

Catholic teachers work-to-rule

By PAUL MITCHISON
Special to The Independent/Free Press

Extra-curricular activities for students in Halton's six Catholic high schools have been cancelled as teachers started a work-to-rule campaign Tuesday.

Una Mulder, interim head of the Halton secondary unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association, said teachers and the board met for 16 hours Feb. 17 but reached an impasse.

She said no further meetings have been scheduled, but the union is ready to meet at any time. Mulder said the decision to work-to-rule rather than strike was made by the general membership and the bargaining team.

Mulder said that although the 320 teachers will not participate in extra-curricular activities they will carry on their full teaching duties and the school day will not be interrupted.

The issue behind the work-to-rule job action may be whether 15 teachers should be laid off.

Fred Sweeney, director of the Halton Catholic Board, says the entire issue boils down to how many teachers the board can keep, and still pay seniority increases (called increments worth \$297,000), which were held back during the social contract.

And he says that the financial equivalent of about 15 teaching positions must be eliminated to pay for wage increases due next year, when the wage freezes are lifted and the social contract expires. That would also mean larger class sizes for the remaining teachers.

Halton Catholic is a growth board, which would normally need to hire 10 to 15 teachers for next September, for an extra 250 students. The need to reduce by 15 positions already takes into account not hiring the extra teachers.

"But we can't just not hire the teachers, we also have to increase the class size and increase the pupil-teacher ratio," said Sweeney. "All we're saying (to the teachers) is come up with some kind of offsetting payment to the board, so that we can come up with those increments."

At a Tuesday night picket of the board offices by most of the 320 teachers in the bargaining unit, spokesperson Una Mulder said the frustration level among teachers, students and parents is high.

"This is not for money, there's no money involved in this. We're looking at maintaining class sizes," she said. "That involves the learning conditions of the kids as well as the working conditions of the teachers."

Public teachers won't cross line

Public school teachers have been instructed by their union not to do any work normally done by Catholic teachers.

Extra-curricular activities for students in Halton's six Catholic high schools have been cancelled as Catholic teachers started a work-to-rule campaign Tuesday.

High school teachers in the Halton public school system have been instructed by their own association not to do work which would have been done by Catholic teachers, said Sally Rewbotham, president of the association representing Halton Secondary Teachers Association.

Another action being taken by organized teachers during the labor dispute is something called "a pink-listing" of the Halton Catholic board, during which teachers are being told not to apply for jobs. If they do, they risk sanctions by the federation.

"If you as a teacher violate a pink-listing, then you've undermined

Sweeney said "the board is willing to resume negotiations with the teachers' bargaining unit and pursue realistic proposals which would lead to a contract settlement that is fair and equitable to the board's students, parents, teachers and ratepayers."

However, there doesn't appear to be any quick settlement in sight, according to Sweeney, unless the teachers back down somewhat.

"The mediator (Dr. Gene Swimmer, an associate professor of public administration at Carleton University) told us (on Friday) not to call him back until one side or the other is prepared to move on any of these issues," said Sweeney. "At this point in time our position is quite clear and it's the position we took Friday evening with the mediator."

your colleagues ... that's a permanent mark, and people tend to remember those things for a long, long time."

A work-to-rule move by the teachers has effected extra curricular activities.

Catholic schools which have qualified for playoffs have had to forfeit their games and thus, be eliminated from further playoff action.

Several students and parents expressed frustration at the board's Tuesday meeting, after which the board approved a recommendation to request that the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECT) Halton Secondary Unit affiliate immediately postpone its work-to-rule sanction until after the Sears Drama Festival, and the volleyball, hockey and basketball playoffs are completed.

This request was sent to the OECT Halton Secondary Unit on Wednesday, February 22.

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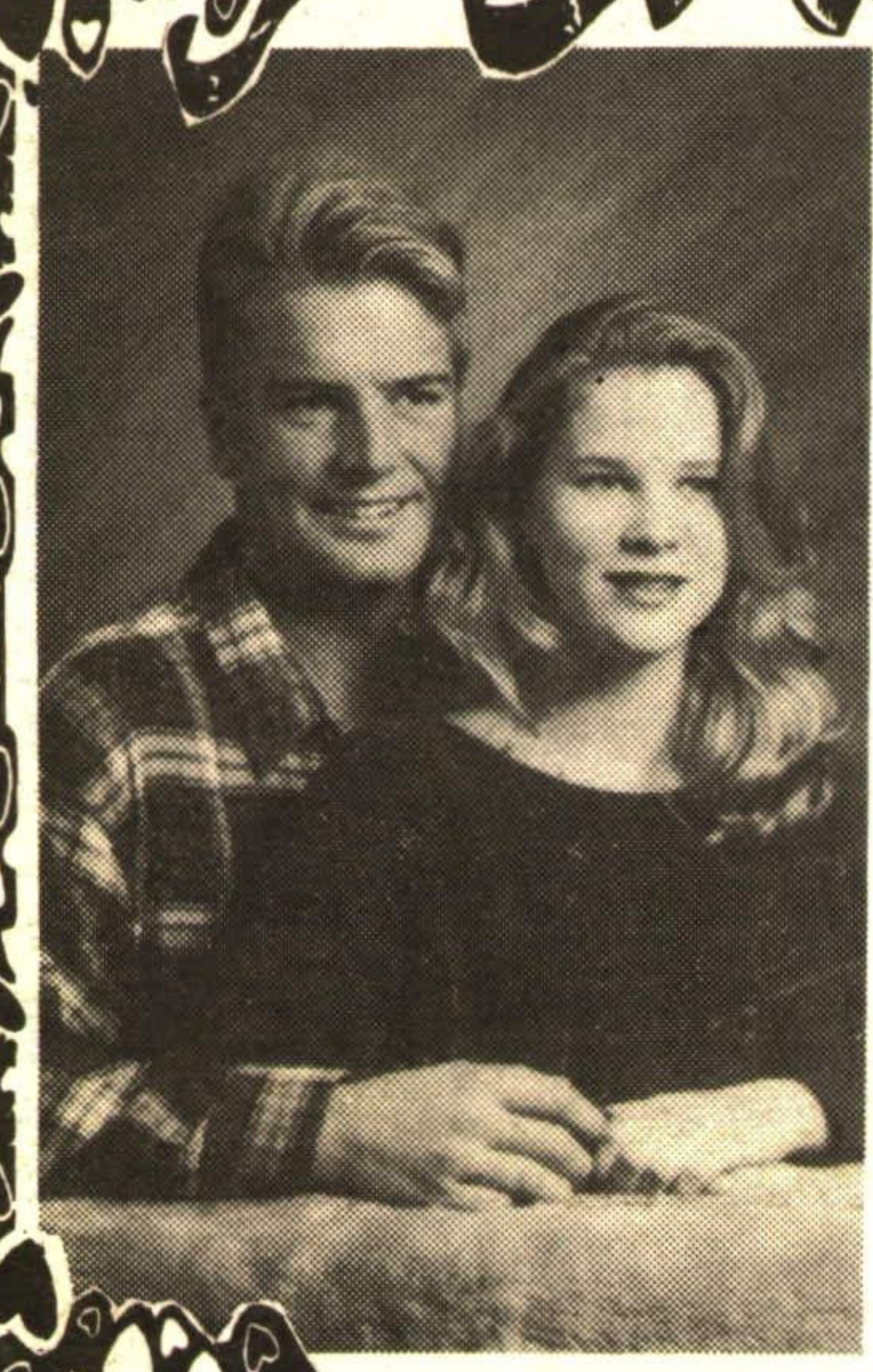
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