

Labour head: Personality at root of stalemate in talks

By HOWARD MOZEL
Special to The Champion

The labour dispute within the Halton Catholic District School Board could be settled immediately, says the president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association, if trustees simply did what's best for the school system.

"This is not about the ability to pay but a willingness to settle," said Marshall Jarvis, in Oakville last week to speak to Halton's Catholic high school teachers.

Mr. Jarvis maintains that the problems at the board are not a matter of money, but in fact stem directly from the personalities involved. Board Chair Jim Sherlock pleads poverty, says Mr. Jarvis, even though the board received adequate provincial funding.

Rather than permit teachers to teach six of eight classes like most other boards, Mr. Jarvis says Mr. Sherlock instituted seven of eight and is pushing for back-to-work legislation. The proof, says Mr. Jarvis, is that Mr. Sherlock has written yet again to the Education Relations Commission seeking intervention.

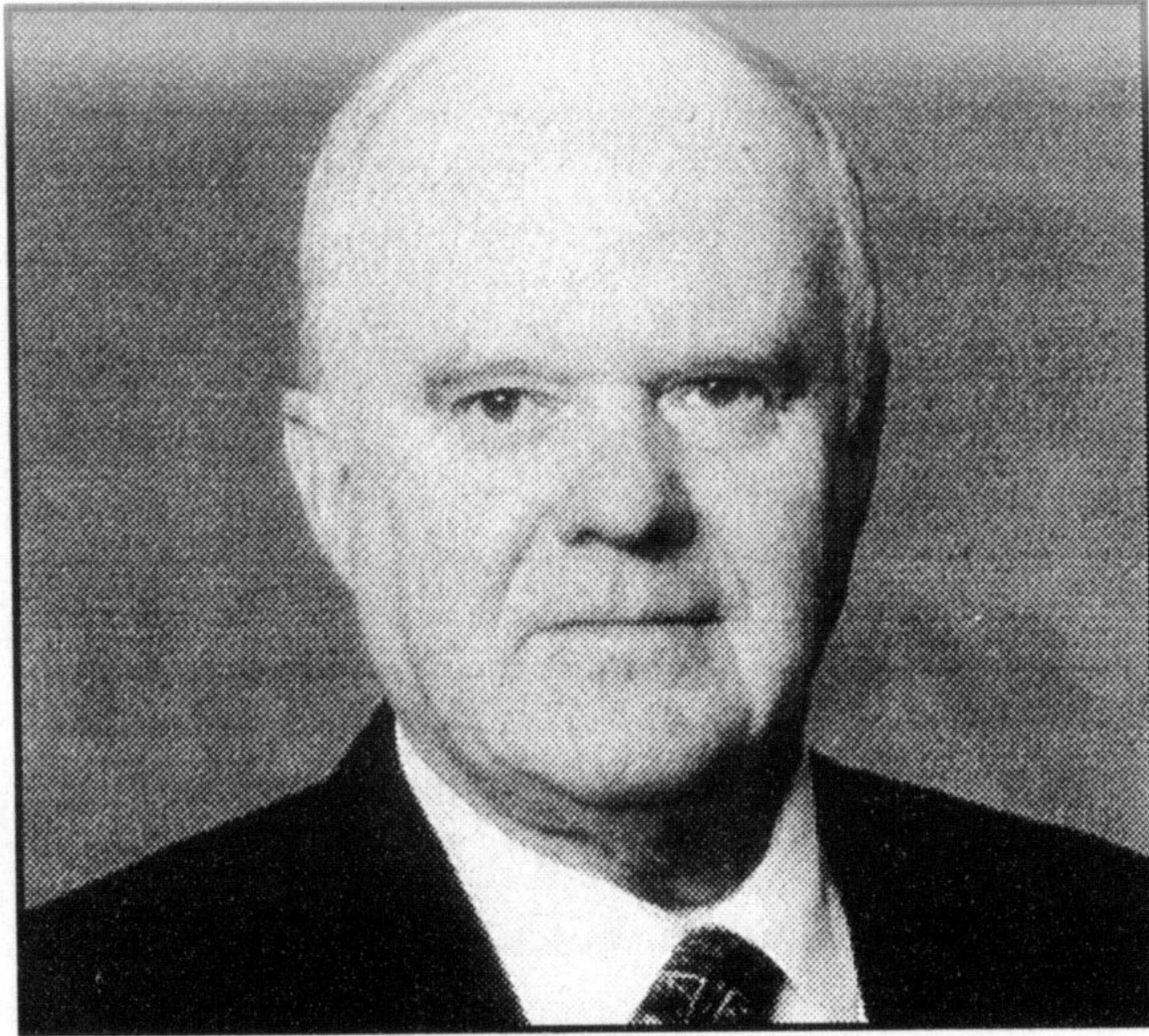
"Teachers want a local solution," said Mr. Jarvis. "The board seems to want an acrimonious settlement like Hamilton-Wentworth."

