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Diet-News:


Daniel M. D. Cook.

Abstract.

*Diet News* is a study of the changes in the content and presentation of news items by *One Network News* from 1984 to 1996. The intention is to examine these changes in the light of current media research on the effects of introducing or increasing commercial pressures. The radical restructuring of New Zealand’s broadcast environment in the late eighties presented a unique case study to study these effects. New Zealand went further, faster than any other comparable broadcast environment, moving in a few short years from a highly regulated public-oriented broadcast system, to perhaps the most deregulated broadcast market in the world. The effects on news selection at *One Network News* were immediate and substantial. Political news halved between 1988 and 1989, while less serious news categories like human-interest, crime and disaster news increased. By 1996, the average *One Network News* bulletin in our sample featured more banter between the presenters than it offered information about political policy.

What follows is a look at two ends of a continuum for how a nation might organise broadcasting – the British system and the American. The second chapter looks at New Zealand’s broadcasting history, and develops the proposition that the move from a public-oriented to a commercially-oriented system would have specific impacts on news selection and presentation. Chapter Three discusses the methodology designed to test those hypotheses, and Chapters Four and Five describe the findings of the macro-analysis of change to content selection, and a micro-analysis of change to a single category of reportage – political policy news. We conclude with a brief assessment of the likely consequences for the New Zealand audience.
Acknowledgements.

This study owes a great deal to Drs. Joe Atkinson, Alan Cocker and Margaret Comrie. Cocker and Comrie paved the way with their comprehensive and insightful Ph.D.’s and subsequent research on the deregulation of Television New Zealand. The study leans on them both for their assessments of New Zealand’s broadcasting history. By précising much of their exhaustive research, I could concentrate on the legwork that took up the bulk of this study – cataloguing the 6551 different items that comprised the 195 news bulletins in the survey. For this, I thank them and in return I hope the longer scope of this content analysis is useful for their continuing work.

I owe even more to Dr Joe Atkinson of Auckland University’s Political Studies Department. Joe sparked my interest in media studies as an undergraduate, and I have stayed with him ever since. *Diet-News* is, in many respects, a product of those years I have spent working with Joe. His guidance has been invaluable, his integrity unshakeable and his friendship irreplaceable.

I’d like to offer my thanks to Professor Andrew Sharp for removing so many of the obstacles that seem to appear whenever one tries to do something unusual. Thank you also Margaret Rotondo for her last-minute proofreading – a hellish task made worse by the need for haste.

Finally, to my wife Carla and to my family I offer my deepest gratitude. Without their forbearance, and their conviction that this study would ever be finished, it would never have been finished. For that, and so much else, I dedicate this work to them.
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<td>American Broadcasting Corporation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Accident Compensation Corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZUS</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand and the United States (Security Cooperation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASB</td>
<td>Auckland Savings Bank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>American Telephone and Telegraph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCNZ</td>
<td>Broadcasting of New Zealand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSkyB</td>
<td>British Sky Broadcasting (Group).</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Columbia Broadcasting System.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPB</td>
<td>Corporation for Public Broadcasting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTV</td>
<td>Children’s Television Workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNAF</td>
<td>Domestic News; Agriculture, Farming, Fisheries (Non-Maori).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNAM</td>
<td>Domestic News; Accommodation, Health, Education; Misc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNCC</td>
<td>Domestic News; Crime; Customs, Security, Jails.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNCCP</td>
<td>Domestic News; Courts; Crime; Property.</td>
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<td>DNCCV</td>
<td>Domestic News; Courts; Crime; Violent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNCM</td>
<td>Domestic News; Crime Misc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNCO</td>
<td>Domestic News; Celebrities and obituaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNCP</td>
<td>Domestic News; Crime; Property.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNCV</td>
<td>Domestic News; Crime; Violence.</td>
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<td>DND</td>
<td>Domestic News; National Defence, Military, NZ Forces Overseas.</td>
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<td>Domestic News; Natural Disasters and Accidents and Weather Extremes.</td>
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<td>DNEA</td>
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<td>DNEE</td>
<td>Domestic News; Economics; Education.</td>
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<td>Code</td>
<td>Domestic News;</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNEH</td>
<td>Economics; Health.</td>
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<td>DNEI</td>
<td>Economics; Interest Rates, Prices.</td>
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<td>DNEIT</td>
<td>Economics; International Trade and Investment</td>
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<td>Economics; Misc.</td>
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<td>Economics; Sharemarket, Corporate Affairs</td>
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<td>DNEV</td>
<td>Environment.</td>
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<td>DNHI</td>
<td>Human-interest.</td>
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<td>DNHT</td>
<td>Health and Technology.</td>
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<td>DNJ</td>
<td>Justice, Police, Law Changes</td>
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<td>DNL</td>
<td>Labour and Employment, ACC, Wages, Conditions.</td>
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<td>DNM</td>
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<td>Policy.</td>
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<td>DNPS</td>
<td>Strategy, Polls, Elections, Personalities.</td>
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<td>DNPT</td>
<td>Taxation, Finance, Inflation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNRA</td>
<td>Road Accidents, Road Toll, Vehicular Crime.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNSC</td>
<td>Social Conflict, Race Relations, Immigration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNTT</td>
<td>Transport, Travel and Tourism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCC</td>
<td>Federal Communication Commission.</td>
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<td>INC</td>
<td>International News; Crime.</td>
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<td>International News; Celebrities.</td>
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<td>Natural Disasters and Weather Extremes.</td>
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<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>INE</td>
<td>International News; Economics, National and International.</td>
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<td>INEV</td>
<td>International News; Travel Tourism and Environment.</td>
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<td>International News; Politics; Domestic.</td>
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<td>INPI</td>
<td>International News; Politics; International.</td>
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<tr>
<td>INSC</td>
<td>International News; Social Conflicts (excluding terrorism).</td>
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<tr>
<td>INW</td>
<td>International News; War, Uprisings, and Violent Political Activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRD</td>
<td>Inland Revenue Department.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITA</td>
<td>Independent Television Authority.</td>
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<td>ITV</td>
<td>Independent Television.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MMP</td>
<td>Mixed Member Proportional.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>National Broadcasting Corporation.</td>
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<td>NET</td>
<td>National Educational Television.</td>
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<td>NZBC</td>
<td>New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation.</td>
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<td>NZBS</td>
<td>New Zealand Broadcasting Service.</td>
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<td>NZOA</td>
<td>New Zealand on Air.</td>
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<td>PBS</td>
<td>Public Broadcasting Service.</td>
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<td>SOE</td>
<td>State Owned Enterprise.</td>
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<td>Television 1.</td>
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<td>Television 2.</td>
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<td>TV3</td>
<td>Television 3.</td>
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<td>TVNZ</td>
<td>Television New Zealand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>UHF</td>
<td>Ultra-High Frequency.</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom.</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations.</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States.</td>
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<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.</td>
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Introduction: Diet News and Thin Democracy.

In 1986, when I was a child of nine or ten, I remember sitting in my grandmother's living room while the news was on the television. I was mystified at this programme for it commanded that all activity stop and all conversation cease as it spoke to my parents, and their parents, in a language that was totally and utterly alien to me. The pictures were of serious grown-ups behaving in serious ways, of maps and documents, occasionally of war and activity, but mostly pictures of an adult world I neither understood nor was interested in.

In 1996, I was watching the news with family members, including a nine-year-old relative. It was the same programme, on the same channel, at the same time. What struck me was that the only person in the room paying any attention to the programme was this nine-year-old girl. My family are very current affairs-orientated, and they pride themselves on being informed. However, during the 'show', they talked, they wandered in and out of the sitting room, they ate and they drank while all the time keeping half and eye and half an ear on the news. I realised then that this was how we watched the news now. I asked this girl what she thought of the show. She said she liked it, that she thought it was fun, that Judy seemed nice and that Mr Saddam Hussein was a very bad man.

I was struck by this answer, for it so contradicted my own childhood experiences of the news and it led to three possible conclusions: I had been a very dim child, my cousin was exceptionally bright, or the news itself had changed dramatically. The following day I tracked down some news footage from 1984. It was exactly as I remembered it. The language was serious, complicated and involved. It demanded the audience listen carefully. The news sets were austere, the reader grave, and the pictures, calm. It was, in short, a programme for adults.

The Television New Zealand early evening news show today is a very different programme. The language is colloquial and simplistic, conversational rather than informational. The news sets are bright, colourful and busy. The news-readers are
friendly, sometimes silly, and always willing to please. The visual texts of the items are always action packed, full of colour and activity. While these changes to the presentational elements are important and demand examination, a quick comparison between 1984 and present day news showed another aspect of the radically changed construction of the programme, and that was in the selection of news content. The news segment in 1984 seemed not just dominated, but almost entirely composed of serious content. *One Network News* in 1984 consisted of serious news presented in a serious manner. *One Network News* in 1999 seems dominated, not by serious news content, but by trivial information conveyed in a frivolous manner.

An observation like this develops many questions. Not just what had changed, but why, and what, indeed if any, have been the consequences for the audience. This thesis is an attempt to map, in terms of the selection and presentation of news content, *what* had changed. It is also an attempt to place the reasons for that change within a theoretical framework. A serious examination of the consequences for the audience of these changes is beyond the scope of this work. Hopefully, this thesis will provide a useful starting point for others who wish to examine this important area of research.

There have been previous attempts at charting changes to news content in New Zealand and elsewhere. Margaret Comrie, Alan Cocker and Joe Atkinson are the most accomplished local researchers. They have developed various methodologies and means to chart changes to news outputs of *One Network News*, and have returned compelling results. However, no one has yet compared the pre- and post-deregulated content in a single, comprehensive study. This thesis is an attempt to look further than just the immediate impact of deregulation, or the lead-up to the deregulatory period. Rather, it examines both pre-deregulation news output, and the post-deregulation product over six years either side, which allows a view of trends to develop and change over a thirteen-year time span.

This is, in comparison to other longitudinal studies of broadcast media in New Zealand, a much longer time frame, and one that allows change to be examined in a

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1 The news segment is the content of the programme that remains after subtracting sport, weather, commercial breaks and chat between the presenters.
more comprehensive manner. The content analysis itself draws on local models and international research for its methodology. The scope of the sample is defined by the election years 1984 and 1996. It is important to bookend the population sample with election years because more attention was paid to political coverage during election years, and commonly, political coverage dropped off steeply during the following two years. As the nightly early evening news-hole is a finite resource, when more attention is paid to political items, then less time is available for other news categories. This triennial change in content had to be recorded to avoid beginning or ending the survey on different parts of this cycle. As bookends to the population, the years 1984 and 1996 presented another useful role. They each sat six years and two elections on either side of 1990, the middle of the three year deregulatory period for broadcasting in New Zealand, bordered by the 1989 Broadcasting Act which set up T.V.N.Z. as an S.O.E. and the 1991 Amendment to that Act that allowed one hundred percent foreign ownership of broadcasting organisations in New Zealand. This neatness is both temporally balanced and analytically useful.

The content analysis consists of two parts – a macro-analysis of the entire bulletin, and a micro-analysis of a single news category: local stories about political policy. Both were designed to test the hypothesis that particular types of changes to content would emerge as a result of deregulation and the opening of the New Zealand broadcast television news market to competition.

Chapter 1 looks at the two ends of a continuum for broadcasting. At one end is the English model for the BBC. Born out of a paternalistic but optimistic view of the social benefits of state-owned and managed broadcasting, the BBC is our exemplar for public broadcasting service. When commercial broadcasting and competition began in the UK, there remained a strong desire to maintain a public service ethic throughout the broadcasting environment – even in the commercial sector. The other end of the continuum is represented by the US broadcasting market. Having begun with strong competition and a commercial orientation, broadcasting in the US remains fiercely competitive and driven by commercial goals. The introduction of a public broadcasting service in 1967 was seen by many as an artificial and unwelcome foray into the market by the state. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting began life compromised by its funding structure. Subsequent attacks on its funding and limited
Government support have seen a steady erosion of even this minimalist form of public broadcasting in the US.

The two ends of the broadcasting continuum are the product of two different versions of democracy and the role of the state (which are themselves ends of a continuum). One sees the state provision of public goods as in the interests of the state and the public. The state may intervene or control part of a market to ensure adequate provision of goods the market may not be able to supply, or may fail to supply equitably to all. The other sees such activities as destabilising and disruptive to the natural ability of the market to supply such goods. These different versions of democracy give rise to differing views of the funding and role of broadcasting.

Deregulation, privatisation, New Right, market liberalisation and neo-liberalism are some of the terms used to describe different manifestations of the view that state intervention in the market is unnecessary and unwelcome. This view claims that in broadcasting, the audience is the best judge of what it wants, and that new technological advances are opening new channels and allowing more channels to exist within the same spectrum, thus creating more choice and so serving audiences better. Margaret Thatcher in the UK, and Ronald Reagan in the US championed neo-liberal economic theory during the 1980’s. In both countries, public service broadcasting came under attack, and both environments for broadcasting were opened up to new competition from developing services such as satellite and cable.

Chapter 2 looks at New Zealand’s broadcasting history, and finds that while New Zealand began broadcasting within a framework strongly influenced by the UK model, self-serving political interventions forced extensive compromises. By the 1980’s, broadcasting in New Zealand had gone through many changes, but had emerged as a hybrid public service and commercial broadcaster. The Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand was funded by both a licence fee and advertising, creating tensions and difficulties with the system. However, the wave of neo-liberal thinking that was beginning to trickle into the UK and the US was about to wash over these small islands.
The changes ushered in by the strongly neo-liberal fourth Labour Government were to see comprehensive change to much of the fabric of New Zealand life. State owned or dominated industries like telecommunications, rail and television were either sold off entirely or reconfigured to embrace commercial values and aims. The 1986 *State Owned Enterprises Act* and the 1988 *Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand Act* created a new model for broadcasting in New Zealand. Television New Zealand was created, a third channel made available for a competing broadcasting organisation, and the Ultra High Frequency part of the spectrum divided up for sale. The hybrid public service/commercial model was replaced with a wholly commercial model, and competitive, commercial broadcasting began.

During the 1980's, television broadcasting in New Zealand moved across the continuum of possibilities for organising broadcasting. It started the decade somewhere left of centre, and ended it firmly on the neo-liberal right.

**Chapter 3** details the content analysis apparatus employed in this study to test the hypothesis that the move from one part of the continuum to the other would create particular changes to news content. The specific hypotheses to be tested are drawn from a view of the particular types of discourse that are likely from different positions on this continuum. A position on the left would be likely to result in a *Democratic Populist* discourse; a position on the right, a *Market Populist* discourse. According to theories developed both domestically and internationally, a move across the continuum would result in an increase in some types of discourse, and a reduction in others. This study looks to test these theoretical explanations.

**Chapter 4** details the findings of the macro-analysis. The dramatic reduction in political reportage and other serious news categories is matched by a rise in non-news elements like weather and presenter banter, and an increase in human-interest and less serious news categories. As such, the findings confirm the hypotheses, and reinforce those of overseas and domestic research.

**Chapter 5** is a micro-analysis of a single category; reportage of domestic political policy. This was a necessarily more subjective project than the macro-analysis, as it featured a discussion based on my own reading of the items, but it is reduced to
empirical features wherever possible. The section first outlines the methodology for these, then examines these elements, and finally, in the light cast by these empirical findings, embarks on a discussion of the discourse elements found within the sample items.

The idea is to further test for changes to the presentational style and content of serious news discourse. Again, the findings display comprehensive change, and confirm our expectations while matching overseas research. Both Chapters 4 and 5 show a very strong correlation between changes to content and the process of deregulation.

However, a disclaimer is necessary. The changes to broadcasting in New Zealand were part of a wider change to economic and to a degree, political orthodoxy throughout the much of the Western world. Overseas research on the impact of increasing competition in broadcasting markets points in similar directions to the results of this study. Given the speed and comprehensiveness of the changes to the broadcasting environment in New Zealand, the Television New Zealand case-study should be seen as an extreme example of more general global trends driven by deregulation and neo-liberal policies on top of technological convergence toward softer or tabloid news tendencies in media outlets. The partially commercial model of the New Zealand broadcasting public/commercial hybrid could be expected to produce a news discourse that was both democratic and populist, while the purely commercial model would be more market populist. Again, it is important to emphasise that these are not in practice dichotomous extremes, but a range of possibilities where elements that can be measured and compared are located.

