

# RC strife finally over

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possible, however, without the pressure of the lockout followed by intense, realistic negotiations and "major concessions" by the union.

Until that point, Mr. Sherlock maintains, the gap of understanding by teachers about the board's true financial situation was simply too wide. Mr. Sherlock said teachers finally realized that the concessions — specifically freezing their salaries for two years — were needed to work out any meaningful deal.

Until the lockout, Mr. Sherlock explained, teachers kept asking why the Halton board couldn't forge an agreement similar to that worked out in Hamilton-Wentworth. The main difference there, said Mr. Sherlock, was a salary freeze.

Mr. Sherlock said he apologizes to students and parents for the disruption and the lockout, but says the tactic proved effective in the end.

## Big concession

Mr. Pece agreed that delaying pay increases was a substantial concession, since for the time being Halton's Catholic teachers will be making less than their elementary counterparts.

Under the new three-year deal — effective through August 31, 2001 — the 365 high school teachers will get nothing in the contract's first year and nothing in the second year. In the final year, teachers will receive 1 per cent on September 1, 2000; 0.5 per cent on February 1, 2001 and 1.5 per cent on the last day of the contract.

What all this means is that the starting salary of \$33,292 and maximum salary of \$64,574 in effect on September 1, 1998 will increase to \$34,299 and \$66,529

respectively on August 31, 2001.

Under the new deal, teachers' workloads will remain the same as specified in their previous contract, namely they will teach six of eight periods per year in exchange for the salary freeze. The major stumbling block since the start of the school year had been the board's insistence that union members must teach seven out of eight classes.

Mr. Sherlock explained that the board will do its best to hire qualified teachers for the current semester based on the six-of-eight workload.

## Taking board at word

If this proves problematic, Mr. Sherlock said the board and union have worked out a deal whereby the workloads of existing staff may be increased. Teachers would then be reimbursed \$1,000 at the end of semester two for this fourth teaching period.

Mr. Pece says teachers are "sticking their neck out" by taking the board at its word that it will do its best to hire enough teachers.

"Someone had to extend an olive branch," said Mr. Pece. "This will be the biggest stepping stone to mending the relationship."

Mr. Pece explained the three major issues for teachers were always workload, salary and maintenance of benefits. On that score, Mr. Pece said the union achieved its aims, once pay increases are implemented by the end of the contract.

"Teachers have had to ensure a lot to achieve the goals that they did," said Mr. Pece. "Yet what we achieved could have been accomplished a lot sooner and without a lockout."

