

Boo for stopping the UNICEF box

COSTUMED DEVILS, WITCHES, AND NINJA TURTLES will be going door to door for copious amounts of candy tomorrow night. But for the second year in a row, that's all they'll be looking for, because once again, there's no orange UNICEF trick-or-treat boxes to be had. It's a shame, too, for with the box comes a valuable resource for third-world children—and a lesson for first-world children in helping the less fortunate.

The Trick-or-Treat box program was first given the green light more than 50 years ago and during its lifetime collected millions of dollars for children in need across the globe. It was ended for a number of reasons: schools were frowning on the immense task of sorting out all of the coins collected, and safety concerns developed over children going around on Halloween with money around their necks. There was further disapproval, too, from certain right-leaning households who disagreed with UNICEF's pro-choice stance, as well as the fact that some saw the trick-or-treating with the boxes as begging.

To equate it to panhandling seems wrong, however. Deciding whether or not to donate spare change to box-wielding children isn't exactly a high-pressure situation: the kids ask, you say yes or no, and they smile anyways because you just gave them some candy that they hope wasn't something healthy like a granola bar. Labelling kids with UNICEF boxes as beggars is inane: they're raising money for children who can't even fathom the idea of eating three square meals a day, let alone being given free candy.

These safety concerns seem overblown, too: most children who tout the UNICEF boxes aren't going to end up with more than a few dollars at best. Even then, it'll be in pennies, nickels, and dimes—not really worth the trouble. Yes, there are some people out there who might try and swipe some poor kid's UNICEF box, but if they weren't after the box, they'd still want to snag the bag of candy.

That plays into the general paranoia that's building around Halloween; the more that children are allowed to roam free and get candy, the more likely it is that some unknown horror—poisoned candy, apples filled with razor blades, or bullies—will occur. And while there's always going to be a few chumps screwing around on Halloween, they'll be there with or without the UNICEF boxes. There's no extra risk in collecting charity at the same time as cherry blasters.

UNICEF has set up a few new programs in place of the Trick-or-Treat boxes, including longer fundraisers in October, but it's doubtful that they'll be anywhere near as effective. People are less likely to give if they have to leave the house to do so—it's easier to be charitable if the charity comes to you.

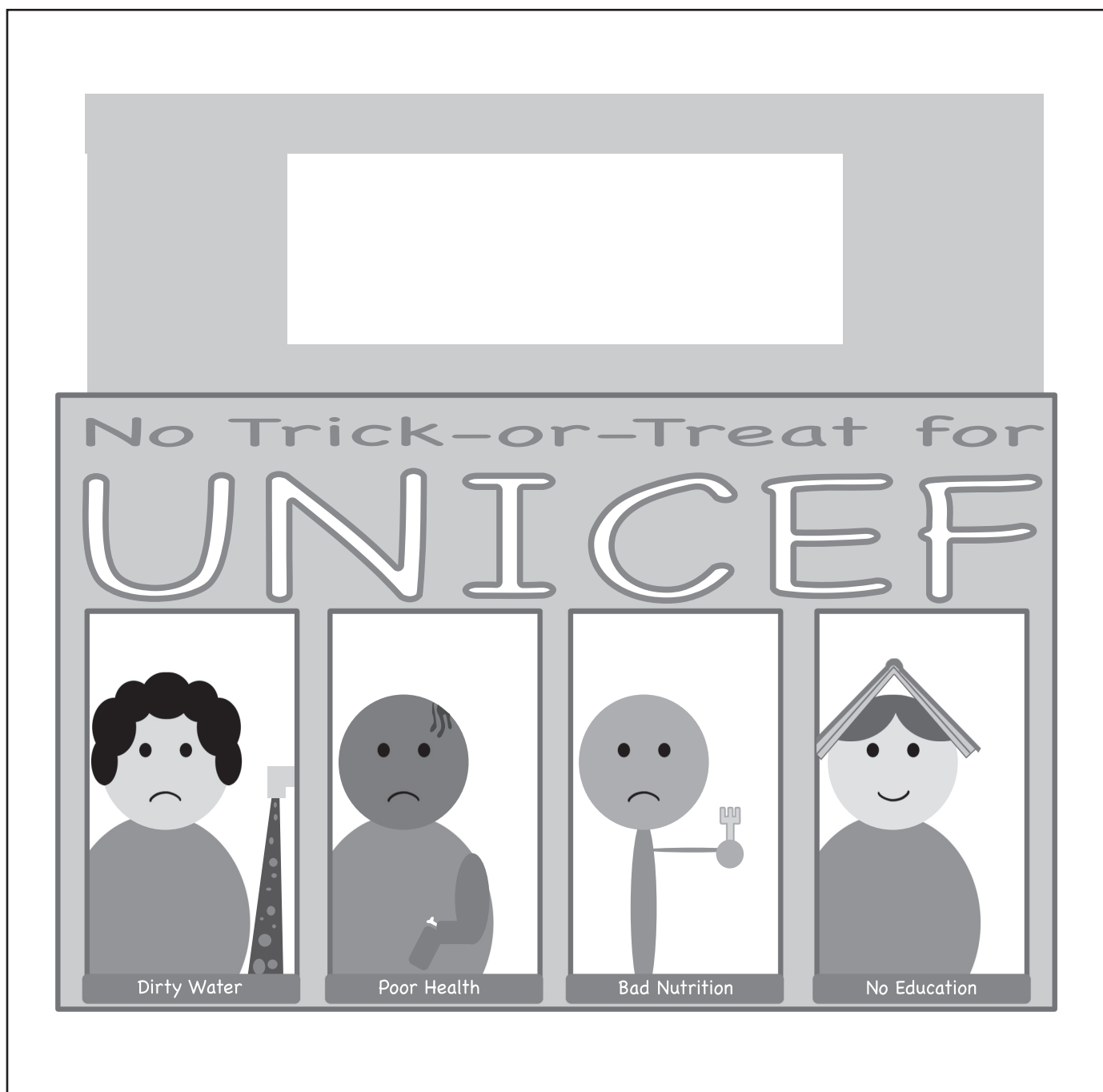
It just seems like such a waste to have given up on a tradition that's generated so much money since its inception. It might've been a hassle to sort out in the aftermath, but the cause was one worth trick-or-treating over—that is, children who will likely never get the chance to do the same.

