

Lawsuit contemplated by educational assistants

JULIE CASPERSEN
Staff Reporter

The slicing of almost a third of the educational assistants from the fall recall list could leave the York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board on the receiving end of a lawsuit from the laid-off workers.

Educational assistants (EAs) are banding together in protest of budget cutbacks that will see 75 of this school year's pool out of a job with the board in September.

Because the EAs don't know who will be recalled, anonymity is a must, said a Richmond Hill woman who has taken on the task of organizing a complaint. Rosemary Warren, a month away from her law degree, is spearheading the formation of a coalition to take action under the Ontario Pay Equity Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

"They've got a very strong case if they can get it brought forward," Warren said. A suit through the Pay Equity Act does not need the endorsement of a union and can be filed by an agent representing the complainants, she said.

Bernadette Kenney, president of CUPE Local 2331 which represents the workers, told the board cuts to EAs are not equitable or fair. "We are not statistics to be played with. We ask that our members be given the same respect as others," she said, charging that trustees did not make cutbacks fairly across the board. "We will suffer more pain than most across the system."

In previous years, educational assistants were dismissed at the end of their one-year contracts but handed

recall notices at almost the same time to confirm their placement in the fall, Warren said.

When the assistants are hired for the fall it is with the understanding that the contract is only for that school year.

There are now 318 EAs on staff working with special needs children to keep them in classrooms with children their own age as part of the board's mainstreaming philosophy. Some are assigned to work in libraries and resource centres.

The board is changing the criteria for assessing the requirements of special needs students. In other years, the assigning of assistants has been based solely on the outcome of case conferences. "We're going to become a little tighter," Director of Education Frank Bobesich said. "We're becoming criteria-oriented instead of emotion-oriented."

He said the cuts have "brought a sense of objectivity" to the placement of EAs with special needs students.

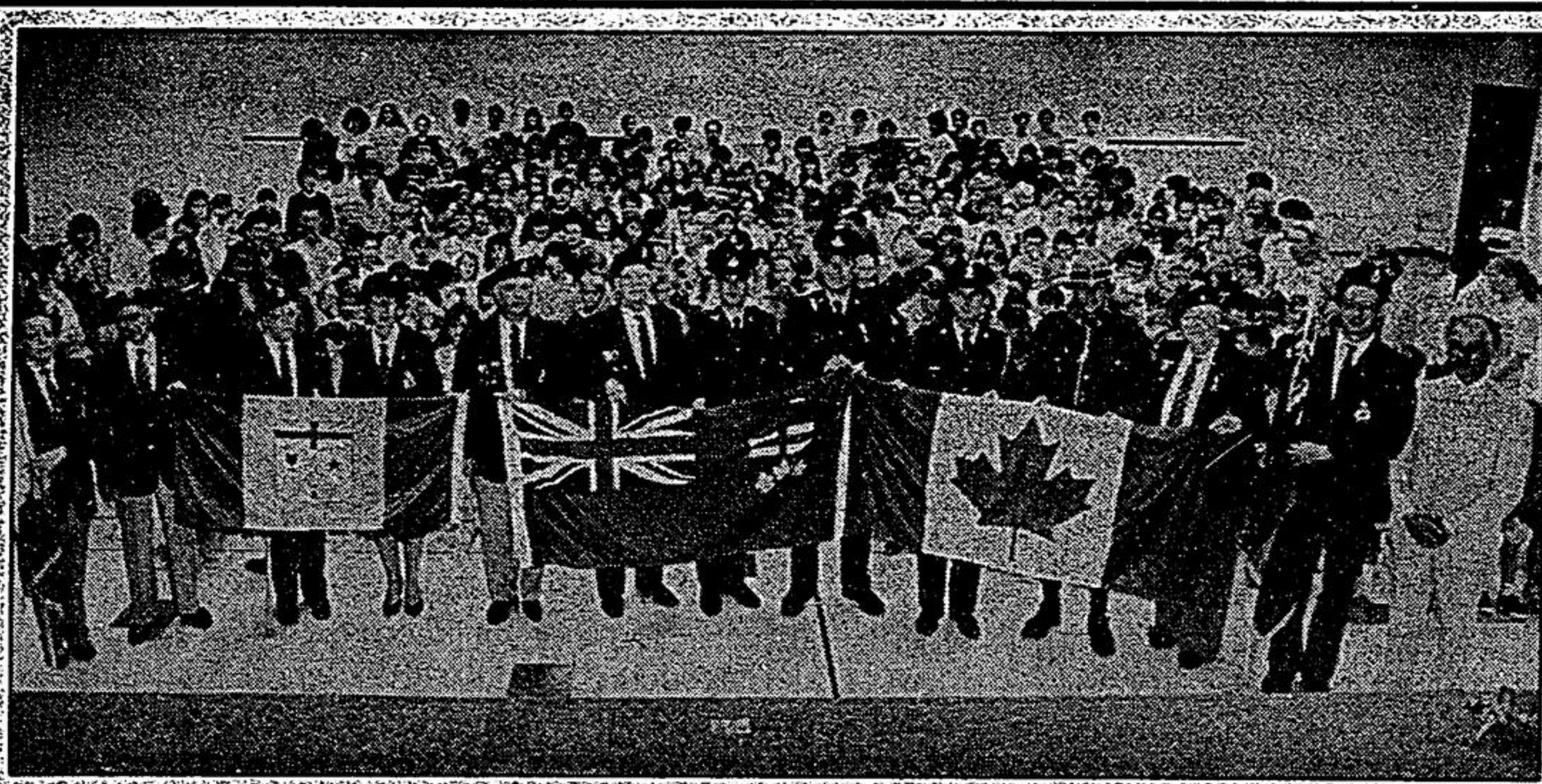
The board is now reviewing all special needs programs and defining the system of allotting EAs. "We've been driven to a more creative decision-making process," Bobesich said. He added a criteria reference point is expected by the end of June.

