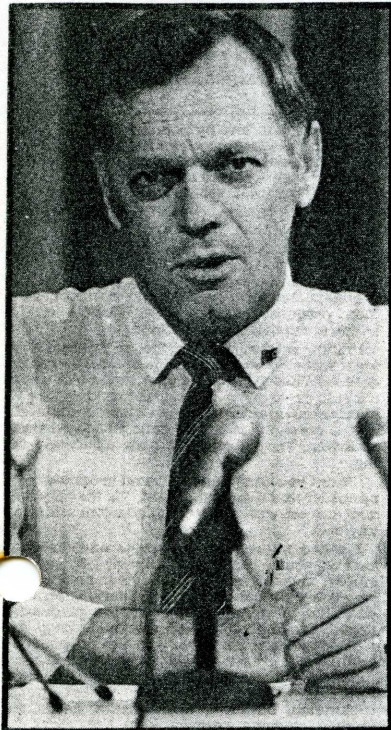


# Chief Minister's head on chopping block



□Mr Hatton

**Do not be fooled by the uncharacteristic lack of fireworks within the NT Government.**

This is like the "phoney war" that preceded the German blitzkrieg in World War II. The real war is about to get started.

What's at issue? One thing is the Anderson proposal to develop the Darwin government precinct.

The Chief Minister, Mr Steve Hatton, has put his head on the chopping block. If the proposal is rejected by Cabinet he may be seen as a leader who cannot muster the support of his colleagues. It is difficult, if not impossible, for a premier or chief minister who does not have the numbers in Cabinet to continue as leader.

Mr Hatton is believed to be disappointed the proposal did not go to Cabinet last Tuesday. This was not his fault. The final submission, carefully put together by the Chief Minister's department head, Mr Allan Morris, with the help and cooperation of Under Treasurer, Dr Neil Conn, has been doing the pertinent senior public service rounds for about 10

days. But some of the Ministers still haven't received advice from their departmental heads.

The delay therefore has been caused by the public service, not by any hesitation or second thoughts on Mr Hatton's part.

He remains strongly in favor of the proposal which he sees as essential to kickstart Darwin's economy. It is in a way

## Anderson plan puts Hatton under pressure

### NT AFFAIRS

FRANK  
ALCORTA



his Chief Ministerial mark in the history books.

But not all of his colleagues are as sanguine as Mr Hatton, not because they think the proposal is unsound or undesirable but because they fear electoral backlash.

"Why knock down perfectly good buildings to create more office space for public servants?" As with all slogans, this one

has an easy appeal which has caught the ears of many.

*The fact that the buildings have a limited life anyway and that they will have to be replaced sooner rather than later has not yet sunk in.*

Indeed people have short memories. One of the buildings opposite the law courts was bulldozed some years ago to make way for the present beautiful park. There was not a murmur of protest then. Few argue against a new Supreme Court building or Parliament House. Both are badly needed. Postpone their construction only inflates costs later on.

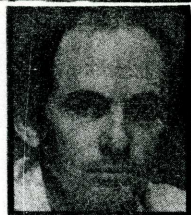
*Provided the financial package offered by the Sydney developer, Mr Warren Anderson, stands analysis (and this appears to be the case) the development should proceed.*

There are two added attractions. One is the gardens. The other is superior architecture.

Apart from the Beaufort and, perhaps, the Sheraton, Darwin has no distinctive architecture. The town has improved considerably since 1975, but it remains essentially ordinary. It is almost an anonymous tropical replica of yet another hot provincial centre anywhere in Australia.

Mr Anderson has promised to change that. He said to me he intended to give Darwin a lasting example of great architecture. There is no reason to disbelieve him.

Arguments in favor of the proposal appear sound, but in the final event a political decision — not just economic or aesthetic — will decide its fate. And here is where Mr Hatton has taken a serious risk. If he can't persuade his recalcitrant colleagues of the proposal's soundness it won't be just Mr Anderson who will lose. It will be Mr Hatton.



□Mr Morris



□Dr Conn

The Chief Minister is running out of time and out of patience. Cabinet meets again in Katherine on Tuesday 20. Yet another delay can only plant more doubts on his leadership. An outright rejection will make it decidedly wobbly.

*That Mr Hatton is sticking with the project speaks volumes about his determination to see it through. He knows he has taken a gamble, but he feels the gamble is well worthwhile.*

What we are witnessing therefore is a watershed in the Hatton Government. The way this project goes could well be the way the NT Government travels in the foreseeable future. In a very real sense the Anderson proposal has become the catalyst that will decide whether the pro-development faction of the CLP wins out over the do-nothing establishment within the party.

The latter disguises its philosophy and attitudes behind the comfort of public service procedures. It has allowed the bureaucracy to take over in the NT.

The former is the remnant of the old CLP shaped by the formidable influence of former chief minister, Mr Paul Everingham, and dominated by strong personalities such as former party president, Mr Graeme Lewis, and former secretary, Mr Barry Wyatt.

*Calculated risks, inherent in the development of the Territory, were almost a way of life then. They are not now.*

But they should be if we want to prosper and build. The alternative is to deliver the Northern Territory to the 13 chief executive officers in the Coordination Committee.

Is this what most Territorians want?