



MOUNTAIN CATTLEMENS NEWS

Newsletter of the Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria
13 Tuxen Street, North Balwyn, Vic 3103

No. 3 March 1989



WE SEEK A MEETING WITH THE MINISTER

We have sought a meeting with the Minister to consider the whole issue of the evictions.

MCAV President, David Treasure, said, "I am sure you will agree that these matters are best dealt with "face-to-face" rather than in the media.

"Of particular interest to the Association is the manner in which these issues are to be resolved.

"In my letter of January 26, I stated that;

"The evictions are of paramount importance to us and have already created a great deal of emotion. Resolution of it (the evictions) would be achieved much more readily if ... you are willing to have the decision reviewed by a Government Working Party."

"You responded by a subsequent undated letter in the following terms;

"... I do not believe that it is necessary or appropriate to establish a Government Working Party to review the phase-out of grazing ..."

"I was then most surprised to hear you say on "A Current Affair" on Monday February 27;

"We have actually asked the mountain cattlemen to join us in a Working Party so that we would be able to arrive at a

solution that is agreeable to all of us and so far they have refused to participate."

"I would not expect that we would reach a final agreement at an initial meeting with you, however, I would hope that we would be able to come to some agreement on the process of resolving the issue.



TRANSCRIPT OF THE GOVERNMENT VIDEO

The Victorian Government has produced a three minute video explaining why some of our licences are to be terminated. This is an edited transcript:

"The traditions of Victoria's mountain cattlemen are not under threat.

"Thousands of hectares of publicly owned alpine land are available to Victoria's mountain cattlemen. Only a small percentage is being withdrawn from cattle grazing in order to protect a few very special areas of the Alps.

"These special areas contain good examples of the alpine grasslands, herbfields, heaths and sphagnum bogs.

The cattlemen have known for more than eight years that cattle will be withdrawn from these small areas in 1991. Areas amounting to less than 5% of the total. This decision was taken by a Liberal Government in 1980.

"Cattle can cause damage by churning up and trampling the soil, browsing on rare and threatened plants, making

tracks across the grasslands, causing erosion and polluting mountain streams. Cattle droppings encourage flies and spoil walking and camping areas for visitors.

"The State Government has offered to look at alternative grazing areas for the affected cattle. The Government has also promised seven year leases which will give greater security than the present one year licences.

We are in the process of producing a video which includes the Government video and media coverage of the Gibbo River Get-together and the Bogong Rally.



MORE SCIENTIFIC WORK TO BE DONE

We have held discussions with several academic scientists in Melbourne with a view to having a project done on the effects of cattle grazing and the wider issues including the proposition that the ecology of the Alps has reached a balance with present use. We have all been disturbed about the quality of existing scientific work and this new project could swing this part of the debate in our favour.

The publicity, especially in the newspapers, has convinced the Association that further work needs to be done on the effect of cattle grazing on the vegetative structure, the hydrology of the catchment and the scientific and social issues surrounding the conservation of natural values.

We are totally unsatisfied with the current state of the debate and the unsubstantiated claims about the detrimental effects of grazing. A proper study of all aspects of grazing should support the continuation of cattle grazing in the alpine area.

We have discussed this proposed new scientific work with the President of the Victorian Farmers Federation and representatives of the academic community in Melbourne. We have been delighted with their response and confidently believe that a project will be developed by a consortium of academics from Melbourne University and consultants with scientific qualifications from ACIL. It is proposed to seek funding for this project from the Special Rural Research Fund.

This could be a landmark research project and we believe that it could start to turn the tide against the conservation push for preservation at all cost.

Importantly, the results of this work should have implications for all leasehold land in Australia.



WILLIAMS IN "THE AGE"

We were disappointed that "The Age" did not publish our letter responding to Dr. Williams' letter criticising the grazing of cattle. We said,

"Dr. Williams, "Cattle grazing in the high country" (The Age 18/2) raises doubts that his botanical work may be partly based on a personal prejudice against mountain cattlemen.

"His phrase, "first there is the issue of private use of public land" has nothing to do with scientific argument. It appears that he may have used science and "conservation" to promote his personal philosophy.

"One argument Dr. Williams, a botanist, used in his letter to argue the case against cattle grazing in the alpine area, related to economic issues surrounding the alleged low rents paid by cattlemen.

"The fact is that the Government bases its rentals on commercial market rates. The rate for the short alpine season is the same as that paid by other Victorian farmers on similar land.

"From the earliest days of this debate, too many scientists have allowed their personal feelings to intrude upon the objectivity so essential to their profession.

"The forthcoming evictions of mountain cattlemen are not due to alleged cattle damage. The evictions are based solely on a subjective assessment that grazing conflicts with other values.

