

Victorian Review of the Year

Mick Hull

THE 1947 ski year in Victoria was notable for a fall of snow almost equal to the record 1946, but also for:

1. The successful advent of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Harris to the management of Hot-ham Chalet.
2. The opening of S.C.V.'s Whittaker Memorial Lodge at Buller.
3. The introduction of popular week-end racing to the S.C.V. by Miss Marv Wallace.
4. An early crop of broken limbs, six.
5. The continued shortage of equipment of all kinds.
6. The election of skier Tom Mitchell as M.L.A. for Benambra in the Victorian Parliament, and
7. Last, but probably most important potentially, the formation of the Federation of Victorian Ski Clubs (F.O.V.S.C.) with a foundation membership of twenty-two clubs representing over thirteen hundred skiers.

The growth of ski-ing interest among those country folk who have the Alps at their back doors has been long overdue in Victoria. The Tallangatta and District Ski Club was formed in December, 1947, after prospecting in late October of a safe low-level route from the Mita Mita-Glen Wills road, via the Mulhauser Spur and the Mt. Wills-Camp Valley Ridge, to the Cleve Cole Hut at the eastern end of Mt. Bogong. Another preliminary was the attendance of several Tallangatta skiers at the first post-war N.E.D.S.A. ski race meeting, held near the Wangaratta Ski Club's new Lodge at St. Bernard.

Main trips of the club will be concentrated in the Mt. Wills region, where it is planned to erect a comfortable cabin above the snowline within reasonable distance of the trafficable part of the Tallangatta-Omeo highway. The C.R.B. is being asked to resume the pre-war practice of keeping this highway clear of snow. Arrangements have been made to transport large parties of skiers by local passenger service. One proposal being considered at time of writing was the purchase of a disused house from a nearby timber mill, to be moved some distance to the proposed site—this as an alternative to

a log cabin of mountain ash.

These are the immediate plans, but there can be little doubt that, if Tallangatta members become regular week-end skiers, they will not for long disregard the attraction of Bogong's tremendous slopes only a little farther away. A road up the Muhlhauser spur would king-hit Bogong's access problem and make the Tallangatta club the envy of every other ski club in Victoria.

Albury Ski Club, one of the most enthusiastic and active of the country clubs before the war and one with a good racing record, was reformed in 1947 after seven years of inactivity.

Apart from the many individual trips made by members, the club made eight official trips to Buffalo, two to Hotham, and one to the Bogong High Plains, via Bogong township. As there was an average attendance of between 40 and 50 on each of these trips, transported in a large bus and up to six cars, the amount of preliminary organising needed can be appreciated. The trips usually left Albury at 5.45 a.m. and members were on ski at 10.30 a.m. until 5 p.m.—total journey for the day 190 miles.

The universal shortage of equipment was one of their main worries, but they were able to make themselves eighteen pairs of skis and also some bindings, for club use. An experimental base-wax proved successful, with good wearing properties.

Plans are in hand for the building of a Club Lodge near Falls Creek on the Bogong High Plains. Cement brick construction is proposed, to accommodate 25 persons. Funds for this have been augmented during the past season by a Barbecue Tea, and a Woolshed Dance, both of which drew large and enthusiastic crowds. Membership at close of the 1947 season was 118.

The Australian Postal Institute Ski Club, formed in 1947, has applied for a site on Mt. Buller to build, in the near future, a hut for twenty people. Membership had reached eighty at the time of writing, January, 1948.

In view of the current interest in the Omeo-Hotham road as a winter approach

to Hotham (if cleared of snow), the following speedo mileage supplied by the C.R.B. may be of value:

- 00.00 Start of Alpine Road from Omeo.
- 4.00 Top of Mountain Maid Hill.
- 6.95 Hut.
- 11.25 Middle Creek.
- 13.25 Cobungra Cottage.
- 13.85 Start of steep section of Cobungra Hill, normal winter snowline.
- 20.10 Hut—Boggy Creek.
- 22.25 Flour Bag Plain.
- 23.20 Start of "Slippery Pinch."
- 26.25 J. V. Plain.
- 26.75 Weeping Rock.
- 28.35 Brandy Creek.
- 29.20 Hut—Whisky Flat.
- 30.00 Slaty Cutting.
- 32.25 Hotham Chalet.

Moving the Address-in-Reply at the State opening of the Victorian Parliament in December, 1947, Tom Mitchell (M.L.A. for Benambra) referred to the need for a snow-land authority to protect water catchments and prevent erosion. He suggested that such an authority should consist of representatives of the Lands Department, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, the soil conservation body, the State Electricity Commission, the Cattlemen's organisations, walking clubs, and representatives of the ski-ing fraternity. In other words, he said, there should be established a cohesive body of all people interested in the use of the mountains. Later in his speech Mitchell advocated development of the tourist industry as one unique in that it was something that could be sold but still retained. The tourist industry gave France a revenue of £120 million a year before the war, and in America the return is as much as from the coal or steel industry. He urged relaxation of regulations for the leasing of land in snow areas. He described as the worst nonsense he had ever heard the refusal last year of a snow lease, with a view to building a small chalet, on the grounds that the authorities were not prepared to grant leases to individuals. He recommended that lessees be called on to render practical service such as clearing and maintaining firebreaks, planting trees under forestry direction, and assisting in fire-watching and other rangers' duties to help hard-worked forest officers. In that way, people would be awakened to a sense of their duty.

