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Health system sick

They're fed up and they're not going to take it any more! They are the province's Red Cross homemakers and 'it' is their embarrassingly low wage. A group of homemakers, 500 strong, were at Queen's Park Monday to demand better pay. Among them were 10 from north Halton.

These health-care professionals have been quietly saving taxpayers' money for years by keeping older adults and the disabled away from costly institutionalized care. Regular visits from homemakers allow many to live independently in the community who otherwise would be in hospital or nursing homes.

For their diligent care and much-needed service, homemakers are paid about \$6 an hour. The turnover rate for the province is 75 per cent. Who can blame homemakers for moving on to better paying jobs?

Women aren't taking jobs to cover cost of "extras" any more. Many are working for their bread and butter. A \$6 per hour job barely affords day-old bread and margarine.

The trend toward home care and away from institutionalization was established to cut health care costs. It has worked. But those savings have not been passed along to the people who made the trend a reality.

The homemakers know just how valued their service is but they can't take that knowledge to the bank. They took it instead to Queen's Park and have made demands they should never have been forced to make.

The health care system is seriously ill when the government can't cough up decent wages for these indispensable professionals. A quick cure is needed.

Strike not solution

Finally.

After what seemed to be an eternity, ambulance attendants in Halton and Mississauga voted to accept the latest contract and return to work in two weeks.

They've been on a legal strike for five months and while many might argue the negotiating process works, it really didn't in this case.

Faced with permanently losing their jobs should they remain on strike another week, the membership was forced, or backed themselves into a corner, depending on your political views, to accept the latest offer.

Perhaps the union's requests were too strong. Perhaps the company's stand was too rigid. It really doesn't matter. What does matter is that for the past five months Halton has put up with less-than-standard ambulance service.

This is no way to run an ambulance service.

Ambulance service should be considered an essential service. If not, then allow competitors in the same area. Any enterprise which can deprive or reduce essential services to the public is only inconveniencing the public.

Secondly, there's no reason a settlement couldn't be imposed by a mediator. The company might not like it because it will be forced to pay amounts it may not have in its coffers. Union members might not like because they have less say in the matter.

Thirdly, there's something about a for-profit ambulance service which is scary. Maybe it's the way of the future, with more responsible management, we're not sure. But we couldn't imagine a for-profit police force or fire department and we don't see that much of a difference.

Clearly, five-month ambulance strikes aren't something we want. It would be considerably helpful if the responsible provincial ministry would do something to ensure they don't happen again.

Looking Back



Before Glen Eden Ski Area was developed, local skiers could travel 10 miles to Cedar Springs Ski Club at Kilbride. That's what this group did back in January of 1960. The Kilbride club had more than 900 members at

the time who paid annual fees of \$8 each. Ready for the Cedar Springs slopes are from left: Nancy Desjardine, Tina Tonelli, Harvey Pettigrew, Carol Randall and Kenny Desjardine.

Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the Wednesday January 13, 1988 issue

• The Milton Rotary Club's prized subsidized housing project on Bronte Rd. isn't about to fall apart but the various factions involved are jockeying for advantage like unfriendly card players, peering suspiciously at the other player's bids. The \$2-million, 28-housing development would be a sorely needed shot in the arm for Milton, which is housing-starved at any price.

• Plans have been set to make the seventh annual Milton Winter Carnival in February one of the best yet. The three-day carnival scheduled for Feb. 5-7 encourages Milton residents to come out of hibernation and take advantage of activities only available in winter. The carnival gets off to a slow start with euchre at the legion from 1:30-4 p.m. Friday. Everyone is welcome. Admission is \$1.

• A Commercial St. resident and her daughter arrived home shortly after midnight on Sunday to discover their front door unlocked and someone upstairs. Police were called and found a 35-year old Commercial St. man in the women's bedroom. Her underwear drawer had been disturbed. A master key was used to gain entrance to the residence.

• The junior girls cross-country team from MDHS competed in many races last year but now they will be competing in one of the farthest races ever — farthest

from home that is. The six-member team from Milton District High School was selected to represent Canada at the International School Federation cross-country championships in Luxemburg in March.

20 Years Ago

From the Wednesday January 15, 1969 issue

• The unpleasant task of issuing 48 tickets to owners of cars hampering snow removal in Milton fell to the Milton Police Force during the past few days. Police chief Ray Andress stated the majority of citizens have been very co-operative in keeping their vehicles in driveways to allow the plows and blowers a clear path.

• Happiness, if you happen to be 100 years old, is a big birthday party, a giant cake, and visits from all of your friends. Mrs. Edith L. Greene of Halton Centennial Manor thought so anyway. It was in her own words "the best birthday party I ever had," when the management of the manor, the Women's Auxiliary and friends at Canadian Wellinghouse threw a big party in the manor auditorium.

• All the thrills (and perhaps spills) of sled dog races will be on display in the district this Saturday and Sunday afternoon, when the Siberian Husky Club of Canada holds its annual sled races at Carlisle.

• Two cars received a total of \$450 property damage Saturday when they collided in Milton Plaza parking lot.

50 Years Ago

From the Thursday January 15, 1939 issue

• Notice — The annual meeting of Milton Cemetary Company will be held in the Farmer's Building, Milton, on Jan. 16th, 1939 at 3 p.m. All shareholders are invited to attend.

• Don't Miss Seeing — "Heart of the North" at the Princess Theatre on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, Jan 17th a 18th, under the auspices of the Grace Church. Admission is 25 cents. This is an all Canadian Picture.

• Value of Leaf Mould — The chief value of leaf mould is in adding humus to the soil. For example, a sandy soil has not the capacity to retain soil moisture on account of its coarse open texture. The addition of humus changes the texture completely, making it absorb larger amounts of rainfall and during dry weather to draw larger supplies from the subsoil. Its addition to clay soils loosens all such, making them more easily worked and prevents baking and cracking during hot dry weather.

Pud

