

Preserving system is a Catholic school board priority for 1998

By CAROL BALDWIN
Special to The Champion

The changing of the guard at the Halton Catholic District School Board — officially the new name for the former separate school board — was accompanied by all the pomp and ceremony required for such an occasion.

The ceremony Tuesday night began with the procession of the new Catholic trustees into the board room, accompanied by the 'Trumpet Voluntary' played by two Notre Dame Secondary School students.

The eight trustees — three Oakville, three Burlington, one Milton (Joe Deoni) and one Halton Hills — were sworn in by Judge Richard LeDressay.

The former Halton Roman Catholic School Board consisted of 18 trustees.

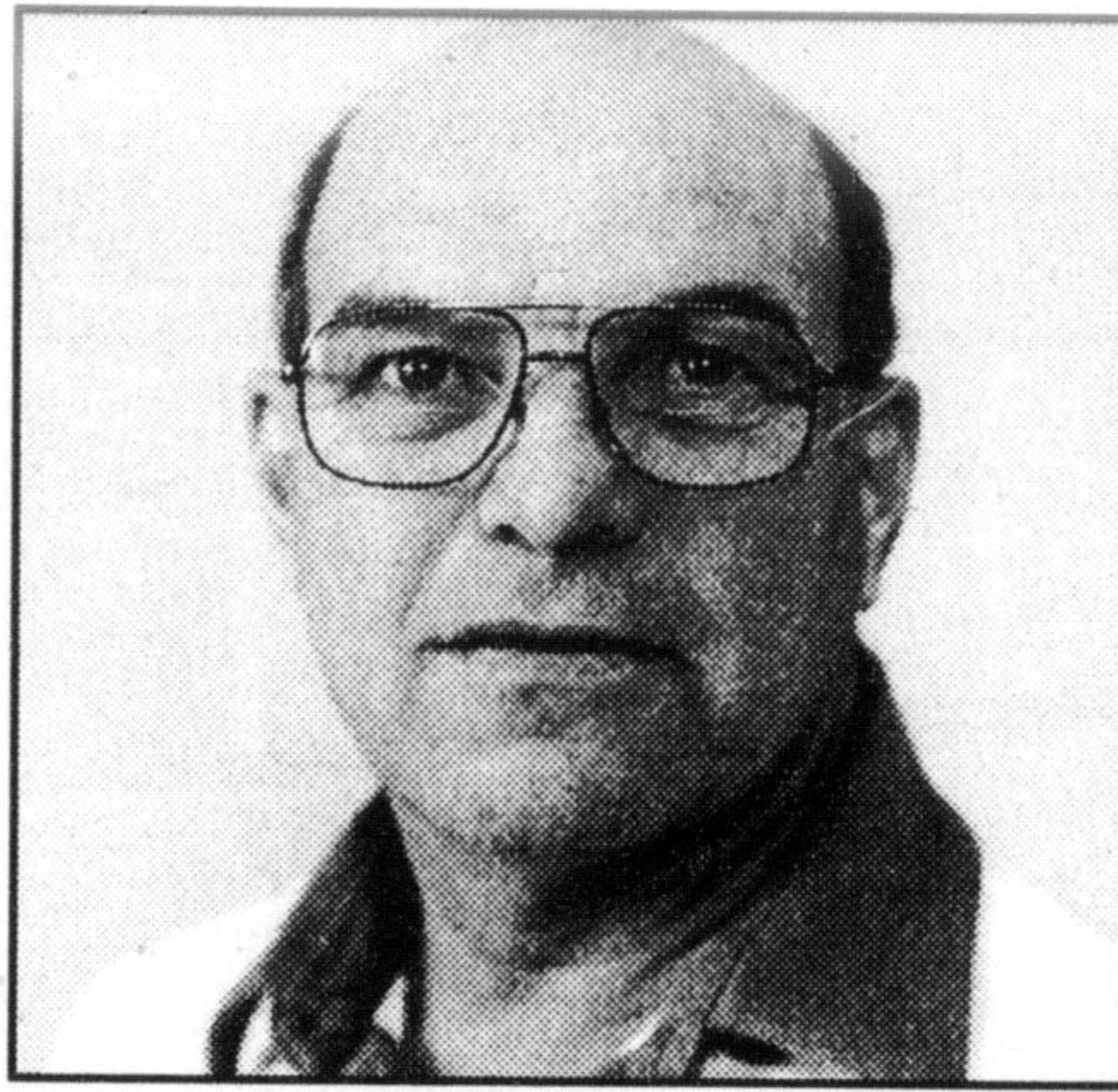
One chair remains empty, awaiting the appointment of a secondary school student in Grade 12 or OAC to a non-voting position on the board.

Bishop Ustrzycki spoke to the new board about the importance of maintaining the Catholic faith in Catholic schools for which "our forefathers sacrificed." He predicted it would be a difficult task in the face of a secular society that claims not to need God.

"God forbid that our young people be tainted with that attitude," he said. "Don't ever think that you are not up to this challenge. You are."

After Sweeney legally constituted the board, elections for chair and vice-chair were held.

Burlington trustee Jim Sherlock, chair of "the brand new Halton Catholic District



Joe Deoni

School Board," told his colleagues that he would need their help and support as well as the support of "every single participant, partner, and supporter of Catholic education in Halton County.

