

# Candidates provide answers to questionnaire

Recently the Halton Teacher Action Coordinating Team's political action committee sent a 10-part questionnaire to the three Halton-Burlington election candidates. The questions and their answers are reprinted here.

"The questionnaire was intended primarily as information for teachers, but we feel the public is also interested in these educational issues," said the letter accompanying the survey that was sent to the Halton press. "The questionnaire and all the activities by teacher political action committees in this election, are intended to be nonpartisan."

The T.A.C.T. group represents Ontario Teacher's Federation in this area.

Answers to the questions were provided by candidates Julian Reed of the Liberal party, William Johnson of the NDP and Gary Dawkins of the Progressive Conservatives. Their answers are published verbatim.

**QUESTION:** A recent government appointed committee suggested that the provincial government pay 66 per cent instead of the present 60 per cent of education costs. What are your views on educational funding?

**Liberal:** Taxation of property does not provide a fair distribution of the educational cost burden. I agree that the provincial government's acceptance of a 66 per cent share would certainly be a step in the right direction and perhaps not enough; however, money from this source must not simply be fed into the open mouth of the educational bureaucracy without democratic control.

**N.D.P.:** It is my firm belief that educational costs have to be removed from property tax. I welcome the day when educational costs are levied at the paycheck or income level.

**P.C.:** Educational funding is being reviewed presently by the government to investigate alternative methods of financing or further adjustments or present funding. Personally, I feel the provincial government should continue to increase their share of educational costs as realistic and responsible financing alternatives allow. In the long run, I would like to see the educational tax divorced from the property tax system.

**QUESTION:** To what degree should the Ministry of Education prescribe what is taught in the schools of Ontario?

**Liberal:** I believe in the establishment of a true core curriculum of basic skills and subjects with accompanying standards of achievement at all levels, recognizing that education under the British North America Act is the exclusive responsibility of the province. Consultation with the teachers' Federations would be a priority since the parent-teacher relationship must once again form the keystone of the system. The influence of bureaucratic policy must be reduced.

**N.D.P.:** There should be basic education standards set to enable a student to pass from one school or one area to another. A reorganization of School Boards should be established to meet local needs.

**P.C.:** The P.C. Party position is that the Ministry of Education should delegate as much decision making as possible to the local board in the area of curriculum development. But it remains the responsibility of the Ministry to develop a framework for the courses of study. Personally, I favour giving more guidance to teachers, in order that the burden of curriculum development is not so extensive that it robs the teacher of the energy needed to cope with the students.

**QUESTION:** Would you allow the teaching profession to license teachers in the province of Ontario?

**Liberal:** Yes, with the same recognition and status that is given to other professions, i.e., doctors. The status of teachers must be raised from its present level. Perhaps some representative parents could also sit on the resulting bodies for discipline and retention of standards.

**N.D.P.:** No. Such organizations in law and medicine do not always act in the best interests of a community. Obviously all teachers are not satisfied with the present situation. I would welcome alternatives from the teaching profession.

**P.C.:** The government's position is definitely not. Personally, I would like to see other aspects of professionalism stressed in order to justify this action. I would like to see the federations voice more opinions on curriculum content as well as teaching concepts.

**QUESTION:** Would you amend existing legislation to give teachers the majority representation position with respect to the Teacher Superannuation Commission? Would you tie teacher superannuation benefits to a cost of living allowance.

**Liberal:** It's your money, why shouldn't you control it? The superannuation fund is currently losing thousands of dollars because the present government is using low interest loans from that source to carry the deficit. The government might think twice about deficit financing if it had to borrow on the open market. In this way teachers are currently subsidizing the Province. If teachers controlled their own fund they could provide whatever escalation clause they wanted.

**N.D.P.:** Yes. I would recommend this right not only for teachers but for everyone participating in such schemes. I would tie the benefits to a C.O.L.A.

