

Some big mistakes, customer complaints

PUC may quit centralized computer billing

After just over a year ago of handing over all billing to the computer system with the London PUC, the Midland Public Utilities commission may

be going back to doing it themselves, with their own computer.

The commission has been less than happy with

the billing out of London. There have been some big mistakes, lack of communication, growing customer complaints and in general an inadequate

system.

At Monday night's meeting, Controller Bill Smith detailed the computer system he has

investigated. The unit, called Basic 4, said Smith, will handle all of the PUC's billing and many other clerical duties, some 40 separate operations.

One of the first concerns voiced was cost. Smith said currently the cost is 24 cents per bill. With the Basic 4 the cost would rise to 42 cents per bill. But there would be added benefits. If monthly billing is used, the cost drops to 24 cents.

Smith termed the system the "Cadillac of its type". This Cadillac will run \$50,000 to set up but Smith noted it won't demand a yearly raise. Commissioner Herb Carpenter sounded a note of caution. He said, "We're always buying the best but it never seems to work out when we get it." Smith was instructed to continue inquiries into the system and others and report to the commission for next month's meeting.

PUC sets overdue bill policy

The Midland public utilities commission waded through one hour of talk at Monday night's meeting to officially set a policy down on paper. Commissioner Richard Platt stated his concern over the PUC's ability to come to an apartment owner to demand payment of a bill that a renter had left behind.

Platt noted that while both the owner and the tenant are equally responsible he felt the PUC was perhaps unfairly going after the landlord and ignoring the real offender.

General manager Art Evans said this was not the case that all avenues were explored including

court action to obtain back debts and the last resort was the owner.

Mayor Boyd said the PUC had no responsibility over tenants and the PUC must be able to collect. Chairman Paul Quilty cast the deciding vote to accept a motion that first the PUC approaches the tenant and then the owner.

Meanwhile the commission was astounded to learn that it cost them \$375 to install water lines from their main to property lot lines. These figures came from last summer's Russell street reconstruction and therefore did not involve any pavement

replacement. Chairman Quilty demanded a report for next month and

thought the tab a little steep for the work being done.

Midland youths back in custody

Two Midland youths are back in custody after escaping from the Midland police while being transported to Barrie last week.

The pair made their run for freedom when the police car was stopped at a traffic light in Barrie. The handcuffed duo rolled down the window reached out and opened the back door of the police car.

The youths were recaptured an hour later and returned to the

detention centre in Barrie.

The two were facing a rash of charges including car theft, break and enter, theft and wilful damage. One was wanted on a warrant for being at large. Both now face charges of escaping custody.

Police Chief Ernie Bates refused to reveal the name of the policeman who was driving the police car at the time of the escape.

