

1986 as abused or neglected," Christensen notes, "only about 30 percent had been physically abused and only about 10 percent of these children (3 percent of the total) had suffered injury serious enough to require professional attention."

Alarming as these reduced estimates are, they do not bear out the charge that the middle-class family is a chamber of horrors. In fact, they are the result of the *breakdown* of the traditional family.

Single-parent families receiving public assistance, a tiny fraction of the total population, account for 30 percent of all battered children, according to Douglas Besharov, former director of the National Center on Child Abuse. A 1985 McMaster University study found that preschoolers living in families with a stepparent are 40 times more likely to become victims than are kids who live with their natural parents. By contrast, a report by the National Institute for Mental Health shows that violence against children "appears to be de-

creasing in America's intact families."

Christensen thinks that the "crisis" is largely the creation of certain feminists, academics, and social workers with a hidden anti-family agenda. The very "solutions" they advocate—more intrusive investigations, sex-abuse education in the schools—would further erode parental authority and undermine the family. Claudia Pap Mangel, a Washington, D.C. attorney, has gone so far as to advocate government licensing of parents.

The welfare state "deserves credit for shielding some children from abuse," says Christensen, "and blame for persistently undermining the moral purpose and family commitment that prevent such abuse in the first place." As it is, 65 percent of all parents accused of child abuse are cleared, but only after long and devastating investigations. Today's vague laws need to be reformed, he concludes, to make it harder for social workers and others to intervene in the family.

PRESS & TELEVISION

The End of Time?

"The Newsweeklies: Is the Species Doomed?" by Bruce Porter, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (March/April 1989), 200 Alton Place, Marion, Ohio 43302.

Oh, how the mighty have fallen!

Since Henry Luce founded *Time* in 1923, newsweeklies have been a mainstay of the nation's news media. Now they—or one or two of them—could be nearing extinction. Circulation (a combined total of 10 million for *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *Newsweek*) has been virtually flat since 1970; ad pages have slipped by around 20 percent during the last decade.

"Where once the newsmagazines were the general public's only source of news about special areas such as the law [and] medicine," writes Porter, who teaches at Columbia's School of Journalism, "today all the large dailies [have] specialists dealing in these subjects." And Americans even in the hinterlands can now get the *New York Times* or *USA Today*, not to mention all kinds of television news. "You

have to ask yourself," says Roger Rosenblatt, editor of *U.S. News*, "why a reader needs us if he gets told a fact on Monday and you tell him the same fact a week from Monday."

He doesn't, and in order to survive the newsmagazines are changing. *Time* has resorted to splashy color graphics to ensure that "readers get a fast idea of what a story says without having to undergo the inconvenience of actually reading it." Yet, it has also hired well-known essayists, such as the *New Republic's* Michael Kinsley, to write weighty opinion pieces.

U.S. News emphasizes "news you can use": articles on personal finance, health, nutrition, and education. At *Newsweek*, soft-edged "stories are pitched to a slightly hipper, more urban set of readers, people in their thirties and forties." Cultural edi-

tor Sarah Crichton explains, "we're tracking a generation."

One assumption behind all of these changes, notes Porter, is that educated Americans will not read anything unless it

is served up like baby food. But it could be, as one former "big three" editor puts it, that readers simply did not care for the pabulum that the newsmagazines were dishing out in the first place.

The Bad News Bias

"Economic News on Television: The Determinants of Coverage" by David E. Harrington, in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Spring 1989), Univ. of Chicago Press, P.O. Box 37005, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

As a rule, good news is no news in the minds of many journalists.

That formula certainly seems to apply to TV network news coverage of the U.S. economy—with some curious exceptions.

Harrington, a Kenyon College economist, surveyed the three television networks' reports on inflation, unemployment, and the gross national product (GNP) during the economy's turbulent years between 1973 and 1984. He found "reports about increases in the unemployment rate were, on average, 48 percent longer and 106 percent more likely to lead the evening newscasts than reports about decreases in unemployment. For the inflation rate, reports about increases were, on average, 29 percent longer and 61 percent more likely to lead the evening news broadcasts." Reporting on the GNP like-

wise emphasized the bad news.

But these patterns prevailed only during *nonelection* years. Harrington found that the bad news/good news differences shrank during congressional election years; they virtually disappeared during the presidential election years, 1976, 1980, and 1984.

Why? Possibly because TV newsmen deem favorable economic news more politically significant during election years, Harrington speculates. Or broadcasters may strive for greater "balance" during election campaigns. In any event, network coverage of the economy is not balanced much of the time, and that has consequences. As economist Herbert Stein notes, Washington "must respond to the picture that is in the public mind, even if that picture is unrealistic."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

James vs. James

"William and Henry James" by Ross Posnock, in *Raritan* (Winter 1989), Rutgers Univ., 165 College Ave., New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

"I'm always sorry when I hear you're reading anything of mine, and always hope you won't," Henry James wrote to his brother William around 1904. "You seem so constitutionally unable to 'enjoy' it."

William James (1842-1910), the philosopher and father of Pragmatism, and Henry (1843-1916), the famous novelist, often chose to regard (and portray) themselves as a study in contrasts, and most scholars have agreed. Posnock, who teaches at the University of Washington, says it comes

down to a series of all-too-tidy dualisms: "active, manly, inquisitive William; contemplative, sissified, withdrawn Henry."

Their father, Henry Sr., had inherited great wealth and acquired a rococo taste for intellectual and theological speculation. The boys' various homes, an exasperated William wrote in 1865, swarmed with people "killing themselves with thinking about things that have no connection with their merely external circumstances."

It was too much for him. During the late