This study is called Diet News. The title was chosen as a comment on the lightening of One Network News after deregulation – of fibre replaced with saccharine. It is also, however, a nod to Dr Joe Atkinson. The study confirms and expands on the research Atkinson did for his 1992 University of Auckland Winter Lecture on "The State, The Media and Thin Democracy." and as such, demonstrates just how light our news has become, and by implication, how thin our democracy grows. One Network News may

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be a meal sufficient for the information needs of a nine year old, but we must question whether it is enough for the rest of us.
Chapter I: Defining Broadcasting Models.

1: Introduction.

The object of this thesis is to examine the effects on broadcast news content in New Zealand as the nation’s largest broadcaster moves from a hybrid public service/commercial broadcasting model, to one that is entirely commercial. To answer this question, the study first looks at two broadcasting models; the British and the American, and examines how different historical and philosophical positions created, in the first case, a predominantly public service model of broadcasting, and in the second, one that was predominantly commercial. The study then examines which is better designed to serve the public interest.

The second stage in the analysis is an examination of New Zealand broadcasting history, looking at how our own historical social and political circumstances created a hybrid model of broadcasting, combining elements of both the public service and commercial broadcasting models. The study then looks at the significant changes in the hybrid model during the 1980’s and 1990’s, and the move to a fully commercial broadcasting system after 1991. The third stage in this study is an examination of the changes to news content over this period in New Zealand in order to test the hypothesis that different institutional systems of broadcasting produce different types of media output.

The present chapter represents the first stage. It looks first to the UK, its history and its current state of public service and commercial broadcasting. The study then turns to the US and its historical and current experience of public service and commercial broadcasting. These two countries were chosen because they are representative of the two extremes of how nations have organised broadcasting. They are also both English-speaking, democratic, capitalist, modern and technologically advanced, yet they have very different broadcasting systems. The chapter then moves to examine the different theoretical and philosophical foundations of the two systems, and their implications for the audience. The most pressing challenges to public service
broadcasting are canvassed, and finally, the chapter presents a summary of the two prevailing views of how broadcasting systems should be organised.

2: Broadcasting in the United Kingdom.

2.1: Public Service Broadcasting.

During the development of broadcasting in Europe and more particularly in Britain (whose broadcasting service has served as a model throughout the Commonwealth, including New Zealand), the spectrum for radio and later television was treated as a national asset. The spectrum was regarded as a finite resource, which should be managed by the state in the interests of its public. In Britain during the First World War the state had utilised the propaganda capabilities of the printed press to further its war aims and boost domestic morale. Some politicians feared the new technologies of radio would be an even more powerful tool of government persuasion. They coupled this with an optimistic view of mass society and universal enfranchisement as a progressive force in society, and a faith in British culture as an uplifting and civilising force as evidenced, in their view, by the colonies. The result was a fear of state control of radio, and a belief, reflecting the writings of social theorists like Matthew Arnold and Herbert Spencer, in the educative benefits of radio.

The British developed a system independent from the state and operating in the service of these goals. The rise of Fascism in Europe through the late 1920's and 30's, with their extensive use of radio and film in the service of state-propaganda and the ensuing disaster of World War Two, became a justification for furthering the independence of public service broadcasting from the state in the UK. Post-war, the continuing threat from the USSR and Eastern Bloc and their domestic totalitarian control of the press provided a continual reminder of the dangers of state control of the media.

The first General manager of the BBC, John Reith (later Lord Reith), was convinced of the beneficial properties of radio if independent from state control. He argued that
the medium should operate as a public service with high standards, and that if its educative value was to be fully utilised, it must exhibit a strong sense of social responsibility. Reith believed radio could be a force for social cohesion during a time of wide social change in Britain. As its responsibility lay with the civic well-being of the audience, moreover, the audience should fund it. His arguments strongly influenced the 1923 Committee of Inquiry into Broadcasting and, in 1927 the BBC became a corporation, with a Royal Charter, funded by a national receiving licence fee.

The high moral standards and reflective cultural role that Reith had set for the BBC served the nation well through the war years, offering a slice of distinctly British culture to overseas troops, and confirming to many on the domestic front the civility and worth of British life. The educative and unashamedly paternalistic role devised by Reith placed the emphasis on determining the quality of programming in terms of informing, educating and entertaining the audience. The worth of news and current affairs programming was determined by its impartiality and the pursuit of editorial neutrality, rather than its popularity.

Today, news and current affairs programming occupies an important position within the BBC, accounting for 50% of its two-channel, prime-time schedule in 1995/6. The financial commitment to news and current affairs is substantial, with an emphasis placed on professionalism and integrity. While these words are used today, often it seems, as a euphemism for their semantic opposites, at the BBC they remain true to the dictionary meanings as described in the Royal Charter. Two documents, the Charter and the Licence and Agreement, govern the BBC's operation and structure. The Royal Charter is periodically renewed by parliament, and this review has usually been both comprehensive and subject to public scrutiny. The Charter works to ensure transparency for the BBC, and allows Government and public to evaluate and assess news and current affairs treatment of controversial topics.


Debrett, Public Service Broadcasting - Constraints and Possibilities, pg. 22.
The Licence and Agreement restrain the BBC from expressing editorial opinion on current affairs; allow the minister responsible for broadcasting to require the organisation to broadcast official announcements, and award the minister a veto power over programmes he considered a threat to the national interest. This last power has been the source of considerable public debate (largely as a function of the review process involved in the Charter).

During the deregulatory drives of the Thatcher Government through the 1980’s, the relationship between the BBC and the Government was strained. BBC reportage of the Falklands War was described by Sally Oppenheimer, a Conservative MP as “... an odious, subversive travesty in which Michael Cockrell and other BBC reporters dishonoured the right to freedom of speech in this country.” In 1985, the Board of Governors bowed to government pressure and forced the withdrawal of a programme featuring two Northern Ireland political extremists. The incident provoked a strike by BBC journalists and brought government interference into public view. Such polarisation between the BBC and government has been rare in its history, however, reflecting the routine achievement of balance in reportage. In 1990, the Broadcasting Act removed a degree of self-regulation from British broadcasters in response to the excesses of the market. The Broadcasting Standards Authority was established to reinforce standards of good taste and decency, and “reflects the sophistry of free market rationale which represses in the interests of market freedom.”

The early paternalism of Reith’s vision for the BBC has been consistently challenged within the BBC by more open, democratic and popular initiatives. Reith’s view of citizenship and national culture was essentially a regressive one. He regarded ‘British-ness’ as something that pre-empted broadcasting; to be preserved and reflected by the BBC as something unchanging. Others saw the rights of citizens and national culture as permanently under construction, and public service broadcasting as reflecting this ongoing process; the debates and conclusions that drive the ongoing formulation of national culture. This enlarged definition of citizenship saw

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2 Debrett, Public Service Broadcasting – Constraints and Possibilities, pg. 30.
broadcasting as the core public space in which new social arrangements could be examined and developed. As Graham Murdock argued, "People need access to the information and knowledge that enables them to understand their situation, to formulate strategies for action, and to evaluate competing policy proposals."

While paternalism often won out during the early years of British broadcasting, the introduction of television, with its ability to show in pictures the differences and similarities, struggles and triumphs of cultural life, allowed this enlarged view of public service broadcasting to dominate. The elitist and paternalist view of high and low culture, of citizenry as a static concept, associated with deference to consecrated authority, were challenged by struggles over representation and explorations of class, race, gender and generation.⁷

Traditional public service broadcasting in Britain was fiercely protective of its independence from the state as necessary to objectively evaluate and present competing policy proposals. Licence fee funded public service broadcasting also gained an independence from its audience, who paid for television regardless of their enjoyment of the programming. While this funding structure creates problems of representation and weakens the relationship between audience desires and the programmes they receive, it does allow a necessary distance from the audience whereby programme makers can objectively evaluate arguments and tensions in society. Licence fee funded public service broadcasting can reflect schisms and tensions in society without fear of losing revenue if it raises unpopular views and loses audience share.

2.2: Commercial Broadcasting in the UK.

Commercial television began in the UK in 1955. Independent Television (ITV) companies were granted regional monopolies where they could offer localised audiences commercially sponsored alternatives to the BBC. They were allowed advertising between programmes, and were expected to produce their own programming. It is worth noting however that it was as a result of the strength and success of the 'British way' of public service broadcasting that ITV displayed strongly Reithian values from the outset. The Independent Television Authority (ITA) supervised the independent companies rather as the BBC Board of Governors supervised the BBC, requiring the independent contractors to inform, educate and entertain in that order. The ITA was also responsible for ensuring that advertising guidelines were met, including strict requirements for a separation of advertising and programme content. Unlike the US, where advertisers sponsored entire programmes and sometimes even participated in their development, commercial television in the UK was required to keep programming, and news and editorial content entirely separate from advertising copy. This separation has traditionally been seen as one of the great virtues of British commercial television.

Commercial television in the UK was not revolutionary; therefore, but an extension of public service goals in broadcasting. The ITA was modelled on the BBC, and as such, the "traditions of public service were inherited by the new authority." The BBC however, had not shown a great amount of interest in the visual possibilities offered by television, tending to treat it as an extension of radio. For example, early news programmes on the BBC were a repeat of radio broadcasts, read over a still photograph of Big Ben.

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Crisell, An Introductory History of British Broadcasting, pg. 85.

The 1954 Television Act introducing commercial television was motivated, therefore, by a desire to introduce competition into television in order to promote and propel the industry forward. It was, however, not intended to be the sort of unfettered competition experienced in the US. ITV was permitted to offer mass popular pleasures but was set up as a public corporation funded by advertising. The BBC, a public corporation funded by the Licence Fee, was free from the demands of populism, and so better able to cater to minority pleasures. The organisations were intended to be complimentary, each dependant on public support, but each in its own way. ITV needed large audiences to attract advertising revenue; the BBC needed audiences to ensure public support for the licence fee. ITV was intended to offer an alternative to the elitism of BBC programming policies, while the BBC would offset the populism of ITV.

The ITA demanded a reasonably high level of non-fiction programming on ITV channels. Because ITV was a networked organisation, their news department could, and did, focus on news at the expense of all else. The BBC, on the other hand, used its news department as a catchall for everything that did not fit into traditional programme categories such as drama, sport and light entertainment and, within news, "many of the concepts of radio were taken over and imposed on television." The failure of the BBC to exploit possibilities in the new medium has been attributed to a New Zealander, Tau Hole, who was head of news throughout most of the 1940’s and 1950’s. He regarded broadcast news as similar to print, and deplored the notion that the inflections of a television news-reader’s voice should be allowed to taint the objectivity of the reportage.

It was not until three weeks before the launch of ITV that a news-reader appeared at all on the BBC television reports. ITV news suffered no such purism in its approach to news production. It employed news-readers from the start who were authoritative and journalistic, allowing their own personalities and distinctive styles to develop.

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15 Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*. pg. 92
They developed a style of persistent questioning of public figures, as opposed to the often-deferential style of BBC reporters. The organisation used lighter and newer cameras than the BBC, allowing them greater mobility and increasing the range of things they could shoot, and also used an unprecedented quantity of film during its bulletins. This incorporated vox-pops from people in the street in discussions of issues of the day, and offered human-interest stories as lighter fare as against the seriousness of BBC bulletins. In 1958 Stuart Hood replaced Tau Hole and the BBC news changed its approach. Following ITV, it developed a series of personalities as news-readers, and incorporated more film into its bulletins.

Despite a shaky start, by 1959 the ITV companies had become very profitable: 'A licence to print money' in the indiscreet words of Roy Thomson, the largest shareholder in Scottish Television. During the initial years of broadcasting, some of the smaller regional stations had not foreseen the growing costs of competition with the BBC, and ran into financial difficulties. The larger and better-funded stations brought the smaller, and became even larger. The 1960's saw a very confident BBC and ITV, with growing audiences for both, but the BBC was losing audience share to the ITV companies. The growing popularity of commercial television with its populist fare was of concern to some legislators as audiences moved in large numbers to the commercial stations, and away from the BBC. The BBC strove to become more competitive under the directorship of Sir Hugh Greene, lifting its audience share to 50:50 with ITV.

During the competition for a third channel, decided by the Pilkington Committee in 1962, the BBC emphasised its public service role and raised concerns about the social and moral effects of broadcasting. In their bid for the third channel, the ITV companies took the opposite view, claiming that television had little or no effect on society, and populist broadcasting was democratic. Pilkington sided with the BBC, rejecting the ITV view that populism was the only measure of quality. He said:

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25 Crisell, An Introductory History of British Broadcasting, pg. 94
To give the audience what it wants is a misleading phrase... it has the appearance of an appeal to a democratic principle, but the appearance is deceptive. It is in fact patronising and arrogant, in that it claims to know what the public is but defines it as no more than the mass audience, and it claims to know what it wants, but limits its choice to the average of experience.

The BBC won the third channel, which became BBC 2.

When the franchises for ITV regional monopolies were reallocated in 1967, prospective franchise holders flooded the ITA with applications; such were the expected returns on investment. However, rather than a re-assessment of the commercial system, the government allowed existing licence holders to buy up others. The result was an increase in the oligopolistic tendencies of commercial broadcasting. The economics of broadcasting, appreciated by Reith as far back as the 1920’s, "ran as a reversal of the natural law that the more one takes, the less there is for others."

This is because one member of the audience watching a programme does not block the programme for another person. Two or two million people can enjoy a television programme simultaneously, all of whom are either paying the same amount for it directly (through a licence fee) or indirectly (through advertising). For commercial television, the high costs of programme production, and the low returns from programme distribution means that a programme, if it is to create a profit for the production company, needs to be seen by as many people as possible. The low cost of distribution to large audiences means a large company owning production and distribution facilities can produce expensive (or cheap) programming, and distribute it widely, thereby garnering large returns. A smaller company is less capable of producing expensive programming, but more importantly, less capable of wide distribution, and therefore produces less return on the investment made in the programme. Market forces in this instance lead to larger companies and the

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* Lord Reith, 1923, Quoted in Curran and Seaton, Power Without Responsibility, pg. 135.
elimination of smaller competitors; creating an oligopoly. The high cost of programme production and the low cost of distribution allow a large company to out-compete a smaller company without reverting to overt monopolistic practices (and without producing better programmes). Given such oligopolistic tendencies, by 1990 there were very few owners of British commercial television companies:

...the small number of corporate owners were not competitive in a sense that they could be conceivably expected to produce an improved product, but their financial rivalry undoubtedly imposed pressure to produce a cheaper one. That meant an almost inevitable lowering of standards.

With two channels, the BBC became more adventurous, while the profitability of the ITV companies also gave ITV confidence. But the large audience television garnered through the 1960’s and 1970’s created its own problems. Both organisations sought to maximise their audiences, but public service criteria demanded they also cater to minority audiences. The solution to this problem was Channel Four, a broadcasting channel available nationwide and designed to cater for minority interests. The channel originally ‘published’ material made by independent production houses (i.e. those independent of both the BBC and ITV). The independents sold the material to Channel Four, and collected the advertising revenue generated. If Channel Four’s revenue fell below 14% of total advertising income of terrestrial television, the ITV companies were obliged to contribute 2% of that amount. If it acquired more than 14%, any surplus was to be shared between itself and the ITV companies. As a result of the 1990 Broadcasting Act however, the character of the channel changed. It was then required to sell its own advertising, and as such, it became distinctly more populist, buying several highly successful American series such as Friends and ER.

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20 Curran and Seaton, Power Without Responsibility, pg. 218.
21 Curran and Seaton, Power Without Responsibility, pg. 229.
22 Crisell, An Introductory History of British Broadcasting, pg. 238.
To offset this problem, both the BBC and ITV companies were obliged to commission 25% of their programmes from independent companies. The need of all three organisations for independent production houses led to the development of some culturally important and commercially successful companies – and innovative programming. Channel Four represents the last great attempt at defining a public service role for broadcasting in the UK. New issues arising during the nineties represented a serious challenge to that role.

2.3: Into the 1990’s.

The 1990 Broadcasting Act passed by the Thatcher Government, opened the British market to full-scale competition. New channels and delivery services proliferated in its wake, reducing the income of the existing ITV companies as audience share fell, and invalidating the broadcasting licence fee as BBC audiences also fell. The BBC was forced to develop commercial enterprises and engage in commercial activities, including the sale, via subscription, of its televised World Service News. It was also forced to become more competitive in its programme production and scheduling, meeting commercial television head on in competition for viewers. By straddling the fence between public service broadcasting and commercial activity, and by recruiting employees and especially management well versed in commercial culture, its commitment to a public service ethos came under threat.

