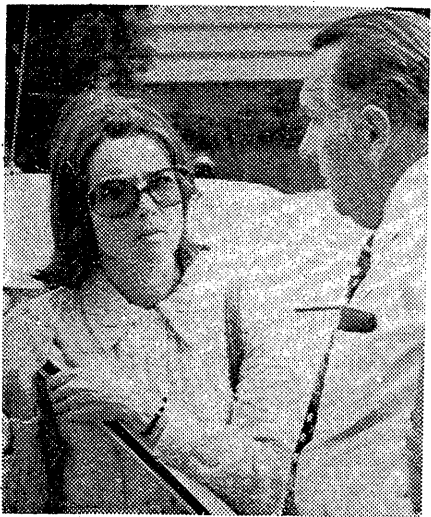


The faces of crisis



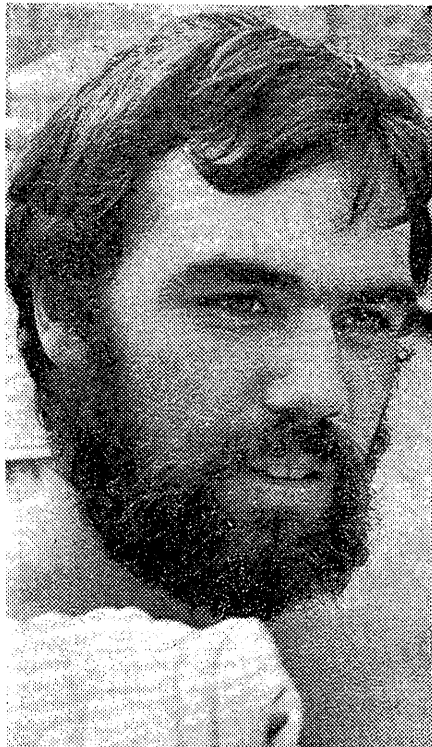
Mayor Jane Bigelow confers with Police Chief Walter Johnson prior to touring the stricken area.



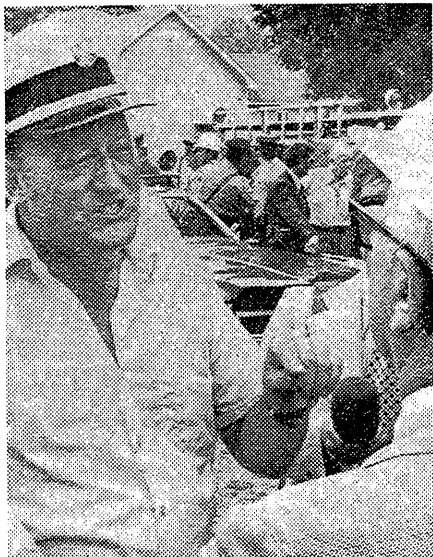
Cynthia Bryan, left, comforts 19-year-old Joan as she watches the home of her mother, Mrs. Joan Forster, burn to the ground.



Flanked by sympathetic neighbors, Mrs. Joan Forster of 44 Britannia Ave., second from right, watches helplessly as her home burned to the ground Tuesday, one of several destroyed in a series of explosions and fires in the Oxford Park area.



Gary Mailoux of 511 Boler Road was walking along Britannia Avenue when the first house exploded, knocking him to the ground and injuring his arms.



Fire Chief Ray Morley confers with City Engineer Keith Rowntree at the Oxford Park scene.



Larry Van Belois helped rescue an elderly woman from a burning house on Britannia Ave. (Story is on Page 12.)

Photos by
ED HEAL
BILL SMITH
MIKE JORDAN
DICK WALLACE
of The Free Press

Live cattle reach 60 cents setting new market record

TORONTO (CP) — The price of slaughter cattle on the hoof jumped to more than 60 cents a pound for the first time today at the Ontario Public Stockyards. Prices climbed by about two cents a pound from Tuesday.

Free Press Wire Services
OTTAWA — Officials of the consumer affairs department are looking for evidence of

collusion, price-fixing or misleading advertising in connection with recent increases in the prices of some food products, Consumer Affairs Minister Herb Gray said Tuesday.

