

Parents will help evaluate Child Centred Learning at Sacred Heart

PAUL SANDERSON

A marked shift in attitude among school and school board officials was evident August 6, during their latest meeting at Midland's Sacred Heart elementary school with a group of parents still deeply concerned about the quality of their children's education.

Last September, in accordance with a Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board of Education directive, the relatively unstructured, free-play, Child Centred Approach to Learning was introduced as a complete program for Junior and Senior Kindergarten students at Sacred Heart.

Parents first officially expressed dissatisfaction with the progress and discipline of their children enrolled in the program at the school's regular May teachers' meeting. Since that time, a continued series of meetings has left concerned parents generally unsatisfied with the merits of Child Centred Learning.

After an organized group of over 30 parents left a July 10 meeting at the school, thoroughly frustrated at their own lack of understanding with the newly adopted

education system, last Tuesday's meeting was scheduled with a film titled, *The Serious Business of Play*, designed to explain Child Centred learning.

But despite the excellent 40 minute film released in 1974, followed by a defence of the Child Centred concept by School Board Primary Education Specialist Anne Murphy, questions from the audience of almost 50 parents were focused almost exclusively on Sacred Heart's interpretation of Child Centred Learning.

While they generally accept the theory of a free play learning environment, most parents in attendance wanted to know how to fairly evaluate the Child Centred practice at Sacred Heart.

In the almost two hours of debate and discussion that followed the film it became evident that further negotiation between parents and educators would be fruitless, until parents had spoken at length with the teachers and perhaps witnessed for themselves the atmosphere in an actual working classroom at Sacred Heart.

Principal Neal Dillon admitted he had kept

teachers from the meetings, fearing they would come, "under the gun" of distraught parents.

But last Tuesday

reaffirmed his school's open door policy for visiting parents, and encouraged organized visits to Child Centred classrooms during the

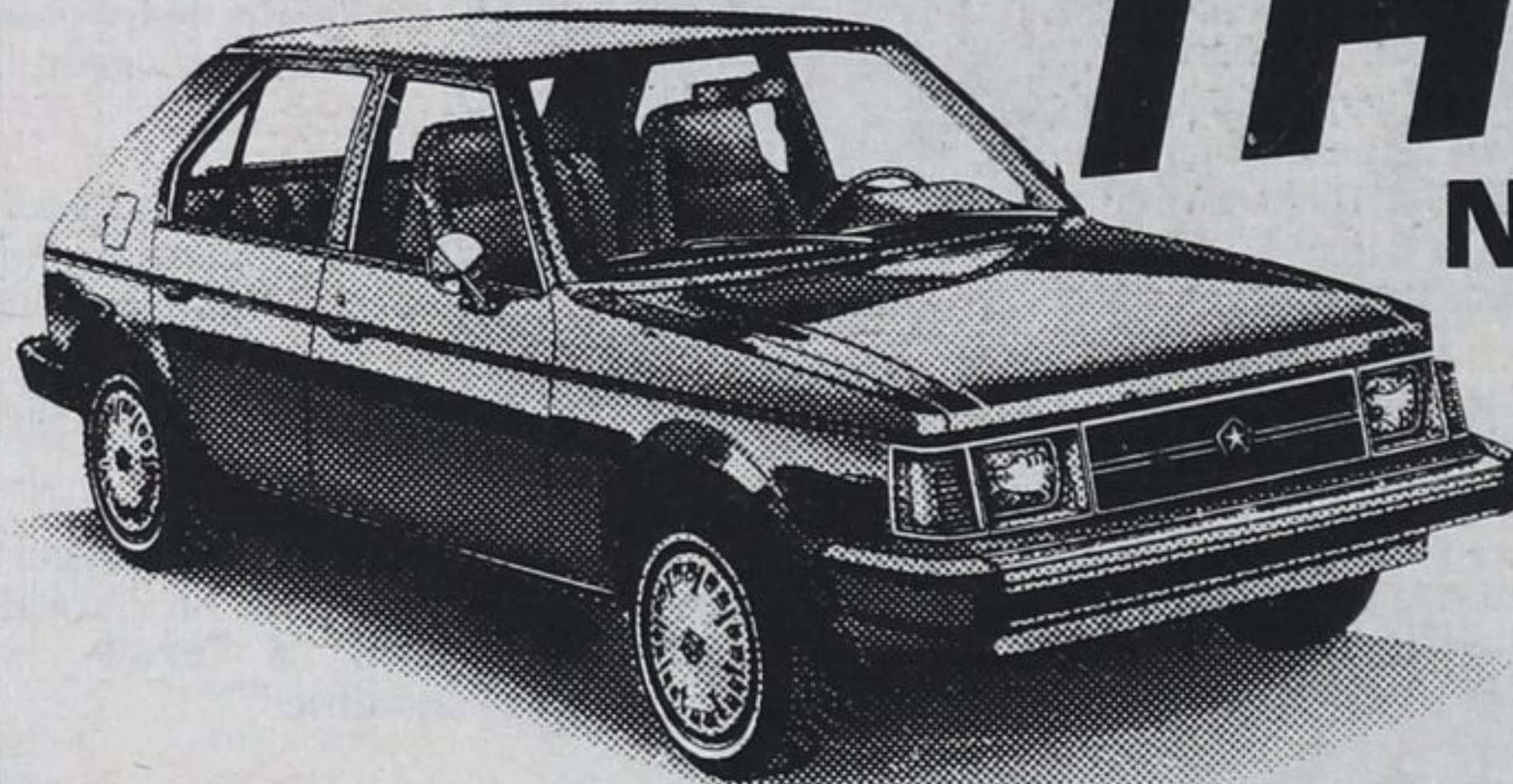
coming school year.

