

New Roads in the N.S.W. Alps

Edward Axford

THEY'RE building new roads and bridges in the Kosciusko mountains—great bitumen-surfaced motor roads which will be snow-ploughed and kept open for traffic all through the winter. Built for the express purpose of transporting men, engineering equipment and dam-making materials to the huge construction works of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority, they will, incidentally, offer quick and easy access to some of our best ski-ing grounds, suggesting that even Australia's greatest engineering project may have uses undreamed of in a hydro-electric engineer's philosophy.

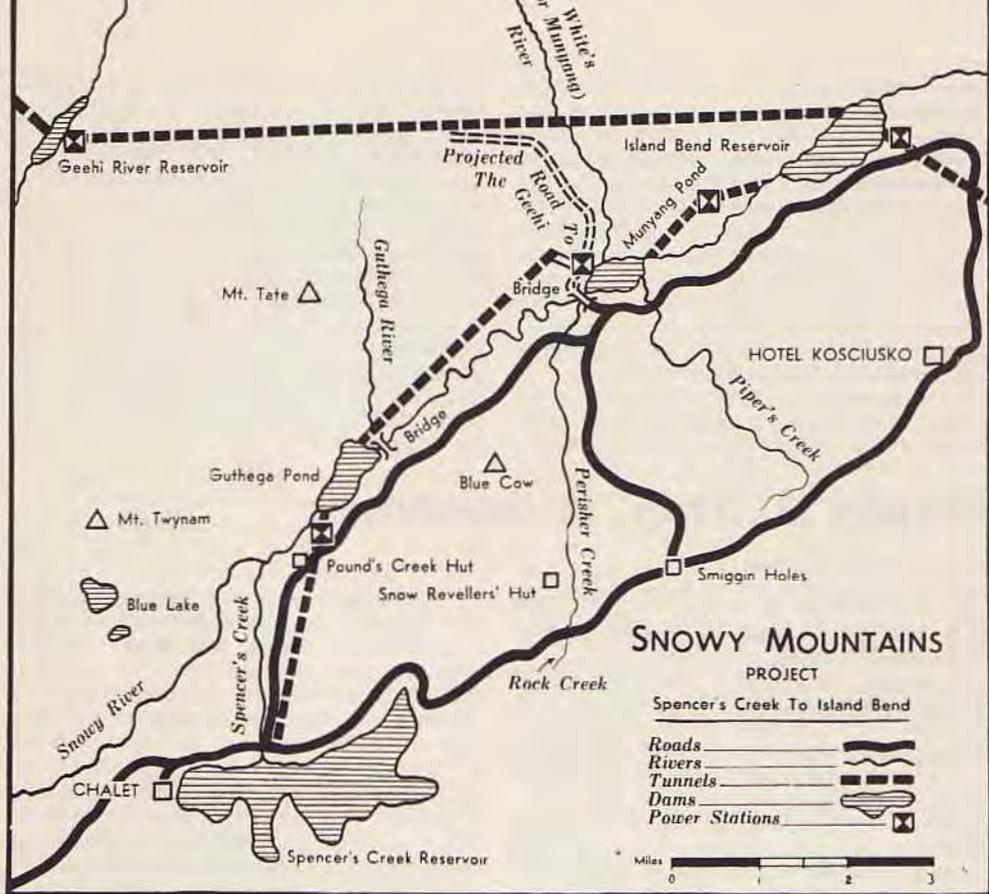
Look at the accompanying map and you will see the startling transformation that's going on in our best-known ski-ing country. Most of the roads shown by the black lines are already finished; for example, the right bank of the Snowy from Island Bend to Pound's Creek Hut and the access road to the Snowy from Smiggins Holes. A temporary wooden bridge has been thrown across the Snowy near its junction with White's River (the engineers call it by its old name, Munday), and a new high-altitude alpine

highway is projected from White's River Crossing right across the Main Range to the Geehi, a project which promises to bring motor traffic to within a couple of miles of White's River Hut and the magnificent ski-ing country in its vicinity.

Through the courtesy of the Authority's engineers I am able to sketch the rough outlines of the picture as it interests skiers:—

Island Bend.—The new road from the Hotel Kosciusko is now completed except for its bitumen surface and a large construction village, including many permanent houses, has been built on a hill overlooking the Snowy.

Munday Pond.—The road from Island Bend to the site of the Munday Pond, at the junction of the Snowy and White's (or Munday) River, has been completed and bridges have been built across Piper's and the Perisher Creek. Of even greater significance to skiers is the fact that the Snowy at this point is now crossed by a temporary bridge giving access to the tunnel and power house works soon to begin on the other side. This bridge, later to be replaced by a per-



manent structure capable of carrying 20-ton loads, will enormously simplify the crossing of the Snowy for skiers bound for White's River Hut. Men housed in the camp at this spot have already put in some skiing on the slopes of Disappointment Spur. Incidentally, you can now get to White's River Crossing by a new road from the Smiggin Holes, where there is another construction camp.

Guthega Pond.—A dam soon to be built at this spot, the junction of the Snowy and Guthega, will supply water by tunnel to operate the Mulyang power station. A camp to house 400 men has already been built and a permanent bridge across the Snowy at this point will give access to the tunnel works on the other bank. The road from White's River junction has now been completed as far as this point.

Spencer's Creek Reservoir.—From Guthega the road will pass Pound's Creek Hut (the site of another power station) and ascend

Spencer's Creek to Adams Hut. Two miles of this road, downstream from Adams, has already been bull-dozed. In the meantime, construction of the dam to make the Spencer's Creek Reservoir has been delayed by test-boring operations. If these bores show that the Sugarloaf contains solid rock and not just moraine rubble the intention is to construct two dams at this spot, one across the valley to the base of the Paralyser, the other from the Sugarloaf to Adams Hut, thus dispensing with the necessity to build a much higher dam in Spencer's Creek gorge. Once the reservoir is filled (and that may be many years off) Betts' Camp and Betts' Plain will be submerged, thus making it necessary to divert the Summit Road to skirt the shores of the lake on the Paralyser side.

So far we have dealt only with the works in progress on the Kosciusko side of the Range, but equally big projects have begun on the Tumut side, north of Jagungal. To

skiers interested in this terrain the most conspicuous work is the completion of another great trans-alpine highway from Kiandra to Tumut Pond, formerly known as the Seventeen-Mile crossing. A bridge has already been thrown across the Tumut River at this point, where there is a substantial camp with a general store and cinema. Westward from there the engineers are now constructing a jeep track across the Main Range to the Toolong River, from which point it will later proceed to Greg Greg and on to the Murray Highway.

Some time in the future these two great alpine highways (one crossing the Main Range north of Mt. Tate, the other north

of Jagungal) will unquestionably be ranked among the most attractive scenic highways in the State. In the meantime, there arises the practical question: Will skiers be permitted to use them? The answer is yes, with reservations. At the moment you will undoubtedly be stopped if you try to take a motor car along the new road up the Snowy. But I am assured that if, for instance, you are bound for White's River Hut and take your car as far as Island Bend the engineer-in-charge will help you garage your car there and provide truck transport for you as far as the new bridge at White's River Junction, a facility for which many of us will be grateful.