

# Union president's firing stirs controversy at Countryside

Countryside, the group home for mentally retarded adults at Hornby, became a storm centre for the third time in four months this week, when Nellie Pitt of Acton, president of the seven-member counsellors' union, was fired.

Mrs. Pitt, who is claiming wrongful dismissal and has protested to the Canadian Labor Congress, has been a counsellor at the Hornby home for the past two years. She was named president of the union when it was formed in April of this year.

A complaint may also be lodged with the Canadian Labor Relations Board over, the firing.

But Edith Hilfman of Acton, president of the North Halton Association for the Mentally Retarded which administers Countryside in conjunction with the provincial government, told this newspaper Mrs. Pitt's firing was legitimate and legally done. Mrs. Pitt was given three warnings, in writing — one by former director of the home Robert Bilodeau and two by acting director Jennie Kuiken who replaced Bilodeau in May.

Mrs. Pitt was officially suspended on Aug. 4 by the acting director, and the NHAMR Board of Directors met Tuesday evening of last week and confirmed Mrs. Kuiken's decision to fire Mrs. Pitt, said Mrs. Hilfman.

It was Mrs. Hilfman who told Mrs. Pitt on Wednesday morning, Aug. 16, that she was fired, on the recommendation of Mrs. Kuiken, and with the approval of the Board. Mrs. Hilfman said "interference with management" was the reason given.

Mrs. Pitt is 49. She had been one of the negotiators representing the seven residence counsellors who were negotiating with the Board for the counsellors' first contract.

The Countryside union is believed to be one of the smallest independent unions in Canada.

Mrs. Hilfman said it appears that since the firing Wednesday, Mrs. Pitt has been waging a campaign for re-instatement, via the news media. She said she had received several calls from newspapers and radio stations who were contacted by Mrs. Pitt.

The Board chairman said there is "absolutely no connection" between the May resignation of Countryside director Bob Bilodeau and Mrs. Pitt's firing. "They are two very different things," she added.

Bilodeau, Director at the group home for two and a half years, has since been charged with 14 counts of fraud, by Halton Regional Police. He is due for his first appearance in Provincial Court in Milton on Monday morning of next week.

Charges were laid Aug. 3 by Halton Regional Police following a lengthy investigation. Bilodeau is charged with misappropriation of over \$5,000 from the residents' monthly spending money.

## No insurance

### \$12,000 damage

An uninsured driver tallied up a bill of \$12,000 after smashing into three new trucks on display at North End Datsun on Monday evening.

Geoffrey McLaren, 33, from Waterdown was northbound on Martin St9 when he lost control of his car and sped across the southbound lane of Martin St.

Narrowly missing a ditch, the vehicle tore through a heavy wire fence, coming to rest in the middle of three parked 1978 Datsun trucks.

Mr. McLaren escaped with minimal injury.

Damage to the three display vehicles is estimated at \$11,000—plus another \$800 for his own 1973 Oldsmobile.

allowances. Mrs. Hilfman said the Board and union are in the middle of what she termed "favorable" negotiations over the contract right now. The Board has never fought the introduction of a union at Countryside, she assured this newspaper — "we didn't fight

