

MINUTES: Dumont General Meeting, Dec. 16, 1979

Agenda for meeting was discussed, Shirley presented options for consideration as:

1. What do we do, or have to decide for Dumont to stay open;
2. If staying open, what changes are necessary;
3. If we feel Dumont must close, in what manner, how and when?
4. Do we establish a deadline for our decision

Kae and Alison reported on the meeting with Brian Iler and Bernie Nayman. Steve requested more information Accounts Receivable and Payable. Shirley replied that A/R billing was up to a certain point, then we would be scrambling for money by payment of those bills. Between moments or times of payments there are tense moments. Kae indicated that this shows we are operating at a loss that cannot be sustained indefinitely and is the cause for the recommendation by Iler and Nayman that Dumont close.

1. The continuation of Dumont was discussed about what was required:

- a) Concerning Between the Lines, the DEC folks and Dumont people should set up a meeting to discuss refinancing BTL and a likely withdrawal of Dumont from the partnership.
- b) Sales: Bill feels that the proposed \$100,000 sales figure (an amount of work required to come through the shop over a six-month period to cover operating costs and the profit/loss sustained in the past) is the right figure for us to be working toward. This would require us to increase efficiency and productivity, possibly 10 hours a day of keyboarding 5 days a week to bring in \$16,000/month. He noted that the quotes for doing fiction manuscripts for publishers in Toronto required rock bottom prices. It is expected that our wage costs must increase substantially. Bill's target is to increase sales to a maximum of \$20,000/month. In three months, we should have to reach this level by gradual increase.

Kae remarked that the available work and known upcoming projects for the next three months amounted to only \$14,000 worth of work. Moe questioned whether we would be able to handle an increase in work and deadlines, are we efficient enough or potentially so? This question led to our next area on the agenda of what to do about reorganization and specialization.

2. If our work is to increase dramatically, we have to accept specialization and the possibility of hiring fast keyboarders for straight book production. This led

to a discussion of hiring straight typists and the impact of this move on the collective. There is also a need to have someone working constantly on machine running. This would mean restricting the number of people in one area (ie, two people only).

At present we do not have the numbers of people to fill all the areas outlined by Kae in her paper on specialization. Where do we find skilled people for typesetting and VIP maintenance? This problem of quality type and dependable machine operation is serious. Someone has to troubleshoot for the VIP constantly to keep it smoothly running all the time for heavy production.

Kae questioned the obvious dependence of sales work on books. Bill felt that books were a very efficient form of production that could cover materials costs, depreciation and wages. Trade work would have to cover other aspects of the shop.

Kae: Can we get trade work in K-W? WPT is satisfying all kinds of people and we are unable to offer a better alternative. We also have to know how much we can accept in one day for 24-hour turnaround. And that means restructuring of the shop.

Steve: The primary question is sales. If we decide to go ahead for three months, then we have to talk of specialization to make that possible.

Moe: Are we in a better or much worse position if we continue for three more months?

Alison, Bernie and Brian feel that we should not continue unless everyone is willing to raise sales, because our costs after three months would be so high that we'd have to declare bankruptcy.

- Possible closing options:** Discussion on what our profit/loss is and our expenses at present, how BTL affects Dumont. Problem of payroll arose. Do we go further in debt because of payroll thus causing us to lose the equipment? Obviously, people are concerned about receiving wages. When is payroll expected? This discussion moved quickly back to sales.

Re: Closing the shop, we cannot make this decision until Brian is here. If we do make this decision, the best idea is to hand the keys to a trustworthy lawyer. Steve wants to talk with Brian about the options of closing: how to approach the Clarion about them taking on the equipment and the rest of the equipment dispersed for non-commercial use. Criticism came from Bill about the actual non-commercial uses requiring animation and involvement by Dumont people. Who would train new groups to use equipment?

Moe: It would be stupid to have this social experiment of the collective

dissolved by an act of unconsciousness. We should have an opinion on what's happening, a handle on it, instead of it happening **to** us.

4. **Between the Lines:** How do we feel about our continuation of involvement?
Bill: If we are going to continue with increased sales, then there is no reason to dump BTL. It is a long-term investment and the damage is already done. There was much concern expressed about the effect on BTL if Dumont is faced with bankruptcy.

5. **Restructuring** – views of each of the collective:

Kae: Her opinions are contained in her paper. She cannot see a halfway move to specialization, it's all or nothing. She can conceive a person doing quality control and pricing steadily combined with something else as desk person. Dividing power among people causes overlap and duplication. Rotation would work better.

Bill: Maybe we have to rethink the desk person position. It could easily become a position of authority and thus dangerous. Perhaps three coordinators to see jobs through all facets of the shop. People would not change jobs at the same time and not at the same rate. Some people might not wish to change or need to work only in one area briefly.

Steve: It is necessary and obvious that we go to specialization, but he worries about how much specialization particularly, in non-production areas, which should be reduced not increased. Personally, he would prefer to do manual work than mental work as he would be more efficient and technically and emotionally able to pick up a job.

Shirley: One does the same sort of work most of the time and that is bearable, but should be combined with rotation, so that change is possible, We despair of ourselves and others to act efficiently and well without change,

Moe: People in the shop must consider what they will be doing in the shop under specialization. There may be large gaps. Specialization removes some low-level guilt about fucking up and replaces that guilt which we now experience with another form of guilt, specific to the area of specialization. This leads to considerations of the implication of hiring people to fill specific skills, their rate of pay, relationship to others in shop, and their training.

Alison: Job descriptions should be drawn up to define responsibilities.

Kae: We need to define:

- 1) Jobs that people see as existing in the shop;
- 2) The gaps that do not seem to be filled;
- 3) How the work flows through the shop;
- 4) How the shop would be physically arranged;

5) How scheduling and shifts should be set up.

Kae: We need to personally consider:

- 1) Things I am good at and do well, and those I do less well;
- 2) What areas I can do back-up in;
- 3) What areas I would be willing to learn more about;
- 4) Important areas of consideration for all of us – what you would like to do and what you see needs to be done.

Bill is setting up a Standards Manual and would like to see others doing the same in each area of the shop, with ideas and how-to's for different jobs.

Each person agreed to prepare a job description to include the following:

- 1) How jobs can be concentrated, combined, and how work flows through the shop;
- 2) How all activities are covered;
- 3) Each person to describe their individual needs in work.

6. Other Important Areas – Closing, etc.

Why are we trying to stay open – for offering non-commercial facilities or for political activity? We do want to keep that aspect of the shop. What is the impetus to keep it open for people? Volunteer groups could not operate these facilities on their own if that was the option. We cannot exist totally on 'left' work; there is too much sacrifice, a sacrifice that could only be made if non-commercial work is ensured.

Moe: We have to think about whether we are fooling ourselves and postponing the inevitable hour. It has been said that typesetting will be obsolete in five years. We should be planning ahead for our lives.

It was decided that before the end of January, research would be done on closure options and sales work, and planning done for change and possible dispersal. We have to be careful to understand our past, and how equipment came here through the energy of past Dumont workers.