

DEBATE HELD AT SCOTCH COLLEGE IN MARCH 1985 BETWEEN HARRY RYDER, MOUNTAIN
CATTLEMENS ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA, AND JANET RICE, CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF
VICTORIA.

...there has been more and more concern expressed about preserving the environment. Issues like the damming of the Franklin River, logging on the Erinundra Plateau in East Gippsland have gained wide publicity. Last week we heard how greater leisure time is creating problems in bushland areas with increased use of 4WD vehicles, trail bikes and the opening up of new skiing areas. An issue that has come into prominence in recent times is the question of grazing cattle on the High Plains, and you may have seen at Moomba the procession of Mountain horsemen and before that there was a procession to Parliament House. To discuss this question it is my pleasure to introduce Miss Janet Rice from the Conservation Council of Victoria, and Mr. Harry Ryder a Cattleman from Mt. Beauty in north-eastern Victoria. Now Mr. Ryder is a member of one of Victoria's most famous Mountain Cattle families. Both the Ryders and his mother's family, the Treasures, have been grazing cattle on the Bogong and Dargo High Plains continuously for over 100 years. Mr. Ryder is the fifth generation Cattleman. He was educated at Wesley College and is currently a junior Vice-President of the Mountain Cattlemens Association, so could you give him a warm welcome please.

RYDER: Thanks Doug for that kind introduction and thank you all for the applause, I was quite surprised to get a bit of applause after Doug said I went to Wesley but anyway thank you very much. It is good to be able to come here today and take this opportunity to put the Cattlemens' case before the students and masters of Scotch College. As Doug said both of my parents and their respective families before them have made their living from grazing cattle in the High Country. The area that our cattle are licensed to graze on now is the Bogong High Plain. So you will no doubt be aware of the recommendations of the Land Conservation Council for the creation and extension of vast areas of National Park. The Cattlemen are opposed to the extension of these Parks. It is a policy of the Australian Conservation Foundation and the present Government to completely remove cattle grazing from National Parks. Therefore you can appreciate the Mountain Cattlemens' concern that their future is threatened. We find ourselves in a back-to-the-wall situation. Cattle have already been removed from the following once valuable grazing areas: Mt. Buffalo, Mt. Buller, Mt. Baw Baw, Mt. Hotham, Mt. Feathertop, and in the near future they will be removed from Mt. Nelse, Mt. Wellington Plateau, and the Mt. Howitt-Snowy Plains area. Regarding the exclusion of grazing from Mt. Nelse it was interesting to note that in 1978 a delegation of Cattlemen visited the Land Conservation Council to protest against the decision. The then Chairman, the late Mr. Sam Dimmick told these Cattlemen that they were not being removed because of any damage caused by their cattle, but simply because cattlemen had to be removed from somewhere to appease the pressure groups. It is also interesting to note that on Mt. Howitt-Snowy Plains area the reason that the Land Conservation Council gave for their decision to remove cattle was that stock were damaging the area. In December 1983 during a tour of the area by Members of Parliament and Cattlemen the Minister was asked to indicate where the cattle damage was in that area. This couldn't be done, he couldn't

