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Hirst, Martin 1995, The coming republic : citizenship and the public sphere in post-colonial Australia, *Australian Journal of Communication*, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 13-39.

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# The coming republic: Citizenship and the public sphere in post-colonial Australia

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Martin Hirst

## Abstract

The 'coming republic' (Horne, 1992) is a reference point in a public discourse about Australian citizenship and national identity. An analysis of this debate raises questions about the degree to which the mass media, as the site of a contemporary public sphere, facilitates democratic change and promotes or demotes the various interests competing for scarce speaking positions. This paper uses the Australian experience to question the ideologies that support the media as marketplace, and suggests the need for an alternative to liberal-democratic and pluralist approaches to theorising the public sphere.

## Introduction: Citizenship and the public sphere in a post-colonial society

Between now and the year 2000, Australia (as a nation) has an opportunity to dissolve its links with the British crown in favour of a 'presidential' head of state. However, there is opposition to this notion from conservative politicians and people with affection for the House of Windsor. The various options open to the federal government have been in the media spotlight for the past four years (Horne, 1992; Keneally, 1993; Turnbull, May 2, 1993). Over the last 30 years, historians and writers, such as Donald Horne (1965, 1977, 1992) and Thomas Keneally (1993); radicals, such as Humphrey McQueen (1986); and conservatives, such as merchant banker Malcolm Turnbull (1993) and retired diplomat Malcolm Booker (1992), have pushed the republic at every opportunity.

The debate has a long history in Australia; indeed, there were republicans before there was Federation (Headon, Warden, & Gammage, 1994). For the first 100 years of Australia's existence as a series of connected British colonies and its second 100 years as a sovereign, Commonwealth nation, the question of autonomy for the national state has been discussed

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(McMinn, 1994). Australia's third century began in 1988 with the 'Celebration of a Nation' bicentennial commemoration of the 'founding fathers', and anger over the lack of 'reconciliation' between those of 'immigrant' stock and the indigenous people of Australia. At the time, calls were made for new types of nationalism and politics that would embrace every Australian in a 'multicultural' future (Mercer, 1992). Now, in the second half of the last decade of the second millennium, Australia's Prime Minister Paul Keating favours only cosmetic changes to the constitution, leaving the federal parliamentary system virtually unchanged—the so-called 'minimalist' position on the issues of the republic and citizenship (Keating, 1993; Hudson & Carter, 1993; Turnbull, 1993).

The discussion of the 'coming republic' (Horne, 1992) involves many questions of politics and 'citizenship', as well as of the values that define Australia as a young, post-colonial 'nation' entering its third century. Therefore, a close analysis of the republican debate might provide insights into the nature of the Australian media as a forum for an informed discussion of these issues. In the process, we can begin to deconstruct and analyse the role of the media as public sphere in a late twentieth century, liberal-democratic nation experiencing social change of major significance to all citizens<sup>1</sup>.

A critique of the pluralist and liberal-democratic paradigm is relevant as we approach the twenty-first century because of persistent perceptions that the mass media is struggling to adequately perform the 'duties' ascribed to it by liberal-democratic political theory (Curran, 1991a, 1991b; Dahlgren, 1991; Schultz, 1989, 1994a, 1994b). It is particularly important today because of the crisis of legitimation (Hallin, 1994; Hutchinson, 1994) surrounding the contemporary nation-state in the wake of collapsing totalitarianism in the Eastern bloc and political crises throughout Western liberal capitalism. It appears to many commentators that a corrupt form of the public sphere has been embraced in the former Stalinist countries at the same time as it is being criticised by many Western media theorists (Curran, 1991a; Dahlgren, 1991; Poole, 1989; Schultz, 1989, 1994a, 1994b).

These writers take as their point of departure the work of Jurgen Habermas and his theorisation of the public sphere as being that space between civil society and the nation-state in which discussion of important social, cultural, and political matters can take place. This notion has its origins in the liberal-democratic paradigm of the bourgeois revolutions. The authors discussed in this paper all recognise the limitations of the pluralist model; however, I suggest that they inevitably fall back on its basic assumptions when addressing reform of the public sphere.

My criticism is that they do not address the fundamental contradiction between the relations of production underpinning the media industry and the media's supposed role as a public informant. As an alternative, I offer

an approach based on political economy methods, linked to a thematic discussion of media content. My analysis of the Australian media's coverage of the republic debate suggests some empirical evidence to support the thesis that restricted access to monopolised media speaking positions leads to a narrowly-focused political debate, well within the bounds of Hallin's (1986) 'sphere of legitimate controversy' (p. 117).

My discussion is divided into four sections:

Section 1 examines the contradiction between capital accumulation in the media industry and the ideology of liberal-democracy, which posits the public sphere as the 'marketplace of ideas' (Horne, 1994b). Garnham's (1990) account is a useful summary of the political economy research agenda, which sees the media as both an economic entity involved in the creation and circulation of surplus value (p. 30) and as the limited public sphere within a capitalist, class-based social formation (p. 109).

Section 2 suggests that contradictions within the free enterprise, market relations in the media industry find their concrete expression in the dualism of the popular press. This is both in terms of market and opinion segmentation (for example, between the tabloid and broadsheet media, and between commercial and public service broadcast media) (Hirst, 1993).

Section 3 illustrates how the media's use of news values constructs speaking positions for elite sources and confines the republic debate to a narrow liberal-democratic agenda. This contains empirical compilations in table format and discursive treatments of selected news items, editorials, commentaries, features, cartoons, and letters.

Section 4 suggests that more work needs to be done on an alternative paradigm, perhaps introducing a more thorough approach to a study of the relations of production that underscore the media's production and circulation of ideologies. The conclusion suggests that the republic debate is fertile ground for an in-depth analysis of the issues of citizenship and the public sphere in Australia today because of both its longevity as an item on the political agenda and the intensity of the passions it arouses in both supporters and opponents.

### **Methodology and content analysis**

Mercer (1992) suggests that we can approach the cultural history of the nation-state through an analysis of the newspapers in circulation throughout its territory. He identifies three 'transactions' between the popular press and audiences that involve negotiation (p. 28). In this account, newspapers participate in and regulate cultural discourse at the level of daily news events in ways that have 'enormous significance in cultural histories of nationhood' (p. 33).

