

Editorial

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Anyone out there remember a little soirée called the French Revolution? A lot of people in France came to the joint conclusion that things were dangerously skewed within their system of authority, and so they set out to make some changes. People rallied around slogans of freedom and rather efficiently went about removing the head cheeses from positions of power. Before long, though, the idealistic rebels also started separating the head cheeses from their heads by means of the chopping block. People quickly became concerned less with reforming the system and more with purging it, cleaning out the old regime with a bloody broom and making the guys in charge suffer. What followed was several years not of constructive reform but instead of destructive terror, senseless death, and lost ideals. The point? U.P.E.I. is ripe for revolution itself at the moment, and it would be a good idea for the university community to give serious thought to what they're doing before they do something they may regret, and before they forget what they're fighting about.

By now, virtually anyone who reads this will know exactly what the controversy is about, the fact that something terrible happened on our campus and that the administration's handling of it was questionable at best. The terrible event in question is the alleged rape (ridiculous as it may seem, folks, that is the legal description of it at present) that took place on the night of Wednesday, September 23 in the Marion Hall men's residence. By all accounts this was a brutal and sadistic crime for which the alleged offender(s) deserves the sternest possible punishment the law allows (castration comes to mind for starters but the courts probably have other ideas). At this writing there has been no one charged with the crime, but many concerned citizens have been saving their outrage for the administration anyway. There has been a flood of criticism for the various levels of administration at the university, most notably for the University President, the Student Council President, and the head of security. This criticism is not without justification. President Eliot has himself admitted that his handling of the matter was inadequate. In a combination of bad luck and bad judgement he left the Province as the news of the assault broke five days later because he had a prior engagement elsewhere, and many students and employees were outraged by this apparent lack of concern for the issue, not to mention the confusion this left as to who was the universi-

ty's spokesperson regarding the incident in Eliot's absence. Similar criticism has been aimed at Student Union President Tracy Arsenault, who heard of the incident through the media on Monday and neglected to acknowledge the incident officially until late Wednesday in a hastily composed press release. Arsenault has also been accused of ignoring inquiries from students and later denying it in public statements such as those made in a discussion on the topic on the television program Compass, and she has been less willing to admit blame in the matter than was Eliot; these and other factors have even led to calls for Arsenault's resignation and a petition has been circulating to call for her impeachment, though the petition was recently ruled invalid by Student Council on a technicality. There have also been calls for the resignation of the head of security, A.J. MacLeod, since his department had the earliest knowledge of the incident while apparently accomplishing little or nothing apart from delaying the entry into the investigation by City Police, who were initially satisfied to let our security force handle it as something within university jurisdiction. This all adds up to a rather bloodthirsty student body angry over being kept in the dark and looking for the first available scapegoat to take it out on.

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Mistakes were definitely made, but officials are as human as any of the rest of us, and in some cases the mistakes are understandable. President Eliot has made a step toward rebuilding trust with his earnest public apologies for his part in the mishandling of the matter, and there are many students who are willing to forgive the errors of their leader, Tracy Arsenault, as made evident by a new petition circulating in support of the student president. Student outrage over the handling of the incident is understandable, and there should definitely be investigation of security and the other bodies involved to see what went wrong and what should be done to prevent such mishandling of similar incidents in the future; however, we should not be too quick to condemn our authorities before we have all the facts, and we should also remember to concentrate on the truly important questions that have arisen in the wake of this crisis: tending to the welfare of the victim and any others affected by this tragedy, and working to better protect students through such measures as the institution of a safewalk program to escort students travelling on campus at night, the offering of self-defense courses, and improved lighting. Before we rush blindly to punish those who may be at fault, we should first work together to ensure the safety and well-being of the university community, and not lose sight of our common goals through useless bickering among ourselves.

Sean McQuaid
Editor-in-Chief