We did, however, have a letter published in "The Herald".



WE SEEK SOME INFORMATION ON WHERE THE EVICTED CATTLEMEN WOULD PUT THEIR CATTLE ON BOGONG

We have written to Bernie Evans, North East Regional Manager seeking a list of the grazing licence block numbers on the Bogong High Plains that CF&L intends offering to the cattlemen whose licences are to be terminated.

The Minister has said that by "making use of unallocated grazing areas, all existing graziers who wish to continue high country grazing beyond 1991 should have an opportunity to do so." (CF&L press release 1.2.89)

Finding out this information does not imply any weakening of our stance. This part of the debate has become bogged down with CF&L stating that there are areas available and the MCAV simply refuting this claim. We really need to know where these intended sites are so that we can properly assess their grazing value.



OUR APPROACH TO THE NATIONAL FARMERS FEDERATION FOR MONEY FROM THE AUSTRALIAN FARMERS FIGHTING FUND

Our request to the Fighting Fund for money to assist in the financing of the evictions campaign has been endorsed by the Victorian Farmers Federation. The next step was consideration by the Conservation Committee of the National Farmers Federation. It has been reviewed by this Committee but a decision has not yet been made. The NFF has asked the MCAV some supplementary questions relating to the national precedences that might be set. If the Conservation Committee approve the request, it still has to be considered by the NFF Executive Committee and then the Fund's Trustees.



WE ASK DEPUTY PREMIER, JOAN KIRNER TO ASSIST IN RESOLVING THE ISSUES OF ALPINE GRAZING FEES

We have still not been able to resolve the issue of charges for bush runs along the lines of our agreement with the former Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Ms. Joan Kirner. That agreement has not been implemented, its spirit has been set aside and, because of this, the issue remains unresolved. MCAV President, David Treasure has asked Ms. Kirner to assist in resolving this matter.

In a letter to the Deputy Premier, David said, "This matter has become as much of an embarrassment to the Association as, I am sure it is to the Government.

"We urgently want to clarify the charges outstanding, be issued with accounts and pay these bills.

"The MCAV is of the firm view that this agreement meant that the rent

would be charged at a rate of \$3.00/head/season for both alpine and bush runs (including licensed forest areas).

CF&L subsequently wrote to the MCAV (2 February 1989). The relevant points of that letter, together with MCAV's responses is contained below:

CF&L: "The Pricing Panel's recommendation that a rate of \$3.00 per head apply was clearly based on the grazing season being limited to 12-16 weeks ..."

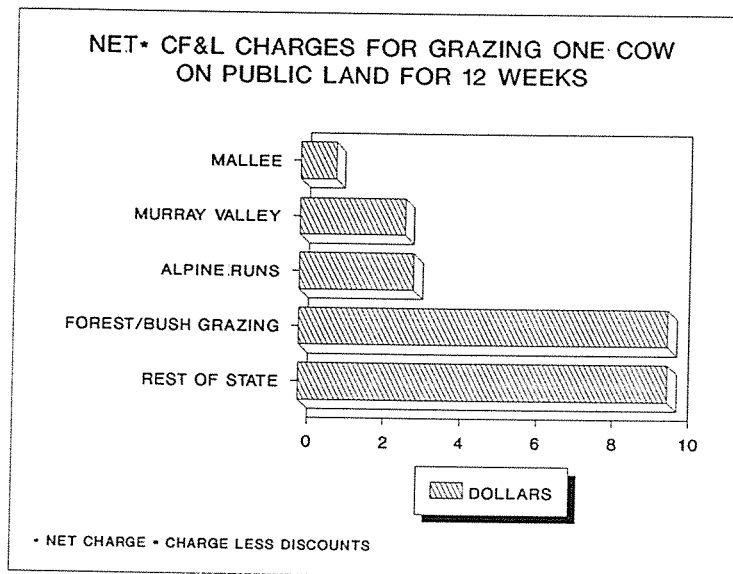
MCAV: This is incorrect. There is nothing in the Pricing Panel report that gives this indication.

CF&L: "The alpine charge of \$3.00 per head is only applicable where ... the areas are above 1220 metres.."

MCAV: There is nothing in the report to indicate that the Pricing Panel was only considering runs above 1220 metres.

CF&L: It is essential that the Department's policies are consistent and equitable..."

MCAV: The following table casts significant doubt on whether this is the case, not only for mountain cattlemen but right across the State. Importantly, it should also be noted that, contrary to popular mythology, mountain cattlemen are not paying cheap rentals compared to some other graziers in Victoria.





CF&L RELEASES ITS PLANS FOR THE BOGONG UNIT OF THE ALPINE AREA.

