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WALL STREET JOURNAL
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Gambling in the 'Graveyard'

New York Publishers Push New Ventures Despite the Demise of Dozens of Dailies

Orig. under Daily World

By A. KENT MACDOUGALL
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NEW YORK—Despite New York City's well-earned reputation as a newspaper graveyard, at least six newspapers and two magazines have bravely started up this year.

Among them: Two newsless newspapers, a sports sheet, a radical weekly "out to make trouble," a "subterranean" biweekly and a Negro monthly.

Due next month: The Daily World, reflecting the views of the Communist Party and replacing the twice-weekly Worker.

Some of these supplements to the city's reading fare stand little more chance of survival than the dozens of dailies that have fallen by the wayside through the years. The most recent casualties were the Long Island Star-Journal in the borough of Queens, which closed down in March because of a printers strike and isn't expected to reopen, and the New York World Journal Tribune. Its sudden death, on May 5, 1967, left Manhattan with only one afternoon newspaper, the New York Post; this created an intolerable situation to many newspapermen.

No Successor in Sight

In spite of predictions then that a successor was inevitable, none has appeared and none is likely. Manhattan's two general-interest morning papers, the New York Times and the New York News, each seriously considered launching an afternoon paper but rejected the project as too risky. So did Time Inc., the big magazine publisher, and several others.

Smaller publishers entering where the giants fear to tread are gambling that a low-cost publication can survive with only modest amounts of circulation and advertising. And modest amounts are all they're getting.

The New York Knickerbocker, a weekly with color comics and entertainment features, sold 260,000 copies of its first issue Feb. 25. But only 140,000 persons plunked down 20 cents for its ninth issue April 21. The first issue benefited from extensive promotion and reader curiosity, after which sales "rapidly simmered down to a more normal figure," explains Frank J. Keller, president and general manager.

To help hypo sales, the Knickerbocker will soon launch a "Lucky Knicker Bucks" game, awarding cash prizes to readers who find $5 and $10 bills with numbers matching 25 numbers printed each week in the paper.

Building a Sales Force

With "time and money and considerable effort," circulation can be pushed to 350,000, Mr. Keller says. But advertising is something else. Thus far the paper has relied on an independent advertising sales representative, and volume has been disappointing. So, says Mr. Keller, "we're going to develop an internal ad manager and a staff of salesmen."

Most of New Publications Are Printed Outside City

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL *Staff Reporter*

NEW YORK—Most of the city's new publications are printed outside the city.

High costs and a shortage here of the offset printing facilities favored by the fledgling publishers have prompted them to look elsewhere. The New York Daily Column is produced in suburban Long Island, the New York Knickerbocker in Buffalo, N.Y., and New York magazine in Sharon Hill, Pa. New Jersey shops print the New York Free Press, Sportsweek and Rat.

The Daily World is bucking the trend. "Some of the new papers are running out of town," says Joseph Brandt, business manager of the Marxist daily. "We want to stay with the union."

The New York Daily Column, the other newsless newspaper, is likewise beefing up its advertising sales force. Its 24-page issues have averaged seven to eight pages of ads, far more than the Knickerbocker runs. One reason for this is a feeling among advertisers that the Column reaches more serious and affluent readers. Published each weekday, the 10-cent Column eschews comic strips and pictures in favor of political, financial and entertainment columns and features.

Circulation has dropped to less than 100,000 from well over 150,000 the first week, April 1-5. But Jerry Finkelstein, publisher, expresses satisfaction. "We are ahead of schedule," he says. "We are in business to stay."

Still, the newsless newspaper concept doesn't make sense to many newspapermen and advertisers. "I'm still old-fashioned enough to think people buy newspapers primarily to read news," says an ad agency executive.

Ad Spending on Plateau

The media director of a big Madison Avenue agency notes that the ad-hungry new publications have arrived during a year when ad spending is on a plateau. "Because of rate increases, clients are getting less space and time for the same money," he says. They're reluctant to cut back spending in established media to support untried publications whose coverage of the vast New York market is minor and non-essential, he says. "The tragedy is that there are probably some very fine publications that should live but won't for lack of adequate advertising support."

New York magazine calculates it needs 40 to 45 ad pages and 100,000 circulation to break even, or 20 to 22 ad pages with 200,000 circulation. The first issue, April 8, carried 64 ad pages, but subsequent issues only 10 to 14. "We expect a dramatic spurt in the fall," says George A. Hirsch, publisher.

The 40-cent weekly started with 60,000 subscriptions, but expects to have to cancel several thousand for non-payment. Newsstand sales exceed 40,000.

Critical reaction has been mixed. Well-researched, well-written articles by Judith Crist, Alan Rich, Tom Wolfe and others have won praise. But cramped makeup, smart alec quips and unappetizing nude photos have been scored. An ad agency official who admired New York when it was the Sunday magazine supplement to the New York World Journal Tribune is disappointed in it as a separate slick magazine. "The rapier wit just isn't there any more," he complains. "They're trying to be too cute."

Clay Felker, who edited New York when it was the WSJT supplement, is editor of the new magazine. William E. Taylor, another WJT editor, edits the Daily Column. And three former WJT sports staffers put out Sportsweek.

A Moonlighting Editor

This 25-cent weekly sports tabloid features imaginative photos and breezy stories contributed by freelance writers, but suffers from diffusion in trying to cover all sports. Editor Sal Gerage moonlights from his desk job at the New York News. Associate editor Marty O'Shea and three clerical workers comprise the payroll. Despite the shoestring budget, Sportsweek is struggling. The first three issues sold an average of only 35,000 copies and advertisers, rues Mr. O'Shea, "have a wait-and-see attitude."

New York Scenes seems to be catching on. The 40-cent monthly magazine is aimed at young, hip, poorly heeled New Yorkers. The second issue, just out, includes pieces on dirty book stores (The Wonderful World of Pornography), Sunday brunch and apartment hunting. To come: How to Spot Your Neighborhood Bookie, Dime-a-Dance Emporiums, and A Selective Guide to New York Clip Joints.

Negro News is published by NEGRO, an acronym for National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organization. This self-help group, through subsidiaries, runs a small hospital, clothing factory, construction company, bus line, ad agency and other enterprises. Besides supporting these projects, the 15-cent monthly newspaper preaches economic self-sufficiency for Negroes and opposes such militant political action as the Poor People's March on Washington.

In contrast, the New York Free Press delights in confrontations with the Establishment. A recent issue listed the names, addresses and phone number of 104 Manhattan draft board members, and encouraged readers to call them to account. "That's a newspaper's job—to dig and make trouble," says editor Jack Banning, who claims 23,500 circulation for the 15-cent weekly.

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