Mr. Gray explained that collusion and similar activities are illegal under the Combines Investigation Act — his only tool in such circumstances.

Mr. Gray said he has asked Beryl

Plumtre, chairman of the government's food prices review board, to investigate price changes "on an urgent basis."

Earlier, board secretary Michael McDermott said the board already is approaching food chains at the head office level with specific questions regarding recent leaps in

(Please turn to Page 10, Col. 5)

Refuses to testify in Hydro inquiry

Moog declared in contempt

TORONTO (CP) — Gerhard Moog, president of Canada Square Corp. Ltd., refused today to testify at the Ontario Hydro inquiry and was found in contempt by the legislature committee conducting the inquiry.

The committee, investigating allegations of political patronage in connection with the letting of a \$44 million Hydro contract, adjourned in disarray until Monday, Aug. 27.

(Earlier story is on Page 2.)

The 11-man committee cited both Mr. Moog and his lawyer George Finlayson for contempt and committee chairman John

MacBeth said he would report the matter to the speaker of the legislature.

Mr. MacBeth read portions of the Legislative Assembly Act to Mr. Moog and his lawyer, which noted the possibility of imprisonment for contempt.

The hearing, which had entered its 37th day, broke down almost immediately today as Mr. Finlayson objected to a committee decision Tuesday which proposed an adjournment Thursday without hearing all of Mr. Moog's testimony.

Mr. Finlayson said his client was being treated unfairly and charged that committee lawyer Richard Shibley was "out to get" Mr. Moog.

Mr. Finlayson said his client had been giving piecemeal testimony for the last five weeks and had been asked to step down numerous times to accommodate other witnesses.

He said Mr. Moog should be allowed to give his testimony in one session.

He said a court of law would not allow the procedure to which the committee was adhering.

Following the adjournment, Mr. Moog, a millionaire developer, who is a close friend of Premier William Davis, made a hurried exit from the chamber and was unavailable for comment.

Holocaust miracle: no lives were lost

By BOB MASSECAR
and GENE FLORCYK
of The Free Press

"It's just a miraculous thing there was no loss of life or serious injury—things could have been tragically different," Fire Chief Ray Morley said today as officials, residents and insurance companies, began detailed assessment of the damage from Tuesday's near disaster.

The chief's thoughts were echoed throughout the area this morning as homeowners told tales of "luck."

An estimated 27 persons were injured, none seriously, shortly before noon Tuesday when a ruptured natural gas line triggered a series of violent explosions and fires throughout a square-mile section in the Oxford Park area.

Fire department tallies show 38 homes affected, 25 by either explosion or fire, the remainder scorched.

Total damage was estimated at \$750,000 by police and fire department spokesmen. The area affected included about 3,000 homes. About 700 homes in the area were reported to use natural gas.

Insurance adjusters blanketed the area today, in some cases offering interim payments to policyholders whose homes were damaged or destroyed.

Affected homeowners sifted the charred remains of their homes, some with tears in their eyes.

"When you see 30 years of your life go up in smoke you don't think too well," a crying Mrs. Rod Packwood of 79 Britannia Ave., said.

She was hanging clothes in the backyard when she heard a "whoosh" and saw her kitchen burst into flames.

"I ran downstairs to see if I could turn off the gas, but the furnace was just a ball of flames, so I called the fire department and left the house," she explained.

Things could have been tragically different but for two things, Chief Morley said.

"The time of day was very fortunate. Adults were at work and the children were up and out of the house," he explained.

"The succession of events — the series of explosions and fires — actually worked to our benefit. It drew people out of their homes who were wondering what was going on."

"This was great for us because it took them from possible danger," the chief said.

"Had it been winter and at night with the heat turned up and appliances going strong, things would have been compounded and the loss of life could have been tremendous."

Payson Sherman, 20 Forward Ave., whose home was gutted, figures lady luck was extra generous.

His wife has cancer, but doctors believe it is arrested. Because of her illness, she was at the hospital for cobalt treatments Tuesday when the interior of their home erupted in flames.

"Otherwise she would have been in the house."

Mr. Sherman said he has \$25,000 insurance, and was waiting for an insurance adjuster to visit him this morning.