For the ITV contractors, too, life was getting tougher. In 1992, the franchise bidding process attracted criticism for the mercantilism that was surrounding the ‘auction’ process mandated by the 1990 Act. It was assumed by many that the highest bid was to be the only prerequisite for owning a broadcasting franchise. The government intervened however, and developed a somewhat ambiguously worded requirement for

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23 Curran and Seaton, Power Without Responsibility, pg. 231.
24 Debrett, Public Service Broadcasting – Constraints and Possibilities.
‘quality’ in the programming of the new franchise holders.26 This might have been seen as a victory for the BBC and the principles of public service broadcasting,27 but while initially inflected in that direction, it was quickly serviceable as a term to describe the improvement of the product, which, it was argued, would follow the introduction of a new and more competitive television system.28

Much like their American counterparts, legislators re-designing the British commercial system, though recognising problems associated with competition, imagined that opening the market further would reduce these problems. In fact, ITV companies lost audience share to satellite and cable systems, and more recently, to the newly launched Channel Five, a wholly commercial channel with minimal requirements to meet public service objectives. As a consequence of falling revenues, consolidation took place, and in the late 1990’s it appeared three companies, United News and Media, Carlton, and Granada, would soon control the entire ITV franchise.29

Satellite and cable broadcasting enjoyed a great degree of legislative freedom in the UK during the 1990’s. Rupert Murdoch’s BSkyB, although it got off to a shaky start with significant losses, posted a 62.2 million pound profit in 1993.30 Subscription television however, while offering more channels, does not automatically offer more choice. To entice subscribers, it must offer more than its ‘free’ counterparts. Exclusive rights to sporting events are seen as a major means of driving subscription rates. A live sporting event is a genuine television premiere, and unlike most other television fare, it can only be seen live at one time. Sports value to subscription television is the opposite of Reith’s view of the economics of television, ‘the more one takes, then the less there is for others’ because its value is predicted upon the exclusion of non-subscription holders.

29 Crisell, An Introductory History of British Broadcasting, pg. 239.
In 1996, the British Government used the 1990 Broadcasting Act to prevent the sale of exclusive rights to eight major national sporting events, although in the same year, BSkyB won the rights to screen live transmissions of premiership soccer until 2001. The BBC could only afford rights to the recorded highlights.\textsuperscript{31} Cable television in the UK has also expanded enormously in the 1990’s. Like satellite broadcasting, excluding non-subscription holders increases the value of the product. As only programming such as sports and news retain much value from being shown live however, and bidding for these types of fare drives the price upwards, most of what is on offer from cable systems are simply re-runs of existing programme stock. The high cost of programme production, and low market share of cable companies in relation to free to air services, means that what programming cable companies do produce is generally pretty cheap, as is programming brought from independent production companies.\textsuperscript{32}

Commercial broadcasting in the UK was born out of public service broadcasting traditions, and until recently, maintained that tradition. By the time commercial television emerged, public service television had already confronted many of the social and political problems associated with television. The BBC had canvassed election coverage, party access to television and the practical problems of neutrality and impartiality, and had developed models to deal with these issues.\textsuperscript{33} The ITA simply adopted them, and enforced the ITV companies’ compliance with these standards. The ITV companies, within these public service frameworks, took television news much further than the BBC, adopting new technologies and exploring the possibilities of televisual presentation. The BBC, in its turn, adapted to the new competitive environment, improving the services it offered within its public service remit.

The neo-liberal approach to broadcasting markets of the Thatcher years and later has seen challenges to the BBC, and a growth in the number of delivery systems available to the public (at the public’s expense), but has not seen a great increase in the levels of


programme choice. The increasing monopolies of the ITV companies, and the dominance of a few players in the satellite and cable markets have thus come about, ironically, during a period characterised by rhetoric of opening the market to competition.

2.4: Summary of British Broadcasting.

Broadcasting in the UK was born out of a view that the airwaves were a national resource, and should therefore be managed in the national interest. Recognising broadcasting a powerful instrument in shaping the national interest as much as reflecting it, early regulators developed a system that would offer a view of the public interest as envisaged by a heavily paternalistic BBC. This early paternalism was challenged by competition with commercial operations which were more responsive to audience demands, and by an audience itself that became more heterogeneous and self-conscious about the variety of identities that made up British life. The commercial system, regulated in the public interest but with the extra freedom for allowing commercial success, allowed the ITV companies to offer populist programming whose ratings successes or failures reflected what the public was interested in. Minority interests were served by a hybrid public service broadcasting/commercial Channel Four.

The result, until the 1990's, was a series of conflicting pressures between the state, the public, the audience, commercial imperatives and broadcasters. The state and the public interacted through the normal political channels; commerce and the public interacted through ratings, commerce and the state via fiscal policies, while the audience and the broadcasters responded through audience research, complaints and programme scheduling. These conflicting pressures made British broadcasting highly responsive to changes in the public mood and political activity.² It also made the BBC, in the eyes of much of the British audience, a much beloved institution.

The changes to British broadcasting after the 1990 Broadcasting Act allowed new technologies to provide more choice for the audience, but have added another

² Garnham, Structures of Television, pg. 23.
dimension to the creative tensions in British television. While many more channels are offered, the economics of subscription broadcasting drive overall production and programme buying standards down. The loss of audience from free to air broadcasting, drawn away by the purchase of exclusive rights to a few much-loved sporting events, means less revenue for the ITV companies via advertising, and so less money for programme production. Paying directly for subscription television also seems likely to increase resentment for paying the licence fee as people pay twice for television, creating further pressure on the BBC and its public service orientation.

The proliferation of channels has not (so far) meant a proliferation of programme production. Instead, more channels has meant a reduction as buyers look offshore (usually the US) for cheaper alternatives to British production. The BBC, however, remains a strong force in the UK. Recent moves to have the BBC produce more of its own funding are challenging elements of its public service ethos, but public service broadcasting is the corner-stone of British broadcasting culture.

3: Broadcasting in the United States.

3.1 Commercial Broadcasting.

Contrasting broadcasting in the United States and Britain provides an interesting illustration of two different versions of democratic theory and freedoms, and how they relate to media theory. The Constitution of the United States was written during the early Liberal period, and consequently is dominated by concerns with freedoms for the individual and limiting state (or monarchical) coercion. Later European Liberals,

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33 The quota on British made programming to be shown on British television was abolished by the 1990 Act, and there now exists no restrictions on showing foreign production in commercial or subscription television.

notably De Tocqueville and J.S. Mill, saw in the United States an emergent ‘Tyranny of the Majority’. Particularly for Mill, this provoked a revision of early liberal theory and culminated in the later writings of Green and Hobhouse and the constructive and optimistic view of mass society out of which British public service broadcasting arose.

Broadcasting in the United States began amid a belief in the ability of the free market to manage the social implications of radio. By 1922, there were 670 licensed radio stations across the United States, and innumerable amateur operators. Limits on the frequency spectrum and fierce competition within major cities created squabbles and even sabotage as the stations tried to drown each other’s frequencies out (see Section 7 of this chapter). The first state sponsored radio conference determined the need for a regulatory body to manage the spectrum and frequency power. The conference also concluded that advertising should not appear on radio but, in the absence of regulation, advertising continued and increased. By 1926, advertising was firmly established as a means of financing radio and creating profit for broadcasters, despite the resistance to it from sections of the audience and industry. Advertising in United States radio developed, “not by informed discussion by policy makers or educators, but rather through default by business leaders interested in making profits.”

The Radio Act of 1927 finally established broadcasting as a regulated system, but regulated only in terms of frequency allocation and public taste. Advertising was recognised as a legitimate income, and commercial broadcasting in the United States took off. In 1934, the Communications Act set up the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as an independent Government regulatory agency with five commissioners, who were political appointees, but with not more than three from a single political party. Although broadcasting was initially deemed a public trust on

the basis of its use of a public resource (the radio spectrum), and public interest clauses were included as obligations for radio licences, the FCC awarded the best and most powerful frequencies to the largest commercial interests.\( ^9 \)

The largest radio corporations began television broadcasting funded by advertising and amid American post-war affluence, the number of television sets proliferated quickly. The ability of advertising funded television to promote goods and services and, in a wider sense, consumer society itself, was soon apparent and, with advertising paying for the new, mass, populist and ‘free’ service, commercial control was legitimated and applauded. The FCC adapted its mandate to manage television in a largely non-interventionist manner, and commercial broadcasting organisations in the United States enjoyed tremendous profits.\(^1\) The high fixed costs of programming kept the number of national network operations low, however, with the big three, NBC, CBS, ABC, dominant until the late eighties.

### 3.2: How free is the American free-market for broadcasting?

The United States broadcasting market is oligopolistic. Market dominance of the big three U.S. networks\(^8\) is nearly total, as they own or are affiliated with over 90% of local stations.\(^9\) Their programming production is virtually the only programming shown in prime-time on all American television stations. The free-market is predicated on choice – the consumer chooses from a range of products, which encourages competitive improvement among producers. In broadcasting, like any other market activity, this competition is in the best interests of the public. However,

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\(^9\) Debrett, Public Service Broadcasting – Constraints and Possibilities, pg 88.

\(^1\) Streeter, ‘Policy Discourse and Broadcast Practice’, pg 253.

\(^8\) Fox Network began broadcasting nationally in the mid-1990's. Its inclusion in the American market has only altered the balance among network corporations; it has not in any way mediated the effects of this monopolist system. Fox produces programming, and like the ‘big three’ throughout the history of network broadcasting, it both pressures its regional affiliates to run its programming and given the economies of production and transmission, this is most often in the profit-interests of the regional stations anyway.

\(^2\) Streeter, ‘Policy Discourse and Broadcast Practice’, pg 254.
if the range of choices is limited, or the products very similar, the system works more in the interests of the producers. The FCC reported in 1978:

_The three network corporations not only in large measure determine what most American people may see and hear during the hours when most Americans view television, but also would appear to have unnecessarily and unduly foreclosed access to other sources of programmes._

The current reality of the American broadcast system is an effective monopoly by four major corporations. The role of the FCC has been non-interventionist. The requirement in the 1934 Act for broadcasters to work in the public interest was deliberately vague. Exactly what was the ‘public interest’ was never defined in the Act, and subsequent court actions to determine an exact definition have usually awarded the FCC wide latitude. _The Fairness Doctrine_ (1959, but since dropped) and the _Equal Time Provision_ (1934) both required broadcasters to allow a right of reply to political figures and others, and to ‘afford reasonable opportunity for the discussion of conflicting views on issues of public importance.’ Apart from the administration of licences, these are, in large part, the entire FCC regulatory contribution to the public interest in American broadcasting. The vagueness of early regulators points to more than the confusion of the original policy makers. The FCC’s continued refusal to question the fundamentally commercial, profit driven activity of broadcasting in the United States has served to uphold the interests of the networks.

To repeat, the high cost of programme production and the very low cost of distribution allow a large company to out-compete a smaller company without reverting to overt monopolistic practices and without producing better programmes.

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6 Cantor and Cantor, ‘United States, A System of Minimal Regulation’, pg. 183

7 Streeter, ‘Policy Discourse and Broadcast Practice’, pg. 255.
The impersonal market forces of competition led, in this instance, to fewer and larger companies and the elimination of smaller competitors, more concentration and less competition. Attempts at regulation by the FCC, often accompanied by howls of protest from the larger corporations, failed to address these fundamental problems with the system. The loud and very public process however, promotes a misimpression that the problems have been fixed while in reality, very little changes. The FCC has never examined the underlying assumption that commercial competition in broadcasting is the same as competition in other industries.

Competition in broadcasting is more complex than in other products, and does not always give the audience what they want. Commercial broadcasters in competition for audience tend toward the 'least objectionable programme', or 'second choice viewing'. The theory runs that larger audiences will be achieved with the least objectionable programme, and so these sorts of formulaic programmes are chosen over a more diverse range of products. As all four American networks are competing for the kind of audiences desired by those who advertise consumer products, they tend toward the same sort of programming, limiting diversity not just within one network's programming, but also across the spectrum of network schedules. As they encourage their affiliated or owned regional stations to accept their programming, homogeneity rather than diversity is the norm. The consumer 'chooses' from a narrow range of very similar products. The argument that more competition would increase diversity is false, as any new entrant into the market has to behave in a similar manner in order to garner a large enough audience to offset its programming production costs. As Streeter says:

*By focussing on questions of a mythical competition, the FCC has successfully avoided any treatment of the basic commercial structure. The source of the problems... the centralised profit making structure of the broadcasting system (was) left untouched.*

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Streeter, 'Policy Discourse and Broadcast Practice', pg. 248.
Streeter, 'Policy Discourse and Broadcast Practice', pg. 247
Streeter, 'Policy Discourse and Broadcast Practice', pg. 255
The Reagan era response to complaints about content quality and the lack of competition was not a re-examination of the fundamental failure of competition, but rather a removal of any perceived hindrance remaining to 'impersonal market-place forces'. Rather than look at the possibility of non-commercial television as an alternative to the networks' dominance, Reagan's policy makers attempted to de-fund the struggling Public Broadcasting Service, forcing it to rely on commercial activities for survival, and denying a non-commercial option. Blithely accepting the network's position that more regulation would stifle competition, Reagan removed most of the public interest-orientated regulation from the FCC's books. The twin assumption that the public interest in broadcasting is served by economic competition, and that that competition actually existed, both remained and remained unexamined.\(^{31}\)

The development of cable and other delivery systems capable of serving small audiences simply intensifies competition and its pressures on programme content. Small audiences are too small to offset programming production costs unless those costs are very low, and so cable companies are seldom involved in producing programmes, and most rely on syndicated re-runs of older programmes (bought off the networks' libraries), and cheap programming such as shopping channels, sport, movies, and pornography. Again, audience needs, in terms of a range of products, are not met. Furthermore, the subscriber function of cable limits access to those who can afford it, creating a two-tier audience economy that disadvantages special interest viewers already poorly served by the larger economy. Finally, with the relaxation of FCC cross-ownership regulations, the networks themselves are now buying into cable companies to extend their grip on audiences.

The recent development of new delivery systems and relaxation on ownership limitations and other 'non-competitive' regulations has encouraged conglomeration. Massive broadcasting, movie and telecommunications corporations have been acquiring one another and are enveloping smaller operations at an increasing rate in the hope of exploiting the opportunities offered by the technological revolution. Rather than increasing competition, these mergers increase conglomeration among the new delivery technologies, with exactly the same results as existing broadcasting

\(^{31}\) Streeter, 'Policy Discourse and Broadcast Practice', pg. 257
monopolies. For example, Time Warner, a gigantic publishing and movie company with an extremely large cable infrastructure, merged with Cable News Network, the first and largest cable news service. The combined corporation now has control of 40% of American cable television.52

The rhetoric of competition in America is as big as the country itself. The reality in television broadcasting is a tight oligopoly of four organisations whose power and reach is growing. The new technologies, claimed by many as a panacea to this dilemma, have become part of the problem rather than the solution.

3.3: The Public Broadcasting Service.

It was not until 1967 that moves to develop a public broadcasting service in the United States were undertaken. The civil rights movement, opposition to the Vietnam War, feminism, environmentalism and other social cleavages had, through the 1960’s, created a systematic challenge to the vision of a homogenous American society presented by commercial television and other forms of popular culture of the 1950's. The Carnegie Commission recommended the establishment of a Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) with “what looked very much like public service goals.”53 Conceived of the BBC, the CPB was to have an educative function, reflect the diversity of American society and provide a forum for public debate and controversy. In particular, it was to provide for audiences neglected by commercial broadcasting, such as minorities, the poor and the elderly.54 The CPB was never intended to compete with commercial operators. Instead, it was to be funded by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and expected to operate as a non-profit organisation, ‘created to serve the public interest, convenience and necessity.’55 The Board comprised fifteen members, all nominated by the President, with no more than

52 Comrie, The Commercial Imperative in Broadcasting News’, pg. 46.
53 Debrett, Public Service Broadcasting – Constraints and Possibilities', pg. 88.
eight from a single political party. This last requirement was to limit the independence of the CPB by ensuring, at the board level at least, its compliance with the wishes of the government of the day. Reliance on government funding also caused problems, since the allocation of funds has diminished steadily since the CPB’s inception.

