

Group vows to keep up fight against racism: Carmichael

North Halton Cultural Awareness Council recognizes those committed to promoting racial understanding

By MELANIE CUMMINGS
Special to The Champion

More than 200 ethnic populations. One country.

Canada is one of the most multi-cultural, multi-racial nation in the world.

And for proof that harmony among them all is certain and achievable, look no further than the list of award winners recognized by the North Halton Cultural Awareness Council in Oakville March 21.

Gathered in the basement of the Vishnu Devi Temple, 80 people committed to promoting cultural and racial understanding within and beyond the community celebrated the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

They're extraordinary people such as event organizer Elizabeth Carmichael, who despite her current struggle with cancer, "promises to work as much as possible

toward creating a harmonious and just society."

The evening's honourees have also made inroads with a similar goal in mind.

They included Suzanne Muir of the Halton District School Board, Rick MacDonald of the Catholic board, Quayum Mufti of the Islamic Circle Of North America, Sgt. Michael Brown of the Halton Regional Police Service, court support worker Adrienne Pearce, Veronica Tyrell of the Canadian-Caribbean Association of Halton, Halton MP Julian Reed, Richard Landau and the staff who put together the CTS show Faith Journal, newspaper reporter Jennifer Lobo and Dr. Joey Edwardh of the Halton Social Planning Council.

March 21 was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1966 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

On the same day, six years earlier in Sharpsville, South Africa, 69 unarmed, peaceful protesters demonstrating against apartheid were killed by police officers.

But while proclamations and awards bring recognition to peacemakers, more needs to be done, said Mervin Witter, who's Ontario's regional director of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

"The reality is that we haven't succeeded yet in creating a society which respects differences between culture, colour, language and religion," said Mr. Witter.

"Either we accept the proposition that no one is better than another or continue to act in ways which threaten our democratic principles. Change starts today, and everyday. We have to redouble our efforts to make Canada a better place to live, for ourselves and our children."

In the words of award recipient Sgt. Brown, Canadians will know that goal has been reached when nights of honour such as Friday's will no longer be needed.

