

Forum ignites angry debate

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"There was no needs analysis done, no working together," said Ciglen. "It's a one-sided wish list because unions want to increase their money and keep paying their salaries."

Ken Signoretti, executive vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labor, representing an 80,000 membership, questioned Ciglen's numbers.

"Where do you get the 93 per cent if it's supposedly all going to my salary?" sputtered Signoretti.

"They listen just like the government does, folks!" exploded Ciglen loudly. "They hear just what they want to hear."

Meeting chairman, Lois Fraser, jumped in to explain that the 93 per cent referred to by Ciglen had included education and administration. Ciglen's point had been that only 7 per cent of union dues support strike action.

Signoretti apologized and looked unhappy with the turn of events as frequent barbs were thrown in his direction.

Fraser then had to ask the forum to refrain from making questions and comments of a personal nature as several citizens became emotional, using accusatory sentences like "I know it's tough to imagine this from your cushy government job..."

"I would like not to have Mr. Signoretti attacked for how much he makes or where he gets his money from," interjected Fraser.

Forum panel member, Stephen Offer, MPP for Mississauga North attacked Bill 40, for changing the Labour Relations Board from "impartial arbiter to one tilted in favour of organized labor." He stated that "it is clear that this bill does not create any jobs," and that many people felt excluded from the consultative process.

"The changes to this bill are not directed to the big car industries," said Offer. "These changes are directed to the service centres, are directed to areas that have traditionally not been unionized...that don't have the capacity to survive service disruption."

Ken Signoretti, executive vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labor, representing an 80,000 membership, countered, "It's not in the interest of the labor movement or the unions to put people out of work."

Panel member, Don Eastman, the vice-president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and senior

manager of commercial research for Dofasco, called Bill 40 "a blatant abuse of personal rights." He cited the solution as painfully simple - a secret democratic ballot vote to decide union certification.

"Individual rights are lost to union leadership," agreed panel member Ted Arnott, MPP for Wellington and conservative party critic for tourism and small business.

In the audience, many citizens defended their lack of desire for labor reform.

"My employees are very happy and I take care of them," said one independent businessman. "And I don't need government legislation to tell me how to do it."

But NDP MPP Brad Ward, parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of Trade and Technology, stating repeatedly that "the old ways no longer work." Ward explained that reform is necessary now, even though Ontario

may be in the worst recession since the 1930's, because of the changing infrastructure of the workforce, in particular since the 1970's.

Ward claimed that the OLRA hasn't been significantly amended since 1975. The current labor law changes were executed after "a tremendous amount of consultation over a long period of time," said Ward.

The same citizen who questioned MPP Brad Ward previously asked which workforce had been consulted over the reform; the 70 per cent that are non-unionized or the 30 per cent that are.

Bill 40 will go into second reading in the Legislature beginning Monday. MPP Noel Duignan expects the reading to take four days. The Bill will then pass the second reading.

Following this Bill 40 will have five weeks of public hearings beginning July 27.

"The Bill will be law by Christmas," said Duignan.