**P.C.:** The Government position is no. They feel that government is a major sharing partner in the operation of the Teachers' Superannuation Commission. It must be remembered that one half of the funds are provided by the public. Personally, I would like to see more teacher input into investment decisions but I feel that the distribution on pay out of funds should be controlled as it is now. As regards tying the benefits to a cost of living allowance, the government feels this has been done with the passage of Bill 135. I personally support the need for recognizing the inroads of inflation upon pension levels for all pensioners.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that the Ministry of Education should encourage the establishment of alternate schools and give financial support to them?

**Liberal:** Basically no. Education should meet the de-

mands of parents; however, there should be enough room in the present system to meet those demands.

**N.D.P.:** No. The Separate School System is protected by the B.N.A. Act. If everyone wanted to send their children to a school of their own choice, we'd have as many schools as homes. My answer to Question 2, also applies here.

**P.C.:** I concur with my party—No. Ontario has a long established principle of a publicly supported school system assessable and applicable to all. If the Ministry of Education were to encourage alternative schools, every ethnic group would want its own school.

**QUESTION:** What are your views on the present quality of education? What do you feel are the priorities for quality education?

**Liberal:** Students have been graduating without a proper grasp of their native language and country. I would like to see a definite improvement in these two areas. My priorities are:—a core curriculum with standards at all levels, an improvement in the teacher-parent relationship, more monetary assistance to the primary grades, i.e. reduced class size and diagnostic services to complement the teacher.

**N.D.P.:** I am disappointed in the quality. Our present education system has developed into a sausage machine where the good, bad and indifferent emerge as one. I don't blame the teachers for this situation; some blame must fall on some parents; but mostly the fault lies with the Administration at all levels. At the university level, competitive enrollment practices make it practically impossible for anyone to gain admission, then these same organizations complain about the mediocrity of the student. Education is to prepare you to cope with situations in the real world for all things, and for a better way of life. The priorities are for finding what each individual is best suited to, and developing his or her potential.

**P.C.:** The party position is as follows: Ontario's system is one of the finest in Canada and has been studied and adopted by many jurisdictions. They state that the priority in education remains to give our children a firm foundation in the basic skills. We must also help them learn to adapt to a readily changing environment. We must teach people how to learn and how

to seek out information. Personally, I would consider myself a traditionalist. I was happy to see directives issued earlier this year stressing the basic skills. I would like to see more expression of teachers' feelings on curriculum and teaching concepts. I do feel that the top 10 per cent or the elite students are at least as well educated as at any other time but we are now accommodating many students in the system who would have dropped out ten years ago.

**QUESTION:** How do you feel about principals and vice-principals not having the right to strike?

**Liberal:** I do not like to see principals and vice-principals separated by legislation from their teachers and professional colleagues and made into junior administrators. The legislation is another example of escalating bureaucratic imposition by excluding principals and vice-principals from their right to strike.

**N.D.P.:** Principals and vice-principals should have the right to strike but not during the life of a signed agreement. If a contract is terminated and the offered conditions are not acceptable, the principal and vice-principal should, like anyone else providing a service, have the right to withdraw that service.

**P.C.:** The party position is that principals and vice-principals are management and should not have the right to withdraw services. I will not comment on this. I agree strongly with the bargaining procedures in Bill 100. From a purely practical point of view, I do not see the advantages in divorcing the principals and vice-principals from the rest of the teachers on the strike issue. A much more serious problem can result from the strains it will put on the staff-principal relationship should a strike situation develop. I do not consider the principal-teacher relationship to be parallel to that of a foreman-worker one.

**QUESTION:** What do you feel should be the role of the school in the teaching of family life education?

**Liberal:** Why do you fear calling it sex education? I want my three children to get all they can. I respect at the same time any parent's right to object to part of the course and withdraw their child if necessary. Morals are taught in the home. I am not afraid.

**N.D.P.:** Family life education should be given the same priority as other education.

**P.C.:** Some family life education can be successfully

taught in the classroom but public morality cannot be legislated. It can only be taught by careful example and this is the responsibility of society as a whole and the parents in particular. I think stress should be put on adult education to help parents deal with the problems of raising children in our complex society. A parent can hardly rely on his childhood experiences anymore. Society is simply changing too rapidly.