A reliance on state funding and politically appointed board members has steadily eroded the independence of the CPB. Soon after its foundation, President Nixon’s suspicion of a board full of ‘eastern intellectual snobbery’ bred special condemnation. After a series of debates critical of Nixon in 1971-72, his Head of Telecommunications Policies, Dr Clay T. Whitehead, questioned the role of public affairs programming on public television:

There is a real question as to whether public television, particularly the national federally-funded part of it, should be carrying public affairs and news commentary, and that kind of thing. For several reasons, one is the fact that the commercial networks, by and large, do, I think, quite a good job in that area.

Within a few short years of its inception, therefore, the Public Broadcasting Service in the United States was operating within a very narrow view of public service. Nixon replaced disheartened board members with his own political appointees. Whitehead said, in a memo, “we need eight loyalists to control the present CPB board and to fire the current staff who make the grants.” In early 1972, the CPB board voted against funding news, news analysis and political commentary. One board member proposed a ban on all controversial programming, but this was defeated. The budget for the CPB was halved to thirty million, with little left over for programme production.

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69 Engelman, Public Radio and Television in America, pg. 169.
During the Watergate era pressure on the CPB diminished as the attentions of the White House were focused on the trial. Since the CPB was the only station to carry live coverage of the trial, this went some way to restoring public affairs programming on public television, and brought new audiences to the PBS. However, dependency on the Government for funding and the board’s willingness to bow to political pressure, had discredited the organisation. The second Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Broadcasting in 1979 found, that “many stations had come to lose respect for the CPB leadership, and to regard the corporation as a government agency.”

During the Ford and Carter administrations, the CPB was forced to beg for funding from the private sector, limiting its ability to criticise corporate America, which had become its largest funding source. A drive for viewer membership (not as pay-per-view, but private sponsorship) reduced the organisation’s ability to critically and impartially evaluate issues within its audience. Rather than the independence from both audience and state envisioned by the BBC, public service broadcasting was now wholly dependant on the state, the audience and corporate largesse, severally limiting its goals of editorial independence and content diversity. In 1980, Death of a Princess, the dramatisation of a true story about a Saudi Arabian princess executed over a love affair with a commoner, became the subject of controversy after the Saudi Government applied pressure to the United States during a time when the Carter Administration was seeking improved ties with oil producing countries. Mobil Oil, a major underwriter of public service broadcasting, was also informed. Both Mobil Oil and the President pressured the CPB not to show the programme. Eventually, it was broadcast, but with provision for rebuttal.

It was however, during the Reagan administration, that public service broadcasting in the United States reached its nadir. If Nixon’s opposition to public service broadcasting was political, Reagan’s was ideological. His wholesale attack on the

50 Engelman, Public Radio and Television in America, pg. 171.
public sphere in the name of privatisation and limited government reflected his attachment to neo-liberal simplicities and to the cause of corporate elites against state intervention.

Reagan reduced funding to the CPB and forced it to rely on commercial activities such as corporate sponsorship. Corporations took this as an opportunity to sponsor shows which furthered their own aims, like, *Free to Choose*, featuring the avid free-marketeer Milton Friedman, who extolled the virtues of free market economics as the saviour of the American way of life, or *The McLaughlin Group* fronted by an arch-conservative, John McLaughlin. However, attempts by Labour Unions to sponsor shows such as *Made in America*, a history of labour relations in the United States, were rebuffed by the board.62 Meanwhile, the FCC, chaired by Mark Fowler, dismantled the regulatory structure built up over several decades, and effectively removed requirements for social responsibility in commercial broadcasting. Television was to be treated like any other business, as ‘a toaster with pictures’ to use Fowler’s famous phrase. While Reagan relaxed restrictions on commercial television content, he increased regulatory monitoring of public television, enforcing the right of rebuttal against left wing views, but not extending an equivalent right of reply to conservative bias.63

Between 1973 and 1990, federal funding of the PBS fell from 70% to 47% of total income. Conversely, corporate sponsorship increased from 4% to 17%, and private subscriber income rose to 22%. While not appearing on the surface as a particularly alarming figure, the 17% of corporate income went almost exclusively into specific programme sponsorship, without which, those particular programmes would not have been made. Subscriber income was directed towards the upkeep of broadcasting infrastructure. The predominantly wealthy private patrons tended to demand programming that reflected elite cultural interests. These pressures combined to produce a service that was virtually incapable of acting in the wider public interest in the manner of the BBC. The PBS found it very difficult to serve non-elite minority

interests, to assess public, government and corporate activity, or to provide diversity in programming and opinion. As Henwood puts it:

*The public broadcasting service, which was launched to offer a voice to the voiceless, offers no regular programming from a consumer rights or labour standpoint. It does, however, offer several regular platforms for business, a constituency not normally thought of as voiceless.*

In the 1990’s, cable and subscription services have allowed commercial interests to develop niche markets, usually avoided by ‘broad’-casting, which has brought them into direct competition with public television, particular among wealthy demographics, and in the education market, which has further eroded private subscriptions. These conflicts allowed criticism from the Right that it was competing with commercial television, and so should not be federally funded at all: that it had a liberal bias, and that it had failed to fulfil its mandate. The same problems attracted countervailing criticism from the Left: that it was elitist; it had a conservative bias; was non-controversial, too commercial and had failed to fulfil its mandate.

The PBS has created some valuable educational television. The Children’s Television Workshop (CTV), and the National Educational Television (NET) produce educational programming that covers all ages, from preschool to vocational training. The CTV-produced *Sesame Street* is claimed to have raised the academic performance of children from low-income areas. Mirroring criticism of the rest of public service broadcasting programming in the United States, critics claim that NET delivers an educational ‘product’ to consumers, and deserves no special funding as this distorts the market’s ability to do the same, particularly in the 1990s with niche subscription television. Others claim that the educational aspects are passive; rather than engaging the viewer in a forum for ‘controversy and debate’, and that it tends to

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stress consensus over controversy, which limits its worth as a means to improve viewers' abilities as citizens.\textsuperscript{57}

Despite these shortcomings, public service broadcasting in the United States has provided a relatively independent voice on news and current affairs in comparison with the bulk of United States commercial broadcasting. Programmes like \textit{Frontline}, the Public Broadcasting Service's flagship documentary series, which began in 1983, defied the restrictions of alternative views imposed overtly and covertly by the Reagan and subsequent administrations. The flagship news programme, the \textit{MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour} adopted a different format from commercial news programmes. The \textit{NewsHour} was the first hour-long news programme on national television from 1983, and featured longer item length, a slower pace and an extended interview-based segment. John Corry, a \textit{New York Times} television critic said of the programme in 1985, "They only ask questions... still the idea of searching for truth rather than just handing it down, is something to be recommended for television."\textsuperscript{58}

However, others have questioned the neutrality of the programme. It was (until recently) sponsored by the telecommunications giant, \textit{AT&T}, leading to questions about objectivity with regard to the burgeoning telecommunications and related industries. Secondly, surveys on the range of opinion expressed in interviews found a preponderance of elite opinion. 89\% of interview subjects were government officials, corporate representatives, or came from top universities and think-tanks. Only 6\% of interview subjects represented public interest, labour or minority interests.\textsuperscript{59} Public service broadcasting in the United States has had a difficult 30 years, and its future looks uncertain. It is a system vulnerable to political pressure, under-funded to near starvation, facing increasing competition and attacked from both sides of the political spectrum. It has also, however, provided relief for many from the unrelenting commercialism of the rest of American television.

\textsuperscript{57} Debrett, \textit{Public Service Broadcasting - Constraints and Possibilities}, pg.92
\textsuperscript{59} Engelman, \textit{Public Radio and Television in America}, pg. 207.
Broadcasting in the US was developed, like that of the UK, out of the view that the national airwaves were a national resource, and should be managed in the public interest. The essential difference was that US regulators thought the market was the best mechanism for determining and reflecting that interest. The result was a highly responsive broadcasting system that failed to acknowledge any difference between the public interest and what the public was interested in. Being, from its inception, wholly competitive and ratings-driven, US commercial broadcasting had no interest in or legislative requirement to recognise any more than the aggregate of audience demands. Minority interests were swamped by broad-stroke, majoritarian averages of what people wanted from television. Competition resulted, not in the heralded proliferation of programming genres and styles, but in a repetitive diet of tried-and-true formulas. The economics of television restricted programme production to a few of the largest broadcasting organisations, further limiting programme diversity, and creating a tight oligopoly within a system awash in the rhetoric of competition.

American commercial broadcasting is loath to examine divisive issues within the audience for fear of alienating members of that audience (unless the alienated section is a poor minority, deeply unpopular, or regarded with suspicion by a large majority of the audience). Commercial and competing broadcasting organisations’ reliance on audience numbers means any member it loses (and providing he or she is not decamping from television viewing entirely), it tends to lose to a rival organisation. This inability to examine the schisms, the debates and the variety of viewpoints in modern American culture has created a televisual view of American homogeneity that is unrepresentative of American life. Commercial broadcasting is also highly concerned not to anger the advertisers it relies on for revenue. What remains is programming designed to offend no one, based on formulaic and standardised genres, reflective of a manufactured homogeneity and lacking in genuinely investigative, critical assessments of social, commercial or political life.

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While the public service broadcasting system was designed to rectify the worst sins of the commercial industry, in particular minority representation, it has, in the main, failed to do so. The organisation's reliance on commercial funding has severely reduced its critical ability in this sector of American life, while its reliance on wealthy individuals as sponsors has reduced its ability to offer programming to the other, poorer minorities it was supposed to represent. While some of the most lively debates about American life are to be found on PBS channels, the organisation suffers both from funding shortages and the indifference of a public continually exposed to more populist programming choices. The growth of cable and other delivery systems has not reduced the grip on broadcasting tightly held by a few major players.

4: Two Versions of Democracy.

Contemporary challenges to public service broadcasting have come from both the Right and the Left of the political spectrum. New Right criticism focuses on new technologies and the opening of the spectrum to multi-channel broadcasting, a growing commitment to monetarist policies and a view of society that stresses individualism as a self-developing force rather than the collective good. Individual self-worth is better determined by the individual than by the state, and the free market and consumer choice allow the individual to examine their options, and select the best for themselves. Unnecessary Government involvement in the market distorts natural exchange mechanisms, creates inefficiency, and is bureaucratic and costly to taxpayers. Some New Right stalwarts blame government regulation and protectionism as the root cause of a lack of consumer choice and the failure of economies. The collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980's was claimed as proof of the failure of economic systems regulated by the state, and has contributed to a wider acceptance of government withdrawal from sectors of the market.

The Right links public service to state bureaucracy and restrictive, rigid and unimaginative thinking. It contrasts this with the free market, and posits competition

71 Comrie, The Commercial Imperative in Broadcasting News, pg. 34.
72 Debrett, Public Service Broadcasting – Constraints and Possibilities, pg. 2.
as dynamic, responsive and innovative. Free and unrestricted entry into broadcasting of any organisation that professes to have something the audience might like to hear or watch will ensure the audience will choose freely from a range of alternatives, creating a feedback to the broadcasters that will punish the unpopular, and reward the creative.

What is at stake with the New Right criticism of public culture is a new (or rather, a revived old) conception of democracy. The interventionist conception of democracy that underpins the public service ethic is predicated on the notion that individual liberty is vital, but should operate in service of the common good. Society is seen as greater than the sum of its parts, and the individual’s right to self-fulfilment through citizenship as a ‘positive’ freedom; something the state may be required to intervene in the market and other areas of private exchange, in order to protect. Individual liberty, in this model, is a means of escape from rigid self-interest and enables one to participate in a shared, mutually beneficial way of life. The individual contributes to the common good, both improving public life and themselves through doing so. The ideology of interventionism developed out of nineteenth century liberalism that championed an open, pluralistic society, supporting universal suffrage and a widening of democratic involvement and education as necessary for creating the sort of citizen who could identify and pursue those elements of their self-interest that also worked toward developing society as a whole.

By the turn of the century early industrialisation had created new sources of private power and economic inequality unanticipated by the early liberals. The state and especially monarchical and aristocratic power were no longer seen as the main obstacle to individual and social freedoms, but the appalling conditions for many that accompanied industrialisation had created new forms of social coercion and glaring inequalities of opportunity in health, education and income. L.T. Hobhouse argued for progressive taxation on the basis that wealth creation had a social dimension, entitling the state to treat a proportion of individual income as justifiable for taxation. This meant money could be re-distributed to alleviate the worst inequalities in access to basic services, which in turn would rebalance inequalities in access to the self
improving aspects of society, and finally, to address the needs of the common good. Like public libraries, schools and hospitals, public service broadcasting from this standpoint was a resource that, with the best will in the world, most individuals could not supply for themselves. This paternalistic vision of democracy advocates state intervention in order to ensure access and contribution to the common good are collective.

Deregulation, privatisation, market liberalisation, the New-Right, and neo-liberalism are some of the terms used to describe a re-application of mid-nineteenth century economic theory that advances the notion that economic freedom for competitive advancement is a basic civil liberty. It is a theory based on concerns held by early liberals about property rights and freedom from coercion by royal absolutism. It rejects the interventionist vision on the grounds of utilitarian and highly individualistic rationales.

The original intention was to advance claims for civil liberties motivated by a desire for a class-less (or rather single-class) society, free from hereditary privilege and patronage. However, aristocratic privilege, the original target for containment, is no longer a threat to freedom in modern capital society. Modern Libertarianism has adapted some of the features of the earlier school, and now uses the cause of highly individualised rights to defend the wealth and authority of newly privileged, mainly corporate, elites against regulatory requirements and state intervention towards advancing the common good. Friederich Hayek, the mid-twentieth century social theorist, argued that common-good ideals and notions of collective goals belong to a more primitive age, and that modern capitalist society is too complex for any centralised body to control. According to Hayek, human progress occurs through the actions of individuals rather than through centralised attempts at social design. Libertarians claimed the collective misery and social-engineering failures of past attempts at centralised social control, most notably in Communist countries but also Fascist Germany, as proof of Hayek’s thesis.

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72 Hayek Friederich, The Road to Serfdom, Sydney, Dymocks, 1944.
Secondly, the national wealth and security of western nations, most notably the United States with its laissez-faire economic doctrines and constitutionally enshrined freedom for the individual, were said to prove the success of modern Libertarian theory.

Thirdly, Libertarians claimed that centralised knowledge led to mistakes being repeated across social and economic strata as poorly conceived policy moved out from the centre and into the lives of people removed from the central decision making bodies. In relation to broadcasting, they claimed that the centralised knowledge of, Reith and BBC elites for example, had little to do with the day-to-day wants and needs of different audiences. The market, they claimed, was a better measure of audience wants and needs than any centralised knowledge due to its dispersed and rapidly responsive ability to chart consumer desires, and that mistakes in one area were punished and not repeated across the entire broadcasting market.

The attack on public service broadcasting from the Left has been equally wide-ranging and multi-faceted. Marxists and neo-Marxists have attacked what they see as the elite-centric bias of programme output and particularly news and current affairs. Cultural Studies approaches have echoed these criticisms. Some Cultural Studies approaches have attacked the foundations of the role of the media in liberal democratic theory as exclusive rather than inclusive and as encouraging passivity and political quiescence rather than empowering citizens. Others still have virtually dismissed the entire notion of media criticism by claiming an infinite variety of receptions among the audience. Criticism of public service broadcasting and its relationship to the government and government influence over content has been another source of sustained criticism from the Left. The lack of feedback from the audience to broadcasters, the perceived exclusiveness of institutionalised value systems, and their inability to satisfactorily respond to, or reflect, public plurality have

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led to a dismissal of public service broadcasting as “elitist, unaccountable, divisive and exclusive.”

5: Commercial Broadcasting.

The rise of corporate power in the modern world has been accompanied by a number of theories and ideologies that serve to justify and reinforce its dominance. Deregulation and privatisation have been used to erode the foundations of public service institutions and with them the role of the state in mediating between corporate and public interests. Traditional liberal approaches to broadcasting conceptualise the role of the media as a ‘fourth estate of the realm’, the principle institution of the public sphere, examining the claims and interests of the Government, the people and (in this nineteenth-century view) the Monarchy. Underlying this hardy, traditional view is the notion, on one hand, of society as an aggregation of individuals, and on the other, of the government (including the Monarchy) as the seat of power. The role of the media is to inform one side of the activities of the other, and to check abuses from either side. The problem is that this approach fails to take into account how power is exercised by modern capitalist structures. This problem is exacerbated when media outlets are themselves part of modern capitalist structures.

