

Three weeks and counting...

St. Mark students join protest

Students across York Region wear yellow ribbons in hopes the strike will end

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
STAFF WRITER

Junior kindergarten student Cassandra Stanton tied a yellow ribbon around a tree at the school she can't attend.

While the St. Mark Catholic School student doesn't understand her teacher is about to be legislated back to class, she's glad it's happening.

"I want to find my friends," said Cassandra. Three weeks ago, Cassandra was all excited about her first day at school. "It never came. Our kids are being used," said Cassandra's mother, Helen Stanton. "While I'm happy she's about to go to school now, I think it would have been better if there had been some type of agreement instead of being legislated back."

Cassandra and her mom and about 80 others took part in yesterday's Put The Kids First rally held at St. Mark Catholic School. There, the children tied the ribbons on trees, bushes and poles.

The children pinned the ribbons on their shirts and some

placed them in their hair.

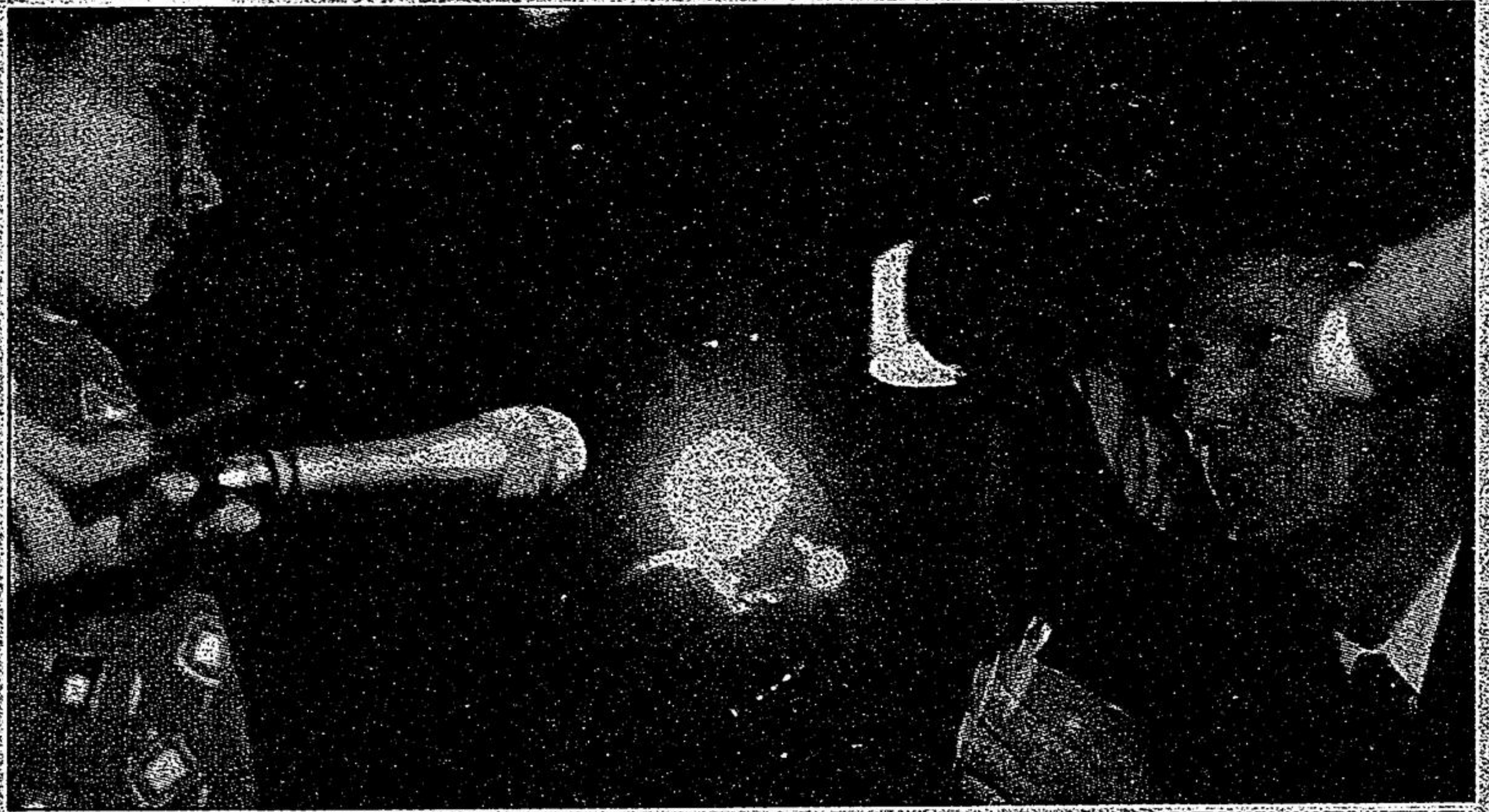
Even though on Thursday, Education Minister Dave Johnson announced plans to introduce back-to-work legislation on Monday, the local rally went ahead as scheduled.

