

Halton faces highest welfare bill in 16 years

High unemployment, an increasing number of deserted wives and mothers and an increase in the number of persons suffering from physical disabilities accounts for Halton's highest welfare bill in at least 16 years.

Jim Gray, director of Social and Family Services for Halton claims the current situation is the toughest he's seen in his 16 years in the business.

In January of 1969 there were 240 welfare recipients in the county. Two years later that figure has swelled to 850. Until 1970 most cases stayed on the rolls not more than one or two months. The stay has been extended to four or five months.

309 called unemployable

Part of the raise is due to an unusual increase in unemployable persons. Until 1969 this figure was usually reflected in the population increase on a constant basis. Since 1969 the figure has moved from 174 to 309 and is still moving up.

The high increase in the unemployables is partly due to two basic factors, first an increase in desertion and secondly the absence of small menial jobs for the handicapped. A job that a handicapped person may have found a couple of years

ago is snatched by a student or another person in search of work now.

The heavy pressure brought to bear on the county welfare department has made it necessary for the staff to grow. Calls handled through the main switchboard have tripled since the county formed the department just a year ago. At various times during the day it becomes impossible to get a free line in or out of the Social and Family Service office at the county buildings in Milton.

Eight field workers

Three intake girls sit with ears glued to the phone as recipients and potential recipients make contact. The intake girls record the initial information and later one of the eight field workers will visit the applicant and decide whether or not help is warranted.

The heavy pressures are probably shown most dramatically in the budget that jumped from \$620,000 to \$980,000 this year. Last year the \$620,000 budget was overspent by \$110,000.

Even at that, Halton has the lowest percentage of residents on welfare of any county in Ontario. As of December 1970, 8 per cent of Halton's people were on the rolls

compared to 6.3 per cent in Russell and Prescott counties which top the list.

The picture is a grim one and there seems to be no relief in the offing—not just yet, anyway. According to Mr. Gray, one the figures from April and May are in the story for the rest of the year will be a little more clear.

Permanent cases

Among the unemployables who collect welfare are many students, deserted women and physically disabled. These persons are permanent welfare cases. Often they'll collect from the county department for the first few months and later collect a mother's allowance, disability pension or some other form of assistance from the federal or provincial government.

Contrary to the thoughts of many those abusing the system account for a small percentage of the those who earnestly need and receive help. If a man if found employable and refuses to accept employment his assistance is cut off immediately, according to the director.

The problem is a sticky one. While the Director and his staff can discontinue support at any time the decision is subject to an appeal board in Toronto and an

applicant has a better than average chance of winning the support in Toronto that he lost in Halton.

Aid for students too

Student support is a difficult problem as well. With the appeal board as lenient as it is, it is theoretically possible for students to leave a happy home and collect welfare for living expenses the next day.

A resolution initiated from the Halton Department of Social and Family Services urging welfare directors be given more autonomy received favorable support from more than 20 counties in writing and some conveyed support to Mr. Gray by phone.

Currently there are 25 students collecting welfare in Halton. According to the Director the 25 have legitimate reasons for their claims. In homes where alcoholism, moral or psychological problems are suspected the youths are removed from the home and provided for as long as their grades are good and attendance at school is regular.

"We are satisfied students we are supporting need assistance. We don't have the problems that exist in some places where students are leaving good homes and winning appeals for support," Gray said.



ACTON REFEREES Association Minor Byng award for the player in the Legion House League best combining ability and sportsmanship went to bantam player Tim McIntyre. Acton referee-in-chief Barry Insoe made the presentation. —(Staff Photo) Turn to sports pages for more details!

Dragway

Reeve warns shape up or ship out!

"I'm not going to lose any sleep over it this year, 'cause I'll close 'er down."

That warning issued by Esqueusing Reeve Tom Hill summed up the feelings of the majority of the township council towards operation of Golden Horseshoe Dragway on the Fifth Line, east of Acton.

Lawyer Walt Sopinka, representing new operators of the dragway, Ed Rachanski and Dave Pratt, appeared before council last Wednesday night, to make application for an operating license for this season. Mr. Sopinka told council his clients have to begin booking cars approximately 90 days ahead of the time they are to race. Although he agreed it was an oversight that application was not made earlier, he asked that council discuss practical hours of operation for the dragway that night.