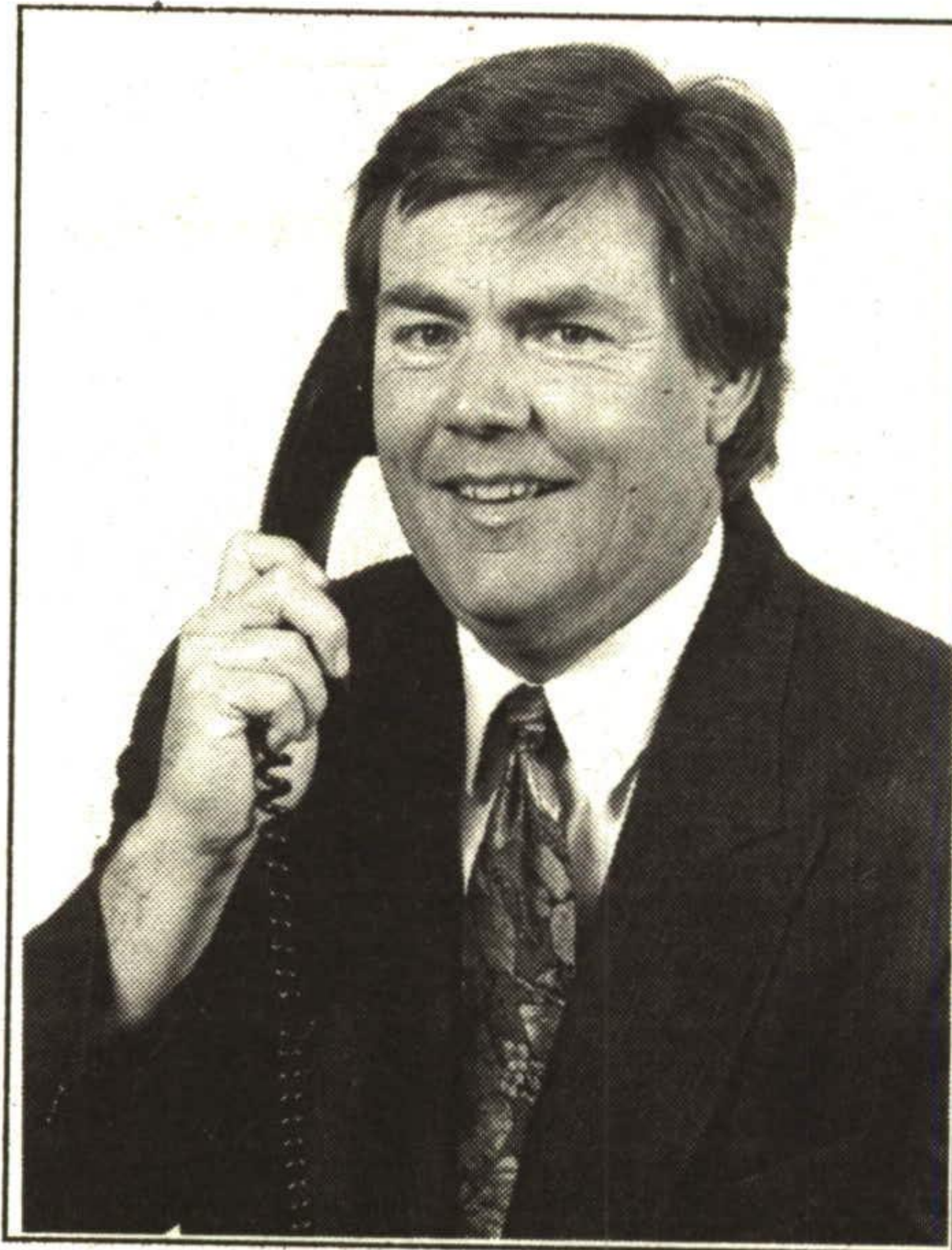
"There's no question, I'm on the government's side," said Duignan at the forum. "I will be supporting the legislation, whatever the final package is. I will be supporting it in the house."

Duignan's decision came in spite of the overwhelming trend of the forum, which scoffed at the OLRA reform.

"There is no doubt that the message to the government was that Halton Hills does not want the reform," said Terry Jackson, Chamber manager.



