

How to give a real Christmas present

By N. BRUCE McLEOD
Richmond Hill
United Church

According to the Christmas Council of Canada, a voluntary organization of manufacturers and distributors of the decorative trappings of Christmas, Canadians usually spend \$100 million on wrapping paper, ribbons, bows and tree decorations.

That's just a fraction of the \$8.4 billion we spend these weeks on gifts, not counting liquor.

It's hard to picture numbers like that; they make us numb. How big is a million? If you pile thousand dollar bills tightly together to the height of a single brick, that makes a million. And a billion? Just pile those bricks to the height of a 32-storey building.

Imagine a building of million dollar bricks reaching 278 storeys into the sky, and that's the Canadian Christmas gift business.

More and more thoughtful people are beginning to pull out of Christmas. Not from gift-giving as such, but from the gigantic annual rip-off that, to keep our Gross National Product growing, hustles money out of our pockets for plastic gew-gaws and gimcracks and machine-tied ribbon bows.

The same magazine that advertises "three wisemen in gleaming sterling for the Christmas tree that has everything", describes over the page how 460 million people are chronically hungry, and most are under five years of age.

For many the contrast is just too much to take.

But won't the children be disappointed? Some will, so carefully have we taught them, who arrived regarding each day as a gift, to look forward to Christmas as the biggest gift day of all.

But perhaps the children are telling us something in their common reluctance to write thank-you notes for what our economy programs them to need and requires them to have for it to carry on.

Babies, until they are taught differently, get as much fun out of a tin pan and wooden spoon as out of any fancy educational toy. Nor does there seem to be the same need in us to make them say Thank-you.

Maybe the real gift is not a card, but a visit or a phone call; not something gleaming, but something personal.

Certainly no silver humidor

could ever match the painted up juice can that holds pencils and pipes on my desk and that will always speak of the little girl who made it.

And what could be more of a gift in our rushing lives than the gift of time?

The electronic game that gives a razzing sound when a wrong choice is made and is produced by a company whose motto is "It's not how you play the game, but whether you win or lose", may be forgotten in February.

But not the offer of a father to spend one whole evening every month doing whatever one of his children would like to do with him.

About ten years ago, a young American, Bob Kochtitzky, decided that what his family needed, more than anything in the Christmas catalogue, was a world free of poverty, hunger, and war.

He developed a way of saying to his Uncle Jim, "I'm putting my love for you this year not into a tie, but to work in the world for good, through this or that organization."

The same rationale is behind the increasing practice of giving to the Heart Fund or the Cancer Society at the time of a funeral.

Kochtitzky has developed an Alternate Christmas Catalogue listing places which use money to warm the world, and cards are sent to Uncle Jim's all over the land saying "A Gift of Life has been given this Christmas in your name."

We don't need a Catalogue. Every church has ways of channeling money to the hurting parts of the world.

Foster Parents Plan of Canada, or Pueblito Canada, will get money to children. You can reach out to refugees and hungry people through the Red Cross as well as through a church.

Lots of people are having a hard look this year at how much money runs out in cards, paper, ribbon, stickers, liquor, gifts, and food. Some are substituting some part of this incredible annual expenditure with home-made personal gifts, gifts of time, gifts of life for a broken world.

Does that take all the joy away? I believe it helps us uncover the joy that Christmas is all about, and that is not always apparent on the faces of tired shoppers.

I believe it is one way of responding to some undiscouraged spirit that is intent on building this earth into a home.



(Photo by Bruce Hogg)

Freezing their feathers

LIBERAL SPRINKLINGS

By DOREEN LIVINGSTONE
Liberal Correspondent

This column started out to be about my recent trip to Ottawa and my visit to the House of Commons and emphasized the fact that my timing is always just a little bit off.

Only hours before my personal deadline the Government of Canada was defeated and an election had been called, making the column sound just a little bit out-dated . . . bad timing.

X X X

Metro can be a dull and boring place at times. On a one-day visit to our nation's capital, Ottawa, I saw more interesting sights and individuals than I have seen here in months. You either seek them out or literally trip over them in the street.

Unfortunately my timing is not too good. I attended the House of Commons a couple of days after Trudeau made his resignation speech. I arrived there about ten minutes after our MP John Gamble left on a flight back here. That's the second time in four months I missed him. Last July I interviewed him via telephone; he in his Thornhill office and I in his Ottawa office.

The day I was in the House of Commons there was an NDP convention in Toronto and the only one there from the NDP was Stanley Knowles who looked quite dapper for his age. Another recognizable figure, to me at least was Toronto's former tiny Mayor David Crombie. At least he was still in town.

Only a handful of Liberals were there (maybe they were trying to come up with a new party leader) and I didn't recognize anyone in particular but I did notice that one was ignoring the proceedings and had his head buried in a newspaper. Then he got up and left, leaving the newspaper behind.

Another Liberal crossed the floor to the Conservatives, but I told you my timing was bad. He was only going to speak to someone across the hall from him. Is that

what "crossing the floor" means?

