

Blizzard of presents will be slowed down in 1997

Now that we've filed 1996 for future reference, I'm proclaiming a New Year's resolution by way of a plea to family, friends, Santa Claus and all others given to the overindulgence of young children: please, please, please, target someone else's offspring this year!

For our son Drew, the past year has been one endless act of ripping the wrapping paper off gifts ranging from tiny trinkets through giant plastic art centres. It's bad enough most years when this four year old product of two divergent religious and cultural backgrounds is on the receiving end of the spoils that fall to kids on Christmas, Chanukkah, Easter, Passover and any other designated excuse for a gift giving frenzy. Throw in the copious extravagance show each year by my wife's parents at Drew's birthday - he's one of only three grandchildren, and for boobies and zaidies, kids are more important than hockey is for most Canadians - and you get the idea. But this year, with the coming of a little brother, Drew reaped an extra harvest of 'big brother' presents from people looking to reduce the feelings of diminishment that can take over when the arrival of a new born sibling suddenly knocks a kid off his perch. The gifts continued to pour in for weeks after Griffin's birth. It got to the point where Drew would hold out both hands instinctively whenever there was a knock at the door!

One day during the recently past week of Chanukkah, Drew informed me that it was now the second day of Chanukkah, and that he had already added another candle flame to the cloth Menorah and candles that hung on the walls. As I had watched my wife's mother read him a kids book outlining the origins of the annual Jewish tradition a few days earlier, I thought I'd take the opportunity to



From
where I
live

Bruce
Stapley

see how much had sunk in. "What does it mean that it's the second day of Chanukkah?" I asked him. "It means I get another present tonight," he responded with an eager smile.

As the number of presents swelled under our Christmas tree in the days leading to the big day, Drew became a lit-

tle put off when he was told that most of the brightly wrapped gifts were for other family members. Santa would surely come down the chimney on Christmas Eve with a few presents for him as well, we assured him. But it was clear a year of runaway indulgences had taken its toll. Now we're in 1997, it will be a good three months before the Easter Bunny comes by to begin the process anew. In the meantime, Susan and I will impose an outright ban on any gifts that might come his way. Easter and Passover booty will be closely monitored, and come Griffin's birthday in June, Drew will receive modest loot just like his cousin. The summer months will bring with them another strictly enforced drought, leading to a controlled showering of birthday bounty

in October. Next year's Chanukkah will see gift giving restricted to just one night, and with any luck the new approach will see Drew's pre-Christmas drooling over anticipated gifts reduced to a mere trickle. This column will be mailed to family, friends and other guilty parties, with a blown up copy also to be hung in our house. Oh, and a belated Happy New Year.

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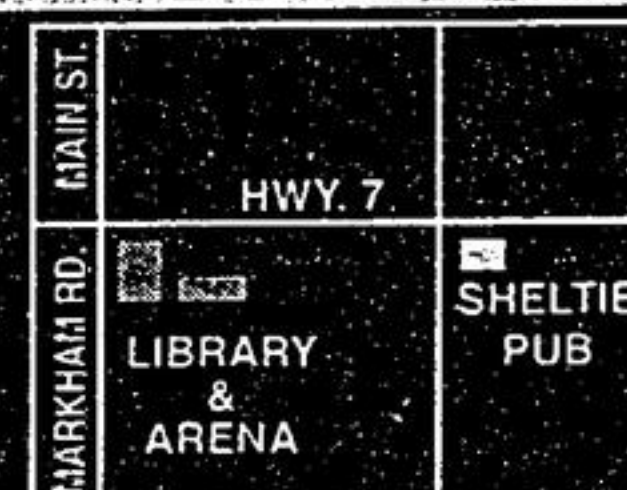
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