

Let them eat cake

by BRIAN LOCKHART

?Let them eat cake.?

That is the notorious phrase attributed to French Queen Marie Antoinette as her response to being told the population is starving.

It's a little misleading as the phrase gets lost in translation. She wasn't suggesting they bake a chocolate cake and have dessert ? the reference was to brioche, another type of bread.

However, a history search reveals there's no real evidence that the queen ever said those words, or even understood the plight of the peasants at the time.

It wasn't even attributed to her until decades after her death.

More than likely, the phrase was blamed on her as a late excuse for explaining why an innocent person lost her head in the guillotine during the height of the French Revolution.

However, the phrase emphasizes the obvious need for people to have food.

?An army marches on its stomach,? is a phrase supposedly coined by Napoleon Bonaparte, the emperor who conquered much of the world, and apparently couldn't get along with anyone.

Once again, it is not certain that he ever uttered that phrase. In fact, it has also been attributed to a few other historical figures.

But the phrase does have a meaning. A well-fed army stays healthy and maintains morale.

Try feeding your army fish heads and beans for a year straight and see how willing they are to take up a fight.

There is an old story from the Second World War. A group of German soldiers had captured some American supplies.

When the Germans took a look at what they had captured, they were stunned to see the amount and quality of food that was heading for the American troops.

The Germans realized they were going to lose the war, based just on what they had found. They figured that the Allies were better equipped in all ways, and morale would be boosted by decent food that would make the Allies a superior fighting force.

Apparently, the German Army was more of a 'bread and water' type of army when it came to feeding its troops, and as a soldier, you were expected to like it and never complain.

Years ago, I had a job working on the Welland Canal, delivering food supplies to both Great Lakes freighters and some foreign ocean-going ships.

Quite often, we would arrive close to lunch or dinner time. Almost always, if it was close to mealtime, after signing for the delivery, the cook would invite us to stay for something to eat.

The food served on the ships was always good, and that includes both the domestic carriers and the foreign ships.

It was much better and had more variety than you would get if you were at home and decided to throw a sandwich together for lunch.

The shipping companies knew very well that if you have a crew of 29 on a ship, and they may be away for weeks or months at a time, you want to keep them happy so the ship operates properly and morale remains high.

Good food makes people happy and healthy.

Health units in Ontario are reporting a dramatic increase in the number of households that are experiencing food insecurity. They simply can't afford the food it takes to feed a household properly.

While we quite often think of low-income people struggling the most at the grocery store, the problem is now affecting the middle class.