Proponents of commercial broadcasting systems make a number of claims as to why such a system is better able to serve the needs of democratic citizens. Ratings measure audience-viewing numbers and are a vital component of commercial systems. It is claimed that ratings are a democratic means of satisfying audience desires because the greatest numbers are awarded the loudest voices in demanding particular types of programming. Secondly, ratings punish unpopular programming

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76 Debrett, Public Service Broadcasting – Constraints and Possibilities, pg. 22.
77 Sally Oppenheimer, Panorama, May 10, 1982, quoted in Eldridge, Getting the Message, pg. 9.
78 Debrett, Public Service Broadcasting – Constraints and Possibilities, pg. 1.
79 Curran, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere’, pg. 29.
decisions, making the system accountable to audience desires and dislikes. This in turn, makes the system highly economically efficient. Unpopular programming is reduced and popular programming increased, meaning less wasted effort and higher returns in viewing numbers. Secondly, ratings allow the charting of particular types of audience desires that marry wide demographic categories, meaning certain programmes can be made for broadcast when the demographics that have (through the ratings) professed an interest in them can be expected to be available for viewing. This in turn creates a wide degree of variety and diversity in programming while ensuring fewer flops and mistimed attempts at attracting particular audiences.

There are however, a number of critical but unexamined flaws in these arguments. Modern democracy is predicated on inclusion and equal representation of all – one person, one vote. Rating-driven systems, on the other hand, are predicated on the need for audiences to sell to advertisers. As such, some audiences are more valuable than others. Certain demographics are routinely over-represented while others are routinely under-valued. The poor, the elderly and some minorities are under-represented in two ways. Firstly, their viewing behaviour is subsumed into majority behaviours, limiting minority representation. Secondly, and more importantly, because they are less attractive to advertisers than wealthier demographics, they are less valuable to broadcasters and so less often catered for in programming decisions. Ratings promote a very limited and exclusive type of democracy.

The arguments made in advancing commercial systems in relation to economic efficiency are equally narrow. Ratings-driven systems are efficient at assembling particular audiences and charging advertisers for access to them. However, they are inefficient at accessing and meeting the needs of audiences as citizens. Further to the problems of addressing the wants of some audiences more than others, commercial broadcasting is resistant to offering particular types of information to all audiences. Unbiased and comprehensive political information, social analysis or economic coverage tends to be overlooked because such information is often complex, difficult, expensive to produce and not expected to rate highly, particularly when placed against more populist competition from other commercial broadcasters competing for the same audiences.
Finally, the claim that commercial broadcasting supplies a wide diversity of programming is simply wrong. Because commercial broadcasting has a low predictive ability (ratings only show what the audience watched, not what they might like to watch) and because of the very high costs of programme production, a very successful programme will tend to be reproduced ad-infinitem. Many of the earliest formulas for programming genre remain with us. The Soap, the Sit-Com, and the Game-Show are now firmly entrenched staples of programming line-ups on all commercial broadcasting channels because they have a proven track record of attracting audiences. In all broadcasting systems featuring competing commercial systems, the story is the same. The competition for the same audiences (those most desired by advertisers) and the high cost of mistakes (programming flops that drive the audience to the competition’s offerings) means there is very little diversity in programming. Successful shows are cloned by the competition in an attempt to attract the same audience, and successful formulas repeated. Because the competition is for the largest possible segment of the same audience, the aggregate of lowest common denominator viewing choices becomes the benchmark for the success or failure of a programme. What results is predictable, cautious and formulaic programming; a multiplicity rather than a diversity of programme choices. Challenging, innovative, experimental or genuinely creative programming is far less likely to achieve airtime as it carries with it an implicit risk of alienating sections of the most desired audiences.

As previously noted, television broadcasting is a very expensive business, with the upfront production costs greater than the marginal costs of distributing the product (which are near zero). Television’s unique and potent selling power in the form of advertising can offset these costs, and make the medium highly attractive to commercial interests. The emphasis in neo-liberalist theory on the role of business and the state has legitimised reductions in state funding of broadcasting and increased pressure for public service broadcasters to seek alternative sources of revenue, which has thus compromised the integrity of the public service broadcasting ethos.
6: Technological Challenges.

Public service broadcasting began during an era of radio spectrum scarcity. The broadcasting spectrum was initially seen as a national resource, and as such, one that should be managed by the state in the interests of the people. Since the 1980's, spectrum scarcity has been reduced by new technologies that use existing frequencies more efficiently (thus allowing more channels) and introduce entirely new modes of programming delivery. Ultra High Frequency (UHF), digital and other compression techniques and various cable and satellite delivery systems have and will continue to change the way signals are sent and received. If broadcasting is no longer a scarce commodity and multi-channel broadcasting can offer a wide range of programmes to a wide range of audiences, then, it is argued, public service broadcasting in the public interest is no longer required. The recent shift from spectrum scarcity to potential abundance has fuelled demands for lifting regulations requiring that broadcasters provide a ‘public service’, and prompted claims that spectrum frequencies should be treated like any other commodity. More channels, argues the Neo-liberalist, means more choice, which means those minority and specialist interests not served by majority-led commercial broadcasting can be offered by smaller, advertising or subscriber funded minority and specialist channels. Therefore, the remit for public service broadcasting disappears.

However, advertising-funded television demands a large audience to sell to advertisers to cover programming costs. Specialist audiences are less attractive to advertisers, unless they happen to collate audiences that are of particularly worthwhile demographics. This is unlikely to include audiences for public affairs programming, because such audiences are, by necessity, diverse. Subscriber broadcasting works against the interests of the poor by charging those least able to pay.

Also, spectrum expansion is not equivalent to programme production expansion, and the highest costs of broadcasting are associated with the latter, not the former. Again, as previously noted, competition in broadcasting tends to be between programme distributors, not programme makers. Spectrum capacity aids the former, not the latter.
7: Broadcasters and Audiences.

As access to existing spectrums and the creation of new forms of delivery have opened new distribution systems for broadcasting, the high costs of exploiting those avenues have reinforced the economic structures of broadcasting. The increase in the scope and scale of broadcasting has taken place in distribution systems, which means greater economies of scale are needed for programming production to increase. Small national broadcasters, both public service and commercial, were once the norm.

Since the mid 1970’s, however, massive media conglomerations have emerged to develop and exploit new communications technologies. These multi-national multi-media operations have interests in print, radio, television, computation and telephony with the return on their investments in one field allowing them to develop others. Few national broadcasters have multi-media interests or the capability to compete with these international operations and they represent enormous competition for public broadcasters. The high costs of transition from ‘traditional’ delivery systems to new systems like digital broadcasting mean those public broadcasters that cannot justify the expense are expected to lose audience to the new systems.

Satellite delivery can offer the same programming stream to many countries simultaneously, and so hugely increase the size of their potential audiences without increasing transmission costs (once the satellite system is established, of course). The reception costs are passed on to the consumer who must buy some means of reception such as a satellite dish, and then usually continues to pay a subscription fee. New technologies allow the exclusion of non-paying and usually poorer audiences. National broadcasters, who are generally restricted to national boundaries, do not enjoy multi-national audiences, and so the return on their programming stream is smaller. Finally, the offshore nature of satellite broadcasting has also made it more resistant to national regulation.
It is difficult to assess the desires and activities of the audience following these changes to the shape of broadcasting. As the audience becomes increasingly fragmented, the inherent problems of audience research are multiplied. Scholarship on audiences is fractured and often contradictory, and the central academic positions on reception have changed considerably over time, as a result of either the changing activity of reception, or the research itself (see Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of this).

8: Summary.

The growing pluralism of modern capitalist societies, and the failure of unfettered commercial broadcasting to offer the true programming competition it claims is superior to the top-down, elitist or paternal approach of public service broadcasting means public service broadcasting is undergoing a number of challenges. However, the socially inclusive, representative and educative products of public service broadcasting seem more valid than ever in today’s socially complex world.

The next chapter looks at the New Zealand broadcasting experience, and the shift from a system that was largely public service broadcasting to one that is wholly commercial. The chapter concludes by returning to the arguments examined here, and proposes that the two types of system tend empirically toward two distinct types of discourses. The hypothesis to be tested is that the New Zealand journey from one system to the other has empirically evidenced changes to news discourse reflecting the changes to the broadcasting system. It is to the history of New Zealand broadcasting that we now turn.
Chapter II: New Zealand Broadcasting History; Change as the Only Constant.

1. Introduction.

A nation's success in implementing a public service broadcasting system will depend in part on how that nation defined the model and in part on political and economic circumstances – for example and among other things, the size of the market, the degree of national conformity or the intellectual culture of the country. In New Zealand, broadcasting developed as a hybrid of state ownership of the broadcasting infrastructure, with development and running costs partially covered by the state, partially by a licence and partially by advertising. The creation and content of broadcasting was a reflection of this hybrid, and these differing funding pressures exerted contradictory demands on the system. Government, the audience and advertisers had different views as to what the system should be used for. New Zealand Governments saw broadcasting partially as a means of furthering public acceptance of their policies, and partially as a means of fostering national culture. The audience, particularly after the 1950's, wanted programming to reflect the emerging pluralism in New Zealand society, while advertisers, particularly after the 1960's, wanted a system that gathered attractive audience demographics in a predictable and stable manner. By the late 1980's these cross pressures had resulted in a discrediting of regulated broadcasting and the widely perceived failure of the New Zealand public service (or more properly-speaking, state-controlled) broadcasting model.  

New Zealand went further in re-regulating broadcasting between 1988 and 1991 than any other western democracy. By 1991 there were no local content quotas, no restrictions on foreign ownership of broadcasting infrastructure or content, a narrow

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and marginalized view of the public interest, and a largely self-regulating advertising industry. Funding for the existing, but now highly corporate New Zealand state-owned system came mainly through this last, well-organised group, and it has operated principally in its interests.62

2. The History of Broadcasting in New Zealand: Regulation and Deregulation.

As in many other areas, early New Zealand looked to the United Kingdom for guiding principles in developing and regulating broadcasting. The history of broadcasting in New Zealand before 1987 was one of tight government regulation and a dilution of the public service principles of the BBC that was often claimed as its model. New Zealand diverged from the path laid down by the BBC in a number of important and political expedient ways. From the first radio broadcasting regulation of 1923 to the Broadcasting Act of 1976, the legislative landscape of regulated broadcasting in New Zealand changed with every parliamentary swing from right to left and back. Successive governments regarded broadcasting as a primary tool of political persuasion, and as such, restructured broadcasting to meet their requirements.

When television broadcasts began in 1960, the costs of production and transmission to the state were soon to be offset by advertising as the cost of broadcasting increased, and real government funding waned. By 1986, the combination of these changes, had produced what Alan Cocker identified as a 'puzzling feature' of the deregulatory period of broadcasting in New Zealand:63

...the muted public, interest group and broadcasting industry response to the thoroughgoing reforms. There was little defence of the old structures and a widespread belief that reform was not only necessary

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62 Cocker, A Toaster with Pictures.
but that even the untested reforms of deregulation would have to be an improvement on what had gone before.”

New Zealand’s history of regulated broadcasting has been defined by the following factors:

- Constant political meddling for private gain.
- The growing reliance of broadcasters on commercial activities.
- The rise of post-modernist ‘active-audience’ theory and subsequent attack on theories concerned with the quality of public discourses.
- The conviction that new technologies would open the door for limitless delivery of choice to the public while undermining a cornerstone of the need for regulation.

These conflicting pressures all combined to harden the New Zealand public and broadcasting interests against further state intervention, prepared the ground for commercialism and promoted the panacea of radical deregulation, despite its having been untried and untested internationally.4

2.1: Early Broadcasting Regulation.

New Zealand was the first country in the world to develop state control of sound waves. Regulation of broadcasting in New Zealand began with the Wireless Telegraphy Act in 1903. The state was quick to realise the benefits of wireless telegraphy for linking remote communities separated by challenging terrain. The notion that broadcasting should extend to all members of the country, no matter how remote or isolated, became an important justification for public funding of state regulated broadcasting (during the third television channel hearings of the late 1980’s

this was an expensive requirement for potential entrants into the New Zealand market). The beginnings of nationally-organised radio started with the broadcasting regulations of 1923 which prohibited the broadcasting of anything deemed 'propaganda of a controversial nature' or 'not conducive to the public interest' or anything considered by the state to be 'of a seditious, profane, obscene, libellous or offensive nature.' The regulations were highly restrictive due to concerns about the effects of the new medium on society in general rather than as a convenient regime to serve the government, but by the mid 1930's, these concerns had been realised. During the rest of the 1920's, the Radio Broadcasting Company (RBC) ran "A" stations throughout the country supported by licence fees, and "B" stations, financed by supporters clubs, and from 1930, sponsored broadcasts which developed into advertising. In 1932, the Broadcasting Board of New Zealand replaced the RBC with the aim of developing the "A" stations around the country in line with the notion that transmissions be available for all. The regulations required that all private operators broadcast any transmission the government desired. According to Cocker, "Broadcasting was firmly regarded to support the purposes of the state." The restrictions on broadcasts of a controversial nature continued during the Depression and went as far as blocking, on the explicit instructions of the Postmaster-General, the broadcast of the thinly veiled political commentary of the Methodist Minister, C.G. Scrimgeour on the eve of the 1935 election.

Scrimgeour was a popular radio personality broadcasting from the "B" licensed 1ZB in Auckland. His radio 'sermons' focused on the plight of 'ordinary' New Zealanders suffering during the Depression. As such, they were often critical of Government and its lack of coordinated responses to those hardships. Criticism of Government on the radio was extremely rare and political pressure on 1ZB to halt "Uncle Scrim's" broadcasts met with wide popular disapproval, with 20,000 people attending a protest

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Cocker, 'Broadcasting Myths and Political Realities', pg. 237.
R.J. Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting: Before and Beyond the NZBC, Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1985, pg. 16.
Cocker, 'Broadcasting Myths and Political Realities', pg. 240.
Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 16.
meeting at Carlaw Park. The blocking by the National Party of his election eve broadcast created an uproar and, according to Les Edwards, was the difference between a Labour win and a landslide Labour win. The lessons about the popularity of radio and its ability to influence politics were not lost on the incoming government.


The difficulties of the Depression led to calls for the restrictions on broadcasts of controversial topics be lifted because, for many New Zealanders, hardships made many things seem controversial. The 1935 landslide victory of the Labour Party gave fresh impetus to changes of broadcasting legislation. The failure of the Broadcasting Board to develop an affinity with the audience resulted in its termination by the new Government and by association, the failure of the Corporation control approach. The alternative option for management of radio was ministerial control, and the 1935 Labour Government intended to keep a very firm hand on the tiller. Control of the national broadcaster was placed under a full government department with the Minister in charge none other than the Prime Minister, Michael Joseph Savage, who made full use of the medium as a tool of party propaganda. He felt the conservative newspaper press “irredeemably hostile” to his liberal views, and stated “The Government is going to be the master of publicity.” In 1936, he countered accusations of using radio to further his own ends by opening parliamentary debates to live broadcast, and ending the era of restrictions on ‘controversial’ subject matters.

However, Savage introduced two more innovations that fed criticisms of the role of radio as an institution designed to further the aims of Government rather than encourage political debate. The first was his ‘Sunday Evening Talks’, which consisted of the Prime Minister detailing problems and policy solutions without right of reply offered to the opposition. The second innovation in 1938 was a short daily

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“Cocker, A Toaster with Pictures, pg. 90.
M.J. Savage in a speech reported in the New Zealand Herald, 9 June 1936, quoted by Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 18.
Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 18.
news bulletin that examined, principally, the development of government policy. The bulletin, however did not offer the opposition a forum to examine government policy or other activities, or to advance their own alternatives. Savage met their demands for right of reply with an appeal to higher principle; that it was necessary to have a communication channel between the government and the people, but a conduit between parliament and the people was less valuable. He felt that the squabbles of parliament were not fit fare for the medium.  

