

PRESS & TELEVISION

sion programs does not violate copyright law.

Technology will continue to complicate the copyright question. Computers, for example, can now artificially produce lifelike images. Such synthetic systems, in effect, "could allow stars to stage comebacks after death," creating knotty legal problems. How would W. C. Fields's estate, for example, be compensated for a "new" Fields comedy?

Bollier predicts that copyright disputes will continue to rise in frequency and complexity. Yet as copyright expert Robert Kost observes, these discussions, however arcane, represent "the foundation of capitalism in the information age."

Misreporting Economics

"Business News: The Terrible Truth" by John F. Lawrence, in *Fortune* (Apr. 25, 1988), Time and Life Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y. 10020-1393.

"ECONOMY WEAKENING, EXPERTS SAY," was the headline of the lead front-page story in the February 2, 1988 *Miami Herald*. "For once, economists are in agreement," the story began. "The big chill everyone feared is here."

A month later, the *Herald* changed its mind. In a story buried on the business page, the *Herald* reported that America's gross national product and the Commerce Department's "leading indicators" of economic trends were *rising*, not falling. The "chill" had vanished.

Lawrence, a fellow at the Gannett Center for Media Studies, notes that such tacit retractions of "hyperbolic" economic news are commonplace. The press creates "news where none exists."

Consider the monthly index of "leading indicators" issued by the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis. This index, combining 11 statistics, such as new orders for consumer goods and changes in costs of materials used for manufacturing, is first issued in incomplete form, then revised later when more accurate information is available. Journalists frequently produce gloomy stories based on *preliminary* estimates, even though *revised* figures show different patterns. For example, the *Washington Post* reported on May 30, 1987 that "LEADING INDICATORS PLUMMET 0.6 PERCENT IN APRIL"; a month later, revised Commerce Department figures showed the "plummet" had not taken place.

Trade statistics create similar problems. Some years ago, Congress began requiring the Commerce Department to issue trade statistics twice; first, with freight and insurance charges on imports added, then, two days later, with these charges removed. The second figure is significantly smaller than the first. In December 1987, for instance, the U.S. trade deficit was \$12.2 billion *with* freight and insurance and \$10.6 billion when these charges were removed. Journalists frequently report the higher figure, thus making trade deficits appear worse than they actually are.

Instead of playing up *monthly* economic statistics, Lawrence suggests that journalists focus on less volatile *quarterly* "moving" averages, based on revised numbers, which more accurately chart economic trends. He also calls on business editors to curb the use of "Second Coming headlines" that may create unjustified alarm among readers.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY



Archmandrite Ioromin conducting a service in the Zagorsky Monastery northwest of Moscow. Some Soviet leaders have been Christians, most notably Georgi Malenkov, prime minister from 1953 to 1955.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Soviets and the Church

"Holy Russia's Millennium" in *The Economist* (April 2, 1988), 25 St. James's St., London SW1 1HG, United Kingdom; and "988-1988: Uses and Abuses of the Millennium" by Simon Franklin, in *The World Today* (April 1988), Royal Institute of International Affairs, 10 St. James's Square, London, SW1Y 4LE, United Kingdom.

Last June, the Soviets celebrated the millennium of Christianity in Russia, commemorating Prince Vladimir of Kiev's mass conversion of his subjects, who were baptized in the Dnieper River in 988.

As both *The Economist's* editors and Franklin, a fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, point out, most Soviet Christians have had little reason to celebrate their heritage.

During the tsarist era, the Russian Orthodox Church was backed by the state. But the Communists, after Lenin led them to power in 1917, declared a "war on God," killing or banishing thousands of priests and bishops and closing scores of monasteries. After Hitler's armies invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, Josef Stalin allowed some religious freedom, permitting the Orthodox Church to elect a patriarch and re-open some