



**GOING DOWN:** The demolition of New Plymouth's historic Arcadia Hotel starts this week.

Photo: MARK TAYLOR

# Hotel to be demolished

By KIM BATCHELOR

NEW PLYMOUTH'S long-fought-over Arcadia Hotel is about to disappear.

New Plymouth District Council business unit manager Ian Baker said he believed the demolition contractors, subject to permits, were planning to move into the central city building today.

The contractors would be working slowly on the interior, first to recover as much material as they could as opposed to bulldozing the building, he said.

"So you won't see a lot to start with."

It would probably take several weeks for them to pull down the building, he said.

The Arcadia, on the corner of Ariki and Egmont streets, is one of the oldest remaining city buildings designed by architect Frank Messenger.

Three years ago, the Environment Court granted architect Ian Pritchard an interim injunction stopping the council from demolishing the building, which was built about 100 years ago.

Since then, several groups had tried to raise enough money to restore the building, estimated to cost between \$450,000 and \$650,000.

They were unsuccessful and last November the Environment Court lifted its injunction.

Last night, Mr Pritchard said the decision to demolish the building was shocking.

"I think that the councillors in say five or 10 years, if they have half a brain, will look back on this decision with a deep sense of regret."

The council seemed to be more interested in process than in being the custodians of the city's buildings, he said.

"They are more interesting in fining people for car registration, than in doing the job they were elected for."

Arcadia Trust chairman Richard Shearer said the building's demolition was very disappointing.

"It's the absolute demonstration of the council's lack of appreciation of heritage, or of any vision for the future.

"It's the final measure of the council's misunderstanding towards heritage and cultural issues."

The council bought the building and lease — it already owned the land — in 1996 for \$400,000 for redevelopment as part of the Puke Ariki Project, but it was later decided it was not needed.