KEN SIGNORETTI



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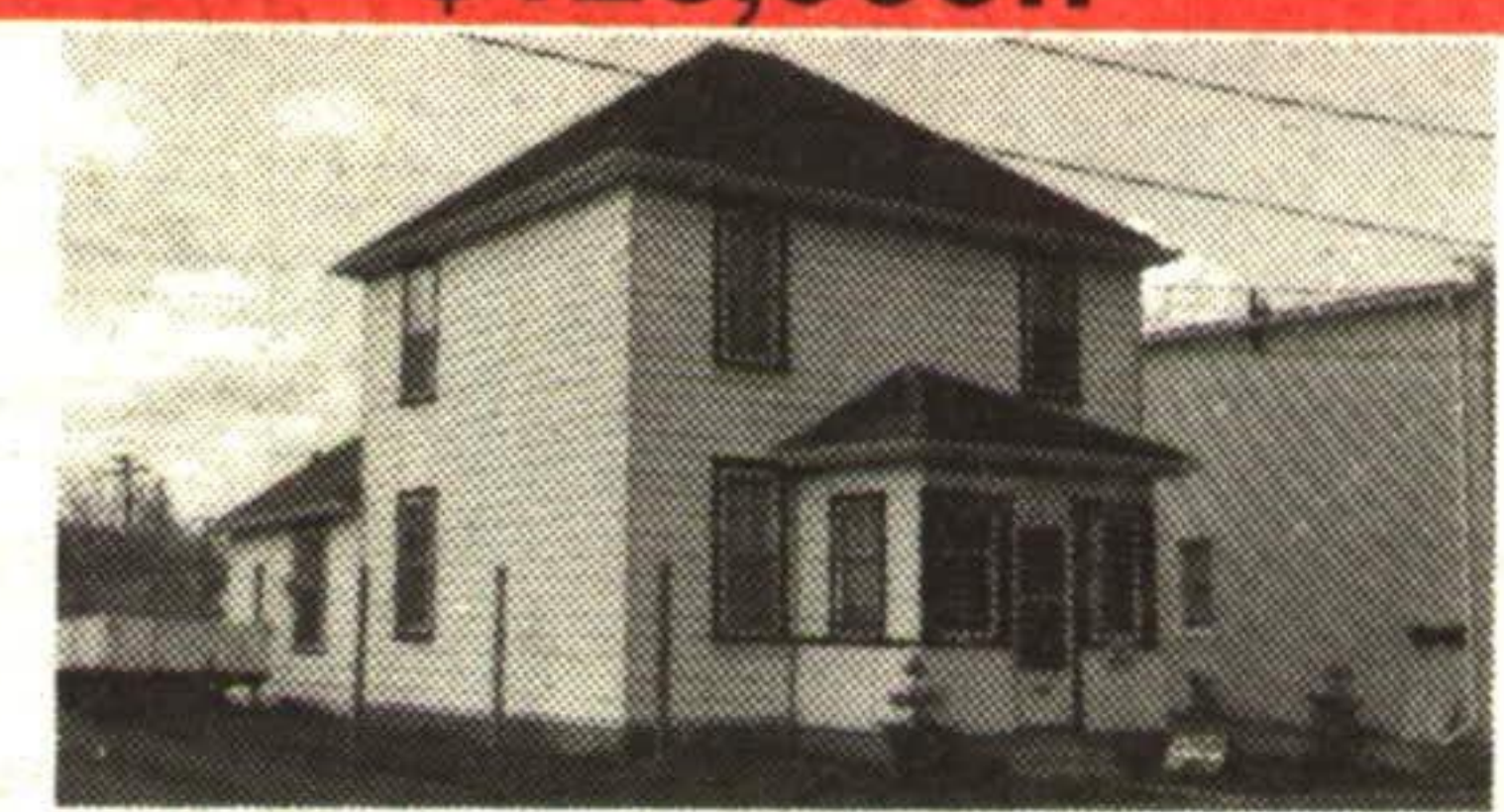
