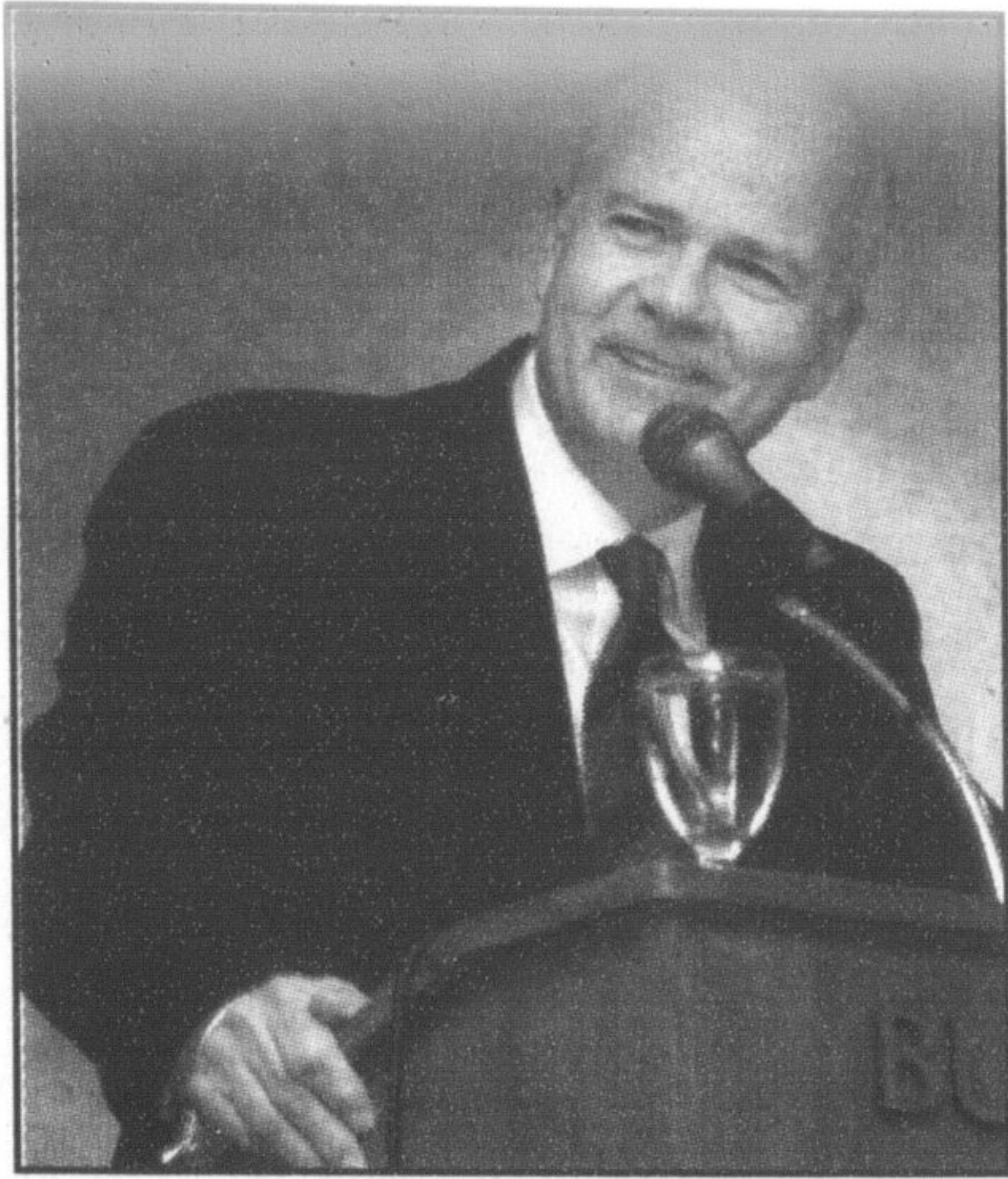


More leaders needed, says Mansbridge at seminar



Peter Mansbridge

By CRAIG McBRIDE
Special to The Champion

Literacy and leadership were the hot points as a high school drop-out and the Ontario education minister spoke to teachers, senior administrators and students Monday night.

The high school drop-out, CBC chief correspondent and anchor of The National, Peter Mansbridge, gave the keynote address at the Burlington Convention Centre at a seminar entitled Literacy Leadership for Student Success, organized by the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic School Board.

Mr. Mansbridge highlighted the need for more leaders, saying that teachers are the people who most need to take on the role.

Mr. Mansbridge said "somewhere along the way, a disconnect appeared between teachers and the public."

He added, "Teachers may not be considered community leaders anymore."

Then again, few people are considered leaders.

According to Mr. Mansbridge, used car salesmen, seen as stereotypically untrustworthy, now have plenty of company.

Politicians, lawyers, bankers and journalists, along with others, aren't, according to polls, any more trustworthy than the used car salesman.

"Are our expectations too high, or have our leaders really let us down? I suspect it's a bit of both," Mr. Mansbridge said.

Healthy skepticism and the challenging of authority are noble, he added, but when skepticism becomes cynicism, something must be changed.

"If you think educators are above this all, think again," he said, highlighting a case of a teacher who was caught with a computer full of child pornography, a teacher who taught that the holocaust didn't really happen, and a teacher who slept with students.

