

poration in Catalonia of the most modern currents of journalism of the beginning of the century, as a necessary link between the traditional academicism of the majority of specialised publications and the obligated information schematism of the newspapers and weeklies of information. Among its themes there is from scientific language to zoology, through astrology, agriculture, chemistry, cinema themes, industrial security, great scientific breakthroughs, medicine and psychology, anthropology, the world of radio and television or psychiatry. Articles on great scientists, accounts of conferences and bibliographic news.

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# 102 **48** Three views on economic information on television

In the framework of the II Congress of Economics of Catalonia, held in February 1988, there was a development of Days on Economy on television, whose papers shall be object of a specific publication on the part of the Association of Economists of Catalonia. "Annals of Catalan Journalism" including, in this number, the contributions of three journalists to this Congress.

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## Economy and television, two languages. The experience of TV3

JOSEP MARIA URETA

An estimation made by the News Services of TV3 on the content of every 100 minutes of new broadcast during 1987, shows the following figures: 27 were devoted to international news; 20 to sports, 17 to Spanish matters (excluding Catalonia); 17 minutes more to Catalan matters; 10 to culture and society, and, lastly, 10 more to economy.

Based on these data, the author —addressing optimists— considers that, since the News Services of the TV3 were organised in 1983, there have been great advances with regards to the presence of economic information on the different televisions, as also the mastering of television language applied to economics, a fact which has contributed, among other factors, to the increase in the demand for this type of information on the part of society. In a more pessimistic view of the matter, Ureta believes, however, that economic information on television does not have the treatment in time and content which it should have, especially if it is compared with that of written press and the radio.

The work puts forth here, the four causes which prevent, according to the author, a better development of economic information on television:

1. **Causes deriving from the medium:** Audio-visual “grammar”, complex and difficult, as it is open and changing, does not result easy to apply in the area of economic information. It is difficult to obtain images which “explain” economic news by themselves and audio-visual orthodoxy orders that on television, the image is essential. There is a vicious circle: since economy does not have images it does not appear enough on television, and, the less effort is made the less it will appear. Then, those who do not understand resort to this argument —the lack of images— to end up by eliminating this type of news.

2. **Causes deriving from the sources of information:** Informative opacity which exists, in general, in Spain and which is not homologable to the rest of the western world, is even greater when the information agents are enterprisers, administrators or whatever socioeconomic agent. The use of “off the record” and the bad habit of saying one thing when before the camera and another when not being recorded, greatly damage especially economic informers on television.

3. **Own limitations of informative process:** More than 30% of journalists in an editor's office be they of television or not are of “letters” and are capable of writing about politics, culture, sports, but not about economy. The demand for expositive clarity is greater and greater for writers of economy than for other spheres. There is a lot that people do not understand about this type of information: an obsession about not making hidden publicity of trade marks in economic information, when no much importance is given to it in other areas.

4. **Limitations of those redevoted to it:** It is relatively easy that an economist

adapts himself to writing in a paper or to speaking on the radio, instead the world of economists and that of television are extremely distant. The author terminates with the following statement: There are two languages, two ways of communicating, that of economists and that of television, which is not yet understood well enough.

# 57 Economic information on the Catalan circuit of TVE

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ANDREU CASTELLET

The author starts the work by explaining that —during the Congress— there were at the News Services of TVE Catalonia, 7 writers of the economy section, a total of 20%, and which their thematic sphere spans from labour and financial news, news referring to the food-farming sector and the world of the consumer, and also matters relating to those aspects of economic policy or technological innovation which could be of interest to the public in general.

Andreu Castellet then focuses his communication on that which he calls: **Small Glossary of topics on economic information on TV:**

**“This is how it should be explained”:** A frequent phrase spoken by some of those responsible for information programmes when, from the economy section, certain types of news are posed, especially referring to economic policy or financial matters. The economic journalist is, at TVE-Catalonia, probably he who is required to have a deeper specialisation, but the firm, instead, does not facilitate the instruments (formation at seminars, access to specialised or restricted information, etc...) which allow him to have a background comparable with that of journalists who work in the written press. However much technological possibilities evolve, a minute’s news on television can never contain as much information as a quarter of a page of a two-column newspaper, which does not mean that the audiovisual journalist has to have fewer data than the informer of the written press.

**“This information does not have image”.** There is news on undeniable interest which may have passed unobserved by our viewers, simply because we have not broadcast it or because we have not given it the relevance they deservedly merited in the written media.