Newspapers are convenient and efficient articulators of these national cultural forms precisely because the nation is the terrain across

which they circulate and, as such, 'is a crucial device and cultural technology through which a certain sense of the national community may be inscribed' (Mercer, 1992, p. 39). This suggests that newspapers constitute an important public sphere tied to the nation-state, and one that distorts the true nature of class society in favour of a generalised, *idealised*, and reconstituted national 'public, 'marked out by the distribution of newspapers on the national scene' (Hall, 1978, p. 51). This becomes even more apparent when it is shown that the common elements in the coverage of the republic debate are nationalism and the necessary repositioning and revision of national 'myths' appropriate to Australian society in the twenty-first century.

I clipped relevant newspaper articles and categorised each as *news*, *comment*, *feature*, *letter*, *editorial*, or *cartoon*, noting and describing the content/sources. The simple process was to assess headlines and summary leads (Fowler, 1986) on a five-point scale, according to their stand *for* or *against* the republic/monarchy. I coded the text for keywords, phrases, direct quotes, and sources, enabling a descriptive and analytical breakdown of the content according to subject matter, theme, and speaking position of the source/author. This approach was developed by Eric Loo and me for a content analysis of the Keating-Mahathir row over the term 'recalcitrant' (Loo & Hirst, 1995). The coding categories for content, tone, and style are given in the appendices.

### **1: Jurgen Habermas and the *idealised* public sphere**

Jurgen Habermas's (1962/1989) work on the media as a modern, public forum for discussion first appeared in the original German in 1962, but it was not translated or taken up in the English-speaking world until much later (Curran, 1991a, 1991b; Dahlgren, 1991; McQuail, 1991). Habermas's historical account of the early bourgeoisie creating the public sphere as a space for its own discourse while it came to terms with its new power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is widely accepted, even by his critics.

In essence, Habermas points to the contradictions between the formal equality espoused by liberal doctrine and the social inequalities generated by market relations, a state of affairs still very much with us today. (Dahlgren, 1991, p. 4)

Thus we might suggest that the virtues of rationalism, reason, and universality that Habermas assigns to the public sphere are, in fact, privileges to be enjoyed by a particular class at a particular historical juncture. This idea appears to be borne out by the observation that 'universal' literacy did not lead to 'universal' participation in 'rational' decision-making by the general populace (the governed), for, as Poole (1989) notes, the 'early promise' of bourgeois (capitalist) society has not been met (p. 15).

The other aspect of the liberal-democratic paradigm that needs to be defined at this point is a belief in the legitimacy and neutrality of the nation-state, based on the principle of 'popular sovereignty', 'a universalist criterion of citizenship, and a particularistic limitation of "the people" to members of a given nation' in such a way that it defines the general interests of all citizens within 'the boundaries of the nation-state' (Beetham, 1991, p. 250). In contrast to this is the position adopted by the political economy tradition, which has always viewed the nation-state as 'coordinator and infrastructure provider for monopoly capitalism', and which, far from being neutral or passive, was able in the mid-nineteenth century to bring pressure to bear to 'squeeze shut' space for other classes to participate in the public discourse opened up by the forging of the public sphere in the heat of the bourgeois revolutions (Garnham, 1990, p. 17).

Taken together, the mistaken individualist notion of citizenship and an ideology of state neutrality ultimately make the liberal-democratic paradigm 'incapable of adequately confronting concentrations of economic power based upon private property and the political and communicative power which results' (Garnham, 1990, p. 18). However, Garnham suggests holding onto the 'Ideal Type' of public sphere nominated by Habermas as a model that 'stresses the importance for democratic politics of a sphere distinct from the economy and the [nation-state]' and 'identifies the importance of rationality and universality as key moments in any democratic political practice' (p. 109).

It is necessary to extend this discussion of the public sphere by reference to the 'dominant ideology thesis'. Abercrombie and Turner (1978) suggest that the 'dominant ideology' is aimed more towards cohering the ruling class around a specific set of organisational and political objectives than it is towards suborning the proletariat (p. 400). This is supported by my review of the republic debate, which suggests that political elites are defining their own positions before trying to sway 'public opinion'. However, there is no doubt that the 'dominant ideology' also successfully prevents the type of revolutionary action by the working class that Marx suggested will, eventually and fundamentally, alter the relations of production in a socialist direction.

As noted above, the 'universalism' of bourgeois ideology (as a totality comprised of various sub-ideologies encompassing working life and economics, liberal-democracy, law and order, the family, schooling and education, the media, parliament, and so on) masks the very limited nature of democratic participation in the public sphere. Still, it creates the illusion of democracy, universalism, and participation in decision-making.

We can infer from this that the bourgeoisie, by extending its control over all production and over the nation-state, controls the production of ideas. This encompasses the public sphere, constructed primarily as an

economic entity bound by market relations of production and consumption and with an important role in the creation and circulation of commodities and surplus value—in short, the media ‘industry’ (Garnham, 1990, p. 30). These transformations of the public sphere began when capitalism was born and continued with the emergence of a monopolistic press and the welfare state in the twentieth century (Dahlgren, 1991, p. 4). As Underwood (1993) remarks, the dilemmas facing the modern newspaper industry (declining demand and rising costs) were in the minds of newspaper proprietors throughout the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Habermas’s ideal forum is compromised by the relations of production that characterise the modern media. We can see that the Australian press operates in this environment today.

## 2: The Australian media in a global context

The Australian media industry is intimately bound into the global network of ownership and control that permeates every nation-state. Underwood (1993) and Cose (1989) discuss the newspaper industry in the United States, while in a British context, Belsey and Chadwick (1992) write that questions about information and communication have increased in significance, ‘but they are the same questions, about production, distribution and consumption, ownership and control’ (p. 3). Schultz (1994b) notes that, in Australia, the reality of monopoly and lack of diversity are not adequately shielded by the pluralist ideology (p. 18).

McQueen (1977) suggests that, while mass production, advertising, and a consumer-based mass media took hold in the US by the 1920s, ‘they do not really get under way in Australia until the 1950s, when hire purchase [consumer credit] debt grew by six and a half times’ (p. 18). However, as early as the 1930s, ‘the Melbourne *Herald* underplayed the seriousness of a polio epidemic because fear of contagion was keeping people out of big city stores’ (Edwards, 1972, pp. 83-84, quoted in McQueen, 1977, p. 12).