justify his decision. Grazing in the Victorian Alps is controlled by a consultative group known as the Alpine District Advisory Committee. This Committee provides a forum for discussion between the managers and users of the Alpine area. The Committee consists of representatives of the following Agencies: Soil Conservation Authority, Forests Commission, Victorian National Parks Service and Cattlemen and recreational interests. With regard to grazing the Committee establishes Cattle entry and exit dates to the High Plains as well as monitoring stocking levels and setting stocking rates for each lease. This group has successfully acted in this capacity since 1950. During the last 15 years there has been increased criticism of grazing in the Alps and a well planned campaign has been directed against this industry. Cattlemen are not opposed to recreational Parks in the Alps, but are concerned that the public is being told that grazing in national parks is not compatible. Such criticism as polluted streams, high stocking rates, damage to moss beds and damage to water supply catchments are unsubstantiated and gross exaggeration. I quote the Land Conservation Councils/^{current}final recommendations on water catchment page 37 Section (e) "The highest elevations produce more water per unit area than any other part of the State and the quality of the water in most streams is high." I further quote from a paper by Mr. Harm Van Rees, now Dr. Harm Van Rees of the School of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Melbourne. "I studied the behavior of cattle on the High Plain and found cattle to prefer the grass land, open heath land, and heath land communities. Cattle generally avoided moss beds, and further I determined that the diet consisted primarily of snow grass early in the season, snow grass and alpine star bush in the middle of the season, and the silver snow daisy towards the end of the season. These plants are common components of the alpine vegetation and it is unlikely that the grass...excuse me...These plants are common components of the alpine vegetation and it is unlikely that these plant species are over grazed. The grass land community of the High Plains appears to be in a stable condition." It is interesting to note that this research work was carried out by Dr. Van Rees and was financed by the Ministry for Conservation. I have got some slides I would like to show you, if we could have the first slide please,...focus it. What we have here coming into focus is a group of Cattlemen on the High Plains who are just on the completion of the muster towards the end of the grazing season. If we could have the next slide please.....Could we have this focused please ... Ah what we have here is a mob of cattle grouped together being driven down from the High Plains at mustering time. They are making their way down to the lowland pastures. Could we have the next slide please...Ah this is pretty much out of focus also but in the background ... can something be done to improve that..... Anyway what we have here is a stockmans horse in the foreground and in the background we have a mob of cattle, it is the same mob of cattle leaving Pretty Valley. Ah could we have the next one please... Oh no that is Janet's slide she can talk about that one when the time comes (laughter). Anyway I thought

those might have showed up a little bit better unfortunately they didn't. I will now list some of the benefits of grazing alpine and sub-alpine areas. It is very clearly proven by practical experience that grazing reduces fire hazard in these areas. Wildfire is one of the most significant causes of damage to the alpine area. Recent examples of the devastation caused by wildfire can be seen in the Mt. Buffalo National Park and the Buckland Valley where a total of 57,000 hectare was totally devastated. Both these areas had not been grazed for many years. Cattle keep the bush clear and free of much flammable material thus reducing the risk of wildfire. The traditional function of Cattlemen in search and rescue work is well known. My father Wally Ryder has personally rescued a number of people from the Mt. Bogong summit area as have other Cattlemen in many other areas. You will also be aware that our huts are always open to provide shelter to those in need. The Mountain District Cattle make a major contribution to the supply of stock required by lowland farmers to fatten as well as for the Melbourne market. This represents a cash flow of some \$23 million annually and substantially supports a number of agricultural communities and towns around the area. If the aims of the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Victorian National Parks Association and the present Government regarding Alpine grazing are realised and the Cattlemen are finally removed from the Mountains it will mean that a famous and historical link with our pioneering past will be lost forever. In a young country such as Australia with so little history you would expect that it would be the policy to try and conserve some examples of our pioneering past, rather than adopting a course of action that will close the era of the Mountain Cattlemen forever. Lets allow the epic of the Man from Snowy River to continue so that we all may see and share this way of life. I take this opportunity to invite you one and all to come up and see the areas that we are concerned and judge the situation for yourself. Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

(Long applause).

Miss Janet Rice has been working with the Conservation Council for the past 18 months. She is a Bachelor of Science from Melbourne University majoring in meteorology. Miss Rice is a keen bushwalker and knows the High Plains well. To emphasise her commitment to conservation just as an example she rode a bicycle to Scotch today, so could you give her a warm welcome please.

(Applause)

RICE: No doubt many of you have seen the Man from Snowy River, probably watched it on T.V. last Sunday night. I only mention that now to get it out of the way because it only has minute relevance to what we are talking about today. You might be interested to know that the Author of the poem The Man from Snowy River, Banjo Patterson was well and truly a city dweller, a suburbanite like you and I. His poem and the film took a very romantic view of life in the Alps not a realistic view

