

OPINION

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Poor benefit most from local initiatives

The poor will go hungrier this spring and summer because of a less-than-enthusiastic response to the annual food drive.

The Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto fell 30 per cent short of its goal of two million pounds of food. In Markham and Stouffville, donations dropped at fire-halls and local drop-off points are forwarded to the local food-bank until a three-month supply is attained. The remainder is passed on to Daily Bread.

In Uxbridge, the Loaves and Fishes food bank is run independently. Volunteers found that while the same number of people donated, their offering was smaller.

The failure of these drives to generate as much food as anticipated is the result of a number of factors.



Viewpoint

Paula Crowell

One of those is a perception among the public that some of the people who use food banks are abusing the system.

As this recession drags on, the public becomes more intolerant. Those who are still employed view the new poor as a cross they never agreed to bear. Reports of abuse of the welfare and unemployment insurance systems make everyone suspicious of food bank users.

It shouldn't come as a surprise

that some do take from the food bank to save their own money for other things. But these people are a small minority of food bank clients.

Daily Bread's organizational success may be the root of this food drive's failure. Perhaps the umbrella network of food-providing agencies looks too much like a well-oiled machine to the public.

It may be time for local food banks and Daily Bread to look at ways to give the food drives a more local feel. Several communities along the U.S. eastern seaboard run programs in which one family adopts a more needy one.

The program began as a food-providing system, but expanded into household items, clothing and other necessities. It connects

the donors with those in need and gives both parties a different perspective of their neighbors.

In other areas, farmers are donating small plots of land as vegetable gardens for the poor. The seeds and fertilizer can be donated by local organizations and the poor are able to help themselves by growing their own produce during the summer months.

Small-scale grass roots programs might improve Daily Bread's image and provide the needy with more than just a two-week ration of pasta and beans.

The best excuses start with 'Welllllll'

There is hardly a man so strict as not to vary when he is to make an excuse.

Lord Halifax.

Very sorry can't come to dinner. Lie follows by Post.

Telegram from Lord Beresford to King Edward



Basic Black

Arthur Black

Ah, the humble excuse. Could modern civilization function without the veritable vermicelli of little white lies we all tell to get out of things we don't want to do each and every day? Probably not. It's early morning as I type this, but already I've fended off a block of Jehovah's Witnesses by telling them I'm a practising Buddhist; I've deflected a telephone sales pitch for magazine subscriptions by claiming I'm stone blind, and I've promised my Boon Companion and Faithful Cohort that you bet, for sure I'll get those storm windows off this afternoon, first thing.

Just as soon as this twinge in my back eases off.

Lies, all lies. Well, not lies, exactly. Excuses. Little dabs of social lubricant that help to smooth the meshing gears of everyday life.

An awful lot of impressive human creativity goes into making excuses — sometimes we expend more mental sweat trying to avoid a job than we would if we just went ahead and did the damned thing — but that's human nature too. And sometimes the excuses themselves become somewhat twisted works of art.

Consider, for example, the excuse of glamor girl Zsa Zsa Gabor, explaining why she slugged a Beverley Hills cop when he ticketed her for driving with expired plates on her Rolls Royce:

"I am from Hungary. We are descendants of Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun. We are Hungarian Freedom Fighters."

Or how about Chrysler shill Lee Iacocca, making excuses for not cleaning up automobile emissions:

"We've got to ask ourselves: how much clean air do we need?"

Then there's Jessica Hahn, Jimmy Bakker's ex-playtoy, excusing herself for doing a ten-page, full-color nude layout in Playboy:

"It brought me closer to God." Not as famous, but just as inventive, is the spokesman for the U.S. Defense Contractor Pratt and Whitney, desperately trying to excuse the fact that his company charged the Pentagon \$999 for pairs of pliers. That's \$999 for each pair.

Explained the spokesman: "Well, they're multi-purpose pliers."

Anyone who starts off most of his sentences with a long, drawn-out "Welllllll," is bound to be a good excuse-maker. Ex-U.S. President Ronald Reagan proves the point. His excuse to Chief of Staff Jim Baker for not reading his briefing notes for an important economic summit meeting: "Welllll, Jim, The Sound of Music was on last night."

And then there's Bill Clinton's classic — an excuse that will go down in the annals of Born Again Pot Smokers Everywhere: "I didn't like it and I didn't inhale it."

My all-time favorite excuse? I give the nod to Lighton Ndefwayl. Mister Ndefwayl isn't a household name in Canada, but he is in Zambia, where he's known as the best tennis player that country ever produced.

Until last year, that is. Last year Mister Ndefwayl was defeated by another Zambian tennis player — one Musumba Bwayla.

Mind you, Mister Ndefwayl has an excuse for his loss. "Musumba Bwayla is a stupid man," says Ndefwayl, "— and a hopeless player. He has a big nose and is cross-eyed. Girls hate him. He beat me because my jockstrap was too tight and because when he serves, he farts; and that made me lose my concentration for which I am famous through Zambia."

Well, perhaps so, Mister Ndefwayl, but you're still the number two tennis player in Zambia.

According to the last report:



ADAM

by Brian Basset

