

Hut Accommodation on the Snowfields

Dear Sir:

OF the many previously published articles on snowfield accommodation, there have been none dealing with hut-class lodgings. This seems to be a bad oversight, as our snowfields are admirably suited to this type of accommodation. Furthermore, because of the shortage of building materials, and their present high cost, better class accommodation is almost impossible to build, whereas huts, lacking all the refinements of the former type, are still practicable.

The advantages of huts over other classes of buildings are: (i) Many of the appointments necessary to chalet class accommodation are unnecessary, and many regulations which are necessary for larger buildings are entirely superfluous.

(ii) The small quantity of building material necessary makes it feasible to construct huts in remote positions which would be impracticable for larger buildings.

(iii) No skilled or trained labour is necessary for their construction, and not first-class material is required.

The regulations which have been formulated by the State Park Trust are in many ways admirable, as control must be imposed of buildings of any great size, for people are dirty and untidy when grouped together in any number. However, they could be greatly relaxed for the purposes of hut construction, because a small group of people, each known to the other, are self-disciplinary and co-operative.

Regarding the second statement, the Northcote Canyon area, which provides

some of the best runs in Australia, is without shelter of any kind, which makes it accessible to only the strongest skiers and dangerous in case of accident. Transport of the materials required for even a modest chalet in this area makes its present development along these lines practically impossible; but huts, on the other hand, could quite easily be built either by the Government for general use, by clubs for club use, or by small groups for their own use.

Regarding the third statement, there can be little doubt that a group of practical though untrained men are capable of building a hut without supervision. Second-hand material, and material unsuitable for ordinary building, can be used, and is quite satisfactory provided it is sealed so as to exclude wind and moisture. A widely used, very satisfactory and cheap substance for this purpose is tar. Ungrained planking, if thus sealed, is quite satisfactory.

While the present building and transport position continues it is only by the construction of small huts that many of our snow areas will be opened up. Whether the hydro-electric schemes which are planned for the south-east areas of the State will help to open up the Alps remains to be seen. In the meantime, much could be done to increase the available accommodation by private clubs and groups. They are prevented from doing so by the State Park Trust Regulations, which may be necessary for large projects, but which make no provision for small, cheap lodgings, which is all that many can afford.

Yours faithfully,

R.B.T.

