

## Halton school board contracts reached

The Halton District School Board has reached contract agreements with two more of its employee groups.

The Office Clerical Technical Unit (OCTU) and Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP) both have new deals with the board.

OCTU and PSSP each got two-year pacts with salary increases both totalling 6.25 per cent over the life of their deals.

OCTU members receive a 3

per cent raise retroactive to September 1, 2002, another 2.75 per cent pay boost on September 1, 2003 and finally a 0.5 per cent increase on January 1, 2004.

OCTU represents more than 200 full and part-time support staff in Halton schools and at the board's administrative office in Burlington.

PSSP workers also get 3 per cent retroactive to September 1, 2002, but they get 3 per cent again on September 1., 2003, and

another 0.25 per cent on August 31, 2004.

PSSP represents about 50 employees who provide administrative support for and work directly with special needs students. They include psychologists, speech language pathologists, social workers and child and youth counsellors.

OCTU and PSSP are both groups within the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

## EAs reject latest offer by public school board

By **TIM WHITNELL**  
*Special to The Champion*

Educational assistants with the Halton District School Board have almost unanimously rejected a final contract offer, with their union adding it's now not prepared to negotiate over the summer.

The president of the independently-operated union said the vast majority of the group's membership were present at a June 23 vote on a final contract offer from the

board, and turned it down by a 340-9 margin.

Lynne Gurzi said she and her executive team recommended EAs refuse the board's offer.

She said it was brought forward for a general membership vote by secret ballot because it had promised EAs they would do so under certain circumstances.

"Educational assistants working for the Halton board have the lowest valued compensation package in the GTA. Halton EAs are not paid at the government benchmark of 1997 and this recent offer does nothing to bridge the widening gap," Ms Gurzi said in a press release.

"Special education money received by this board was increased by over \$9 million, \$2 million put into reserves. (Education Director) Dusty Papke said this money must be spent on special education — well that's us."

The chief negotiator for the Halton public board, Dawn Beckett-Morton, said the board put a generous deal on the table.

"We have an offer that is double digits" in terms of a pay increase, when you factor in retroactive pay, another raise this September and the pay for a half-hour longer work day.

As for the extra half-hour EAs would work each day, Ms Beckett-Morton said it was the EAs' negotiating team that told the board it wanted the work day to go from five-and-a-half hours to six.

"It's a cost factor to us which would add another \$750,000 per year."

Ms Gurzi said Ms Beckett-Morton made a "threat" to impose changes to the terms and conditions of the EAs' employment if the latest contract offer wasn't accepted. This prompted Ms Gurzi to state the union wouldn't be inclined to meet over the summer.

However, Ms Beckett-Morton said she made no such threat.

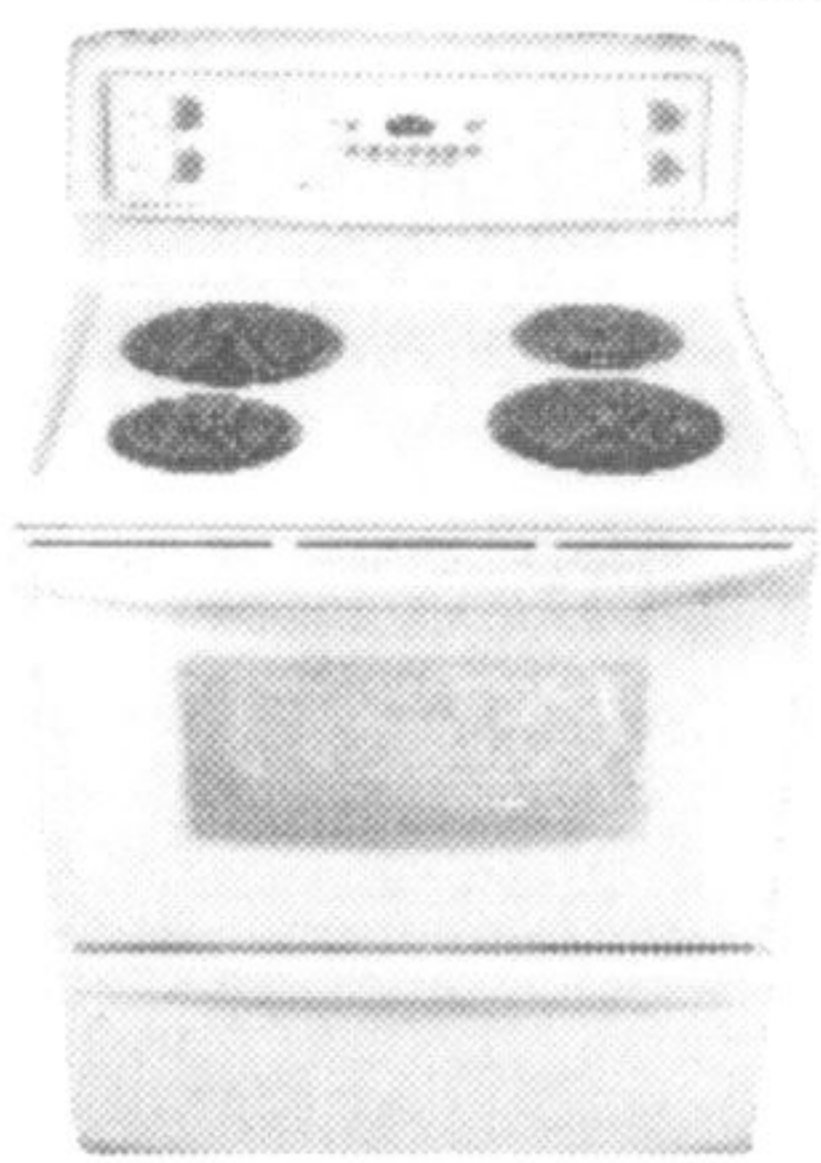
"No threats were made. That is not helpful," she said of a refusal to meet over the holidays.

