

# Coming down

Demolition of the 108-year-old Imperial Hotel in central New Plymouth began today.

The job is expected to take about five weeks as the contractor, Mr J. Van Der Elst, of J and M Contracts Ltd, Waitara, hopes to salvage as much as he can for sale.

He and his partner, Mr M. T. Keegan, began the operation by systematically stripping the walls and rooms of fittings and tearing down some of the false lining put up during various "modernisation" programmes.

## Timbers

One of their first actions was to lay bare the old carved wooden balustrade on the main stairway to the second floor. This had been covered with plywood, as had the curved panelled wall below.

## TURKISH TERRORISTS KILLED

(NZPA-Reuters—Copyright)

ISTANBUL, Thursday. — Two left-wing terrorists were killed and two wounded in a 30-minute gun battle with security forces in eastern Turkey today, according to the independent Haber News Agency.

The four terrorists were reported to have hurled sticks of dynamite when gendarmes tried to flush them out of a house with hand grenades.

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ed wooden balustrade on the main stairway to the second floor. This had been covered with plywood, as had the curved panelled wall below.

Mr Van Der Elst believes a lot of the timber in the old building is kauri and Oregon, and he hopes to salvage much of this.

Items such as doors and windows would be kept intact, and the baths and hand basins would be carefully removed.

The demolition team would be keeping an eye out for anything of historical interest as they worked, and any worthwhile finds would be handed to the Taranaki Museum.

## Staircase

He said probably the most valuable item in the whole building, a cast iron spiral staircase near the kitchen entrance, would remain the property of the firm which own the site, Doyle and Cramp Holdings Ltd, Auckland. The firm intends to replace the old hotel with a two-storey block of offices and shops.

Once the interior of the building was cleared a bulldozer would be brought in to level the empty shell. This would be done behind a wooden hoarding to be erected by Roebuck Construction Co. Ltd in the next week or so.

## Verandahs

"First we have to take down the verandahs," Mr Van Der Elst said. This would be done at weekends or early in the morning when there were few people about.

He hoped to have most of the verandahs out of the way by the end of the weekend.

There was a keen demand for the iron poles which supported them, and he had had inquiries for them from Auckland.

The demolition has not come early enough to save all the contents of the building from thieves or vandals. Late last year someone broke in and removed a number of brass door handles and other fittings valued at more than \$500.

Mr Van Der Elst said the thefts had been reported to the police.

## Deares

Not all of the hotel as it now stands is included in the J and M contract.

A wing of about 12 bedrooms over Deares Ltd shoe shop belongs to 'Deares, but was leased to the hotel.

Deares' managing director, Mr N. D. McDiarmid, said this would be redeveloped as storage for the shop, and as office accommodation once the hotel demolition was completed.

"From discussions with the Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr Freer, this week, it appears that councils in other regions will quickly follow.

"The Minister has asked me for a report on the situation in Taranaki and this, together with the survey by the Taranaki Chambers of Commerce and representations by major commercial interests in this area, will enable the early setting up of a council.

"The council would be made up of people representing local bodies and the commercial, financial, trade union and transport interests in the locality, with the Minister having the right to appoint a chairman.

"Council members would be given a set of guidelines relating to the type of assistance

and the management of the development division of the Trade and Industry Department.

"The policy was originally for the control to rest with the Development Finance Corporation, but as it may be some months before this corporation can be re-organised, earlier action is being taken through the control of the department," said Mr Barclay.

**POLAND WILL HELP:** Poland has confirmed participation in an international commission to supervise the ceasefire in Vietnam, Government spokesman Wlodzimierz Janiurek said yesterday. Other proposed members of the commission are Indonesia, Canada and Hungary.

## JOHNSON SPACE CENTRE

(NZPA-Reuters—Copyright)

WASHINGTON, Thursday. — Legislation to rename the Manned Spacecraft Centre in Houston, Texas, after the late President Johnson will be introduced in the Senate, Senator Lloyd Bentsen said today.

President Johnson played a major role in launching America's space programme, first as a Senator when he served as head of the space committee, and then as Vice-President and President.



MR. M. T. KEEGAN, a partner in J and M Contracts Ltd, stripping away wood that had been built round the carved balustrade in the old Imperial Hotel. He and Mr J. Van Der Elst began demolition of the old building in central New Plymouth today.