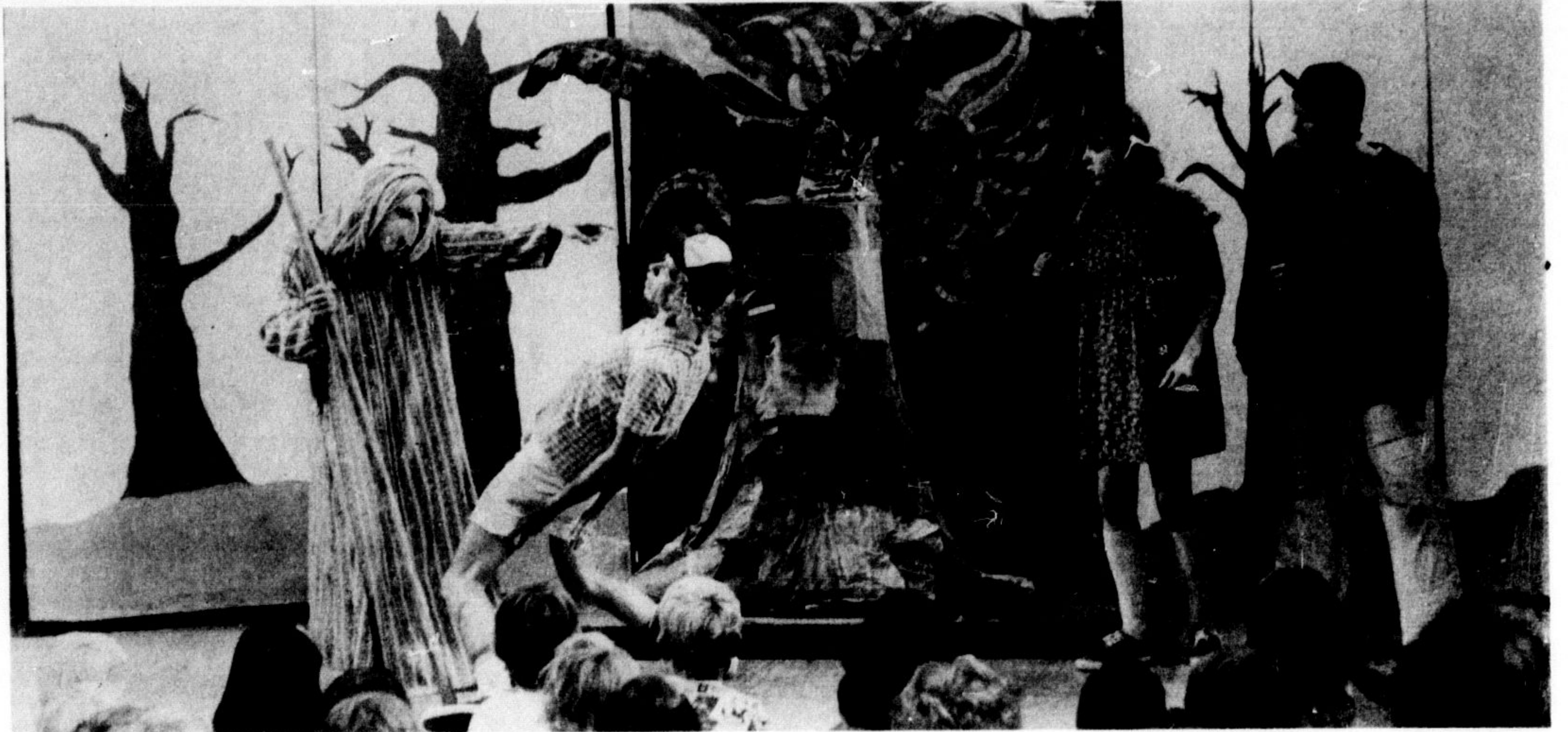
it at all, we feel unions can work both ways."

The negotiators are meeting again tonight (Wednesday). The union is expected to name a replacement on the negotiating team for Mrs. Pitt.

