

The contracts committee report--finally

Since this report ~~is in some ways~~ ^{semi-} takes a historical approach, it is necessary to deal with some areas of responsibility which are not now part of contracts. This is not to suggest that these areas (non-commercial and book publishing, for sure) should be part of the contracts committee's responsibility, but that we have observations about these areas which may be valid.

The contracts committee was first formed to be a liason group between Dumont's workers and its customers. The committee's main task was the drawing up of contracts with the Cord Spoke and Chevron. And since there were a lot of questions concerning quality, layout and technical info, the contracts committee spent a lot of time going over Dumont's work with its customers. Out of this came the "crit copy", the mechanism ~~π~~ whereby contracts relayed customer complaints to everyone at the shop. For a period of time, we went over each crit copy in our weekly meeting.

Through the process of continually raising the minimum standards of quality in the shop, as well as more experience in all areas of production, customer complaints have been reduced considerably. Unfortunately, both these developments are so intangeable that they cannot be written down, and only taught to new people as they come up--and often they come up in the printed product, and not during typesetting. Thus abandonning crit copies has not only deprived us of the mechanism of self-criticism and education, but the mechanism of communicating customer complaints on to everyone. Now we use the log book and the general meeting for these things, and neither should be used for that purpose;

For the sake of the new people, our customers and for a continued process of improving our quality, we should probably reassess our decision (?) to abandon crit copies.

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In terms of getting work for the shop, the next important development occurred in the spring of that first year when Bill Aird volunteered to help ~~be~~ a group of people typeset their paper (Alternate Society) on nights when the shop wasn't in use, and to do that typesetting on a cost basis.

Since Bill was volunteering his time (whoever pasted this section up ought to have their eyes checked) and had to put time ~~xxxxx~~ at Dumont as well, there was no way he could handle the supervision on his own, and so he talked to other Dumonters who he thought might be

interested in the work.

By keeping exact figures on materials used, he was able to calculate the cost of materials required to put out a paper on a cost basis-- with no charges for labour or overhead. The price worked out to an amazing \$1.25 per tab page, including negs, as ~~xxx~~ compared to our commercial rate of \$34.50.

Non-commercial has gone through many changes since then, but those changes have simply been the reassessing of Dumont's role in encouraging left publications. Because Dumont is a left wing typesetting shop, and because the fight for socialism will be strengthened when more publications which promote left-thought are available to everyone, we must encourage all publications which help this fight. We must do this at no cost to Dumont for we can little afford to lower our wage level, but we must also do this at no benefit to Dumont, because we are not out to rip-off the left.

This does not mean, however, that any group of people who call themselves leftists can use the shop non-commercially. For if the basis for N-C rates is to promote socialist thought in Canada, then a group, and that group's publication, must be judged according to the degree to which they do just that.

Unfortunately, our basis for discussion with N-C groups is seriously jeopardized if we are not constantly involved in the process of evaluation of effective communication of socialist thought (and action, of course)--evaluation which must occur in the areas of form, style, technique and content. We must recognize this as an important area of work ~~at~~ in Dumont, and support people who are involved in it, or else we lose our socialist identity and simply become a "model" factory-- we could get money by allowing industrial psychologists to do studies on us (like rats in a cage).

So much for N-C contracts--except to say that we must reaffirm their their importance, as well as our own goal of promoting socialist struggle in Canada.

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With the flood of non-commercial work that followed our N-C policy, there also came a variety of commercial work, seldom in the form of tabloid newspapers. This was the beginning of Dumont's development as a full-fledged typesetter. Since the most important part of this report will be the the suggestion of a massive program to seek out commercial work, it is necessary to go through each type of job we do, and evaluate the

possibility of getting that type of work, and what effect having that type of work will have on our financial position.

(For the new people, some information: for the first time in Dumont's ~~xxxx~~ history, we start into September without a budget. We do have some ~~xxxxxxakewt~~ observations: 1) work coming into the shop is very unpredictable (last year 2 jobs worth \$20,000, or 15% of our budget, fell through), and our budget went haywire). 2) our ability to handle all types of work, and handle them efficiently, has not only got us ~~x~~ through losing those two big jobs, but a very productive summer (in terms of ~~px~~ typesetting, not maintenance) has put us in the best position ever going into the fall. 3) an estimate of our expenses for this coming year is \$140-150,000. and a conservative estimate of sales (projected in June) of \$105,000 can now probably be revised to around \$130,000. (\$15,000 for work we now have, or did have or know we will have, but didn't account for, and \$10,000 for the stuff we won't know about until it comes in) leaves us needing \$10,000 minimum (\$10,000 means 1,667 book or 300 tabloid pages)) This is the end of parenthetical note to new people, now back to our rescheduled paragraph, an Intro to a Discussion ~~in~~ of the Types of Work in the Shop.

