

Richmond Hill, Newmarket sites proposed for York regional centre

Let them (the John Roberts Commission studying Metro Toronto) "do what they want south of Steeles (Avenue)."

Having an administrative centre for York Region in a "highly-populated" southern part of the area, "would show the region is going to stay together as a region," Councillor Lois Hancey of Richmond Hill told a meeting of the regional planning committee last week.

The committee was discussing a report from the planning department on possible sites for such a centre, specifically citing Newmarket and Richmond Hill as potential locations. The former proposed site was the existing Newmarket old York Manor site on Yonge.

The latter consisted of one west of Yonge Street, south of Major MacKenzie Drive, and one east of Yonge, north of Markham Road.

Mayor Bob Forhan of Newmarket, who is also chairman of the planning committee, took the report apart almost clause by clause, finding most of its statements "hard to believe".

He ended with the declaration the Oak Ridges moraine should be the boundary between the north and the south.

"You go your way and we'll go ours," the mayor said.

That was something Mayor Forhan then proceeded to do in his rundown. The report was prepared for last May, but the committee just got around to last week.

"The creation of a highly visible symbol of government is one benefit derived from the establishment of a regional centre," the report said in its opening paragraph.

Then it went on to say the acceptance of such a focal point depended largely on the "accessibility of the centre to regional residents."

"I find that hard to believe," said Mayor Forhan. "That wasn't the main criterion."

How many people ever came to the regional office in Newmarket? They went to their local offices instead, he said.

Acknowledging this later on, the report said "consideration might well be directed toward the gradual implementation of a system providing services and information to residents at local centres."

Provision of such information in "locally available form" should possibly be incorporated into plans for the new centre.

The report said the importance of council meetings, which were now poorly attended by the public, would be realized

"when the process becomes more visible" through easier accessibility.

"I find it hard to believe that the bigger building means more people become involved," Mayor Forhan said.

Were they now going to "become another arm of the information bureau?"

The report also said the selection of a site outside of main population centres will necessitate sub-regional centres in any event.

Site selections

Selection of the Richmond Hill west site in the BAIF development, "would involve co-ordinated planning with a political support from the Town of Richmond Hill," which was also considering a spot within the general area for its own office, community facilities and an 18-acre park, the report said.

Land costs in the area average \$50,000 to \$60,000 an acre, and are twice that in the Richmond Hill east location.

The report said a regional centre there would have a "major catalytic effect upon the existing land use pattern of the surrounding area," which included market gardens, steel plant, GO Transit bus station, vacant land and sewage treatment plant.

Integration of existing rail and bus lines, along with proposed rapid rail transit, "would also be a major determinant of this centre's design," the report said.

The York Manor site in Newmarket "would serve as a development catalyst for surrounding area," as well as "have a substantial impact upon the over-all land use pattern west of Yonge Street."

The 118-acre York Manor site had 80 acres of open, agricultural land available for development.

However, "the sacrifice of ruraly-designated land and the redirection of a main employment and retail centre away from the central area of Newmarket will doubtless affect" the established commercial area," the report said.

While development on the Newmarket site might achieve some local objectives, it might also "defeat regional preferences for the structuring of the town," the report added.

The latter remark brought a quick rejoinder from Mayor Forhan who said any such structuring would be "determined by local municipalities and not regional planners."

He said he would also like to point out the centre of Newmarket wasn't the main employment centre.

In summing up, the report said the effect of the centre was difficult to estimate without taking into consideration such things as "opportunities for in-

corporating other municipal offices, space needs of school boards, provincial offices and many other ancillary and supporting functions . . ."

Regardless of the choice of site, provision of certain services would "in all probability give rise to further decentralization and the need for sub-regional facilities as the regional population expands and

demands for services increase," the report said.

Lacked objectivity

Councillor Robert Adams of Markham said he thought he detected "a singular lack of objectivity" in Mayor Forhan's assessment of the report.

The only thing he could see wrong was another 75,000 people in the southern part of the region, Adams said.

He complimented staff, which he said he felt was "looking for what will be the greatest good for most."

While Richmond Hill east didn't "excite" him as a possible location, Richmond Hill west did, Councillor Adams said.

Should wait

Mayor George Burrows of Georgina Township said there was "no way the region should get into a major expenditure at this time, or in the near future. We're doing fine here."