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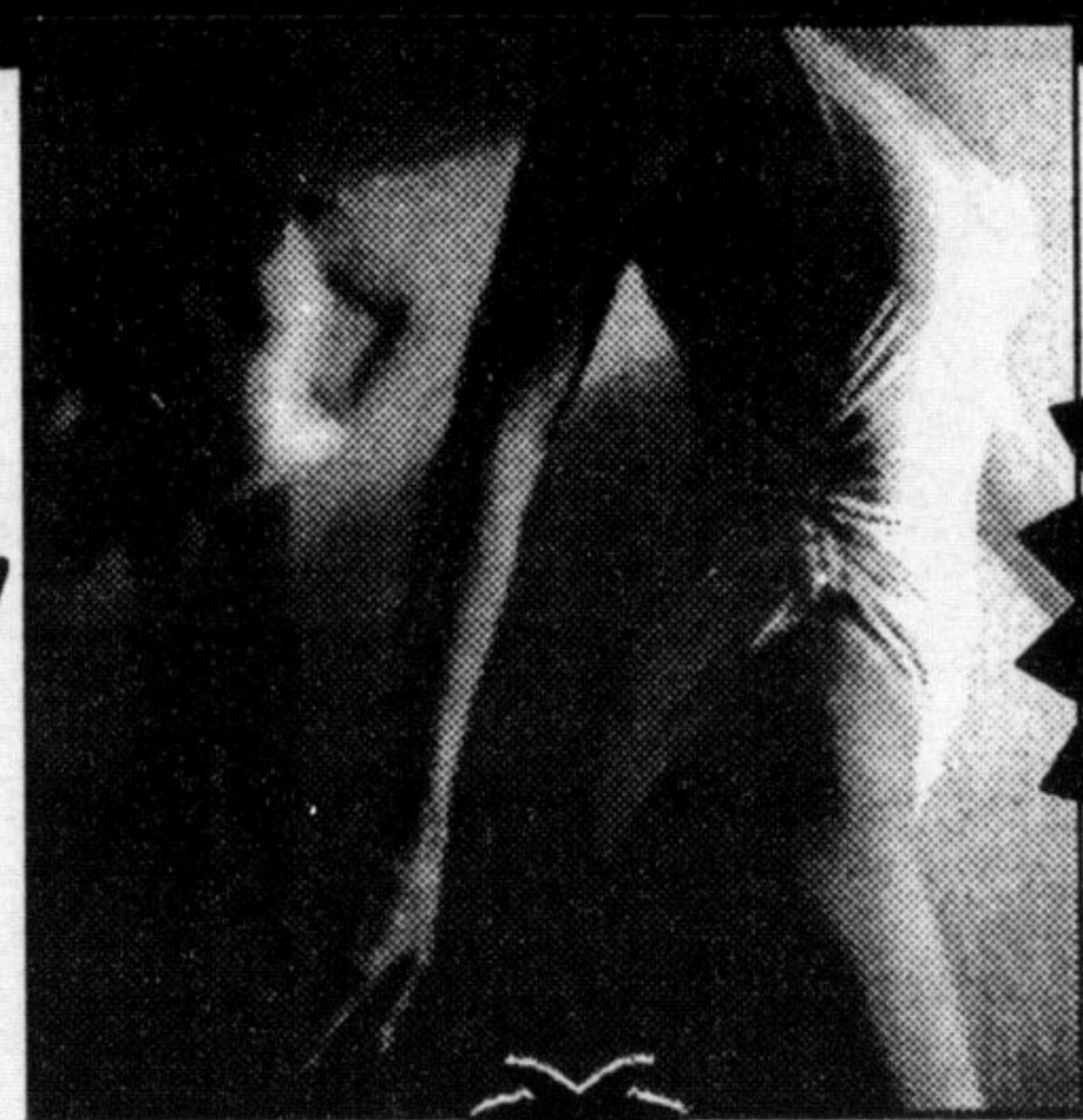
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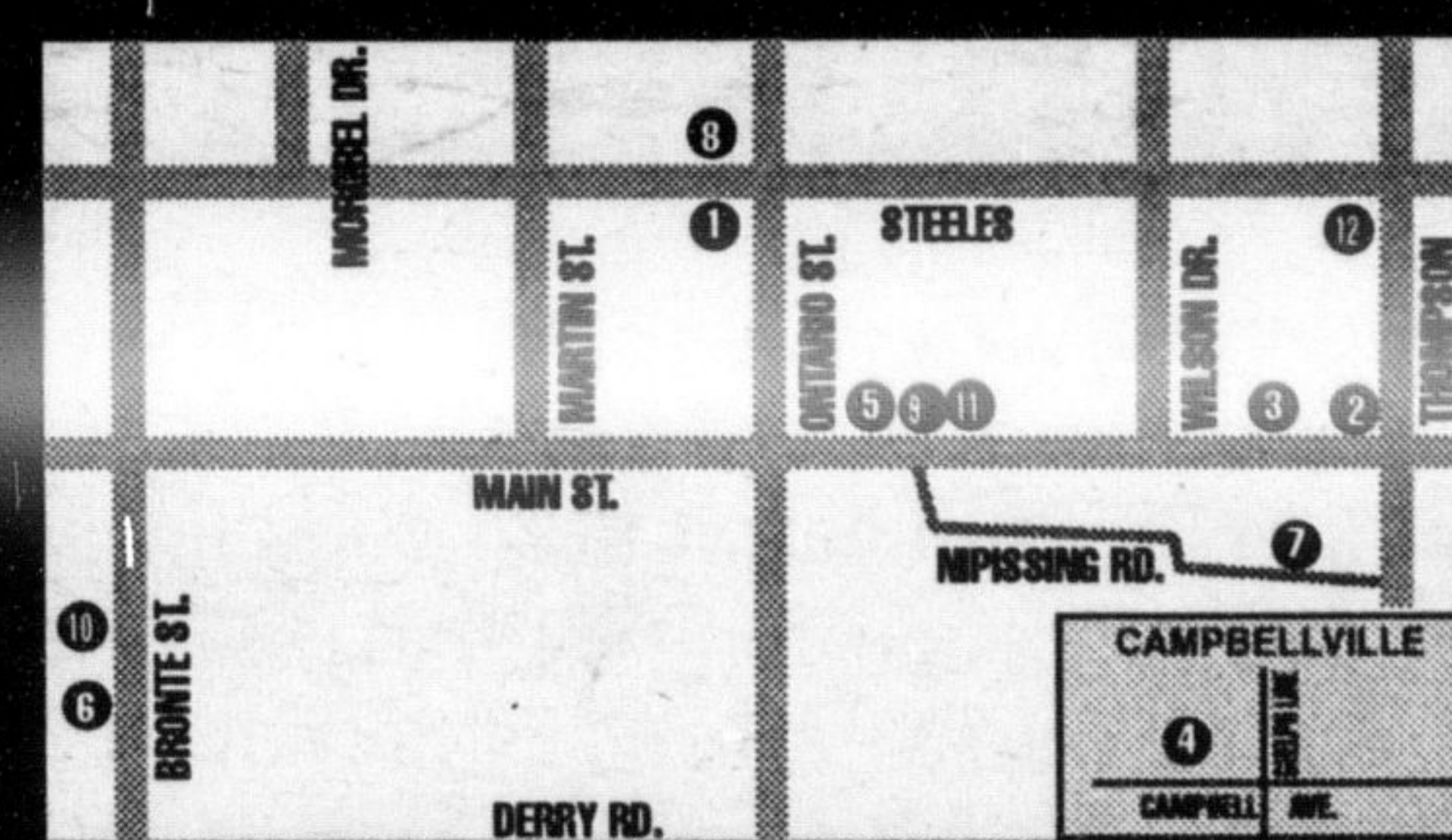
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