F.O.V.S.C. was formed on a stormy Saturday evening, November 8, 1947. The storm was entirely due to J. Pluvius and the meeting proceeded calmly, albeit with considerable enthusiasm, to draft a constitution and elect provisional officers. Some committeemen of the S.C.V. were there as observers, but their frowns did not become evident until later; see the Nov.-Dec., 1947, issues of SCHUSS.

The northern country clubs, with a pronounceable name like N.E.D.S.A. (North Eastern Districts Ski Association) were in favour of some title with the initials making a word. On this subject, with apologies to our New Zealand friends, there was some byplay at the expense of the august S.C.F.M.C.N.Z.! After debate a vote gave verdict to Federation of Victorian Ski Clubs as the title, with V.S.S.F. as runner-up, and V.A.S.A. and V.S.A. last. OMSK and TOMSK were not mentioned.

The constitution was ratified and accepted by nineteen clubs at the first annual meeting on December 6, 1947, and three other clubs also joined before the time-limit for foundation membership expired on December 31. A further application has since been received from the Lazy-Eight Ski Club, and will be considered at the next meeting. The S.C.V. Committee, in a five-page letter, gave reasons for not joining. Discussion on the subject had not been permitted by S.C.V.'s President at their Annual General Meeting a few days before.

The foundation clubs comprising F.O.V.S.C. are twenty-two—with a total of over thirteen hundred members:—

- Albury Ski Club
- Alpine Club of Victoria
- Aust. Postal Institute Ski Club
- Aust. Womens Ski Club (Vic.)
- Beechworth Ski Club
- Bogong Ski Club
- Bull Lodge Ski Club
- Chamois Club of Aust.
- C.S.I.R. Ski Club
- Edelweiss Ski Club of Aust.
- Howqua Ski Club
- Melb. University Ski Club
- Melb. Walking Club
- Monsanto Ski Club
- Myrtleford Ski Club
- Tallangatta & Dist. Ski Club
- Telemark Ski Club
- University Ex-Servicemens S. C.
- University Ski Club

Wangaratta Ski Club

Youth Hostel Association

The objects of the Federation, as given in its Constitution, are:—

1. To promote the common interests of the constituent clubs and bodies.
2. To develop ski-ing and ski-ing areas, and to confer with appropriate public bodies and officials to secure their co-operation in this objective.
3. To foster and conduct ski racing including inter-club competition and championships.
4. To develop safety measures.
5. To improve the supply of ski equipment.
6. To interest the general public in ski-ing.
7. To co-operate in production of an Australian Ski Annual, and the production of other publications dealing with ski-ing.
8. To promote good fellowship among skiers.
9. To further the development of ski-ing generally.

Each club belonging to F.O.V.S.C. appoints representatives according to the size of its membership, who meet in Council to control the affairs of the Federation. The Council appoints Sub-Committees to which it may delegate the conduct of any of its activities. Between meetings of the Council, the officers of the Federation and the Chairmen of the various Sub-Committees put into effect the policies of the Federation, consulting together as necessary. The Sub-Committees operating so far are Ski Annual, Equipment (including research), Racing, Publicity, Technical and Resort Planning. The material from Victoria in this yearbook has resulted from the efforts of the F.O.V.S.C. Ski Annual Sub-Committee under the leadership of Tom Mitchell, with Constance Wilson, Lynette Walker and Ken Taylor as its other members.

The roots of F.O.V.S.C. go back a long way. Mr. Gordon Langridge, one of the founders and first President of the S.C.V., has documents which make a very interesting history of the several attempts that were made in the 1930's to bring about a federated body among the Victorian ski clubs, including enquiries initiated by the Ski Club of Victoria.

The germ of a Ski Council proposal appeared first in 1933, when as a result of some difficulties arising from racing programmes, an annual conference was arranged between

S.C.V., Chamois and Mt. Buffalo Alpine Clubs.

An attempt just before the war appeared to be getting somewhere, but fell through apparently because of the war. This began when in June, 1938, S.C.V. wrote all clubs in Victoria asking if they were in favour of a Council, would they support it, had they any suggestions for its formation, and would they send official representatives to a meeting to discuss a Council, with the backings of their clubs.

S.C.V. again wrote the clubs in November setting out the reasons why it thought the clubs did not desire a Council.

But in December, 1938, a meeting of U.S.C., A.W.S.C., M.U.S.C. and Chamois representatives was held. Unable to attend, Bright, Wangaratta and Junior Ski Clubs advised their approval of the proposed Ski Council. S.C.V. declined to attend, but a member of their Committee was admitted to the meeting. The meeting fully discussed S.C.V.'s November letter and doubts were expressed whether S.C.V. was sincere in its desire for a Council. The meeting resolved that a Council was desired, and draft objects of the Council were formulated with a view to a meeting of all clubs in 1939 to consider forming the body.

So much for the various abortive attempts to bring clubs together before World War II.

