

Teacher contract dispute 'demands full disclosure'

AURORA — A fact finder in the collective bargaining dispute between York County board of education and its elementary teachers said that, "if negotiations towards a fair settlement are to be fruitful there must be full and open disclosure between the two parties."

John Laskin, whose report is to be submitted to the chairman of the education relations committee, said it would be unrealistic to expect the teachers to accept the board's position in negotiations without some documentary verification.

"It would seem that settlements are much more readily reached when

there is full disclosure between the parties."

That didn't mean it might lead to the teachers "only being content with every last dollar of the board's budget," but the more one side refused to reveal essential information, "the more it leaves the other party to believe that there really must be something to hide."

Laskin's remarks resulted from the board's statement that its own final offer would put it approximately \$90,000 over budget to the end of 1976.

However, the teachers' final offer would put it \$430,000 over budget for the same period, even though the teachers

had stated it would be well within the board's budget. In fact, it would even leave the board free to hire extra teachers, they said.

Despite this discrepancy and his own "considerable urgings," the board wouldn't provide teachers with a detailed financial breakdown of its budget calculations and estimates, Laskin said.

"The board, as I understood it, feared that to reveal anything but hard facts would mean the end of fair negotiations and the beginning of negotiations to budget time," he said.

Compromise proposed
Laskin said he didn't doubt the sin-

cerity of both sides. However, in the end, a compromise was proposed in which both sides submitted extra material pertaining to their calculations. The board's were given on the understanding any conclusions drawn would be included in the report.

In assessing the latter, he said the differences between the two sides appeared to be related to three main facts: the estimated cost of upgrading, the estimated affect of roll-over (resignations vs new hirings); whether the cost of non-teacher personnel is included in various board budget lines.

Now having seen the board's information, Laskin said he felt it could be given to the teachers without loss of negotiating stand.

"That may not help solve the dispute, but it may help the board to satisfy the teachers as to its financial situation, and thereby assist in moving toward a monetary settlement."

Laskin said the "grid to grid monetary difference was in the order of \$150,000," and it was regrettable an agreement hadn't been reached before the intervention of the fact finding process.

"I am reasonably satisfied from my discussions with the parties that, if the monetary issues were settled, other items in dispute would be resolved relatively quickly," he said.

Kinsmen build playground

RICHMOND HILL — Local Kinsmen Club members, parents, teachers and other volunteers were hard at work last Saturday, despite hard rainfall, constructing an adventure playground at Jerrerson Public School.

The Kinsmen have pledged \$12,000 over the next five years for the construction of playgrounds in 11 public and five separate schools in Richmond Hill.

Funds for construction of the playgrounds, and for other Kinsmen service projects, are raised at the club's annual Monster Bingo. The next bingo is scheduled for May 1977.

The Kinsmen are Canada's only native service club, and its national headquarters are in Thornhill.

The Richmond Hill club is open to any men, under 40, who are interested in community work and club fellowship. Further information of club activities and membership may be obtained from Don Hill at 884-2861 or Gary Robertson at 884-3582.

Most contentious item between the two parties, according to Laskin, was staffing and class size.

He said the teachers didn't dispute the board's claim that in York the reduction of one-tenth of one point in the pupil-teacher ratio meant an additional cost of about \$100,000.

Because of previous lowerings, the board said it could not afford a further reduction. The teachers, meanwhile, say they compare unfavorably in the secondary panel in York and that lowering the ratio improves the efficiency and performance both of students and teachers.

The teachers' proposed salary schedule shows a low of \$9,000 in its starting category to a high of \$25,300, with 11 year's experience and the proper qualifications.

The board's offer in the same category is \$8,800 and \$25,200.

The grid for elementary principals as proposed by the teachers, shows a low of \$27,550, compared with the board's offer of \$27,300.

once gathered 2,313 names on a petition to council, but after council made its position clear last month, Luftman said he was ready to throw in the towel.