McQueen’s point—that ‘advertising is the key link between the mass commercial media and monopoly capitalism’ (p. 9)—is repeated in Windschuttle (1988), and a study of the Australian press in the 1950s shows that ‘even the smaller newspaper operations among the metropolitans are big business’ (Holden, 1961, p. 23). Once this is established, the question is: ‘to what extent does this fundamental economic relationship influence the mass media in the dissemination of useful information to an active, political, and *ideal* citizenry?’.

McQueen’s position is that the economic and ideological roles of the media are interlocking (p. 26), and, he goes on to suggest, that ‘by its very existence, advertising provides unintentional ideological defences for capitalism’ (p. 29) and, further, that ‘just by being there, advertising

reinforces the apparent naturalness of capitalism' (p. 30). I would argue that McQueen is right in this assessment: the apparent 'naturalness' of capitalist relations of production and their seeming 'inevitability' are cornerstones of liberal-democratic ideology, contributing to what one American sociologist described as the 'pragmatic acceptance' by the working class of its subordinate position within liberal-democratic social formations (Mann, 1982, p. 389).

McQueen (1977) provides interesting empirical data from the period 1903 to 1976 on the growing press monopoly in Australia's capital cities (Table 1), which can be extended by reference to the work of Windschuttle (1988) and Schultz (1989, 1994a). A cursory glance at these figures shows that two alarming trends are at work in the Australian press industry: the declining number of titles indicates a lack of diversity, despite 90 years of laissez-faire capitalism, free enterprise, and (in the last ten years) deregulation of the media industry; and the even greater decline in the number of newspaper proprietors (down 75 per cent) tells the story of capital accumulation, concentration of ownership, and increasing monopoly in the Australian print media<sup>2</sup>. There is more evidence to support these claims: for example, in the five years from 1987, sixteen metropolitan newspapers ceased publication (Schultz, 1994a, p. 26).

**Table 1. Number of capital city daily newspaper titles and number of proprietors by selected year (1903-1994)**

	1903	1923	1950	1963	1971	1976	1982	1988	1994
Titles	21	26	15	14	17	17	18	16	12
Owners	17	21	10	6	4	3	3	5	4

(McQueen, 1977, p. 36; Windschuttle, 1988, p. 86; 1994 figures compiled by the author)

At the same time as the number of owners has declined, foreign ownership of the Australian print media has increased. This has upset many 'nationalist' proprietors and commentators, such as Kerry Stokes, the 'rogue' media owner from Western Australia. Others are not so concerned about foreign ownership, but more about the lack of diversity in the print and electronic media. This group argues that foreign ownership might, in fact, increase diversity. Late in 1995, the federal government adopted this position on both pay television delivery and regional newspaper ownership, relaxing foreign ownership regulations in both areas.

Following the Labor-initiated changes in the regulatory environment in 1986, Rupert Murdoch's News Limited took over the *Herald* and *Weekly Times* group and merged the afternoon and morning tabloids in

Melbourne. This returned a newspaper once edited by his father Keith (McQueen, 1977, p. 56) to the family fold and took Murdoch's share of the newspaper market to over 60% (Schultz, 1989, p. 75). The Fairfax empire imploded after a disastrous attempted buy-out by Warwick Fairfax in 1987 and five years later was taken over by Canadian newspaper magnate Conrad Black. Magazine publisher and television network owner Kerry Packer also has a stake in the Fairfax stable, limited only by the federal government's cross-ownership rules, which restrict him to 15% in a market in which he also owns a television station.

However, throughout 1993, there were consistent (but always denied) rumours that Kerry Packer and Conrad Black were favoured by Labor and would be allowed to alter the rules to suit themselves. In 1994, the rumours were fuelled by both former Prime Minister Bob Hawke and by Black himself. This led to a Senate inquiry and intense hatred between the two men. By mid-1995, Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer were embroiled in an all-out commercial war over television rights to sporting events and event ownership of individual players. Kerry Packer also signalled an intention to increase his stake in Fairfax and the Seven television network. In late 1995, Kerry Packer appeared to endorse opposition leader John Howard as an 'alternative' leader, and Rupert Murdoch described the management of the Australian economy as a 'disgrace', perhaps putting him offside with the Prime Minister (Ramsey & Brewster, 1995). This constantly destabilised and circus-like environment in the media industry is amusing, but, more seriously, it highlights one of the most fundamental contradictions within the pluralist framework: the monopolists use the 'free enterprise' system to enrich themselves, exploiting every legal loophole possible.

This sketch provides the background for discussion of news values and diversity in the media marketplace. As can be seen in consistent comments from a number of sources, many working journalists, editors, and media theorists believe that news values are shaped, or perhaps distorted, by the economic imperatives and social relations of capital accumulation.

### **News values, the market, and manufactured consent**

The central assumptions of liberal-democratic media theory are that the market system is inherently good, that individuals have 'equal rights', that they have equality of access to the public sphere, and that they exercise power through elections. It suggests that the brand loyalty of the audience as consumers and the rhetoric of the market meeting their expectations means a consistent standard of news through the application of a market-tested formula. In contrast, Windschuttle (1988) writes that 'the news formula, or the personality of a newspaper, works

mainly to deliver a particular type of target audience to the advertiser' (p. 275). Garnham (1990) suggests that this represents 'direct control by private interests or state interests of the flow of public information in the interest, not of rational discourse, but of manipulation' (pp. 16-17).

O'Neill (1992) suggests that 'the market undermines the relation between journalism and democracy' (p. 15). As he points out, 'free speech' in the 'free market' is controlled by relationships of ownership, control, and access. Ownership restricts control of the public sphere to those with property rights to the media. Windschuttle (1988) and Garnham (1990) outline an approach that can be characterised as the political economy of the media, emphasising the importance of the relationship between media as capital and its attendant relations of production and news/entertainment as ideology. The media's role is to orchestrate a discourse within the public sphere that is

not of a narrow class interest but of the nation-people—the 'general interest'—and, in that way, demobilising alternative viewpoints, [thus] the press can be understood as playing a critical role in the reproduction of class hegemony in the democratic class state. (Hall, 1978, p. 49)

At the same time, Windschuttle (1988) identifies important contradictions in news presentations. He suggests that news stories undermine the ideals at the core of capitalist ideology and that the 'frustrations of the real world, the exasperations of consciousness that drive the audience to the media' also drive the media to 'market bad news' (p. 274).

