

Family fights gas pipeline on farm

By NORMAN NELSON

A planned 11-kilometre expansion of the Union Gas pipeline from Ninth Line to just west of Highway 25 in Milton is fuelling the anger of a third generation farmer literally caught in the middle.

It's not the first time the Micallef family, which owns a 100-acre market farm on Sixth Line just south of Derry Road (across from Trafalgar Golf and Country Club), has been asked to turn over land in the name of progress.

They didn't like it back in the early 1970s when the first two gas lines were put through, and estimate they spent as much as \$25,000 in an unsuccessful bid to keep them off their property.

They believed the pipeline was shuffled onto their property in order to avoid disrupting a small portion of the adjacent golf course. The eventual settlement, John Micallef said, was less than \$7,000.

And now Union Gas is preparing to put in a third gas line which it plans to construct next summer.

Union Gas pipeline project manager Roger Piatt explained in a telephone interview from his Chatham office that the Ontario Energy Board gave its approval in late August, after presiding over public hearings last November and February.

About 30 property owners are along the site. He said negotiations for use of the rights-of-way are "very seriously" underway and will hopefully conclude before winter.

If not, he said, "we'll be forced to proceed with the expropriation process."

The issue came to a confrontation Monday when Union Gas sent employees to Mr. Micallef's property to do a survey. The family refused them entry.

The Micallefs say they were not informed of the Ontario Energy Board hearings held last winter, and thus their concerns were not addressed when the provincial

agency handed down its decision last summer in support of the Union Gas expansion.

"I'd like another energy board hearing," John Micallef said.

Union Gas contends that all affected property owners were advised of the hearings by registered mail and that announcements were placed in the local media.

"He (Mr. Micallef) was served notice of the hearing by registered mail," said Mr. Piatt.

He explained that the "Ontario Energy Board approval gives us the right to enter his property to do a survey."

The survey is needed in order to negotiate a settlement with the landowners, or failing that, for the expropriation process.

Mr. Piatt said Union Gas informed both Mr. Micallef and his lawyer the previous week that it planned to do the survey last Monday.

"We showed up Monday to do it, and he wouldn't allow us on the property."

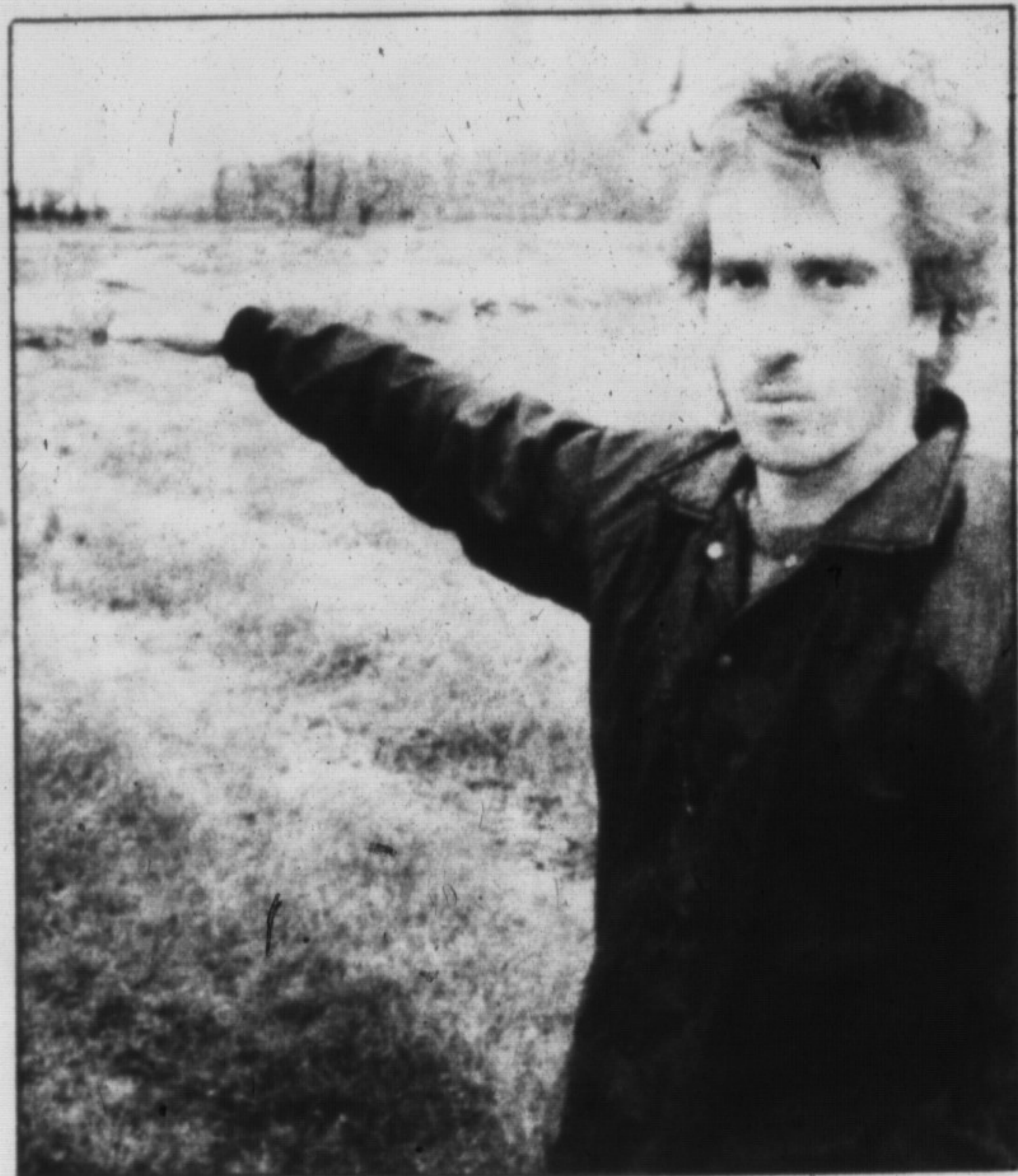
Mr. Piatt added that the company will attempt to resolve the dispute. If the differences can't be resolved, he said, "we'll probably return within a week with the assistance of the local police."

