

Teachers — Board agree to use mediator

by Eric Elstone
Halton Board of Education and 78 per cent of its high school teachers hit upon a new strategy to beat the seven-month-long contract dispute. They're going to let Martin do it.

The Martin in this case is Martin Teplitsky, a lawyer, who is on the receiving end of all the outstanding issues between the secondary school teachers and the Halton board.

Mr. Teplitsky is to be mediator-arbitrator concerning the wages, working conditions, benefits and retirement gratuity for the 1979-80 contract. He is also to handle the

whole package for next year's contract.

Spokesmen for both sides believe two months will pass prior to a resolution. Meanwhile teachers will continue to work without a contract, as they have since August.

The cost of Mr. Teplitsky's fee is to be split between the board and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

Halton Trustees voted Thursday to accept the recommendations of their salary committee. They gave Mr. Teplitsky the power to determine which issues are outstanding. The 16 to 20

trustees present—all the Milton trustees and one from Burlington were absent—voted unanimously to send the matter to arbitration.

The vote, according to board spokesman, Trustee Cam Jackson, is indicative of the board's willingness to solve the dispute without a teachers' strike.

Most Halton high school teachers—895 of 1,147 who cast ballots—also agreed to binding mediation-arbitration. There were 245 teachers opposed. Seven ballots were spoiled.

Under mediation-arbitration Mr. Teplitsky will try, again, to persuade

the sides through one half of the process, mediation, to come to an agreement. Under the other part of the process, arbitration, he can name the terms of a settlement. Those terms stick under law.

Mr. Teplitsky succeeded in getting the two sides to agree to consider mediation-arbitration, a process resisted by teachers, during 14 hours of mediation in Toronto a couple of weeks ago. An earlier attempt at mediation failed when Mr. Teplitsky found "serious differences of principle separating the parties on each of the major items in dispute."

OSSTF President Ron Ness said that while teachers oppose mediation-arbitration they are prepared to accept it because the process will meet their contractual concerns. A better way to reach a settlement would be through open talks between the parties, he said.

Sending the contract dispute to mediation-arbitration was "The only responsible route to take," according to Acton-Esqueing trustee Betty Fisher. Georgetown Trustee Barry Shephard said "it's probably the best way out for both parties."

Mr. Shephard has,

since January, been a member of the board's salary committee. Though not a member of the sub-committee dealing with teachers, he was at the meeting which saw Mr. Teplitsky urge the parties accept mediation-arbitration.

The negotiations by the board, he said, he believed were conducted fairly. "I'm thankful we can all avoid a strike."

In an earlier vote teachers delivered a 93.5 per cent strike mandate to their OSSTF representatives.

"If the two parties can settle, I think it is healthier for board-staff relations," observed Trustee Fisher. Mrs. Fisher is chairman of Halton's staff-board standing committee.

"Anytime you've disputes of this length (seven months), it no doubt affects morale of the staff. Now that the matter has gone to arbitration, we'll be able to

get our minds back to the kids," said Mrs. Fisher.

OSSTF President Ness said at a press conference after Thursday's special board meeting in Burlington: "Clearly there are relationship problems with the board."

"I don't think the staff-board relations are as critical," said Trustee Fisher, "as at other boards. I hope things will settle down and get back to normal."

Mr. Shephard said: "If there are real morale problems in the teachers' ranks, that concerns me. I hope the rank and file can take this without it affecting their morale."

Both trustees indicated a hope the negotiation process will be strengthened with the review of provincial legislation covering such matters that is underway.

One of the trustees absent for the vote was Burlington's Fred Arm-

itage who earlier was critical of teachers' expectations for retirement gratuity. Mr. Armitage is one of those trustees who believes the gratuity has outlived its usefulness. He stressed that if the board was to finance retirement gratuities properly it would, this year, have to add another million dollars to its \$404 million budget.

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Region budget discussion today expected to be donnybrook

By Jim Robinson
Debate began this morning on the 1980 Halton Regional Council budget which will be the largest in history and probably will reflect the largest percentage increase since the switch to regionalism six years ago.

Already the battle lines have been formed between those prepared to accept the preliminary budget figures and those who want to cut the proposed budget back drastically.

Councillor Mac Anderson, chairman of

the Administration and Finance Committee, a committee which is responsible for recommending all fiscal spending to council, has already warned he will lead the fight to shrink the 1980 operating budget.

Although the object had been not to exceed the 1979 budget by more than eight per cent, the current increase is pegged at about 19.8 per cent. With the 1979 operating budget at \$34 million, it means the 1980 budget, if approved as is, will top the \$40 million

mark.

Mr. Anderson told Wednesday's regular council meeting he is not prepared to send a 20 per cent taxation increase on to the ratepayers.

"I want to say here and now that I am prepared to go back to square one on this budget."

"We've already been conned on the grants," he said, intimating the 20 per cent proposed increase may also be far more than is necessary.

When councillors meet today for a full-day session, Treasurer Don Farmer will also be in-

roducing the 1980 provincial equalization factors which could have a significant bearing on the final budget outcome. These factors provide a formula for assistance and are extremely complicated—so complicated in fact, that their issuance to municipalities has already been delayed once.

Also bearing on the minds of councillors will be certain inconsistencies which have cropped up during the budget debates.

These involve the deliberation on the regional grants to charitable groups in Halton. In some cases

groups like the Salvation Army have been totally denied funding; while in others, the guideline eight per cent increase limit has been exceeded. This is particularly true in the case of the Halton Children's Aid Society which got a 25 per cent increase, even though there were warnings from the Chief Administrative Officer this move was inconsistent with stated grant guidelines.

What is certain is that two distinct camps exist at Region Council, and today's debates will probably see the most spirited exchanges of dialogue yet in Halton Region headquarters.



Making the rounds. Corrections Minister Gordon Walker paid a visit to Maplehurst Correctional Centre Tuesday, April 2. Wood cutting is one of the newest projects undertaken by inmates.

Correction Minister visits Maplehurst

By Linda Kirby
Maplehurst inmates will be cutting wood to be sold to firewood concessionaires in a move to cut costs at the medium-security institution.

Allan Roberts, superintendent of Maplehurst, made the announcement last Tuesday during a visit by Ontario Corrections Minister Gordon Walker to the correctional centre.

Mr. Walker was inspecting inmate work programs following his announcement two weeks earlier that inmates across the province will be growing vegetables,

making clothing and building tools in an effort to cut costs and make jails as self-sufficient as possible.

Maplehurst inmates are now clearing a 10-acre wooded area in Elliot Tract near Acton. The wood is hauled to Maplehurst where it is chopped and stacked, ready to be sold.

Mr. Roberts said soft wood will be given to the province for use as firewood in public parks, while hard wood will be sold to concessionaires.

Between 20 and 30 inmates are expected to be employed in the program. They will not

be paid, said Mr. Roberts, despite the fact the institution expects to make money on the project.

"Money is not the objective," said Mr. Roberts, adding the program provides inmates with work and is a means of cutting expenses at the institution.

Inmates now work at a variety of community projects as well as jobs in the laundry room and kitchen at Maplehurst.

Two large vegetable gardens will also be cultivated this year by inmates.

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