

ADDRESS BY ALAN BREWER, CHAIRMAN M.C.A.V. TO LIBERAL
PARTY DINNER, WODONGA 5/7/90

THERE HAS BEEN AN ENORMOUS CHANGE IN PUBLIC ATTITUDES
AND CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND RIGHTLY SO.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT POLLUTION AND PEOPLES' WASTEFUL
HABITS ARE SLOWLY DESTROYING THE WORLD, AND THAT
SITUATION MUST BE REVERSED.

AS PEOPLE HAVE GRADUALLY RECOGNISED THIS IN AUSTRALIA,
MAINSTREAM CONSERVATION GROUPS HAVE BECOME VERY STRONG
AND HAVE GENERATED HEAVY POLITICAL CLOUT.

INSTEAD OF USING THIS NEW POWER WISELY, THEY HAVE GRABBED
THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO TRY TO KNOCK OFF GROUPS LIKE
THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN, AND PRESSURE THE GOVERNMENT TO
TURN 33 % OF VICTORIA INTO NATIONAL PARKS.

33 % MIND YOU.

THEY ARE VERY CLEVER.

THEY SELL THE PERCEPTION THAT THE CREATION OF MORE
NATIONAL PARKS, AND STOPPING GRAZING AND LOGGING, WILL
SOMEHOW SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT, IMPROVE THE OZONE LAYER,
AND DO MANY OTHER WONDERFUL THINGS FOR SOCIETY.

2.

IN FACT THEY PUT IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE COMMUNITY, OPPOSITION PARTIES, AND PRACTICAL GROUPS SUCH AS THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN, FEEL GUILTY FOR ACTUALLY QUESTIONING THE PROPOSAL.

THE TRUE SITUATION IS THAT WHILE SMALL NATIONAL PARKS ARE VERY NECESSARY TO HAVE, LARGE, EXPENSIVE, UNMANAGED PARKS LIKE THE ALPINE NATIONAL PARK, ARE IMPRACTICAL, IMPOSSIBLE TO FINANCE, AND HAVE CLOSED OFF FOR ALL TIME VALUABLE RENEWABLE RESOURCES.

THE TRAGEDY IS THAT THESE RESOURCES COULD BE USED AND REPLACED WITHOUT ANY DAMAGE TO THE ALPS AND THE IRONY IS THAT REPLANTED FORESTS HAVE MORE LEAF AREA THAN MATURE AGE FORESTS.

THE REALITY IS THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT STARTED THE ALPINE PARK WITH A BLAZE OF GLORY AND AN INJECTION OF FUNDS, THE SECOND BUDGET SHOWS SUCH A REDUCTION IN FUNDING THAT THE WORKS TEAMS WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO LEAVE THE 4WD IN THE YARD FOR HALF THE YEAR.

DESPITE ALL THAT YOU HEAR, ALPINE GRAZING DOES NOT DEGRADE THE ENVIRONMENT.

SURE IT CHANGES IT, BUT SO DOES ALL OTHER HUMAN ACTIVITY.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT CHANGE IS NOT DEGRADATION.

THE BENEFITS OF ALPINE GRAZING FAR OUTWEIGH THE DISADVANTAGES OF THE MINOR CHANGES GRAZING CAUSES.

THESE BENEFITS INCLUDE REDUCTION IN FIRE POTENTIAL, A RESPONSIBLE PRESENCE OF THE CATTLEMEN IN THE ALPS, THE MAINTENANCE AND OPEN DOOR ATTITUDE OF HUT OWNERS, THE MAINTENANCE OF A VERY IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT PERSISTENT LOBBYING BY CONSERVATIONISTS AND THEIR SELECTIVE USE OF SCIENCE HAS INFLUENCED GENERAL THINKING AND THE PUBLIC NOW HAVE AN IMPRESSION THAT CATTLE:

TRAMPLE FLOWERS,

TRAMPLE BOGS,

DEGRADE THE ALPINE ENVIRONMENT.