We referred last year in this Review to the considerable number of applications which had been lodged for hut sites on Mt. Buller. A consequence of these applications was a visit to the area by Forest officials and representatives of the clubs interested, including S.C.V., which at that stage had been granted a site in the area for the Whittaker Memorial Lodge and had commenced the building of it. Regrettably, there became a lack of harmony between the views of certain S.C.V. Committeemen, and those of other clubs. At or about that time the S.C.V. Secretary wrote a letter to the Forests Commission, portions of which were subsequently read out at a general meeting, in which a distinction was drawn between the applications of "private" clubs and "public" clubs and the suggestion made that the "private" clubs should pay substantial annual rents for their sites, while the S.C.V. should pay only a nominal one.

As a result of this, some of the clubs concerned, including University, Alpine, A.W.S.C. and Bull Lodge, joined to write a

reply to Forests pointing out that the distinction was an unreal one, the only right any skier had on the mountain being from his or her rights as a citizen. Clubs, whether large or small, were groups of citizens. The small clubs contained many who had been ski-ing for years and had taken a leading part in ski-ing administration and competition. Their maturity ensured an appreciation of their responsibilities.

The C.S.I.R. Club, which already had a hut at Buller, was so taken aback at this attitude of the State body to the ski-ing accommodation problem that, in addition to writing a letter in similar terms, it resolved at its next general meeting of members to make moves towards the formation of a federation of ski-ing clubs. This decision did not become known outside that club, however, until later.

Mr. Tom Mitchell won the Benambra by-election for the Victorian Parliament in June, 1947, and became the first member to be elected on a policy which included development of Victorian snowland areas, with specific reference to ski-ing and the tourist industry.

When Parliament sat, Mitchell informally invited representatives of the clubs directly and immediately interested in building huts at Hotham to meet the Leader of the Country Party, and also the members for the three Alpine electorates whose boundaries adjoin on Hotham, to discuss Hotham matters and in particular the clearing of the road in winter. The clubs were given an encouraging reception by these members and discussed at length plans for the future of the area.

Some time after the meeting had concluded, and when those left were talking, as skiers do, Colonel, the Hon. W. S. Kent-Hughes, M.L.A., former Oxford ski captain and member for Kew, joined the discussion in the corridor and added a sobering thought—"why don't all the clubs in the State get together in a united effort behind Mitchell—you have a marvellous opportunity at last, if you can grasp it!" This chance remark turned the talk towards a proposal for the formation of a federation of all clubs, to be led by the S.C.V.—feelers put out earlier to broaden the affiliated clubs provisions of their constitution having evoked no response.

How to gain the co-operation of the S.C.V.. That was the knotty problem since the "con-

servatives" of their Committee were known to be touchy on the subject of federation—perhaps fearing a change in its position as State ruling body, with an attendant diminution in importance and prestige, leading to a loss of members. However tactfully put, it was likely to prove difficult to achieve.

As he felt that all clubs should be able to act in harmony to improve the ski-ing facilities of the State, Mr. Don Bennett, first President of the Alpine Club and Chairman of Radio Communications on the S.C.V. Committee, volunteered to raise the question at an S.C.V. Committee meeting, including the possibility, as seemed appropriate, of S.C.V. taking the initiative.

The answer came back, cautious and non-committal though not by any means hostile, that the S.C.V. Committee would probably consider an invitation from other clubs, if received, to attend a meeting to discuss federation, but would not take the initiative. The latter was in line with the rejection of earlier informal suggestions that its affiliation provisions should be revised to clarify the representation question and other points.

At that stage the C.S.I.R. decision about forming a federation became known, and representatives of seven metropolitan clubs met (University, C.S.I.R., A.W.S.C., Alpine, Edelweiss, M.U.S.C. and Bull Lodge) to discuss whether a general invitation should be issued to all clubs for a meeting to consider forming a federation. A letter was sent to the S.C.V. on July 10 stating that there had been informal discussions between the seven signatory clubs concerning the desirability of linking all clubs in one representative body, whilst retaining their individual independence, and suggesting that the S.C.V., as largest club, should take a prominent part in the formation and government of any such body. The S.C.V. Committee were invited to appoint representatives to join in preliminary discussions. This letter was signed by representatives of the seven convening clubs.

A separate letter was sent to seventeen other clubs (others became known later), inviting them to attend the proposed meeting, and giving a list of items voiced among the convening clubs as an idea of some of the proposals to be discussed. These included governmental liaison (particularly on road access, hut tenure and equipment), inter-club racing, safety measures, the yearbook and long-range plans for the expansion of

ski-ing. The letter closed by saying that a date would be advised when the S.C.V. had had an opportunity to reply, copy of the letter to them being attached.

The S.C.V. Committee replied, affirming that its policy was full co-operation with other bodies, and that it would be pleased to have two representatives and its President attend as OBSERVERS ONLY at the proposed meeting. S.C.V. Committee stated that the S.C.V.'s Articles provided for the closest co-operation of all clubs, and requested the meeting to consider what degree of co-operation it would be prepared to exercise to achieve its aims *which could be incorporated within the structure of the S.C.V.*

This appeared to be a reference to the alternative of each club affiliating separately with S.C.V., and a precis of the S.C.V.'s letter, along with summaries of replies from ten other clubs was therefore sent on September 4 to all clubs, along with a circular suggesting October 4 as a meeting date and advising that the convening clubs had appointed a drafting committee to draw up preliminary suggestions for a constitution, in case the meeting should decide on federation. The question of revision of affiliation provisions had already been discussed by Mr. Mitchell on page 81 of the 1947 Yearbook, and a reference to this was included.