The group was disowned by the executive of the Markham Ratepayers Incorporated. Luftman says there were only five out of ten members at the meeting where that happened.

He also said he did not submit to a dunking at the Markham Fair last week as previously reported.

He had been planning to be one of the local celebrities dunked in a tank of water as part of a charitable fund raising stunt. But he heard that the agricultural society had a photographer set to take his picture when he went in, and he changed his mind.

Markham fairground committee disbands

MARKHAM — The Save the Fairgrounds Committee has disbanded. "The citizens have been fooled again," said chairman Dr. Jack Luftman, after the abandoning of the committee.

Markham council voted last month to designate the fairgrounds residential, despite the efforts of the Save the Fairgrounds Committee to have a special committee set up to study the possible use of the old fairgrounds site.

Luftman had been criticized for questioning the legality of the sale of the fairgrounds by the Markham and East York Agricultural Society to 293484 Ontario Ltd.

The questions raised by Luftman's lawyer have been answered in a report from the town solicitor which includes a letter from the society's lawyer, Donald Hindson.

The Save the Fairgrounds Committee

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Her friend had been through a similar experience and because of that Mrs. MacDonald knew she couldn't blame herself; a learning disability is not the fault of the parents, and thinking that it is can be of no help to child or parent.

Mrs. MacDonald is chairman of the conference committee for York Region chapter of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. She says she was eager to become involved because a number of parents she talked to weren't quite as fortunate as her, in that she has a partner who is willing to share responsibility and direction.

"A lot of families have experienced anxiety and frustration to the point of breakdown," she comments.

Her son Kevin was hyperactive. It was a shield he put up to hide a perceptual problem. He was seven years old at the time, and Mrs. MacDonald says "we had him psychologically tested because we became suspicious, although there was nothing noticeable from his report cards. We wanted to have our own opinion and wanted to satisfy ourselves."

Within two days Mr. and Mrs. MacDonald found out by interview and written report that Kevin had a lateral reversal problem; he saw things in reverse.

A cause has never been established. According to Mrs. MacDonald, there can be many different causes for a learning disability.

Kevin is now receiving private tutoring and understanding at school. "I'm very proud of him because he was a frustrated little boy, but with medication, tutoring and understanding he is a totally different boy."

Mrs. MacDonald thinks more children should be assessed; any child who has a school problem possibly has a learning disability.

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Each school is to raise up to \$750 on its own, and the Kinsmen will provide matching funds to all of them.

At Jefferson, the students raised their share of the money by selling chocolate bars, and for the past several weekends volunteer workers have been building swing sets, climbing apparatus and other playground equipment.

Peter Merrill, the Kinsmen's chairman of the project, expressed appreciation for the efforts of the volunteers.

"Membership in the club is small, and this ambitious project of 16 playgrounds cannot be completed without the involvement of the community in providing additional manpower," he said.

History series in Unionville

UNIONVILLE — Unionville Centennial Library will hold a series of four programs dealing with local history and genealogy Wednesday evenings beginning Oct. 27.

Speakers will be Pat Hart, who will discuss how to trace your family tree, Axel Rinek on the achievements of William Berczy, John Lunan on the Berczy settlement in Unionville and Isobel Champion, who will talk about Unionville pioneer life.

Films on Saturday

RICHMOND HILL — A Saturday morning film program for children of all ages will be presented Oct. 30 at Richvale library on Pearson Avenue.

Starting at 10:30, the show will include Free to Be You and Me, Mad Baker, Live Ghosts and two surprise films.

Alleged rapist acquitted

TORONTO — Thomas Thompson of Thornhill, who was convicted in March of raping a 17-year-old girl, was acquitted of the same crime last week when Judge William Rogers re-opened the case.

Rogers, who said it was the first time in 20 years he had done so, allowed the new hearing after defence counsel Ed Schofield produced evidence not previously available to the accused.

The evidence showed the girl was a heavy user of drugs, especially speed, and had often been in trouble with the law.

