Increase in wife battering traced to Monday football's demise

By LISA JAKOBSEN

What does the National Football League strike have to do with potential for domestic violence? More than a Monday night diversion, the game provides a leisure outlet, relief from boredom and an avenue for controlled violence for many men. Removal of such a safety valve will probably

cause the incidence of wife battering to escalate, predicts Dan Silvester who is currently organizing a counselling group for wife batterers in Halton. Recognition of cues for potential violence

provides a point of departure for the support group, says Mr. Silvester, stressing individuals must take the first step: assuming responsibility for their own actions.

A couple may find themselves in a battering situation for a variety of reasons, with each partner bringing tensions to bear in the relationship. The self-belp group will explore certain factors

which may bring men to act out anger and frustration through physically abusive episodes. Some of these psychosocial factors include: dependency fears; rigid definitions of masculinity; poor impulse control; and low self esteem.

Although a number of counselling services and bostels are currently available to Halton and area women in physically abusive situations, there is no male-oriented counselling service available in Halton and only three in Ontario.

The victim is only a symptom of the larger community issue, says Mr. Silvester adding the counselling model be proposes offers alternatives to violent behavior rather than directives for spec-

Mr. Silvester, a life skills and employment coordinator for the Burlington probation and parole office, hopes to form a counselling group this fall. Although drawing on mediating skills gained through work with probation office and a background in psychology. Silvester will run the pilot program on a volunteer basis in response to referrals from the Children's Aid Society. Halton Women's Place (HWP), a shelter for abused women and the courts.

Long term goals for the project also include establishing a domestic response team, composed of social worker and police officer, ideally a male and female team, who provide home intervention, diffusing the immediate violence and providing information on counselling services available,

including the Halton counselling service for men. Once established, the nine-week program, which will meet once a week, will rely on a learning theory approach, one involving participants in

an educational and therapeutic format. The five to eight member groups will decide on issues to be discussed, with the help of a facilitator. Participants will be invited to discuss cues which trigger violent behavior as well as how to

deal with the crisis situation during and after. Ideally, alternatives to battering situations will be established through group discussion and a peer support network. The model is based on a

similar Toronto treatment program. Mr. Silvester emphasizes the problem-solving orientation of the group, which will call on members to listen to one another as well as share coping mechanisms for dealing with crises.

One participant may have found walking, reading or just leaving the house may avert a potentially violent confrontation.

Hopefully, group members will exchange phone numbers, providing an ongoing self counseiling petwork among members Mr. Silvester explains.

Other long range goals include community education. Heightened public awareness of the issues surrounding wife battering would be useful in a preventative approach to domestic violence according to Mr. Silvester.

"The community should not consider what goes on inside the home beyond the law." he says, noting harsh punishments are not always an effective deterrent to crime.

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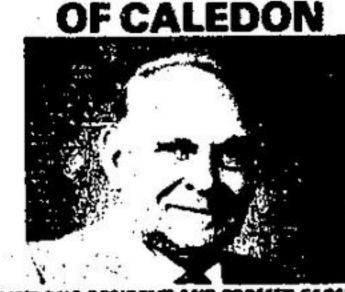
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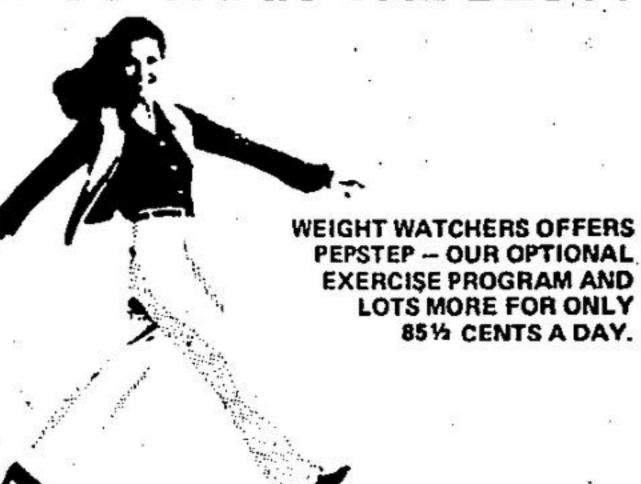


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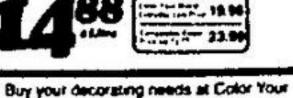
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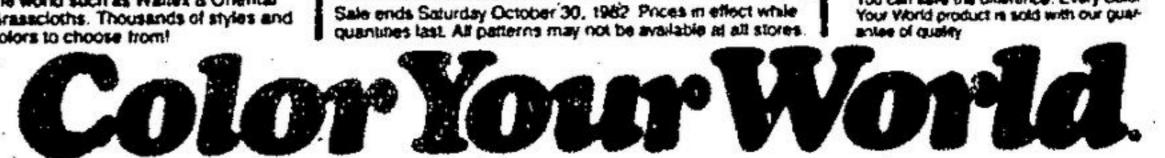
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