CF&L has released its "Alpine Area - Bogong Planning Unit - Proposed Management Plan". It does not contain any surprises but it does further cement into place some management plans relating to grazing that will be of concern to the Association.

In our initial reaction to the release of the plan, the President of the Association, David Treasure said the plan is a recipe for the continued attrition of the mountain cattlemen. David made the point that management of the Alps was being planned and regulated as if the whole area was already a National Park.

The main management points are:

A CF&L Alpine Area Grazing Policy is being prepared. The management objectives for grazing are to:

*Provide for grazing in areas specified by the Government.

*Apply appropriate licence conditions and supervision to minimise the impacts of grazing.

*Undertake or encourage further research and monitoring on the effects of grazing.

LPRACs will advise Regional Managers on entry and exit dates and stock numbers and other seasonal management.

Carrying capacity of all blocks will be assessed considering vegetative cover and any adverse impacts of grazing. Stocking rates will be reassessed if necessary.

Grazing block boundaries will be rationalised where appropriate

Fences, paddocks and yards will be reassessed and rationalised where appropriate in consultation with licensees.

Seven year licences will be offered.

Licences may only be transferred to immediate family and issued to traditional grazing families.

If a licensee dies or does not wish to review his licence, and the licence is not transferred to a member of his immediate family, to a family company or his estate, the block will become vacant.

Blocks which become vacant before 1991 may be allocated to those graziers whose blocks are to be withdrawn in 1991.

If research shows that grazing should be excluded from any block, the licensee may be transferred to a vacant block.

Alpine blocks which become vacant will not be re-allocated.

On the implementation of the 1991 Grazing withdrawals:

* A program to implement the withdrawals will be commenced as a matter of priority. It is a North East Region responsibility in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Division.

* Fences paddocks and yards will be removed except where they are of historic significance or have some other purpose.

Further research will be undertaken into the effects of alpine grazing.

Fitzgerald and Roper huts will be retained.

Kelly hut will be removed after 1991. In total about eight huts are listed to be pulled down.

This follows the Kosciusko National Park style of management, which the Association totally opposes.

There are other sections on Fire Protection, Soil Conservation, Horse Riding, Water Catchment Protection, Management for Visitor Use and Resource Utilisation. A full copy of the Report can be obtained from CF&L offices.

On the day the plan was release the President, David Treasure said,

"The real issue should have been the management of the alpine area and the grazing of cattle as a significant component of that management.

"Mr. Treasure said he was most concerned about the increasingly tight restrictions on alpine grazing.

"Throughout the debate the government has claimed that evicted graziers can be located elsewhere on the bogong high plains.

"This time however, the government is only offering alternative areas "wherever possible". This is the first time that the government has acknowledged that the graziers facing eviction might not all be accommodated at all. Worse still, graziers, who the government thinks it might be able to reallocate might not be able to build huts, fences or yards. Therefore, whereas the government has been claiming that cattlemen can be readily reallocated it is now saying that this will only happen "where possible" and they may not be able to build huts, fences and yards.

"The plan states that the government is preparing an alpine area grazing policy. This is the first we have heard of this proposal and it is hoped that we will be consulted in its development.

GRAZING ON MOUNT STIRLING

The Alpine Resorts Commission has responded to representations made by the Association.

The Commission has advised that it has no objection in principle to continued grazing in the resort other than the extent to which it may impact residential and recreational use of the resort and the stability of recently developed downhill and cross-country ski runs.

There is unlikely to be any restriction placed on grazing in the 88/89 and 90/91 season. It may then be necessarys to exclude cattle from some areas and some areas only until they stabilise after restructure and sowing down.

The ARC also has no objection to a cattle grid being built at an agreed location with the materials being supplied by the licensee and construction being done by the Commission.

The ARC will also be liasing with Mr. Purcell to agree on yearly cattle management required within the resort each year.

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**SMITHKLINE ANIMAL HEALTH PRODUCTS
SUPPORT M.C.A.V. FIGHTING FUND**

To assist with the M.C.A.V. fight to retain Bogong and other proposed Phase Out areas grazing leases, SmithKline Animal Health Products are prepared to pay \$25.00 for every 10 litre of Valbazen sold to Mountain Cattlemen and supporters.

This offer ends on 19th April 1989.

If you wish to support the Fighting Fund in this way please complete the form below and return to John Perley by 21/4/89

Post to:

John Perley,
Area Manager,
SmithKline Animal Health
24 Elm Street,
HAWTHORN VIC 3122

Phone: 03 861 7000

| Name/Address | No. of 10 ltr dums | Credit Dalgety Elders G & N (please state) | Town | Signature |
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