The date of meeting was deferred a month at request of the S.C.V.

The drafting Committee's suggestions were circulated on October 30, with a memorandum from the convening clubs again emphasising that they were intended purely as a basis for and as a help in speeding discussion on a constitution, should the meeting of all clubs decide to form a federation. The drafting committee's document was short, as it held the view that it should merely sketch its idea of the main outline of the organisation, without attempting to legislate in detail for its operation. If the proposed federation was to become an effective body, it would do so by virtue of the efforts of the individual representatives composing its management, and not because of any clauses contained in its constitution. Brevity and simplicity were, therefore, the aim.

At the meeting of November 8, the S.C.V. President emphasised that S.C.V. were there as observers only. Junior S.C. said they were also observers. Melbourne Tech. S.C. said they were forming, and would follow S.C.V.'s lead. Bogong S. C. said they would like to see

S.C.V. join before they decided. (They have since become a foundation club.) All other clubs, seventeen in all, supported the formation of a federation, and a motion that such body be formed was carried without dissent. Many speakers paid tribute to the past work of S.C.V. and expressed the hope that S.C.V. would join and play a leading part. Several referred to the S.C.V.'s letter, and it was asked did it mean that, as an alternative to federation, each club should affiliate separately with S.C.V. The S.C.V.'s President said yes. The speakers then stated their clubs would prefer a federation, as affiliation did not cover enough ground. One said his club felt that it could lead only to impossible situations, as S.C.V. would be under obligations to its individual members when it was endeavouring to give service to affiliated clubs.

The meeting then drafted a constitution for the federation. In the discussions on this subject, it became apparent that many of the clubs had given a lot of time and thought to the drafting committee's document before the meeting, and there was in consequence a free, full and sometimes vigorous, though always good-humoured, exchange of views. I do not intend any invidious distinctions, but remember in particular the many well thought out suggestions and amendments brought up by Monsanto, Youth Hostels and Walking Club representatives and adopted by the meeting.

The atmosphere of the meeting was most heartening, and promises well for the future. Personal contacts are always more effective than the most elaborate exchange of views on paper, and I for one left the meeting with a better understanding of the views of other clubs on many subjects. Incidentally, the meeting resolved full co-operation with the S.C.V., whether or not it chose to join.

The constitution drafted by the November meeting was ratified by the first formal meeting of F.O.V.S.C. a month later, after each individual club had had an opportunity to consider it and suggest further alterations. Several clubs whose existence had become known were invited to consider joining.

It is a pity that the S.C.V. Committee, led by its "conservatives," feels that its club is unable to join. Perhaps an opportunity was lost on the affiliation proposal, as an alternative to federation, because neither they nor the other clubs would take the initiative in suggesting the broad outline of an accept-

able revision of the present hardly democratic provisions, under which the affiliated clubs have no specific right ss such of direct representation, but are dependent for this on the S.C.V.'s pleasure.

Article 110 (c) of the S.C.V.'s constitution reads:

"An affiliated or amalgamated association shall have the following rights and privileges only, viz:

- (i) Representation on other bodies **through the medium and sanction of the Club.**
- (ii) Consultation with the Club upon all matters of interest in relation to ski-ing, skating, mountaineering, trail riding or other outdoor sports and/or pastimes in which the Club may be interested **and co-operation on such lines as may be determined by the Club.**
- (iii) To receive one copy of the Club journal per issue.
- (iv) Stating and publishing on its printed documents or otherwise that it is affiliated to or amalgamated with the Ski Club of Victoria."

It is also a pity that the general body of S.C.V. members were given no opportunity of airing their views and discussing the pros and cons of federation and affiliation, in general meeting, before the season closed, after which they were indoctrinated as to their Committee's views in an eleven-page SCHUSS article.

F.O.V.S.C. has been formed at last. It must be judged on the value of the work it performs. If worthwhile, the S.C.V.'s attitude may alter, as all the other clubs sincerely desire.

Already the Federation has produced results. In its first few weeks of existence, F.O.V.S.C., supporting the earlier claims put to the C.R.B. by some of its member clubs, particularly the Alpine Club, was instrumental in obtaining a recommendation to the State Government from the Upper Murray Regional Committee, through the Central Planning Committee, that the Omeo-Hotham road should be cleared of snow during winter of 1948.

The number of broken legs sustained during the year has revived discussion of prevention. Some have rallied against the down-pull bindings, others blame the boot, or the

dying-out of skill in soft snow, the trend in downhill racing, and so on.

Some people are accident-prone. So found the R.A.F., when it began research into flying accidents during the war, which at one stage were threatening the expansion of its bombing force. After considerable statistical and other investigation, methods were evolved which gave a spectacular reduction in the accident-rate.