To understand how the media can market news that undermines its main ideological function *at the same time as* it generates ideologies that sustain the system, accounts of the production of news as ideology and as popular culture must recognise the economic, social, and political contradictions that construct the social relations in which the ideology functions. Hence, there is an unequal, contradictory, and unstable relationship between news, reality, and audience response. Audiences can, therefore, challenge media interpretations of the real by comparing them to their own experience. This point is implicit in Mann's (1982) account of 'agencies of political radicalism . . . struggling against their opponents' ability to mobilise the national and feudal symbols to which the population has been taught to respond loyally in schools and in much of the mass media' (p. 391).

In his study of US coverage of the Vietnam war, Hallin (1986) notes that throughout the 1960s successive American governments struggled with massive social pressures from below—an acute crisis of legitimacy from which it eventually recovered, but at a massive social cost.

The behaviour of the media, as we have seen, is intimately related to the unity and clarity of the government itself, as well as to the degree of consensus in the society at large. This is not to say that the role of the

press is purely reactive. . . . But it is also clear that the administration's problems with the 'fourth branch of government' resulted in the large part from political divisions at home, including those within the administration, which had dynamics of their own. (p. 213)

Hallin's conclusion is worth noting because of its applicability to the Australian media's coverage of the republic debate. In the Australian context, both McQueen (1977) and Windschuttle (1988) reinforce this point in their examples of strike reporting and the coverage of political disputes, including those over Vietnam in the 1960s and the Whitlam sacking of 1975. More recently, the Victorian media's short flirtation with anti-Kennett sentiment highlights how the news agenda can be influenced by pressure from outside parliamentary processes. The point is that political divisions can create fractures in the manufactured consensus that make visible a systematic contradiction between 'social control' and 'resistance' in the everyday application of news values. This issue of contested meaning is taken up concretely in the next section, which examines the republic debate in the Australian print media.

### **3. The coming Australian republic: 'Sale of the century' (Kiely, 1994)**

Brand identity is everything in marketing. Clinging to outdated and confusing imagery is not the way to break into new markets. One of the most powerful arguments for the republic is the commercial imperative of establishing Australia as a serious player in international business. Kings and queens are fine so long as they don't stand in the way of overseas sales. (Kiely, 1994, p. 20)

Media coverage of the debate about Australia's quickening march towards a republic, with an end-of-the-century timetable, crosses the boundaries of traditional reporting about politics to embrace the whole of popular culture. It is as much about redefining 'who we are' as it is about changing the head of state or the constitution. Journalists and columnists are at the cutting edge, reporting and, in some cases, proselytising, or, at least, popularising, the arguments for and against the republic. The coverage references itself to Australia's changing national identity, the need for economic and cultural ties to the immediate region, the role of the monarchy, whether to elect or appoint a republican head of state, and the need for consensus.

Prime Minister Paul Keating is widely perceived to have initiated the debate, and the Labor Party is generally strongly in favour of the change. Despite consistent charges by monarchists that it is 'Keating's republic', opinion polls show strong support for the republic among Labor supporters and a shift towards this position among rank and file conservative voters (Cockburn, 1994, p. 1). But the conservative Coali-

tion of the urban middle-class Liberal Party and the rural-based National Party is, fundamentally and permanently, divided over the issue.

Half-way through 1994, a long-standing impasse in conservative leadership was broken when Alexander Downer, a member of a well-established and genteel Adelaide family, staged his own coup against Dr John Hewson, a former merchant banker and Professor of Economics. But Downer's reign was short indeed. In early 1995, he was replaced by the 'recycled' former leader John Howard. Howard is an avowed monarchist and his elevation was seen as giving the traditionalists a boost, but his honeymoon period was barely over when his Coalition partner Tim Fischer declared the republic inevitable and began to debate the issue of an elected or appointed head of state. At the time, this appeared to shift the ground towards the republicans and undermine Howard's leadership, which is widely perceived to be based on a return to the social values of Australia in the 1950s. John Howard has (at the time of writing) embraced the idea of a people's convention and a non-binding plebiscite on the republic issue *if* he wins the 1996 federal election. This has perhaps taken some of the initiative away from Keating and blunted his edge in the debate (Hirst, in press).

The republic is a controversial issue in Australia and opponents argue that the debate is 'divisive' (Kirby, 1993). Exchanges between republicans and monarchists (supporters of the present constitutional arrangements) are often acrimonious, leading to accusations that one side or the other (most often the republicans) is out to 'wreck' the nation, or that the media is biased (Horne, 1992; Kirby, 1993). More importantly, there is profound disagreement over some fundamental issues regarding nationhood, the rights of state governments versus the nation-state, and what constitutes Australian citizenship (Turnbull, 1993).

This content analysis begins with a detailed study of one small episode from May 1993 and ends with a few comments about the broader picture and further research in this area. I have adopted this approach to indicate the periodisation of the media's coverage as it relates to specific events and ebbs and flows around these important dates. The articles are taken from the major papers available in Sydney and Melbourne. All titles in these cities, including the national titles *The Australian* and *The Australian Financial Review*, are owned by either Fairfax (Conrad Black) or News Limited (Rupert Murdoch).

Because of the closures and aggregation referred to in Section 2, there are now only four dailies and three weekend papers in circulation in Australia's two largest media markets. It is, therefore, legitimate to ask: 'how much (or how little) diversity of opinion is there in the regional and national *public sphere(s)* created by the combined circulation of these papers?'

The focus here is on the first week of May 1993 (Tables 2, 3, 4, & 5),

when Malcolm Turnbull, a prominent Sydney lawyer and merchant banker, was appointed to review republican options on behalf of the federal government. The tables label the most prominent sources quoted in the story or with the major theme devoted to them as *talent*; the other categories are labelled *prominent* and *mentioned*, depending on whether the source was mentioned prominently or mentioned in passing.

Given the 'for or against?' nature of the republic debate, this content analysis focuses on the tone of each article according to a coding of both the headline and the text (Appendix 1). To trace news values and separate out opinion pieces, the content analysis is also coded for style. This refers to the type of each piece: news, news and opinion, opinion, profile, editorial, colour, letter-to-the-editor, or cartoon. (Brief definitions are in Appendix 2.)

