

# Supply teachers in militant mood

by Vic MacBourne

For the third time in its 10 year history, the Halton Substitute Teacher's Association has been forced to go to war against the board of education to fight proposed salary cuts.

More than 60 substitute teachers—some long time veterans of the board, others with barely a year's experience, gathered in a board office Thursday afternoon to discuss strategy. In the hour long meeting, Association vice president George Gereben called for teachers to organize. He made references to unions throughout the meeting calling it a "last resort."

"We don't want to get a union, but if we have to, we better be ready," he warned the teachers.

Just a week earlier, Rae Stoness, superintendent of employee services at the board of education, dropped a bomb on the substitute teacher's association by announcing the board of education was considering changing the payment method for substitute teachers that could result in a freeze or cut in some substitute teacher's salaries.

Stoness is proposing a standard rate of pay for both elementary and secondary substitute teachers. The change would not recognize teachers with university degrees who are now being paid \$89.56 daily in the elementary grades. Teachers without degrees in the elementary system receive \$64.40 daily.

A flat rate of \$86.80 is presently being paid to secondary teachers.

Part of the board's argument centres around the status of the Halton substitute teachers who are one of the highest paid in the province.

### Difficult fight

It's not the first time the Association has been hit with a proposed salary cut. It was formed in 1972 for what organizers say was to: "protest and combat an unfair, unexpected and unforewarned cut in substitute

teacher salaries.

In 1976, the Association was revived to protest and combat an unfair unexpected and unforewarned cut in substitute teacher's pay." It was successful in convincing the board to rescind an earlier decision to cut the salaries on both occasions.

But with the board looking to cut costs this year, substitute teachers may have a difficult fight ahead of them.

The total Association membership represents only a fraction of the more than 500 Halton substitute teachers who remain disjointed and unorganized.

"We have to get the rest of the substitute teachers in Halton to join," pleaded Gereben who is trying to gather information on the amount of experience the average substitute teacher in Halton has to prove to the board that: "we're not just kids fresh out of university but experienced teachers."

But the Association may have difficulty gathering the data.

Not only is the Association presently struggling for membership, the board's proposal also splits the substitute teachers down the middle because the non-degree substitute teachers could conceivably make more money if a standard rate is set.

Although Gereben stressed that a union was a last resort, he did recommend to teachers that they should consider joining the Ontario Public Service Employee Union (OPSEU) which presently negotiates on behalf of college teachers and many government workers.

Gereben emphasized the need for a "strong presentation to the board."

But Stoness claimed the board is only "looking at a number of alternatives." He said the salary policy commission would be examining the issue and he expects to hear from the substitute teachers by the end of February. Stoness said he expects the issue to come up before the board as early as late March.

## Board says no to arbitration

Negotiations between 1,200 Halton elementary teachers and the board of education have fallen to a new low after the board's negotiating committee refused to consider arbitration.

Robert Filman, president of the Halton teachers' elementary association, said, this week, that the board had refused a federation request to appoint an arbitrator to look into the issue of staffing.

But according to negotiating committee chairman Elaine Riehm, an agreement on the issue has already been made.

"The board does not wish to use an arbitrator because as far as we are concerned we have an agreement on pupil-teacher ratio," she said.

A long-term agreement was made for the 1981-82 school year through to the 1983-84 year, which allowed for an increase of teachers in each of those years, explained Riehm, adding as many as 24 additional teachers could be hired this year. She said

the agreement allows for a decrease of 4 per cent this year from 20.4 to 20. She admits that because of declining enrolment, fewer teachers will be hired.

Riehm insists the board is willing to look at the problem of staffing, explaining that the negotiating committee has agreed to set up a joint committee to examine the problem, for negotiations in 1984.

But Filman maintains there is no agreement.

He says the Halton elementary school board is the worst staffed in the province and he wants 12 new teachers to improve the situation.

An additional 12 teachers would decrease the pupil teacher ratio to 19.8 still more than Hamilton's 18.1 and Peel's 19.1. "We would have to have about 72 additional teachers to come in line with the Peel board," he said.

"When you're last you're last. We're not saying we want to be first, but last?" he questioned.

## Fisher says letter wrong

A letter to the editor which appeared in many Halton region newspapers is "incorrect" according to Halton Board of Education vice chairman Betty Fisher.

The letter, from Richard M. Berrie, of Oakville, suggested board members' salaries are tied to teachers' awards. Berrie noted the nine per cent salary increase the secondary school teachers settled on recently "will raise the education taxes paid by the Halton taxpayers by 13.6 per cent."

Fisher wondered if Berrie knew something she did not, and stated the board increase will not be more than eight per cent this year.

While secondary teachers recently settled their contract for 9 per cent, previous contract commitments actually increased their overall package to 13.6 per cent.

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