

Oaklands Regional Centre

Homelike atmosphere for retarded persons

By Joyce Beaton
For too long our government housing conditions for the mentally handicapped have been appalling and our lack of sensitivity shocking. A giant step in the right direction has been made in Oakville with the building of the Oaklands Regional Centre at the corner of Kerr and Bond Streets.

Scheduled to officially open this Friday, Oaklands is a new idea in the care of the mentally retarded. The old Ortona Armed Forces barracks have been renovated and rebuilt to accommodate 150 children and adults.

They will be brought from the antiquated buildings in Orillia and Cedar Springs in Huron County, where for upwards of 10 years they have slept up to 70 in a room in an insular environment.

Family environment
At Oaklands the atmosphere will be homelike with no more than two to a bedroom in cottage-style residences resembling modern houses. Unlike the "warehouses", the name given to present accommodation by board member Elva Telfer, the buildings encourage family situations with common recreation areas, small kitchens, and most important accessibility to the normal life of the community.

As do normal children they will attend local schools, sheltered workshops and sheltered industry and return to their cottage-style home atmosphere in the afternoon. A school program will also be available within the centre.

Persons first
"Handicapped is in the eye of the beholder. The handicapped are persons first and handicapped second." This is the philosophy behind the Oaklands Centre and the words belong to Bengt Nirje of the Ministry of Community and Social Services as he explains the concept of normalization to be used within the new residence.

Unlike the set-up in many residences where the retarded received no training and had to stay inside the wards, the residences of Oaklands will be taking part in community activities. "In an institution they are isolated in an artificial life," said Mr. Nirje. "Here they take part in life, this is a great place where we also want the community to come and share with us."

Relate with love
The children's division will be under the direction of Elsa Henroth who has taught handicapped and mentally retarded children in Sweden, Switzerland and Canada. "Our goal is that the children be happy and relaxed, as independent as possible, each with an individual program," she explains.

Miss Henroth will work with a team of occupational, speech and physio-therapists, psychologists, social workers, programmers and counsellors. She is insistent

that evaluations will be done in the child's environment, "an office is not a child's environment."

"The councillors will act as mother or father figures in the child's life and relate to them with love," she said.

Into community

It is the plan of Dr. Garry Baker, in charge of the 62 adults in the building, that community resources be used as much as possible. "Many have had 10 years in a large institution and have been living outside normal lifestyles," he explains. Residents will be taken shopping and to entertainment within the community.