**Table 2: Most prominent sources referred to in coverage  
28 April to 6 May 1993**

<i>Source</i>	<i>Talent</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Mentioned</i>
Paul Keating	16	7	19
John Hewson	11	4	13
Malcolm Turnbull	9	3	5
MPs & senators	6	4	6
Governors general	5	1	1
State premiers	5	1	8
Academics	4	3	5
Ordinary people	3	0	0
John Howard	3	3	10
Former MPs	2	1	2
UK MPs	2	0	0
TV & other personalities	2	3	1
Aboriginal representative	1	1	1
Queen	0	3	2

From Table 2, it is possible to see that the Prime Minister Paul Keating, the leader of the Federal Opposition (at that time) John Hewson, and Malcolm Turnbull were the most quoted or mentioned 'players' in coverage of the Republic Advisory Committee (RAC). This is consistent with the proposition that this 'event' and reaction to it drove the coverage in this period. This table also shows that the most favoured speaking positions in the republic debate tend to be occupied by individuals in positions of institutional prominence, such as members and former members of parliament, state leaders, vice regal appointees (past and present), and academics.

Table 3 indicates the dominant themes developing in this period and shows that Coalition disunity was the most prominent theme in the period 28 April to 6 May 1993. This reflects the importance that journalists placed on the impact of John Hewson's decision to boycott the RAC, and Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett's proposed high court challenge to the validity of the republican exercise.

The prominence of the RAC is to be expected, given that this period of coverage was triggered by its establishment. We can also see how certain issues raised by the debate are also achieving prominence, particularly national identity, states' rights, the role of the monarchy, and the centrality of opinion polls in the coverage of political stories. The dominant news value is conflict—highlighted by the focus on the Coalition's split over the issue and Dr Hewson's 'boycott' of the RAC.

**Table 3: Most prominent themes mentioned in the coverage  
28 April to 6 May 1993**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Mentioned</i>
Coalition disunity	17	8
National identity	14	6
RAC	10	10
Monarchists	7	3
States rights	6	2
Democracy/dictatorship	6	5
Opinion polls	5	3
Conduct of debate	5	3
Minimalist position	4	3
Parliament	4	2
Role of president	4	3
Oath of allegiance	4	1
Referendum	4	6
Closer ties to Asia	3	4
Economic picture	3	3
Labor agenda	3	2
Youth interest in debate	2	0
Credibility	2	3
Multiculturalism	2	3
Republican movement	2	2
ANZAC myth	1	1
History	1	2
Land rights	1	1
Next election (1996)	1	0
Sexism of monarchy	1	0
World War II	1	0
Constitution	1	6
Racism	1	1

Other highlighted issues that revolve around the news of conflict include accusations that a republic will lead to a dictatorship (the categories democracy/dictatorship and Labor agenda); the changed role of parliaments; the head of state; the states; arguments about the conduct of the debate; time of a referendum to decide the issue; and abolition of the 'royal' oath of allegiance.

### **Keating takes his 'circus' on the road (28 April to 6 May 1993)**

The broad outlines of the republic debate were clearly articulated at the time of the Prime Minister's announcement of the RAC, with Malcolm Turnbull as its head, on 28 April 1993. That evening, Keating unveiled the RAC proposal, the committee's terms of reference, and clear indications of the PM's support for the *minimalist* position in a speech to the Labor-aligned think-tank, the Evatt Foundation:

I am an advocate of what has become known as the minimalist approach. My view is that the constitution should be changed sufficiently to replace the hereditary monarchy with a non-hereditary, Australian head of state. (Keating, April 28, 1993)

The afternoon edition of Melbourne's *Herald-Sun* carried the banner 'REPUBLIC BOYCOTT', referring to the Liberal's initial response to the announcement Keating was going to make that night. The next day, the *Herald-Sun* headlined its coverage 'PM's TEAM 10 to shape a republic' (Dunlevy, April 29, 1993, pp. 1, 2), bracketed with a quarter page photo-story about the attitudes of two nine-year old students, from Fitzroy Community School, towards the republic and the Queen (Quine, April 29, 1993, pp. 1-2).

'PM's TEAM 10' opened positively, quoting in paragraph three the Prime Minister's comments about economic links with Asia and the Australian democracy both being strengthened by the coming republic. The story spilled onto page two, but a negative comment from John Howard was relegated to paragraphs 28 and 29 of the 29-paragraph story. There was a spill story on seven of the ten members on the RAC, those nominated by Mr Keating, which mentioned that the PM had written to John Hewson seeking a Liberal Party nominee.

*The Daily Telegraph Mirror* headlined its front page with 'PM's GANG OF 7 team to forge our republic' (Farr, April 29, 1993). Chief political reporter Malcolm Farr opened with the news that Prime Minister Keating 'last night propelled Australia towards a republic', but the story is then much the same as the *Herald-Sun*, quoting Paul Keating and outlining the RAC's agenda. National Party leader Tim Fischer was given a small mug shot and four paragraphs under the headline 'Fischer slams no-Queen oath', in which he said that removing

references to the monarchy from ministerial oaths of office is 'part of a Keating agenda to create a stampede towards a republic' (p. 1).

The following day under a general banner 'REPUBLIC 2001' (Dunlevy, April 30, 1993), the *Herald-Sun* ran 17 paragraphs on John Hewson's rejection of Keating's committee, while at the same time noting a shift in community attitudes that made the 'hardline monarchist position . . . out of touch with the realities of Australia today' (p. 5)<sup>3</sup>. A companion piece by the paper's Victorian state political correspondent Matthew Pinkney (April 30, 1993) reported Premier Jeff Kennett's strong opposition to the whole republican agenda and his description of it as 'the most fundamental issue facing Australia' (p. 5). The same issue of the *Herald-Sun* carried the edited text of a paper on the role of state governors by the then serving Victorian Governor (McGarvie, April 30, 1993, p. 13); a comment piece by 'freelance writer' Julia Patrick (April 30, 1993) defending the rights of 'cautious, conservative Australians' against unidentified individuals or groups who want 'power, and [who] hide behind the skirts of the republican push' (p. 13); and an editorial entitled 'Not so much if, but how' that invited cautious support for the republic committee and mildly criticised John Hewson's 'wait and see' attitude (p. 12).

