

Boston/NY Newspaper War: Pulitzer Winners Face off

Was surprised last night when two Pulitzer-prize-winning journalists locked horns on WGBH-TV's *Greater Boston*.

In a heated discussion of the *New York Times*' threat to shutter the *Boston Globe* if employment concessions aren't made, former *Globe* Columnist Eileen McNamara, who now teaches at Brandeis, charged that the *Times* is only out to save itself and doesn't care about Boston or the *Globe*. She and host Emily Rooney criticized the *Times* for a lack of "transparency," in threatening to shut down the paper just a week after some 50 reporters were required to take buyouts or risk being laid off. McNamara called for an investigation into how *Times* Publisher Arthur Sulzberger, Jr. could have so mishandled the papers' strategies and finances.

Alex Jones, the former *New York Times* reporter who now directs Harvard's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, said that Sulzberger has long been seeking ways to keep his papers on sound financial footing and pointed out that the *Times* and *Globe* are just two of many papers threatened by huge operating losses. With countless subscribers migrating to "free" news on the Internet and advertisers cutting back in the current financial crisis, several papers have already declared bankruptcy.

I agree with Jones that there's no point in focusing on the *New York Times* as the bad guy in all of this; the *Globe* is crucial to the Boston and New England communities, which must find ways to keep the paper alive.

The Boston Foundation has put together a blue ribbon panel to seek with solutions—which might include a takeover of the *Globe* by a consortium of nonprofits until the *Globe*'s

economic situation improves.

The *Globe* reported this morning that [both employees and management will be taking cuts in pay and security](#), and that [20 bloggers, organized by Paul Levy, president of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center](#), simultaneously published a post asking readers to submit suggestions on how the *Globe* can improve its financial position.

(Levy's blog is at runningahospital.blogspot.com).

[I've joined the rally in a separate post.](#)

I hope a solution is imminent because good journalism provides crucial lifeblood to any community. As the so-called "fourth estate," it serves as a watchdog on government, allows citizens to communicate with one another, and helps organize the thoughts, lives and livelihoods of individuals and institution in a democracy. Broadcast and Internet media certainly contribute to this—but, by and large, it's print reporters to do the heavy lifting.

AMH

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