There has been considerable study of accidents in America, but not much of the literature resulting has gone into general ski-ing circulation here.

Some general investigation of the subject would seem worthwhile. What causes a fracture, particularly those which occur at slow speed on a practice slope, the "I just fell over" variety. Why does the bone actually break? Is it due to the foot remaining attached to the ski? If so, is that due to the type of binding, the way in which it is attached to the boot, or some other reason. Does the cable-downpull binding cause more accidents than others, or is it just because it is more widely used? (B.S.Y.B. 1947 p. 294.) If so, is it because the deep groove in the heel of most boots prevents the heelspring from coming off, or for some other reason? There are many such aspects which provide a meaty problem for our ski-ing medicos and scientists. Results should be of interest to the designers of so-called safety bindings, as well as to those who particularly want to keep their limbs unbroken.

Difficulties in timing of the Women's National Downhill at Hotham on the Varsity Drag last year emphasise the need for permanent telephone lines for such purposes. It is to be hoped that before long these will be standard equipment on all our important downhill courses and as well on the commonly used slalom slopes.

Judged by their performance last season, in the face of a regular chapter of accidents, Hotham skiers will wish Mr. and Mrs. Bill Harris long life in their management of the Hotham Chalet. Abnormal depths of snow and continuous bad weather were topped by staff sickness, pump trouble, water trouble, lighting trouble, sewerage trouble, telephone trouble and ski-ing accidents. Despite all this the Railways did not receive one letter of complaint—a tribute to the popularity

and success of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Harris as a management team. All wish Bill a successful resumption of racing this year.

The three seedling trees planted experimentally by the Alpine Club at Hotham in the autumn of 1947 came through the winter well and are now showing good growth. The Forests Department were very interested when asked to identify samples (they were cedars of the Atlas variety) and have offered the Club up to five hundred seedlings for planting in the vicinity. The Hotham area is in particular need of re-forestation, as the fine stand of snowgum that were such a delight to pre-war skiers are to-day silver skeletons amid a wilderness of suckers. Indeed, most of the trees through from St. Bernard to Cobungra were killed by the bushfire of January, 1939.

Plans for a lodge seem to be the most common item on all club agendas this season. S.C.V., Alpine, Edelweiss, University, C.S.I.R., Youth Hostel, Wangaratta and Telemark are all completing or erecting structures. Plans are on the drawing board for Monsanto, Aust. Postal Institute, Bull Lodge and Talangatta propose moving a house near a timber mill to a site more suitable for ski-ing.

Architect McColl has the following potted advice regarding the essentials of a ski cabin suitable for Victorian conditions, where wind, ice, wet snow, packhorse transport and bushfires all have to be considered. "Essential points consist of picking a site handy to wood and water with a good aspect and where a wind-scour may keep snow from banking up around windows. Nearness to deposits of sand and stone should be considered if these materials are to be used.

"In choosing materials for construction, remember the bushfire risk—stone, although expensive, is far ahead of other materials in this regard. Fibro-cement and corrugated iron come next, although neither, from the aesthetic angle, are ideal. Bituminous sheeting for the roof is dangerous—anyone who has seen a building constructed wholly or partly of it on fire will eschew it as the plague.

"Essentials of planning are to site the main living area to take advantage of the sun—preferably mid-day. There's nothing pleasanter than basking in the sun either during meals or for the after-lunch siesta. Next—always contrive to have one or if pos-



sible two airlocks between outer air and living area. This prevents loss of warm air from the fire and avoids cold breezes whistling in bad weather. Good windows overlooking views are obvious, and shutters, too, preferably sheeted on the outside with metal to act both as a protection against bushfires and a deterrent to marauders. Almost the most important thing is to arrange to have the fireplace on an internal wall. The amount of heat lost through the back of a fireplace can only be realised by those who have actually felt the back of a fireplace totally enclosed in a building. The amount of heat radiated into the building is tremendous. If you have a two-storied or attic-type of building, and wish to take advantage of all the heat being generated by the fire, have the top part of the flue in metal to radiate heat into the sleeping quarters.

"Double-hung windows are the best type for our conditions. Not to many—ample ventilation will be given by a few, and the rest can be fixed.

"Points which have to be considered in relation to the size of building and funds available are, wood storage inside the building, handy space for ski racks, work bench, showers, small drying room or cupboard, store for food, meat storage, shelves and lockers, etc., for stowing gear.

"The ordinary timber-framed construction can be made quite weatherproof and warm by malthoid or sisalkraft under the outer lining and roof, and caneite, masonite, etc., inside.

"If water is laid on, one of the most important points is to allow for a continuous flow of water throughout the buildings at all times, to prevent freezing: still water in even short lengths of pipe should be avoided. If internal sewerage is installed the use of the

'cottage' type of pan is advisable. This does not have the usual water-seal in the pan—this is provided for below ground-level and consequently frost-level by lengths of glazed piping with a water-seal several feet below the pan.

"It is wise to have the entrance door not overhung by a roof, or, if this is not possible, to install snowguards on the roof just above the eaves to avoid the possibility of having several hundredweight of snow dropping on unsuspecting persons as they leave the building. It can be quite painful!

