

Annual meeting

Hikers want action to save the Bruce Trail

The Bruce Trail Association wants the provincial government to act quickly in securing a permanent right-of-way for the Trail, before the Trail is broken up any more by landowners closing down sections of it.

The trail association has encountered problems in recent years with landowners closing down the sections of the trail which pass through their property. It is estimated that about 45 per cent of the trail is now on roads, rather than through the bush.

COME FORWARD
The association would like to see the province come forward with amended legislation to secure a permanent route for the trail, and funding to help the association negotiate with landowners for easements, right-of-ways and other means for bringing the trail back into one piece.

At a meeting of the Bruce Trail Association at Erindale College on the weekend, association members indicated their dissatisfaction with the government's reluctance to act immediately to preserve the trail, which winds through Terra Cotta, Silver Creek, Limehouse and Speyside on its way south from Tobermory to Niagara Falls.

It would prefer to wait until the master plan of the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) receives final cabinet approval before taking any action, association secretary Ray Lowes said. But cabinet approval could be two years in the future.

George Shepherd, spokesman for the Niagara Escarpment Central Ratepayers Association (NECRA), says the trail association has only itself and the expropriation powers in the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act to blame for the problems it is encountering with landowners along the escarpment.

"The Bruce Trail Association should remember they had their best success with handshake deals with landowners," Mr. Shepherd said. "That should prove they don't need legislation to expropriate or buy land along the trail route."

"They had the good will of the landowners and they threw it away by their strong lobbying with the government on the optimum route for the trail and by getting a member on the commission who seemed to see the commission as a way to get an easement over the trail in perpetuity," he continued. "The Bruce Trail Association would have been far better off

if it had never seen lobbying or the Niagara Escarpment Commission."

Mr. Shepherd said farmers used to let hikers on their property, but they became worried about the scope of the expropriation powers in the act governing the planning of the escarpment. The farmers were concerned that an easement for the trail, if it happened to go through their property rather than around it, would jeopardize their farm operation.

"The Bruce Trail Association would say, 'Don't be stupid. The trail doesn't go through all the farms'," Mr. Shepherd said. "But if you look at a map of the optimum route, it does go through some pieces of property."

Mr. Shepherd said the uncertainty about the route of the trail has caused landowners a great deal of concern as well.

MASTER PLAN
"The NEC will bring in its master plan, which will recommend some land acquisition for the preservation of the escarpment, and the government will probably go along with it, but when will they buy the land?" Mr. Shepherd said. "The landowners have been asking that a time limit be set for the land to be purchased within six months of a development permit being refused, since the province isn't going to give landowners compensation."

"There is no reason why the landowners should donate land

for the public good," he said. "It used to be what was in the public good, the public paid for, like transportation, roads, welfare and so on."

"I think the landowners would be happy to talk to the

Bruce Trail Association if the expropriation powers were removed from the act, or if the government agreed not to use them," Mr. Shepherd said. "What we really need in this province is a Bill of Rights to

protect us from parliament. The Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act was one of the greatest invasions of our civil rights and liberties that there has ever been in this province."

NEC master plan is expected near the end of October

Herald Special
The proposed master plan for the Niagara Escarpment should be released Oct. 20, the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) chairman says.

About half the proposal was sent out Wednesday and the other half should go out today, he said.

Published reports this week said the plan called for the province to buy another 17,123 acres to expand 15 of the 115 parks along its 724-kilometre length. McMullin said the reports were apparently based on working papers. He would

not elaborate. McMullin said in a telephone interview some changes have been made, varying a map released earlier. The changes reduce the escarpment in Caledon and increase its area in Bruce and Grey counties. He said the changes in Caledon are "bits and pieces along the edge."

"I don't think it's too watered-down," he said. "I'm proud of it. I think we've done a good job."

The plan has taken six years to draft

Demonstration forest planned at regional headquarters

Halton regional council has approved a plan to establish some 1,400 trees of various species in a "demonstration forest" on the grounds of the regional headquarters in north Oakville.

Highway 25 just north of the Queen Elizabeth Way. The forestry plan stems from Ontario Hydro's offer early this year to plant a total of 43.3 acres of trees at its own expense. Three sites owned by the Halton Region Conservation Authority in Halton Hills and Milton have been selected for the bulk of the replanting, with the balance to be located in Oakville.

designed to minimize kill due to weed and mammal infestation," Mr. White reported. "The cost of both the tree planting and the maintenance program to the region should be minimal."

free, and may also have arranged for planting, although the latter could be unnecessary if an Arbor Day program involving the area schools, boy scouts and girl guides can be extended to include the demonstration forests.

