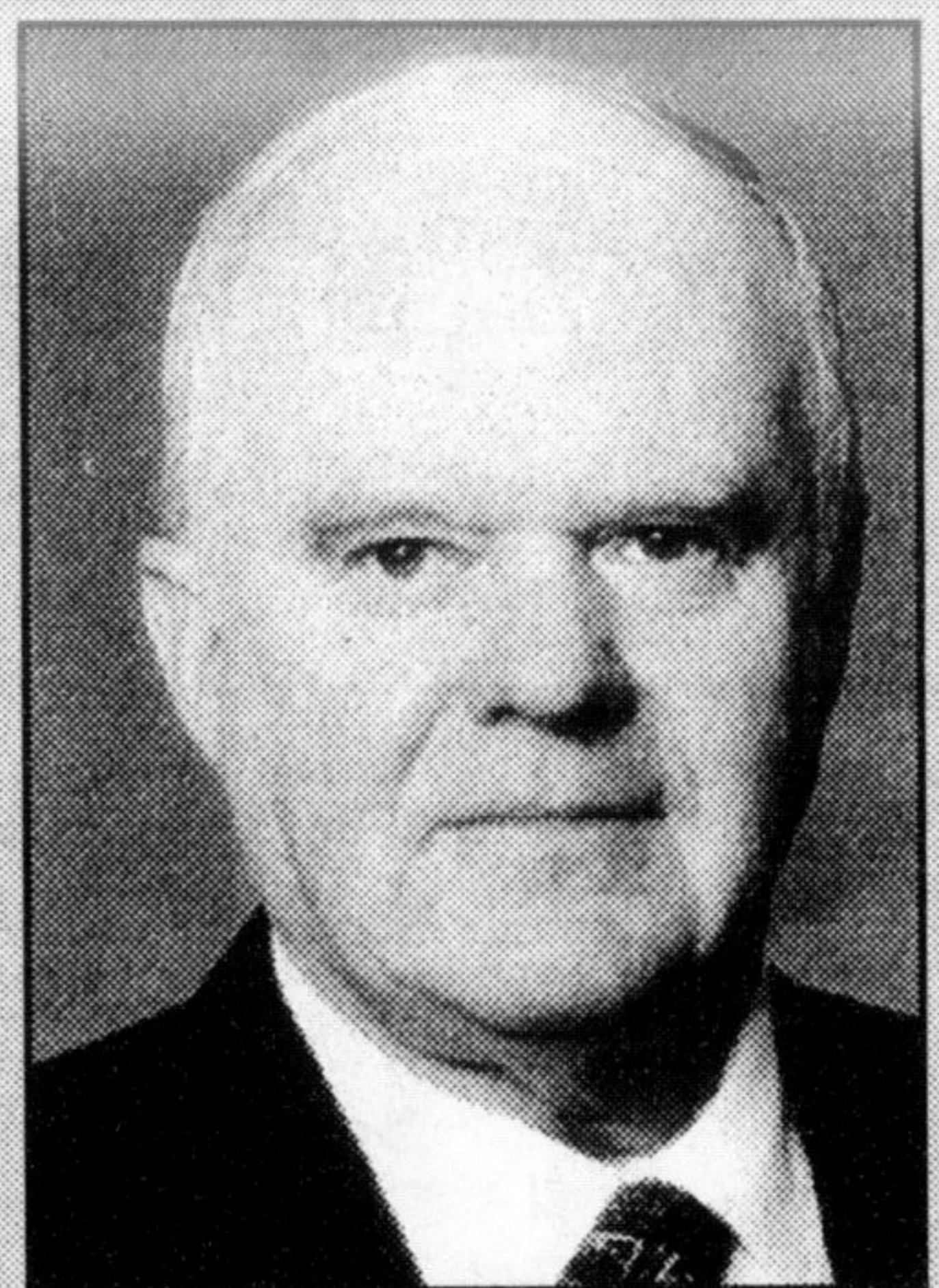


Catholic teachers complain to labour board

"The union membership's expectations have been raised to totally unreasonable levels by that kind of misrepresentation of the facts."

