

The Independent & Free Press

Weekend Edition

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Sad display

Wasn't that a lovely show of solidarity by Halton public secondary school teachers this past Thursday? Yes, we know, they only did it "for the kids".

We've said it before and we'll say it until we're blue in the face: No one in this education dispute— not the school boards, not the government and not the teachers— have acted in the best interests of the students.

How can any of them make this absurd claim when students, especially those in their final year of high school, are in danger of losing scholarships and opportunities for post-secondary education?

Do local secondary school teachers truly believe that calling a one-day strike at all 17 Halton high schools was "in the best interests of the students"? Let's be honest folks, it was in the teachers' best interests and no one else's— especially when they gave parents and the school board such short notice they'd be striking.

According to OSSTF president Earl Manners the rotating strikes are the teachers' way of sending school boards a message that teachers want an agreement.

Who doesn't? That's why negotiations are continuing. But that fact was apparently lost on teachers Thursday who went public with contentious negotiation issues by handing out a union-sanctioned leaflet that was little more than propaganda.

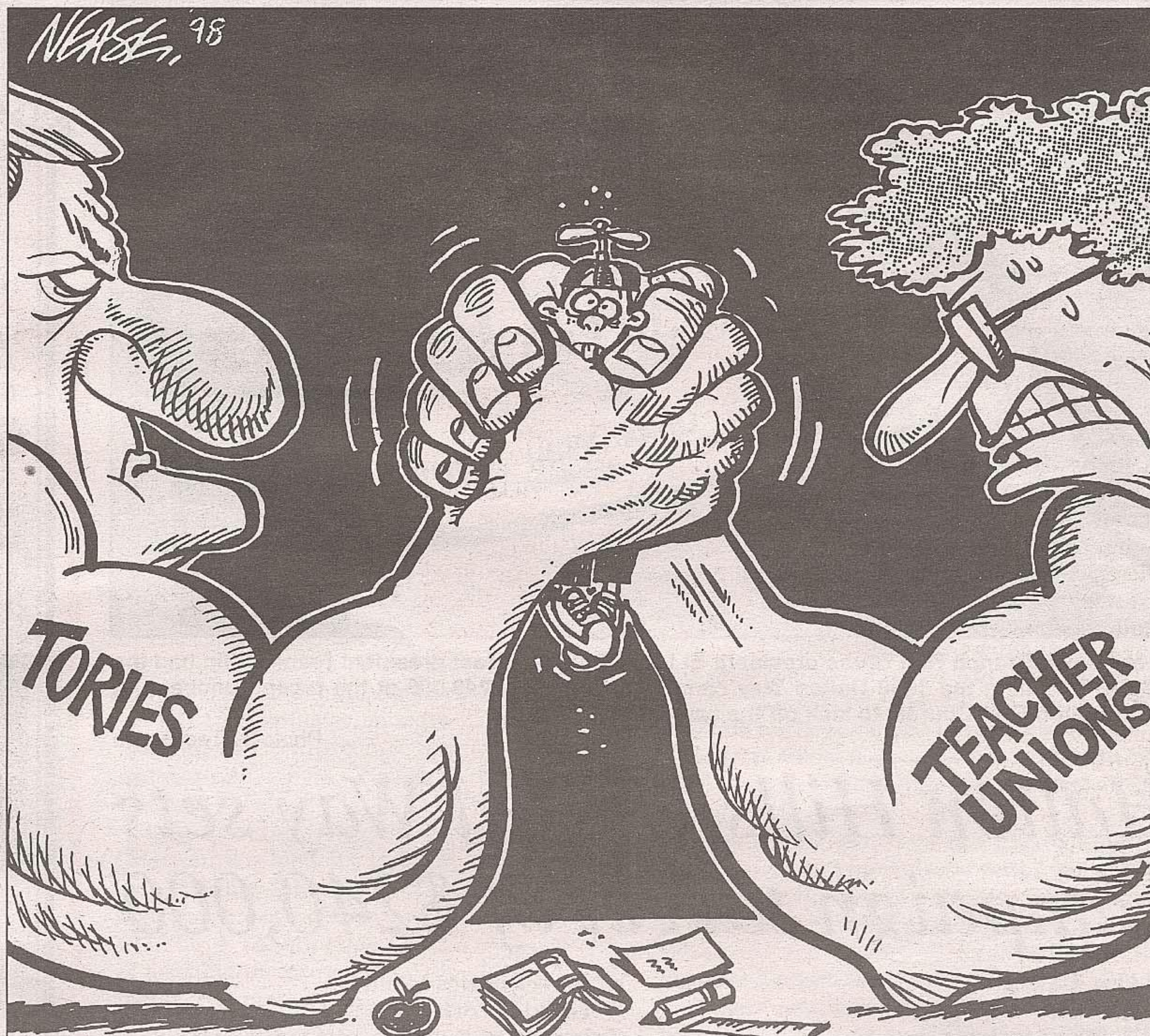
To hear the teachers talk, the extra class they are being asked to teach— for one semester only remember— is so debilitating they are suffering health problems and are not being able to perform at their best.

