

By FRANK ALCORTA

AS expected the proposed redistribution of electoral boundaries will not bring any major alterations to the Territory's political map.

Changes outside Darwin are cosmetic and in no way alter voting patterns. This means that, all things being equal, sitting members will be returned without much trouble.

In Darwin the story is somewhat different. One seat, Wagaman, disappears, and a new seat, Karama, is created.

Port Darwin and Fannie Bay remain unchanged. Ludmilla takes on the RAAF base and Coonawarra.

This should make sitting MLA, Colin Firmin, happy. The armed forces traditionally vote conservative.

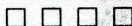
Ludmilla was held for the CLP by Roger Steele from 1974 to 1983 when he decided to challenge Les MacFarlane at Elsey.

Firmin won the seat in 1983 despite the handicap of the Kurringal flats. On present indications he will have little trouble retaining it in the next election.

North of Ludmilla the Millner seat is extended to include Coconut Grove, previously in the Nightcliff electorate.

Plenty of flats there where Labor leader Terry Smith will have a decided advantage. Millner becomes a blue-ribbon Labor seat.

Nightcliff takes on the Rapid Creek area north of Rossiter St. The Chief Minister, Steve Hatton, should be smiling. Federal returns indicate the majority of Nightcliff voters support the Liberal party. Hatton has a seat for life.



Jingili is one to watch. It includes the well-settled area between Rapid Creek, McMillans Road, Lee Point Road, Trower Road and Wagaman Terrace.

Much of it is middle-class and likely to go CLP regardless of the candidate. Some of it, particularly in the vicinity of McMillans Road, is mixed with a preponderance of blue-collar voters.

To make matters more complicated the candidates will be sitting MLA, Rick Setter, and Labor challenger, Bob Wharton.

A recent Labor survey showed surprising constituent recognition for Setter.

Word coming out of his electorate is that he is an assiduous constituency worker. Visits schools, attends christening parties, kisses babies, that sort of thing.

Setter, who faces a small 5 per cent swing to lose his seat, may yet surprise everybody.

Teachers Federation boss Wharton will have to start footing Jingili immediately. He is a personable and intelli-



Darwin changes its political face

gent candidate. The looming battle looks fascinating.

But not more fascinating than at Casuarina where sitting MLA, Nick Dondas, faces a stiff challenge from Labor Party NT president, John Reeves.

This seat, along with Karama and Palmerston, is the election's litmus test. If Reeves swings it his way Labor could be set for a big win in 1991.

A word of warning. While Casuarina includes upmarket Brinkin within its boundaries, it also incorporates the area

north of Trower Road from Elamere Street. That is good Labor breeding ground and so are parts of Nakara and Alawa.

With a swing of 15 per cent needed to unseat Dondas, Casuarina must be thought safe CLP.

But there is the Reeveses imponderable. With a high public profile, articulate and representing the acceptable face of Labor politics, he could cause the biggest upset of the election.

Wanguri is another seat to watch. Sitting member, Don Dale, has an extraordinary degree of recognition among his constituents but he has now been forced into the south side of Vanderlin Drive.

That is dog's country for the CLP. Those few hundred votes could tip the election to Labor.

It is difficult to understand how Dale, who is a born fighter, consented to his own party's redistribution proposal giving him the short end of the stick.

Tiwi will go 50-50 with some luck. Wanguri is CLP, but north of Wagaman Terrace he has trouble.

To compensate, Dale has been given a bulge in Leanyer. The Labor Party is sure to object. In the end Wanguri may be decided by the hospital staff. This is too dicey for Dale.

Adjacent is Leanyer which includes Wulagi and Woodleigh Gardens, a CLP plum.

The pre-selection war for this seat among CLP hopefuls is going to be much hotter than the election itself. Favorite is present Wagaman MLA, Fred Finch.

Talk in the CLP traps is he will be challenged by Sanderson branch president and recently elected alderman, Graeme Bevis.

Interestingly, there is also some talk about Don Dale casting covetous eyes on this safe seat.

In Sanderson sitting member, Daryl Manzie, loses all the bits he held at Wulagi and gains Northlakes.

He will be breathing much easier after all those Liberal votes balance out the bad vibrations he gets from Anula.

Sanderson is one of the most marginal seats in the Territory. Manzie, for reasons best known to himself, has preferred to keep a very low profile.

This is bad news in an election if only because Territorians often vote for names rather than for parties.

Manzie may be Mr Nice Guy himself but he will have to do a lot more if he wants to feel safe come election night.

Just to the east is Karama where Mick Palmer will probably face a Labor left-winger, Lamb Jenkins. This will be an absorbing struggle.

Karama looks today like Millner did 10 years ago. It should be blue-ribbon Labor, except for one factor, Mick Palmer.

Palmer won the seat in 1983 after an easy fight against Labor lawyer, John Waters.

One of the most telling incidents in that contest was a small newspaper item where Palmer, a Malak resident, offered to change residences with Waters, who lives in silver-tail Fannie Bay.

The item did not escape attention by working-class Karama residents who found it easy to identify themselves with Palmer.

Recognition, at 47 per cent, is reasonable. Karama is a new suburb with plenty of new people. It cannot possibly be compared with Jingili or Millner.

Contd. P7.

Labor faces problems

From Page 6

One other factor will be the large Asian population there. Palmer is likely to make capital out of his rival's left-wing philosophy. It does not cut a lot of ice with people who have tasted communism first hand.

Finally there is Palmerston where sitting MLA Barry Coulter will be fighting for political survival.

Coulter is one of the doers in Hatton's Cabin. He lost the fight for the top position by a whisker and has not stopped working since. His profile is very high.

All of that, however, may be for nothing. Palmerston, as all new satellite towns, has special problems.

Youth delinquency, vandalism, single mothers, unemployment and the rest. If those problems are all added on election day Coulter could be tossed.

He should be wise to emphasise that the good citizens of Palmerston would be making the mistake of their lives if this is the result.

The reason is fairly simple. With Coulter as their representative they will be on the winning side. This means they can expect more pork-barrelling.

But if they vote Labor, they can kiss goodbye any hopes for continuing urban improvement.

That is the reality of politics whether anyone likes it or not. And there

is no doubt Coulter will be playing those politics down to the bone.

So what are the prospects following this redistribution? The CLP will win Port Darwin, Fannie Bay, Ludmilla, Nightcliff and Leanyer.

The Labor party is assured of Millner.

Jingili, Casuarina, Wanguri, Sanderson, Palmerston and Karama are doubtful although, on present indications, they are all likely to go CLP.

That is not the end of Labor's problems. Arafura, with Collins out, is vulnerable for a hard CLP push. And with Yulara fully developed so is the southern seat of MacDonnell held for the ALP by Neil Bell.