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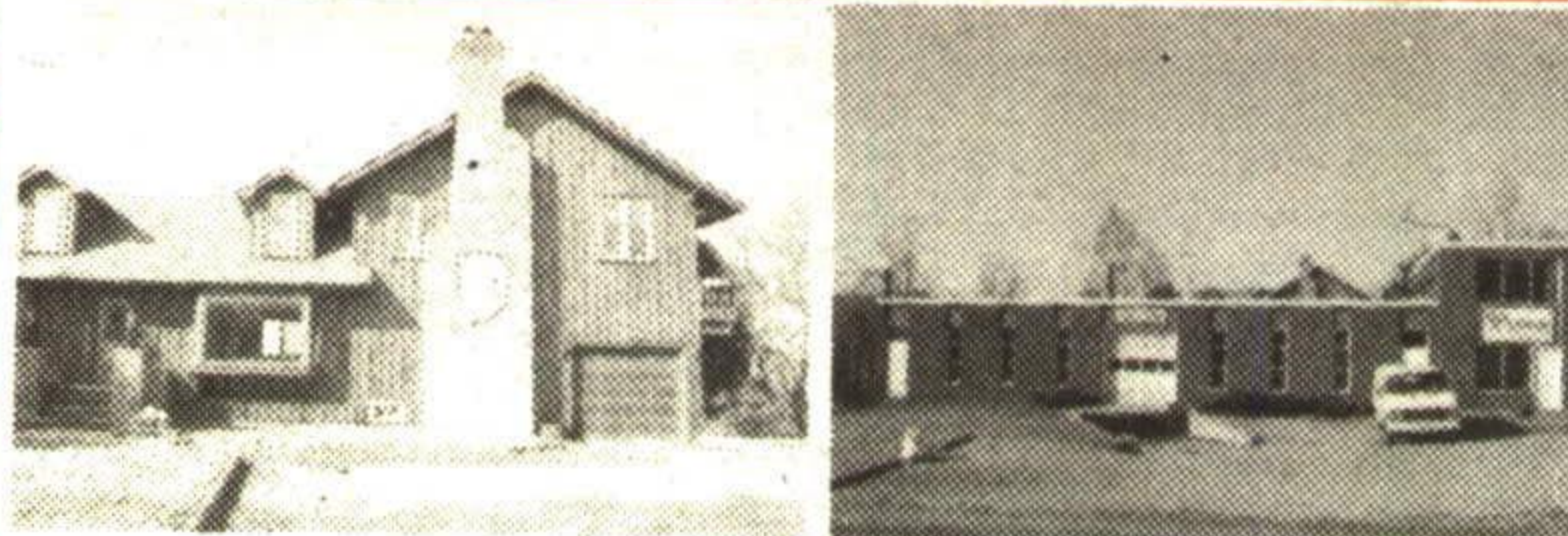
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