

EDITORIAL, December 5, 1986

Come back, Mr Hatton

IF a day is a long time in politics a week must seem an eternity to the embattled hierarchy of the ruling Country Liberal Party.

Territory MHR, Mr Paul Everingham, party president, Mr Graeme Lewis, and general secretary, Mr Barry Wyatt, are all going or gone.

Leaderless and goalless, divided within and threatened without by an emerging splinter conservative party, the CLP is on the verge of collapse.

Never has the party faced a worse crisis.

Quite unbelievably this is the time when the Chief Minister, Mr Steve Hatton, chooses to fly interstate for nine days.

He apparently thinks that if he stays away from the problems they will disappear.

Mr Hatton must come back forthwith and do what he has not done since becoming Chief Minister in May — rally his panicky troops and provide some solid leadership.

The Chief Minister must make his high office the focal point for a thorough reorganisation and regrouping of the CLP.

He cannot allow his forces to disintegrate simply because he prefers to fiddle while Rome burns.

Territorians have, by and large, been well served by the CLP. It has provided continuity and stability to the Northern Territory's political process and has been a model for conservative parties around Australia.

Bickering

If the so-called Nationals are allowed to establish themselves here they will inevitably bring with them the same bickering and division that exists in the States between right-of-centre factions.

In the process there is a good chance they will deliver a few seats to the Labor Party.

And who are these Nationals anyway? So far their cloak-and-dagger high jinks have the smell of histrionics and amateurism.

Only one name, a minor Darwin businessman, has been proposed to represent this wholly unwelcome development in Territory politics.

His approaches to the federal National Party have been rejected.

This nonsense should stop immediately. Disenchanted conservatives must work within the CLP to bring about the reforms they desire.

It is up to Mr Hatton to show the way. But he certainly cannot do it from some obscure place in New South Wales.