As for the future, "after Labor Day, we're going to take off for a month."

Until his wife returns from hospital, he'll stay with friends, he said.

"Yesterday it was too early to accept any help," he commented, "but today we sure need it."

"Yesterday I couldn't have cared less. Today, well, I just don't know."

Mr. Packwood said his insurance will cov-

er the damage, and his adjuster had indicated an interim payment would be forthcoming on request. The entire house will have to be reconstructed.

A friend, William Sprague, of 1148 Kipp's Lane has offered the Packwoods the use of his house for a month while he is vacationing.

"Maybe by then we'll know what's going on," said Mr. Packwood.

Craig MacDougall, who had an upstairs apartment at 44 Britannia Ave., was supposed to be at work at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, but his employer called and asked him to report for work earlier. He left the house about an hour before it was destroyed by flames.

The stories of "luck" were innumerable—

children out playing, people at work, housewives shopping.

(Other stories and pictures on pages 3, 10, 11, 12 and 13.)

Four firefighters were injured. Treated in hospital and released were Capt. John Malone, who suffered a cut forehead when he tumbled down a flight of basement stairs, and firefighters Gary Weese, Bob Deacon and Jack Kellum, all overcome by smoke.

All residents in the area were allowed back in their homes at about 8 p.m.

Hydro was being fed into the homes in stages to prevent overloads.

Gas lines were to be pressurized through

(Please turn to Page 10, Col. 5)



By Bill Smith of The Free Press

Leo LeCroix, an employee of Nor-Pipe Construction, was operating a backhoe at the end of Paul Street. The hoe hit a gas line and set off a series of explosions and fires.

Inside pages . . .

MONTREAL — Als' owner, fans sing praises of Johnny Rodgers	Page 19
TORONTO — All major banks boost lending rates to 8 1/4 p.c.	Page 25
LONDON — Alma extension approved	Page 26
CHARLOTTETOWN — Energy, resources development likely topics at premiers' conference	Page 43
WASHINGTON — \$50,000 kickback to Agnew reported	Page 55

SECTION ONE	
Editorial	P 6
Bridge, horoscope	P 9
Stamps	P 14
SECTION TWO	
Sports	P 17-20
Financial	P 22-25
SECTION THREE	
Women's	P 30-38
Ann Landers	P 32
Today and Tomorrow	P 34
Entertainment	P 39
Coins	P 40
SECTION FOUR	
Television	P 44-45
Classified death notices	P 46
Comics, crossword	P 55

BLUES CHASER

One of the happiest men today is a vegetarian studying the prices in a meat market.

Where do we live? fire victims' problem

By BILL ELUCHOK
of The Free Press

The most immediate concern of those families whose homes were destroyed in Tuesday's gas explosions and fires appears to be not so much, "what's going to happen to our homes?" but, "what's going to happen to us?"

A large number of those who lost their homes are residents with families.

"We can't go on living in a motel — at least, not with three children running about," one such Wilson of 173 Columbia Ave., whose first impulse Tuesday morning, when his kitchen stove exploded and rose "six or seven inches into the air," was to get his three children outside, said his principal need at the moment is to secure temporary accommodations.

"I don't know what's going to happen to the house," he explained, pointing to the fire-blackened hulk of what used to be a two-storey white frame home.

"We'll probably try to rebuild. There are a lot of things that have to be ironed out.

"But one thing's certain: We have to find another home or apartment for the time being."

His wife, Ingrid, said the motel at which the Wilsons stayed overnight Tuesday made it clear that not even an electric kettle could be used in their rooms. The Wilsons may stay at the motel for another few days but made it clear they will try to have other accommodations arranged during a visit with their lawyer.

While their children remained with friends today, the Wilsons took up vigil at their former home, waiting for the army of insurance adjusters to pay them a visit.

One finally showed up at 11 a.m. and immediately asked them if they needed emergency cash. Mrs. Wilson replied the family did.

The adjuster said a representative from the family's insurance company would be around later in the day to make the necessary arrangements. As well, there would be appraisers to evaluate the home and contrac-

(Please turn to Page 10, Col. 3)