Ontario Hydro will provide the trees through its replacement scheme, combining examples of seven different species from ministry of natural resources "stock".

A sub-committee of the region's Ecological and Environmental Advisory Committee was formed to prepare a tree plan and maintenance program for the demonstration forest.

Mr. White noted that Ontario Hydro is providing the trees

First proposed by regional staff last January, the demonstration forest "is not a landscaping plan", according to Bob White of the planning department. It is, rather, a "reforestation project" aimed at creating an "attractive, visual break-buffer" and providing a suitable habitat for "a large number of our birds, mostly boreal species, and even some small mammals, all of which are in keeping with the Parkway Belt setting of this site."

"The maintenance program involves preparation of the site, cultivation and spraying,

BLACK WALNUT
Mr. White explained last week that species of trees indigenous to Halton, mainly White Ash, Black Walnut, White Pine, Red Oak, Butternut, Sugar Maple and Carolina Poplar, would be planted on the 1.3-acre site adjacent to the regional headquarters building, constructed last year on

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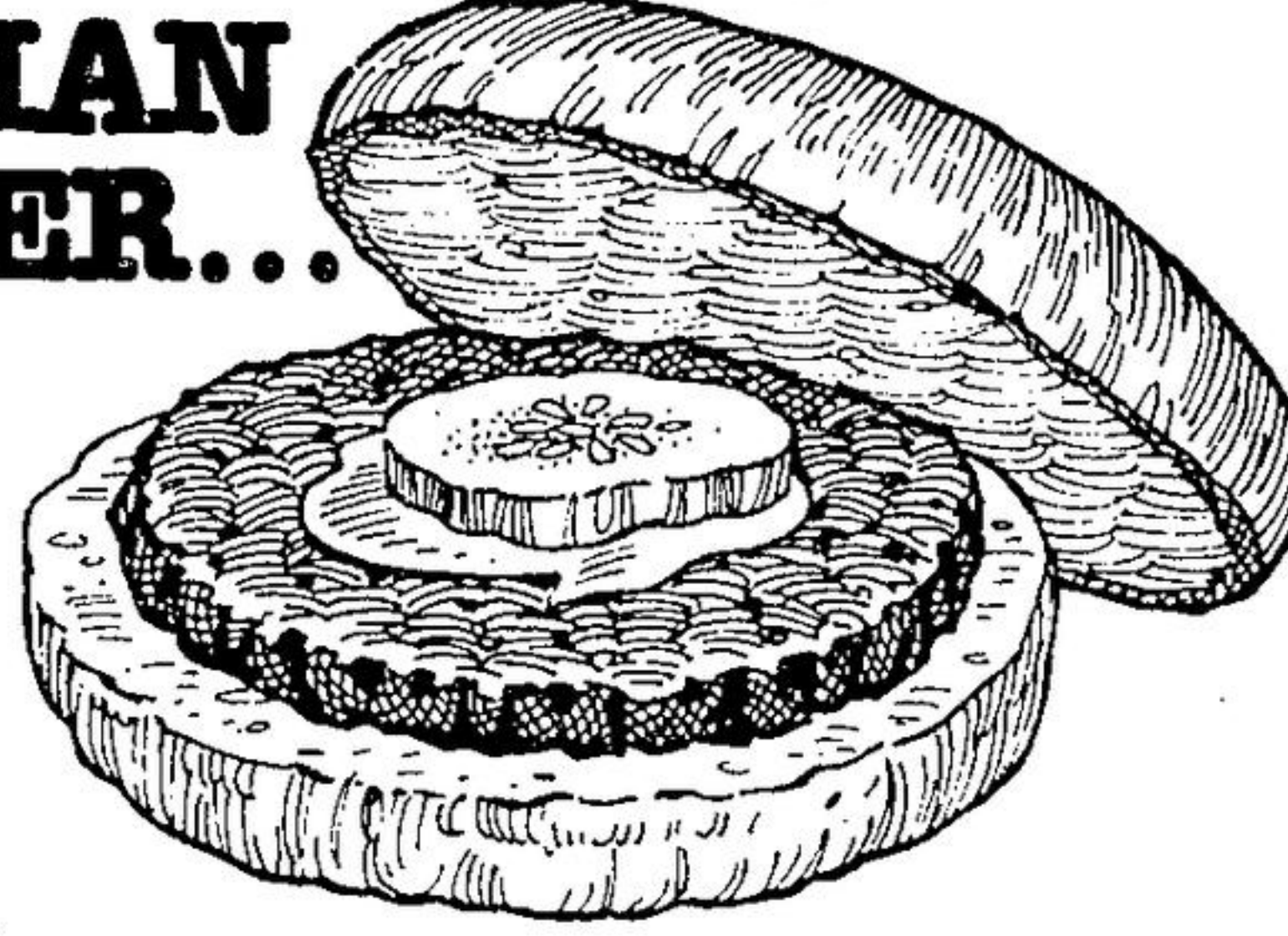
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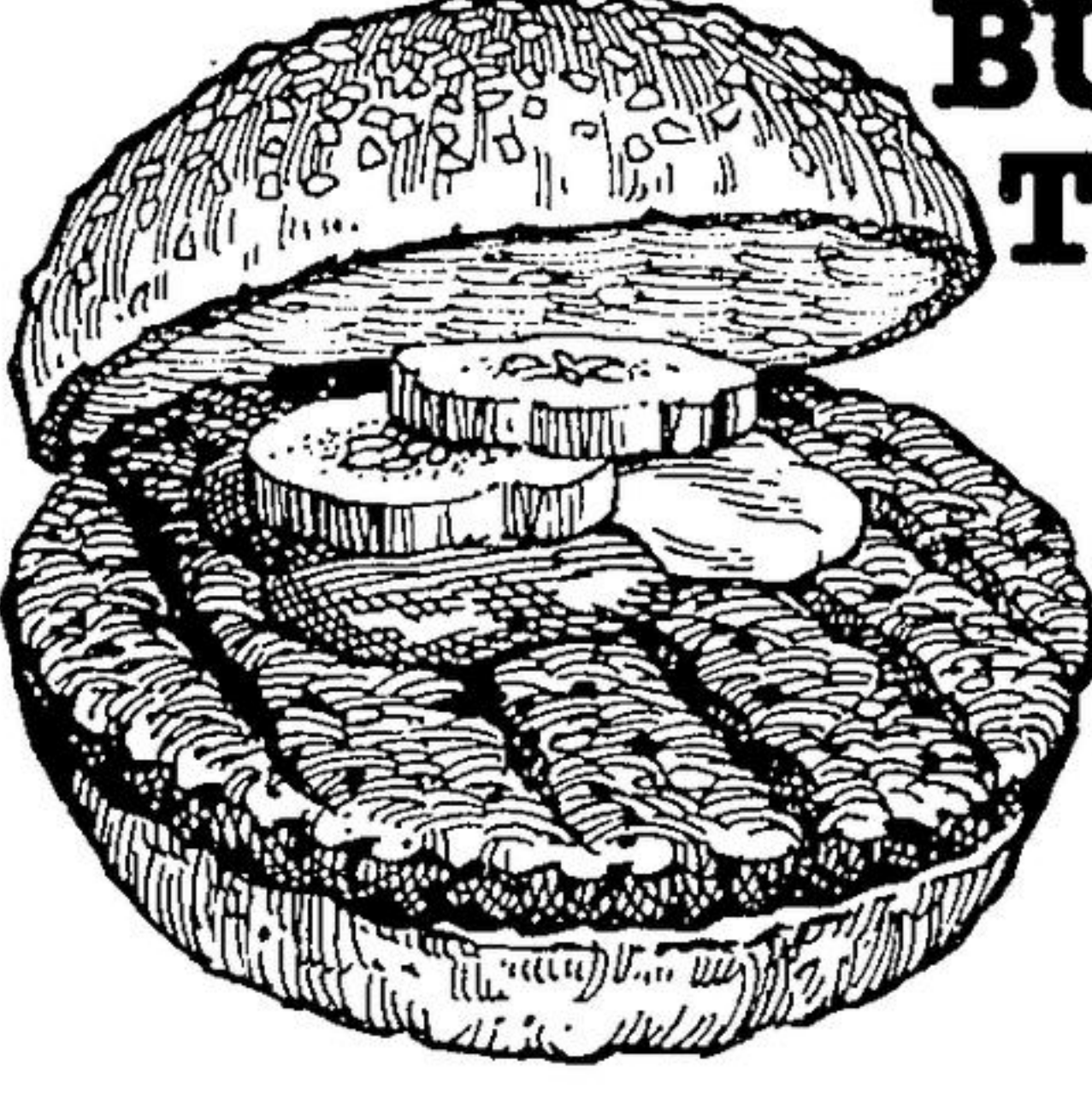
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