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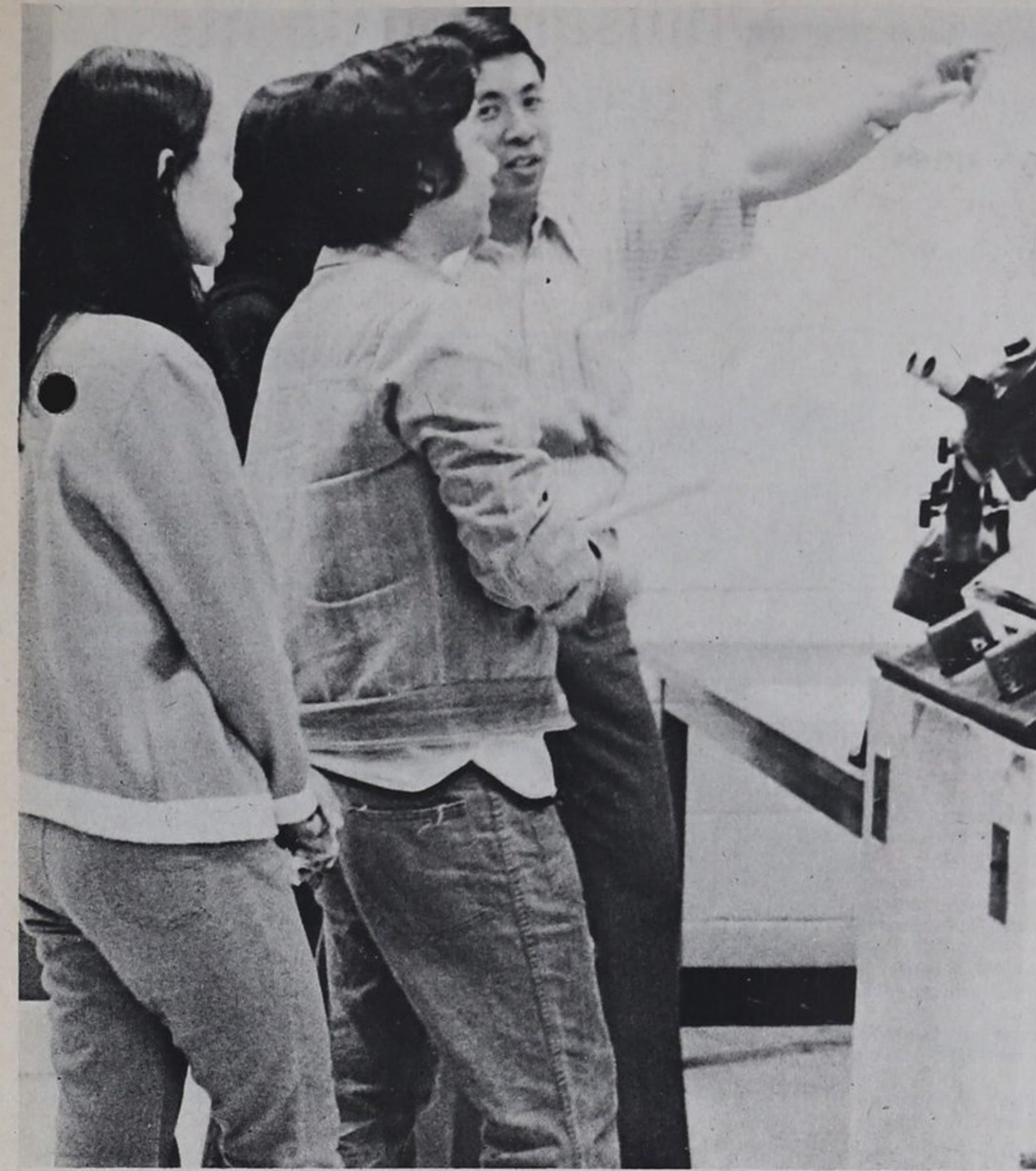
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Three millionth anniversary

Visitors show an interest in the production of color television tubes produced at the RCA plant in Midland. Employees were invited to bring their families to the plant last week for a tour and for refreshments af-

terwards. Tours like this are held every two years. This one was to celebrate the third millionth tube produced at the Midland plant.

Approached PUC

Anglers want reservoir stocked

It was a rare night at the Midland public utilities meeting Monday night as some members of the public were in attendance. A half dozen members of the Hunters and Anglers club were present to officially suggest a rather different project. The idea,

originally from the Ministry of Natural Resources, is to stock the town's reservoir ponds on Vinden road with trout and then open them to the public.

The club said they are looking for a good conservation project and this provides a worthwhile

opportunity for a one or two year effort. Members of the commission were in favour of the idea, but the practical aspects are liable to create some roadblocks.

There is nothing wrong with having fish in the reservoir but the problems are created by

those who come to fish and at the same time pollute. Therefore some form of supervision becomes necessary, government approvals are needed and the future use of the reservoir area must be considered.

The commission voted unanimously to give further study to the idea.

PUC waterworks budget shows \$76,000 profit

It has been almost four years since the Midland public utilities commission has recorded any lost time due to an injury to staff. It may not seem like much but in the waterworks industry it is approaching a wonder.

Over the past 10 years the waterworks industry has had about the worst possible record for injuries. At Monday night's commission meeting a letter was tabled from the American Waterworks Association commending Midland and asking for information on how they

have done it.

In other business the waterworks budget was tabled. A 40 per cent increase in rates this past April will help the department to realize a profit of some \$76,000. Unfortunately the PUC finished last year with a \$160,000 loss.

In other financial news the first quarter report of

the electrical department showed a \$45,000 loss, mainly due to higher Ontario Hydro bills.

And the bill for the accident in April that cut off Midland power for up to seven hours is almost in. For the PUC, the cost is \$3,000 plus some \$1,300 expected from Ontario Hydro. Insurance will be paying the tab.

Blood donor clinic

There will be a blood donor clinic on Thursday, June 17 at the RCA plant in Midland.

The clinic runs from 1:30 p.m. until 5:30 and will be held in the conference room at the plant.

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