Need time

Deputy-reeve Russell Miller felt council needed time to talk the matter over. "We didn't have that good co-operation last year on some regulations in the by-law," he reminded Mr. Sopinka. Freshman Councillor Dick Howitt indicated he wasn't prepared to issue a license that night without becoming better acquainted with regulations in the present by-law.

Mr. Sopinka answered council his clients are anxious to co-operate with the township. He explained both have had previous experience operating dragways. He said the same limited

company, Golden Horseshoe Dragway, is still in ownership of the strip, but that it may be operated under the name Toronto International Dragway.

When Councillor Howitt said he'd like some guarantee management will be backed up by ownership in complying with township by-laws, Mr. Rachanski said he will be directly responsible for the operation.

"Carl Bristow Jr. will have nothing to do with this operation," he said. Mr. Bristow operated the strip last year.

Mr. Pratt told council he has operated a similar strip at Cayuga for the last three years and has experienced no curfew problems. "There was a church nearby and we never began operating until 15 minutes after it had emptied," he told council.

Admits fault

Reeve Hill admitted 90 per cent of the trouble the township had with the dragway last year was

council's own fault because they don't have anybody to enforce by-laws. However, he warned the new operators they'll be held strictly to the line this year. "And if you don't, your license is going to be revoked," he said.

Councillor Len Cox backed the reeve's stand. "This year there'll be no question of whether they're prepared to co-operate or not, it's simple, either they will or it'll be revoked."

Last year, it was alleged operators of the dragway violated the township's racing by-law on three occasions. Charges were laid against the operators by Peter Bowman, whose property adjoins the dragway property.

Earlier in the meeting, council received a letter from the North Esqueusing Ratepayers' Association, asking that they be allowed to have representatives meet privately with council, before they issue this year's operating license to the new operators.

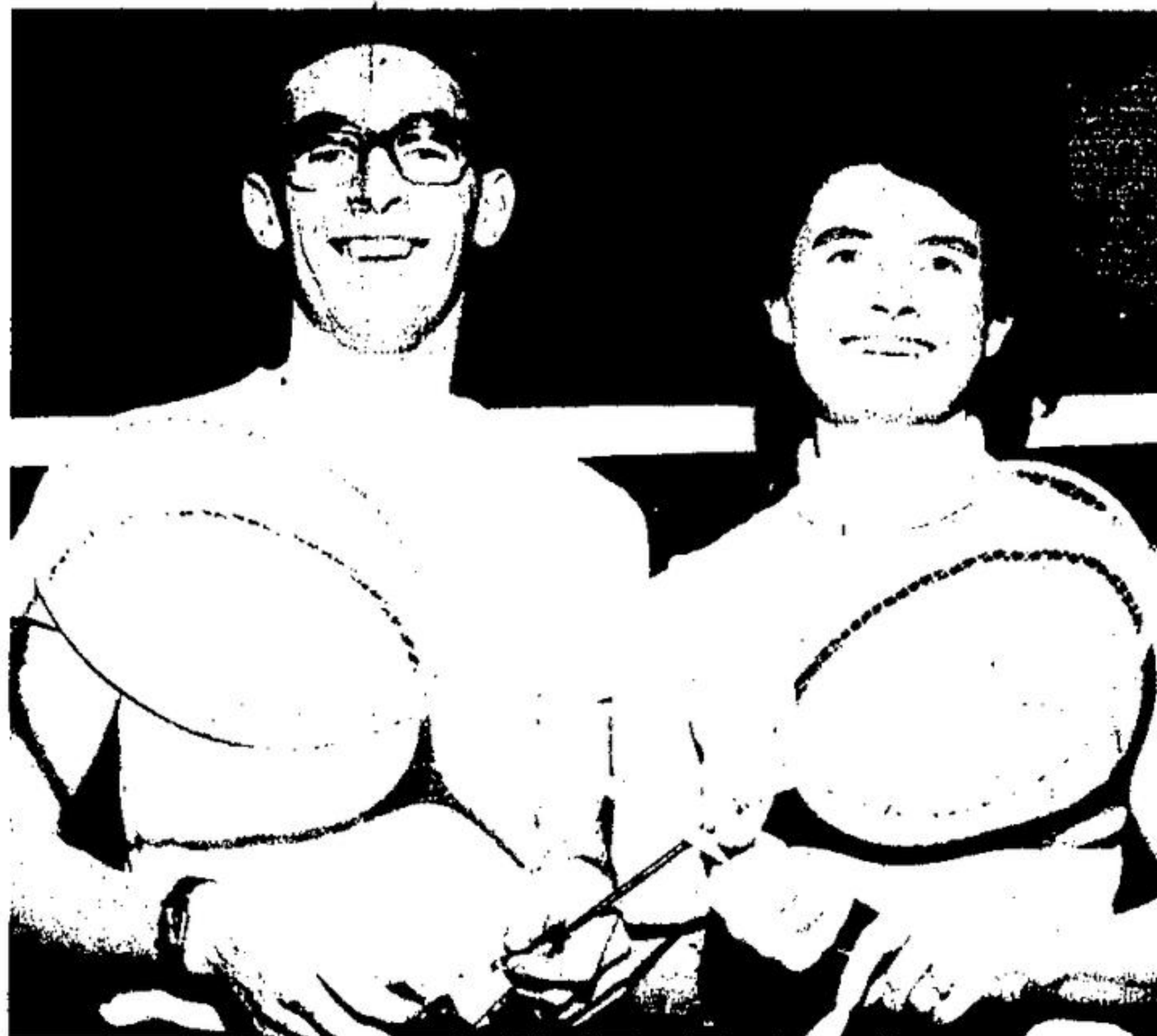
Council decided to have representatives of the ratepayers and the new operators come to a private meeting the same night to discuss the matter.

