

Parents, students, trustee frustrated with dispute

Editor's note: The names of the parent and students in the following story have been changed.

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

In the cold war between the Halton Catholic District School Board and separate school teachers, tempers are starting to boil.

The heat is the aftermath of a surprise lockout that followed five months of divisive negotiations

between the board and 350 high school teachers.

Ian, the parent of a 17-year-old Bishop Reding student, said he doesn't care which side is right, he just wants his son back in school.



Joe Deoni

"If the school board or the unions have to cave, so be it," he said. "Someone has to take a leadership role."

With the school doors locked and both sides unwilling to deal, education is suffering and faith in the separate school system is waning, he said.

"A lot of parents I've talked to plan on moving their kids into a public school," said Ian, whose

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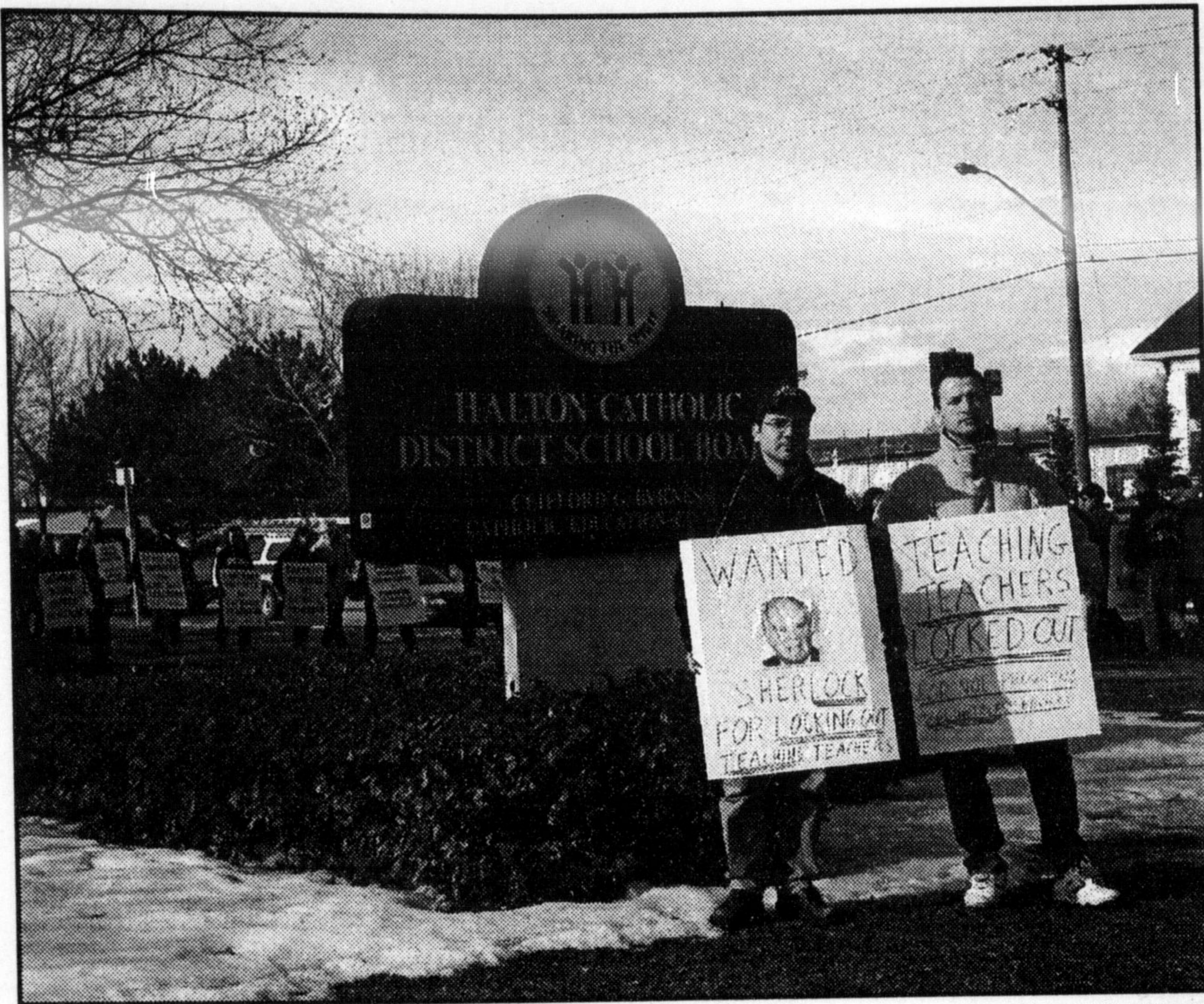


Photo by RON KUZYSK

Charlie Lopresti (left) and Peter Posocco, teachers at Oakville's Loyola Secondary School, protest outside the Halton Catholic District School Board building after being locked out earlier this week.