The *Telegraph* and the *Herald-Sun* infused their coverage with 'personality' profiles of Keating's 'team', including SBS news presenter Mary Kostakidis. The dominant personality on the RAC was quickly identified as corporate lawyer and deal-maker Malcolm Turnbull, and, during this period, the coverage in the broadsheet press was similar in content.

*The Age* carried an editorial 'teaser' entitled 'The rocky road to a republic' and photographs of the RAC appointees in its front page coverage (April 29, 1993, p. 15). The mug shots were captioned 'The team that will guide the PM to a federal republic of Australia' and gave brief biographical details of the careers and current positions of committee members. The editorial warned of the difficulties of forging a consensus, even around the minimalist position. Constitutional lawyer Professor Michael Pryles (April 29, 1993) noted, in a front page column, that the complex and controversial nature of some suggested reforms could 'delay [the republican change] substantially if not defeat it entirely'. He went on to underline the pragmatism of the Keating approach: 'politics is the art of the possible and the argument for a minimalist approach rests on this consideration alone'. Describing the route to a republic as 'the rocky road', the editorial suggested that failure to reach a bipartisan consensus could cause the republican agenda 'to fall apart because our political leaders fail to rise above their narrow party political interests' (p. 15).

At the same time, Hewson's troubles within the Coalition were elaborated upon as divisions widened between John Howard's conservative group and the 'progressives' around former NSW Premier Nick

Greiner (Barker, April 30, 1993). Between 1 and 6 May, *The Age* carried at least six major columnists writing on the republic. Professor George Winterton, Malcolm Turnbull, and former Senator Susan Ryan outlined their views from the speaking position of RAC members. Social critic Robert Manne, the editor of the conservative journal *Quadrant*, wrote in *The Age* under the imaginative headline 'Why I am not a republican' (May 4, 1993, p. 15).

Manne's contribution outlined an alliance between the Irish-Australian political and cultural 'elite' and 'the ethnic intelligentsia and the left'. While perhaps not quite a conspiracy theory, Manne argues that the republican push wants simultaneously to 'overturn all British cultural symbols', replacing them with a "mosaic" of immigrant and indigenous "contributions", and to exact revenge 'against insufferable establishment conservatism' (p. 15)<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, Malcolm Turnbull (May 2, 1993) appeals to the good sense of 'Australians' to counter the monarchist arguments that 'democracy' will be destabilised by the republican cause. He then goes on to elaborate on the cultural arguments for republicanism, national identity, and 'the respect of other [nations in the Asia-Pacific region]', but Turnbull admits that this republican world-view is firmly based on identifying with the English-speaking world! (p. 13).

Australia's identity should be—wait for it—Australian. Our culture is an English-language one. Our institutions are more influenced by British models than by those of other countries, although we should not overlook the contribution of other nations, especially the United States. (p. 13)

In this account, the contributions of immigrants and indigenous people are overlooked in favour of the view that 'diversity, and our tolerance, is one of the best things about our democracy' (p. 13). While remembering that 'our community is made up of many cultures, races and religions', Turnbull reminds *us* that 'there is one thing that all Australians have in common: their love for, and commitment to this country above all others' (p. 13). The new nationalism is cast in the inclusive (but empty) phrase 'our community', and Malcolm Turnbull invokes a revamped cultural paradigm: 'there is more to Australian culture than the royal family' (p. 13). Unfortunately, Turnbull's (1993) cultural 'vision' seems to fade just beyond a yearning for 'a genuinely Australian head of state' (p. 92), and the pragmatic 'respect' Australian business can yearn for in dealing with their counterparts in the *other* culture of Asia.

In Turnbull's Australia, there is no class conflict or division; it is imagined and articulated as democratic *per se*. In a minimalist attempt to reconcile the gulf between supporters of the present constitutional arrangements and the republicans, Malcolm Turnbull (May 2, 1993) turns to a national cultural myth—that of nineteenth century republican, newspaper publisher, and Presbyterian minister John Dunmore Lang:

Lang argued that the greatest tradition British settlers had brought to Australia was a love of freedom and independence and the right to choose our own rulers. On that score Australia is one of the oldest democracies in the world, older than Britain *if you define a democracy as being a place where all adult citizens have the vote* [italics added]. (p. 13)

In the op-ed 'middle ground' between sniping republicans and monarchists, Geoffrey Barker (May 2, 1993) called for a religious truce in the republic debate and an end to 'tribalism' along Irish-Australian and British-Australian divisions. He describes 'both sets of attitudes [as] . . . reprehensible and potentially dangerous' (p. 15). Barker also comments on the generation gap between older monarchists and younger republicans, writing that 'the republican debate provides potentially fertile soil in which old tribal hatreds might be revived' (p. 15).

The same weekend, *The Weekend Australian* led its 'Focus' section with Glenn Milne's (May 1-2, 1993) analysis of the symbolic battle for 'hearts and minds' between Paul Keating and John Hewson. His concluding paragraph serves as a reminder of the uncertainty of *potential* outcomes in the republic debate and its ultimate impact on politics, culture, and ideology in the next few years: 'The only certainty is this: having moved to the brink of the republic, Paul Keating and John Hewson are now both staring into the abyss' (p. 15).

Milne's prediction has at least come true for Dr John Hewson, deposed by a scion of the Adelaide Club and sacked from the front bench not much more than a year later, in part due to the fact that he could not reconcile the party on the republic issue. However, the 'abyss' opened up by conflict among political representatives has created the conditions for open interpretation and argument over the republic. In a desperate bid to shore up his party room and public support towards the end of 1994, Opposition leader Alexander Downer promised a referendum on the republic and other citizenship issues *if* the Coalition wins the next federal election (Kingston, November 14, 1994)—a turnaround on his position three months earlier. John Howard has adopted a similar position just six months away from the next federal election.

From this brief survey of the press coverage, it is possible to elucidate the main themes, the tone, and the matrix of speaking positions that define the republic debate. To complement this detailed analysis, I have coded 77 articles from the Melbourne, Sydney, and national press for the period 28 April to 6 May 1993. Table 4 sets out the style of each item and the overall tone.