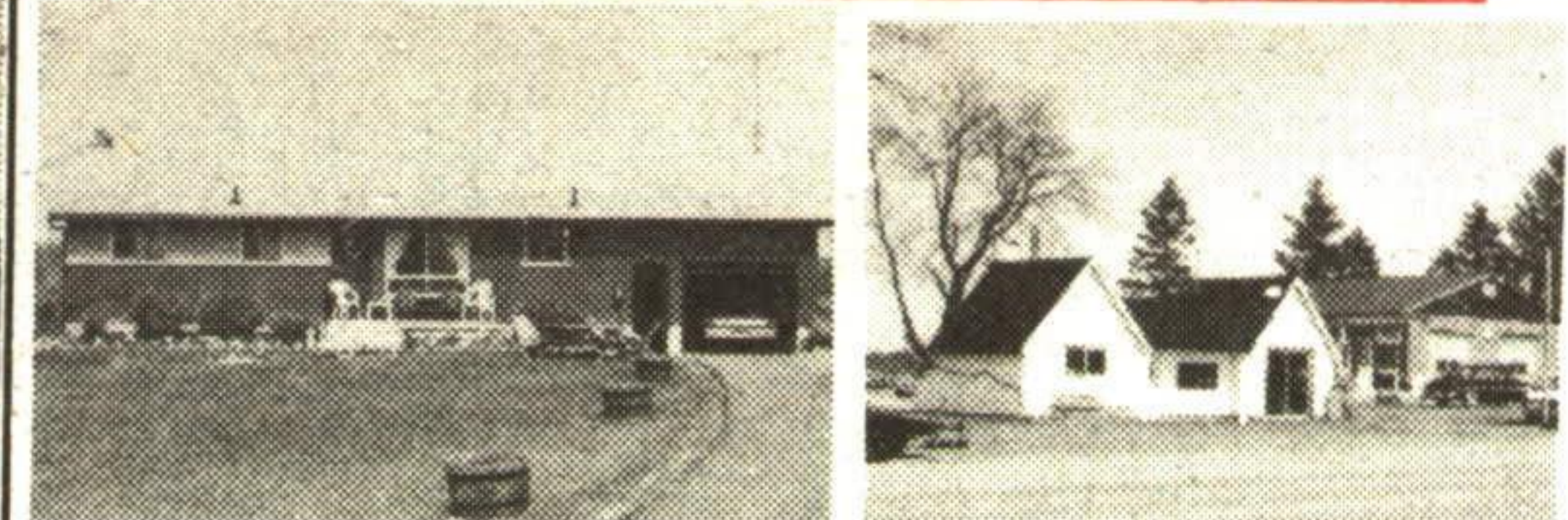
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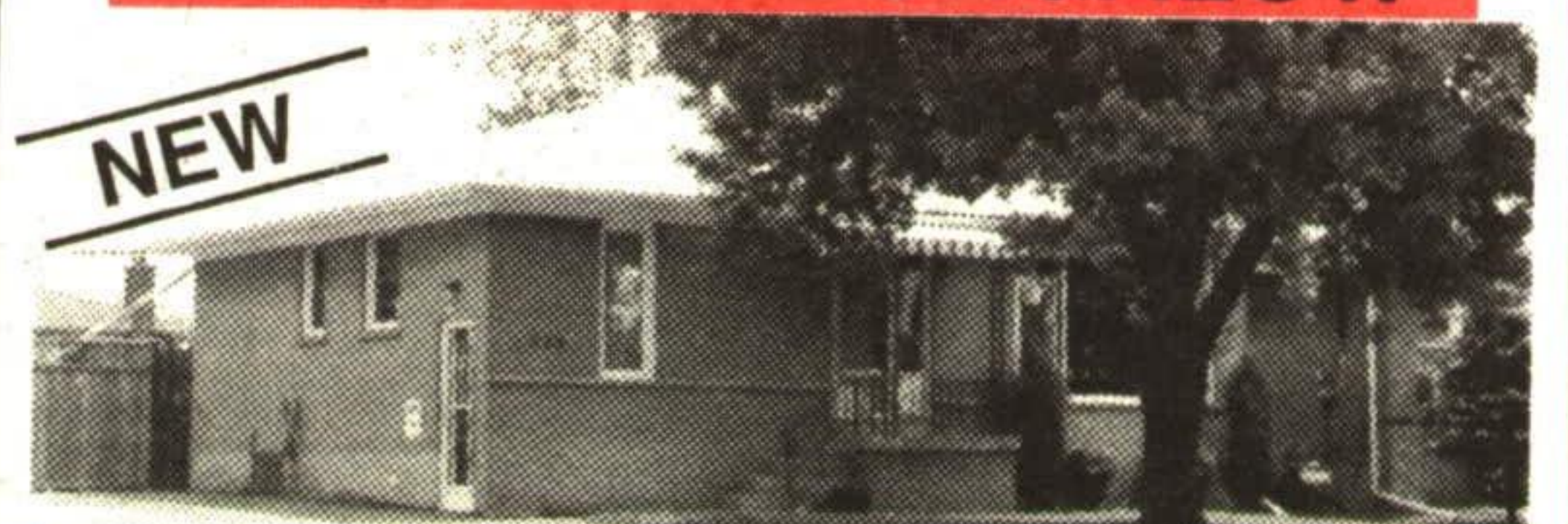
