

Editorial

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Halloween has come and gone, but its effects are still everywhere a few days later: motorists try to wipe the last traces of egg and soap out of their long-suffering windows; department stores do their best to sell off enough leftover treats to give every kid in Ethiopia cavities, while surreptitiously switching from gaudy, black and orange sales displays to gaudy, red and green sales displays (only 49 shopping days before X-Mas, don'cha know); lobotomized pumpkins rot, abandoned on people's lawns; teachers struggle to control classrooms full of hyperactive rugrats high on sugar overdoses; and just about every man, woman, and child, in the land is coping with the guilt and calories they've been left with by an orgy of junk food consumption. Unfortunately, though, extra poundage and emotional trauma aren't the only things our candy binge leaves us with. We're also stuck with piles of chip bags, candy wrappers and zillions of other useless packagings that will probably be floating around long after the calories have melted away. Halloween has become one of the worst symptoms of our culture's obsession with wastefully packaging everything that we consume.

It's no secret that our planet is drowning in garbage. Every week the news is filled with discouraging reports on how we're running out of places to put our trash, especially that man-made monkey on our backs, plastic. The darn stuff is virtually indestructible and will probably outlive its makers, and we seem bound and determined to wrap everything from corpses to candy in the cursed material. It's one of the drawbacks of living in a capitalist socioeconomic system that caters to "the consumer", devoted to the buying and selling of goods and hence dependant upon packaging as a sales tool for most of our products. Halloween treats, for example, are among the most outrageously overpackaged items on the market. Take, for instance, your average bunch of chocolate bar treats, wrapped in a big plastic bag, with a couple of dozen little wrappers inside around the actual candies. By the time you've ingested the chocolate you're left with a pile of packaging that's pretty useless to you unless you were planning on wallpapering your livingroom with the "Mars" logo. Then, there are those delightful mini chip packages, each bag used to seal a fingerfull of potato chips that take about two minutes to consume if you linger over them. It all adds up to massive waste for the sake of some pathetically tiny helpings of snackfood.

The logical question, then, is what should be done about this: the easy answer would be to ditch our obsession with packaging, but that's probably not a practical proposition until our society develops ways to market and distribute its products without packaging everything to death. In the mean time, it's a good idea for all of us to look into recycling a lot of our waste

materials so that people won't be picking up after us in the next century; and as for Halloween, it's a fun holiday that shouldn't be deep-sixed entirely, but we might think about different ways of celebrating it, at least in terms of "trick-or-treating", perhaps doing instead what some communities have tried by holding community gatherings where all the kids can dress up

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and stuff themselves without roaming the streets at night and without accumulating dozens of individually wrapped goodies. At the same time, we big kids can stick to buying our junk in bulk.

It may not sound quite as fun, but it could be one small step in preventing our packaging problems from haunting us in the future.

Sean McQuaid
Editor

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