
Editorial

Cold Feet in The Cabinet

As was widely predicted (even in *Private Eye*!) the Government has decided that reform of the law of copyright is too hot to handle. This after thirteen years of debate, during which time the law has become more and more shambolic.

Political convenience has triumphed over the interests of rights owners, despite the stress laid by the Nicholson Report on the importance of intellectual property for innovative industry. The present shambles will remain intact until the electorate has spoken and the next Government has fulfilled as many of its manifesto promises as it sees fit.

Non-reform can be in very few people's interests. Freehold tenure of copyrights has been eroded since 1956 by advances in the technology of trespassing on those rights, and by legal restrictions on the actions which could be taken

against squatters. At least the White Paper (Intellectual Property and Innovation, Cmnd 9712) proposed that they should be obliged to pay a fair rent.

Of course there were hard choices to be made, especially on industrial designs and the tape levy. But Government's job is to take hard decisions, not duck them. One can sympathise with a Government facing a House of Commons whose members are united in their ignorance of intellectual property law, whipped up by the propaganda of the vested interests. But that cannot be allowed to cause the postponement of very necessary law reform.

To all our readers may we wish every success in 1987 and hope you will continue to support us. Please let us know your views and criticisms during the year.