



THE MANAGER of the Imperial Hotel, Mr M. K. Grigg, puts up a sign declaring the 107-year-old building is closed. Watching mournfully is the hotel's oldest patron Mr Dan Keenan (90), who arrived just after 9 a.m. to celebrate the end of 66 years of drinking there, only to find the place already closed.

# IMPERIAL IS CLOSED

The was no closing celebration, no last "shout" from the owners, not even a "last drink." The 107-year-old Imperial Hotel just failed to open to customers at 9 a.m. today.

Would-be customers arrived to find a large handwritten sign on the bar door proclaiming: "This hotel is closed."

Patrons who had drunk there for years found the manner in which the old hotel passed on saddening and disappointing.

### UPSET

The hotel's oldest regular patron, Dantty Keenan (90), was one of those upset by the manner of the closing. He had drunk at the Imperial for 66 years.

"I was really disappointed," he said, surveying the closed doors and sign. "Quite a lot of us regulars had planned to come up and have a last drink today, thinking the place would close tomorrow.

There was nothing doing."

Mr Keenan was among those who unsuspectingly drank their last beers in the hotel on Saturday but he said it was not the same as saying goodbye to the place "properly."

Two car loads of patrons bent on seeing the hotel out in the "proper way" arrived at the office of the owners, the DB Taranaki Brewery Ltd, shortly after the usual opening time of 9 a.m., demanding to know why they could not get a beer at the Imperial.

"They were told it was closed and bought a dozen bottles of beer, presumably to go and drink to the hotel somewhere else," an employee said.

For the rest of the day at intervals people could be seen wandering along Currie St to the hotel only to turn away at the closed door and sign.

The managing director of

the DB Taranaki Brewery, Mr G. B. L. Saunders, said they had been forced to close the hotel in this way so that staff could prepare for the Ngamotu Tavern opening tomorrow.

Official approval to close the hotel was given on Friday and there had been no opportunity to announce a closing date.

The manager of the hotel, Mr M. K. Grigg, was advised yesterday afternoon that he would not be opening today.

Today he and his staff were busy packing up in the Imperial and preparing the new Ngamotu Tavern to open at 11 a.m. tomorrow.

Mr Saunders said final arrangements for the opening were still being made and was not sure who would be at the ceremony.

### STRIPPING

For the rest of this week men will be busy stripping the interior of the hotel.

Some of the equipment will be used in other hotels owned by the firm but Mr Saunders said the bulk of the furnishings would be sold at a public auction in the Queen's Hall, on Saturday.

The building has been sold to Auckland property developers, Doyle and Cramp Holdings Ltd, who intend to demolish it to make way for a five-storey block of offices and shops.

It is understood that demolition will not start till after March.

Closing of the Imperial leaves New Plymouth without an early opening hotel. Its bars were open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. instead of the more usual 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. but Mr Saunders said an application had already been lodged to have the Royal Hotel in Brougham St open early.

## Free vote on treaties

(NZPA-Reuters—Copyright)

BONN, Sunday. — The government is to allow its deputies a free vote on the controversial treaties with Poland and the Soviet Union, an official of Chancellor Willy Brandt's Social Democrats said today.

Herr Karl Wienand, the Parliamentary whip, said in a radio interview that he was convinced the treaties would win a majority in the final vote, expected in May. The coalition of Social Democrats and Liberal Free Democrats command only a six-vote majority in the Lower House.

The treaties, under which West Germany pledges itself to acknowledge all existing frontiers in Europe, will be given a first reading in the Lower House on Wednesday.