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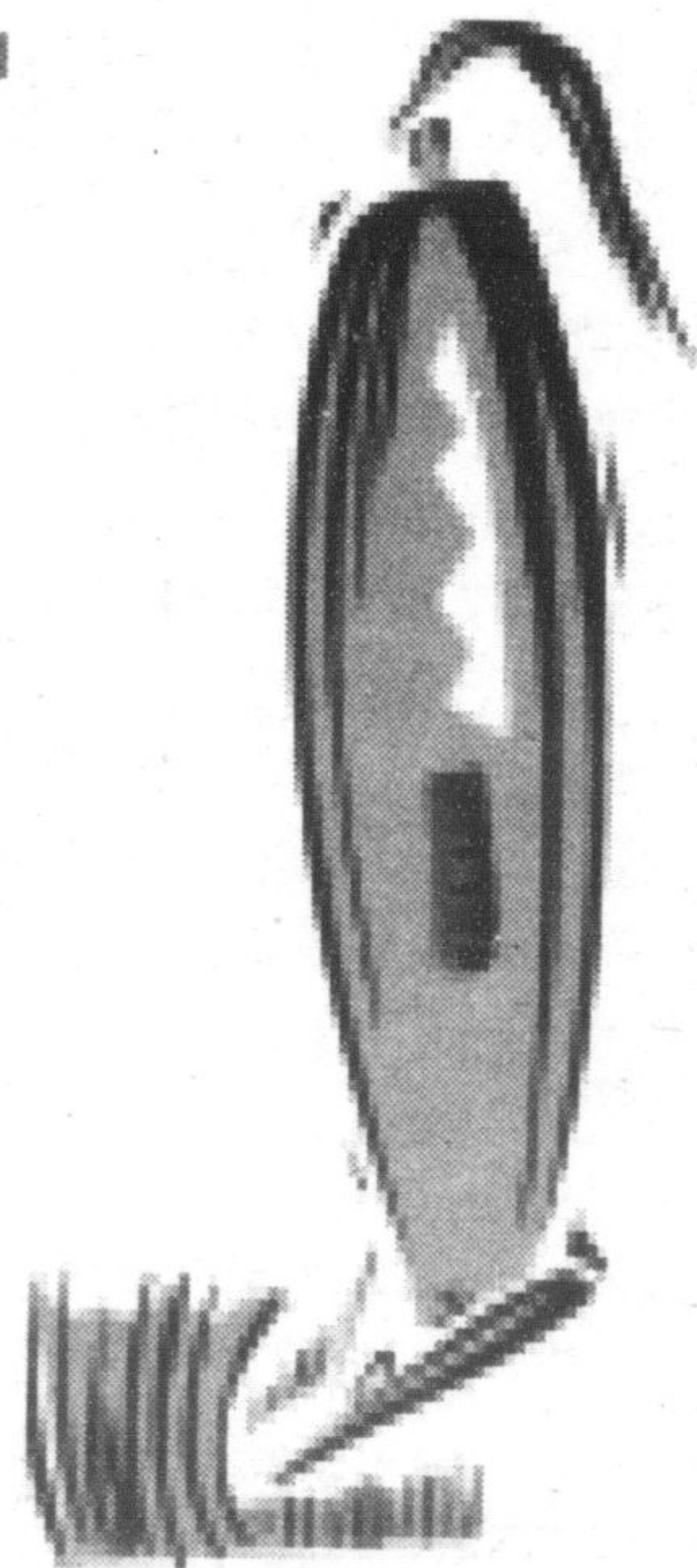
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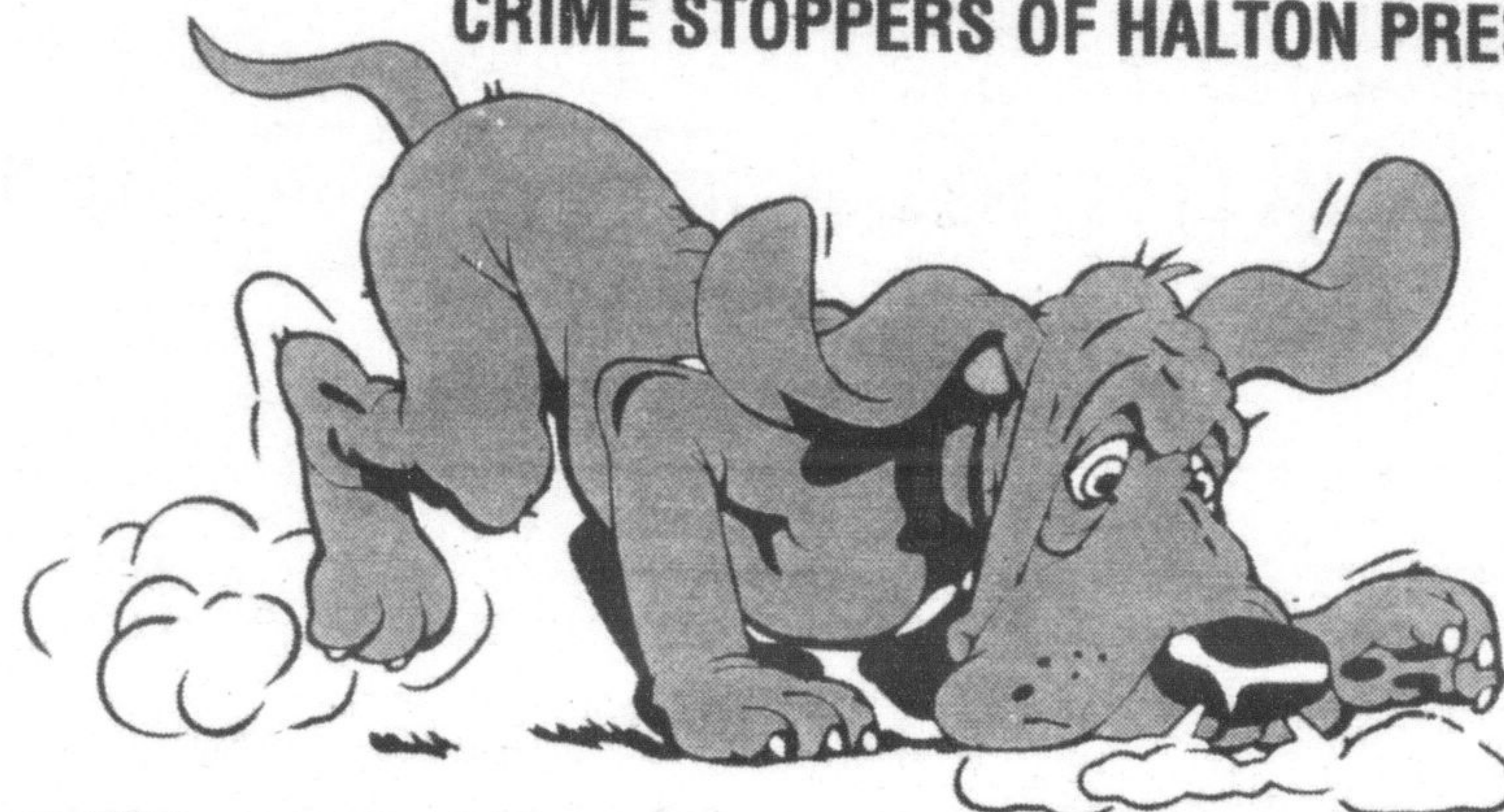
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