Councillor Hancey said the choices had been "narrowed down to Newmarket and Richmond Hill," and this was "something council's going to have to come to grips with."

They needed office space as they were "bursting at the seams" in Newmarket. Money could be set aside to invest for the future building, Mrs. Hancey said.

A government building should be made "accessible to the people," she said. The Richmond Hill east site had the advantage of rapid transit. The western site had an "aesthetic advantage."

Favors Bond Lake

Mayor Gladys Rolling of East Gwillimbury said she didn't think the latter had any "identity," and favored the Bond Lake area.

Mayor Evelyn Buck of Aurora wondered what would happen to Newmarket if the centre were put in Richmond Hill.

Planning Commissioner Murray Pound said they had "considered it both ways".

If the centre were in Newmarket, they could foresee the decentralization of offices in the south.

With the reverse, he could see Newmarket always remaining as a centre for the northern part of the region.

Mayor Buck also wondered "just how far reaching" the Roberts report would be.

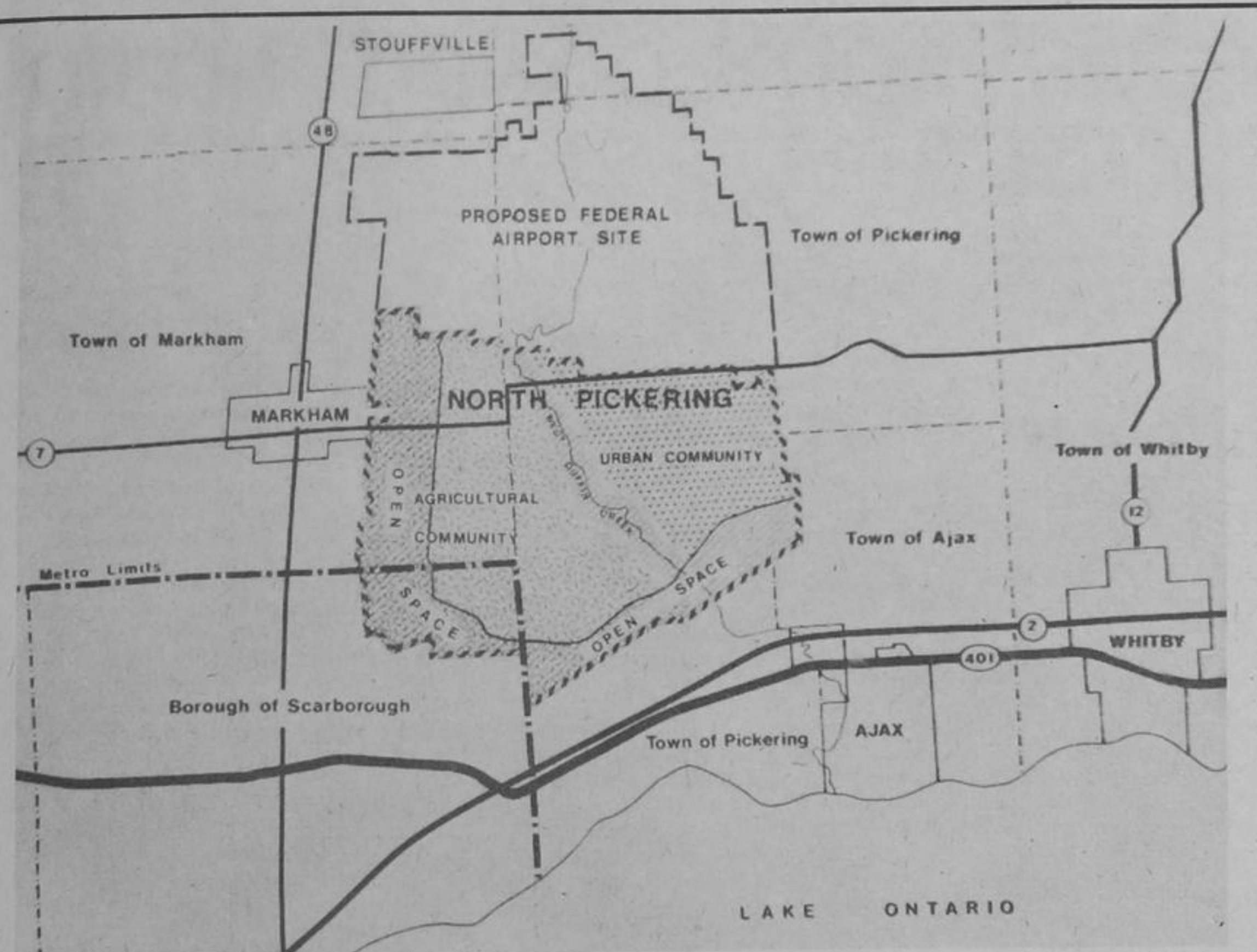
It was at that point Mrs. Hancey commented on the importance of building in the southern part of the region.