"These are a few of the points to be given careful consideration, in putting up your home in the snow. It's not a simple problem."

That hardy veteran of country clubs, the Wangaratta Ski Club, enjoyed, in 1947, a full season of trips to its Lodge at Mount St. Bernard. Eric Hoy's four-wheel-drive snow buggy was invaluable in pushing through the several miles of snow on the Alpine road above Harrietville to bring members close to the Lodge on week-end trips. Apart from the official fortnightly trips to St. Bernard, other trips were made to Hotham, Feathertop (an ancient stamping-ground of the Wangaratta Club) and to Buffalo.

The club race meeting extended over two consecutive week-ends at St. Bernard and in the vicinity of Blowhard, where there are some fine open slopes. The N.E.D.S.A. inter-club meeting was also raced at Blowhard, and Wangaratta team were successful. Members of the club also raced in some of the S.C.V. week-end events run at Mt. Buller.

The Wangaratta Club, with sixty active members, plans improvements to the present St. Bernard Lodge in the near future, and has a project in mind for two more lodges, at Hotham and Feathertop, as soon as conditions permit.

Myrtleford Ski Club made day trips to Mt. Buffalo at fortnightly intervals throughout the 1947 season as well as other trips to St. Bernard (two) and to the Bogong High Plains. Their team secured third place at the N.E.S.D.S.A. race meeting held at St. Bernard.

Some of the members intend making their own skis for the 1948 season. Membership during 1947 was twenty-eight, which their Secretary, John Robertson, considers is very good in view of the size of Myrtleford.

The S.C.V. membership continued its growth during 1947, with a net increase of 189 over the previous year. New members were 422 compared with 332 the previous year, and the total at the end of 1947 was near 1250.

Some interesting speculation (which may be of value for those assessing equipment markets) as to the probable total ski-ing population of Victoria can be derived from a study of past S.C.V. membership data, in conjunction with memberships of other clubs. Published figures show that new S.C.V. members admitted over the past ten seasons totalled 2252, during which time the financial membership rose from 620 to 1250. From this it appears that during the same period 1667 gave up financial membership, but some allowance should probably be made for those who maintained a sporadic membership and would thus appear more than once as new members. Although probably a majority of those who fell out would have but a temporary interest in ski-ing, a good proportion may have left for various other reasons and may still be active skiers.

Membership of the twenty-three F.O.V.S.C. clubs to-day exceeds 1350, and there are also five other clubs whose total would be near 200, though some of these are also members of the S.C.V.

In addition there is the great company who own no club, including the many "refos," as we are thoughtlessly apt to christen our new Australians—many of whom have skied in Europe. Perhaps we can estimate them from Hotham bookings, after allowing for club figures.

Hotham Chalet last year had a season of some seventeen weeks, and it has been stated that the Railways could have filled each bed each week eight times, from the booking applications received.

Now we are in a position to estimate some sort of total population.

Membership of F.O.V.S.C. Clubs	1350
Other clubs, five in all, say	200
S.C.V., after deducting 300, as a guess, for those who belong to F.O.V.S.C. Clubs, and others	800
Past members of S.C.V. still ski-ing, say half the total of 1667	800
Skiers who belong to no club, say	1500
	at least
Victorian total ski-ing population	4800
	or more
"Who cares?" you may well ask. We were	

talking to a sporting goods manufacturer last year, who was interested in the possibilities of making laminated skis in Australia. One of his main causes for uncertainty was whether the market would be large enough to absorb the minimum quantity he could economically produce—between 5000 and 10,000 pairs. Here at least is some evidence of its rate of growth, for pre-war estimates placed the total at around 2000. Did you read, in the daily press, that B.C.O.F. Australians are learning to ski at the rate of 120 per week at Dogoyama, Kure?

Last year, in this review, we reported the work that was being done by the C.R.B. towards opening the Hotham-Omeo road in winter. Engineers of the C.R.B. made special investigations at Hotham and Kosciusko last winter (1947), and also studied snow-clearing methods abroad. Their report makes interesting reading, and at the time of writing there appears to be a very good possibility that an attempt may be made to clear the road this winter. One major difficulty, by no means uncommon at the moment is the shortage of labour to carry out the preliminary summer strengthening to allow snow-ploughing. The report comments on overseas practices, noting particularly that it is almost universal to use trucks equipped with a blade to **throw** snow off the road at speed (25 m.p.h.) rather than to push it off. Rotary snow-ploughs appear to be regarded as reserve equipment only, for use when all else fails (the state of Maine, U.S.A., owns only one). The average road distance regarded as a unit for one clearing gang corresponds with the length of road to be cleared between Hotham and Omeo. Trucks of a suitable type (6-ton, 4-wheel-drive, Matador) are available in N.S.W. The report draws a very favourable comparison between estimated cost of keeping the road open and what it will cost skiers annually in the way of horse-hire when the Railways Chalet and University Lodge have been completed. The value of the road as a general tourist attraction in winter is, however, the motivating force behind the interest in the project displayed by the Country Roads Board.