Mr. Micallef said that when "gas mains cross a market farm, it is then not fit for horticulture use."

One problem, he said, is that after the pipe is put in, the topsoil and subsoil are mixed together, which is unsuitable for crops. Where the current pipeline goes through, he added, erosion has left the land three feet below normal.

"It's bare, vacant land. You can't grow crops, can't dig wells. It would make a good drive-in theatre," he quipped.

He is also unhappy with the proposed financial compensation.



3—The Canadian Champion, Friday, October 26, 1990

Photo by JOHN WARREN
Ron Micallef points to the proposed site of a natural gas line to run through his parents' farm on Sixth Line.

see PIPELINE on page 8

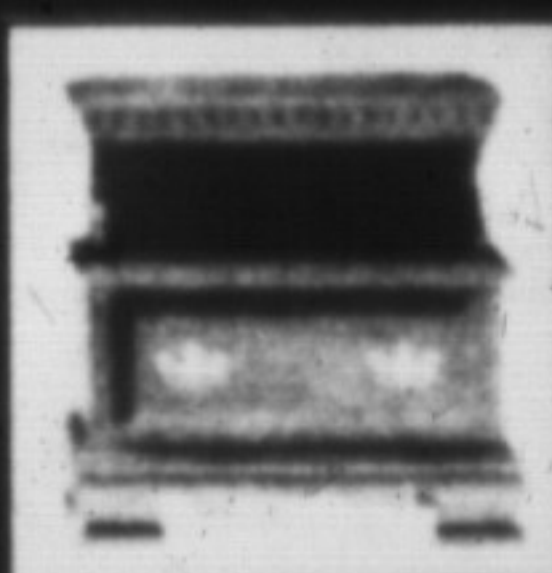
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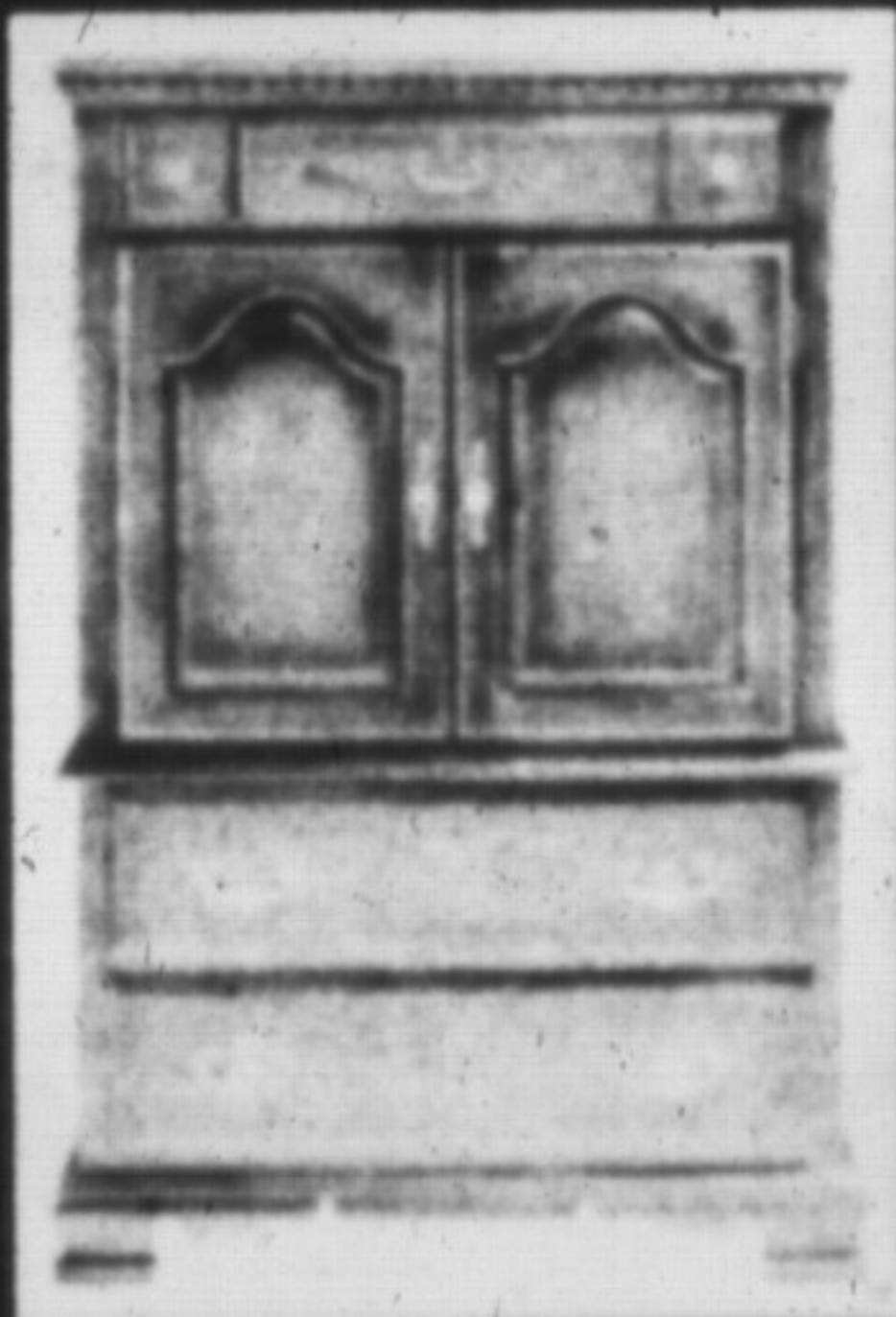
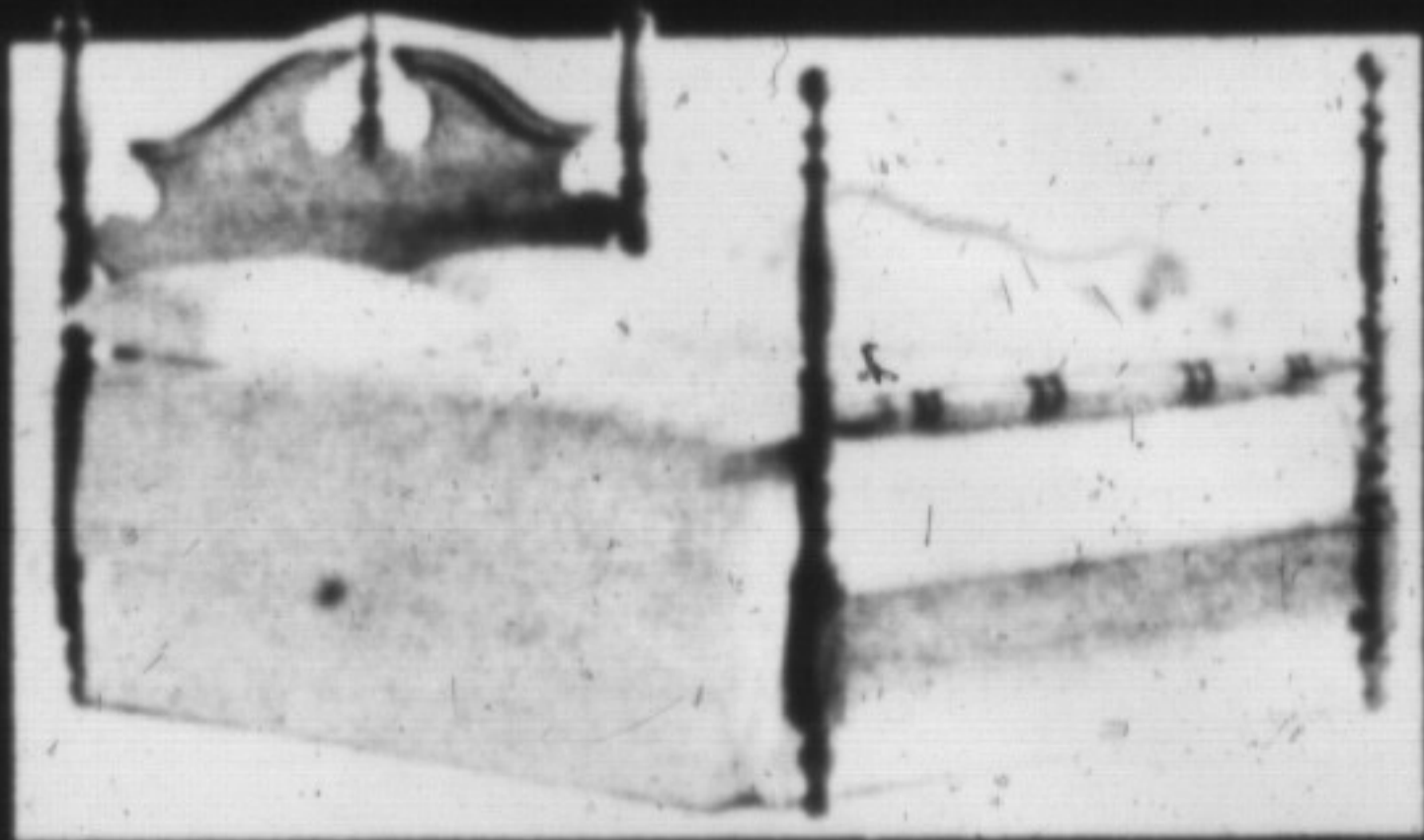
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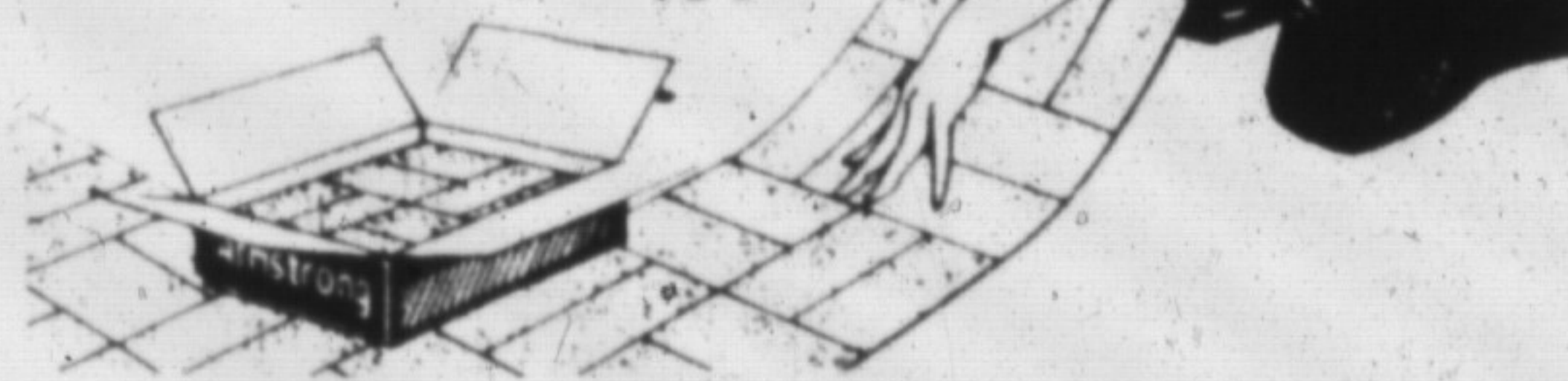
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