

At the end of the day

It is with unspeakable sadness that we print our last edition today as the only English language newspaper in Latin America, ending the *Buenos Aires Herald's* 140-year run.

We have come a long way from our humble beginning as a single-sheet and many things have changed. The *Herald* has been facing difficulties for a while now and though our future incarnation has been painted as a new challenge and an exciting offering to the market, it would be foolish to deny that such a dramatic change comes at huge cost, or that it also reflects a media industry in crisis.

On the one hand, print media is suffering worldwide. Newspapers are facing reductions in staff and resources and major surgery as readers shift and migrate to digital media, drastically cutting circulation and advertising revenue. On the other, much of the public, especially younger people, are reading or watching the news on smartphones or computers, often via social networks and — most importantly — for free.

This is a worldwide phenomenon but it is especially true of the Argentine media landscape this year, where modifications to government-paid advertising, its distribution and the recession are exacerbating the changes at a rapid pace. Unions estimate as many as 2,000 journalists may have lost their jobs in the country in 2016, a staggering number which will damage the profession greatly.

It is particularly true that the *Herald* has faced its own challenges, especially in an ill-conceived, polarized media environment. It is in this scenario that we currently find ourselves, one in which — it seems to our majority owner, the Indalo Group — has become increasingly difficult to survive in as a daily.

At the same time, we are the first to believe and trust that there is a public — and a wider world — that demands an unbiased press. We believe that facts still matter. If the *Herald* holds a unique reputation in the English-speaking world in Latin America, it should be able to find a place in the market — be it as a daily, a weekly or a website.

ON THE RECORD

Much has been written by other media outlets and online over the last few days and we would like to set the record straight.

We learnt for certain last Wednesday that we would be “transforming” into a weekly publication. The Indalo Group decided that continuing the daily edition in its current incarnation was unviable. Three days later, on Saturday, advertisements appeared in the newspaper announcing the new era ahead. We ourselves decided yesterday to publish a short note to our readers on page 3, upon which we are expanding today on this page in our editorial. On Thursday, the day after we learnt about the coming changes to the newspaper, the overwhelming majority of our colleagues were told that they would be losing their jobs and understandably, our thoughts have been dominated by their plight this week.

THE ROAD AHEAD

It must be repeated, as we have said many times in these pages, that freedom of expression is a delicate flower, one with multiple requirements—for example, a company or organization which understands the mission, values, history and readers of a newspaper but also a state which does not overlook its duty to promote pluralism (an obligation that is not always ensured through having an elected government — both left-wing populist policies and market-friendly policies can lead to similar realities for the media market).

Regardless of whether the public or private sector is to blame, the concentration of the media into the hands of the few, ones with an axe to grind, always conspires against the right to information — a right which the social networks do not always preserve. The new digital culture demands innovative, serious, long-term strategies. It also requires a government that is willing and able to protect voices and ensure that pluralism is reflected in the media landscape.

For most of you who take the time to read this, we do not need to explain our history as a publication nor our most illustrious period during the military dictatorship. Whatever the *Herald's* future is, we must maintain the pillars for which it has always stood — the diversity of ideas and cultures, a respect for individual life choices, defending human rights and abhorring those who infringe them. Not just to reflect one view, but a multitude of them, this is the true demonstration of democracy in action.

At this juncture of this editorial and our existence as a publication, it falls on us to mention two key groups.

We should thank those loyal readers who have accompanied us every day — often for decades — a highly diverse and critical public. Many of them have true affection for the paper, as they regularly let us know by phone calls, emails and personal meetings. A number of you have called over the last few days to express your solidarity, respect and thanks—we offer you the same. Simply, we could not have done it without you.

Our final thoughts must be with the *Herald's* staff, who have given their time and expressed our values in these pages over the years. Sadly, fourteen of them are leaving us today. They have written, designed and proofread key pages of our history. To you all, thank you.

The ***Buenos Aires Herald***

Wednesday October 26th, 2016