

'Dear John'

The marriage of New York City newspaper publishers has always been a rocky one, and last weekend a "Dear John" letter may have ended it for good. Addressed to John J. Caherin, president of the Publishers Association of New York, the letter announced that The New York Herald Tribune was withdrawing from the 68-year-old association to resume publishing this week. "Economic and other considerations," wrote the Tribune's president Walter N. Thayer, "make it impossible for us to continue inside the association."

The paper's decision came on the tenth day of the strike by the Newspaper Guild of New York against The New York Times, also an association member. By standing agreement, the Trib and the three other major dailies in the organization—the Daily News, Journal-American and World-Telegram and Sun—had shut down in sympathy. Together, the strike and shutdown put some 17,000 newspaper employees out of work and left the city with only one major daily, The New York Post, which itself walked out of the association during the 114-day International Typographical Union strike in 1962-63.

Actually, the printers are at the heart of the upheaval this time as well. In heading off a strike by the ITU last spring, the association, at the Times's urging and in the face of Tribune arguments, agreed to give the union the right to veto the introduction of automated equipment that would affect its members. "That settlement seemed to us unrealistic," the austere Thayer wrote in the Tribune's letter of resignation last week. "We went along with it only in the interests of unity. Now, six months later, the Herald Tribune finds itself involved in a strike and shutdown that cannot undo what happened last March, that will not resolve any of the basic newspaper problems of this city, and that only complicates and further embitters newspaper labor relations."

March of the Machine: One embittered party is the guild. A computer not only can help set type in the composing room but also can take over such guild-performed tasks as calculating payrolls or billing advertisers—and the guild fears that the ITU, with its veto power, will ultimately be able to place guildsmen under ITU jurisdiction. Consequently, the guild has asked for similar veto power in its dispute with the Times.

Another issue is pensions. The Times maintains it should be free to run its pension plan as it pleases because the paper established it and requires no compulsory payments by employees. The guild argues that because the money



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Trib's Whitney: Back in business

otherwise be used as wages and because many guildsmen participate in the plan voluntarily, the union should be a co-partner with the paper in administering it. Although the debate is a heated one between the Times and the guild, it has little application to the other papers. "Basically," Thayer told an interviewer, "this is a New York Times strike."

Indeed, there is little love lost between the Trib, a steady money-loser that survives on the bankroll of millionaire owner John Hay Whitney, and the more prosperous Times, its chief rival in the morning field. Not too long ago, insiders say, the Times turned down the Trib when it proposed the papers merge mechanical facilities to cut costs.

Many political observers feel that the New York mayoral race also figured in the Tribune's decision to resume publication. Whitney is a heavy financial backer of John V. Lindsay, the Republican-Liberal candidate for mayor, and the paper, a leading national voice of

moderate Republicanism, is sure to endorse him in his race against Democratic candidate Abraham D. Beame. With the election just five weeks away and registered Democrats outnumbering Republicans in the city 3 to 1, underdog Lindsay was expected to suffer most from the newspaper dim-out.

The Tribune's defection from the association threw New York's already ailing newspaper industry into almost complete disarray. "It caught me completely by surprise," said Times publisher Arthur Ochs (Punch) Sulzberger, as he rushed off to a hastily summoned meeting of the association. "The New York Times," he added, "will continue its negotiations with the guild."

At the weekend, those talks were still deadlocked. And after a 4½-hour meeting, the remaining members of the Publishers Association emerged sullen but announced they "intend to stand together." Said city-appointed mediator Theodore W. Kheel: "The next few days may be a period of psychoanalysis to see what the other fellow is thinking."

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