



**LAST SALE:** Opunake retailer Arthur Hughson prepares for his last ever sale. The clothing business had been in his family for more than 90 years.

Photo: GLENN McLEAN

# Sale ends a century of retailing

DN: 20/8/99.

By GLENN McLEAN

OPUNAKE'S longest-serving store is to close.

Hughsons Tasman Enterprise Ltd has been serving customers in Opunake since 1902 but its owner, Arthur Hughson, can no longer afford to keep the store open.

Mr Hughson's grandfather started the business as a town supply store, before his son changed the stock to clothing in 1919.

The store is believed to be the National Bank's oldest Taranaki business client, something the store received a silver commemorative tray for 10 years ago.

After 17 years as a mechanic, Arthur Hughson went into business

with his father, helping to build one of the largest stores in the town.

He blames the government for the introduction of cheaper imports, which he says are the downfall for many small town businesses.

"We just can't compete with the cheap importing coming in from China and Taiwan.

"There used to be a time when all of the New Zealand companies used New Zealand labour, now all the factories have closed and those people, who are only skilled for factory work, are jobless," he said.

The closure of the region's smaller dairy factories was another reason small towns were struggling to survive, said Mr Hughson.

"The relocation of all these small factories into Hawera has meant the

end of services to the small centres, there are definitely no more buses going down this main street."

Opunake still had plenty of potential for business people, said Mr Hughson, but the tourist dollar was vital to the town's survival.

"You have to import the tourist dollar to support this town and to support this country."

Opunake Business Association president Eddy Klaassen said it was sad to see such an established business close in the town.

"It's never pleasant to see somebody close down.

"I just hope the building will be utilised because it is a really attractive building," he said.

The store will close after the final sale of all the stock.