Most Mountain Cattlemen don't spend their lives with the sun setting behind them and with violins sweetly singing as they ride off into the wild and beautiful mountains. That's myth, and today we are talking about reality. Consequently I would like to take Harry to task for a few things he has just asserted as facts which blatantly are not. But before I get down to that nitty-gritty I think it's important for you to understand clearly what the conservationist stand in this issue is. It's now a radical stand, or an extreme stand or selfish or motivated by a desire to lock up the Alps to use the emotive term the Cattlemen are using. It is being consistent with a population belief that humans have got no more right to exist on this planet than any other species and that our existence shouldn't threaten the existence or as far as possible interfere with the existence of other native species. Why should we think that we have got the right to ruin the homes of animals by clearing, to ensure their demise by polluting air and water. Why do we think that we are the most, the cleverest, the most important species on this planet after only just managing to stop blowing ourselves and everything else in the planet to smithereens. Conservationists don't think that we know everything and conservationists don't think that we have got the right to change the face of this planet just because it suits us, or suits our economic system. We think we have got the responsibility to exist as far as possible in harmony with other species to live and let live. Now this might all seem a bit far removed from the issue of grazing in the Alps, but it is not it is all too relevant. Because in the Alps we have an area which is very special to us in Australia, indeed to the World. It is a special sensitive ecosystem which is basically undeveloped and pretty removed from all the exuberance of the cities. I have got a few slides, hopefully we will be able to get focused which should give you an idea of what the country looks like.

That's looking down a gully off Mt. Feathertop... have another one.... Another typical view of alpine grassland with more mountains in the background... and that's Mt. Magdala with the snow gums in the background and alpine grasses in the foreground. That's the sort of country we are talking about. Right, a bit difficult to tell but it's meant to be a map showing you the very small areas of Australia which is actually covered by .. it is an alpine environment. Um if you would care to look up on the ceiling there, you have got Mt. Kosciusko coming down south to the alpine areas of Victoria, and in Tasmania we have got small areas of alpine scenery, overall, all of Australia, oh, right... that gives you an idea that green patches is the area above 1000 metres. To give you an idea of the... have the lights back on again now. of the very small parts of Australia which are actually covered by alpine vegetation which have alpine eco systems. I think the figure is 6 % yes 6% of Victoria is in this alpine region, and of course compared to the whole size of Australia, the alpine area is much much smaller. Even though it is only 6% of Victoria more than 1050 different plant species have been recorded in the alpine regions 12 of which only occur in the alps, and another 56 which are poorly represented elsewhere in

Victoria. There are 62 major vegetation alliances or groupings recorded in Victoria more than a third of these occur in the alps and that's more than a third of the vegetation alliances occur in the area which is only 6% of Victoria so the alpine region is very very special to the type of vegetation that it has and the diversity of the vegetation that it has. Of course there is also a wide range of wild life with 34 species of native mammals, 183 species of birds, 30 reptiles, 17 different amphibians and 13 native fish. Amongst these are rare species such as the Mountain Pygmy Possum, the Tiger cat, the Smoky mouse, and the broad toothed rat. Not only is this alpine environment special for Australia but no other alpine environment in the world can boast such a variety of species. In its natural state the alpine region is of world heritage standard as is the Kosciusko National Park in New South Wales and the southern mountains of the A.C.T. However as it stands at present the alpine area couldn't be included and recognised as world heritage for much of its beauty and its value is being threatened by a number of exploitative activities and grazing is one of these. The alpine area should be an area of natural beauty of natural worth and natural heritage for us and our children. The internationally accepted definition of a National Park which is what the Government has decided and the scientists have definitely decided is what much of this alpine area should be the internationally accepted definition is an area that should not be materially altered by human exploitation and occupation and where the highest competent authority of the country has taken steps to prevent or eliminate it as soon as possible exploitation or occupation of the area. That's the internationally accepted definition. There is obviously recognition that a large National Park should be in the alps rather than a situation at the moment where less than 30% of this environmentally significant area is in any sort of reserve at all. The 1983 recommendations of the Land Conservation Council which is the body set up to make decisions on what is committed where on public land has recommended a significant increase in National Park area bringing reserves up to 48% of land in the region so it's still less than half that's not all the alps which is what the Cattlemen are trying to say. These recommendations however have yet to be implemented and even when they are they are recommending grazing continue indefinitely in almost all new areas of National Park. It doesn't take me to point out to you that here we have an inherent contradiction. Firstly our Government recognises the area is scientifically valuable enough and environmentally important enough to be declared a National Park but remember an internationally accepted definition of a National Park is an area not materially altered by human exploitation and where the highest competent authority of the country has taken steps as soon as possible to prevent or eliminate exploitation or occupation in the area. So you have got a contradiction with the recommendation that grazing which is an exploitative use and a non-natural use should continue indefinitely. That contradiction is what conservationists object to and what is behind our push for the phasing out of grazing in the alpine