— JIM SHERLOCK, IN RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS TEACHERS SUBSIDIZE THE BOARD.



By KIM ARNOTT
Special to The Champion

A complaint to the Ontario Labour Relations Board is the latest salvo in the ongoing battle between Halton's Catholic school board and its high school teachers.

The complaint, alleging bad faith bargaining, has been filed by the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Union (OECTA), which represents the 375 Halton teachers.

OECTA is alleging the board violated the Labour Relations Act by unilaterally imposing a plan which would allow students to make up class time missed back in September and October when the teachers undertook a partial strike.

Under the program imposed by the board, teachers are not paid for making up the lost 25 hours of class time, despite the fact that they were docked 25 per cent of their pay when they refused to teach the classes in the fall.

Joe Pece, who heads up the Halton secondary unit of OECTA, said the complaint also names the Ministry of Education for interfering in the collective bargaining process by ordering the board to develop the make-up plan.

"They've clearly violated the bargaining process," Mr. Pece said.

The complaint came at the beginning of a week when the board and the union are due to sit down and review the board's financial records.

Board: No more money

The school board has repeatedly said that it has no more money to pay its unhappy high school teachers, while the teachers' union continues to claim the board has more than enough money to settle the dispute.

A provincial mediator working with the two sides requested that the teachers review the board's financial books, in the hope of furthering the possibility of a contract settlement.

But Mr. Pece isn't optimistic the review will be useful.

The union has already looked at the numbers, he says, adding, "I can tell you there's a surplus there, based on what they've reported to the Ministry of Education."

In fact, Mr. Pece claims the board could satisfy every demand the high school teachers have made and still have a surplus of \$1.8 million in the area of salaries.

But Jim Sherlock, chair of the Halton

District Catholic School Board, says that's simply ridiculous.

"In my opinion, that's totally inaccurate," he said.

While the union claims the board will see a 22 per cent increase in revenue this year, Mr. Sherlock says that number is closer to 4 per cent.

Big gap

"It's that kind of gap that makes it difficult to responsibly negotiate and it's that kind of gap that the mediator wanted to have discussed," Mr. Sherlock added.

The dispute, which has dragged on since September, has taken its toll in terms of both student and teacher morale.

Mr. Pece says that many teachers, particularly in specialized fields, are leaving the board to teach elsewhere.

And given the province-wide teacher shortage that has been reported, he believes the Halton board is taking entirely the wrong approach.

"If they want to attract the best teachers, they should be trying to get the best contract," he said. "They can afford it."

Times have changed

"This is not 25 years ago when Catholic secondary education was just struggling to get on its feet," Mr. Pece added. "We've got equitable funding now and it should be equitable for teachers."

"Catholic secondary teachers should not have to subsidize Catholic education any longer. They've done it for far too long."

But Mr. Sherlock says that type of rhetoric has contributed to the lengthy delay in reaching a collective agreement.

