

Specifics of **GATEWAY** autonomy

Didn't you do this last year?

• Last year, we collected more than 3300 signatures on a similar petition (we only needed 2500). After being audited by the Students' Union, that tally dropped to 2311 "valid" signatures. Why? No one knows. We asked for another audit, but it hasn't happened yet and those signatures are now too old to use. It doesn't appear to be our fault, but, nonetheless, we have to collect all those signatures again.

Why do you want this?

• Because, in short, it's bad for the media to exist without full separation from the government; in our case, the media is the Gateway and the government is the SU. While the SU guarantees the Gateway editorial freedom, the fact is that they control the budget and our jobs, and can indirectly assert pressure that way.

• Nearly as importantly, we believe that an autonomous Gateway could operate more efficiently. That efficiency doesn't just come through speed, although there would be some benefit in cutting down on redundant bureaucracy, but mostly in pursuing ventures that the SU has ignored. For example, the SU has ignored our requests to look into switching to a different advertising provider that could bring the paper more revenue.

• Other examples: we were told by an SU executive that we might "get more [stuff] if we weren't as controversial." Tempering our criticism just to get pay raises isn't how the press should operate. Also, adding a Features Editor to the staff took about 100 hours of work in order to convince the SU, even though the editors and volunteers realized that it would provide a very clear benefit for minimal cost.

What does this mean?

• We are seeking autonomy from the SU. Autonomy, essentially, is the right of self-government; we believe that the people who work at the paper have the best understanding of how it works and how it should work, and should consequently have some say (but not all of it). It's much the same as moving away from home.

Who will run the paper?

• The Gateway and all its resources would be transferred to a non-profit society called the Gateway Journalism Society. It would be run in accordance with

More information is available at <http://www.soup.ab.ca/gateway/> or by contacting Dan Lazin at 492-7052, in 0-10 SUB, or at dan@lazin.ca.

the Societies Act of Alberta and according to its own bylaws, which follow the structures of dozens of other successful autonomous student papers across Canada. It would still be run entirely by students, however.

Is this a scam?

• Certainly not. In fact, it's very normal, and very good. Every other major student newspaper in Canada has achieved autonomy from its SU over the past 20 years.

• But if you're asking how you'll know that we're not going to run away with the money, or run ourselves into the ground, or become even more right- or left-wing (take your pick), you should look at our bylaws and budgets at <http://www.soup.ab.ca/gateway/>. We have a very sensible set of plans, modeled after our own successes and those of others. There's plenty of financial oversight—lots more than we have now—and much more effective complaint procedures.

• The members of the Gateway's board of directors would all be students, and only three of the seven would be from the Gateway. The others—the majority—are there to represent average students.

• Our Ombudsboard would be composed of experienced members of the academic, journalistic, and student communities. Its members can't be affiliated with the Gateway, so complainants are guaranteed fair, intelligent treatment.

What else would change?

- Longer issues during the regular year
- Functional website with searchable archives
- No advertising inserts (the messy ones)
- Excess profits would go to scholarships
- Liveable wages for all staff, most of whom are paid a salary that works out to less than minimum wage

How does this work?

• First, you (and all your friends) should sign the petition. The petition doesn't say that you support this, just that you want to vote on it. Then, in the SU Elections, vote Yes or No on the referendum question, whichever you feel is most appropriate. If a majority vote in favour, then we'll get our autonomy, and you'll get our thanks—and a much better newspaper.

potential,
Iceland

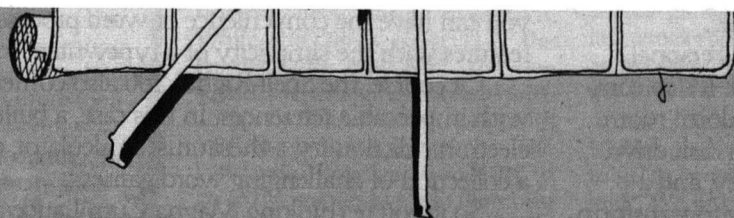
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Interview by Paul Murphy
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