

Rockwell labour dispute erupts on picket line

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By KAREN SMITH

1980 brought little cheer for employees of Rockwell International of Canada in Milton. In January, the company announced that 125 workers may be laid off in late February or early March. A desperate state of economic affairs within the North American car industry was forcing the local coil and leaf spring plant to dismiss workers from the assembly line. Dismal car sales, down 30 per cent over 1979's figures, was one of several factors to blame for the troubles.

It wasn't a happy new year for the Delfabbro family. Fire gutted their new \$40,000 home near Moffat in early January. Fire officials believed a furnace malfunction was responsible for the blaze in which little was saved. Mario Delfabbro was in the process of moving his family into the house.

The Milton Chamber of Commerce selected the entire 250-member Milton District Hospital Auxiliary as the 1979 Citizen of the Year.

February started on a sad note when the frozen body of a Mississauga man was found in field on Derry Road, nearly six weeks after he was reported missing. The 19-year-old was last seen alive on the evening of December 22, leaving a party on Lower Base Line Road to take a friend home to Derry Road. Three Ontario land surveyors discovered the body. Investigators believed the death was accidental.

It was called a "controlled harvest" and a "slaughter", but the Halton three-day deer hunt was scheduled to go ahead as planned, November 3, 4 and 5. Regional Council voted to allow the hunt.

Progressive Conservative Otto Jelinek returned as Halton's MP in the new Liberal government after beating Liberal Bill Perris and Doug Black of the New Democratic Party.

A breakdown in contract negotiations between Rockwell International of Canada Ltd. and the United Auto Workers Union led to a strike by approximately 500 employees in the Milton plant in March. Serious picket line confrontations followed.

Three of nine vocational workshops at E.C. Drury School for the hearing handicapped were closed in early April because of fears that asbestos may be falling from the ceilings.

Milton Council planned to petition the Ontario government to allow Milton to opt out of regional government. The reason was a 31 per cent education tax increase and a 31 per cent regional tax increase which the town would probably have trouble collecting from ratepayers, especially as Milton expected its own municipal increase to be less than one per cent.

The Town of Milton started legal action to force the owner of a burned out fruit and

A DECADE REMEMBERED 1980

vegetable store to clear out the debris. The store on Mill Street burned down December 22, 1979.

During late May, a preliminary hearing was set in August for a man charged with manslaughter in the shooting death of a 24-year-old Milton man. The accused was originally charged with criminal negligence causing death. Andre Wysman of Heslop Road died in Milton District Hospital 14 hours after being fatally shot in the back while fishing on a private farm owned by the accused.

Milton Council's proposal to sell the existing town hall and move the town administration to the former Halton courthouse and jail on Brown Street, took another step in June when an architect was selected for studies.

Tempers exploded on the Rockwell picket line later this month in what was described as a riot involving 40 striking picketers who blocked plant exits, thwarting the exit of plant management staff. Seventeen strikers were arrested and bodily carried away during a frenzied and bitter half-hour confrontation with Halton Regional Police.

It was now more than four months since Cathy Sweet, a Grade 9 student at Milton District High School, disappeared during a family vacation in Mexico. Cathy's mother Frances Sweet approached the Canadian police after becoming angered and frustrated by the Mexican government's lack of enthusiasm.

The Rockwell strike continued to cause controversy in July when the local plant won an interim court injunction restricting the number of striking picketers to 10. Meanwhile, striking workers planned to take action against Halton Regional Police to protest police tactics used during the arrest of 17 employees outside the plant.

In mid-August, a 17-year-old Milton youth died instantly after being hit by a train while walking on the Canadian National Railway bridge over the Credit River. Mark Garside was killed after being hit by an east-bound freight train and thrown against a concrete abutment.

Tragedy struck the small village of Kilbride in September with the death of a 19-year-old youth David Stokes of Cedar Springs Road



The ribbon was cut in October, 1980 to open the doors of Halton Women's Place, a refuge for abused and battered women. Peggy Balkind, Halton Women's Place president (left), assists Walter Mulkewich regional councillor and chairman of the Health and Social Services Committee.

was killed instantly in a single car accident on a stretch of Derry Road outside the village.

In October, Education Minister Dr. Bette Stephenson was looking into a Milton suggestion that the Town pay for an extra person to man the E.C. Drury swimming pool. Another employee would make more time possible for swimming programs.

November ended the eight-month Rockwell strike. Under threat of permanent plant closure by the new year, 1,200 workers and Chatham signed a three-year contract.

In the November 10 election, Gord Krantz, a

life-long Milton resident, ousted two-term mayor Don Grodon. Colin Best, whose father Brian earlier served as mayor, got the highest number of votes in Ward 2 and was set to join incumbents Rose Harrison and Blanche Hinton, plus first-time challenger Don Knight on council.

Milton Council took a radical step in December to resolve once and for all the 1,100-acre parcel of industrial land along Highway 401. Known as the Milton-Highway 401 Industrial Park, the land was planned to be split into three parcels so that it could be developed.



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