

Bid to ban shooting in Nassagaweya fails despite

By ROB KELLY

An angry and embittered Ron Higgins vowed to fight after his bid to ban shooting in rural Nassagaweya was spurned at Milton municipal council last Monday.

Roughly 100 people crammed into - indeed overflowed - the council chamber to unfold yet another chapter in a struggle that has endured over more than a decade.

As 12-year council veteran Bill Johnson, who is retiring, noted, "this is where I came in and this is where I'll go out."

Higgins said he had collected 600 signatures in Ward 3 on a petition asking that town council make it illegal to shoot guns in the only area of Milton where it is still a permitted activity. As has been the case in the numerous

other similar attempts made over the last decade or so, his paramount argument was that if the shooting doesn't stop soon, someone is going to get hurt or killed.

On the other side of the always emotional and often acrimonious debate over the years have been the hunting fraternity and a sizeable collection of farmers. They say hunting is one of the primary weapons to combat crop losses due to animal foraging, as well as being a tried and true method of keeping the lid on varmints and deer herd size.

Despite the fact he brought a large and vocal contingent of supporters with him to the council meeting, and had some outspoken allies among elected officials, Higgins faced an uphill battle

from the start. Town planning director Bob Zsadanyi, in whom Higgins was "very disappointed," recommended council maintain the status quo which allows for hunting in Nassagaweya.

In a move obviously aimed at appeasing the anti-shooting lobby, Zsadanyi also said the Town should ask provincial authorities to beef up their supervision of hunting in rural Milton.

In the end a slightly modified version of that plan passed in an 8-3 recorded vote that saw only Ward 3 councillors Bruce Attenborough and Bill Johnson, along with Ward 1 councillor Rick Day, voting against Zsadanyi's suggestions.

'Dodged the issue'
"They've dodged the issue

again," said Higgins after the five-hour marathon discussion had finally plodded to a vote. But the Nassagaweya activist warned that he still planned on blocking the four-day deer hunt in November with an end run around council. "I'm going to try and get a court order to stop the hunt."

There were three amendments to Zsadanyi's motion, all proposed by Councillor Les Laughren and all supported. They will enforce a prohibition on shooting near the hamlet of Moffat, just as gunfire is prohibited near the other two Ward 3 population centres of Brookville and Campbellville.

The crux of the friction between the two groups is growth - both residential growth in Ward

3 and, on the other side, alleged increases in animal populations that are said to plague farmers and even pose hazards for area residents.



Roughly 7,000 people live there now. It's the last enclave for relatively unrestricted hunting in Milton. As such, hunters cling to it fiercely.

But the new residents are often moving into previously undeveloped areas of the ward, and anti-shooting homeowners who appeared at council said they fear for the safety of their families, pets and property.