National Park. We know, the Government knows the area should be a National Park be made with conservation as its prime objective. But this belief just does not just stem from nowhere its backed by statements such as the following quote from the Australian Academy of Science.. who said "a larger contiguous alpine National Park in Victoria would not only help safeguard Victoria's scientific heritage but would be of national and international significance!" Grazing in an alpine National Park belittles its importance, drastically affects its value for conservation. In addition the presence of cattle a non indigenous domestic species with their mooing, their dung, their mere physical presence many people find disturbing, in an environment which is meant to be natural, peaceful and wild. And so to take Harry to task he is asserting amongst other things that cattle do no damage. However it is an irrefutable fact indeed a fact that all except the Mountain Cattlemen or graziers as I prefer to give them their less dramatic but just as appropriate term, everyone has accepted that except them. These graziers have decided to ignore 40 years of research that shows conclusively that cattle have caused damage to the fragile alpine eco system. And they are pinning their hopes of convincing the public otherwise on misquoting one researcher. The report of Harm Van Rees says the Mountain Cattlemen, according to their propoganda, have exploded the myths of moss bed damage and has exploded the worn out theories and arguments against cattle. And what does this man Harm Van Rees say in response to his report being used in this way. I will quote from a letter that he wrote to The Age. He said "I would like to draw attention to the mis use and mis representat of the contents of my report." He said "The report does conclude that the relatively low grazing pressure, cattle numbers having been reduced since the 1940s is an equilibrium with the growth of prefered species." Then he added, that from this one should not go on to extrapolate that grazing has no affects on the alpine environment or that it does no damage. He added "On areas of the high Plains many moss beds are in a deteriorated state and there is evidence that regeneration is occurring in moss beds and grazed areas but regeneration appears to be occurring at a faster rate in the areas protected from grazing." This is hardly the stuff to explode the worn out theories and arguments against cattle hey? For yes its irrefutable cattle do damage the alpine regions. I will just briefly go through the how they do. All the problems stem from the fact that cattle are exotic. I don mean that they are from the mysterious East or anything of that sort, but merely tha they don't belong. Two things to remember from the outset. The first is that they have got hard hooves, unlike all the other Australian animals, and that there are lots of them, some 20,000. The most fragile eco system in the alps are the bogs and the moss beds. These are threatened because unfortunately 20,000 cattle with their 80,000 hard hooves need to drink. They don't need to eat the vegetation to do the damage. In order to get to the creeks or water holes they trample the surrounding fragile vegetation. This not only causes damage to these plants it