Asks invitation

When he heard about the private meeting, Mr. Bowman who was attending the meeting as a spectator asked for an invitation.

Reeve Hill originally refused, on the grounds Mr. Bowman had nothing to bring before council.

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CHAMPION BIRD CHASERS of the Acton Badminton Club were decided at the final playoffs Thursday night at the high school, with Don Price and Joan Morris emerging as champions of the pairs. The tourney ended another successful season for the Acton badminton. They had 70 players registered in the club this year for the twice weekly sessions of badminton. —(Staff Photo)

New commuter service co-ordinates bus, train

A new co-ordinated rail and bus service aimed at commuters between Toronto, Brampton and Guelph has been devised by Canadian National and Gray Coach Lines. It will commence April 26.

Operating daily, except Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, the service will enable passengers from Guelph, Rockwood, Acton, Silvercreek and Norval, to use Gray Coach Lines to Brampton where they can transfer to the 7.15 commuter train to Toronto.

In the reverse direction, the CN evening commuter train from Toronto's Union Station will connect with the bus at Brampton station at 6.09 p.m.

Additional service The transfer between services at Brampton is in addition to regular bus and rail services between Toronto and Guelph. A combination CN and Gray Coach ticket will be accepted on the train and bus. Combined fare from Rockwood to Toronto one way is \$2.00, \$1.75 from Acton and \$1.50 from Silvercreek, \$1.30 from Norval.

The Free Press contacted officials of the railway and asked what advantage the new co-ordinated schedule would offer residents of Rockwood and Acton since the early morning train leaves 17 and 16 minutes later from the two places respectively, arriving in Toronto 15 minutes earlier than the bus.

An official of the CN public relations department said the major change in services was the co-ordination between bus and

train -- a suggestion emanating from the hearing in Acton concerning closing of the station, where more co-operation between the two services was urged to accommodate commuters.

The combination ticket offered a third option to either bus or train.

He suggested commuters along the bus route would also benefit since they could now board the bus and transfer to the train at Brampton without driving to the station.

Not Georgetown?

The Free Press enquired why the bus would not stop at Georgetown although commuters from Norval and Silvercreek, on either side of Georgetown, would be picked up. But the official had no answers.

This newspaper also suggested that it would be ridiculous for anyone to board the bus at any places along the route and then board the train at Brampton when seating would be at a premium. Far better to board at Acton or Rockwood when seats were plentiful.

