

The CLP must return to its sense

IT seems clear that unless a determined effort is made by the powers that be, the ruling Country Liberal Party faces disintegration.

This is not a desirable outcome for Territorians because the party, with all its problems, has come to represent mainstream conservatism in the NT and has reflected reasonably well the feelings and aspirations of the majority of voters here most of the time.

Internal political debate has reached extraordinary levels with accusations by the Nightcliff branch president, Mr Harvey Fewings, that political hucksters were responsible for forcing the resignation of former president, Mr Grant Heaslip, last Sunday.

Mr Fewings is entitled to his feelings, but if debate is to be kept within reasonable bounds he

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EDITORIAL

would probably be better served by toning down the language.

Perhaps he could take a leaf from the acting president, Mr Shane Stone, who, while agreeing there is community disquiet about the Government's performance, hopes the party will be able to patch up the differences and work towards a better future.

Mr Stone was also quick to qualify his justified criticism by saying that in times of economic downturn it is both fashionable and convenient to blame the Government of the day.

There is no doubt about that, just as there seems little doubt the economic downturn has been caused, at least partly, by the serious fall in capital works expenditure in the Northern Territory over the last couple of years.

The community therefore, particularly the business community, is right to question the actions of the Government.

There appears to have been a decided lack of

imagination and vision on the part of our political leaders in tackling the Territory's serious problems.

However this does not mean there is an expectation out there the CLP will disintegrate in favor of a formal coalition of Liberals and Nationals.

It may well be that this is the logical outcome of the bitter wrangles at present shaking the CLP to its foundations.

But most Territorians would much prefer to see the party return to its senses and continue providing a sensible forum for right-of-centre policies.

And if at the end of the road party members believe they can no longer work together in the same organisation, there should be a formal break without acrimony and spite.

The end of the road has not been reached yet. Indeed there is a considerable way to go before anything like a split is contemplated.

It would be wise for the party's managers to take a few steps back from the brink and try to analyse coldly the consequences of their actions.

Political instability is the last thing the Territory wants or can afford.

What we need now is the reverse — stability and a calm look at our problems. We can have neither while the governing party continues to tear itself to pieces.

Heaslip resignation a giant 'CLP blunder'

IT BEGS the question whether members of the CLP's Management Committee lost their senses last Sunday.

In my view, when they forced the resignation of the party president, Mr Grant Heaslip, they did much more than change leaders — they put the existence of the CLP on the line.

These are my reasons for the assessment. Mr Heaslip was the compromise reached in August last year between the CLP and the federal National Party. Without him and Senator Grant Tambling sitting with the Nationals in Canberra there is little doubt the NT Nationals would have gained federal affiliation.

The CLP's annual conference was distinguished by more than its fair share of plots and counterplots. Central was the enormous pressure put by the National president, Mr Stuart MacDonald, and the party's former president, Mrs Shirley McKerron, on CLP powerbrokers to accept Mr Heaslip.

The alternative was Mrs Helen Galton, widely identified with the Liberal Party and fully supported by Alice Springs lawyer, Mr Shane Stone, a former member of the Victorian Liberal Party, Mr Graeme Lewis, also with Liberal connections, and Mr John Hare, a Liberal sympathiser.

NT AFFAIRS

FRANK ALCORTA



Party puts its existence on the line

The federal Nationals won last year's bitter struggle because any other result would have brought affiliation to the NT Nationals. This would have made the CLP a de facto branch of the Liberal Party.

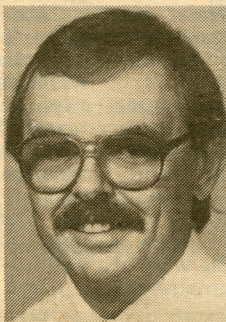
That deal has now come unstuck. It is finished, zapped out of existence, terminated with extreme prejudice. The Country Party faction of the CLP is out in the cold. That means just about every CLP branch south of the Berrimah line.

It is not difficult to predict how their delegates are going to react at the Central Council meeting on June 4. They are fuming now. The fireworks will not be pretty to watch.