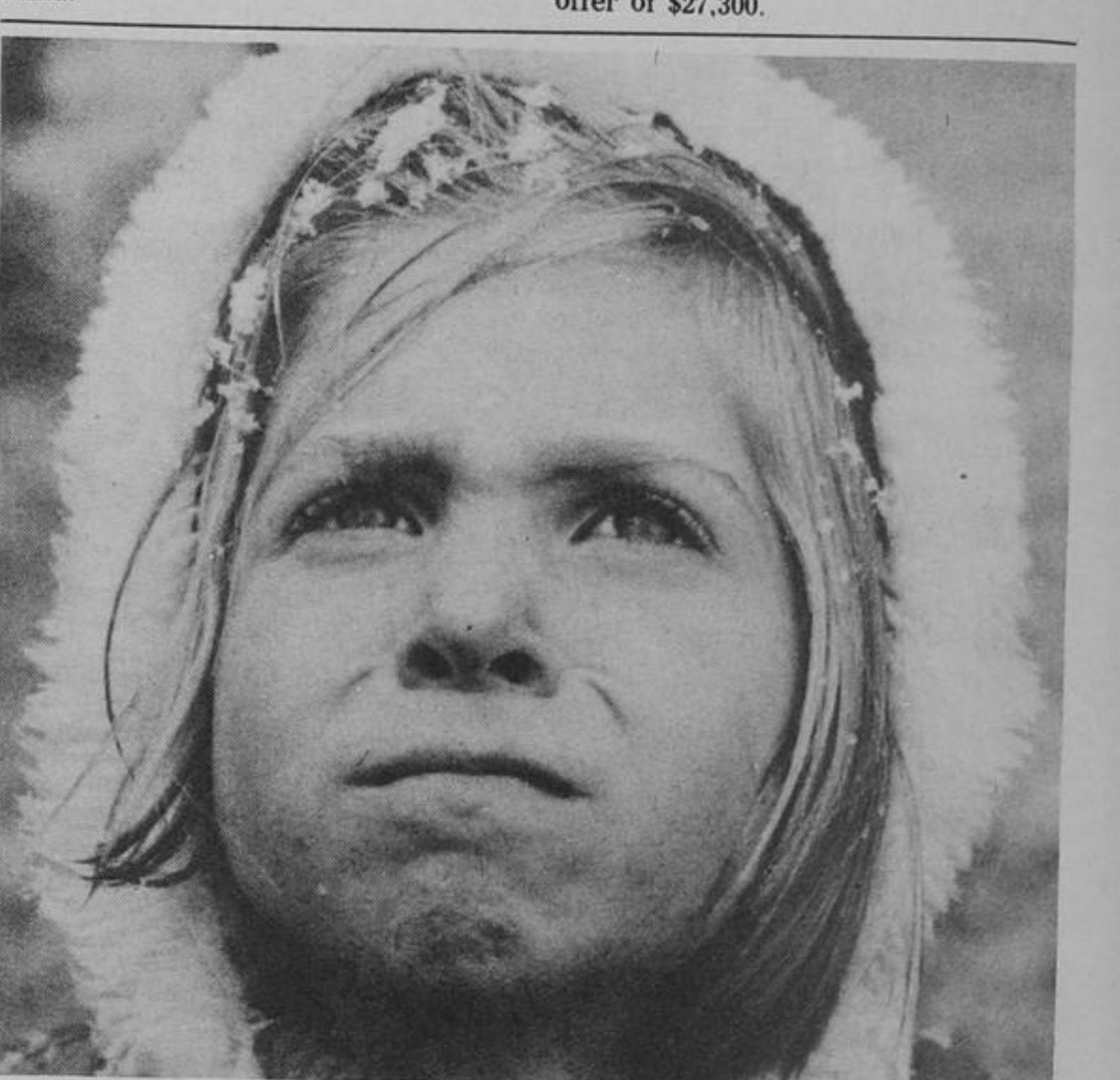
Montessori's fair on Sunday

THORNHILL — The local Montessori School's annual fall fair is being held Sunday between noon and 4 p.m.