Regardless of these rare incidents, a remarkable number of teachers are everyday heroes, Mr. Mansbridge said, and many of them work entirely selflessly. "You are the leaders we have to count on. It is somewhat cliché to say one teacher can make all the difference, but like every cliché there's a ring of truth in it," he said. "I know how easy it is to talk idealistically, but good teachers can change this country."

When asked during the question and answer period how teachers were expected to return to their classrooms and motivate students to graduate when he didn't even graduate, Mr. Mansbridge replied, "Tell them I got an honorary degree. It worked out for me. It's rare, but it does happen. It's not the smartest route."

Mr. Mansbridge went on to admit that getting into news was a fluke.

While working as a freight handler for an airline in Brandon, Man., he was asked to do a boarding announcement. After doing so, he was approached by a manager of CBC radio northern service, who asked Mr. Mansbridge if he had ever thought of working in radio. He hadn't, but he took the opportunity and made the most of it.

"I worked a lot harder than the people around me who had qualifications," he said. "I taught myself to do news."

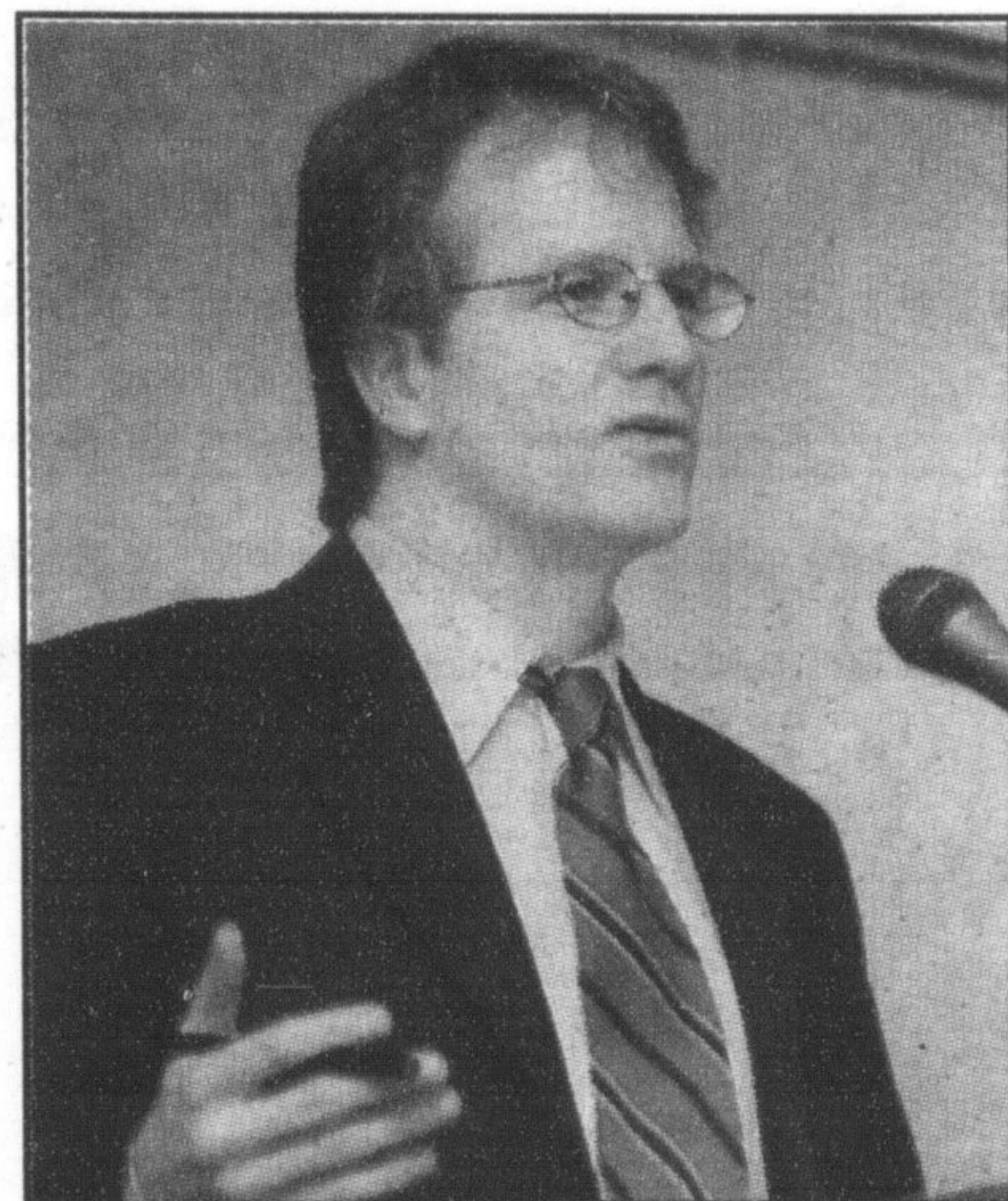
Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy didn't make many promises during his speech, but did proclaim that "this is going to be a very exciting time in education."

He said that the provincial government's emphasis on education is drawing a consensus he has never seen before.

"The path to a better place to live in is through education," he said.

Literacy was also touched on by Mr. Kennedy.

"It's not just about reading and writing. It's about understanding what Mr. Mansbridge is talking about every night," he said. "At 12 years old, if we can't have you literate and numerate, we've taken away your chances."



Gerard Kennedy

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