For the three Hadcock children, the prospect of returning to school is welcomed by all. "I want to go back so I won't have to spend two years in one grade," said Douglas Hadcock, 9. Big brother Bengy is anxious to return to school. Grade 8 is very important year, said the 13-year-old. Their sister Kimberly, 6, said she's not too keen to be returning to her Grade 1 class. Still, she was very busy tying the yellow ribbons.

Having an extended summer vacation is not welcomed by Grade 3 student Michael Jeffrey. "We're not learning this way," he said.

Although the government is now intervening in the labour dispute, Michael isn't convinced that will solve the problems. "Maybe the teachers will go on an illegal strike," he said.

TIE A YELLOW RIBBON ...



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Education Minister Dave Johnson takes a yellow ribbon — signifying hope for the end of the teachers' strike — from York Region student Allison Trimble during a student protest at Queen's Park Thursday.



STAFF PHOTO/JOAN RANSBERRY

Parents and students headed to St. Mark Catholic School Friday morning wearing yellow ribbons as part of a region-wide protest to end the teachers' strike.

Public board negotiations continue

BY JENNIFER BROWN
STAFF WRITER

Progress was slow Friday, but talks will continue next week between the public school board and its 1,750 high school teachers.

"There's no threat to the school system, at this point," Jim Ross, a member of the collective bargaining team for OSSTF, said Friday afternoon. "It's moving slowly and I suspect we will be meeting again next week," he said.

The two parties adjourned Friday afternoon and will resume discussions Tuesday.

The union representing high school teachers in York Region called off a planned strike day Thursday to return to the bargaining table with mediator Kevin Burkett.

"I'm really positive our unions do want to get a local solution. I have a feeling, at both the elementary and secondary level, they are tired of the strings being pulled from Toronto," said Karen Barker, chairperson of the board's negotiation advisory committee. "That doesn't mean they still aren't going to want six out of eight."

Secondary teachers are being asked to teach 6.5 periods out of eight, but want a contract that reflects their previous working conditions of six classes out of eight. Without the extra period for preparation, they say their work and the quality of education will suffer, and after-school activities will end. The board says it needs \$7 million to hire 110 teachers to produce a schedule of six out of

eight. Teachers in York Region were encouraged Wednesday when they heard the Simcoe County public high school teachers ratified a two-year deal Tuesday, ending a three-week strike.

Elementary teachers in York Region will vote Monday on whether or not to pursue strike action.

The 2,800 elementary teachers in the region have seen their prep time reduced from 160 minutes per week to 120 minutes since last June. The provincial average is 150 minutes and the board claims it would cost \$9 million to hire the 140 teachers needed to provide 150 minutes of preparation time — money not provided in the new funding formula.

Car crashes through crowd of striking teachers

A car sped into a crowd of 2,000 striking teachers outside the York Region Catholic school board offices Tuesday morning.

No one was injured in the incident, York Regional Police Det. Sgt.

Doug Hall, who was at the scene, said police had closed Bloomington Road for the demonstration, but a car entered off a side street and drove right into the crowd at a high speed.

The car was surrounded by

screaming teachers. The driver backed up, scattering the teachers around him.

"He did what I call a Hollywood 180," Hall said, with all four tires screeching.

"As the driver tried to leave, Hall — in full uniform and standing in the middle of the road — motioned for him to pull over.

The car went around Hall and took off south on Coons Road, but was

stopped by officers soon after.

An Aurora man, 45, is charged with dangerous driving and failing to stop for police.

— Patrick Casey

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