It would let Roberts et al "know we are not playing games," she said.

The report will now go to council for consideration.

News from next door

SHARON: A motel complex is proposed for East Gwillimbury but township council is keeping the location a secret. It will be discussed at a closed meeting later this month.



North Pickering, the Province of Ontario's first new town located on 25,000 acres of land northeast of Metro, will contain an urban community and an agricultural community, the Honorable Donald Irvine, Minister of Housing announced Thursday.

The urban community will be located on 7,000

acres in the easterly portion of the site nearer to Oshawa. The agricultural community will be located on approximately 17,000 acres (26 sq. mi.) on the west and, with the Open Space System, provide a buffer from Metro Toronto. These last two zones will lie partly on land now in York Region.

Airport satellite town to get urban and rural communities

Two distinct communities — one urban and the other agricultural — comprise the Ontario government's proposal for development of its first satellite city to be located next to the proposed federal airport at Markham - Pickering.

This proposal is based on results of public review and technical studies of three modified concept plans presented to the public for comment during October and November last year.

During these presentations it became evident the public had two basic preferences — the desire to save agricultural land and to orient North Pickering's urban community toward Oshawa rather than to Toronto (with a maximum separation from Metro).

The agricultural community will be located on approximately 17,000 acres west of the West Duffin Creek, including land in the Town of Markham, the Borough of Scarborough and the Town of Pickering.

The urban community will now be located entirely within the Town of Pickering and will consist of approximately 4,000 acres on the east side of the creek which bisects the site.

The remaining acreage will be earmarked for open space uses.

The open space portion of the agricultural community will likely be incorporated into the Parkway Belt and will still allow extensive agricultural uses.

The Parkway has not yet been defined east of Highway 48 in Markham Town.

In making the announcement Minister of Housing Donald Irvine said the location of the urban development to the east coincides with the objectives of the Toronto-Centred Region Concept to stimulate economic growth east of Metro.

It also simplifies jurisdictional issues by locating the urban component entirely within the Town of Pickering and the Region of Durham.

Mr. Irvine said that in co-operation with the ministry of agriculture and food, a number of measures will be developed to encourage farm production in the 17,000 acre agricultural community for perhaps the next 20 years.

An innovative farm lease program, developed in collaboration with farmers in the area, is already under way and may well serve as a model for the management of provincially-owned agricultural lands elsewhere, he said.

"It is our intention to discourage non-agricultural activities and to encourage full-time farm operations", the housing minister added.

A basic task of the planners will be to recommend land use zoning to establish areas which are explicitly urban and agricultural as well as areas which will fall between the two.

It is in this context that the roles of the existing hamlets within the agricultural community will be determined, he said.

An architect-planner from the North Pickering Project is now meeting with hamlet residents in planning for the future of their communities.

The two-community concept forms the basis for planning during the final planning phase.

The plan that will evolve will be submitted to the North Pickering Development Corporation when it is established in the spring or early summer.

This plan will form the basis for official plan amendments to be proposed by the corporation to the municipalities having jurisdiction in North Pickering, including Markham and York Region.

The proposed official plan amendments would be considered by the municipalities in accordance with established procedures under The Planning Act of Ontario.

Meaningful, learning employment

York County students will get a chance this summer to try their hands at building "adventure playgrounds," painting playground equipment and working on research projects.

And it's all on the provincial government.

The programs are some of those suggested by the ministry of education as part of "Experience '75, designed to give students both "meaningful employment" and a "learning experience."

Each project is to be financed up to a maximum of \$5,000 with most of that going for student salaries. Material costs for approved

projects would be added to 1975 budgets.

First project to be recommended was the painting of playgrounds.

Trustee Norm Weller of Aurora thought that should get precedence and was backed by Doreen Quirk of Markham, who termed the playgrounds an "utter disgrace . . . grubby and weatherbeaten."