In a press release issued by the board, Ms Beckett-Morton said it's the board's intention to reach a mutually-beneficial collective agreement.

"However, should negotiations not achieve this outcome, the board has the right under the Labour Relations Act to take one of the following options — impose a new collective agreement with changes to terms and conditions; present the board's final offer and put it to a final offer vote (supervised by the Ministry of Labour); lock out the members; or take no action."



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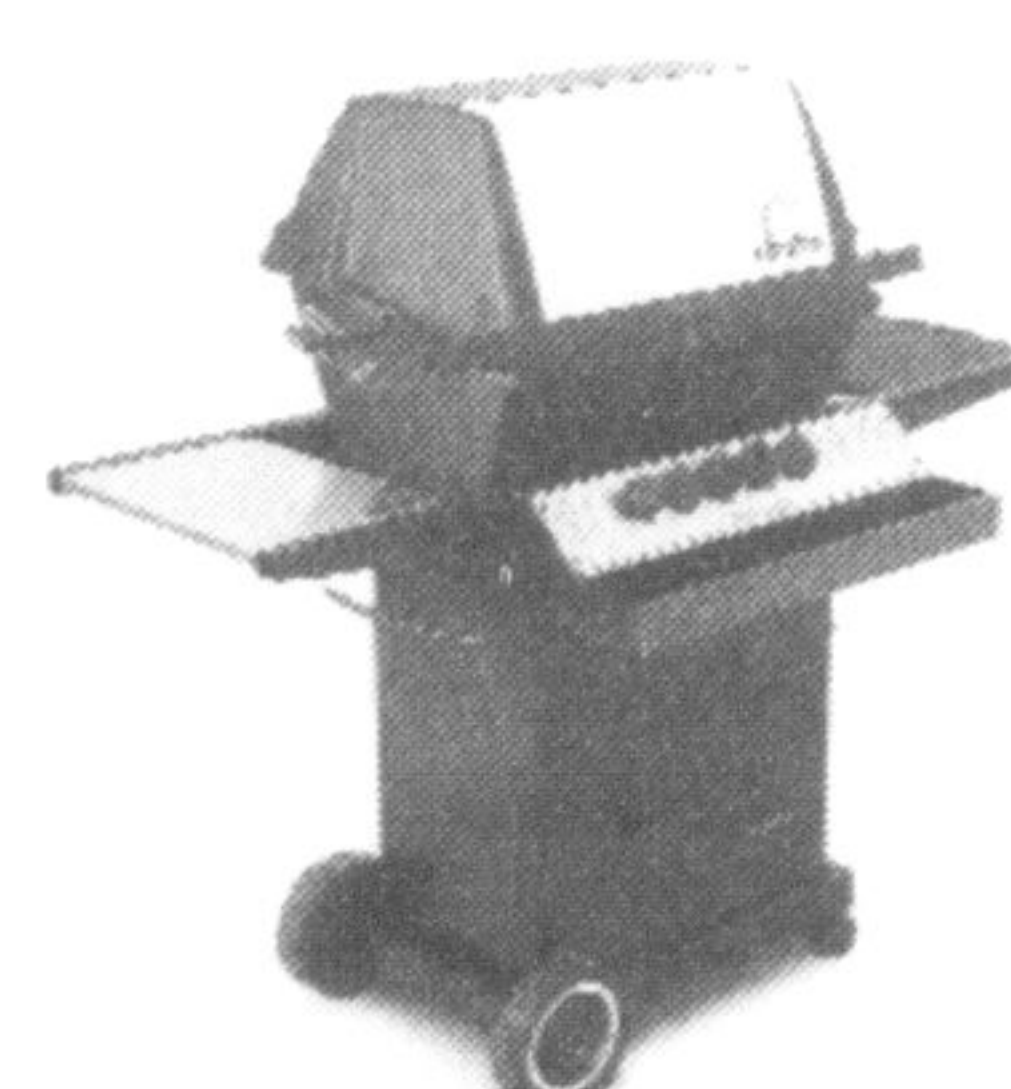
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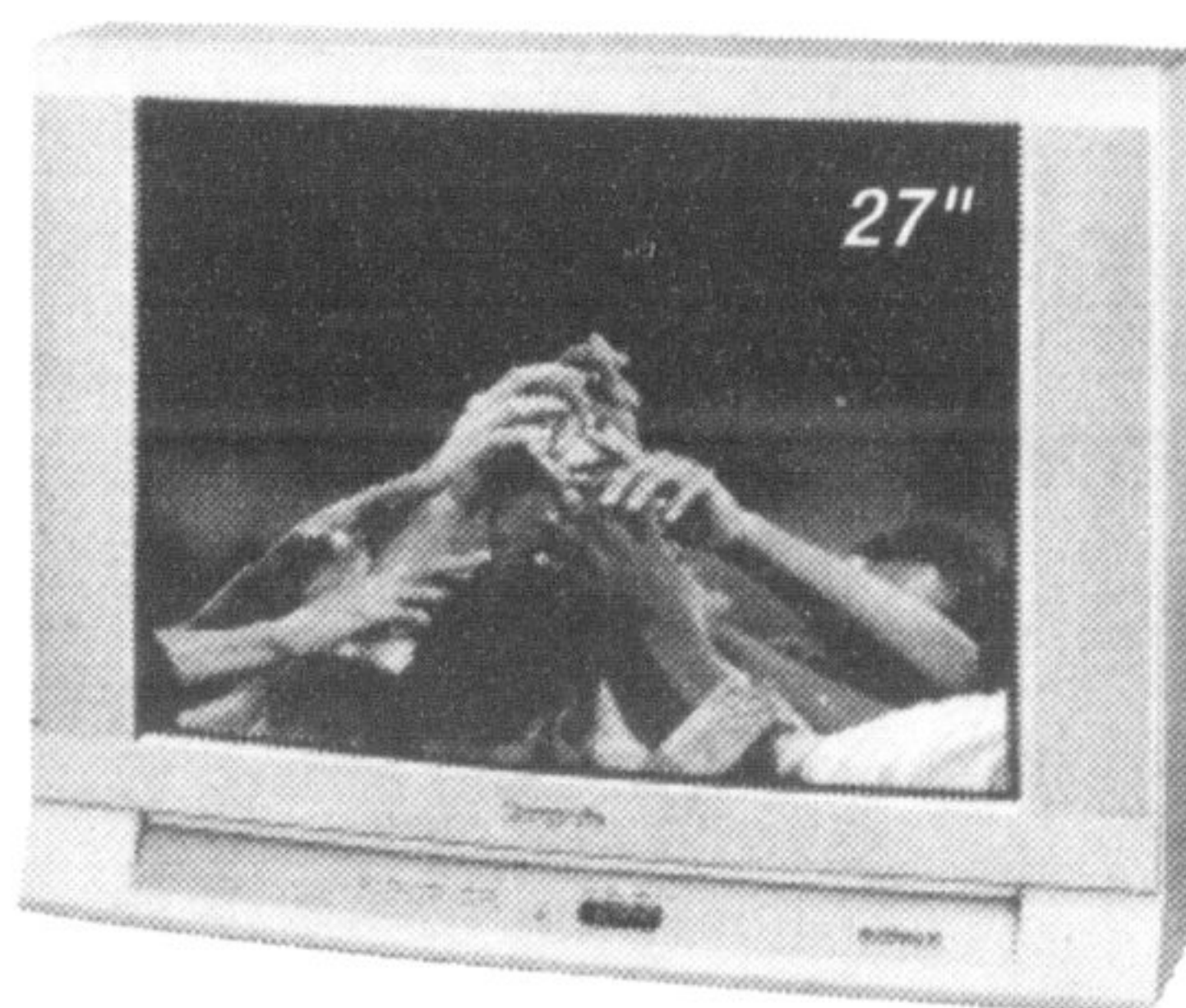


