

March 10, 1972

It's difficult to know where to begin, and it's not often that I attempt to put what I feel into writing. So please bear with me as I try to explain my frustration not only with Dumont and the friendships there, but the working relations that we have developed.

I feel a schizophrenia in Dumont, a split that not only exists in my life, but in the lives of most of us. For the past few years now. I have been involved in some way or another with most of you, be it to a greater or lesser degree with some than others. I come out of a past of attempted radical revolutionary politics that first began with the university and student power, and which eventually found itself in attempts to live that understanding within the community at large, Kitchener-Waterloo.

For me, the conception of Dumont was important because I felt that we would be applying what we had propagandized; that is, the living and working conditions of a co-operative and the transition of that to a collective. We as a group of people were going to begin change with ourselves. We were going to try to understand and work out the implications of working and sharing work together. We were given the chance to call a "business" our own and experiment with a different working structure other than what we had known.

Dumont did not begin in and of itself; I can remember Eddie talking about Dumont when it still was only an idea, not quite developed, but as they say, "a gleam in your father's eye". I don't think that we can deny the planning and sharing that Eddie and Trudy and others put into Dumont; it was on an individual's initiative and drive that Dumont began rolling.

This is not to deny the kind of drive and initiative that has since been felt and explored by other individuals within Dumont. No, because I, myself, have seen a shift, or perhaps even sharing, of the responsibilities of Dumont as a business. I'm trying to address the frustration of us here and trying to put it in its proper perspective. I very much resent the expression, "If things don't get better here, I'm leaving," and by talking about the way I see things begin, and then operate, I wish to point out what I see as the "rut" we are now in.

A co-operative means and suggests a certain amount of sharing, not only of work but of responsibility. A group of people don't suddenly understand something and then act upon it. A group is made up of individuals with thinking minds and ideas. And your

thoughts are not only a reflection of yourself but of yourself and others, yourself and the world.

I, you and me, have to come to grips with the part we play in Dumont as individuals. I can direct Dumont, you can, and we all can. But it doesn't come from the sky, and Dumont does not exist in and of itself, or the people within it. Dumont is situated in the old Mitchell Button Factory, on the corner of Weber and Victoria, kitty-corner to the Station Hotel, in the city of Kitchener, twin to Waterloo, in Ontario, in Canada, in the world.

Lately, I've been making more frequent visits to the Chevron and the University of Waterloo. This past Sunday I sat in on a student council retreat with Terry Moore, the new federation president. I couldn't help but feel the energy and the enthusiasm of these young people. They rekindled the feeling of a power and confidence in myself that I too can change the world. I'm not ignoring the naivete of these university students, but I'm trying to point out a difference between them and us. I felt energized and stimulated in their presence and I felt because of my experience, limited as it may be, that I could help, not only with ideas but perhaps even in some active way. I'm not sure how yet, but I feel anxious to do something not only about me but about the world I operate in. Not that Dumont isn't a part of this anxiousness - I'll explain that further on.

I don't believe it's possible to change the university within the university; I believe that university will change fundamentally only when our society changes fundamentally. What can we do here in Kitchener-Waterloo? First of all, I don't see the papers we do necessarily as "shit" (as it has been sometimes expressed).

There are people putting out those papers with a certain amount of energy and drive and ambition (not all ambition being bad). We have said before that we should get to know these people so that we don't operate separate and apart from them, and also that we share in some ways what we are trying to do.

There is energy and knowledge to be shared. Where did most of us come from, or at least in what circumstances did we meet? I'm not saying let's go back, I'm just offering a suggestion, as vague as it may be, and trying to let you know why in some way my frustration does not correspond to the frustration I see within Dumont.

There was a time when we did spend a lot of time at Dumont and it was necessary, but I don't believe it is as necessary now, and shortly we will have a hell of a lot more time than we have had before. It's time to get out of the vacuum of Dumont and all that comes with that vacuum – an over-emphasis on relationships, female & male, male & male, female & female. Our insularness is showing, our dependence on the "group" to satisfy our immediate and far-reaching needs is becoming too obvious for comfort, our creativity and enthusiasm is becoming stifled. We won't find the answer in each other, but first in ourselves and then with each other.

Around Christmastime, Bill and I sat down and rapped for a good while on the possibilities of Dumont and the extensions of those possibilities. I know, at the time, my enthusiasm came from some of the things I was getting into outside of Dumont, like clothesmaking, embroidery work, & candle making.

What more can I say, except that capitalism does exist, and we in Dumont, not necessarily as Dumont, have to change that fact. And I don't see Dumont as unable to help in that change, but I do see us as individuals unable to affect that change unless we start seeing ourselves other than as the Dumont Ducks and more as individuals in an ever-changing society whose many changing facets have to be explored not by others, but us, me & you.

And about the truck: My opinion. Both sides (and there are sides and people in the middle) are suffering from more than the hassle of a truck and the payment of that truck. I'm not sure that it is possible to get at what actually is the problem, as long as "the truck" remains the hassle. To me "the truck" is a symptom of a much larger problem. There is so much yet to understand about people working together, without the usual pre-conditioned forms of incentive & enforcement. There is so much to learn about individual commitment and responsibility.

I can't help but feel that there is resentment and bitterness due to the intangibility of our labour value and the recognition of that labour. And how do we get at it? Part of getting at it is what I've just gone through – the direction of Dumont & the relationship of her facilities to the people who work there & people outside of Dumont – something that can happen only through the efforts of each one of us.

Another is Bill's suggestion of looking more carefully at how we're distributing our money, not only in payment of the machines but also in salaries and possibly a provisionary fund for extra needs.

I would like to suggest that we buy the truck so that it no longer remains the problem, but I'm afraid that this will only upset some people more. In this case I would suggest that the people who strongly disagree over the decision of the truck get together and try to agree on at least the original agreement about the truck. It's up to you. I was not in on the original agreement about the truck. If Dumont originally agreed to pay S900 for the truck, then it should, and in future make such agreements more clear (in writing if necessary).

Over and out,
Winnie the Pooh, Lang