**QUESTION:** What part should French language rights play in our educational

system? Should French be a compulsory subject in the elementary and secondary panels?

**Liberal:** It is a known fact that any language is learned more quickly in the early years. Children are handicapped with the present grade 6 up system. Parents who wish their children to learn French should be able to do so.

**N.D.P.:** I feel that as we are a bilingual nation, all students should be taught to communicate in French.

**P.C.:** The party position is no. French should not be

compulsory. Personally I feel children in the elementary panel should be exposed to a second language. Logically this language should be French.

**QUESTION:** At present the basic ceilings are \$926 per elementary school pupil and \$1,441 per secondary school student. What are your opinions on these ceilings and the difference between the two panels?

**Liberal:** I do not like the ceilings as they presently exist. This is an important issue that requires further study,

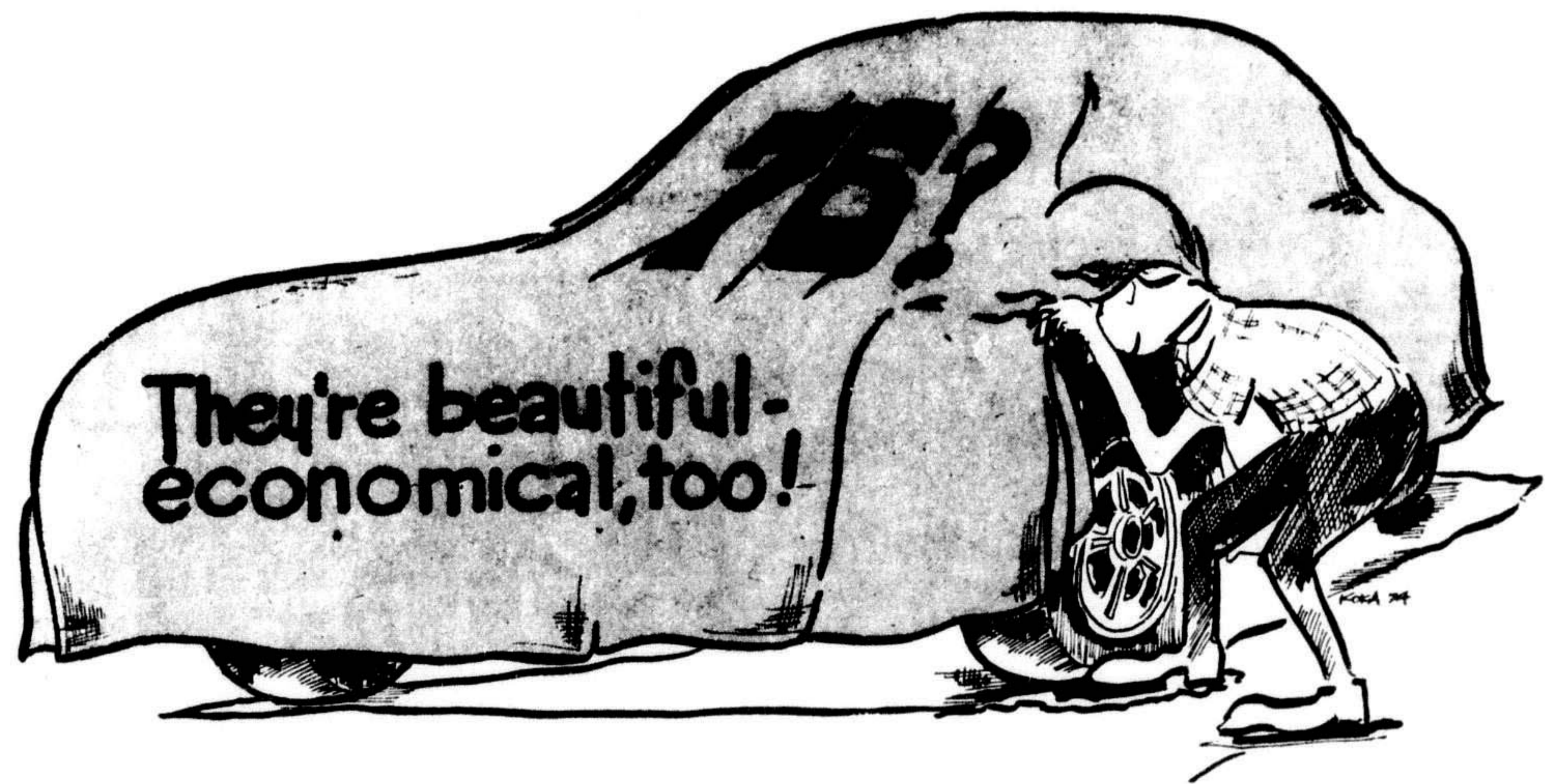
e.g., an examination of unit costing for specific programs and greater priority to the primary level of education.