PAUL BLINOV
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Strike won't do Jacques

IT SHOULDN'T SURPRISE ANYONE THAT ROUGHLY 20 000 Quebec postsecondary students are protesting planned tuition increases—it's how they're programmed. Still, while marching through the streets of Montreal does send an important message, in this case, they're going about it all wrong. After 13 years of frozen tuition, Quebec has the lowest average tuition in the country by a very wide margin—\$2025, \$608 lower than Newfoundland and Labrador—and really has nothing to complain about. Still, striking in order to send a message isn't going to do much. After all, they're still paying their institutions' fees, and the only people hurt by the missed class time are those students with the picket signs. Tuition is never going to be free in this country, and groups that try to fight to make it so are deluded into thinking it will work.

PAUL OWEN
Managing Editor



CONAL PIERSE

LETTERS

Pumpkin-crushing had a point

Poverty doesn't have four wheels or a steering wheel, and it certainly wasn't manufactured by a North American automobile company. While we're on it, it's very unlikely one (or even several) oversized pumpkins will eliminate the lack of opportunity for the 1.2 billion currently living in extreme poverty. What, then, was the point of Engineers Without Borders dropping a 250kg pumpkin onto a van last Wednesday?

This question mirrors the interrogations I've received this week from multiple parties. I've also been asked why we would be so willing to waste a huge pumpkin and a van, especially when one of the points we're protesting is world hunger?

To reiterate what we said on Wednesday, the pumpkin was grown for competition and was not fit for consumption. Had it not been used in our event, it would've been left to rot—and it was rotting when we picked it up. The van was well beyond its drivable life—as could be seen by the missing engine—and the van was bought by a scrap metal yard just as it was to be bought if there had been no pumpkin dropped on it.

So, then, why was it done? I'll be the first to admit that our message on Wednesday was not incredibly deep, but then again, it wasn't supposed to be. We were trying to do two things: first, to point out that there are four easy things anyone can do today to start fighting poverty, today. Research

0.7 per cent and the Millennium Development Goals, buy fair trade coffee, write or visit your MP, or join a social justice group meeting. Secondly, we wanted to get as many people as possible thinking about poverty—if only for a short time.

Of the thousand people at the event itself—and the tens of thousands more who caught it in newspapers and on television—many will give the Make Poverty History campaign a second thought this year. Guaranteed we reached more people than we would have by setting up a booth in CAB.

So what was the point? Well I'm glad you asked; by asking you've told me that, even for part of your day, you were thinking about poverty and those around the world afflicted by it, and that was the whole point.

TONY HANCOCK
VP External
Engineers Without Borders

On the field of bullshit

Following an all-candidates' meeting during the recent Ontario provincial election, I had the privilege to discuss the fact that "bullshit" has become a respectable academic field of study with some journalism students.

If one uses Google scholar to search for "on bullshit," one is rewarded 5590 hits of what should be mainly the academic peer-reviewed literature on the subject.

While the revival of studies on bullshit is generally credited to the phenomenal success of Princeton University emeritus philosophy professor Harry Frankfurt's 2005 book simply entitled *On Bullshit*, this author

is of the opinion that Neil Postman's paper entitled "Bullshit and the Art of Crap-Detection" should be the first reference any student should read. Postman made the following point: "As I see it, the best things schools can do for kids is to help them learn how to distinguish useful talk from bullshit."

A little later he continues: "every day in almost every way, people are exposed to more bullshit than it is healthy for them to endure." It was left to Frankfurt to proclaim that "one of the most salient features of our culture is that there is so much bullshit"; however, the purpose of this submission is to draw to the attention of students that the rapidly expanding academic literature on bullshit has something of interest for them.

GW "BILL" RIEDEL
Alumnus

Editor's note: to read the full version of this letter, including suggested reading in the field of bullshit, go to www.thegatewayonline.ca/letters.

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Letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words, and should include the author's name, program, year of study and student identification number to be considered for publication

LETTERS FROM THE ARCHIVES

You can't change the past without a time machine, so stop whining about it

Instead of Peter Moore wasting his time on an issue that can't be changed—and that happened 500 years ago—he should write an article on something that's happening in the '90s, such as the Kurds' mistreatment or the blacks in South Africa.

In your article ("1492: Welcome to America," 8 October, 1992), you said that "the Spaniards were not the only ones seeking gold in the new world." For the record, Christopher Columbus was Italian. Mr Moore should also be aware of the fact that Canada doesn't celebrate Columbus Day, we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, which was a dinner between the pilgrims and the Indians, thanking the Lord for the harvest.

ISABEL MOLINA
29 October, 1992

From the Archives is a semi-regular feature where the Gateway runs historical letters that we feel are of particular importance—or are just really hilarious. In this case, it makes you wonder about where the hell the Canadian Thanksgiving actually comes from. Did they ever address that in elementary school? I don't think so.