As we were about to leave Paul Hellyer arrived and surveyed the situation from his special balcony seat. It seemed suspicious to me that only a couple of days ago Trudeau had resigned. As you may remember he ran against Trudeau for the nomination the year our former Prime Minister was elected.

Since Pierre and Joe were both absent that day and no one else arrived, it was time to make a quick exit, only to walk past columnist Charles Lynch of Southam News engaged in conversation near the Parliament Buildings.

Anne Murray lives somewhere in Thornhill but have I ever driven up to her house and parked in front? No way. But I did park in front of Margaret Trudeau's house in the subdivision of East Edinburgh near exclusive Rockcliffe Village.

The house looked freshly painted in a charcoal grey with a coral trim and because her drapes were open I noticed a white telephone on a table placed near the window.

My timing was still bad because it was quite obvious Margaret wasn't at home. It was a P.A. day in Ottawa and presumably she was out with her three sons.

My track record was still good. I missed seeing Pierre, Joe, Margaret and John Gamble all in one day.

Oh well, all was not lost. I had some time left over and went browsing through a book store (relieved that there was not one souvenir of King Tut), had lunch at Le Baie (I think that's how it was spelled); here we call it The Bay and looked around an exclusive antique store owned by the former Mayor of Ottawa. And guess what? He wasn't around either!

Postscript — Here it is a few days before Christmas and right in the middle of Chanukah and have I written one word about either holiday? Would you call that bad timing?

Letters Santa Claus Rice

Dear Bob Rice:

I hope you don't mind me calling you dear, but I wanted to start this letter off right to encourage you to read it all.

Your idea of giving away a really nice gift was a nice gesture, but it is for an adult, and I believe Christmas is for children.

It is the time of year we celebrate Christ's birth and if you can remember the story you will see that the gifts were presented to Jesus and not his parents, Mary and Joseph.

I know that children see Christmas as a time for Santa Claus and not Christ's birth, but then the wise men who gave Christ His gifts were something like Santa Clauses themselves, with their ways of travelling from afar and their wise old looks.

I hope I'm not

being impertinent by writing this letter and telling you what I think.

I know there are a lot of children, even in Richmond Hill, who will be very disappointed on Christmas morning.

It is hard to explain to a small child that, yes, they have been good, but Santa passed them by and visited the neighbor's child who is the one who picks on or beats up the other children.

I realize you know many people in Richmond Hill, and maybe next year you could get some together to donate small toys or some clothes so that you can play Santa to the children.

You could ask the children to write to you, as Santa, telling you their sex, age, name, address and a bit about themselves and their Christmas wishes.

Then you could pick the

needier ones and make a small face light up with joy, because nothing is more important than the smiles and joys of laughter from the small citizens of today and the adults of tomorrow.

I feel that if we are good and kind to the children today, that maybe we will be able to look to a better future for our grandchildren and great grandchildren.

I know I'm asking a lot from just one person, but if someone starts, I know that others will follow and maybe this world will be a better place to live.

The children will also like the idea that they can send a letter to Santa.

I know the Post Office still gets lots of letters addressed to Santa and they are just thrown away after Christmas.

I know this is a great

request, but please think of the children and when they are happy, I know the parents will have something to smile about also.

Mrs. W. Walsh
Richmond Hill

ED. NOTE — The above letter was among the entries for Bob Rice's Christmas Card Contest. Bob replies: "I agree with Mrs. Walsh's views and I would like to be able to undertake such a project, but I feel that the various service clubs and agencies in the area do admirable work with the less fortunate and are more capable of running such a drive." Bob added that the contest was open to children as well as adults, and many entries were received from the younger set.

By BOB RICE

The winner is..

Well gang. . . here it is!
(TAH-DAH-HHHHHH. . . drum roll)
It's time to announce the name of the winner of my Christmas Present contest!
(Bigger drum roll and blaring trumpets)
The draw was held at The Liberal office and the winning card was drawn from all of the entries which had been placed in a slightly used wastebasket.

(Add two tympani and a flugel horn)
. . . by our new receptionist, Nancy!
(Cymbal crash and kazoo fanfare)
DA WINNAH OF DA PANASONIC PORTABLE TV-RADIO. . . FROM 226 RUGGLES AVENUE IN RICHMUND DILL IS THE . . . TOM STEWART FAMILY!!!!
(Applause. . . London Philharmonic Orchestra playing selected tunes from the Fats Domino Songbook)

Congratulations to Tom and his family and I should tell you that when I phoned him with the good news he was still in bed sleeping! I understand, however, that he was wide awake for the rest of the day.

I want to thank everyone who entered our contest and the nicest way I can think of doing it is to acknowledge you in print.