Pony rides, games, cartoons, food and prizes have been planned for children and there will be a bake sale and white elephant table for parents.

A 10-speed bicycle is being raffled off at 3:45 p.m.

There is no admission charge to the fair to be held at the school at 8569 Bayview Ave. just north of Highway 7.



It can't be
But it is. That's snow in the blond hair of 7-year-old Maya Samila, daughter of David and Susan Samila of Richmond Hill, and there's no difficulty interpreting the look on her face last Saturday when a freak snowstorm hit the area. Sunny weather followed for the first of the week, and tomorrow — who knows?



Margaret MacDonald...helps to share experiences

Learning disabilities successfully treated

By Doreen Livingstone

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Most children with learning disabilities have at least average or above average intelligence. It has been

established that very often, after about two years of working with a known perceptual problem, the child is able to return to his own grade level.

Kevin, now eight, is an avid model builder. A year ago he could not have done it. He has also made a crystal radio with the help of his father.

The ACLD started 15 years ago in Ontario when some parents wanted to share their experiences. At the time perceptual problems were not diagnosed and not handled.

Those working with the association do not necessarily have a child with a learning disability, nor do they have to be members of the association. It is a community effort toward public education and has stemmed from parents.

Ronne Dale, one of these parents, says "there is a tremendous change coming about now and we are beginning to recognize that there is such a thing as a learning disability. It involves a large number of the school population."

"The ministry of education is officially recognizing the need. It was recently announced that there will be consideration given for the establishment of special classes for children with learning disabilities at the discretion of the individual school boards."

Various areas have their own branch of the ACLD. For a minimal fee, there are many benefits in joining, such as the fine and gross motor program, a swimming program on Saturdays, resource and information centres, and newsletters and current information available. For further information, call Crosby Heights Senior Public School in Richmond Hill at 884-7933.

Mrs. MacDonald has initiated a seminar series which is now in progress. On Oct. 29, Dr. Nancy Warnock, professor of special education at the University of North Carolina, will speak on Learning Disabilities from the Educational Perspective," and on Nov. 18, Al Katzman, co-chairman, of adolescent affairs of the American branch of ACLD will speak on Learning Disabilities from a Legal Perspective."

These seminars take place at Thornlea Secondary School on Bayview Avenue at 8 p.m. and tickets (\$4) are available either at the door or from Ronne Dale, 120 Babcome Drive, or Nancy Trantor, 171 Romfield Circuit.

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In the classroom:

By Jim Irving

RICHMOND HILL — Did you know that the present population of York Region is 196,000?

That's a fact.

And did you know that, in a group of 100 Grade 9 students in the region tested last year, 56 needed remedial reading?

That's also a fact.

However, it's a fact that now having been uttered, seems to have given its declarant pause.

"Yes, that's what I said," Janette Neville, an English teacher at G. W. Williams Secondary School, was saying the other day. "And to some extent it's true. But I didn't give it the full context. I didn't have the time."

At the time she did make the statement, Mrs. Neville was part of a large crowd of teachers and members of the public attending a special meeting of York County board of education to see whether moral issues were really moral issues, or just all part of the school curriculum, like recess.

Education health

There were also several other matters discussed, such as whether Holden Caulfield and Duddy Kravitz should be allowed to mingle with the rest of the students; whether the strap should be substituted for discipline; plus the general all-round state of

health of education in the area.

It was with this latter concern in mind that Mrs. Neville contributed her offering to the gathering.

It was the first time she had been to a committee meeting of the board, she said, and she wanted to know if the Grade 9's were prepared.

"I think there are problems . . . I offered my services."

View modified

It was when called by The Liberal the next day, however, that she said she felt her statement on remedial reading should be modified.