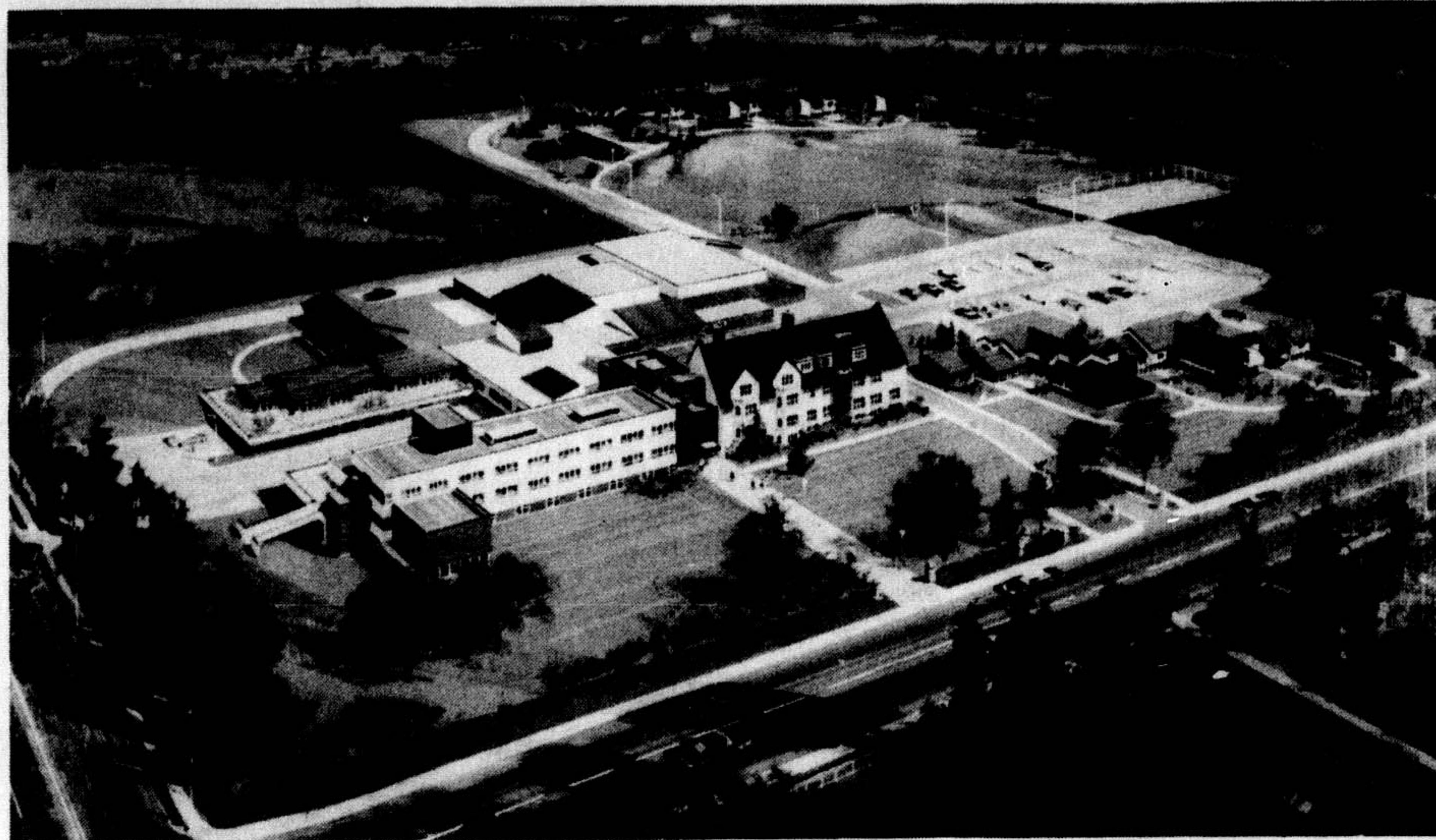
Oaklands has been built on 20 acres of land in three distinct areas. The main building contains offices, teaching rooms, assessment and medical facilities. There is also a double gymnasium and sloped swimming pool. The second area is the residences for eight persons each.

The grounds feature a large playing field, paved tennis courts and an orchard and gardens.

Planned locally
Members of the local associations for the mentally retarded have assisted in the planning of the centre. The board of directors are E. Lawrence Morris of Oakville, Rev. Peter Barrow of Georgetown, Shirley Campbell of Mississauga, Cor Bonama of Brampton, Harry "Red" Foster of Oakville, L. Griffiths of Georgetown, Dr. Richard Hyma of Brampton, Anne Kavelman of Mississauga, George Maltby of Acton, Jean Millar of North Burlington, Ruth Mitchell of Hornby, Alice Scheer of Burlington, Colin Smillie of Milton, Elva Telfer of Oakville and John Wood of Oakville.

Donald Bath of Oakville is the executive director of Oaklands Centre. Residents will be moving in toward the middle of October.

"A Patchwork of Local History", a special display of Champion photos, books and papers, is on display at Milton Library to Sept. 27.



CENTRE FOR RETARDED in Oakville is the new Oaklands Regional Centre on the site of the former Ortona Armed Forces barracks. The buildings to the left in the foreground are offices,

teaching rooms, assessment and medical facilities. The housing to the right in front is for the adults and in the rear for the children. It will be officially opened this Friday afternoon.

Manpower program at Sheridan

Two development officers from the Manpower Training Branch of Queen's Park have transferred their operation to Sheridan College.

Owen Stephen and Jack Seifert, in charge of the Canada Manpower Industrial Training Program (CMITP) for Halton and Peel, have been working out of the Oakville Campus since early September.