NOTHING IS FURTHER FROM THE ACTUAL POSITION.

CLOSE ANALYSIS OF THE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE AVAILABLE DOES NOT SUPPORT THE DEGRADATION CHARGE.

4.

EVEN A CLOSE LOOK AT OUR MAJOR OPPONENTS' WORK - DR. DICK WILLIAMS FROM MONASH, REVEALS THE STRONGEST HE IS PREPARED TO GO IS THAT CATTLE CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT.

OF COURSE THEY DO.

EVERYTHING CHANGES THE ENVIRONMENT.

BUT THIS ISNT NECESSARILY BAD.

IN FAIRNESS TO THE CONSERVATIONISTS THEY DON'T HATE THE CATTLEMEN.

ONLY THEIR COWS.

THERE IS A STICKER AROUND -

"MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN DO CARE FOR THE HIGH COUNTRY - WHAT A PITY THEIR CATTLE DON'T."

DESPITE THE POINTED THRUST OF THE CONSERVATION ARGUMENT AGAINST THE CATTLE CREATING DAMAGE, THE ONLY REASON THE LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL COULD GIVE FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE 11 FAMILIES NEXT YEAR WAS NOT BECAUSE OF DAMAGE, BUT SIMPLY THAT THEY WANTED SOME AREAS FREE OF CATTLE.

LET ME GET BACK TO THE CONSERVATION GROUPS BECAUSE THEY ARE ONE OF THE KEYS TO WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN.

5.

THESE PEOPLE USE THE MEDIA SKILLFULLY.

1. THEY ARE A BIG HEADACHE TO THE STATE GOVERNMENT, AND WHEN THE LIBERALS GET INTO POWER (OR BEFORE) THEY WILL HAVE TO PLAN HOW TO HANDLE THEM AND NOT BUCKLE UNDER TO MINORITY GROUPS. AT THE MOMENT THE GOVERNMENT CANT GOVERN BECAUSE OF PRESSURE GROUPS LIKE THIS, AND THIS HAS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE INCOMING GOVERNMENT.

2. IT WILL BE EASIER FOR THE LIBS BECAUSE THESE PEOPLE WILL NEVER VOTE LIBERAL UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

OBVIOUSLY THE PLOY IS TO ISOLATE THEM FROM MAINSTREAM COMMUNITY THINKING AND EXPOSE THEIR HIDDEN AGENDAS.

LET ME REMIND YOU OF SOME HISTORY WHICH WE THINK HOLDS A POLITICAL LESSON.

YOU WILL BE AWARE THAT THE LIBERALS VOTED AGAINST THE FIRST ALPINE PARK LEGISLATION FOLLOWING NUNAWADING, WHICH WE HELPED WIN FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY FIVE YEARS AGO.

HOWEVER LAST YEAR THEY CHANGED THEIR MINDS, LEFT US HIGH AND DRY, AND VOTED FOR THE ALPINE PARK WHEN THE BILL WAS REINTRODUCED.

THIS DECISION WAS DEVASTATING TO US BECAUSE WITH NUNAWADING WE HAD SACRIFICED FOREVER, OUR NON-POLITICAL STATUS, AND THE LIBS WERE ABLE TO BUILD ON THAT ORIGINAL ONE SEAT MAJORITY WON BY ROSEMARY VARTY.

6.

AT THE LAST ELECTION THEY WERE WELL IN CONTROL OF THE UPPER HOUSE.

THIS WAS DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO OUR EFFORTS WHEN THEY HAD THEIR BACKS TO THE WALL AT NUNAWADING.

THERE ARE SOME BIG POLITICAL LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE EXERCISE.

THE MAJORITY OF LIBERALS THOUGHT THEY COULD GAIN MILEAGE FROM THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT BY VOTING FOR THE PARK. THEY CAME A TERRIBLE CROPPER.

THIS IS WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED: THE MINISTER USED THE PARK LEGISLATION VICTORY IN THE HOUSE TO SHORE UP HER POSITION WHEN SHE WAS VERY SHAKY.

