

Trick or treat— or \$20, bitch

WE'VE ALL HEARD THE DANGERS OF TRICK-OR-treating on Halloween, such as the sadistic neighbours who poison candy and insert razor blades into apples. This has prompted paranoid parents to breathe down their children's necks as they head door to door, cutting the costume promenade short to return to the safe confines of their home and meticulously inspecting the goodies for any sign of tampering. But these fears of adulterated candies and apples are overwhelmingly unsubstantiated, the few true cases being linked to murderous parents or family members—not the stranger down the way. Still, parents continue to harbour these suspicions and find new ones to boot. The latest target: UNICEF's annual Halloween penny drive.

"Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF" was born in 1950, when a few Philadelphia kids and their pastor brought empty milk cartons along during their Halloween journey to collect coins in addition to candy. More important than the \$17 they collected that night was the tradition that grew out of it, and UNICEF's campaign has collected hundreds of millions since then, proving that a few coins can go a long way. But parental concern about children carrying loose change in the dark night have resulted in the demise of the familiar orange boxes, as UNICEF Canada has replaced the campaign this year with a month-long fundraising affair, leaving kids to raise money at school and at home throughout October.

But as much as it's important to raise children to be active citizens and aware of those less fortunate around the world, asking them to each raise \$20 on their own is a big undertaking for a kid—especially when the expectation is coming directly from school, so not keeping up will cause a frown from teachers and classmates. Those who can't think up creative ways to keep up with the other kids in their class will just fall to their relatives for help—and asking your rich uncle for \$20 for the poor kids should not be a demand placed on any elementary school kid. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with fundraising or getting kids involved in doing it (unless you're Joe Volpe and the sum they give you is \$5400), but giving children the responsibility to do it, based on previous successes from the UNICEF campaign, gives them unnecessary stress in an age when kids are already growing up too fast.

The simplicity of picking up coins along with candy on Halloween night raised awareness not only for the trick-or-treating children but also for the people whose houses they knocked at, reminding the community at large about rampant poverty in many areas of the world. But more importantly, it showed kids how easy it is to make a difference—even while having fun. Parents should be sheltering their children when it really matters, and not by crushing a 55-year history of collecting coins for the poor.

CHLOÉ FEDIO
Managing Editor

A disgraceful Act

IT'S A DARK DAY FOR FREEDOM IN AMERICA, MR Bush. Contrary to what you might think, allowing your government to torture suspected terrorists with impunity in the name of national security is not what the founding fathers had in mind. Signed into law yesterday, the Military Commissions Act will allow the Bush Administration and the CIA to question terrorist suspects—notably those held in Guantanamo Bay and other secret American prisons—without fear of censure under the Geneva Conventions. It also assures that Bush et al will not be held accountable under the US War Crimes Act.

At base, this new act means the courts will turn a blind eye to illegal torture and coercion, all in the name of freedom, security, and the American Way. Never mind the lack of due process, dissolution of individual rights or assured anti-Islamism. As the farce concerning Maher Arar has shown Canada, lack of attention and excess of assumption can ruin a man's life. In a time when the US is steadfastly assaulting a slippery, ill-defined enemy, the call should be for prudence, not zealotry.

MATT FREHNER
Editor-in-Chief

LETTERS

Gateway editorial too mainstream

If I want to read an article that slanders Hugo Chávez, be it an editorial or a news piece—the two usually don't make a difference when it comes to reporting on Hugo Chávez—I would just pick up the *New York Times*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Financial Times*, etc (re: "Hugo not the boss of UN Council," 17 October). Basically, I'd just need to turn to the mainstream corporate-owned media.

However, to see the same type of Chávez-bashing editorial being printed at the *Gateway* is [that] it offers no new perspective on the issue. It is basically a summary of all opinions from the mainstream media. Just like any mainstream media, the focus is on Chávez's address to the UN assembly where he referred George Bush as "the devil" and how his speech has hurt him politically. Well, if you look at US influence in [the] UN, [then] even without his notorious speech, Chávez will find it really difficult to secure a seat at the UN security council.

The Bolivarian Revolution that is happening now in Venezuela takes socialist characteristics and it is a grassroots movement, and we all know how the US government feels about real grassroots democracy, especially the kind of democracy that is challenging US hegemony in Latin America.