Savage’s successor as Prime Minster, Peter Fraser, developed an even tighter grip on the tiller. Although he had two Ministers of Broadcasting during his term, he made all the key decisions himself. During the war and as part of the international response to wartime restrictions on broadcasting, he exercised a great deal of control over the medium. He followed the wartime restrictions on information with a blanket ban on any publicity for his opponents during the lead up to a referendum on military subscription in 1949.

Although political coverage, or coverage of ‘controversial topics’ was firmly under government control, Professor James Shelly, appointed by Savage in 1936 to run the non-commercial “A” licence stations, did develop a distinctive and successful information and entertainment service. Shelly agreed whole-heartedly with Reithian notions of broadcasting as an educative and enlightening tool rather than mere entertainment. At the time of his appointment he asked rhetorically:  

*Are we going to use such a tremendous instrument merely to fill in the gaps or as background for the noises we make when we eat our soup?*

While his legacy was the development of outstanding radio drama, the National Orchestra and the construction of a chain of local radio stations, furthering the rural reach of radio, he failed to take into account the essential differences between the BBC with its autocratic and austere leader, J.C.W. Reith, and the New Zealand broadcasting situation. Shelly did not distinguish between the BBC’s fiercely

4 Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 18.

protected independence from government and New Zealand broadcasting’s
dependence on it. Under Shelly’s direction, according to Gregory, there was, “an
inadequate development of those public broadcasting functions deemed essential to
the emergence of an open society.” Parliamentary broadcasts were the sole vehicle
for domestic political controversy. The government of the day placed broadcasting
directly under the thumb of the Prime Minister and radio news was little more than a
means of disseminating officially sanctioned information. Shelly, it appeared, felt
indifferent to Ministerial control of public broadcasting: “Broadcasting is too
powerful an instrument to be in the hands of anyone except the state, or an
organisation responsible to the state.” This view of broadcasting as an instrument of
government policy coupled with an elitist view of broadcast entertainment as an
educative tool, fostered in New Zealand a top-down approach to the audience which
was firmly entrenched by the 1950’s and created a public informed rather than an
informed public.

The lack of independence from government meant legislation and structuring of
public broadcasting could not gain the cross-party support enjoyed by the BBC. The
use of broadcasting as a tool for disseminating government messages meant the party
in opposition was always deeply suspicious of broadcasting policies enacted by the
party in power. The opposition, on entering government, would enact changes to the
structure of public broadcasting ostensibly in response to criticism of the former
administration’s exclusive use of the medium. In truth, however, policies to increase
the independence of the public broadcaster from state ministries produced merely
cosmetic change, and control remained firmly in the hands of senior officials. Such
was the case with the 1949 adjustments made by the National government, which
endured until the advent of television in New Zealand in 1960. National responded to
criticism of government control of the medium with an administrative ‘sleight of
hand.’ The new Prime Minister announced that the news bulletin would no longer be

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66 Cocker, ‘Broadcasting Myths and Political Realities’, pg. 244.
67 Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 29.
68 Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 29.
69 James Shelly quoted in Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 30.
70 Cocker, ‘Broadcasting Myths and Political Realities’, pg. 245.
prepared by the Broadcasting Ministry, but by the Tourist and Publicity Department. The PM then assumed the Tourist and Publicity portfolio.101

The start of television was long delayed due, in part, to the Government’s concern at the impact on the balance of payments that the importing of the systems required for national television broadcasting would have, as well as doubts about whether to import or locally manufacture television sets. However, central to the delays was the Government’s view of how to organise this new technology. The co-optive political role of radio broadcasting did not bode well for a fully independent role for the new medium.

Throughout the 1950’s, arguments continued over the role of the public radio news service. In 1955 and 1956, a survey conducted by J.H. Hall, supervisor of the news service, showed over 81% of items used in the daily bulletins were supplied by the Tourist and Publicity Department.102 Public broadcasting as a means of circulating ideas and encouraging debate was still regarded as threatening by the state, and broadcasting continued to be seen as a Governmental information service.103 Criticism of this structure from the Opposition and increasingly from within the industry itself led, almost inevitably following National’s loss of the 1957 election, to another set of proposals for broadcasting.

The proposals, developed by J.H. Hall, espoused daily news bulletins and a weekday-news hourly-update service prepared by the newly formed New Zealand Broadcasting Service (NZBS), which would employ its own professional full-time journalists, at a cost of about 22,500 pounds a year. Treasury supported the idea with the proviso that the service be integrated with the Tourist and Publicity Department, and not operate in opposition to it, which essentially negated the independence from Government that J.H. Hall was seeking. Consultations continued with no firm decision taken until 1960 when, with television in prospect, the Minister of Broadcasting approved the appointment of a Director to develop and supervise the news service.

101 Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 20.
102 Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 32.
103 Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 32.
2.3: Television Regulation.

Labour introduced television late in its first and subsequently, singular term. Walter Nash, the Labour Prime Minister, decided that continued state control was necessary, and placed television under the NZBS, with a similar legislative structure to radio. The medium was to have both non-commercial and commercial services, while the state continued to exercise Ministerial control over content. Once again, however, an election intervened and broadcasting was again under review. This time, public and industry calls for the speedy introduction of television meant that more comprehensive change to broadcasting was needed than the tinkering of the past ten years. Labour arguments in regards to television were similar to those advanced in the 1930’s about radio; chiefly that broadcasting was a national resource, and as such, should be guided by public service objectives rather than private profit. National criticised the Government’s position as self-serving exploitation of the new medium, and promised a public commission on the role of private enterprise if it won the 1960 election.

As the election loomed, Labour defended its policies of continued state management of broadcasting as a simple choice between unbridled private enterprise on one hand and benign state control on the other.\(^\text{104}\) National argued that the medium was one of primarily popular entertainment, and the Government should have a smaller role in the industry. National won the day, and formal departmental control of broadcasting ended with the 1961 Broadcasting Corporation Act.

In 1962 the newly established New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC) took over from the NZBS. As in radio, the BBC was raised as the inspiration for the structure of the new medium, but again, the ideals of the BBC, notably that of independence from state interference, were not considered important.\(^\text{105}\) Gregory reports that there were no pressing demands to subject the introduction of television to any “comprehensive analysis of its philosophical and practical contingencies” and

\(^{104}\) Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 40.

\(^{105}\) Cocker, A Toaster with Pictures, pg. 95.
New Zealand politicians "were reluctant to relinquish the partisan privilege of shaping the administrative structure of broadcasting."

The nominal independence of the NZBC was restricted by its legislative structure, financial arrangements and institutionalised habits. Section 11 of the Act stated the NZBC was to 'comply with the general policy of the Government of New Zealand with respect to broadcasting, and shall comply with any general or specific directives given in writing by the Minister pursuant to the policy of the Government in relation thereto.' The Government retained tight control over capital expenditure, and appointed the board. The NZBC board moved quickly to assert its statutory authority over the Director General of the organisation, and in order better to do so, it expanded the board from three to seven members within a year of the Act. The politically appointed board was, unsurprisingly, partisan and provided a conduit for ministerial control over the organisation. Most of the employees of the NZBC were ex-departmental public servants, and continued to see themselves as custodians of approved social values in the same vein as they had in relation to radio under the NZBS.

The National Party's election manifesto had promised a Royal Commission on the introduction of private broadcasting, but it never eventuated. The Government did however, grant the NZBC the right to issue warrants for private radio and television stations. None were awarded. The NZBC was reluctant both to allow competition in television, and to investigate the potential impacts of private television broadcasting. Radio stagnated until the pirate radio station, Radio Hauraki won public support, forcing the Government to intervene and remove the licence-granting authority from the NZBC and award it to the newly established Broadcasting Authority in 1969.

Public dissatisfaction and political suspicion marked the era of the NZBC. In the face of protest activity in the late 1960's, however, 'normal' political debate received less attention than the 'anti-social' activities of anti-war, anti-apartheid and youth protests.

106 Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 41.
107 Cocker, A Toaster with Pictures, pg. 95.
108 Cocker, A Toaster with Pictures, pg. 97.
With television programmes like *Gallery* beginning in 1968, New Zealand radio and television “virtually for the first time in its history... was seen clearly to be a vehicle for open political disputation rather than a purveyor of officially proscribed information.” This was partly due to the fact that the NZBC management was distracted by territorial arguments with the newly established Broadcasting Authority, and was unusually lax in policing its own media content. By 1970, however, the Board had again asserted its control. Rather than providing guidelines to programming, it involved itself in specific programming decisions, recommending for instance, that the inaugural *Brian Edwards Show*, which featured prominent members of the radical left, not go to air. Public outcry over the decision and criticism from the Minister of Finance, R.D. Muldoon (who also appeared on the show) forced the Board to reverse the decision.

The Leader of the Opposition, N.E. Kirk, accused the Government, and by association the organisation, of “managed news, in the era of a subservient, chin-dripping NZBC.” In an effort to insulate itself from political criticism, the NZBC news and current affairs adopted a strict approach to impartiality, requiring positions from each side of a debate. This ‘mandatory balance’ meant politicians could stymie debate on controversial topics simply by refusing to appear. Their no-show meant that other views could not be aired either. The requirement for mandatory balance was finally dropped in 1969, being replaced with a convention for ‘balance over time’, which allowed journalists greater flexibility. That such a simple feature of political journalism developed so late in New Zealand (it was a convention the BBC had practised since the late thirties) indicated the “late flowering of news and current affairs programming.”

As an exercise in public service broadcasting, the NZBC was a failure. An essential requirement for public service broadcasting is independence from state interference.

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113 Cocker, *A Toaster with Pictures*, pg. 100.
yet this requirement was never met. Throughout its existence, the NZBC's "political independence was seriously compromised by an unacceptable willingness to accede to the wishes of the government of the day." The criticism was similar to that directed at its predecessor, the NZBS; that through efforts to reflect what they saw as their political and social obligations while attempting to avoid controversy, both organisations were too cautious. The development of a daily television news service during the conflict-ridden 1960's would have been difficult regardless of the relationship between the NZBC and the government. The façade of independence touted by the NZBC and its occasional attempts at examining the issues and positions held by both sides of the political spectrum attracted criticism from Government as being too radical and as fermenting social unrest. Caught between an unhappy Opposition, an unhappy Government and an unhappy public, a Labour win in the 1972 election spelled an almost inevitable restructuring for broadcasting. Periodic restructuring was to continue for another twenty years.

The Labour Government's plans for broadcasting in 1972 involved decentralisation of the NZBC, increased independence from Government and the introduction of competition within publicly-owned enterprises as an alternative to allowing privately-owned competition in television broadcasting. Decentralisation was intended to dismantle a stifling and conservative bureaucracy, and to free the organisation from the influences of the Government-appointed board, most of whose members were openly supportive of the National Party. The use of competition within public broadcasting as a foil to private enterprise displayed the Labour Party's stated commitment to publicly owned broadcasting. It was an ambiguous commitment in relation to the shape of publicly owned broadcasting however, and, like preceding broadcasting developments, lacked theoretical foundation, public involvement, or inquiry.

Early in his short career as Prime Minister, Norman Kirk announced the development of the second television channel, and the structure of competition between the two state-owned stations. The Adam Committee (a four-person Committee on Broadcasting) recommended the development of three separate organisations to

\[14\] Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 59.
manage radio, and television channels one and two. The committee stressed the importance of producers of programmes rather than administrators in developing local content and managing news and current affairs programming. The three organisations were to be coordinated and managed and, in relation to the two television channels, competitively ‘guided’ by the Broadcasting Council of New Zealand (BCNZ). The Broadcasting Act of 1973 sought to enhance the independence of these organisations by limiting the role of administrators in programming, abolishing the ministerial portfolio of broadcasting, and dropping Section 11 of the previous Act which required that the organisation ‘comply with the general policy of the Government of New Zealand...’ The new structure was enacted, after much delay, in April 1975. A few months later, Labour lost the election.

Competition between the two channels was to provide competition with some degree of complementary programming, but problems developed with guided competition soon after its inception in 1975. The contradictory nature of the two opposing regulatory demands created a situation where neither could be adequately met. Competition created administrative duplication while at the same time each organisation tried to out-manoeuvre the other with convergent rather than complementary programming strategies. The new system was credited with an unprecedented flowering of local production, particularly in news and current affairs, but it was both more expensive than the one it replaced, and more politically challenging. Furthermore, ‘complete political independence’ for broadcasting claimed in the 1975 Labour Party election manifesto was, argues Cocker, partial.\textsuperscript{135}

The incoming National Government wasted little time in introducing a new set of changes, and in 1976, yet another Broadcasting Act was passed. Radio and both television channels were brought back under one roof. The Ministry of Broadcasting was re-instated and given the power to issue directives, returning broadcasting to a structure similar to that of the NZBC. In Section 11 of the 1961 Broadcasting Act the organisation had been required to ‘comply with government policy’. They were now required to ‘have regard to government policy’\textsuperscript{136}; a largely meaningless semantic

\textsuperscript{135} Cocker, ‘Broadcasting Myths and Political Realities’, pg. 250.

\textsuperscript{136} Cocker, ‘Broadcasting Myths and Political Realities’, pg. 251.
change. These revisions encountered criticism from the Opposition and from industry interests, and while they had the effect of reducing ministerial control by making the Broadcasting Tribunal an adjudicator for the settlement of complaints from Government, the Minister of Broadcasting could still delay the broadcasting of an offending programme by referring it to the Tribunal. Finally, National replaced Labour appointees to the board with its own people, again encouraging partisan compliance.

After nearly forty years of public broadcasting in New Zealand, conceptually very little had changed. Echoing a statement made in the 1930’s by Shelly, “Broadcasting is too powerful an instrument to be in the hands of anyone except the state, or an organisation responsible to the state.” Hugh Templeton, the Minister for Broadcasting in 1976 said “No corporation as big as broadcasting should be without Ministerial control, and it was important to provide some government direction... broadcasting is too important to leave to the broadcasters alone.” (Emphasis added).

Prime Minister Robert Muldoon sustained relentless pressure on the independence of public broadcasting in New Zealand through the 1970’s both by imposing severe economic control and by verbal broadsides. Many saw his verbal attacks on journalists as an attempt to undermine their professional credibility in the eyes of the public. The organisation did little to defend its staff in the face of these attacks. The Chairman and Chief Executive of the BCNZ, Ian Cross, reportedly told journalistic staff when they asked him to publicly defend them, that they should “grin and bear it.” His dual roles as Chairman and Chief executive seemed incompatible. As Cocker puts it, “as Chairman, he was the supposed defender of the public interest, as

118 James Shelly, quoted in Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 30.
120 Cocker, ‘Broadcasting Myths and Political Realities’, pg. 251.
121 Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 95.
Chief Executive he was the presumed champion of his organisation and his staff. These conflicting roles diminished his ability to perform either particularly well.

Muldoon’s economic attack was two-pronged. He criticised the financial irresponsibility of the organisation and froze its revenues. During the 1970’s, The BCNZ oversaw the introduction of colour television, covered the Commonwealth Games and completed the construction of the Avalon Television Studios. All were necessary improvements, but were also capital intensive. As Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Muldoon, froze the licence fee in 1975, despite the $38.9 million of BCNZ debts run up with these costs. As inflation soared during the 1970’s following the OPEC oil shocks and extensive overseas borrowing by the Government, the licence fee remained frozen and the BCNZ was forced to rely increasingly on advertising. What public service commitments the organisation possessed and could deliver, already under political and institutional pressure, came under increasing pressure from commercial imperatives.

2.4: TVNZ: Continuing Regulation and Commercial Pressures.