### **Is the media biased?**

The chair of the Australian Press Council Professor David Flint doesn't think so, despite arguing that most journalists and members of

**Table 4: Tone of headline and content, tabulated by style and attitude to the republican issue**

Newspaper coverage of RAC and response 28 April to 6 May 1993

<i>Style</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Tend Sup.</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Tend Opp.</i>	<i>Oppose</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>News</b>							31
H/L	6	1	16	4	0	4	
Tone	9	0	19	1	0	2	
<b>News &amp; opinion</b>							13
H/L	3	0	3	1	0	6	
Tone	3	0	5	1	0	4	
<b>Opinion</b>							21
H/L	1	0	8	4	0	8	
Tone	2	1	12	1	1	4	
<b>Profile</b>							3
H/L	1	1	1	0	0	0	
Tone	1	0	2	0	0	0	
<b>Editorial</b>							3
H/L	1	1	0	1	0	0	
Tone	3	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Cartoon</b>	0	0	1	0	0	3	4
<b>Colour</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Review</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

the 'intelligentsia' are, at least sentimentally, overwhelmingly republican (Flint, personal communication, 1995). On the other hand, the Executive Director of Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy Kerry Jones (July 17, 1995) believes that the media favours the republican side. A rating of the coverage in the first six months of 1994, prepared by Computer Aided Research and Media Analysis International (CARMA, July 18, 1994), suggests that 42% was positive, 24% neutral, and 34% negative on most issues in the debate. Their calculation is that, overall, the coverage had a 'slightly favourable' pro-republican rating of 52 (p. 1).

In order to examine the propositions that coverage is fairly even-handed and similar, if not identical, in the broadsheet and tabloid press, I have broken down the 77 articles according to style, tone, and whether they appeared in a broadsheet or tabloid paper (Table 5). We can see from this table that both tabloids and broadsheets contain a majority of news and comment pieces in the open category and about equal numbers of pro and anti-republican stories. In researching this paper, I collected and analysed clipped articles from a number of nationally circulating East-coast daily newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, and other media sources to assess these claims of bias. Overall, I have concluded

that the press is not overtly biased in news reporting and that columnists supporting and opposing a republic have roughly equal space (Table 5). For example, in July 1993, there were two favourable reports on the gatherings of the anti-republican forces in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Stapleton, July 12, 1993, p. 7; Stephens, July 3, 1993, p. 2) and one in *The Weekend Australian* (Richardson, July 3-4, 1993, p. 6).

**Table 5: Analysis of tone of article by style and attitude to the republic for the period 28 April to 6 May 1993**

For this table, cartoons, letters to the editor, and reviews have been combined into the category *opinion*

	<i>Support</i>	<i>Tend Sup.</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Tend Opp.</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
<b>Broadsheet</b>						
News	5	0	6	1	0	2
News & opinion	1	1	3	0	0	1
Opinion	1	1	6	0	1	4
Profile	0	0	2	0	0	0
Editorial	1	0	1	0	0	0
Colour	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total (37)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>
	<i>Support</i>	<i>Tend Sup.</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Tend Opp.</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
<b>Tabloid</b>						
News	4	0	13	0	0	0
News & opinion	2	0	1	1	0	3
Opinion	1	0	4	1	0	5
Profile	1	0	1	0	0	0
Editorial	2	0	0	0	0	0
Colour	0	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Total (40)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

Broadsheets: *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian* (including *The Weekend Australian*), and *The Australian Financial Review*

Tabloids: *Herald-Sun*, *Daily Telegraph-Mirror* (including *Sunday Telegraph*), and *Sun-Herald* (Sunday)

My research on this period in 1993 suggests that rather than exhibiting a 'bias' towards one side or the other, the media's coverage appears to reflect the wide-ranging nature of the debate, with plenty of space given over to news stories 'rich' in the news values of *conflict*, *prominence*, *timeliness*, and *proximity*, and reporting the opinions of well-recognised sources in the political arena. It leads me to conclude that coverage is concentrated within the *sphere of legitimate controversy* (Hallin, 1986, p. 117) and in the paradigm of liberal-democracy, where the prominent

institutional and invited speakers in the debate have a *stand-for* relationship with the largely silent 'general' public (Sless, 1986).

By looking at the three main categories of style (news, news and opinion, and opinion), it is possible to see that the spread of coverage tends to be concentrated in the middle of the table, where meaning and interpretation can be seen to be more contested. The tone of the headline was also coded and indicates some dissonance between 'angle' and the room for 'interpretation' allowed by the text.

This indicates that there is diversity of opinion, though around a number of 'core' values and ideas, such as mateship, allegiance, the value of the parliamentary system, and the desirability of free enterprise. Pilger (1992) describes this public media space as being physically bound by the parliamentary precincts and within 'a short cab journey of the Palace of Westminster' (p. 13). At the same time, Hallin's (1986) spheres of 'consensus' and 'legitimate controversy' (p. 117) mark the ideological boundaries of acceptable debate. The perceived 'alternative' (the state socialism of the Eastern bloc<sup>5</sup>) is less attractive and is relegated to the sphere of *deviance*—rarely, if ever, to be sympathetically discussed—where journalists 'uphold the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate political activity' (Hallin, 1994, p. 54).

However, contests over 'meaning' are almost encouraged by the vigour of the debate, while the controversial and passionately held beliefs of both republicans and monarchists make it difficult for opinion 'leaders' to be always certain of a receptive audience.

As I wrote a draft of this paper over Easter 1995, a whimsical statue of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, sitting naked on a park bench in chilly winter Canberra, caused a national outcry. Eventually, the artist insisted that the works be removed, but not before someone lopped off the Queen's head (Stevens, April 15-16, 1995, p. 1) and monarchists scuffled with republicans as the former attempted to cover their Majesties' *largesse* (Roberts, 1995, p. 1; McQuillan, 1995, p. 1).

As the 1996 federal election approaches, the parameters of the debate are perhaps wider than either the monarchists or the minimalist republicans would like. Paul Keating has attempted to broaden the republican agenda by moving to capture the opinions of young people (Kitney, April 15, 1995, p. 1). He has turned up the heat on John Howard and continues his revision of Australian history, pressing into service the ghost of Sir Henry Parkes on a recent visit to Faulconbridge in the NSW Blue Mountains, west of Sydney. It was reported in *The Sydney Morning Herald* that, while planting a tree in honour of Sir Henry's role in federating Australia, Keating claimed to be carrying Parkes's mantle, closing the circle by initiating steps towards a republic (Lewis, August 31, 1995). Lewis wrote that 'Sir Henry Parkes could be heard rolling in his nearby grave yesterday' (p. 3).

