

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the M.D.C.A.V. held at Tobacco Marketing Board Room, Dalgety House, 461 Bourke Street, Melbourne on Friday, September 24, 1982.

Meeting was declared open at 10.00a.m.

PRESENT

R. Treasure, J. Treasure, J. Hall, D. Kneebone, D. Rogers, J. Rogers, H. Ryder, L. McCready, G. Stoney, F. Moor and M. Moor, B. Fitzgerald, J. Commins, J. Treasure, G. Connley, C. Hodge, W. Cumming, Mr. Don Saunders, Jeff Burrows, J. Lovick, C. Lovick, T. Murphy, V. Barnes, P. Osmond, J. Gunter, M. Jordan, R. Hebblethwaite, C. Aston, Mr. S. Ware, F. Crooke, Miss Cole (U.L.H. A.), Andrew Rule (Reporter).

APOLOGIES

Mr. Rennick, Mr. Hammill, Mr. Hand, I. Roper and D. Gunter.

MINUTES

Minutes of the previous meeting were read. B. Fitzgerald moved the Minutes be confirmed. Seconded V. Barnes.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The most successful event for us during the past year must have been our Get-together, at which over 1,000 people gathered at Pretty Valley on the Bogong High Plains.

Many influential people, including Ministers and their wives, plus Departmental and industry leaders, were present and we had the opportunity to discuss many issues that have become controversial and which are vital to us. Great credit is due to N.E. Branch members, whose turn it was to organise and conduct this most successful event.

The cost of communication still remains our greatest problem in the face of heavyweight but ill-informed opposition. If this ill-founded opposition is not overcome, ways will be found to squeeze us out and so bring about the demise of a valuable industry.

We must do all in our power to gain time before more damaging decisions are made. The recent change of Government has made this renewed effort imperative as we have not yet had as much discussion with the new leaders as we have had with their predecessors.

I must thank members, and particularly Executive members and Branch secretaries who have been most active, and a special mention is due to the careful attention paid by our Association's Secretary, Mrs. Aston.

Associate members have been of great value and assistance to us. The most recent to come to my

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notice has been the work of Paul Osmond and his colleagues in publishing very helpful articles in the community newspaper "Learning Exchange" which circulates mainly through the suburbs of Melbourne.

Research work on grazing on the Bogong High Plains by the University of Melbourne is continuing and we are hopeful and confident that this will throw more true light on the subject than has been shed in the past.

The re-opening of study on the Alpine Study Area by the L.C.C. after all the work and expence we have already been put to comes as a worry to us. Maybe it will give us an opportunity to gain some ground lost as a result of previous L.C.C. recommendations, though I feel we will need to be extremely skillful to achieve this in the short term.

Due to the Government's increased revenue raising activities, there will be inevitable increases in grazing fees and we are concerned lest they be disproportionately high in view of the particular circumstances of runholders.

Due to co-operation between neighbouring runholders, the actual cost per beast can be conservatively estimated at half what it would be without that co-operation.

Generally costs appear to come to between 75c and \$1.25 per head per week, without taking into account grazing licence fees or agistment. In some cases the cost is much greater than this.

When it is realized that the grazed forage is generally of maintenance value only, with the cost as high, or greater than, that often paid for first class agistment on well improved and fertilized pasture, it can be seen that the freely quoted opinion of "Cheap grazing in the bush" is a myth.

Losses are a factor that is difficult to quantify accurately. The value of cattle lost by death or missing from those taken to the bush are simple to calculate, but the losses from mismustering are another matter. Cows may be missed at mustering and have to calve unattended during the winter months. If a cow has difficulty calving under these circumstances, the cow and/or calf may die. If both survive the calving in harsh conditions, the resulting stress may cause the death of one or both, or in any event the cow will become relatively poor and emaciated and the calf stunted in growth, and this represents a certain loss.

On the other hand, cattle grazing in the bush in the best of conditions, are at risk of being stolen,

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particularly for slaughter, as they are more vulnerable in the remote areas they graze - especially as today many of these places are too readily accessible by motor vehicle.

Calving losses are believed to be greater in herds of cows that are subjected to mass movement from summer grazing areas during advanced stages of pregnancy.

Because much of the loss factor is not readily apparent without detailed study, uninformed people, including fellow graziers, tend to regard runholders with a degree of envy and perhaps even jealousy. It must be remembered that it is not so many years since rabbits devastated all the nation except the sub-tropical north, and the bushlands of Victoria were no exception. During this time most graziers would not even think of taking their stock into the mountains due to the poor economic prospects, coupled with the risks of serious injury through accident, and becoming lost. Grazing blocks were abandoned and many remain unoccupied. Those runholding families that survived those difficult times and held to their runs have still today to contend with a difficult economic climate and the element of personal risk, although the danger of being permanently lost has been reduced.