In 1979, Ian Cross sought another major re-organisation to minimise the problems that television was having with competition between the two channels and to advance the cause of complementary programming. In reality, financial pressures came to dominate the restructuring. Television New Zealand (TVNZ) was born out of this re-organisation, with the separate administrative structures of Television One and Television Two combined into a single structure, responsible for all programme buying, scheduling of advertising-space and programme production for both channels. The competing two channel’s news services were integrated into a single operation. The re-organisation was about more than simply cost-cutting. Complementary programming could better provide public service requirements than competition, especially as the drive for the advertising dollar “had led both channels into a ratings game which had not only precluded complementary placements between programmes of differing audience appeal, but in doing so had tended to vitiate public television’s

122 Cocker, A Toaster with Pictures, pg. 109.
ability to cater for the widest possible range of viewing preferences.\textsuperscript{126} Cocker notes that Cross saw an increasing reliance on advertising and ratings competition as a threat to broadcasting.\textsuperscript{125}

The 1979 reorganisation was viewed with suspicion by many staff at the BCNZ, who saw it as a politically initiated attempt to assert more administrative and political control over programming decisions.\textsuperscript{126} Gregory argues that, following his appointment as Chairman and Chief Executive, Cross held all the strings within broadcasting in New Zealand, and the “wheel had turned a full circle; that, as had been the case for 26 years of direct departmental control, once again the public broadcasting organisation’s top official is appointed by and holds office at the Government’s pleasure.”\textsuperscript{127}

The wave of sweeping deregulatory pressures ushered in by the Fourth Labour Government in 1984 were to meet little resistance from those within the broadcasting industry. Already versed in commercial imperatives and eager to distance themselves from Government interference, many within the BCNZ were eager for change. The history of New Zealand broadcasting, argues Cocker, was not one built on the principle of public service broadcasting, but of public servant broadcasting. Throughout the history of broadcasting in New Zealand, politicians had regarded electronically transmitted spoken-words and pictures as an extension of their domain. Not satisfied with determining broadcasting policy, they had involved themselves in the day-to-day operations of an area in which they had a vested interest.\textsuperscript{128}

Criticism of Government broadcasting policy from Opposition parties, from the public and from the industry itself was largely ignored, yet when Government changed hands, the former Opposition would enact policies to further its own interests, making itself the target of renewed criticism, until, once again, Government

\textsuperscript{124} Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 99.
\textsuperscript{125} Cocker, A Toaster with Pictures, pg. 107.
\textsuperscript{126} Cocker, ‘Broadcasting Myths and Political Realities’, pg. 251.
\textsuperscript{127} Gregory, Politics and Broadcasting, pg. 106.
\textsuperscript{128} Cocker, ‘Broadcasting Myths and Political Realities’, pg. 253.
changed and the pattern continued. There has been very little public consultation or
determined inquiry into public broadcasting over the sixty years between 1923 and
1985, and as the next section demonstrates, the findings of the Royal Commission
into broadcasting in 1985 were also largely ignored.

Through a tight, self-interested pragmatism, politicians in New Zealand had
dominated the broadcasting industry until 1988, and ridden roughshod over the claims
and interests of public broadcasters themselves. The history of broadcasting displayed
“patterns of party-political decision making and pragmatic, short-sighted solutions to
problems and issues.” 129 A newly emerging force in the formation of broadcasting
after the freezing of the licence fee in 1975 was the pressure of a commercial
imperative, which further strained public service principles. The only constant in New
Zealand broadcasting history was change, with successive Governments developing
new policies. By 1984, given the lack of a stable broadcasting order, lack of
consultation, and lack of true a public service ethic, there was little the audience could
attach themselves to in the interests of defending public broadcasting. For many, an
untested and largely unexamined future within a deregulated broadcasting economy
could only be an improvement, for both the audience and broadcasters, on the past
sixty years of regulation, interference and political self-interest.

2.5: The Fourth Labour Government and Deregulation.

On the 14th of July, 1984, New Zealand elected its Fourth Labour Government, and
entered a long period of radical restructuring of the public sector. The Labour
Government inherited an economy in crisis. National’s large scale international
borrowing had failed to either curb high inflation or increase low employment figures.
Labour’s response to the fiscal crises was to institute ‘Rogernomics’, a new and
radical approach to restructuring named after the then Minister of Finance, Roger
Douglas. The large-scale deregulation and privatisation of much of the New Zealand
economy had begun. State sector broadcasting was to come under scrutiny as much

129 Donald E. Stewart and Logan Moss, ‘Communication Policy in New Zealand: Overseas Influence
and Local Neglect’, in Patricia Edgar and Seyd Rahim, (Eds.) Communication Policy in Developed
as any other piece of the state apparatus, and the new neo-liberal approach to state involvement in 'non-core' operations would guarantee changes in the funding structure of the BCNZ. The National Party had begun moves to develop a private third channel before their election defeat in 1984, and the Labour Government promised to continue this process as well as set up a Royal Commission on Broadcasting with a view to examining the likely impact of emergent broadcasting technologies and international competition on the New Zealand broadcasting market.

In 1985, a Royal Commission into broadcasting was announced, and on August the first, hearings began. After listening to 282 submissions, the Royal Commission recommended moderate reforms: to increase the licence fee and in-house production, to develop a commitment to local programming, and to ban advertising during children's programming. However, many, including the Prime Minister, saw these policies as out of step with the contemporary economic orthodoxy, and the recommendations were largely ignored. Running concurrently to the Commission were the Broadcasting Tribunal Third Channel Hearings. These were concerned with the awarding of the third channel licence and in many ways they reduced the Commission to a sideshow. The Tribunal dragged on for two years, largely due to the delaying tactics of the BCNZ, and at great cost to the contenders and the state. In the meantime, the BCNZ was streamlining and centralising its operations and opening a new Television Centre in Auckland that was to be its central office and production facility. The two channels were branded differently, with Television One becoming the information and drama channel aimed at older viewers, while Television Two would be directed toward younger viewers with lighter entertainment. Staff were shed, regional operations cut back or closed down and investment in new equipment initiated.

In 1987 three events impacted on broadcasting in New Zealand. The Labour Party won its second term and appointed Richard Prebble as the Minister of Broadcasting as well as Minister for State Owned Enterprises (SOE's), the sharemarket crashed with

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resounding implications, and the Tribunal finally awarded a licence for the third channel. Richard Prebble was a firm advocate of neo-liberalism, but with no special interest in broadcasting. Ignoring the recommendations of the Commission, the Cabinet, angry with both the Commission and the Tribunal – on the grounds of expenses, ponderousness and lack of vision - began to take its own steps towards deregulating broadcasting. In 1988, Prebble announced a series of radically new reform principles. The state would continue to own Television One and Television Two, but the new organisation would have to perform like any other private sector corporation, that no special restrictions would be placed on the introduction of new services like cable and satellite broadcasting, and public and private broadcasters would be able to compete for licence fee funds. Social objectives were to be met by separate state-contracted services, based on the neo-liberal mantra of a funder/provider split.

The Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand Act of 1988 created Television New Zealand (TVNZ) Ltd as an SOE, and the Broadcasting Act of the following year (which repealed the 1976 Broadcasting Act), established the Broadcasting Commission (later New Zealand on Air) to collect and allocate the licence fee, and the Broadcasting Authority to develop and require broadcasters to adhere to certain codes of practice. Restrictions on foreign ownership were lifted, allowing up to 15% foreign ownership of broadcasting operations in New Zealand.

Anticipating third channel competition, throughout 1987 and 1988 TVNZ further streamlines its operations and adopted a combative agenda to acquire the rights to the world’s highest rating programmes. In 1989, the news package was re-vamped with the formalisation of a dual presenter format, the rescheduling of the evening bulletin to six o’clock (from a six-thirty start), and the introduction of a current affairs show that aired after the news at 6.30. The company spent heavily on branding the news service and the two channels.

32 Spicer, Powell and Emanuel, The Remaking of Television New Zealand, pg. 10.
In late 1989, Television Three began broadcasting, but immediately ran into financial trouble. The long and expensive Tribunal process, the high start-up costs of broadcasting and competition with TVNZ (which had the exclusive rights to the high-rating Auckland Commonwealth Games that summer), and the continuing national recession following the 1987 sharemarket crash, sent TV3 into a financial tailspin. After the 1990 elections, a new National Government and a new Broadcasting Minister, another neo-liberal champion Maurice Williamson, hinted at lifting foreign ownership restrictions to 49.9% following the financial collapse of TV3 in May 1990.

TVNZ was in a difficult position. It obviously wanted to maintain market dominance over TV3, but it would have been embarrassing for it and the government if they crushed the competition entirely. National was committed to competition, and Party voices called for new legislation to reduce TVNZ's dominance. However, the neo-liberal Cabinet went down a different road, but given their commitment to foreign investment and competition, the road they chose was predictable. Rather than clip the wings of TVNZ, in 1991 the Government opted instead to allow 100% foreign ownership of broadcasting organisations in New Zealand with the Broadcasting Act Amendment Bill. In late 1991, CanWest, a Canadian-based broadcaster with multinational broadcasting interests, brought a 20% stake in TV3 (which it has since increased to 100%) and thus saved TV3 from irretrievable bankruptcy, and ensured a competitor for TVNZ. The amendment also meant that New Zealand shifted, in the space of a few short years, from a highly regulated broadcasting industry to perhaps the most deregulated broadcasting environment in the world.

As an SOE, TVNZ was expected to return a profit to its shareholders, the Government. It held a long tradition of free-to-air broadcasting, a stable audience, a good advertising stream and knew its market well. TVNZ did return very large dividends to the Government, and by 1997 was returning the highest profit on assets.

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134 Yeabsley, Duncan and James, Broadcasting in New Zealand, pg. 71.
135 Margaret Anne Comrie, Capturing and Keeping a Deregulated Broadcasting Market, Palmerston North, Massy University, 1993, pg. 4.
of any publicly owned broadcaster in the world. Like all SOE’s, the emphasis was on profit. Section 4(1) of the *State Owned Enterprises Act*, of 1986 states: “The principle objective of every State enterprise shall be to run a commercial business.” However, the SOE Act also included a secondary component requiring that SOE’s exhibit a sense of social responsibility.

The SOE Act requires an SOE “to attend to the interests of the community in which it operates... when it is able to do so.” (SOE Act, 1986 s.4(1)(c).) This emphasis on profit and the demand that the SOE’s exhibit a sense of social responsibility were often at odds, and the social responsibility component was almost bound to come off second best. The Court of Appeal found, in 1993, that the stipulation that SOE’s exhibit a sense of social responsibility was unenforceable by official review or civic action. While TVNZ enjoyed very wide profit margins, it could also claim the dubious distinction of having, in 1997, the cheapest programming hour in the world. Another feature of the profit over public-service orientation was, according to David Beatson, the head of New Zealand on Air (NZOA) in 1998, the fact that New Zealand had the lowest rate of domestic product on its television in the world.

4: Re-regulation and the News.

The entire history of political meddling in broadcasting up to the 1980’s had been one of cautious pragmatism. The Royal Commission’s report was the last step in this long history of inching toward public service-oriented structures within the confines of what was affordable. In the late 1980’s, caution was thrown to the wind and for the first time, radical reform with a clear ideological direction was embraced. TVNZ

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138 Suich, *Benchmarking Public Broadcasters*, pg. 5.

139 David Beatson, *New Zealand Herald*, 16.4.98.
executives took to their commercial mandate with, in Atkinson's words, the fervour of "born again capitalists". 140

The central concern of this thesis was the news product of TVNZ and whether and how it changed as a result of the re-regulation of the industry in the 1980's. The regulatory framework of New Zealand broadcasting changed in the three years between 1989 and 1991 as much as it had changed in the previous sixty years. The entrance of a third channel with a competing news service; the advent of Sky television with a twenty-four hour news service, and the development of regional television stations, all placed pressure on TVNZ as competition for advertising revenue and audiences increased.

The SOE structure required that the organisation return a profit even whilst it faced competition for the first time in its history. The news programme assumed a particular importance in the competition with TV3, and became a leading weapon in the fight for audiences' attention. The early evening news bulletin was, and remains, one of the highest rating programmes on New Zealand television, and beyond the revenue generating capacity of this one programme, the bulletin lined up audiences for the broadcaster's later programming. This was and continues to be a vital function of the early evening bulletin for both TV3 and TVNZ. By garnering a large audience at the start of prime-time, the news helps to secure audiences for the station. For these reasons, the news bulletin came to assume a special importance after deregulation; an importance that went far beyond the traditional remit for news dissemination.

Before 1988, broadcasting in New Zealand was not as public service orientated as that of the UK, but neither was it as commercially orientated as the US system. Rather it was a hybrid system with a monopolistic state run-broadcasting organisation that relied partly on the state for its existence, partly on the licence fee and partly on advertising. Political, public service and commercial demands all competed within the system, creating a model that was crippled by conflicting mandates, and served

140 Joe Atkinson, 'Parasocial Dysfunction in the TVNZ News Family: The Hawkesby Affair', paper delivered to the annual meeting of the NZ Political Studies Association, Massey University, Palmerston North, 7-9 December, 2001, pg. 4.
none of its masters particularly well. The news however, was seen as a having an important public service function.\(^{41}\) This was its central conceptual role within the organisation: it was “low key, authoritative and neutral.”\(^{42}\) The TVNZ management believed that they were “…in charge of an instrument of great influence and [would] only be trusted by the public if they exhibit calmness and detachment in the face of political pressure.”\(^{43}\)

Pressure from advertisers was also a concern, and it was recommended that news and current affairs did not allow advertising and marketing concerns to impinge upon news values. The erosion of the public service values of the news in the face of commercial pressures was anticipated, and warned against in 1985.\(^{44}\) Finally, whilst it was difficult to gauge the levels of audience appreciation of the pre-1988 news product, rating information displayed high levels of viewership.

The hybrid-broadcasting model, whilst under pressure from political interests, did hold that public service principles were important within news and current affairs. During the 1970’s, political influence receded with the freezing of the licence fee. Political content in the bulletin remained high, although this was a product of public service principles rather than political influence (Chapter 5 examines the often critical pre-deregulation political coverage). The move in 1990 to a fully commercial model allowed commercial interests to overwhelm the chartered public service interests (examined in Chapter 4).

As the central questions being asked by this thesis were what was the content of the news and how was it presented before deregulation, did it change as a result of deregulation, and if so, in what ways, then it would be useful at this point to

\(^{41}\) Submissions by the New Zealand Public Service Association to the Royal Commission on Broadcasting and Related Telecommunications, 1985, pg. 18.


\(^{43}\) Ian Cross, The Unlikely Bureaucrat: My Years in Broadcasting, Wellington, Allen and Unwin, 1988, pg. 149.

\(^{44}\) Submissions by the New Zealand Public Service Association, pg. 18.
summarise the two broadcasting models in New Zealand. Table 2.1 displays the basic differences in structure between the two models.

Table 2.1: Basic Differences in Broadcasting Organisation Structure, 1963-1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1963</th>
<th>1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Corporation</td>
<td>State Owned Enterprise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from the state for programming and services.</td>
<td>Revenue to the state in the form of annual dividend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45% Advertising free.</td>
<td>1% Advertising free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience ratings and minority needs aided programme selection and production.</td>
<td>Market share of audience determines programme selection and production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One quarter of the programming was produced in New Zealand.</td>
<td>One sixth of the programming was produced in New Zealand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly funding came from the licence fee.</td>
<td>Most funding comes from advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A single channel monopoly.</td>
<td>Three free to air channels and a number of subscription channels competing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A non-profit organisation with excess income being recycled into new programme production.</td>
<td>A profit led organisation – excess income returned to the state.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although the 1963 model underwent a number of revisions before 1988, the structure remained essentially the same at the beginning of the sample in 1984. The hybrid model relied on advertising, the licence fee and government funding for special projects.

The drive to maximise profit within a commercial broadcasting environment is a zero-sum game. One broadcaster must maximise its audience at the expense of other broadcasters in order to attract their advertisers, and, thus, revenue. Secondly, the

broadcaster must also attempt to reduce costs. Within news and current affairs, TVNZ imported a number of consultants well versed in commercial television practices to advise them on how to maximise their audience while reducing costs.

5: Maximising Audiences.

After 1988, TVNZ had to turn a profit. To do so, it had to maximise particular types of audiences to sell to advertisers. Advertisers want particular types of audiences, such as the young and the wealthy because, in the case of the former they have less brand loyalty, and so are more open to the commercial pitch, and in the case of the latter, because they have more disposable income to spend on the products advertised. By the same token, the elderly and the poor are less attractive to advertisers.

Because the demands of advertisers are basically the same regardless of the programme or channel, commercial broadcast organisations, tend chase the same viewers – those at the margins. Very loyal, hard-core viewers of a channel are unlikely to switch, but the young, not having developed a loyalty to a particular channel, are more likely to move about, and so are pursued with more rigour than other groups. Commercial broadcast news offerings, therefore tend toward both audience maximisation in general, and younger and more affluent viewers in particular.

If any of these efforts to attract an audience can be measured, the essentially ephemeral nature of news has to be packaged so one product can be compared to another, and changes to the package that result in audience loss or gain can be assessed. As a result of these commercial demands, news formats in commercial markets have become progressively standardised, or packaged in particular ways.140

News bulletins in New Zealand always had a standardised appearance, from the austere sets of early bulletins with a single (usually male) anchor, distinctive sections

such as sport, weather and the news, and opening and closing theme music. The aim was to create an air of sombre importance, and to organise the news in predictable and normative patterns. Like print journalism, the bulletin was arranged with the most important stories first, and lighter items last.

