

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