

Editorial

The opinions expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect those of the staff of this publication, or of the Student Union.

Everybody remembers the old school bully. He was the big mean guy in school who scared everybody into doing exactly what HE wanted. Well that was a long time ago. This is university and we are all too big for bullies now, right? -WRONG. There is a new bully in our school and he has everybody doing just what he wants, only this time he is not looking for just our lunch money.

When the provincial government found itself with a supposedly "unexpected" \$50 million dollar shortage of money, it told everyone who has any financial connections with the provincial treasury to ask their employees to take a voluntary cut in their wages and salaries of 9% or else the government might just have to force them to. Since the university gets a few million (around 20) from the treasury each year, we fell into this great category.

The university did what every schoolboy does when confronted by a bully, it gave the province exactly what it wanted. Since the staff and faculty unions had contracts with the university, they refused to take the cut so the university had to find other ways of getting the money before the big bully came around and started to show his muscles.

The final solution: In order to protect the university's autonomy, the university decided to tell the government to cut this years funding to the university by about \$600,000, the amount the government asked for. This amounted to no more then the university giving the government exactly what it wanted in an effort to avoid facing the fact the government has power over the university. This was viewed as a great saviour to the university's autonomy yet if we refused to help out and called the bully's bluff we probably would have found out that the bully would have stepped down (as all bully's do) and, except for some hard feelings, we would have been \$600,000 better off.

Now the university says that the money is coming from a surplus they have had over the past number of years (maybe from the 15% increase in tuition last year). This deal that the university made with the government is only transferring the burden of the

problem on to the backs of students. With the government saying that there will be no increases in grants to the university over the next few years the students are in an even more vulnerable position now then ever.

Instead of the university falling to pressure, it should have stood up to the government and taken the bluff. If the government did forced the pay decreases, then all the university would have lost was face and the cutbacks would have given the university a better financial foothold for the next few years.

The next time the problem arises (and it will) I think that the university should stand it ground and tell the provincial government they should instead try for some other ways of finding money, maybe a student loan?

Indebted to you,

Cory Large

Cory Large
Editor

Tradewind
189 Kent St., Charlottetown 894-4291

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