Continuing the previous years liaison, the Hotham clubs sent a formal deputation to the C.R.B. in July, 1947, which was introduced by the Hon. Albert Lind, M.L.A., and T. Mitchell, M.L.A. The case presented to

the Board was the clubs' keen interest in the proposed Alpine Village at Hotham, and as a first step to keeping the road to Hotham open the year round they suggested the back entrance to Hotham from Omeo be snow ploughed to that cars and railway buses could get up via Omeo—eventually the Harrietville side might also be tackled.

The presentation of snow sports of high calibre for the first time to the general public was stressed—opening the road would benefit all skiers—not only the clubs represented. Ski-ing would be brought nearer the man in the street as in America over the past ten years. People from Gippsland and the North-east would come in greater numbers if access to Hotham were made easy. Ski-ing could be developed to give Victoria a handsome tourist industry capable of showing a great profit.

The Chairman of the C.R.B. said the importance of the Omeo road was recognised. The first step was to improve the surface, before a snow-plough could be used. The Board was sending its Divisional Engineers to Kosciusko to see what was done there in the way of removal, and its Chief Engineer was at present in America enquiring into equipment for snow removal, among other matters. It was hoped that the surface improvements could be done before next winter. Location engineers were making observations of drifts at the moment remaining at Mt. Hotham, and the C.R.B. wished to thank the Alpine Club for its assistance in arranging for these men to get up to the snowfields. £6000 had been allocated for maintenance in the coming summer. The Chairman concluded by saying that the Board would do its best to improve the road and arrange later for snow removal, but could not say exactly when the work would be done because of the difficulties under which the Board was working. It hoped something would be done during the current financial year.

The case for opening the road was again strongly put at Hotham on Tuesday, January, 20, 1948, when these clubs (Alpine, University, A.W.S.C., Edelweiss), together with a delegate from F.O.V.S.C. attended by invitation a meeting of the Upper Murray Regional Committee—S.C.V. though invited did not turn up. The function of the various regional committees is to survey resources of their areas and report their recommendations for the development of those resources

to the Government, through its Central Planning Committee. The Regional Committee inspected the Omeo road as far down as Slippery Pinch, and saw at once how much easier a proposition it would be for snow-ploughing compared to the Harrierville approach to Hotham. They inspected the Edelweiss and Alpine Club Lodges, and were entertained at afternoon tea at the latter.

In the evening the skiers presented their case, firstly for the opening of the Alpine Highway starting with the Omeo side in winter, and secondly for a broad scheme of long-range development of the Hotham area in particular, and the Alps in general. They were given a very favourable reception, and it became obvious that many members of the U.M.R.C. had been impressed with the energy and initiative displayed by the clubs in achieving what had been done at Hotham so far, and in fact we have since learnt that the U.M.R.C. has recommended opening of the Omeo-Hotham road in winter.

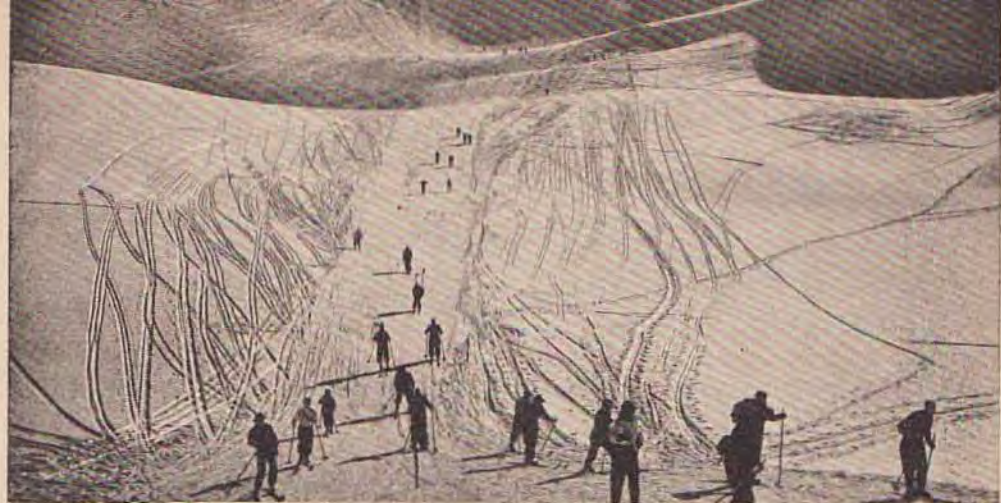
There is not space to record here a detailed report of the proceedings. One remark however made quite an impression. The representative of the State Rivers and Water Supply said what he liked most about what he had seen during his visit to Hotham was that the clubs there had not sat back and for the Government to do something, but had been prepared to invest their money, and spend a lot of spare time in the energetic fostering of their aims.

As a result of the meeting, F.O.V.S.C. was requested and has prepared a comprehensive confidential report on the development of Hotham in the near and distant future, for use by the Regional Committee. A copy of the report is being passed to the S.C.V. with a view to its endorsement of the proposals.

