

# It's okay to steal when you're 'due'

**M**any people have been following the chaos in New Orleans, and feel both compassion and horror.

The desperation of the victims is so sad. Clinging to survive, they are being doubly victimized by the lawlessness in the city.

Gang mentality has taken over, as armed gangs of low-lives have looted, stolen, raped and even killed to take that which is not their own. I saw a report last week, where a looter was running down the street with a case of Coke and a portable TV under his arm.

When asked what he was doing, he replied, "Hey man, I'm gettin' what I'm finally due. It's my turn now."

A portable TV and a case of Coke? If he were stealing to feed his hungry kids at home, I might be inclined to feel for the guy, but stealing a TV (when there isn't even anywhere to plug it in!)? That's simply being a thief.

I told that story to tell another.

I pulled into my usual gas station this week to fill up. Tony Nifo and his nephew George Kontostergios run the Esso station on Guelph Street, at the top of Norval hill.

Tony told me his story. On August 31, when inputting prices into the pumps, he made an error. The price was supposed to be \$1.199 but instead, was entered as \$0.199— 20 cents for a litre of gas. For several hours, the price was set wrong, as customers filled up and went their merry way, with a tank of cheap gas.

During that time, not one customer told Tony or George about their error. In fact, they later learned that at least one customer was on his cell phone, calling all his friends, to come in and fill up with bargain-rate mid-grade gas.

As a result, Tony and George lost substantial money that day— about \$1,500.

I find it disturbing. Those customers, who took advantage of the mistake, felt they were 'putting the screws to Imperial Oil, cuz the big

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**Ted Brown**

bad oil companies are jacking up the prices.'

In fact, they 'put the screws' to Tony and George, taking money out of the pockets of two guys who are simply trying to make a living— feed and educate their kids, heat the house and eat three square meals a day.

And how do those customers justify taking advantage of the situation and stealing from Tony and George? Because 'they're due?'

I tell ya, it's *waaaay* too close to the mentality of that looter in New Orleans.

If those same people who filled up and never said anything happen to leave their garage door open, and a passerby dropped in to grab the bikes, the lawn mower or the tools stored inside— say \$1,500 worth— it'd be considered theft. The police would be called and anyone caught in the act would be charged.

But when it's an oversight at the pump, it's okay to steal, especially if it 'feels' like it's from Imperial Oil— not Tony and George.

No one likes high gas prices, but for the little guys in the middle, like Tony and George, it's harder— they're the 'messengers,' and they take the flack. And sadly, they're also forced to suck it up and accept the loss.

If you 'stole' from Tony and George that day, how about showing some guts— drop by and make it up to them.

I kinda think they're 'due.'

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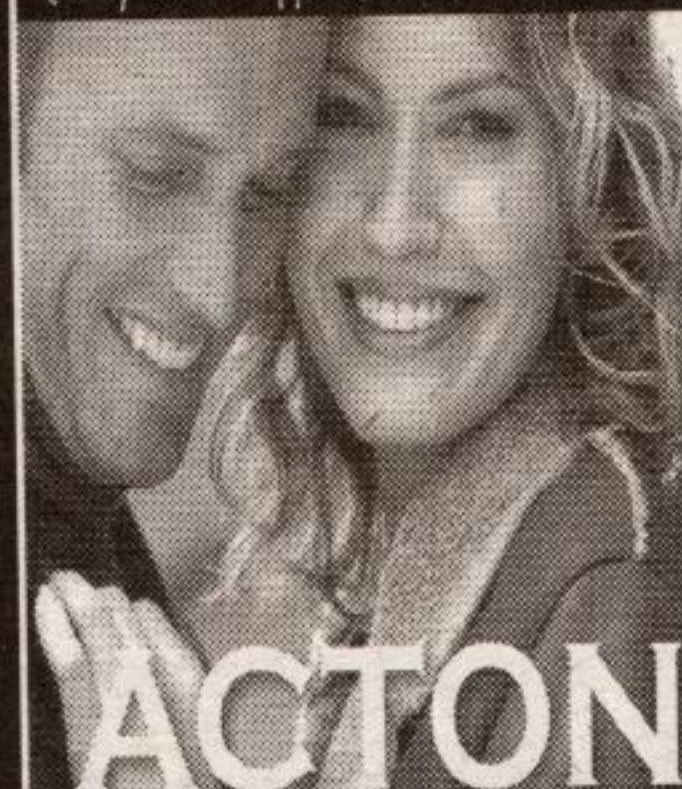
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