The training program, formerly administered by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, provides direct financial aid to industry for training and retraining. It also pays for part of the employee's salary while on the job for one year following the training.

On-job training
Over the past few years, the

federal government has shifted its emphasis from institutional training to on-the-job training in industry, said Don Hamilton, Dean of Community Services. By decentralizing the training out to the college, it becomes easier for the government to respond to local needs and to monitor the training.

"From the college's point of view, CMITP provides Sheridan with another funding mechanism to fulfill the needs of both business and industry and the general public. Sheridan is now able to consider areas that we couldn't cover before," said Hamilton.

In addition to the new Manpower Industrial Training Program, Sheridan runs programs for Training in Business and Industry and Management Development and Training.

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Russell Clements honored

Twin flags were flown at half mast last week to honor the late Russell Clements who died Monday night and was buried Wednesday.

Prior to observing a minute's silence in his honor at Tuesday's council meeting, Mayor Anne MacArthur noted that Mr. Clements "was an esteemed citizen and one whom everyone in town

had benefitted from. He was a gentleman who stood straight and who stood tall." Mr. Clements was a former postmaster and 91 years of age when he died.

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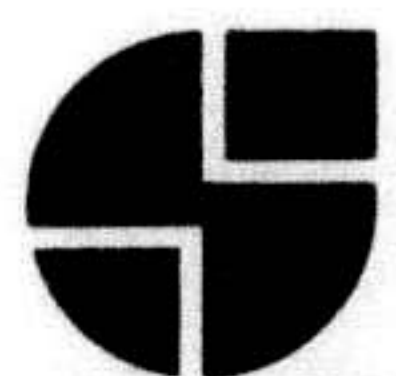
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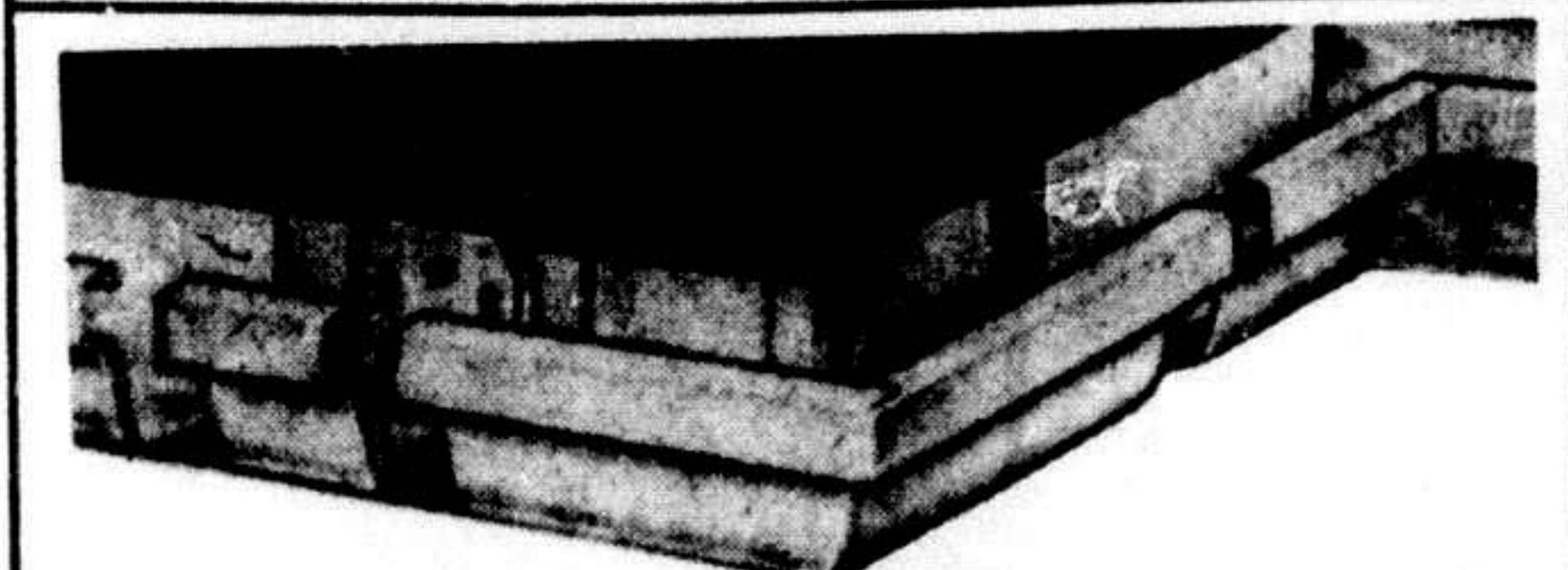
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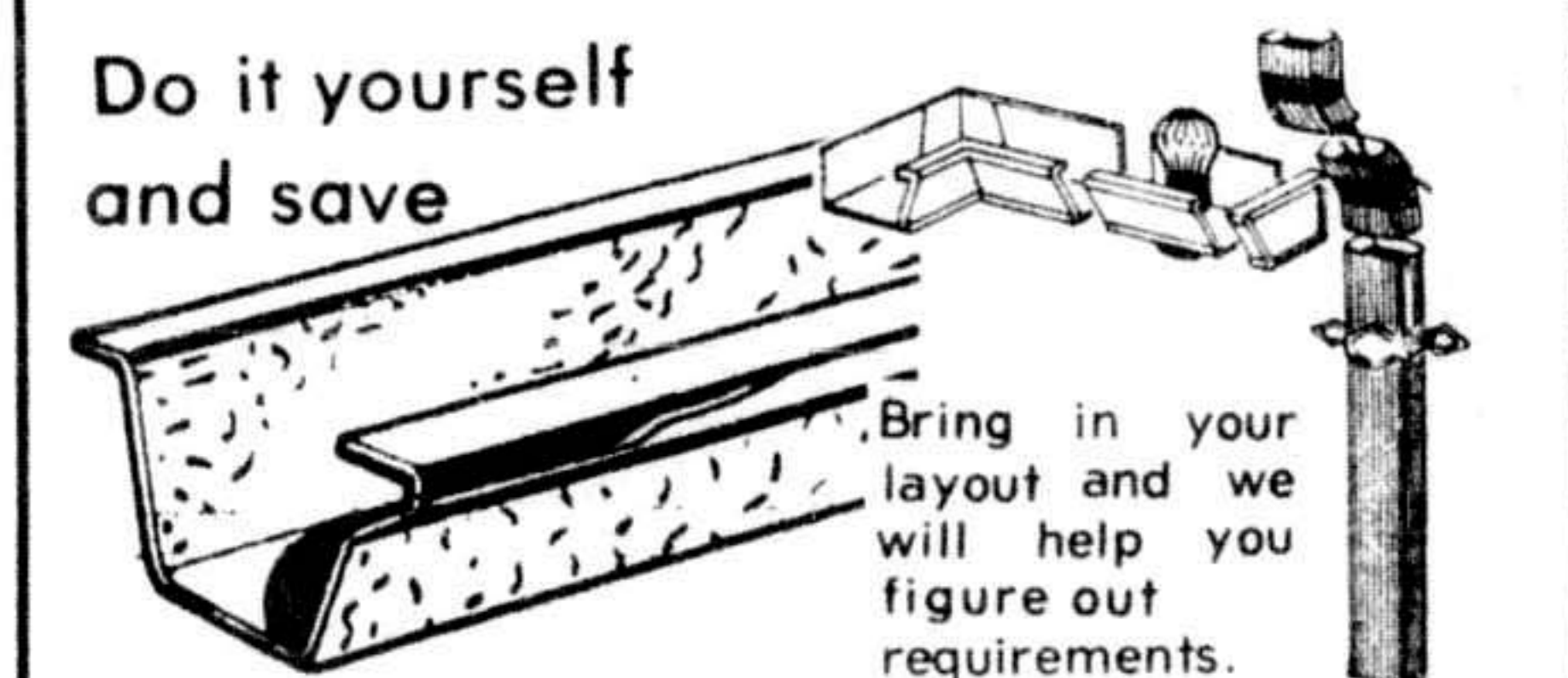
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