**N.D.P.:** I believe the elementary ceilings should be increased. The students' formative years are the most important. Learning difficulties and social problems can be discovered and treated early if sufficient funds and effort are applied. One doesn't build a sky-scraper or indeed any building on a poor foundation, and this rule also applies to education.

**P.C.:** The government position is that the ceilings

are designed as a protection for the public against excessive costs in education. They are set high enough to allow a high level of educational quality. The Minister of Education has been working to narrow the margin between the two panels. I believe the ceilings are a good idea providing they are reviewed and found not to be overly restrictive. I very definitely feel they must be equalized. The elementary school years are the formative years when the basic skills are established. They must be given equal financial emphasis.

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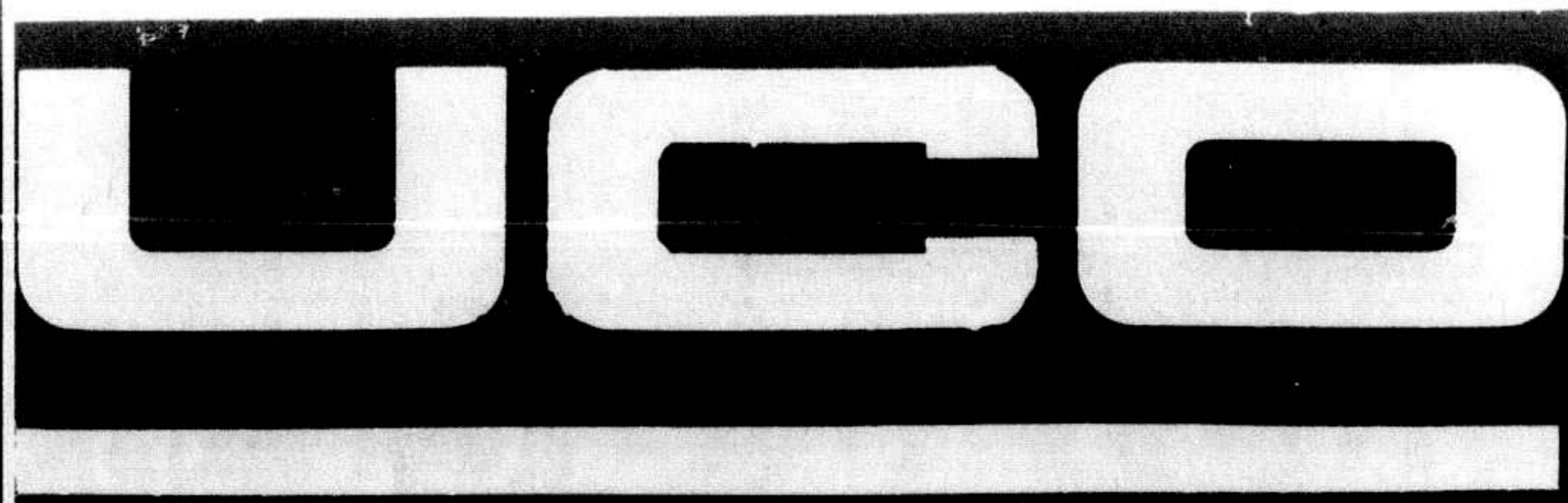
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