

CLP worthies must stop playing boy scouts

The 19 parliamentary wing members of the ruling Country Liberal Party pledged loyalty to their party.

This is real boy scout stuff.

It is ridiculous.

The pledge came about as a result of a threat to establish a breakaway National Party.

The new party will compete with the CLP for the conservative vote.

Such is the state of disrepair in the CLP that the threat has been enough to throw its parliamentary wing into a show that would have made any clown happy.

The question is why? These new so-called Nationals are nothing but a few blow-ins, malcontents and Johnny-come-latelies attempting to cash in on the overwhelming support Territorians have given in the past to right of centre politics.

If they were not so pathetic they would be laughable.

The most they can expect is to split the conservative vote and throw four or five seats to Labor.

Their cloak and dagger tactics are risible.

Amateurs looking for a bit of glory at the expense of a party, the CLP, that has served the Territory well.

They are a joke.

That is for everybody except a few nervous nellys in the parliamentary wing who need help with their shoe laces.

Pledges indeed. What next? Blood bonds?

Backbone

What the hell is the matter with these CLP worthies? Where is their backbone?

Given that the Government made an incredibly stupid error when it rejected a snap December poll it is high time these politicians come to their senses and calm down.

It has not helped that several backbenchers, Denis Collins, Eric Poole, Roger Steele, Colin Firmin, Noel Padgham Purich, Marshall Perron and Rick Setter, are under challenge for preselection.

It helps even less that the party machine will not come to a final decision on their fate until about mid-January.

That's six weeks of plotting and political assassination that will take their inevitable toll.

Nor does it help that the wielder of the meat axe, general secretary, Barry Wyatt, will be away in the United States for the next few months.

His replacement is former executive director, John Hare.

This is like swapping an M60 machine gun for a limp sling shot.



□Mr Barry Wyatt



□Mr Ian Tuxworth



□Mr Steve Hatton



□Mr Graeme Lewis

The bleeding must stop



Wyatt is not a philosopher. He is a doer and the party needs a few of them at this stage.

Party president, Graeme Lewis, must take responsibility for the formidable disarray among his troops.

He is going for preselection in Fannie Bay or Ludmilla.

That means he could not concentrate on his job because there was clear conflict of interest between his political ambitions and normal party administrative demands.

He should have resigned as president when he applied for preselection.

With Lewis and Wyatt, the old and faithful Pretorian guard, out of contention there are simply no strong men in the CLP machine.

Most of the others are a

wimpy bunch with no clear idea where the party is going or what should be done to stop the rot.

Here is where the wing should step in.

It should provide decisive leadership to the headless chooks in the machine.

A strong Chief Minister, backed up by a cohesive team, should become the focal point for a party in confusion.

Steve Hatton is too fond of "talking things through" instead of acting.

His training is in industrial relations and it shows.

This is no time for compromise.

He must know that the root cause of the CLP's problems is the festering wounds caused by Ian Tuxworth's demise last May.

He must know, too, that strong-willed CLP capos like Joan Small, Jan Heaslip, Graeme Bevis, Geoff Cross and others blame Tuxworth's fall squarely on the Lewis-Everingham faction.

They may or may not be correct but that is what they believe and as long as the wounds remain open there is no chance the CLP will come together.

Hatton let a unique chance slip through his fingers immediately after he became Chief Minister in May.

Lewis made a public statement to the effect that he would resign as party president if he did not have the confidence of the new Chief Minister.

Hatton should have taken Lewis at his word right there and then.

The party and the Government are bigger than the president, good as the president was.

Then, quite unbelievably, Hat-

ton allowed the one thing that could have brought an immediate end to the infighting, wiped any chance of a maverick splinter conservative party, given his government every northern suburbs seat plus a four years mandate, and would have settled the party machine for good — a December 6 election — go by default.

This was so incredibly stupid that one wonders whether the government has lost its collective marbles.

As predicted Hatton's earlier electoral appeal is vanishing.

Attractive Labor candidates are footing it hard in every electorate.

The CLP suffers. It must not. The bleeding must stop. The CLP has served Territorians well over the years. It is a home grown party which serves no master interstate. No other party can represent the interest of Territorians better at this crucial historical juncture.