All the foregoing report must inevitably lead to the question "why continue the practice?"

The over-riding reason so far as graziers are concerned, is that while the economic returns are not particularly attractive, the fact of being able to disperse herds over relatively large areas of land during dry seasons and droughts make the exercise worthwhile since it enables continuity of breeding programmes to be maintained. This has resulted in the high quality of cattle produced in the mountains of Victoria - cattle that are eagerly sought after by breeders and fatteners throughout south-eastern Australia.

Apart from the personal reasons for runholders to continue to operate, there are many good reasons from the national viewpoint why the industry should be maintained and encouraged.

It is very disturbing that an effective anti-grazing lobby has developed from the misleading and inaccurate assumptions arrived at in the past by people in official and respected capacities.

Examples of this can be found when reading the works of Stretton, Costin and Carr, to name three influential authors, where due consideration has not been given to important facts. Such errors and

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omissions have carried forward and been compounded by information from the L.C.C. in more recent times.

In spite of what detractors have had to say, there are very important benefits to the public and to the State from grazing activities which should not be overlooked. These include wild fire control, recreational benefits, and in the field of search and rescue. It should be added that all these services cost the public nothing.

There is currently much enthusiasm for maintaining our national heritage, and mountain cattlemen can be seen as living examples of livestock husbandry that has remained unchanged since the first settlement.

The matter of fees charged for the grazing rights on Crown Land and the overall social and environmental considerations provide a very complex case for study and hasty and impromptu decisions should not be made. C. Hodge moved the report be received. Seconded G. Stoney. CARRIED.

ELECTION OF OFFICE
BEARERS.

PRESIDENT	J. COMMINS nominated by L. McCready. Seconded J. Gunter
V. PRESIDENT	C. HODGE nominated by G. Stoney seconded L. McCready
2nd V. PRESIDENT	G. STONEY nominated by G. Connley. Seconded J. Lovick
3rd V. PRESIDENT	H. RYDER nominated by W. Cumming seconded G. Connley.
LIAISON OFFICER	L. McCREADY nominated by G. Stoney. Seconded C. Hodge
SECRETARY/TREASURER	C. ASTON nominated by J. Commins Seconded V. Barnes.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

Balance at 1.7.81	\$	\$
		2,943.57
<u>RECEIPTS</u>		
Members Subscription	508.00	
Associate Members	561.00	
Donations	5.00	
Miscellaneous Receipts	5.75	
Advertising	952.50	
Sales of Voice of the Mountains	3,117.80	
" " Stickers	84.70	
Get-together receipts	4,903.54	
Interest	98.65	
		<u>10,236.94</u>
TOTAL RECEIPTS		13,180.51

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TREASURER'S REPORT
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TOTAL RECEIPTS carried forward	\$	\$ 13,180.51
<u>less EXPENDITURE</u>		
Bank Fees and charges	2.90	
Freight/postage	257.44	
Copying/Duplicating	89.09	
Stickers/Stationery	89.00	
Catering & Room Hire	242.50	
Professional Advice	175.00	
Voice of the Mountains	4,077.25	
Central Secretary allowance	286.60	
Miscellaneous	<u>123.00</u>	<u>5,342.78</u>
BALANCE AT 30.6.82		<u>\$ 7,837.73</u>

C. Hodge moved report be received. Seconded
B. Fitzgerald. CARRIED.

LIAISON OFFICER'S
REPORT.

L. McCready expressed his disappointment at the response to Costs on Runs Questionnaire. He has been working with the new Minister for Lands and Forests. Will not approach Evan Walker until we have costs to present to him. Moves are afoot to increase National Parks within the L.C.C. study areas. B. Fitzgerald moved report be received. Seconded D. Rogers. CARRIED

Councillor Max Moore of Barmah Forest spoke on costs of agisting cattle on runs. Fifty cents a week to keep cattle on, not including mustering costs or cost of looking after them. Only 700 head in the forest when it should be 3,000. Dartmouth Dam floods forest and takes away the feed. A view of putting up a united front and approaching the Forest Commission or any Ministers.

W. Hicks mentioned the Barmah Forest is used as a guage for costing. Councillor Moor told us the Mildura district is used as a guage for their costs. Feeling that we are being "played off" between each other.

G. Stoney added that grazing licences and fees we pay are a big issue. Meeting felt it was good Councillor Moor came and informed us of his side of the storey so we can compare notes.

Councillor Moor emphasised the importance of grazing as a service to the community in reducing the risk of fire and other benefits. Important for all this information to be tabulated.