"The union membership's expectations have been raised to totally unreasonable

• see FAITH on page 17

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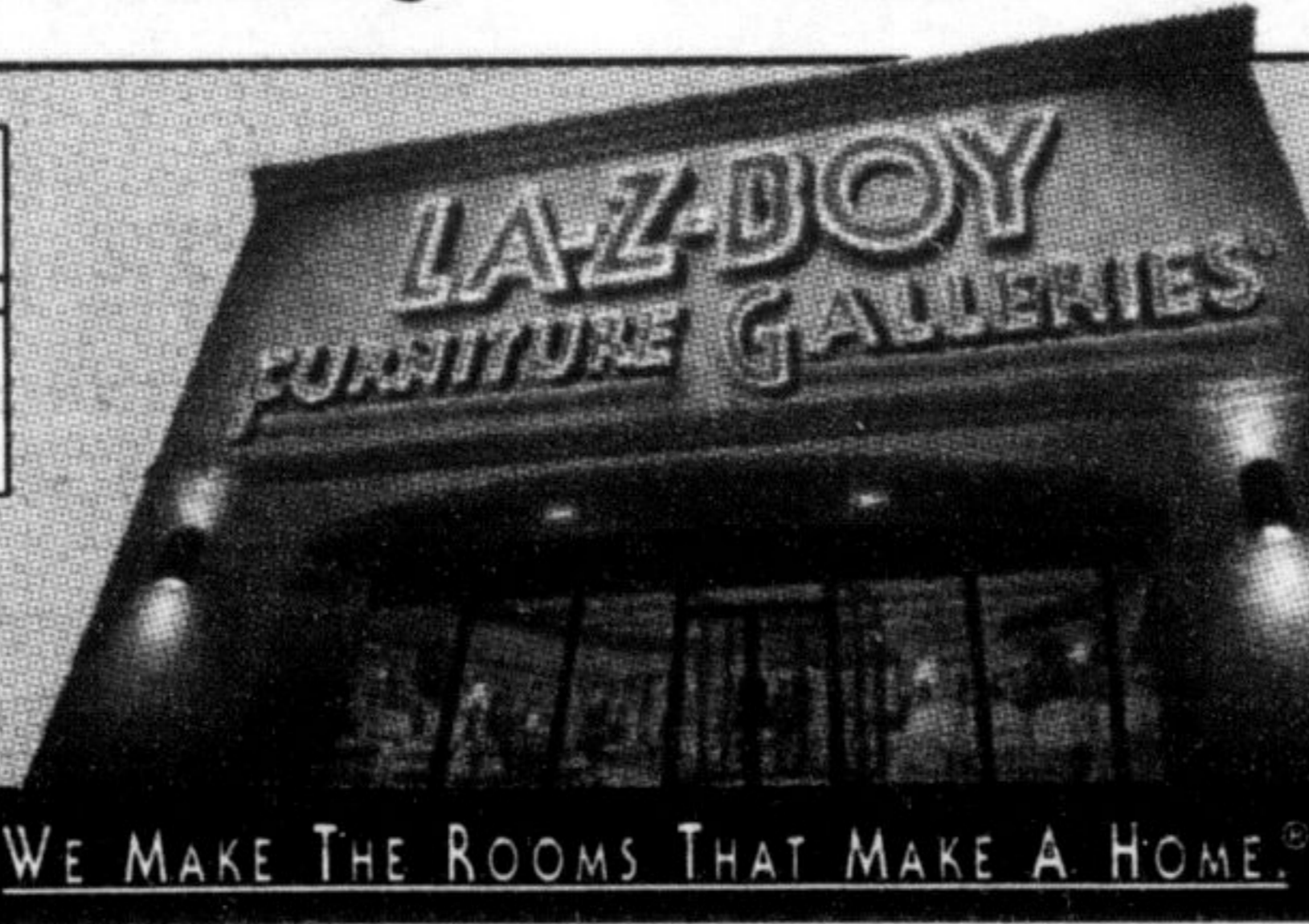
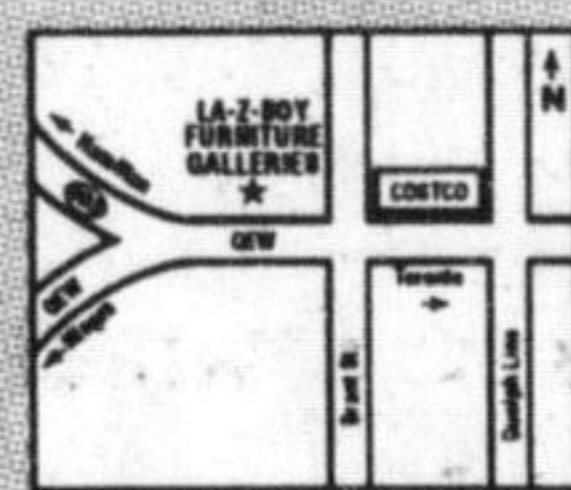
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