affects the whole water flow in alpine regions. The moss beds act as gigantic sponges soaking up water throughout the winter and spring and gradually and continually releasing it throughout the summer and autumn. Damage to the moss beds means that this doesn't happen as efficiently. Creeks may die out in summer, and erosion through increased exposure (?) in winter and spring occurs more readily. This doesn't only have consequences in the alps, the alpine area provides at least 25% of the total flow of Victoria's rivers. And in the words again of Harm Van Rees "it is essential to maintain the moss beds in good condition to ensure that the optimum water catchment protection of the high plains is realised." He then added "The interaction of cattle with moss beds poses a threat to maintaining optimum water catchment conditions." Then I have another slide here of a damaged moss bed. Moss in the middle there, and you have got eroded ground all around it. Have the next slide. Again you have got areas where there has been bare ground which has been created through pressure from cattle which the bare ground spells disaster for erosion and the next slide...gives you a chart showing how erosion occurs. Could we have that one back again please. You begin with snow grass when you get bare ground between the tussocks you will end up with the soil level being eroded right down. You end up with just stones on the surface, and have shrubs colonising the surface rather than the original grass land. Apart from the damage to moss beds and the effects which are causing erosion cattle are responsible for introducing weeds by their seeds in coats and droppings. Again Harm Van Rees found seven different weeds species in seeds he has collected from cattle droppings. I think that it is quite wrong that we should have a National Park that is gradually being invaded by weeds, could have been gradually being invaded by weeds ever since they first began grazing cattle up there and the process continued ever since. More damage they do concerns the boggy areas of the high plains which form the southern habitat for the migratory Japanese Snipe which is a rare bird that flies right down from Japan to Australia every year. And by damaging the bogs the cattle threaten this habitat and in turn the survival of this bird. Even light grazing affects the wild flower displays that the alpine region is famous for. You only need to compare the wild flowers in the Victorian alpine region and the display in the Kosciusko National Park where grazing has ceased to see the difference. Again the scientific facts backs up this observation. Again a quote from Harm Van Rees. I could have found many other researchers but I think it is appropriate to stick to the work of the researcher that is being distorted by the cattlemen. He says that cattle grazing reduces the flowering display of the major herbs. That's the damage that cattle do. Quite apart from the effect they have on people who don't like to see them there. The increase in flies, from all their dung lying around taking years to decompose, and the quite unnerving I find presence of cattle standing very near ones very small bushwalking tent, oh and just standing around doing what they do just upstream from your drinking source. And yet the cattlemen present many arguments as to why cattle should be in the alps. Most of it boils down to the fact that they are there,

that the graziers have had 150 years of the good lurks, utilising public land at a very low cost when other graziers have to purchase their own land. The main arguments and Harry went through most of them just before, are firstly that the Mountain Cattlemen are a part of Australia's heritage, they are part of a living heritage that deserves to be maintained. Conservationists feel that our alpine region are a very important part of our natural heritage which has taken millions of years to reach how it is at the moment. Far far older, and I think, far more important than the fact that driving cattle up to the alpine regions in the summer. It is also a heritage of 150 years damage to the alps. Other parts of our European heritage include deforestating most of the State, opening up the country to erosion (? cant understand word) and extinction of native species. We don't have to be proud of everything that has gone on in the last 150 years. Another point related to that is that removing grazing from the alps isn't going to put all of these graziers out of business. They don't depend entirely on the alpine regions. The 1977 survey estimated that loss of alpine grazing would mean that they would have to reduce their stock to 60% of what it is now. The graziers who used to graze cattle up on top of Kosciusko are still in existance many years after grazing was precluded from that National Park. There will have to be some reductions, yes, but it is not as if all of these 120 families will suddenly be totally without livelihood, many are moving into tourism already. The other related point is the value of a National Park to the local economy. There has been a recent Australian study done by a team called Ulf and Reynolds who studied the impact of the National Park in the Worumbungles area in New South Wales, not a major National Park, you have probably never heard of it. They found this National Park created an additional \$500,000 for the local economy it employed 39 people in the town of Coonabarrabran alone. They found the cost of having the park there cost between \$3.95 and \$5.44 per visit a day and ended up returning revenue of something like \$100 per visit a day. So the economic value of National Parks through the increase in tourism, the increase in visitors is quite substantial. The other reasons why Mountain Cattlemen contend that cattle should be allowed to stay in the alpine area is that the Cattlemen now the country, they search for walkers, they build huts, they keep their huts open they have opened up access tracks and they fight fires. Therefore they have got a right to be there. Most of these things they can keep on doing. Just minus the accompanying cattle. Remember also that they keep open the roads so that 4WD can get in to tear about and cause damage, so that people can have ready access to light the fires that they can then fight. As regards huts personally I prefer to see the alps without them. It only encourages people to do silly things like not take a tent with them. They depend upon the huts and then get into problems in poor weather when they don't quite manage to reach them. Now the point that was raised that grazing inhibits fires. This idea has no substance in fact at all. Again Harm Van Rees did some research that showed 1. That alpine grass land is very difficult to burn, and 2. That if sections of the alpine grass

are going to burn no matter whether they're grazing or not conditions such as the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires present themselves there they will burn.