RC school board locks out teachers

At midnight Tuesday, the Halton Catholic District School Board closed classes to more than 350 high school teachers and all students.

The on-going bitter labour dispute between the board and its working-to-rule teachers reached the boiling point Tuesday afternoon after teachers overwhelmingly turned down the latest contract offer Monday.

"The board is showing complete and utter disregard of teachers and students in this community," said Joe Pece, president of the Halton Secondary Unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA).

According to board Chair Jim Sherlock, an emergency teleconference was held Monday night after 99.4 per cent of teachers rejected the deal.

By unanimous resolution, said Mr. Sherlock, board members authorized a lockout effective 12:01 a.m. Wednesday if

the union did not lift all "partial sanctions" — namely refusing to engage in extra-curricular activities — for the remainder of the second semester. The union was given until 4:30 p.m. Tuesday to make up its mind.

Late Tuesday afternoon, however, the union offered to meet with the board in a last ditch effort to avoid what Mr. Pece, called a "draconian move."

"This move by the school board could be the most detrimental action to the students and teachers and to the long-term viability of Catholic education in Halton," said Mr. Pece. "We owe it to our parents and students to make every attempt to avoid an unnecessary lockout."

Mr. Pece, along with OECTA president Marshall Jarvis and members of the teachers' negotiating team, went to the board offices in Burlington ready to negotiate.

However, they found all doors to the building locked and were left standing in the parking lot.

"They just don't want to talk to us," Mr. Pece said after learning of the board's decision to lock them out.

Minutes after the 4:30 p.m. deadline, Mr. Pece said the union faxed the board an

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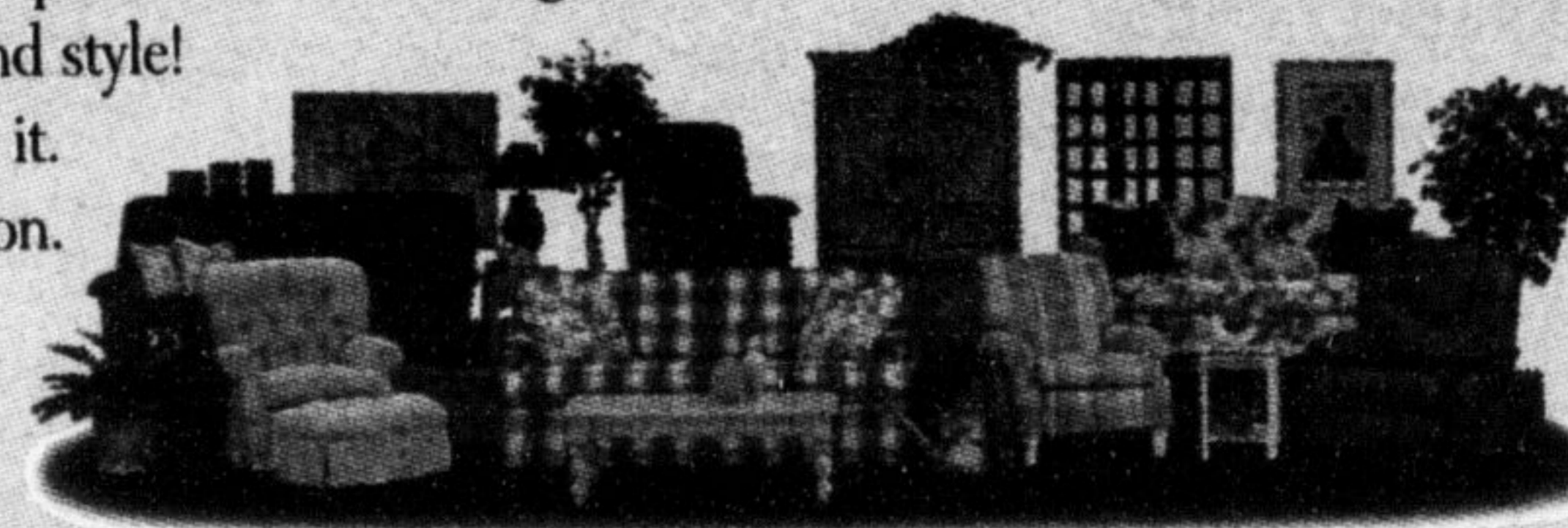
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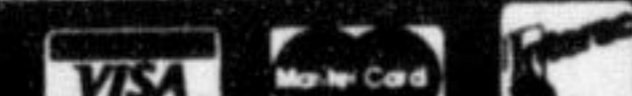
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