

WILL DENVER BECOME AMERICA'S LARGEST CITY WITHOUT A NEWSPAPER?

By Irv Sternberg

Readers of the Denver Post's Sunday edition (April 8, 2018) were startled to find its six-page editorial section devoted almost entirely to a fierce diatribe against its owners. In its lead article, the Post editorial board members accused their bosses of deliberately destroying the paper in the pursuit of dubious corporate profits.

Faced with the inevitable demise of its paper, the editors courageously outlined the reasons the Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire will soon be dispatched to the dust bins of history. The editors pointed the finger of responsibility directly at the paper's owners "who have embarked on a cynical strategy of consistently reducing the amount and quality of its offerings while steadily increasing its subscription rates."

If you've noticed you get less news these days while your subscription rates have exploded, now you know why.

Recalling a pejorative printed elsewhere, the Post editorial labeled its owner, the New York hedge fund Alden Global Capital, "vulture capitalists," who have "pumped hundreds of millions of dollars of its newspaper profits into shaky investments completely unrelated to the business of gathering news."

Denver's loss will be horrific. The editorial reminds us that a daily newspaper like the Post provides a "public record of the good and the bad, serves as a watchdog against public and private corruption, offers a free marketplace of ideas and stands as a lighthouse reflective and protective of—and accountable to—a community's values."

Unbelievably, Denver may become the largest city in the United States without a newspaper, all because its owners "view profits as the only goal." Until then, readers will notice, that a newspaper controlled by such owners becomes a pathetic enterprise, struggling to cover the news and provide insight into the community's human condition.

To help make their case, the editors called on former Post staffers to express their personal opinions. Eight reporters and editors related heartfelt observations, bemoaning the imminent loss. Even politicians who sometimes felt the sting of reportorial recrimination, admitted the city (and state) would be the loser without the probing professionalism of the Post's dedicated journalists.

The editors who decided to put their necks on the line by publishing this startling editorial deserve our admiration for their courage. They may have already been told to clean out their desks because they dared to tell the truth. In what may be their final message to readers, they

called on all us who care about civic future to “get involved and see to it that Denver gets a newsroom it deserves.”

Who can save the Post? Perhaps it will be one of Denver’s successful billionaires, or a civic-minded foundation or one of the suburban newspapers entities who will see the news vacuum in Denver as one they can logically fill.

We can only hope someone with integrity and a passion for good journalism will step up.