G. Stoney moved we delay further discussion until after the meeting with V.F.G.A. Seconded C. Hodge.

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G. Stoney advised meeting as a result of request from the President and from information we received from various sources, he had approached the V.F.G.A. on behalf of the Association to see what avenues are available to us to become an affiliated member. Miles Bourke (V.F.G.A.) knows about our activities and that we are going to look at ways we could join. G. Stoney feels we are too small to have any proper influence on our own. We need a good submission to Government. The original L.C.C. Report was only the tip of the iceberg or the thin edge of the wedge. We need the strong backing of the V.F.G.A. but retain our own identity - be autonomous. It is vital we retain our own image and our own name. All branches were in favour of amalgamation as long as we still hold our own identity and this appears to be quite feasible. G. Stoney moved we defer further discussion to General Business. Seconded L. McCready. CARRIED.

"THE MAN FROM
SNOWY RIVER"

J. Lovick invited the Director of T.M.F.S.R., Mr. Jeff Burrows to speak to the meeting. Jeff began by saying it is the cattlemen who are the species in danger. If the cattlemen of the high plains are stopped, then they will become extinct. He feels we don't have any real clout because we are no real threat to the government. This is an important principle. He feels we have good scope in the public arena. We may have to change our image and be loud and aggressive. This does not mean we have to do this if we could engage a strong lobby presence. Identify the enemy and start fighting on the offensive and find the weak spot. He feels we can win on an emotional level. e.g. destroying our heritage, endangered species (discuss yourselves as being endangered). A need to co-ordinate resources. What has been done wrong on Kosiosko? Need to raise funds. Obtain a political lobby to maintain presence and keep us informed, so to be there when the action starts. Need for good links with the press. Use the drought situation as a way of pressuring the advantages of high plain grazing. Need to get a Public Relations Person. An offer of assistance on the latter point. He feels the film is going in our favour and that people identify with it and make you proud to be an Australian.

GUEST SPEAKER

Mr. Don Saunders, Director of National Parks. National Parks Service has been operating for 25 years. Many people within the Service are city-based "Greenies". Most of the staff are recruited from country areas. There is a farm under their management where children can go from the city for a taste of "country life". 25,000 children have gone through it. It is not fair to put the Services in the one basket. Bogong National Park (1.10.81) has had little done in getting the park underway. Wanangatta-Moroka National Park (1.7.81) to date no staff appointed.

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GUEST SPEAKER CONT'D. Grazing Fees:- The principal of the user pays. The runs to be charged based on a formula to be applied to all regions of the State. Rentals to be based on a realistic basis.

L.C.C. Review of Alpine Area:- Government has asked the L.C.C. to look at the Alpine Area again to make recommendations by 1.12.82 on areas which might be added to the National Park Section with a view to implementing the Government policy. If we are going to put up that grazing should be restricted, then we have to have a reason for it. We do not know the new government policy. There are gains to be made from co-operation between M.D.C.A.V. and National Parks in the presenting of a problem.

National Parks do wild dog control work along with the V. & N.W.D.B. where they cannot get to. The staff will be moving into areas and will do their job of management and maintenance. If they see a rabbit burrow then they should destroy it.

Huts:- The owner is still in control of his hut, which he built and maintained. L.C.C. still have too many grey areas regarding cattlemen's huts.

QUESTIONS & ANSWER.

Q. Licence fees have to have a lot of thought and and must not be gone into hastily. The M.D.C.A.V. were under the impression they had a lot more time and now feel there has been a con.

Q. What areas can we work together within activity in physical areas?

A. The Safari Operators, Vermin and Weed Control, work together in search and rescue as cattlemen have the knowledge and ability.

Q. Is the National Parks Service in favour of continuing grazing?

A. In some places it is to an advantage to have it for fire protection. In the past the removal has been based on damage caused by cattle, or changes in the vegetation that are brought about by cattle.

Clive Hodge pointed out that the best cattle are grown in these areas and should be kept in mind when making decisions, particularly now in times of drought it is very important.

BREAK FOR LUNCH 12.45p.m.

RESUMED 2.00p.m.

Miles Bourke, President of Victorian Farmers and Graziers Assoc., Jim Saunders and Des Crowe, President of Pastoral Group of V.F.G.A. as guests.

Miles Bourke stressed the importance that we have a mutual benefit for getting together.

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Des Crowe:- Look at what your problems are,
Where you go with them,
Where you can best get what you want
and where you get relief.

Clive Hodge moved we form a sub-committee to
decide on the merits of affiliating with V.F.G.A.

Seconded G. Stoney. CARRIED.

V.F.G.A. appointed two members:- Mr. Crowe and
Mr. Teehan.

General feeling that there should be no problem as
far as M.D.C.A.V. putting their casue.

Meeting closed at 2.30p.m.

Minutes confirmed, 23/9/83
Pat Commis

(Chairman)

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