Second of all, what disturbs me the most about Ms Climenhaga editorial is that it carries exactly the same tone as mainstream media in regard to its view on Hugo Chávez. If the *Gateway*, as a student newspaper, cannot even bring an alternative perspective in its content, then what is the purpose of the *Gateway*?

HARIYANTO DARMAWAN
Alumnus

Don't let dangerous offenders walk, Lilwall

Scott Lilwall seems to have been so carried away by his baseball metaphor that he has failed to correctly judge Prime Minister Stephen Harper's new measure that would put the onus on three-time offenders to prove that they should not be declared dangerous offenders (re: "Harper playing hardball," 17 October).

Violent crime is a very serious issue. While overall rates have been decreasing, they remain unacceptably high and the homicide rate has been rising over the past few years. Torontonians vividly remember the gunfire that broke out in their city's downtown in December that killed an innocent teenage girl. In January, a 17-year-old girl was murdered at a Montréal gas station where she worked. A similar incident occurred near Vancouver in March 2005 when a young man was murdered while chasing a motorist who had stolen twelve dollars' worth of gas. These are horrible events, but only represent a fraction of the violent crimes perpetrated in our society.

The author of this article dismisses most crimes as being committed in "the heat of passion." However, the individuals who committed these unspeakable crimes in the examples above present a grave danger to

Bush responds to criticism over the Military Commissions Act



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society. Locking them up for longer periods ensures that they are kept behind bars and that they are unable to murder more people. It is not too much to demand that criminals who have committed three separate violent crimes spend more time behind bars. Besides, how many times does a violent repeat offender get to use the "heat of passion" excuse before they become a threat to society?

Furthermore, the proposed law does not violate the idea that someone should be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Someone convicted of three violent crimes has already been shown to be guilty of these crimes. Declaring that criminal to be a dangerous offender would simply be part of the punishment that comes with committing that third offence. Rather than violating our concept of justice, this measure flows from our belief that criminal acts should come with strict consequences.

It's about time that someone stands up for the innocent victims of crime. The proposed new law is about getting things done to protect Canadians from the crimes of repeat offenders. This one is a home run for Harper.

RENZE NAUTA
Arts IV

Step up to the plate with some solutions, Lilwall

Your baseball metaphor notwithstanding, why don't you offer a better solution to the problem of ongoing violent crimes, instead of

just whining when someone else actually tries to do something about it? Or at least cite your sources for the "debunked" approach that stiffer sentences will lower crime?

You make it sound as though you're satisfied with the status quo—that violent offenders should be given even more chances to ruin lives. As for the cost, you've totally ignored the cost of the crimes—both human and financial—in your calculations.

Since your approach is to complain without trying to help the situation, I imagine that you will be among the first to complain that the government isn't doing anything. It begs the question: why on earth are you given a platform to spout your ideas from, when you're contributing so little? Maybe we need a higher standard in journalism, as well as in the judicial system.

BOB ELLIS
Via e-mail

'Illegals' doing America's dirty work

Judy McNeese's letter about Mexicans sneaking in and milking the US system dry is absurd (re: "Becoming Canadian as easy as putting 'eh' at the end of every sentence," 17 October). Most Mexicans who illegally cross into the United States end up working illegally, doing jobs which pay less than minimum wage to try to support their families back in Mexico. These are the guys washing dishes, unloading trucks, mowing people's lawns, or waiting by the

Home Depot in hopes of being hired by a contractor for labour work (doing the jobs that we fat, lazy Americans and Canadians don't do).

They have no ability to milk any systems such as health care (which would be difficult in the States anyway), because they have no citizenship and cannot gain easy access to most of these services. Furthermore, McNeese believes that all 12–30 million illegals should file their papers, pay their money, and wait. Anyone who has lived in Mexico knows the stupidity and naivety of this statement in contrast to the reality faced in the corrupt system. Unless you pay big (and that means paying all the middle men their "bonus" salaries), there is no way your papers are going to get processed. Most people who illegally cross the border are in search of jobs [that] will pay them enough to support their families, meaning they don't have the money to pay corrupt officials to begin with.

As for us trying to imagine millions of third-world immigrants in Alberta, there is a reason Canada is called a multicultural society. Let the Mexicans work in America. You probably need them to do your lawn work or shingle your roof while you sit and clog your arteries [at] McDonalds. And don't even think about coming to Alberta, we already have enough ignorant, upper-middle class conservatives here, thank you.

MICHAEL SNIDER
Education IV

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