At that moment she was meeting with the board's chief research officer, Brian Birnham, whom she apparently felt it expedient to call and enlarge on her words of the night before.

They were also going to come up with a definition of the word "remedial," because, "what is the definition?"

When the matter was discussed again later on, Mrs. Neville said it applied to a "student who has a problem or more in a particular area, such as reading, writing, etc."

A small number of students needed remedial aid, she said and she didn't want it misinterpreted.

"I feel I gave the impression all the kids were in that category," she said.

"If I were a parent, I wouldn't want my kids going to that school. I'd think they were all dummies. Which is not the case."

Had she and Mr. Birnham established anything in their meeting?

"No, but it was informative. He gave me the whole way of looking at it . . . related it to other tests and that we're right about where the norm is in Grade 9."



Janette Neville...lots of problems

The problems were emotional and perceptual; there was no "concrete evidence" the students were poorly prepared.

They could be bright in other areas of English, but still be low in reading.

How could the level of reading, plus comprehension, be raised?

She was in a bit of "a bind" on that score, Mrs. Neville said. Should she teach to all, or concentrate more on the individual who needed help, until he caught up?

Wasn't it the duty of a teacher to teach the over-all class?

Methods followed

She hadn't resigned herself to that, Mrs. Neville said. "I can deal with individuals if I set up the program properly. If a student is hurting the class and won't respond, I call him and his parent in."

"If he still won't respond, I tell him I will help, but to smarten up."

If that doesn't work, the student is let slide to some extent, until he comes to her. Or else he might leave altogether.

"Parents' Night really helps," Mrs. Neville said. "I make an appointment with the parents and ask them for help. Between the two of us we try to decide some course."

"We're not always successful."

Mrs. Neville said discipline was "pretty strict" at G. W. Williams.

"It's difficult to decide where the teacher's responsibility is and where the student's is.

"It takes a lot of soul searching."

Part of Mrs. Neville's soul searching has her "general," or non-advanced students participating in projects. These projects help to sustain student interest in the subject of English literature, a subject they might be only too ready otherwise to abandon because of the potential work load looming ahead of them.

And while the procedure — working out their own comic book format — may seem strange to some, Mrs. Neville said it helped them.

They read their assignments more carefully, made critical judgments and were less defiant. They also built their "skills and confidence."

"We only lose a small percentage of pupils," Mrs. Neville said. "It's usually not just problems in English, but other subjects as well."

"If you're going to be slack, nothing works. But if you catch their interest, you have a better chance of teaching them in what is referred to as the traditional way."

And, no matter how they learned, they still wound up writing the exams. There was no escape there.

Her qualifications

Mrs. Neville has an honors BA from Brock University in St. Catharines and a teaching certificate from Western. She doesn't look much older than the Grade 10 and 11 pupils she teaches and it's not difficult to picture her walking down the school halls through a chorus of whistles.

She likes her work, which she's only been doing for a few years, and she found the first year the roughest.

"You have to earn their respect," she said.

And so she does it with her blend of common sense teaching — no shoddy speech around her — and firmness of manner when the need arises.

"If we let the kids get away with things we're not helping ourselves," she says.

Her husband, who is also a teacher, has less trouble in that department, because "he's a big guy."

So it often boiled down to that, did it?

"It's an awful thing to say, but it's true," she replied.

What's "remedial"

With the interview over, Mrs. Neville sat looking thoughtful for a moment and then said she felt "remedial" should now be defined as applying to a student who had "a problem in one or more areas and is weak in comprehension."

The next day she called to see if she could suggest another alteration.

"Could you change that 56 per cent (56 of 100 students tested required remedial reading) to approximately 56 per cent?"

"Well, you did give that figure. And it was a public meeting. If you don't mean what you say, you shouldn't say it," she was told.

The bright and conscientious young teacher let a slight sigh escape. "I'm learning," she said. "I'm learning."

Concerned teacher ponders morals, discipline, 3 Rs