In addition, Early Childhood Education Specialist Murphy pledged every attempt to accommodate

parents' concerns within the implementation of Child Centred Learning at Sacred Heart, while elected school board

Trustee Mary Jo Quilty proposed monthly meetings between parents and primary school teachers to discuss these concerns.

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A 'Chamberpot' in every store

Most of the 171 member businesses, with the Midland Chamber of Commerce, should already have received the latest edition of the Chamber's spunky little newsletter, yesterday.

The whimsically titled "Chamberpot" was introduced last April, in a small, four page, newspaper format featuring black and white photographs with coloured graphics around the stories.

The original format has been retained for the second edition, complete the "Pot Watcher" (all the latest business and commercial news), and "Pot Luck" (where 18 new members are welcomed to the Chamber of Commerce).

The "Chamberpot" is prepared by freelance editor Kathryn Downer with the advice and assistance of Administrator Carol Baker, Staff Writer Carol Dimock, and Secretary Laurie St. Amant.

Three hundred copies are currently being distributed, and another issue is scheduled for release before the end of the year.

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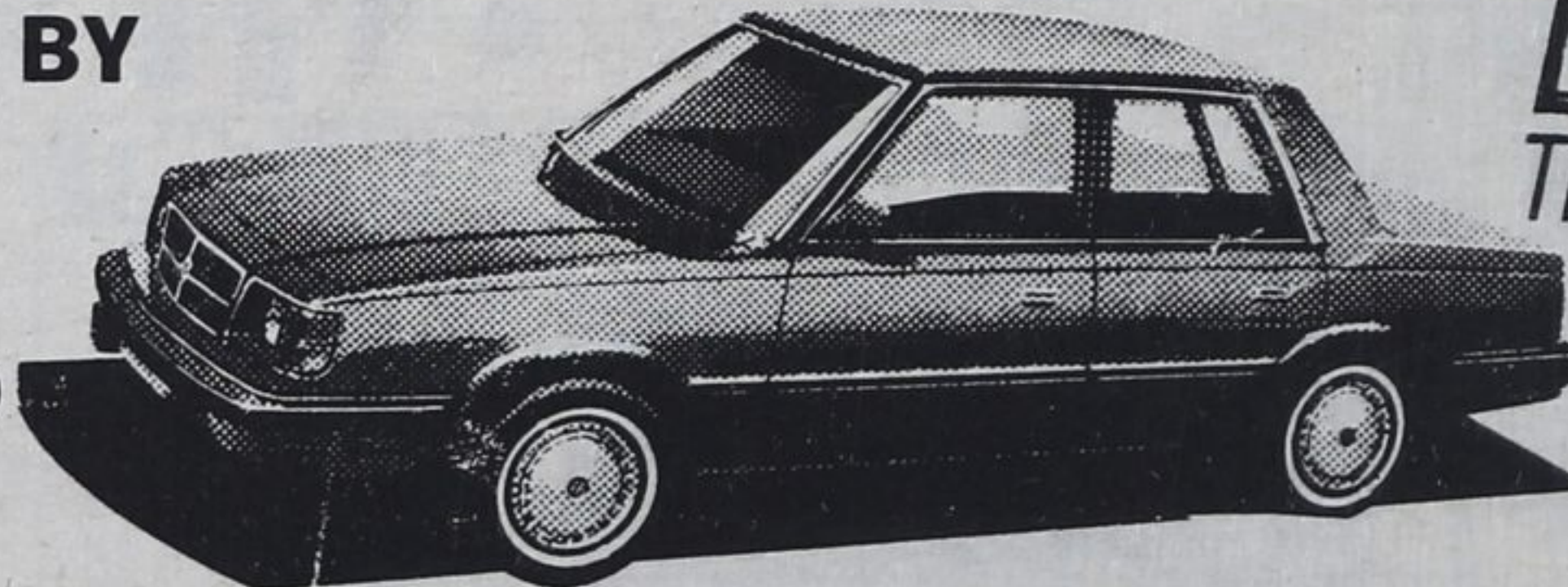
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