An unsigned letter to the *Weekender* said some children need a lot

of one-to-one attention and have health needs that a regular teacher doesn't have the time or skill for. "Because of the financial cutbacks, these children will be suffering quality

of education and the potential that they could achieve," the letter said. A meeting is set for early next week for all concerned EAs to discuss legal strategy.

Warren would not disclose the location of the meeting because she said anonymity is crucial, but interested people can call 881-8339 (a fax number) to leave or receive information.



Photo/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Flag day at Summitview

Presenting three flags (Whitchurch-Stouffville's, Ontario's and Canada's) to the students of Summitview Public School are (from left): Bonnie Forfar-Kingsley, Donald Hodgins, Cliff Aiken, Ruth Kaspick, Norm Dunn, Ronald Allison, OPP

Const. Brent Baverstock, OPP Const. Charlie Stewart, York Region police Const. Morris Shaw, RCMP Const. Roger St. Gelais, Jean Atteridge, Bill Kingsley and Doug Winger, principal of Summitview

Hazardous Waste Day a hit with Stouffville

TRACY KIBBLE
Staff Reporter

More than 30 Whitchurch-Stouffville residents travelled to Newmarket Saturday, May 11, during the first of the region's two spring Household Hazardous Waste collection days.

All in all, more than 1,400 regional residents dropped off household hazardous wastes at the Newmarket Recreation Complex, local officials heard last week.

York Region's waste management engineer Jeff Flewelling said 1,700 gallons of paint, 1,000 gallons of used motor oil, 627 car batteries, 162 propane tanks and enough pharmaceuticals, pesticides, cleaners and other chemicals to fill 243 45-gallon drums were collected throughout the day.

However, Ward 4 Councillor Wayne Emmerson said Newmarket residents have an unfair advantage because the collection days are held in their municipality.

Reports show 851 Newmarket residents, the largest number, dumped off waste during the day. The least number of residents (two) were from Vaughan.

But town Public Works Director Paul Whitehouse told officials, Stouffville "doesn't have the facilities" to efficiently accommodate 1,500 visitors to the town.

"The region has picked ideal sites (at Newmarket and Richmond Hill.) Stouffville just can't handle that many cars," Whitehouse said.

He added there is not another collection day planned in town because of the region's commitment to hold two days a year.