The railway official said they felt someone boarding the train in the morning before Brampton would also have the option of taking the bus from Brampton and journey to parts of Toronto along the bus route.

Would this have anything to do with eventual closing of the Acton station by eliminating a stop? The reporter asked the official.

None whatsoever, the official replied. The scheme was merely another service for commuters, not an attempt to establish an alternative to stopping the morning and evening trains at Acton.

Market value reassessment program start

The Halton-Peel assessment office started a re-assessment program in Acton Monday and expect to start in Milton shortly, Regional Assessment Commissioner Robert H. Beach told this newspaper. The program is part of the province-wide re-assessment at market value to be conducted over the next three or four years.

Although the assessment office expects to have the whole of North Halton done this year, residents are being assured that the old assessment on their house will be used until the entire county is re-assessed.

Townships next

The townships of Esqueusing and Nassagaweya will be done after Georgetown, Acton and Milton are complete. Assessors started in Georgetown several weeks ago. Then it will be Oakville and Burlington.

Mr. Beach emphasized that at least one of the former assessors from each town would take some part in the re-assessment program. Each assessor has proper identification to produce for home owners in the event there are recognition problems. Five assessors will work in each of Acton and Milton.

Formerly assessment was administered by local municipalities and counties but on January 1, 1970, the Province of Ontario assumed the assessment role, endeavoring to bring consistency and equality to the hodge-podge throughout the province.

The task of converting assessment to market value was broken down into districts, with Halton and Peel counties lumped into one region under Mr. Beach.

The Assessment Act defines market value as the amount a property might be expected to realize if sold on the open market by a willing seller to a willing buyer. Value of different properties, the government maintains, should be reflected in the assessment, suggesting the old and still existing assessment values are open to inequities.

Fair way

Government studies have indicated that re-assessment is the only fair way to find out if you are paying too much, too little or just about the right amount of taxes, compared to other property owners in the area.

This means your assessment will go up but does not mean your taxes will necessarily rise. If your taxes go up when the re-assessment program is completed it will mean:

(1) You were previously under-assessed or (2) your local council or school board has increased taxes to raise more revenue for local services.

Assessors are handing out explanatory booklets about the new assessment program as they re-assess properties. Ask the man who assesses your property for one.

South wants power

Members of Halton County Council are readying themselves for a battle over representation on the county council. The trouble first began to brew last year when Burlington representatives on county council made it known they were going to press for greater representation at the county level.

A meeting has been slated for May 12 to try to resolve the problems between the north and south but reporters have been banned from the meeting.

Burlington Reeve Jim Swanborough presented county council with a notice of motion at their meeting Tuesday afternoon. The motion urged council to support a private member's bill calling for greater representation for Oakville and Burlington.

Greater strength

If passed the bill would increase Burlington's representation from two members to five and Oakville's from two to four. The weighted votes that now allow for 18 votes

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No grass widows

Acton firefighters aren't just sure whether they should rejoice yet or not over the so far unusual grass fire situation this Spring. Ordinarily they have one lost weekend filled with smoke and burning grass annually that sends them scurrying in all directions.