I am proposing to do further work in this area with a perspective that will foster useful comparisons between the present debate and Federation in the last decade of the nineteenth century. As *fin-de-siècle post-modernism* descends upon us, it strikes me as interesting to reflect on the turning of the century and to compare it with the end of the nineteenth century. In 1901, when post-Victorian *modernism* was rampant in the world, what constituted an individual as a citizen in the new Australian federation? What do postmodernists and 'minimalist' republicans have in common at the close of the twentieth century? Which ideas are appropriate for dealing with the politics of the republic debate? Such questions have already found their own space, albeit a small one, in the pages of *The Australian* (Hirst, 1995; Wark, 1995; Watson, 1993). No doubt there will be further contributions to this debate, especially in the context of the 1996 federal election, which could turn out to be a rehearsal for the proposed referendum on republicanism. If Paul Keating can win again (against the odds), the republican cause will get a boost; if John Howard wins (as opinion polling suggests), the republic could be delayed for some time.

### Notes

1. I am referring to the economic program of the current Labor government, which involves major shifts in policy, ideology, and culture, and the instability in both state, federal, and international politics from an Australian perspective.
2. The situation in the electronic broadcast media is very similar. Instability mars both the commercial and state-run sectors of radio and television.
3. This turned into a key phrase and was later interpreted as an attack on John Howard and other monarchists inside the Liberal Party, adding to John Hewson's discomfort, and deepening the ideological divisions inside the Coalition.
4. In 1994, Manne changed his mind. He wrote in April 1995's *Quadrant* 'Why I am no longer not a republican' (pp. 2-4).
5. There is a long tradition of opposition to Stalinism within the left, but, like any serious discussion of what Marx, Engels, Trotsky, and their theoretical/organisational descendants have to say, it is ejected into the sphere of deviance. The only 'coverage' it receives is derisive at best and crudely objectionable at worst.

## Appendix 1: Categories for coding of headlines and overall tone 28 April to 6 May 1993

Given the recognised controversial nature of the republic debate, this content analysis focuses on the tone of each article according to a coding of both the headline and the text. The material has been coded using the following categories:

### Supports the republic (P+)

The tone of the headline or text is most likely to be read as supporting the republic in some way. Headlines were given this coding if they were unambiguous (for example, 'NSW Libs jump on republican bandwagon'). Text was coded as supportive if the overall tone was clearly favourable to the republic or urged support for the republic. A story could be supportive if the majority of sources are favourable or the writer indicates a strong preference for the republic.

### Tends to support (E+)

This category was used for headlines and text that possibly, or ambiguously, supported aspects of the republican position or accepted the *inevitability* of a republic (for example, 'The rocky road to republic').

### Open (E-+)

Material in this category was ambiguous or contained material that could be read as either supportive or opposed (to some degree). My judgment in forming this category was that material that did not clearly support either side but put forth opposing arguments could be read *oppositionally* by people with already confirmed views. This category needs careful attention because, in some cases, a columnist (or news journalist) might tender an opinion that could lead to the article being read as either supportive or opposed. In such situations, the overall tone is measured because an oppositional reader is going to either agree or disagree with the writer.

### Neutral (E)

Neutral headlines and text (straight news reporting) take no apparent position or, in some cases, are oblique (for example, 'Republic black bid'). Occasionally, neutral headlines will not mention the republic at all (for example, 'The Governor's brief'). A neutral headline accompanies a story that is coded differently.

### Tends to oppose (E-)

Headlines and text in this category are likely to be read as opposing the republic. For example, an article focusing on Senator Cheryl Kernot's response to the RAC has the negative headline 'Kernot attacks Keating's cop out', but in the text it says that she supports the republic and thinks that Keating has not gone far enough.

### Opposes the republic (N-)

Articles and headlines in this category are most likely to be read as opposing the republican position or strongly supporting the loyalist cause (for example, 'Will there be honour for ANZACS in republic: Kennett challenge threat'). The overall tone is coded 'opposes the republic' if it contains unrefuted attacks by sources or the writer shows clear opposition (for example, 'Why I'm not a republican').

## Appendix 2: Definition of codes used to define style in newspaper samples 28 April to 6 May 1993

### News

A straight report of an event, speech, reaction, or comment by prominent sources. Brief items of news were coded, as well as the major stories that had a bearing on the republic debate, directly or indirectly.

### News and opinion

Stories pegged to a news event that have as a *major element* comment by a source, or by the journalist writing the news story. For example, a story about Hewson's initial response to the RAC 'Hewson rejects group' also contained comment by the journalist that this was 'out of touch' with public opinion.

### Opinion

Stories by journalists or columnists that comment directly on events or issues as they arise.

### Profile

Stories that concentrate on the personalities of the major sources (for example, 'Turnbull's quest for a republic'). There are occasions when news stories might also fit this category (for example, 'PM's GANG OF 7'). I have coded these as *news* if they contain other more prominent news values, such as timeliness or conflict.

### Editorial

Unsigned editorial columns on the leader page, usually representing the paper's opinion.

### Colour

Background or tangential stories (for example, 'Sparring into the future: At odds—even the young') that rely on a human interest value. I expect this category to remain fairly small as most colour pieces when read carefully are either profile or opinion. In the initial open-coding, I used the category feature opinion (Table 5), which will have to be recoded into the new categories.

### Letters

Letters to the editor. I have coded these separately in the initial analysis and will continue to do so. However, in presenting overall results, I have included letters, reviews, and cartoons in the opinion category because they are, in themselves, statistically a small component and are, by their very nature, opinion pieces.

### Cartoons

Illustrations, comic strips, and 'one-off' cartoons that appear on the op-ed pages. Significant cartoons illustrating features or news stories are also catalogued. Smaller illustrations may be mentioned in the text, but not coded in the initial analysis.

## Reviews

Book, film, television, radio, theatre, or other reviews that comment directly or indirectly on the republic debate and the issues raised, or on the major characters involved.

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