Trustee William Laird of Georgina Township objected to the latter, because it didn't provide the necessary "learning experience."

He said he was against the "menial labor" idea. Vice-chairman Craig Cribar of Newmarket, felt

the board should consider two other proposals first.

These would be opening school libraries two or three days a week for about three hours a day for six weeks for the distribution of books.

Next would be taping material for students with learning difficulties with cassettes.

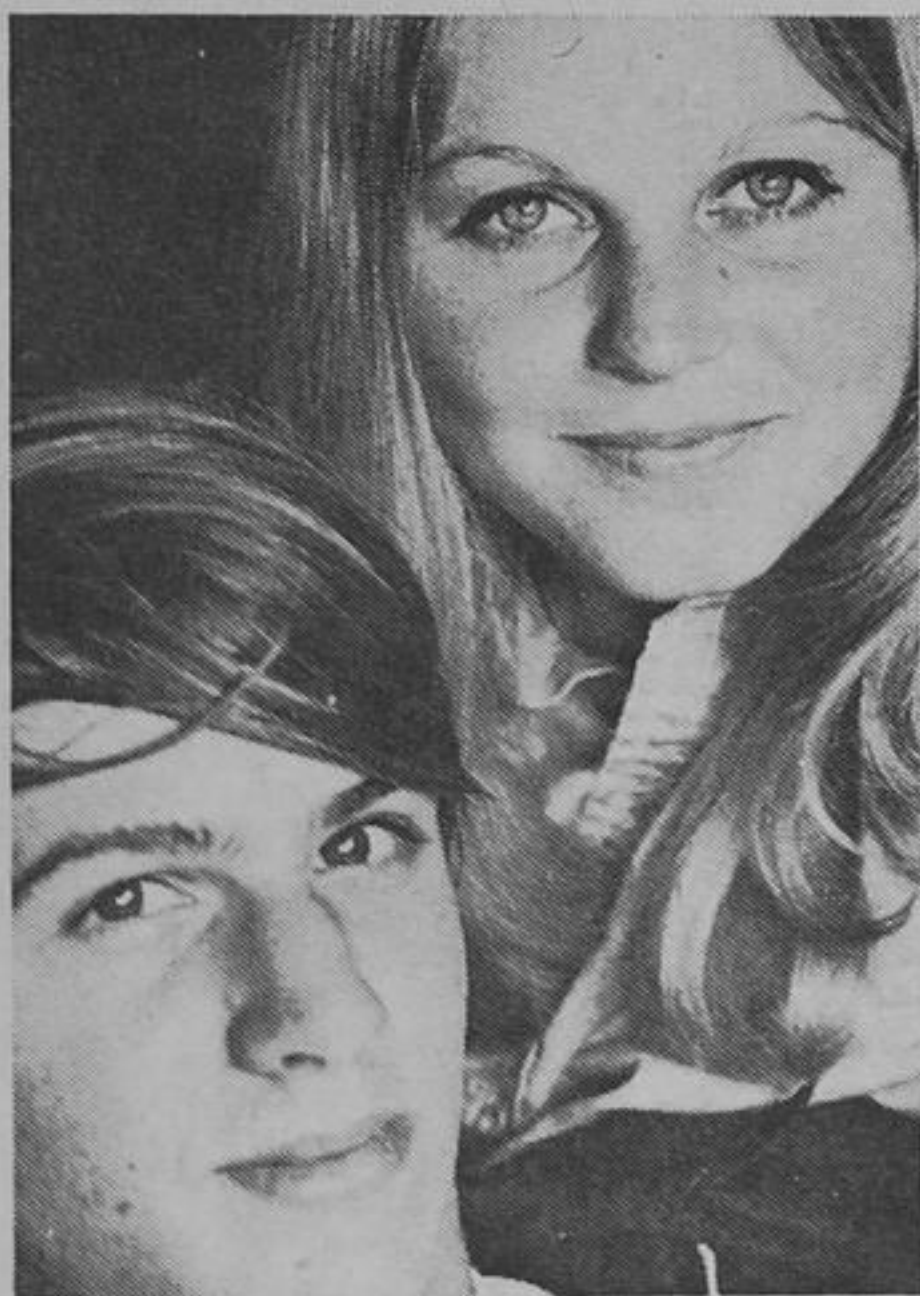
Trustee Donald Cameron of Vaughan suggested the board "adopt the whole package and put all the kids to work."

