

Trustees have to pay their own legal bills

By **TIM WHITNELL**
Special to *The Champion*

Public school supporters will not be asked to foot the bill for legal expenses incurred by five Halton Board of Education trustees.

Trustees — other than the five in question — voted 7-4 not to reimburse the quintet to the tune of \$6,919.25 each. This represents the individual bills run up by board Chair Linda Glover, and trustees Flo Belford (Milton) Joe Pavelka, Ethel Gardiner and Penny Siebert in defending themselves against municipal conflict of interest charges.

David Houston, a member of the Taxpayers Coalition

Burlington, made the allegations last year, contending the five trustees should not have voted on the 1996 board budget because of close relationships each had with a school board employee.

The case was withdrawn by consent of Mr. Houston and the trustees last spring.

The Milton trustee who tried to convince the board to pay the group's bill, and who started a public fund on their behalf, was obviously discouraged by the result of last week's school board meeting.

"I was almost stunned, and disappointed in my colleagues," Tim Kingsbury said the day after the decision.

Mr. Kingsbury thought the legal opinion recently obtained by the board, which indicated it was "permitted to indemnify the

trustees", would be enough to convince his colleagues to support payment of the expenses.

The fact the Halton board does not have municipal conflict of interest insurance coverage is an omission Mr. Kingsbury would like to see rectified. He said he will bring forth a motion to have the board look into the cost of such insurance.

In the meantime, Mr. Kingsbury said the defence fund he started in January has reached about \$4,000. He said he will divide it among the five. The fundraising is expected to continue as Mr. Kingsbury has about 150 phone calls to return to people interested in making a donation.

Hugh Doull, president of Taxpayers Coalition Burlington, said his group finds no satisfaction in the trustees having to pay their own way.

"The TCB has said for a long time that this is a provincial matter and should be paid for from provincial funds. There should be legislation so that private individuals don't have to take this on themselves," said Mr. Doull.

The TCB would prefer to see a publicly-funded commission set up to handle these kind of disputes.

Mr. Doull also noted Mr. Houston's \$20,000-plus legal bill is about half paid and will eventually be fully covered by TCB.

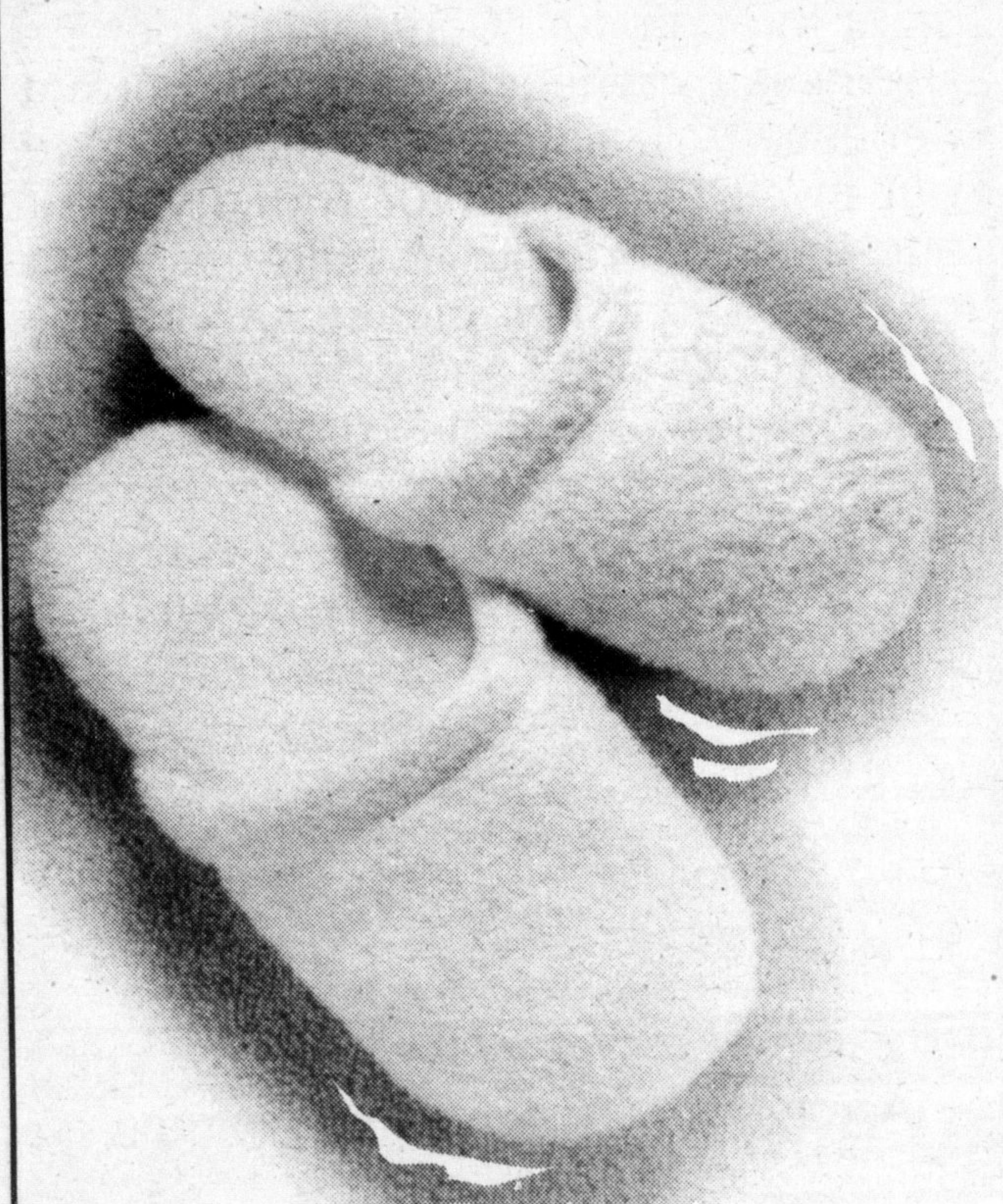
One person left fuming by the whole affair was Steve Glover, husband of board Chair Linda Glover. He stormed out of the meeting when payment was denied.

"My family is now on the hook for about \$9,000 in legal fees to defend against these groundless allegations. We have to use money put aside to pay for our (two) children's (post-secondary) education to pay these costs," Mr. Glover said in a one-page letter he had prepared in case trustees voted against paying for the legal expenses.

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1997 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1997, 7:00 - 9:00 PM.

Tonelli Arena, Community Meeting Room.
Items of importance to the League will be discussed.
Elections for the 1998 Board will be conducted.
Contact ROY HARROLD (876-3357) for information.