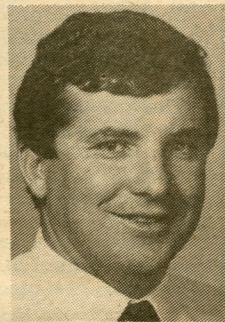
There is no discounting the possibility, remote as it may seem, that a formal split will



□ Mr Lewis



□ Mr Hare.



□ Mr Stone.

occur. At the very least, what might happen is that disaffected Country supporters will leave the CLP for the Nationals.

The Management Committee meeting was attended by Mr Heaslip, Mr Hare, Mr Lewis, Mr Stone, Mr Peter Trenchard, Mr Charlie Taylor, Mr Bob Brough, Mr Chris Nathaniel and Mrs Susan Cavanagh. The Chief Minister, Mr Steve Hatton, and deputy chief, Mr Barry Coulter, were also in attendance.

There is an ironical twist to this. It is that at least two of those opposed to Mr Heaslip, Messrs Brough and Taylor, are in fact hard liners who would be most likely to defect to the Nationals in case of a split. Both have expressed disquiet at the Hatton Government's left of centre line on some vital issues and belong to a group who want the CLP to return to basic conservative politics.

It is most unlikely the meeting came as a result of a deliberate plot to unseat Mr Heaslip as he himself believes. He told me last Tuesday the deal had been stitched together during or immediately after the Liberal Party conference in Melbourne about six weeks ago.

This does not ring true and it is vehemently denied by, among others, Mr Lewis and Mr Stone. Significantly, although there is no love lost for Mr Heaslip, both were against his resignation which was almost exclusively pursued by four members, Messrs Brough, Taylor, Trenchard and Hare. In the event they carried the day.

The debacle has the word blunder written all over it. It is likely that the issue simply got out of hand. By the time the number crunchers, Mr Lewis and Mr Stone, became aware of what was happening it was too late.

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Sounds of rebellion

PLACID South Irianese peasants were awakened from their normal lethargy last week by the sound of gun fire as the Opposites launched a full scale rebellion against the entrenched forces of two See El Pee Commissars, Mushel and Ba Ree.

The Opposite warlords, Te Ree and Ring-a-Ding, opened up a fierce campaign forcing Mushel to deliver one of the most vacuous ministerial statements the House for Talking has heard in years.

While rebellion raged over the affairs of the ZDT's Famine For, a company brought from Queens Irian through the disbursement of plenty of rupees by South Irian's Unassurances Bureau, Mushel delivered a speech that made even the toughest Commissioners and parliamentarians abandon the House.

Only Rik Ee and Dan Ee (no relation) remained to listen to Mushel's rantings about Enabsirb's Expo and frill-necked lizards. The others, including Supreme Commissioner Hat On, fled.

Because Famine For is a company operating in Niwrad's Bartering Area, which some critics have unkindly dubbed Miwko Ree's Bazaar, Mushel, as the Commissioner in charge, is in the firing line.

Next week the Opposites, armed with new evidence on the NBA's Mandarin, Miwko Ree, will return to the charge. Miwko Ree of course is not in Niwrad to face the music. Having obtained the necessary documentation signed by Mushel, he is in Sing Poor.

As the rebellion gathers momentum Hat On is witnessing his two main rivals, Ba Ree and Mushel, take the main brunt of the attack. Both have been rumored to have ambitions for the post of Supreme Commissioner. Mushel, as legendary hero Paw Kee's favorite Keeper of the Cupboard, was heir apparent until he found feeding fish more entertaining than copping flak.

Ba Ree, advised by Deeb See and Shar On, has kept his ambitions quiet but the oracles predict his ascension to the throne soon.

Ba Ree's discomfiture over management of the Unassurance's Bureau is the cause of much glee for the Supreme Commissioner.

The Opposite's rebellion has had a ripple effect throughout the various Bureaux of Syc

SOUTH IRIAN



Ophants and Mandarins. Whenever Commissars hurt, Mandarins are forced to share the hurt. And when Mandarins suffer, Syc Ophants wisely look for cover.