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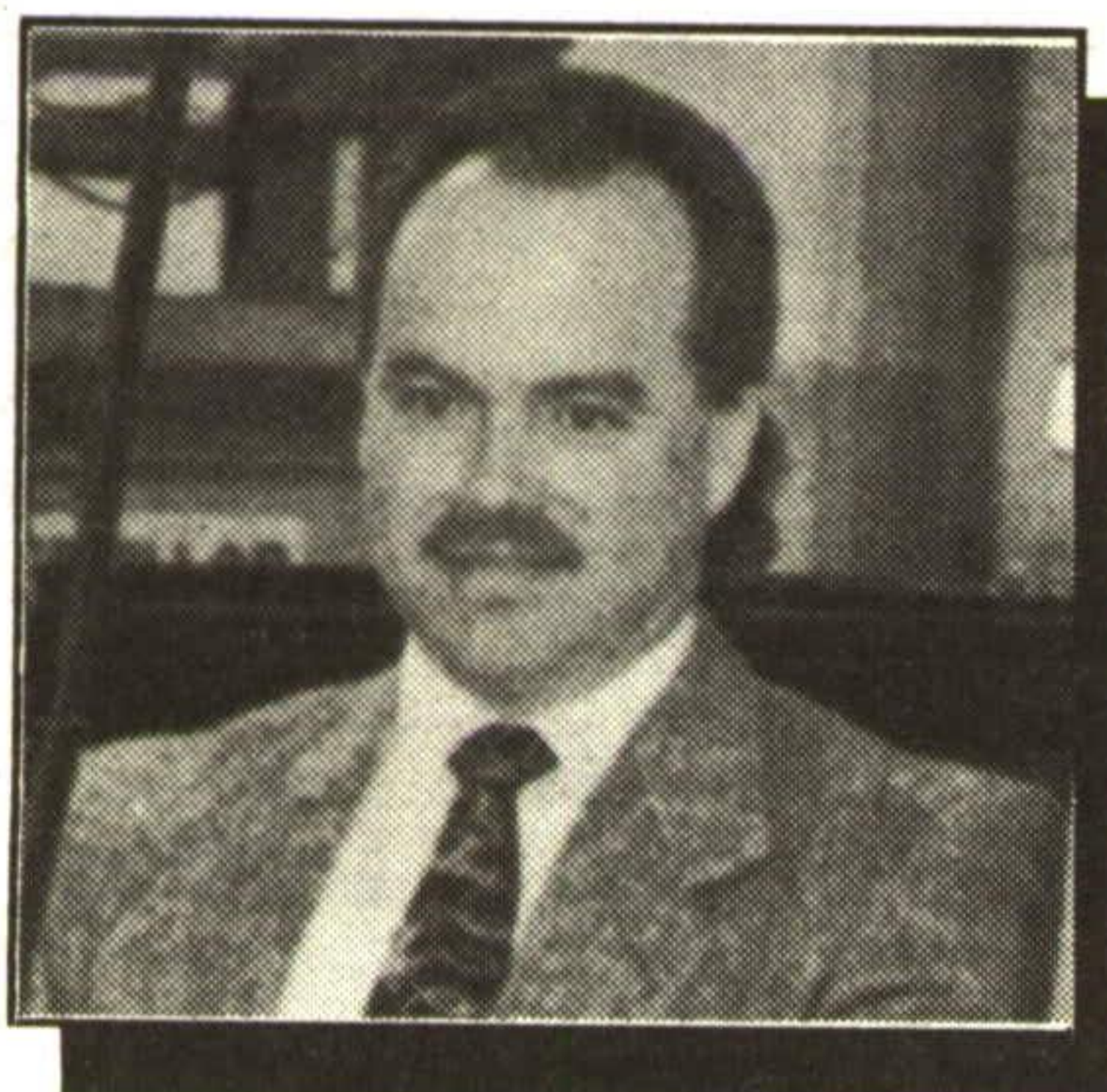


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