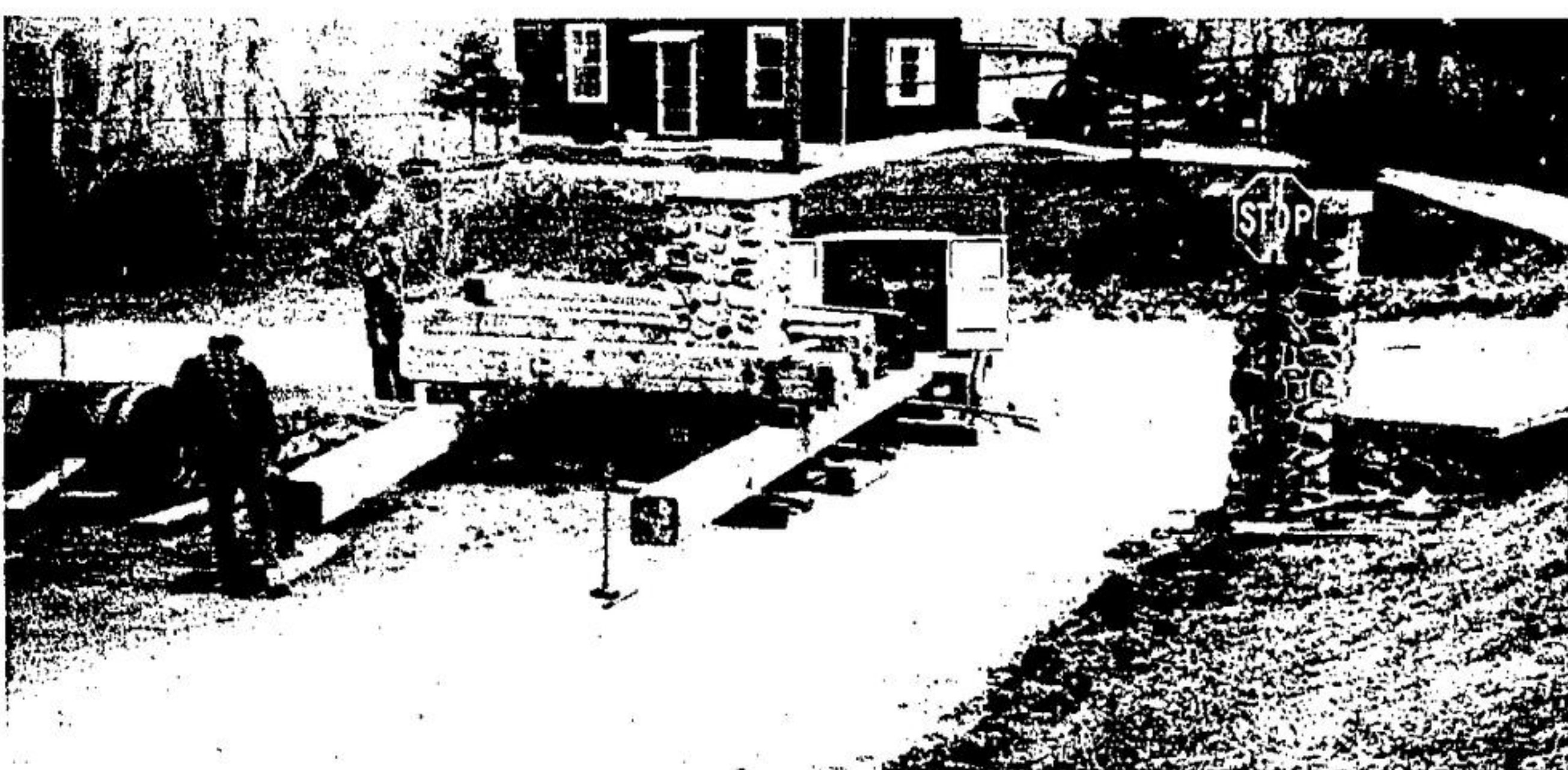
There were three calls this week but not one of them amounted to any more than a run to Ballinafad Sunday, just before noon, where they discovered the Georgetown brigade had been called prior and extinguished the blaze.

Grass

Monday at about 5.30 in the afternoon the alarm went for another grass fire in the Eden Mills district but they were advised it was out before they left the hall.

Tuesday at 9.30 a.m. another call came from 22 Sideroad where a man was smoking out bees from under eaves, but they never had to leave the truck.

Meanwhile they are crossing fingers and hoping the growing season is well enough advanced that no further grass fire calls will be necessary. Wives of the volunteers especially enjoy the respite from grass widowhood.



HISTORIC STONE GATES, located at the Ransom Street entrance to Fairview Cemetery, are being moved this week to a new location near the Cobblehill Road entrance to the

cemetery. Mover Doug Brander is supervising the operation.—(Staff Photo)

Turn clocks

It's that time of year again when the dawn comes so early in the morning we mortals must turn clocks ahead to keep in time with Old Sol.

Daylight Saving Time will be ushered in Sunday morning at 2 a.m. and stays with us until Sunday, October 31.

For some it means an hour's sleep they'll miss until November. For others it means an hour's more daylight they'll enjoy.

Take your choice.