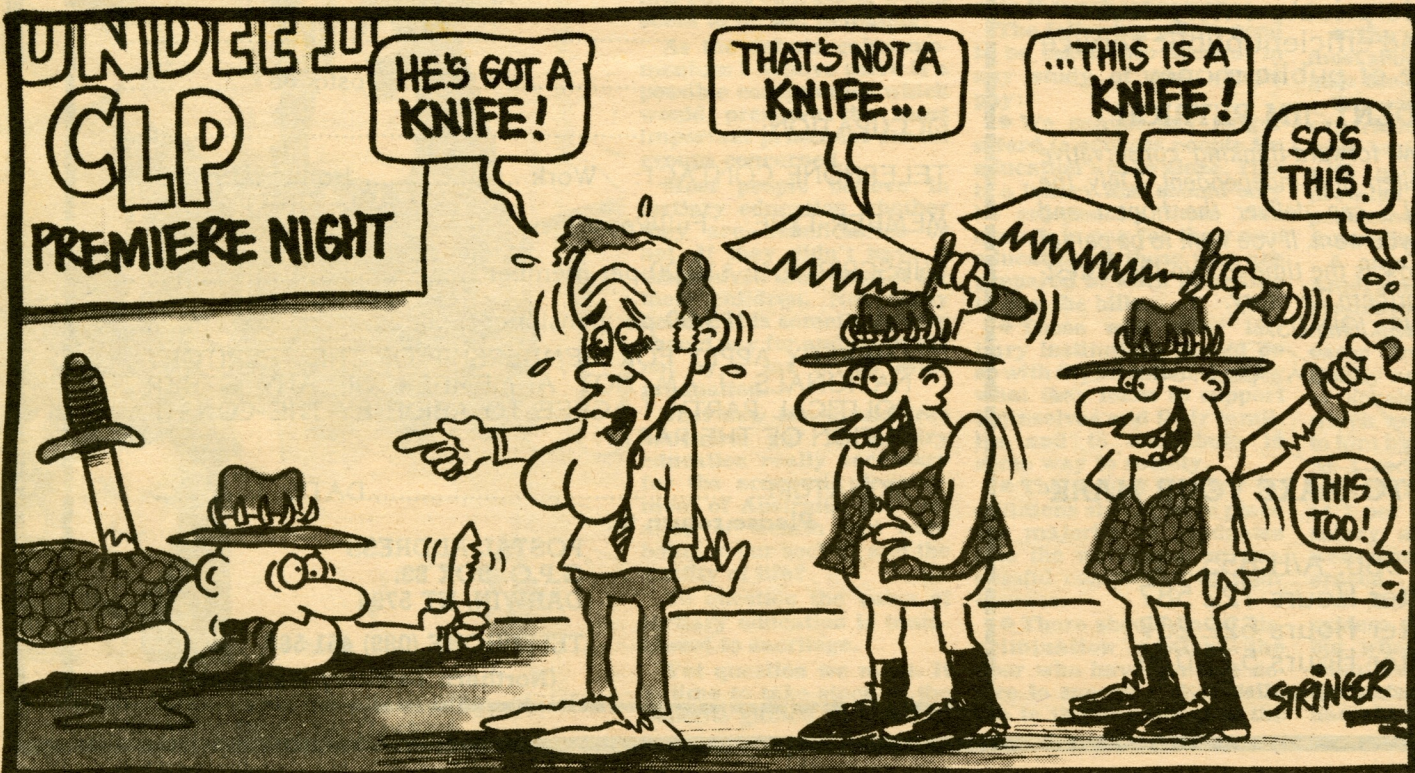
The two Mandarins most affected are Synagogue and Miwko Ree whose future must be judged under a cloud. Synagogue got the lash from Ba Ree, not for the Unassurances Bureau's involvement with Famine For, but because Synagogue committed the unpardonable crime of not informing his Commissioner of the saddest of happenings.

Miwko Ree has the ear and wisdom of Mushel who thinks the sun shines from an orifice strategically placed in that part of his Mandarin's anatomy where the back loses its honorable name.

Mushel's predilection for Miwko Ree is the subject of much speculation among other Mandarins who believe their colleague is getting away with everything they would want for themselves but cannot get. Exile into Sing Poor or Honkers every time there is rebellion is a much sought dream of Mandarins under threat.