Thank you and Merry Christmas and a Happy Holiday Season to:

Mrs. Irene Worrell of Bayview Ave.
Thelma and Alan Humphries on Yonge St.
Helen Shaw of Lake Wilcox
Bud Botham of Dunlop Street
Laurie Anne Bishop on Arnold Crescent
Janis James on Westwood Lane in Thornhill
Mrs. Angela Nielsen on May Ave.
Doug and Loretta Thompson of Elmwood Avenue

Mrs. E. Shubert on Royal Orchard in Thornhill
The Lusk Family in Oak Ridges
Mrs. Leonora Paxton in Oak Ridges!

Mrs. Barbara Gillibrand on Elmwood Ave.
Linda Sugars on North Taylor Mills
Susan and Rena Crabb of Rockport Cres.
Irene Reeves on North Taylor Mills
Mrs. Kay Wood of Oak Ridges

Lyman Welch on Woodward Ave. in Thornhill
Margaret and Jim Williamson of R.R.1, King City
Terry, Joan, Libbi and Alan Hood on Gentry Cres.

June Clarke of Rosemar Gardens
Ron Schaufele on Baif Blvd.

Irene, Kenneth, Anne, Christina, Henry and Eric Osso on Anzac
Irene Boyle on Yonge Street
Nan Hunt in Willowdale
Christina Lown of Maple

Linda and Dino Salvatori on Oxford St.
The de Paulsen family on Rothsay Road in Thornhill
Mrs. J.D. Nelson of Thornhill

Ms. M. Maddox on Braeburn Drive
Mr. and Mrs. N. Bowen of Church Street, North
Mrs. Margaret Blow of Thornhill
The Infanti Family on Bayview Avenue

Mr. and Mrs. John Richardson on Elmwood
Mrs. Jeanne Aubry on Garden Ave. in Thornhill
Irene Van-Kats of Thorny Brae Drive
Dane and June Pendrith on Crestwood Rd.

The McLennans of Osiris Drive
Anne and Rick Gerber on Leisure Lane
Doug White on Markham Road
Margaret Hines on Centre Street, East

Hazel Jones on Albright Ave. in Toronto
George and Anne McLachlan of Delta, British Columbia
Mrs. F. Hishon on Alper Street

Sandra and Mini Ground of Harding Blvd.
Mrs. Joy August on Ruggles Avenue
Chris Jackson on Proctor Ave. in Thornhill
Shirley Tarling of Concord

Dorothy Turner on Lynett Cres.
Mr. and Mrs. John Brookes on May Ave.
The Finlays of Innis Crescent
Nancy and Paul Keighley of Thornhill

Dawn Waterhouse on Mill Street
Blanche Fagan of Trayborn Drive
Ron Wallace of no fixed address
Bob and Mary Watson on Harrygan Crescent

W.K. Ellis of Bridgeford Street
Maureen and Frank Krause on North Taylor Mills
Allan and Sharon Blow on Garden Ave. in Thornhill

The O'Tolles of Stornoway Cres. in Thornhill
Chris Bergauer of Unionville
and. . . last but certainly not least,
Penelope Arvidla Harriet Parmenter (those of us who know her call her Penny) of Richmond Street.

I am sorry all of you couldn't be winners and I truly hope you will try again when I come up with another fantastic, wonderful, exhilarating, fun G rated kind of contest.

The ol' Millpond Philosopher has taken the week off and has a special story for everyone in next week's Christmas edition of The Liberal.

THE GLAD CHRISTMAS MESSAGE!

A white-robed angel, flying high,
Paused to gaze down from the dark blue sky
Upon the small town of Bethlehem
Which cradled God's precious gift to men!

Flying lower he could clearly behold
The sleeping Jesus, wrapped safe from cold,
In the hay-filled manger at the Inn-
The Christ Child, sent to save men from sin!

He begged to the angels soaring near,
"Let's visit the shepherds watching here;
Tell them the Messiah has come to earth
In the gift from God of Jesus' birth!"

The shepherds, amazed at the heavenly light,
Were filled with joy on that holy night;
They hastened to Bethlehem to find their Lord;
Wondered and worshipped and truly adored!

Today, we're amazed at God's great love
Which gave us His own Son from above;
So we thank and praise Him every day-
Tell the glad news to all on our way!

Christmas 1979
Mary Honey Brown
A senior citizen
living on Dunlop St.

ENERGY SAVERS

Bill Hughson has some interesting ideas to conserve gasoline in automobiles and is looking for some interested people to form a club to perfect these ideas and come up with others.

"If you have one person with an idea, I'm sure it can snowball as well as be improved just a

bit," said Mr. Hughson.

One idea Mr. Hughson is looking at is to heat the gasoline before it hits the carburetor or perhaps turn the fuel into a vapor so 100 per cent burn would be obtained rather than only 25 per cent.

Mr. Hughson also has some ideas for the Town of Richmond Hill to save money as well as produce energy.

At the sewage disposal plant on Markham Road, he said, there is an everlasting flame, lit 24 hours each day and 365 days a year. Mr. Hughson is suggesting this methane gas burning could run a fleet of trucks if it was captured.

Anyone interested in meeting to discuss these ideas and many others can contact Mr. Hughson at 884-6390.



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