The final point that Harry didn't comment much on today is what the graziers tend to use as a large part of their argument is that National Parks lock up the alps that they are beyond our financial reach, that they are over regulated, that they only satisfy one small section of the community and they are a drain on our economy unlike grazing which provides economic wealth. I have already covered the last point but the first ones I would like to finish by rebutting them as it ties up many of the things I am saying. Declaration of National Parks is the only way that Australia's natural heritage is going to be preserved for posterity. These graziers and the people involved in the timber industry are pushing their idea that multiple use of areas is good enough to protect these areas. It is blatantly untrue to suggest it is. ...in some detail cattle have a demonstrable unnatural impact on natural areas. The felling of timber clear felling which means that every tree gets chopped down and the ones they don't want get burnt after they take out the ones they do want, has an even greater effect. If we want to keep these important areas of our natural environment untouched then we need to exclude logging, grazing, mining, uncontrolled use of trail bikes and 4WDs and many other exploitative activities. That's what the regulations of National Parks are designed to do. There are many reasons why we have to maintain these areas as well as for the recreational value there's their wilderness value, there's their scientific value the importance of these plant species, the different arrangements collections and habitats of the plants and animals, why they exist where they do is basically unknown to science. I mean it might even prove prominent to all sorts of things perhaps how to grow a better timber producing tree, or help in medical research, the possibilities are boundless. These eco systems have evolved over billions of years, there's a lot of knowledge that is stored up there, that we haven't begun to unravel, yet we consider ourselves arrogant enough to destroy it without having unravelled it. Over 70% of Victoria has changed dramatically over the last 150 years, where we have got bits left that are still basically untouched, it is our duty to keep them that way, and where we have the opportunity to stop the damage that has been done in an otherwise natural environment it is imperative that we take that opportunity. A large alpine national park continuous with Kosciusko National in New South Wales without logging grazing and mining isn't a drain on our community it is an essential part of protecting this very important part of our natural environment, for its sake and for ours.

(Applause)

Now I am sure you have got a lot of questions you would like to ask, if you would like to stand up and address your question to either Mr. Ryder or Miss Rice, but stand up please and direct your question to either thank you.

QUESTION: Miss Rice what percentage does the conservation group actually want

to transform into National Park areas?

RICE: As I quoted it at the moment it is 30% the LCC recommendations (cant hear?) would like to bring it up to the 48%.

QUESTION: Miss Rice, Cattlemen have been grazing the alpine area for years Mr. Ryders family have been there for five generations, is there such a sensitive eco system and why is it only now that people are so worried about it and why (???) looks pretty good to me.

(LAUGHTER) Certainly didnt look like five generations of damage to me.

MISS RICE: A lot of the damage which is being done is damage that you can't see just by looking at a slide like that. It is also damage that the Politicians can't see when they don't know what they are looking for. The damage has been done and all the research has shown that the damage has been done. At the moment it is (??) to say that it is fairly much in equilibrium, that the damaging isn't continuing to be done, but the damage, but the improvement in the eco system is incredible you only have to compare the Victorian alpine regions with the improvement which has happened in the Kosciusko National Park to see the difference.

QUESTION: If you succeed in getting rid of the cattlemen then aren't you destroying their livelihood of the cattlemen and do you want to put the humans above animals as by doing this you are destroying the cattlemens livelihood in putting the wild life above the humans.

MISS RICE: As I said we are not destroying the cattlemens livelihood. The figures have shown in that there would be ...if you removed the cattle from the alpine areas they would still be able to maintain about 60% of their herds. Some of these 120 families would gradually move out, other ones would be able to continue grazing their land on land which belongs to them, not public land that they are misusing public land that belongs to all of us. Public land that is worth far more than just a cattle paddock.

QUESTION: Mr. Ryder you mention a wild fire is that so much hotter... thats exactly the same thing, ...doesn't the bushfire regenerate the land(???)

