



On 2 June 1930 a new title appeared on the newsstands, whilst two national papers disappeared.

In an editorial the newcomer – the News Chronicle – explained: – “We have to announce to the readers of the Daily Chronicle and the Daily News that these two great Liberal papers have joined forces and will from today be combined in a single newspaper ... By pooling their resources, the two great London papers which are united in our columns to-day assure the readers of both of a far more complete news service than either could have hoped to give alone.”

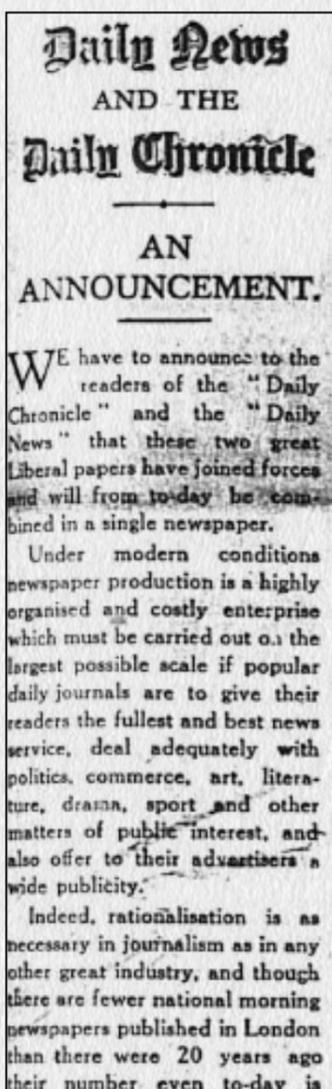
Page 8 continued: “The combined paper will stand, first and foremost, for peace. It will seek by every means in its power to support and forward the ideals of the League of Nations. It will oppose both reaction and revolution with equal firmness. It will oppose waste, and fight steadily for real economy in public expenditure ... It will champion the social reforms which both papers have always insisted are demanded, both by common justice and common sense; and the liberties of speech, of thought and of religion for which both have always stood. And it will defend these causes for the future – at a time when many of them are gravely menaced-with the vigour and consistency which unity alone can assure”

The News Chronicle was true to its word, on two important issues which divided Fleet Street in the 1930s and 50s.

At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, it took a strong anti-Franco stance sending three correspondents to Spain in 1936-37: Denis Weaver and Arthur Koestler – both of whom were captured and nearly shot before being released – and Geoffrey Cox. The paper’s editorial staff took an active part in campaigning for the release of Koestler who was taken by Franco’s forces at the Fall of Malaga and was in imminent danger of being executed.

Twenty years later the paper took an equally anti-war line. Despite considerable pressure from Downing Street, notably from Prime Minister Anthony Eden himself, the paper opposed the Suez venture. Geoffrey Goodman, a journalist on the newspaper at the time, recalled scenes of intense excitement in the News Chronicle news room on the night of 31 October 1956 when RAF bombers struck at Egypt - and the paper opened its campaign of robust criticism.

But this editorial position was also a big commercial risk. Opposing the government lost the paper sales and its circulation dropped to just



over a million a day. Then, in 1957, post-war rationing of newsprint ended and popular newspapers were able to upsize and carry more advertising and editorial. The News Chronicle’s circulation was smaller than the other dailies and so not as attractive to advertisers. Since it launched in 1930 it had been profitable in every year but one: in 1959 it made a loss of £100k with this projected to become a £300k loss by 1960.

The paper’s financial situation prompted Lawrence Cadbury, Chairman of the News Chronicle and its sister evening paper the Star, to write to fellow proprietor Lord Rothermere on 5 October 1960 to say that he was planning to close the papers.

Lord Rothermere (second Viscount), Esmond Cecil Harmsworth was the biggest newspaper magnate in Fleet Street by this time. Heir to his father’s peerage, he also inherited the Associated Newspapers Group, including the Daily Mail, after the death of his uncle Lord Northcliffe in 1922.

Rothermere was, in addition, Chairman of the Newspaper Proprietor’s Association, a position he held from 1934 until 1961, and it was in this role that Cadbury had written to him. The chairmanship gave Rothermere considerable influence over government departments, newsprint manufacturers and the print unions. The obvious person to confide in about the

future of the News Chronicle and the Star, he replied to Cadbury, saying he would do ‘everything to help.’

On Monday 17 October 1960 both the News Chronicle and the Star ceased publication. The News Chronicle was merged with the Daily Mail and the Star with the Evening News. Lord Rothermere promised sufficient money to cover the cost of redundancies and pensions. In return he acquired both of the two defunct newspaper’s extensive newspaper properties on Bouverie Street.

Faithful readers were dismayed, politicians alarmed and the staff of the newspapers indignant – all sensing that a paper with sales of 1,116,000 a day ought to have survived. The fate of the News Chronicle featured strongly in a 1962 Royal Commission on the press. It had been a newspaper with a national reputation for quality reporting and a long tradition of radical liberalism. The blame was put on poor management and intransigent unions.

James Cameron wrote in ‘Reynolds News’ that the News Chronicle “stood for something outside the establishment ... perhaps after all, blood and tears would have been a better proposition than cocoa and water” alluding to the Cadbury family’s parent business.



News Chronicle

Additional notes

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