It should become obvious that almost all new commercial work we have got has been as a result of non-commercial work, though this does not guarantee us enough in the future. Anyway,

1) typesetting for job printers-right now our only steady customer is Kopy Kwik, which we got through N-C. We have had interrupted contact with Floyd Bast and Fremar, and intermittent work from Peerless Printing and Moir Press, ~~xxxx~~ the last two coming to us through N-C contacts as well. The possibilities for expansion are great, mostly in two areas--typesetting and camera (they usually want to do paste-up). Unfortunately, to pick up this work requires a lot of work on our part: improving our technique in all areas, including organization, for these are our most exacting customers; a large selling campaign; rush deadlines, and office hours. Contracts responsibility includes preparing a new typestyles book for the VIP and then approaching printers (in conjunction with another of contracts' responsibilities--finding better printers). Contracts must also reassess our pricing policy in light of information we will get concerning prices of other area-type-setters. We urge the development of more precise technique in the camera room, and more accurate typesetting in the area of perforation. 5 or 6

printers could bring us that minimum of \$10,000 (especially if one of them was the Record).

2) sheet-fed typesetting and printing-this work has come from a variety of sources--friends and relatives, sympathetic and apathetic groups, N-C contacts, and others. Work in this area has constantly reminded us how much more efficient it would be if we could control the whole graphic arts process (i.e., if we got a press) but up until now has been limited to expanding into the area of supplying paper. Because this area is the most unpredictable, we should do careful study before we get a press, as well as pursuing the policy of increasing our activity in all areas as that becomes financially practical. Until we have our own press, this area of work will probably remain unpredictable, as well as insignificant in the total sales picture.

3) camera work-this area is definitely our most lucrative--last week a 10 people/hour job brought us almost \$100 in camera work--far better than most other work we do. Work in this area generally comes through N-C contacts, as well as the Newsweb boycott and our good arrangements with Fairway. This area also has the greatest potential for expansion, if only for the simple reason that you can set a newspaper on a Selectric, but you can't shoot page negs on an Instamatic. If we were open to doing negs during the days, Mon. to Fri., we could probably get work from a lot of printers.

4) Chevron, Cord, Spoke-these jobs bring in well over 50% of our sales, and we have little control over them and their spending. It is doubtful that we can expand much in the area of university tabloids (Enginews, anyone?).

5) Other tabs and Demi-tabs-most of these have come to us through N-C contacts. What's On came through Operation Socrates, CCU-CTCU came through Women's Press, Brant Connection through BFP, and so on. There are possibilities with some magazines, but that means competing with Toronto, on their terms and their ground. Probably our best approach here is to let N-C continue to bring in work for us.

6) Books-because this area is specialized, and because it requires a different organization and approach to typesetting, as well as a different approach to selling, a Book Publishing and Distribution committee was set up. That committee lost its raison d'etre with the decision to get out of publishing, but should be revitalized to do the following

a) work out a co-publishing agreement with Women's Press

b) develop a second advertising campaign to sell the remaining copies of Highrise and SuperProfits and the Labour Bibliography

- c) investigate setting up a separate publishing company, to get grants and other goodies.
- d) break into the Toronto book typesetting clique.
- e) investigate printers and binders for books.

As with the other areas, all of our books have ~~xxxx~~ come to us ~~in~~ through N-C contacts--even Vince, who first met Dumont 2 years ago in an N-C project. And in this area as well, precision and efficiency will have to develop at the same time as we approach sources of work, looking for that \$10,000.

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The job of the contracts committee has changed as knowledge becomes decentralized. A lower rate of staff turnover has made this possible, to the point where routine quotes can be handled by whoever takes the call. The contracts committee should see its main function ~~xxx~~ within the shop as: handling the bigger jobs (both quotes and customer contact); educating people on quotes, customer relations and quality control; for the smaller jobs; providing leadership in conducting the area printer-typesetter study; and the initiating of new contacts and possible work.

As well, contracts recommends:

- 1) that we continue to develop our technique in all areas of typesetting but especially in camera (we should have 6-8 people who are capable of doing a wide range of high-quality camera work).
- 2) that we continue to expand our involvement in the whole graphic arts industry.
- 3) that we conduct an aggressive campaign to break into the K-W printing industry.
- 4) that we encourage the book publishing and distribution committee to take ~~an~~ more aggressive role as well.
- 5) that we reaffirm our support of N-C work as a political input into the shop as well as a possible source of commercial work.
- 6) that we ask customers to supply us with crit copies of their publications, if they are interested, and that if they are not interested, we do our own, as an important part of self-criticism.

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