

# OPINION

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## Show the poor that work is worth the effort

A Toronto woman made headlines this week by announcing her resignation so she can collect welfare and stay home with her children.

The issue has turned into a media circus. Helle Hulgaard insists she will go through with her plan, in spite of criticism from government and the public. Provincial Progressive Conservative Leader Mike Harris jumped on Hulgaard's bandwagon before his staff checked her figures. She's quit a job that pays \$41,500 believing she'd be entitled to welfare benefits of \$1,973 per month. By the time she factored in benefits for clothing and GST tax credits, she decided it was too close to what she was earning to make it worthwhile going to work.

Hulgaard also points to the cost



Viewpoint

Paula Crowell

of dressing for work, public transit and babysitting fees whenever she has to work at night as reasons for leaving her job. This way, she says, she can stay home and care for her children, ages 12 and 11.

Unfortunately, by going public, Hulgaard has resigned herself to grief and misery. She can count on having her benefits held up due to 'unforeseen circumstances.' She'll also find herself scorned by both the working people and

legitimate welfare recipients, and poorer than she thought she'd be.

But Hulgaard has brought to the fore a sentiment that is surely felt by many. Why bother to work when the government will support you to stay home?

That perception raises the point that all levels of government must take a closer look at what can be done to help the working poor.

Work done by the Fraser Institute and the C.D. Howe Institute should be put to immediate use. An accurate scale to determine what defines poverty in urban centres and rural areas must be established. And it should be indexed regularly to reflect inflation. Then social welfare agents can decide who should be getting tax credits, subsidized child care, public transit allowance and the

like. Give the working poor a reason to continue working. Make it easier for them to better themselves, thus improving society as a whole.

For the non-working poor, work programs must be expanded to encompass all able-bodied welfare recipients.

It's often been said that the best way to find work is if you're already employed.

So even if people take work they don't care for, they're exposed to employment opportunity among other working people.

## What if crooks were as wily as politicians?

Is it a bigger crime to rob a bank or to open one?

A chap by the name of Ted Allen wrote the above. I think Mister Allen had his thumb squarely on one of the elusive characteristics of crime: its chameleon-like ability to pass itself off as something else.

When you think about it, it's really rather remarkable that so many people take up a life of crime, considering there are so many legal ways to be dishonest. We live in a time when political bumboys who have weaseled their way into a Senate appointment cynically vote themselves a massive pay raise smack in the face of a recession-ravaged populace. If you can get away with scams like that legally — who needs to break the law? Still, break the law we do. Some of us at any rate.

Take, for instance, the case of Eugene "Butch" Flenough, Jr. of Austin, Texas. Eugene, down to his last five bucks, decided to knock over a pizza joint late one evening. Cleverly enough, Eugene reasoned that since there were several members of the staff still on the premises, it might be a good idea to conceal his identity. Accordingly, he donned his motorcycle helmet, complete with tinted visor, burst through the door, ordered everybody up against the wall, cleaned out the till and fled.

Imagine Eugene's surprise when the Texas Rangers were practical-



Basic Black

Arthur Black

ly at his door to greet him when he got home. The Rangers told him he had been positively identified by several staff members. Impossible, thought Eugene "Butch" Flenough, Jr. How could anyone identify me when I was wearing my motorcycle helmet with the tinted visor?

And so he was — the one with "Eugene 'Butch' Flenough, Jr." neatly stencilled across the front.

Eugene was plain dumb. Daniel Wakefield was Dumb Squared. Wakefield walked into a bank in Pretoria, South Africa last year with a gun in one hand and a canvas bag in the other.

He was wearing a mask — which, cleverly enough, did not have his name stencilled on it. Wakefield threw the bag at a teller, and told her to fill it with folding money. She did. Wakefield fled. So far, so good — for Wakefield at any rate.

But 50 minutes later a bare-faced Dan Wakefield shows up in the same bank. "He was still wearing the same clothes and carrying the same bag," testified one of the tellers. "We all recognized him the minute he walked in and we called the police."

Say goodnight, Mister Wakefield.

Dumb — but not dumb enough to hold a dunce cap to William Saunders of New York. In February, Saunders stormed into an office of AT & T in Manhattan, armed to the teeth and threatening mayhem. He took 14 hostages. Police cordoned off the building. SWAT units slipped into position on rooftops and in adjacent offices.

Fortunately, 13 of the hostages managed to escape on their own. How? They asked Saunders — one at a time — for permission to go and get a drink of water. They never returned. Saunders eventually surrendered to police.

Thank the Gods for Dumb Crooks. Imagine the shape we'd be in if they were as wily as our politicians.



## FLICK PICK

August 27 - Sept. 2	CRITICS AVERAGE	MPAA RATING	THEME	VOLENCE	COARSE LANG.	SEX & NUDDITY
1. The Fugitive	★★★★	PG-13	Thriller	Much	Much	Mild
2. Hard Target (New)	★★★	R	Action	Lots	Lots	None
3. The Secret Garden	★★★★	G	Drama	Mild	None	None
4. Rising Sun	★★★	R	Thriller	Lots	Lots	Lots
5. Jurassic Park	★★★★	PG-13	Adventure	Much	Some	None
6. In the Line of Fire	★★★	R	Thriller	Lots	Lots	Mild
7. Free Willy	★★★	PG	Drama	Mild	None	None
8. Heart and Souls	★★★	PG-13	Fantasy	Some	Some	Mild
9. The Firm	★★★	R	Thriller	Some	Lots	Some
10. Sleepless in Seattle	★★★	PG	Romance	None	Mild	None

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## FOCUS GROUPS

SHARE YOUR VIEWS! The Ontario Women's Directorate wishes to hear your thoughts regarding their plans to combine their Wife Assault Initiative and their Sexual Assault Prevention Initiative.

Community Services Council has agreed to host sessions around York Region so that York Region residents can make their feelings known.

Below are listed the dates, places, times, and hosts. Please choose the one which is most convenient to you and plan to spend time in discussion.

This is your opportunity to help shape the future of provincial programming regarding Wife Assault and Sexual Assault.

### MARKHAM

Milliken Mills Library

Tues., Sept. 7

7 - 9 p.m.

Facilitator: Catherine Fox

### MARKHAM

Milliken Mills Library

Thurs., Sept. 16

7 - 9 p.m.

(Chinese Translation Available - Helen Li)

Facilitator: Barbara Moorhead

Opportunities to respond are also being provided to members of the Black Women's Congress (Eric Rutherford) and the Markham Federation of Phillipino Canadians (Marlene Mogado).