"During the past year we have witnessed in the school systems of Ontario an unprecedented level of disruption and confrontation," he explained. "I sincerely believe that the top priority of this board should be to establish and maintain a calm and stable learning environment where our students can receive the total Catholic educational experience which they deserve and for which their parents have entrusted them to our care."

To accomplish that the newly-elected chair suggested a top priority for the new board would be the "critical school accommodation problems" and "urgent need for new pupil places throughout the county."

Oakville Trustee Ed Viana, who was elected vice-chair, said he was "looking

forward to representing all of Oakville for the next three years. I dedicate myself to working in co-operation with the new chair."

The two new faces around the board table — Father Charlie Jordan from Oakville and Al Bailey from Burlington — were eager to participate in the ceremonies. The former nominated Sherlock for chair, while the latter seconded that nomination.

After the meeting, Jordan suggested that he had already read the book 'A Report on the Role of School Boards and Trustees' sent to him by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. Quoting a paragraph from that book he said one of the board's primary responsibilities would be to establish school board policy and monitor its implementation.

"There is very much an emphasis on a less managerial role and more of a philosophical one," he added, predicting that the Catholic board would deem Catholicism as a priority. "I think as a Catholic school board it is going to be important in the future to be courageous to pursue why we are different and have the conviction of our Catholic faith," he said. "We are in a society that can be very indifferent to our Catholic faith, and we have to be careful that we don't take it for granted."

Part of preserving Catholicism in the school system, he said, will be to monitor the implementation of Bill 160.

His counterpart in Burlington, Al Bailey, suggested that his new job as trustee would entail policy setting and maintaining the Catholic system, including the buildings.

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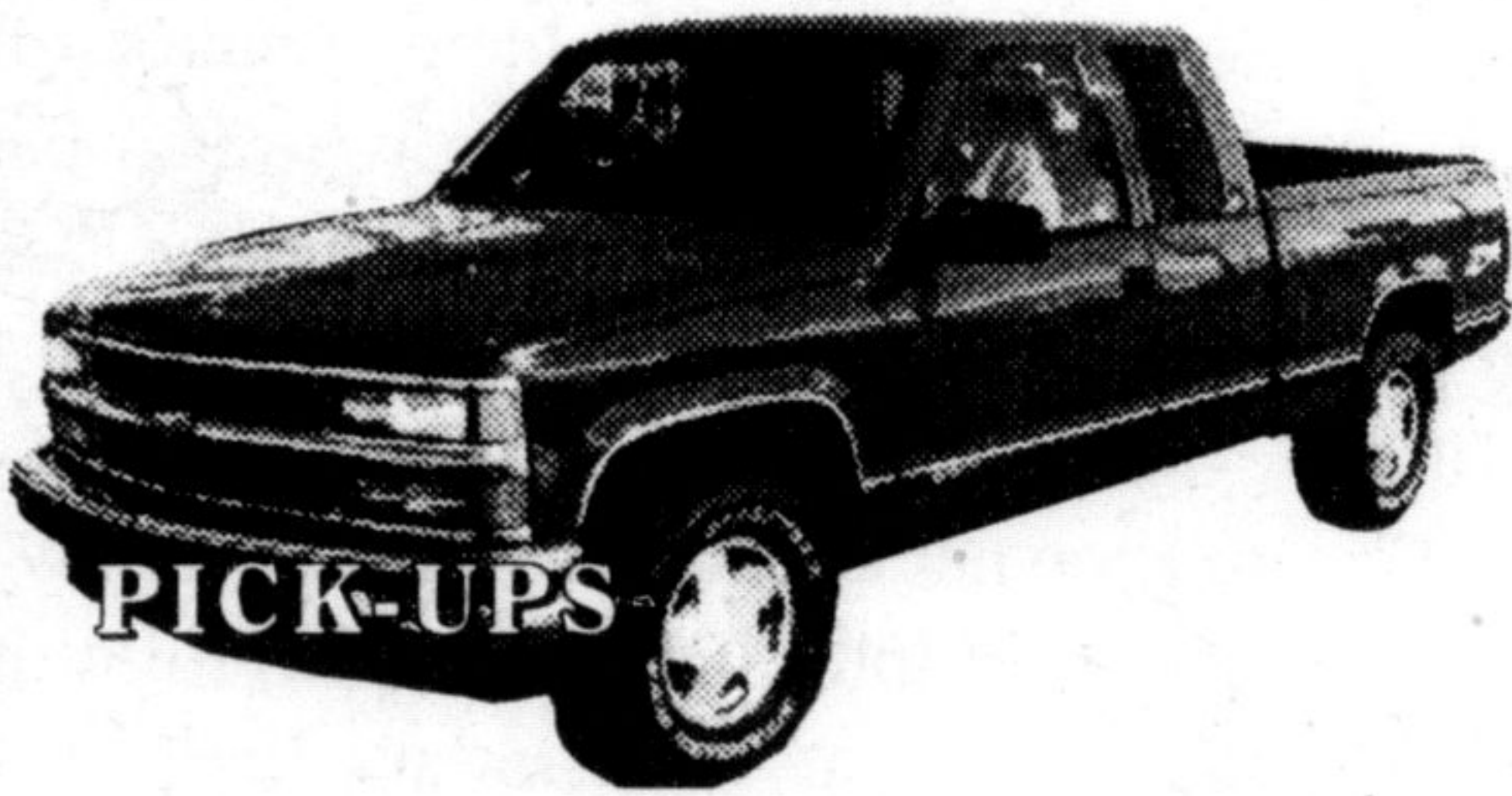
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