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Group Protests Food Chain's Refusal To Donate Historic Red Hook Building

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Special to the Journal

RHINEBECK — Loyalists gathered in front of the Rhinebeck Grand Union Saturday to protest the company's refusal to donate the decaying, but historic Elmendorf Inn to Red Hook.

The controversy rekindled a new revolutionary spirit among bicentennial-minded Red Hook loyalists last week when Grand Union held firm on its offer to sell the Inn to the town for \$31,500 and set April 23 as the end of any further negotiations.

The focal point of the controversy, the Elmendorf Inn, is a decaying structure, standing idle and boarded up next to the closed Red Hook Grand Union.

The Inn was once a stop for weary travelers and served as a hall for town meetings. A recent Cornell architectural study established the Inn as the oldest and most distinctive 18th century structure in Red Hook.

Town residents want to bring back the charm and elegance that once

graced the Elmendorf, but say they simply cannot afford the Grand Union's asking price of \$31,500. They want the Grand Union to give them the building, that was recently appraised for \$6,900 by an independent Poughkeepsie appraiser, as a bicentennial gesture.

The Grand Union could write-off the building as a tax loss and reap untold public relations benefits, said Paul Fredericks, public relations director for Friends of Elmendorf, incorporated as a non-profit organization.

The Grand Union purchased the property, that lies adjacent to the site of its former Red Hook store a few years ago. Grand Union, which usually leases property, found itself in the unique position of landowner when it left Red Hook.

Now, the firm wants to sell the property for \$31,500 with a \$1,000 a year rental until the inn is restored. Friends of the Elmendorf say the price is unreasonable.

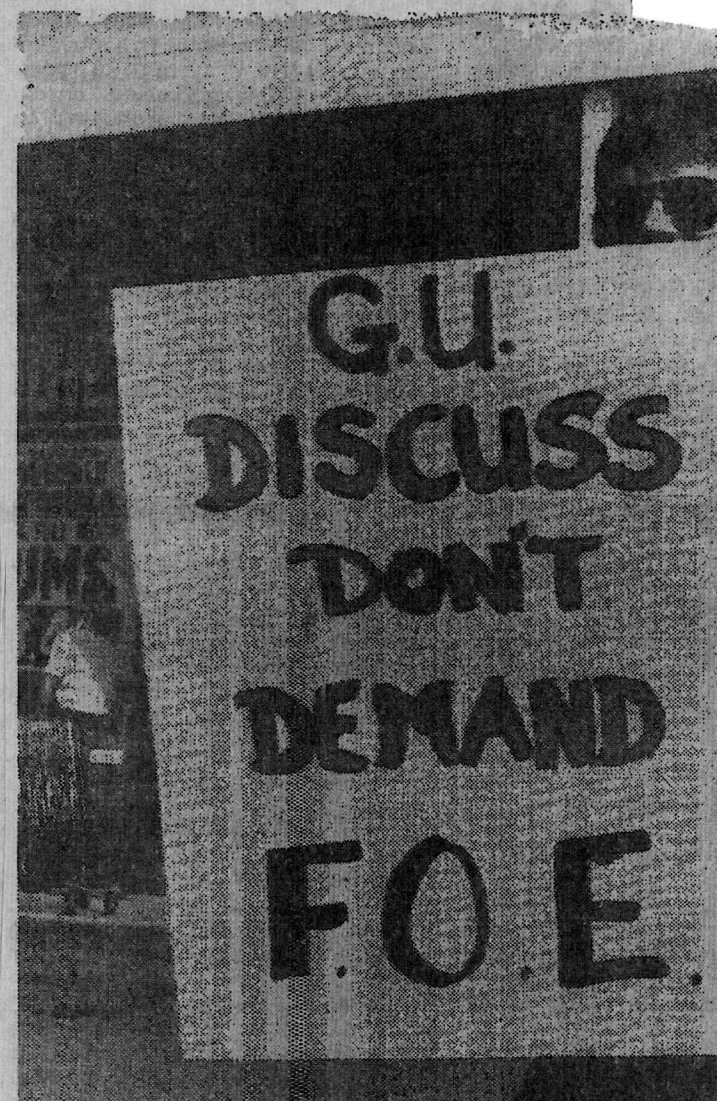
Fredericks said Saturday the Grand Union is treating them unfairly and should lose the inn. "England lost America by not treating her fairly and Grand Union deserves to lose the inn for not treating our town fairly."

Friends of the Elmendorf are frustrated over the attitude of the British-owned company for an American Bicentennial project, Fredericks said.

"A tory," Fredericks said, "is a thing whose head is in England and its body in America and its neck ought to be stretched. A Grand Union is an establishment 80 per cent of its head in England and its body in America and its 'bottom-line-profit' neck out to be stretched."

Fredericks and other Friends of the Elmendorf have gathered 500 petitions advocating the turnover of the inn to the town. However, Grand Union has held firm on its offer and has said it has another interested buyer.

The Friends of the Elmendorf are concerned that a prospective buyer might tear down the Inn. "The town has already lost its other landmark, when the Red Hook Hotel was replaced by a gas station," said Rosemary Coon, village historian in a letter to Grand Union President James Wood. "Now, the community, through the restoration of the Elmendorf Inn is anxious to see Red Hook have its identity again. If the inn is restored, we can once again point with pride to our heritage."



Demonstrator outside Grand Union in Rhinebeck Sa

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