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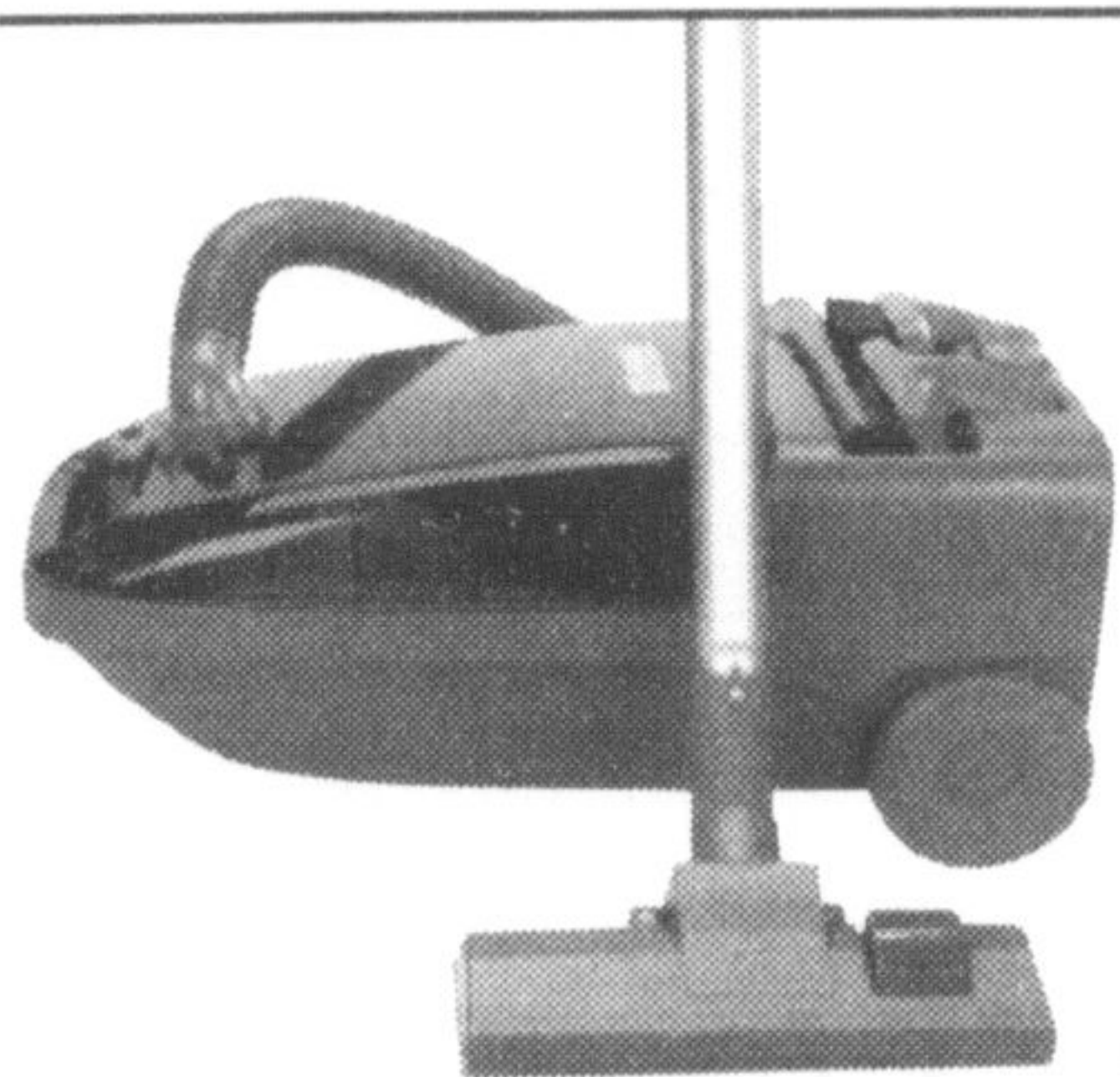