Arnold Lunn, in the B.S.Y.B., has some hard things to say for the modern habit in Europe of ski-ing only on the hard-packed tracks ("pistes") near the ski lifts. He says: "Unfortunately the improvement in 'Cresta ski-ing' has coincided with a decline in cross-country ski-ing. Twenty years ago a man was considered a good skier if he was a fast steady skier both in soft snow and in hard, and if he could control his ski on difficult snow, such as breakable crust. The test of a good skier was his ability to choose a good line when running fast on untracked slopes, and on unknown ground. The good skier was also a good ski-tourer. To-day,

many a skier who sports the highest badge of the local variety of standard course tests is helpless in soft snow, and very slow on any run which he has not rehearsed again and again . . . Of the many reasons for the decline of cross-country ski-ing, which is the consequence of Cresta ski-ing, the prevalence of ski-hoists is perhaps the most obvious. But among the more important causes of this lamentable degeneration is the foolish fashion which condemns the telemark, for the telemark is the easiest of all turns in soft snow, and if the beginner is deprived of the telemark (i.e., by it not being taught in class) he instinctively tends to avoid soft snow. The disappearance of the telemark has been achieved not by rational argument, but by the influence of fashion." Lunn goes on to describe the advantages of the telemark, which he says involves less effort in heavy snow than the stem or stem-christy, is much easier for the beginner to learn in heavy snow than any variety of stem and is steady and more easily steered. Although of more value to the beginner than the expert, it is useful also to the latter especially in racing, where its use often enables a fast line to be taken in untracked snow outside the beaten down section to which the non-telemarkers are confined. Such a line, he claims, has been run faster and with fewer turns and less effort.

"The beauty of the real mountains is one of the greatest assets of Switzerland, an asset which the tourist should be taught to understand and appreciate. It is an asset which remains when youth has passed. Many a 'Cresta skier' abandons the winter Alps when his speed begins to decline, for his vanity suffers when he can no longer compete, but the ski-tourer never abandons the beloved mountains, so long as he is strong enough to climb them, however slowly, and run down them, however cautiously . . . A clever hotelier said to me, 'You are an idealist and your case is unanswerable on ideal grounds, but how many of our visitors have any real feeling for mountain beauty? How many of them could climb a couple of hours to be alone among the mountains? The great majority are quite happy sliding down the same piste every day. They think they can ski, and this illusion gives them great pleasure and is good for business, and so we give them badges to confirm them in this illusion. The real skier does not need badges nor does the real mountain-lover,



On the Beaten Track, Parsenn, Switzerland

but you cannot make a business out of the small minority of intelligent skiers.' On which Lunn comments: I am not so sure. Out of every hundred skiers, there are perhaps ten who will find their own way to the mountains, and fifty who will never climb a yard provided they can buy a ticket in a ski-hoist, but about three in ten will develop into mere 'Cresta skiers' if the whole propaganda drive of tests and schools is in that direction, but are capable of being converted into ski-tourers with a little encouragement. In ski-ing, as in other things, if you consistently play down to the people you will degrade public tests. If, on the contrary, you consistently attempt to elicit the best in people you will succeed." Lunn's article bears the title "The Decadence of Ski-ing."

Here is some food for thought for Australians. A good deal of our new snow is relatively heavy and hard work to turn in—has the telemark been tried seriously under such conditions? Nobody teaches it, and about the only time one sees it performed at Hotham or Buller is when someone is acting the fool in new powder. Lunn guarantees to teach anyone who has passed his third test the telemark in the course of an afternoon's run, and says the people who affirm the telemark is a difficult turn are those who have never grasped its simplest basic principles.

So much for the telemark! But it is on the general consequences of ski-hoists, which, of course, come when a resort has be-

come densely populated, that we should cogitate a while. We are at a stage in ski development here similar to that which in Europe Lunn dubbed the "Golden Age" of ski-ing. Our terminology is perhaps a little different, in that we call a ski-tourer one who traverses our rolling plateaux, and those who rough it in the huts of our more remote mountains—many tourers haven't any great proficiency in downhill running, though they are usually good bushmen and judges of mountain conditions. The European ski-tourer takes his tours more in the vertical plane, climbing untracked slopes to the higher pinnacles, and sweeping down competently over thousands of feet of country new to him. He stays at nights at huts at which he can get a bed with blankets etc., and meals are provided by the hut-keeper at a small charge. Not for him the routine of sleeping-bag, tent and all food for the tour in the rucksack on his back. The European tourer approximates more to our Kosciuszko Western Face, Hotham, Buller and Bogong skier, than to the classic Australian tourer of the Bogong High Plains, and the "Main Range Rat."

We are all fond of earbashing about the need for developing resorts, building accommodation, opening roads and all those things which every skier knows are essential if the sport is to grow and become a universal one in the south-eastern States at least. We prate of the "greatest good for the greatest number" and similar slogans

when talking about these things, perhaps without defining to ourselves exactly what we mean. Whose idea of "good?" Are some of us prepared to accept without thinking the decadence which Lunn suggests is an inevitable consequence of playing down to people, as part of the cost of achieving improvements in the comfort and conditions of our own individual ski-ing. Recognising this danger, will we stick to our ideals and make

our programmes of ski development ones in which we attempt always to elicit the best in people? Will we take the trouble to educate new skiers one by one to a real love and appreciation of our Alps, or are we content to take them as a lump, a contribution towards expansion of that "greatest number" to a size which will justify from the economic angle the comforts we each desire?