Whitehouse said he would like to thank the four town staff members and 10 members of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Recycling Group that helped out during Newmarket's Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day.

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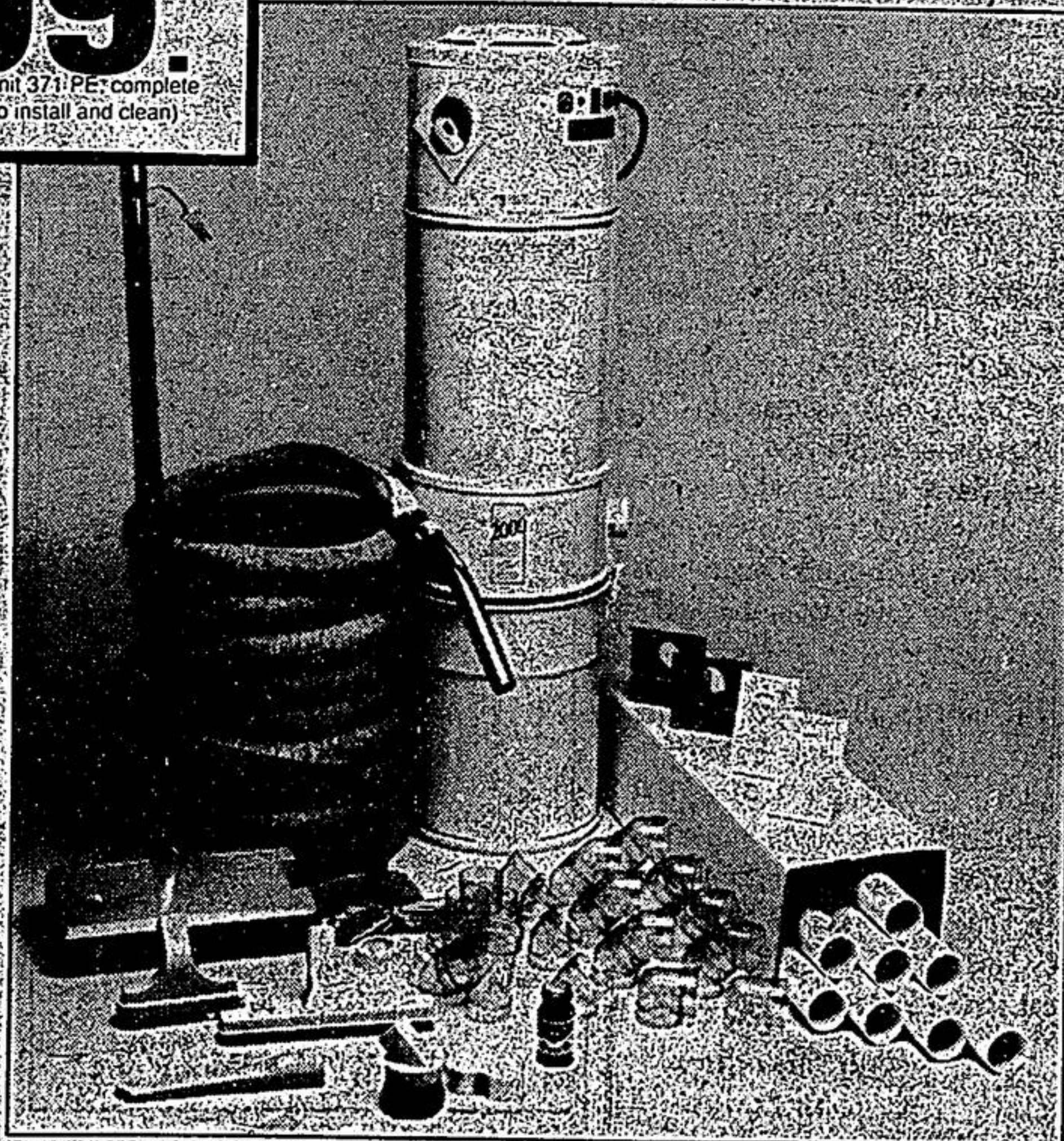
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