Historically, Mr. Jarvis explained, the Hamilton-Wentworth and Halton boards have been supportive of each other. The former is currently in arbitration. Once they settle, added Mr. Jarvis, you can bet the green light will be given to Halton to settle.

In the meantime, says Mr. Jarvis, Mr. Sherlock is "putting the Halton board through agony."

This is particularly frustrating, says Mr. Jarvis, since almost every other Ontario board settled long ago. Windsor-Essex settled last week. The remaining hold-outs are Halton and Niagara Secondary.

"Most boards recognize what the parameters of set-



School board Chair James Sherlock.

tlement are and have worked to resolve the situation," said Mr. Jarvis.

Mr. Jarvis said his visit to Oakville at the Knights of Columbus Hall was made because local negotiations are now at a "critical juncture." (Two meetings for mediation are set for December 2 and 8.) He was also on hand to discuss options with teachers in the event there is no settlement. Moving sanctions to a "higher level of strike action" may be front and centre.

"That would be unfortunate if we have to move in that direction," he said.

Mr. Jarvis said he has kept abreast of the Halton situation and one thing he understands is that teachers, students and parents have all made it abundantly clear that they want this resolved.

Catholic secondary school council chairs, for example, are urging both sides in the dispute to return to the bargaining table. They propose re-starting negotiations from a fresh perspective and advocate the creation of panel with equal representation from all stakeholders.

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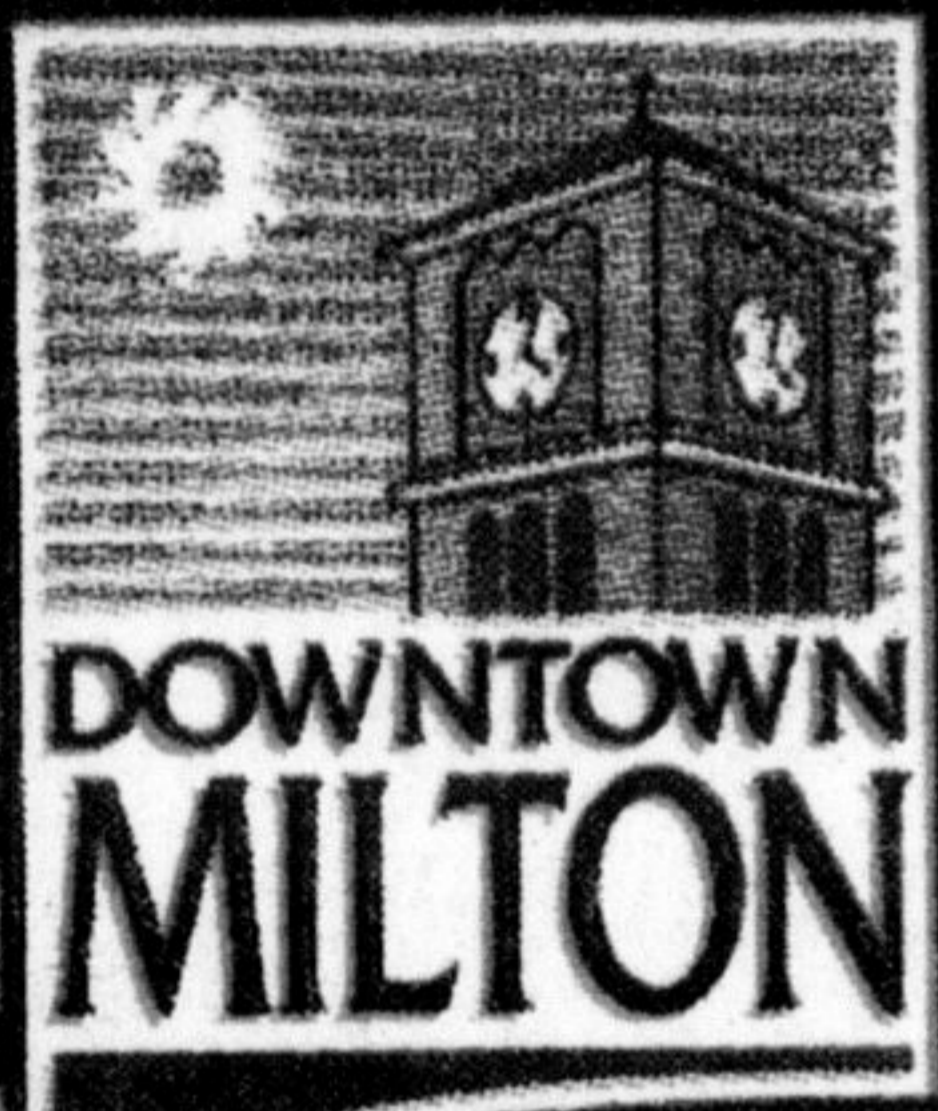
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