RYDER: I think the point has to be made here is the difference between fuel reduction burning which is carried out late in the year in the autumn, it burns cooler, it reduces the amount of flammable material on the forest floor and henceforth when there is with the less of flammable material on the floor of the forest, there is much less chance of a bush fire starting in the summer when it is 40 degrees and a hot northerly wind blowing, ah a bush fire such as I am talking about that starts in the summer time destroys everything in its path, it absolutely annihilates trees they have to, they eventually shoot and regrow after a number of years, whereas in a fuel reduction burn it goes under, it doesn't even burn the leaves off the trees, just gets rid of the dead grass and bark on the forest floor, and if a bushfire gets going or a fire gets going in the summer time, where it has been fuel reduction

burnt it is much easier to put out and can be controlled before it burns too great an area. The example I quoted of the fire in Mt. Buffalo National Park where 57,000 hectares were burnt that fire, nothing would have survived in that fire, you pigmy possums and all those numerous other little creatures would have absolutely annihilated. So that's what we are trying to avoid.

RICE: But as I have pointed out that even if cattle had been grazing up on Mt. Buffalo that fire would still have occurred. The research shows that there is no difference whether the cattle are there or not.

RYDER: I think anything that reduces the amount of flammable material makes a fire less severe.

QUESTION: Miss Rice you went on about all the native animals in the area being thinned out by five generations nothing seems to have happened to them.

RICE: Well there are fewer of them now. There are fewer of them they are gradually, I mean as their eco system gets destroyed there are fewer places where they can be there are fewer of them. Why does...we should start working now toward conserving their habitat, you can't just suddenly say OOps we have only got two of them left, and hope that you can do something about it.

QUESTION: Miss Rice you want to move the cattlemen...being responsible about the environment but you want it reserved for a recreational purposes, don't you think they will damage the environment more you know motor bikes 4WDs more.

(Applause)

RICE: Well you obviously weren't listening very closely to what I said. As I also said that 4WDs and uncontrolled use of 4WDs and trail bikes were just as damaging to the alpine environment, and is a use that has to be controlled and probably removed from the National Park.

QUESTION: Hard to hear but asks her about removing cattle will reduce to 60% of their incomes .

RICE: Well it wouldn't be all of them living on 60% of their incomes. As I said there would be some who would have to move into alternative employment.

Tourism is one very real possibility that some of them are moving into already. There are also..there would be families who would gradually move out, there would be people that are moving into the city. ... Well its not an immediate problem because grazing, no it will never be..an immediate problem because grazing has been phased out its not as if all of a sudden one day we are going to say, Right leave your homes take your...go away.

QUESTION: Mrs. Rice you said that one of the parkscosts \$3 or \$4 a day and you said each visitor would return a \$100 per day to the park, I want to know how you get \$100 per day from each visitor.

RICE: Well this was a study done in the Worumbungles National Park in New South Wales but the effects of having that person in the community buying food, buying provisions from the community, perhaps paying camping fees, perhaps staying in a hotel all of these things while they are moving in and out of the area that they are providing wealth to the local economy.

QUESTION: Too hard to hear.

RICE: No I wouldn't like to see 30 horses all at one, one riding, happen now, probably ten would be a more optimum number, but there is a bit of a difference ? having just ten horses just walking or cantering along tracks to having 20,000 going anywhere and everywhere.

QUESTION: ...the cattle are not natural in the environment.....something about bushwalking people bushwalking are not natural on the same theory ... noone is to be allowed in there, so therefore whats the point of having a national park at all.

(Applause)

RICE: Thats an extension of logic beyond reality. Humans just walking. The number of humans that are in the alpine area that are walking in the alpine area perhaps even riding horses in the alpine area do far less damage per human than per cattle, they don't go tramping through the moss beds to get to the creeks to drink, and there are far fewer of them than as I said, 20,000 cattle.

Some question and answer apparently about dams in New South Wales. Too hard to hear.

QUESTION: Something about national heritage.

RICE: Yes I consider they are a part of the national heritage, and as I said they will continue to exist.

END OF TAPE.