THE FEW AMENDMENTS SANCTIONED BY THE LIBERALS (AFTER A LOT OF PRODDING), WERE CLAIMED BY THE MINISTER AS HERS, AND THE LIBS DIDN'T GET ANY CREDIT.

THE LIBS ARE NOT RECOGNISED AS HAVING PLAYED ANY PART IN GETTING THE PARK DECLARED, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAVE SUCCESSFULLY PORTRAYED THEM AS OBSTRUCTIONIST, AND THE CATTLEMEN AS OUTDATED TO THIS ERA.

THE MINISTER USED THE LAUNCH OF THE PARK TO PROMOTE GOVERNMENT AWARENESS OF THE ENVIRONMENT - THE LIBS GOT NOTHING, AND WE LOST THE BATTLE.

THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACT

THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT ISSUES NO BACK CREDITS, AS SOON AS THEY ACHIEVE SOMETHING, THEY WANT SOMETHING ELSE.

THEY HARDLY ACKNOWLEDGED THE PART THE LIBS PLAYED, AND THE INK WAS HARDLY DRY ON THE LEGISLATION WHEN THEY STARTED TO APPLY PRESSURE TO GET MORE CATTLE OUT, REDUCE COMMERCIAL TOURISM TO UNECONOMIC LEVELS AND TO HAVE PLANNING INTRODUCED TO CLOSE UP VAST TRACTS OF THE PARK TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC WHO WISH TO VISIT THE AREA BY VEHICLE.

THEY WANT ENORMOUS AREAS OF WILDERNESS WITHIN THE ALPINE PARK.

I KNOW THAT IT IS UNPRODUCTIVE TO RAKE UP OLD ISSUES, BUT IN THIS CASE A VALUABLE POLITICAL LESSON CAN BE LEARNED.

I ALSO WISH TO PUBLICALLY THANK LOU LIEBERMAN, ROSEMARY VARTY, TOM AUSTIN, GEOFF COLEMAN AND THE OTHER SENSIBLE AND PRACTICAL MEMBERS OF THE LIBERAL PARLIAMENTARY PARTY WHO FOUGHT TOOTH AND NAIL TO GET THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN THE BEST DEAL POSSIBLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE M.C.A.V. HAS NOT GONE PUBLIC WITH THESE COMMENTS, BUT HAS PRIVATELY TOLD LIBERALS ITS POSITION AND OPINION.

THE LIBERAL PARTY HOLDS THE ONLY HOPE FOR VICTORIA TO GET BACK TO SENSIBLE PRACTICAL CONSERVATION.

SUSTAINABLE USE OF RENEWABLE RESOURCES IS A MUST IF WE ARE TO SURVIVE AS A NATION.

THIS WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE IF 13% OF VICTORIA IS LOCKED UP AND ONE-THIRD OF PUBLIC LAND (33%) CAN HARDLY BE VISITED, LET ALONE UTILISED.

THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT MUST BECOME ECONOMICALLY LITERATE AND THEY WONT BE FORCED TO DO THIS UNTIL GOVERNMENTS LEARN TO SAY "NO, GO BACK AND REWRITE YOUR DEMANDS OR WE WILL ALL GO BROKE AND THEN WATCH THE LAND SUFFER".

THE VICTORIAN LIBERALS ARE IN THE BOX SEAT AND IF THEY ARE TOUGH, THEY CAN DO MORE TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT BY BEING PRACTICAL THAN ANY GOVERNMENT BEFORE THEM.

IF THEY ARE WEAK, AND PANDER TO THE CONSERVATION LOBBY IN THEIR ELECTION PROMISES, AND WHEN THEY COME TO POWER, OUR STATE WILL GO FURTHER DOWN THE GURGLER, THE ENVIRONMENT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO BE FUNDED OR PROTECTED, AND GROUPS LIKE THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN WILL ONLY BE A MEMORY.