in authority. It would be a tragedy if the old custom of cattle grazing in the high country during the summer was allowed to die out. Most Australians value the mountain cattlemen and their work just as much, or more, than they do unusual flora, or fauna such as smokey mice or pygmy possums. The cattlemen are allowed to use such a small amount of the vast Alpine area - only about 1% - that they could not do any very great damage to the whole environment.

It is a matter for regret that the cattlemen lost some of their rights after the previous enquiry and recommendations by the Land Conservation Council. Incidentally, that enquiry and recommendations were supposed to last till the end of the century. It seems very unnecessary and wasteful to hold another enquiry so soon – it also puts a great strain on the resources of the mountain cattlemen to again put their case so soon after the last enquiry, when they presented an extensive survey of grazing operations on Crown Land in Eastern Victoria – the first and only survey of this kind. In the circumstances, it would be only fair for the Cattlemen's Association to receive some financial help from the Government to once more put their case and make their representations. The various Conservation organisations regularly receive many Government Grants.

We are glad to see that the L.C.C. recommends the continuation of cattle grazing in the Alps. But we also see that there are to be large increases in National Parks to 39% of all public lands, as well as 24% of Uncommitted Land, which amounts to 63% of the Area. The massive increases in National Parks will mean a much greater area will be out of the control of the Land Conservation Council. We do think that this will be beneficial to the cattlemen.

Great care should be taken in declaring new Parks and Recreation Areas, that they do not make it impossible for the cattlemen to get cattle up to their leaseholds, and there should not be any large increases in their rates and rentals, as it would be quite easy for these grazing areas to become non-viable. The expenses are already heavy in taking the cattle up and maintaining proper care for them during the summer, as well as the responsibility of control of noxious weeds and vermin.

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Moorabool Landowners Action Group
Upper Yarra Valley Landholders Association
Narbethong/Marysville & District Ratepayers
Green Wedge Farmers Association
Mountain District Cattlemens Association

INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING ASSOCIATIONS:

Bannockburn Ratepayers Association — Barrabool Hills Preservation Society — Bellarine Ratepayers Association — Gippsland Lakes Association Mt. Dandenong Ratepayers Action Group — Peninsula Rural Landholder's Association — Phillip Island Land Rights Association Upper Yarra Citizens Rights Association

Most cattlemen do not have very large properties in the lower country, and if they lost their Alpine grazing they could be put out of business, which would be a great loss to the industry. The high quality breeding cattle that come from these areas are well known and are sought after everywhere.

Grazing cattle help keep the long mountain grasses in control, reducing the need for costly operations of slow burning, which is absolutely necessary for the control of bushfires in summer. One bushfire will do more damage to the environment than many years of grazing could possibly do.

Cattle and sheep grazing could be rotational. The Mount Hotham area has been closed since the '50s. Some rotational grazing would surely do no harm there.

If the Government provided some dams in the grazing areas, it would help keep the cattle away from marshy land, which it is claimed they may damage.

The cattlemen state that there is no serious or long term damage done by these cattle grazing, and there is no genuine proof of damage. There are certainly many benefits from reasonable, controlled grazing. Rabbits and blackberries certainly are doing very great damage indeed. Four wheel drive vehicles, ski lifts, ski slopes and lodges (many areas catering for two or three thousand people) are also very damaging to the natural environment ... but nobody seems to be very concerned about this.

The mountain cattlemen have much to contribute to the community, as well as their colourful traditions and magnificent riding and bushmanship. When skiers and hikers become lost, a quite frequent occurrence, the cattlemen can find them and bring them safely out as no one else can do. Their huts are always available in emergencies, and their more recent activities in organising and guiding riding parties of tourists give a wonderful opportunity of passing on their unsurpassed knowledge of the area, their traditional bushcraft, and knowledge of the local history.

According to the official Agricultural Census, Victorian beef cattle numbers are down by 25% since the drought. The high quality beef breeding cattle produced by the mountain cattlemen will therefor be in greater demand than ever. They should receive every encouragement. It should never be forgotten that Australia depends on its rural industry for 45% of its export income. The great majority of Australians would expect the Government to give the cattlemen all the help and encouragement possible, so that they may continue their valuable cattle production and their conservation of the traditions of the Australian bushman and cattleman.

Yours faithfully,

(LORRAINE COLE)

Hon. Secretary
UNITED LANDHOLDERS & CITIZENS
CO-OPERATIVE LTD.

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