**Negotiations on great public or private financial operations,** for instance, have often been absent from our programmes. The scene of the information is often far from us or simply outside our reach, or their protagonists have no interest in their faces being seen by millions of viewers. Often recourse has to be made to file images or the simple reading of a 30 seconds note before the camera. The possibility of creating one’s own informative image through data treatment, does work for lack special training for journalists on their possibilities of use.

**Public or private:** The pejorative prejudice towards the private enterpriser already forms part of the journalistic culture of the Spanish transition, and not always based exclusively on the sectarianism of the informer. And that of econo-

mic recovery is protagonised by private agents and not always do they keep to their news as they should, while more protagonism is given to acts impud by public administrations, even though they often do not have excessive interest. On the other hand, private enterprises are generally not entities of easy access to journalists their directors usually have a very reluctant attitude towards the journalist.

**"Is this important?":** The people in charge of news programmes frequently ask this question, and they put it more frequently to journalists of economy than any other group. Journalists in our country are generally ignorant of economic matters. When they hear an economic subject being talked a lot about they want it to be dealt with in the news, but they have not made a serious effort to understand economic phenomena. Really, they hope that this trend for economic information will disappear, that it is a passing thing, and at last they can forget about news which they dislike evaluating because they do not understand it.

I am very optimistic with regards to the solution of this problem, among other things because it can hardly become worse in relation with the economic formation of the non-specialised journalist. The times and market requirements will have their effect...

## 63 Credit of economic information

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ANDREU MISSÉ

The author focuses his work on the preoccupations as a whole of the journalists who give economic information, whatever be the medium in which they develop their activity, including television, focusing on the case of FECSA, a firm whose true financial situation was made publically know in the years 1986-87 and which was very different from that which had been divulged, both by the firm itself as by the media. Andreu Missé poses the following reflections:

- 1) Until 1986 the true financial and economic situation of many enterprises of a sector so basic and important. That is to say, neither the shareholders had information on that which they were buying and selling, nor the lenders (the general public, through the bond market), knew to whom their money was going.
- 2) The Stock Exchange, an official organism, took and published as good the information coming from the firms, without making the slightest contrast. The Stock Exchange's publications are considered one of the most solvent sources.
- 3) Thirdly, the authorities had set the price of the tariffs for many years basing themselves on data on the costs of the sector which had nothing to do with the reality.

Missé explains that the case of FECSA is not an isolated case (Hidroelèctrica de Catalunya, Spanish bank crisis, plan for textile reconversion, etc...) and in fact we can cite many more examples of disinformation, or incorrect or false information, due to journalists' ignorance. To the lack of an insufficient appropriate level on the part of journalists is added, then, the lack of trustworthiness of sources, statistic bases and honourable and reliable institutions which allow news professionals to work as they should.

In spite of everything, the author considers that economic news has undergone a substantial advance in recent years, particularly since democratic transition has given way to reflection, increasingly frequent, which without advancing in the field of democratisation of economic life, political democracy is lame. Also favouring this phenomenon has been the process of strengthening and modernisation of the Spanish economy, motivated by integration in the European community. The great stock exchange profits and the crash of October 1987 have resulted in a sizeable increase in the number of readers of newspapers' economy pages. This increase in demand has had a response in the field of supply in the market of economic information, with diverse specialised newspapers and magazines, whereas economy sections have enlarged and new ones created in the different media. The Association of Journalists of Economic Information of Catalonia at the beginning of 1988 grouped around one hundred journalists.

The author of the work considers that a strong plurality has been introduced and this news speciality has been democratised, at the same time however that many firms and institutions have steeped up the difficulties of free access to information. The number of economic informers has increased but there has been a greater increase in heads of press, image bureaux and departments of external relations, with the fundamental purpose of intermediating the information. On the other hand, the excessive increase of the quantity of information coming to editors' offices (press releases, press conferences, trips, presentations, cocktails, etc...) do not enable professionals to develop a good work of research and contrast. All this also favours monothematics lot of information from banks and little from the saving banks; wide treatment of the presentation of budgets of the administrations and little follow-up of their execution; announcement of public works and no verification of their being carried out.

In order to overcome these conditionings, the author of the work considers that it is necessary to maintain a critical attitude before all the data available and to raise the professional level of journalists by specific specialisation courses at the same time introducing the contrast and revision of all information.

Missé also explains that many works have not been gone into in depth for lack of conclusive arguments and that the great economic affairs eternally crawl through lawcourts and administrative organisms (Banca Catalana, Buixeres affair, Social Security fraud, case of the auctioners of the Special Magistracy, Barcelona customs fraud, anomalies in bank accounts and the Generalitat's game, etc...)