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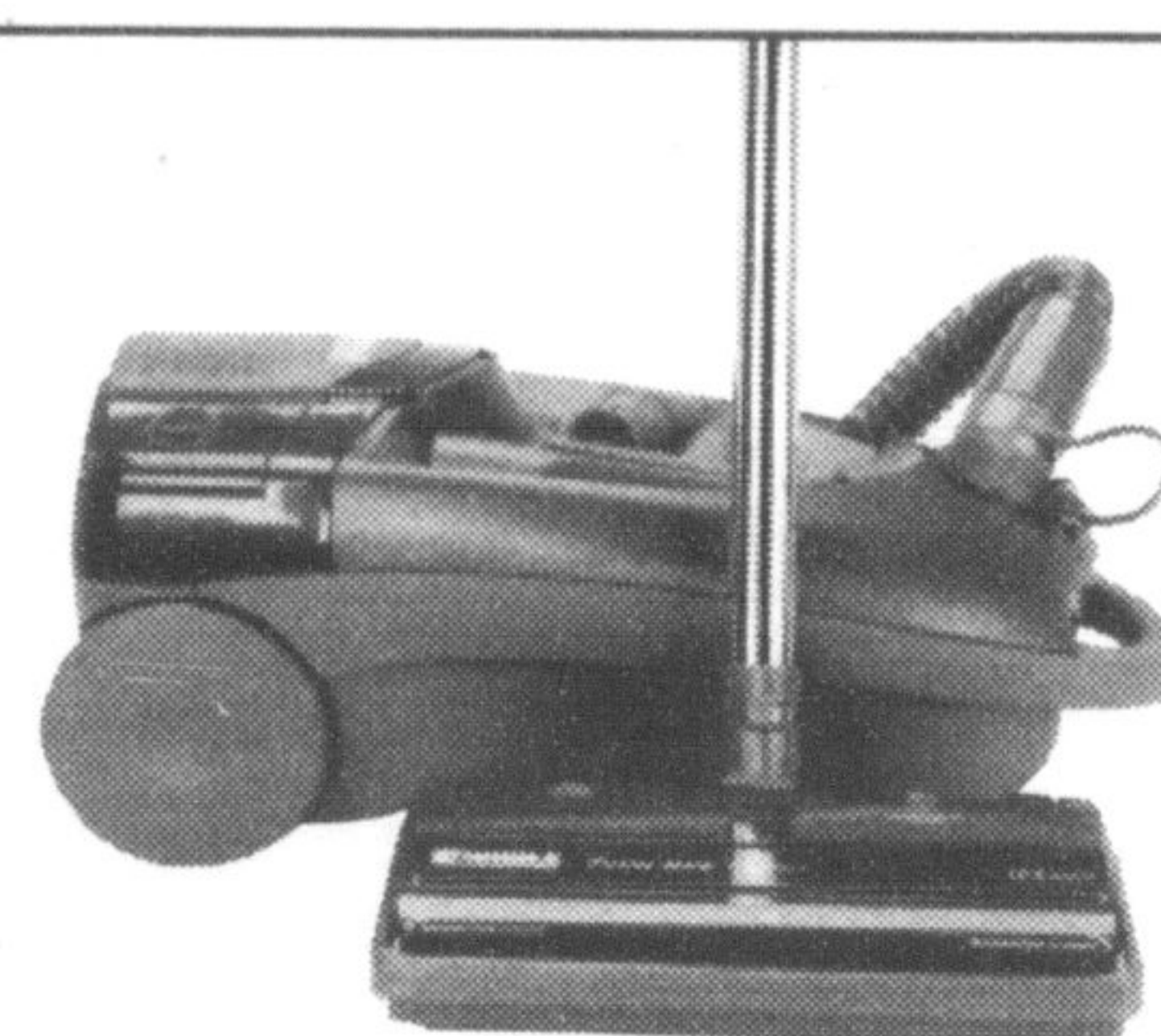
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