Puh-leeze! There have only been 23 school days since school started Sept. 8 and teachers have refused all extra-curricular work. So how, pray tell, can they be suffering from overwork? Was their eight-week summer vacation that taxing?

The problem with this labor dispute— as in any labor dispute— is that there are two distinct sides to the story with the truth hidden somewhere in the middle.

What is clear, is that this is a battle between a group of unions opposed to real change and a government that believes change is vital to Ontario's education system.

The students are the last ones anyone is thinking of and Thursday's teacher walkabout proved that.



Complacency rules in Ontario's education system

Dear editor,

An eminent American philosopher, scholar, author and Unitarian minister once said, "The teaching of politics is that the Government, which was set for protection and comfort of all good citizens, becomes the principal obstruction and nuisance with which we have to contend... The cheat and bully and malefactor we meet everywhere is the Government."

Well, I think that most of the enlightened of us will agree with that, however, in the case of the ongoing war between Ontario teachers and Tories, Emerson's 1860 journal entry may not necessarily apply.

I think it's pretty obvious the Tories are hell-bent of nullifying unionism and the teachers' union is no exception. But is that a bad thing?

We know that the original idea of a union was to protect the rights of workers against the unscrupulous employer (we have seen enough movies on the subject).

I was a teacher in the private sector for 28 years. I have post-secondary education and hold professional status in two guilds and a number of associations.

Last year I became what is termed in the educational system an "EA" - Educational Assistant. There's no union there, the pay stinks, there's no benefits and whatever qualifications you possess mean nothing. I don't know who's responsible for what goes on in those "hollow halls of academia" but if it happened in the non-union environment of private training, heads would roll fast and furious.

Letter of the day

Service with a smile

Dear editor,

I watched with great interest last Saturday a diligent Georgetown Independent & Free Press carrier delivering our free paper in the pouring rain. She had a smile on her face, no jacket, and was trying desperately to not get any of those papers wet.

It reminded me to ensure I tipped the next time I received my paper. Most of us give the paid publication carriers a gratuity, how on earth could I forget the person who delivers a free press?

Perhaps this may remind a few readers what I have previously taken for granted: a free, hand-delivered newspaper that I look forward to reading twice weekly.

Sandra Moravac,
Georgetown

Most of us have never seen the educational systems of countries, such as Germany, so it is very easy to get comfortable with the news propaganda that Canada is a leader in education. There, as in other established countries, training of students is shared by both teachers and "in the field professionals".

The teachers take care of the basics and the professionals handle the specifics they are adept at. If these people who are called EAs were allowed to proceed based on their various areas of expertise, maybe kids, like my son

who will be graduating in 1999, would be able to read the directions on a Campbell's soup can and write his name legibly.

If we as parents had to dole out a check each month for our child's education (instead of just watching it disappear into thin air on our taxes) we'd want the head of the person responsible on a platter; in the private sector you'd get it.

We are a complacent bunch here in Ontario and believe me, the boards of education and the Tories are well aware of that.

David Franklyn

Our Readers Write

The Independent & Free Press welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. All letters must be signed and include an address and a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for content and length and can be mailed, delivered to our office address at 211 Armstrong Ave., Georgetown, Ont., L7G 4X5, faxed to us at (905) 873-0398 or e-mailed to: independent.freepress@aztec-net.com