The first controversy at Countryside this year in-

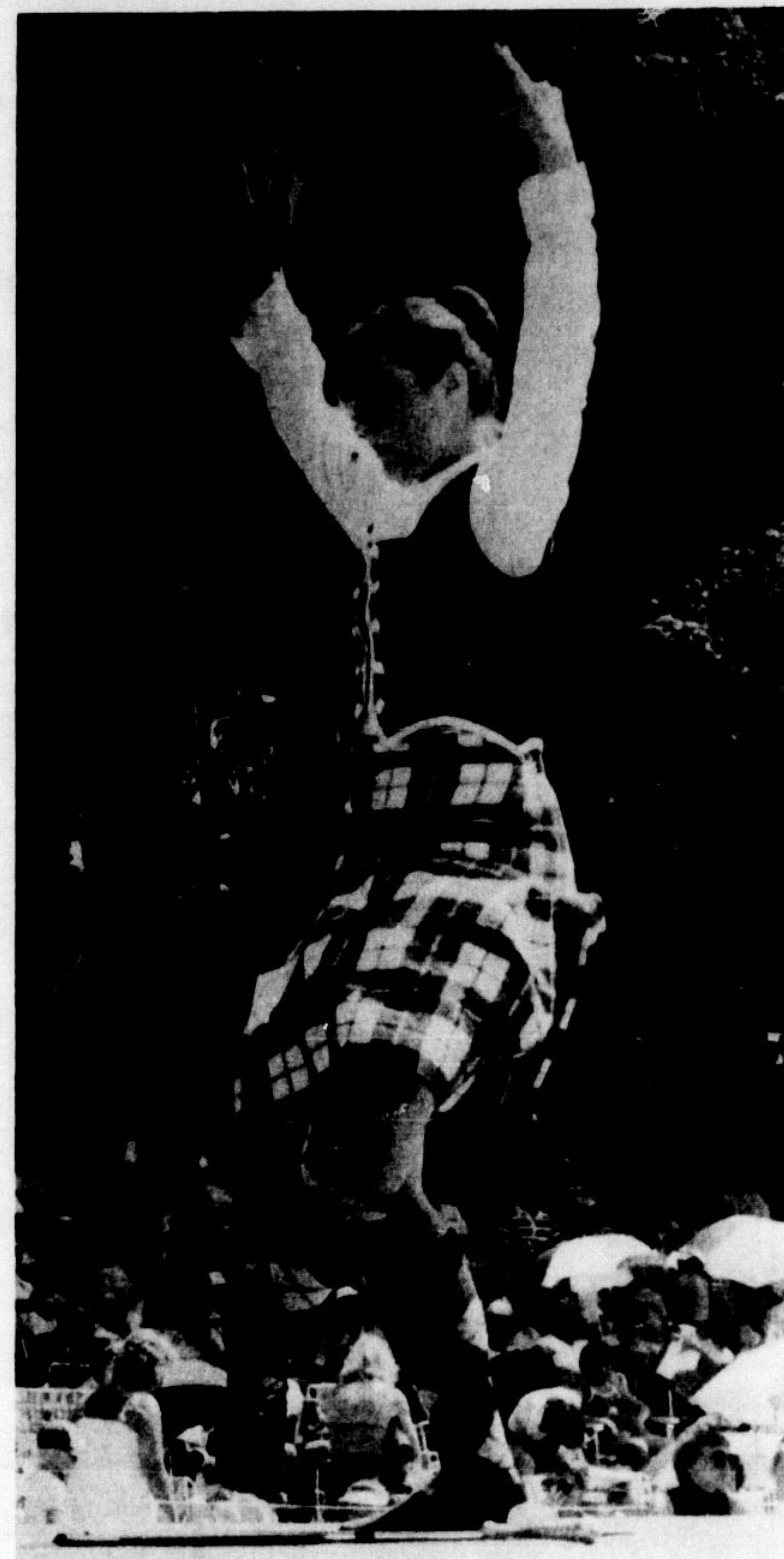
involved the dismissal of Alice Maybanks of Georgetown, a residence counsellor who was let go just after her 13-week probationary period ended. Mrs. Maybanks publicly complained that she was dismissed because she refused to join the union, and because of a personality clash with Mrs. Pitt. The Board denied this, however, claiming Mrs. Maybanks was let go at the end of her probationary period because she did not fit in with the residents and staff.

Countryside houses 16 mentally retarded adults from the North Halton area. It is supported by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and by the NHAMR through its annual Flowers of Hope and other fund-raising appeals in the North Halton area. It is affiliated with ARC workshop at Hornby, where several Countryside residents work.



KEEPER OF LAND of Never Mind threatens the Bird Boy while Angela and Max (the "Jello Fellow") and audience of children watch in horror. The Bird Boy, a presentation of Theatre Max of Guelph, attracted a large crowd. After the

performance members of the cast answered questions from the children. Milton Library has been running special features for children throughout the summer.



SANDY COUPER of Britannia Road, Milton, was among the hundreds of Scottish dancers who competed for prizes in the Fergus Highland Games.



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