Later Trustee John Stephens of Markham suggested the board take such projects as the

libraries, cassette tapings, research work on the history of York County, English as a second language and an inventory of community resources and "lump them altogether."

The board agreed.

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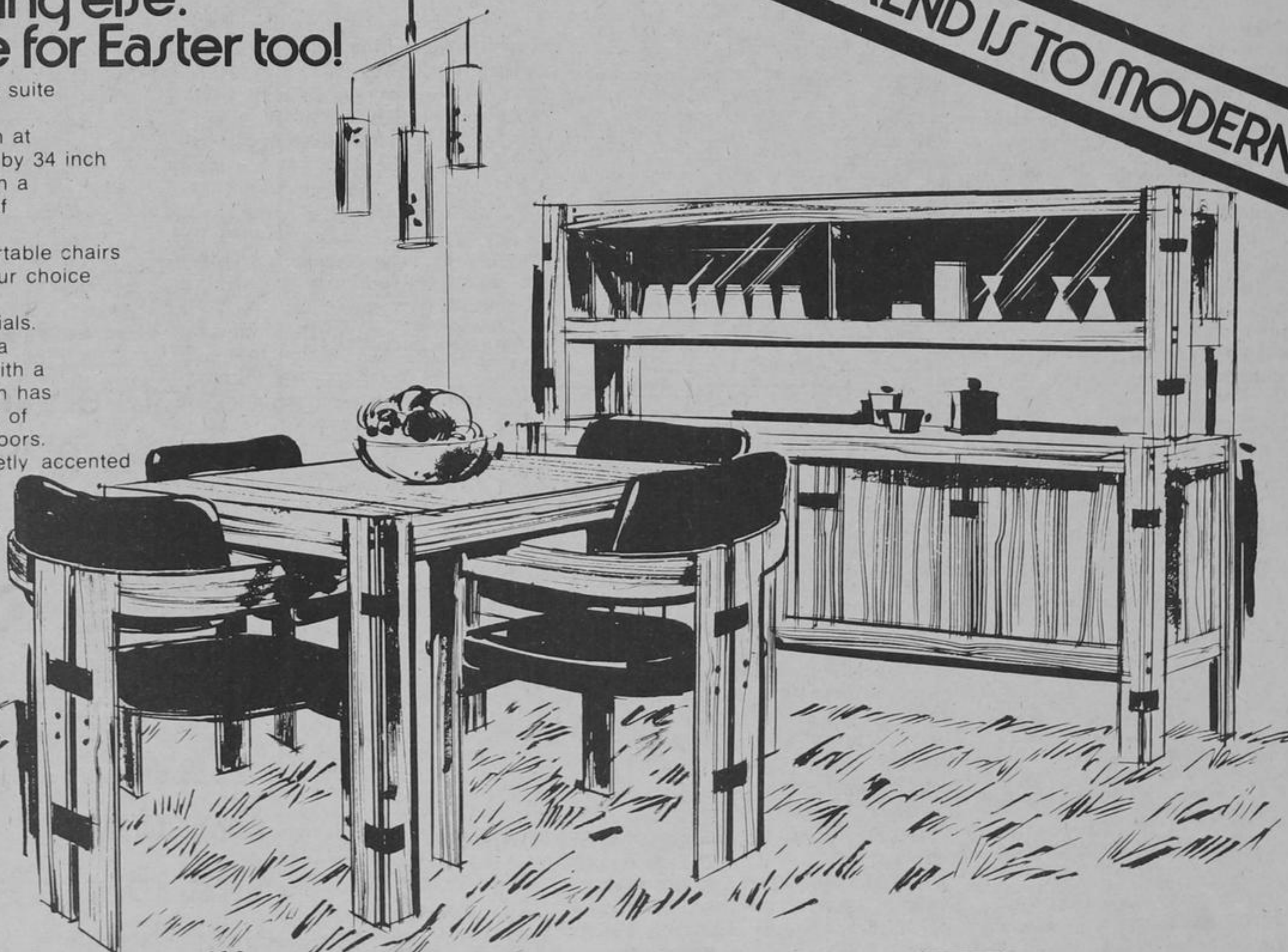


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Hon. Frank S. Miller, Minister

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