It is also believed Opposites have acquired details of the famed Mandarin's conditions of employment which they will reveal in the House for Talking next week. These include the capacity to go into exile whenever he likes.

The standings in the House are likely to be more fiery than usual, not least because Mushel has been distinctly rattled by a certain piece of writing in the Daily Blab alleging his performance is less than should be desired.



Heaslip resignation a blunder

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Whether plot or not however there can be little doubt about the political fallout it has engendered.

Last Monday Mr Tuxworth, speaking on the ABC 7:30 Report, sheeted the blame on the Liberal faction in the CLP. Mr Tuxworth must be taken with a grain of salt. It is in his own interests that the CLP splits into its Liberal and Country Party components.

Nonetheless there is no denying his political acumen. He has correctly identified the party's main weakness and would like to drive a tank through it.

Given the present turmoil it is not at all unthinkable this very tough and durable politician will succeed. Mr Tuxworth's ability or his determination should never be underestimated.

Perhaps the major obstacle towards his goal is the CLP's parliamentary wing. There are no signs of division among the politicians except those caused by normal personality differences. None wants to see the CLP disappear in favor of two conservative parties because they know that is the way to eventual electoral defeat.

If it should come to that after the June 4 Central Council meeting, CLP strategists tell me the party will simply go on without a change of name and with its structure intact. In other words, unless something unforeseen happens, there will be no formal Liberal Party here.

Mr Hatton of course does have an ace well hidden in his sleeve. He can and most probably will amend the Electoral Act to allow for optional preferential voting, in effect a first-past-the-post system, if the CLP splits and the NT Nationals become affiliated federally.

The Northern Territory's election to the first fully elected Legislative Assembly in 1974 was under that system. A by-election in Alice Springs the following year also occurred on an optional preferential basis. It was changed to a full preferential system only in 1977.

The difference between the two is that under the optional preferential system a voter only has to mark one square on the ballot paper. Under the full preferential system all the little boxes have to be filled.

The first system therefore works marvellously well against the emergence of third parties. The second system gives them a lease of life.

• From Page 14

that should be paid, using a formula based on the parent's income.

This is a guide to how the Agency will affect you in Stage 1.

• PARENTS WITH CUSTODY AND THEIR CHILDREN.

Custodial parents will be paid by the Agency once a month by direct payment into a bank account, at the same time as family allowance.

Parents who are already separated and do not claim any welfare benefits do not have to take part in the scheme, whether or not they have court maintenance orders.

But most other parents will be covered and in most cases, it will be compulsory to use the Agency for maintenance payments. It will cover:

— All custodial parents receiving government welfare or benefits, regardless of when they separated or when their child was born (before or after June 1, 1988).

This includes parents receiving sole parent, unemployment, or sickness benefits, service pensions, Austudy allowances, and even business incentives and training benefits.

— All other parents who separate on June 1 or later, plus parents who have not lived together whose child is born on or after June 1.

— Parents using state maintenance collection agencies (but not in NSW).

Spouse maintenance can also be collected and paid through the agency in some cases.

The amount of maintenance to be paid is set by the Family Court unless the parents have reached agreement themselves and registered this with the Court.

But the court can make a new assessment at the wish of either parent if circumstances

Big changes in child payments

change, such as the non-custodial parent losing his/her job.

If the parent paying maintenance defaults somehow, the agency will stop payments, but welfare benefits will be adjusted accordingly.

Maintenance received through the agency will be counted as income for income tests on pensions and benefits.

Sole parents already on benefits will not have to try to get their former partners to pay support, unless they have a court maintenance order from within the last three years.

But all new applicants for sole parents pensions will have to take reasonable action to get maintenance or they will not be eligible.

Acceptable actions include getting maintenance through a court order or voluntary agreement, having begun court action, or having no idea where the other parent is.

There are also let out clauses for difficult social situations — where the father's identity is not known, there is a fear of violence or other harm if the non-custodial parent is involved, or the father is obviously impoverished.

Cases where the mother or father's life could be disrupted are also excused, including where a baby is born out of rape or incest, or where paternity has been denied.