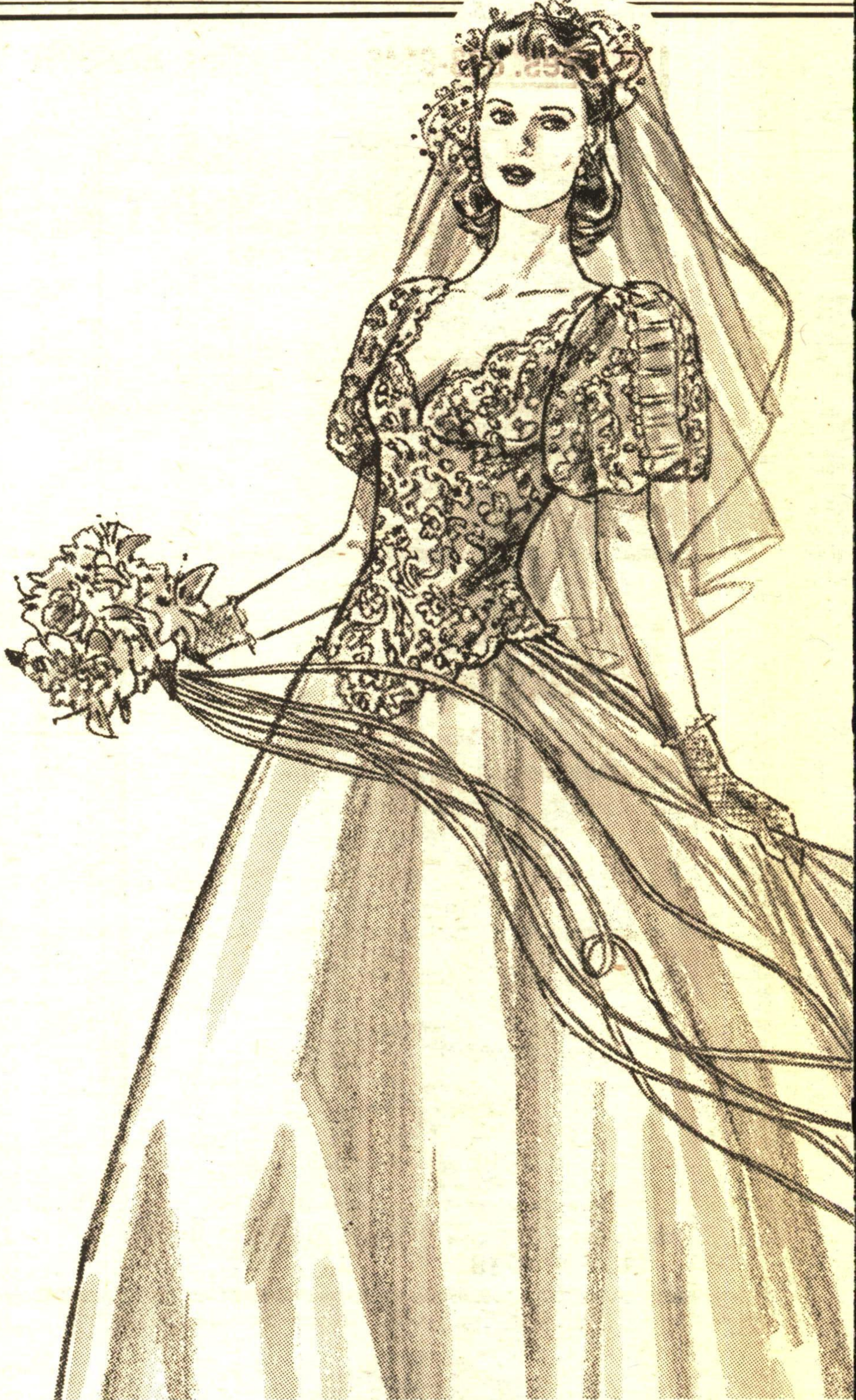


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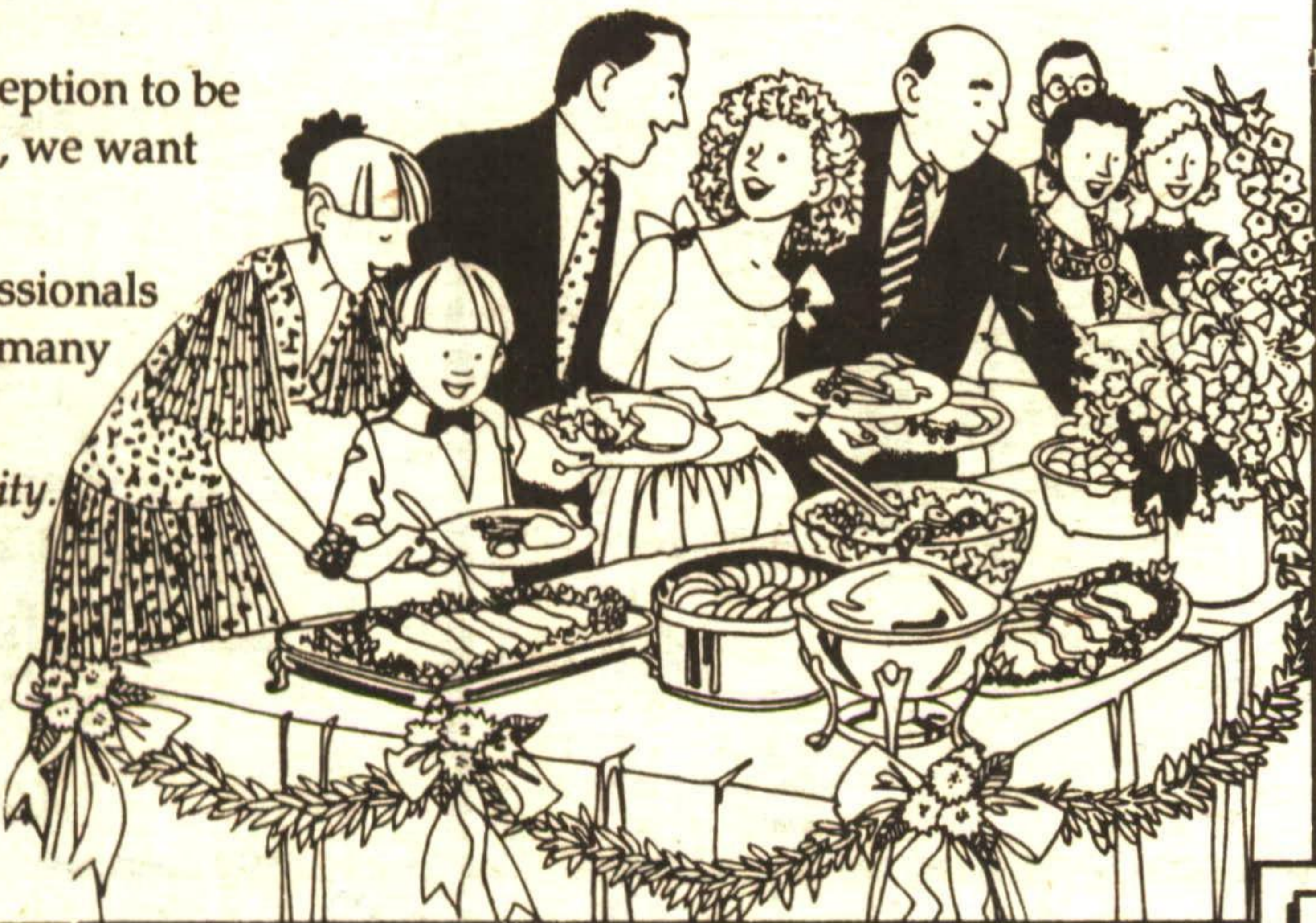
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