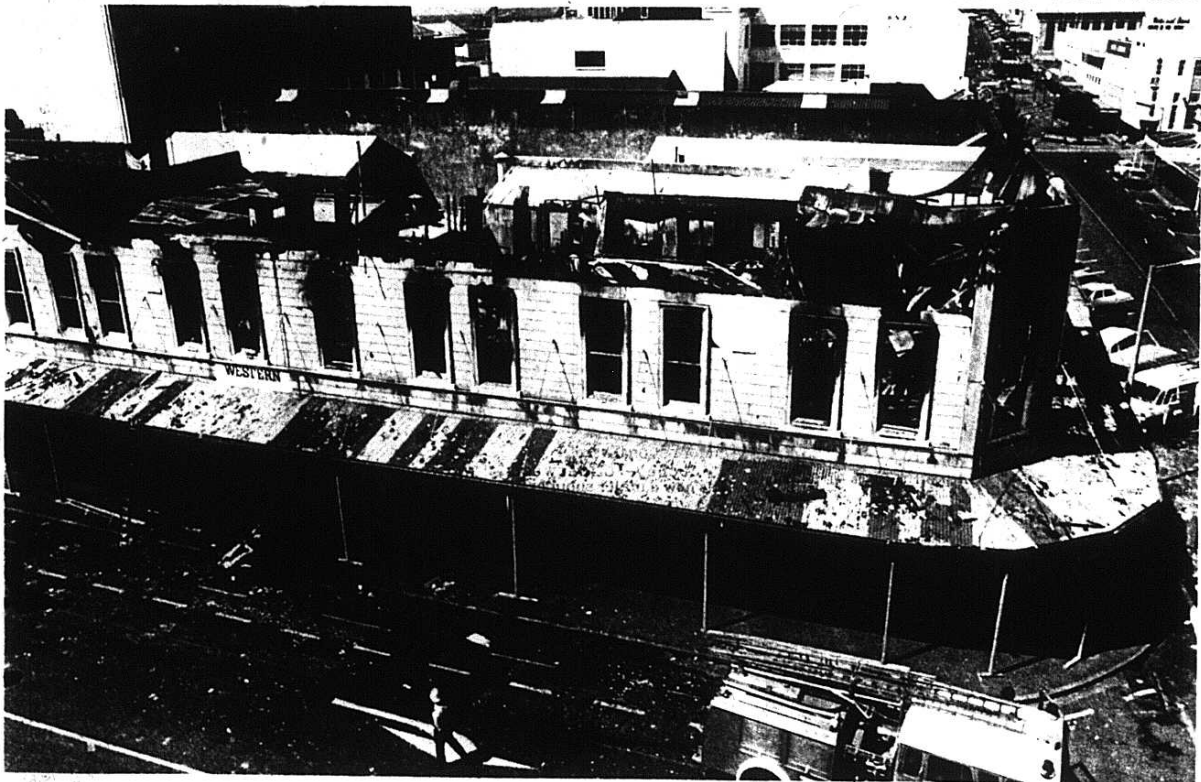


Big blaze in NP



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Top: Two firemen on the verandah of the building attempt to contain the fire as smoke billows out of the roof of the old wooden building on the corner of Devon and Egmont St, New Plymouth, which was burned out in a fire early yesterday morning.



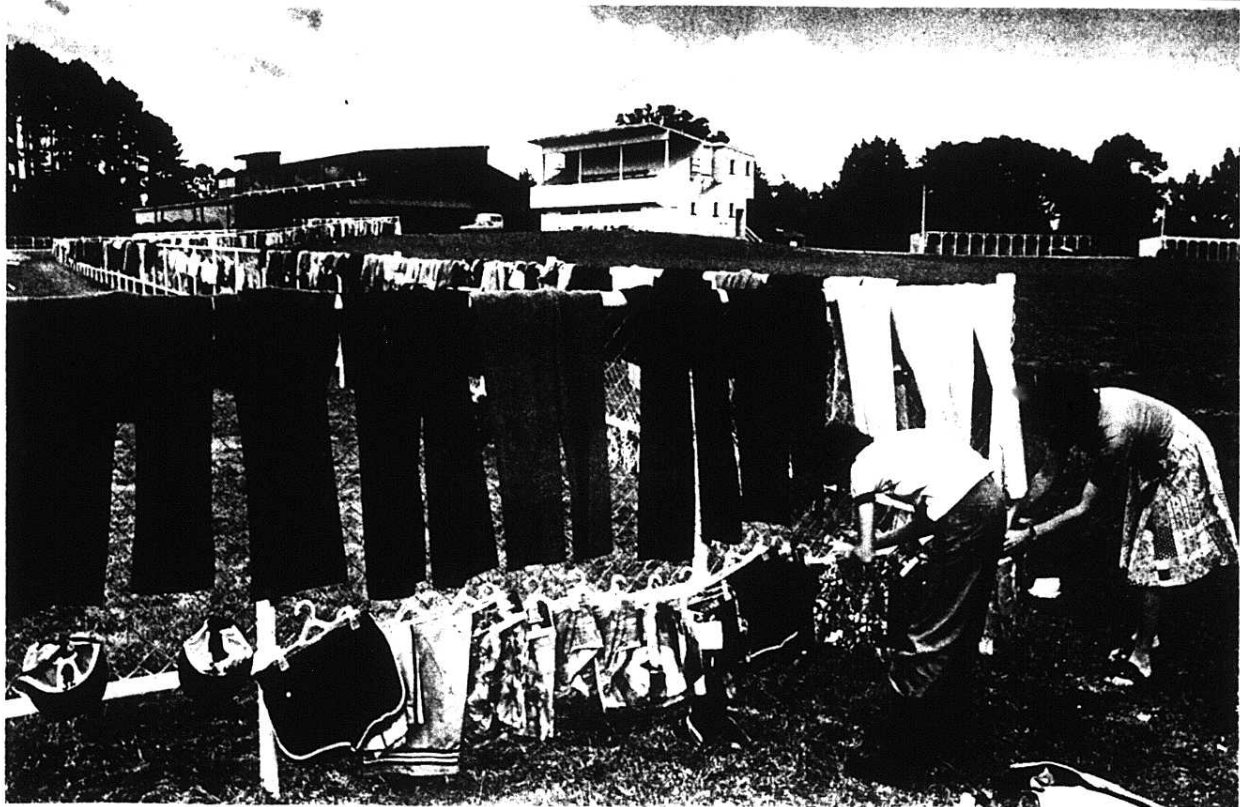
Second Top: The extent of the damage caused by the fire before the top floor was demolished for safety.



Above: Demolition begins yesterday afternoon while the area is cleared of pedestrians.



Right: The aftermath of the fire, as clothes are laid out to dry at the New Plymouth racecourse by David Rush (12) and Mrs M. Rush. Mr C. Rush had a clothes shop in the building.



Wellington's first day of Saturday trading got off to a slow start with a children's Christmas parade, not open shops, being responsible for congested streets in the inner city.

Generally, only small numbers of retailers opened for business in spite of the sunny weather — most being shops clustered together in arcades and malls.

It was the same story in Auckland where the annual Farmers' Santa parade brought thousands of people into the downtown area and, by 11 a.m. Queen St pavements were alive with people.

Central Auckland Business Association president Mr F. A. Carter said: "Saturday shopping is here, and it's here to stay. There's no point in turning the clock back."

Mr Carter's shoe shop matched a usual Friday night takings and he was confident the figure could be increased.

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