In setting pensions, maintenance will be treated differently from other income and the first \$15 a week for one child and \$5 for each other child, will not be counted.

After that, pensions and al-

lowances will be reduced by 50 cents for each \$1 of maintenance per week, subject to special safety net provisions.

All forms of maintenance will be counted, including cash, lump-sum and in-kind payments such as buying food or paying the mortgage, rent, or school fees.

Lump sums will be calculated as a weekly payment, but only sums paid specifically for maintenance, not property settlements.

In line with current tax laws, maintenance payments to a woman are not subject to income tax.

Parents with custody can challenge decisions of the agency, within a set time, through extensive appeal rights.

• NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS.

Parents without custody will have to pay maintenance through the agency if the custodial parent is eligible to use the Agency and wants to, or is required to use it.

Where there is a choice it is up to the parent with custody alone, and the non-custodial parent cannot opt out.

If the non-custodial parent is an employee, the maintenance will be automatically withheld by the employer. Self-employed people will have to pay direct to the Child Support Agency each month and will have to pay interest if they are late with any payment without a good reason.

But employees can choose not to have their maintenance taken out PAYE if they have maintenance order from before June 1, or apply to the court to avoid automatic de-

ductions in other cases.

However, if payments are not made regularly, and on time, the agency can start automatic deductions from the employee's paypacket without asking the courts.

To protect parents' privacy, employers will be given only the barest information, and are prohibited from disclosing any information about their workers' maintenance obligations.

Discrimination by employers against workers, on the basis of their maintenance obligations, is also an offence with a fine of \$2000 plus compensation. Non-custodial parents will have the right to appeal against decisions by the support agency.

• EMPLOYERS.

In each maintenance case, the agency will inform first the employee, then the employer, of the maintenance obligations and how much should be paid each payday.

Employers will process the maintenance just like PAYE tax, and forward the money each month to the agency, and must keep records of all deductions.

If the non-custodial parent has more than one job, the agency will decide who should make deductions.

Employers will also need to notify the agency when an employee paying support, leaves the job, and if possible, provide details of his/her new employment.

If employers cannot make deductions for any reasons, for example if the worker takes leave without pay, they should notify the agency.

Employers will not have to make up the shortfall from any worker's payments.

Employees will always be left with a weekly protected earnings amount to ensure they can look after themselves.

If their salary falls temporarily, maintenance deductions are reduced.

(ADVERTISEMENT)

AN INVITATION TO ALL TERRITORIANS— HELP US BUILD THE TERRITORY'S FUTURE

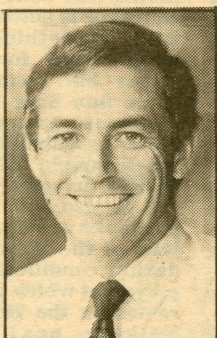
The TERRITORY NATIONALS are Territorians working for Territorians. The TERRITORY NATIONALS' policies will help all Territorians by—

- * protecting the family
- * increasing jobs
- * supporting small business
- * revitalising the public service
- * eliminating damaging taxes

HOW?

- * realistic programs to make the family income go further
- * planned development of new industries and services
- * responsible support for viable private enterprises
- * rebuilding an independent and efficient public service
- * careful, honest and open use of public money

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, JIM PETRICH



Territorians want a new forward-thinking conservative Government, clean, united and independent. Only the TERRITORY NATIONALS can deliver the honest and competent government you want. If you want to be part of the Territory's future, now is the time to join the fastest-growing party in the Northern Territory.

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Authorised by Sam Calder OBE DFC. 322 Casuarina Drive, Nightcliff, NT 5792.

CONFIDENTIAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Please complete a separate form for each person.

NAME:
(Please use block letters).

RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:
.....
..... Postcode

POSTAL ADDRESS:
.....
..... Postcode

OCCUPATION:

TELEPHONE CONTACT: Work Home

MEMBER TYPE: Full/Pensioner

SUBSCRIPTION: \$10.00 per member
\$5.00 per pensioner

I HEREBY APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE TERRITORY NATIONALS. I AM NOT A MEMBER OF ANY OTHER POLITICAL PARTY. I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PARTY.

SIGNATURE: DATE:

Please return to:—

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