However, the commercial environment after 1988 demanded that the viewer do more than watch the news. They also had to be enticed to watch the advertising, and if possible, to watch it in a frame of mind conducive to buying products. The regular and predictable hierarchal item distribution would no longer work, as there was no way to structure the items to ensure the audience was sent into the advertising breaks in an acquisitive state of mind. Instead, the bulletin was repackaged to allow mini-cycles of feeling between the advertising breaks. Like entire news sections of old, each section between the ads began with something important, and ended with something light, and so delivered an audience, if not primed, then at least not hostile to the advertising messages.

However, it is difficult for a single anchor to move from tragic to comic, from serious to frivolous items and retain the sombre authority of a serious news-reader. Co-anchoring, on the other hand, allows a change of anchor with each change of pace. These packaging formulas are now so normal in commercial news organisations as to be ubiquitous, yet by structuring each section between the advertising as a mini-bulletin, they increase the selectivity of the news bulletin, and thereby reduce the socio-political diversity of its content.

The dual anchor format serves another commercial function – that of fostering parasocial interaction – or intimacy at a distance. By offering a series of relationships with the on-screen news team, news organisations hope to develop relationships between the news team and the audience, creating an interpersonal loyalty at a distance. They reason that if the audience is going to invite the news team into their sitting room every night, they had better like them.147

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Parasocial interaction also demands a reduction of onscreen authority to render the news readers 'more like us'. They call each other by their first names, they joke and exchange bon mots on screen, they appear personable and warm. Each member of the studio team has a distinctive 'personality', depending on his or her role. The (usually older male) news-reader may appear stern, but he is warm to his (usually younger female) off-sider. The weather person is often quirky, the sports reader breathlessly excitable. According to Atkinson, we are offered teasing glimpses into their backstage behaviour, marriages, births and 'holiday mishaps'.\textsuperscript{148} They are celebrities, with sanctioned exposés in magazines and appearances on red-carpets.

The sole anchor, by contrast has less opportunity for the manufactured interaction and wild mood swings. The pacing and mood of the single-anchor format is functionally more consistent, less a see-saw of emotional highs and lows solicited by the important and frivolous items positioned around the commercial breaks to meet the demands of advertisers. With a relaxation of the hierarchy of most-to-least important, every thing becomes equally important, and the co-anchor format lends itself particularly well to bulletins with more a human-interest oriented, universalised content.

The market for serious news is a subset of the entire public-attention market – at any given time, only some of us are interested in serious news. The market for more entertaining news content and discourse is also a sub-set of the whole public-attention market, but except in time of war or threat to the system of public affairs, the market for entertainment is generally larger than the market for serious news.\textsuperscript{149}

Commercial news organisations tend to gravitate away from serious, public affairs discourse, to more popular types of news. The human-interest story has been with us for a long time, and is a bastion of tabloid reportage. 20 years ago James Curran,

\textsuperscript{148} Atkinson, 'Parasocial Dysfunction in the TVNZ News Family: The Hawkesby Affair', pg 8.

\textsuperscript{149} Atkinson, 'Parasocial Dysfunction in the TVNZ News Family: The Hawkesby Affair', pg. 9.
Angus Douglas and Garry Whannel developed a view of human-interest news in newspapers and found that the\textsuperscript{15}

*Human-interest angle gives stories a wider appeal, particularly among women and young people who tend to be light readers of public-affairs content... personalisation [of news] – with all the distortion and trivialisation that it implies – has become a recognised and approved strategy for building circulation.*

Atkinson says that, generally, audience maximisation means the coverage of topics that divide us – namely politics and religion (unless it is a cult or an ‘enemy’ religion such as Islam post-September the 11\textsuperscript{th}) are sacrificed in favour of “richly-descriptive, non-explanatory narratives lacking specific or determinate historical context.”\textsuperscript{15} Rather than risk alienating members of the audience, commercial news organisations tend toward human-interest stories that feature the things, the attitudes and the values that unite us.

The human-interest story seldom looks to class, race, economic circumstances or legal inequalities as the cause of problems. Rather they look to the actions of bad individuals – ‘Them’ – lying politicians, dodgy tradesmen, incompetent bureaucrats, social rejects – versus ‘Us’ – the peaceful citizen. Simple, entertaining constructions of villains and victims are preferred because the victims matter to advertisers, and the villains don’t. The people being alienated serve little commercial function, while the people being flattered as ‘normal’ are the target for the commercial messages in between the news sections.

*One Network News* adopted a dual anchor format and increased the prominence of the weather person and the sports anchor in 1989. From the above, we could expect some


\textsuperscript{15} Atkinson, ‘Parasocial Dysfunction in the TVNZ News Family: The Hawkesby Affair’, pg. 9.
quite specific consequences, to be outlined shortly. But first, let us take a step back to recall the international context of what is being studied here.

6: Moving Through the Broadcasting Spectrum: From the UK to the US.

The move, in 1988 from a hybrid public service/commercial broadcaster to a fully commercial model was sudden, swift and substantive. Television broadcasting in New Zealand moved very quickly from one system to another, but the two systems are not mutually exclusive, rather they are two ends of a continuum. The Bertelsmann Foundation in Germany has developed a comparative view of public television in six different countries, ranging from those with a highly developed public sector to heavily commercially-oriented ones. This report presents a very useful view of the range of possibilities for broadcasting, and the effects on public service programming that the different structures have. To ensure a fact-driven comparison, the Foundation employed the services of international consultants, Booz, Allen and Hamilton. The consultants found that, in 1998:15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Kingdom:</th>
<th>Had a highly developed public sector with public television without advertising (BBC 1 and 2), complemented by a television channel purely funded by advertising but chartered with a public service mission (Channel 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia:</td>
<td>Had a highly developed public sector that was recently converted from licence fee funding to funding through taxation, and no significant role for advertising in the financing mix for public television.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Germany: Had a highly developed public sector with a public service mission rooted in constitutional law and a mixed financing of public television of licence fees and advertising revenue, but with a high proportion of that mix being from the licence fee.

France: Had a highly developed public sector with one recently privatised ‘public’ television station (TF1) and a high share of advertising in the revenue mix for public television.

New Zealand: Had an open, commercially oriented television market with a subsidy of public interest programming (instead of a public television station).

USA: Had an open, commercially oriented television market incorporating a public-oriented niche with limited government funds for public television.

The report finds there were three, generic television market structures in the countries analyses. The first was a combination of one or two state-owned television stations with a broadly defined public service mission, and a number of restricted licensed commercial stations facing extensive service obligations. This is the case in the UK and Australia, and with the exception of licensed commercial stations, it was the case in New Zealand before 1988.

Germany has a combination of one or two state-owned television stations with a broadly defined public service mission, and a number of commercial stations with service obligations pertaining to specific regional responsibilities.
The US and, as the cross-national study found, New Zealand in 1998 have comprehensive commercial orientations, with relatively few public service obligations and a very limited budget for public service programming. Those monies are targeted mainly to close the gaps in existing commercial offerings. The study states that the New Zealand and US markets "rely profoundly on the principle of market forces" for programming decisions.

This study posits that the changes to the operating environment and structure of One Network News would create changes to the presentational and content structure of the programme, and affect the types of discourses employed to tell the news. These changes would come about as a result of the move from a Democratic Populist approach to media discourse as exhibited by New Zealand's hybrid public service/commercial system, to a Market Populist approach as exhibited by the country's fully commercial system after deregulation.

The UK model, a public service broadcasting organisation operating alongside commercial organisations has generally maintained an approach to broadcasting that produces a form of news discourse Atkinson has called, 'Democratic Populism'. The US, with its predominantly commercial organisation and a public service broadcasting system that is weak, under funded and operationally confused, generally produces a form of news discourse that may be labelled 'Market Populist' (Atkinson again). By comparing the two approaches, a number of distinct differences emerge. The overriding hypothesis of this study is that the broadcasting environment in New Zealand, in moving from a UK-like model to that more similar to the US, has produced a news discourse that has moved from one end of the spectrum to the other. The differences in the discursive outcomes of the two systems are presented below, in Table 2.2

However, a disclaimer is necessary. The changes to broadcasting in New Zealand were part of a wider change to economic and to a degree, political orthodoxy throughout the much of the Western world. Overseas research on the impact of

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135 Bertelsmann Stiftung, Public Interest Programming, pg. 3.
154 Bertelsmann Stiftung, Public Interest Programming, pg. 6.
increasing competition in broadcasting markets points in similar directions to this study. Given the speed and comprehensiveness of the changes to the broadcasting environment in New Zealand, the Television New Zealand case-study should be seen as an extreme example of more general global trends driven by deregulation and neo-liberal policies on top of technological convergence toward more softer or tabloid news tendencies in media outlets.

The partially commercial model of the New Zealand broadcasting public/commercial hybrid could be expected to produce a news discourse that was both democratic and populist, while the purely commercial model would be likely to create news discourse that is more Market Populist. Again, it is important to emphasise that these are not in practice dichotomous extremes, but a range of possibilities where elements that can be measured and compared are located.
Table 2.2: Democratic Populism And Market Populism.\textsuperscript{135}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democratic Populism</th>
<th>Market Populism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Open to minority and dissenting viewpoints.</td>
<td>• Favours lowest common denominator majorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Egalitarian concern for citizens regardless of wealth and power.</td>
<td>• Pseudo-egalitarian espousal of ‘consumer sovereignty’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appreciative, non-judgemental attitude to ordinary tastes and pleasures.</td>
<td>• Sentimental celebration of ordinary people, but a rejection of emancipatory projects as idealist, elitist or utopian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A focus on specific and determinate historical conjunctures.</td>
<td>• A focus on universal and decontextualised human experience and feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The use of tolerant, dispassionate tones (shades of grey).</td>
<td>• The adoption of a moralistic, and unreasonable tone (villains and victims).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An information orientation.</td>
<td>• An entertainment orientation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Factual, neutral, utilitarian language – a descriptive orientation.</td>
<td>• Poetical, mythological, timeless language – a narrative orientation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A sceptical attitude to the structures of economic and political power.</td>
<td>• Apologetic, uncritical endorsement of the capitalist status quo as a natural structure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous empirical research on news discourses lead us to expect some quite specific consequences of a shift from democratic to market discourse. These hypotheses are in effect, a summary of Table 2.2. If these specific hypotheses can be proved in New

Zealand over the survey period, then we can say with assurance that the introduction of commercial imperatives at One Network News moved the organisation from a Democratic-Populist alignment to a Market-Populist alignment, and created particular types of presentational and discursive outcomes.

John H. McManus undertook a very useful study of ‘local’ news organisations in the US. Thomas E. Patterson looked at changes to presentation and content of local and national news in the US, and John Langer examined texts and narrative structures of the human-interest story in Australia. Margaret Comrie’s work on New Zealand television and Joe Atkinson’s many pieces of research have all found similar trends in news values when commercialism is introduced or increases in the broadcast media environment. Atkinson has summarised these findings, and developed a series of specific hypotheses about changes to news values as a result of commercialisation.

We have taken this work, and added several more predictions to those made by Atkinson, thus compiling twelve hypotheses with which to examine whether the journey from one institutional arrangement to another resulted in predictable changes to news content at One Network News.

1. Commercialisation: That the size of the news segment (the amount of the bulletin devoted to news, rather than advertising, sport, weather and banter between the presenters) would decrease, and the size of these other elements would increase.

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2. **Morselisation**: That the pace of the bulletin would be speeded up, with shorter stories, sound-bites and shot length.

3. **Depoliticisation**: That the coverage of expressly political issues would decrease and be replaced by more psychological and less overtly political crime and human-interest items.

4. **Gaming Orientation**: That the coverage of political issues and events, particularly during election years, would be reduced to 'horse-race' style coverage with a greater reliance on polling data, and less discussion of policy issues.

5. **Personalisation**: That the amount of stories about victims, particularly crime, would increase and the use of expert voices would be replaced by the voices of ordinary people.

6. **Tabloidisation**: That an inversion of serious journalistic norms would occur, with an increase in reportage of the dramatic, the spectacular and the sensational at the expense of serious reportage of serious topics.

7. **Decontextualisation**: That there would be a reduction in the number of cited sources and references to verifiable evidence in favour of more universalised narratives.

8. **Centralisation**: That the number of stories situated in Auckland would increase at the expense of regional coverage.

9. **Trivialisation**: That there would be increase in the use of theme music and presenter chit-chat.

10. **Familiarisation**: That the adoption of a dual anchor format would include an extension of the 'news family' to include weather and sports presenters and an increase in chit-chat to foster para-social interaction.
11. Atomisation: That there would be a reduction in stories about collective action like unionism at the expense of stories about individual actors portrayed as villains and victims as in crime coverage.

12. Commodification: Finally, that there would be a reduction in stories that serve the needs of the audience as citizens, and an increase in stories that serve their needs as consumers.

7. Summary.

The focus of this study has been upon changes to news content between 1984 and 1996. The question asked is how these changes to the funding and legislative structure of TVNZ affect news content? The move from a public service broadcasting model (albeit one fraught with difficulties in the New Zealand model) to a market-led broadcasting model has been swift and far-reaching, and previous research would lead us to expect profound implications for news content. The next three chapters use these twelve hypotheses to measure and evaluate to what extent the change in the institutional structures at TVNZ have resulted in changes to news outputs at One Network News.
Chapter III: Macro-Analysis of Content; A Methodology.

1: Introduction.

One goal of this study is to determine if there have been significant changes to the allocation of time to subject categories on the nightly early evening news bulletin at TVNZ as a result of deregulation and the advent of direct, head-to-head competition between rival news bulletins. This chapter and the following chapter are concerned with the macro-analysis of content; that is, an examination of changes to content in the broadest sense; in the comparative levels of time allocated to various news subjects. This quantitative content analysis is the principal feature of this thesis, and attempts to answer two simple questions:

Have there been changes to the allocation of time to news subjects during the sample period?

If so, are those changes consistent with those predicted in the light of previous research?

The specific expectations we have of those changes are that there would be more Commercialisation, Morselisation, Depoliticisation, Gaming Orientation, Personalisation, Tabloidisation, Decontextualisation, Centralisation, Trivialisation, Familiarisation, Atomisation and Commodification in the presentational elements and story content ratios of the bulletins over the survey years.

This chapter describes the raw material under examination, and the methodology employed to examine these expected consequences of a move from a Democratic-Populist to a Market-Populist alignment at One Network News. However, we begin with an overview of the theoretical considerations of content analysis.
2: Some Theoretical Limitations of Content Analyses.

A major source of academic debate over media messages is the interpretative role played by the audience, or by different members or groupings of that mass audience. Views of the audience and their approach to media messages have moved from the early Hypodermic model of transmission, where the audience passively interpreted all messages as the creators of those messages intended them to, to recent Cultural Studies approaches to audiences that have abandoned any universalistic assumptions about reception, and hold that any analysis of content independent of the audience is meaningless. Both models are overly simplistic, and both undervalue the role of content analysis. Both rely on untested assumptions about the audience, and both lead to unsustainable conclusions. The Hypodermic model assumes too much passivity within the audience, and leads to the implausible conclusion that audiences regard media texts as sacrosanct truths that do not require further discussion to make them relevant to their lives. It denigrates content analysis by simplistically claiming that the researcher and the audience interpret texts in the same ways; that whatever content analysis turns up will correlate tightly with how the audience reads the news.

At the other end of the reception scale, Cultural Studies and other postmodern approaches to audiences assume too much activity; the logical conclusion being that if all members of the audience decode texts in highly individualistic ways, communication itself can be very difficult, if not impossible. News is news partly because it reports on events that disrupt consensual experiences about the routines of the world and its everyday life. Events and issues in the news take place against a

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background of agreement on what is normal. Domestic political events in New Zealand, for example, take place within a realm of wide-spread—although increasingly contested—political consensus. The Cultural Studies approach limits the worth of content analysis by claiming that it primarily represents the view of the researcher, and does not necessarily have wider implications for the audience.

David Morley, originally a strong proponent of the Cultural Studies approach and groupings of interpretation strategies in the audience, has more recently modified his views on reception by conceding that if texts are regarded as too polysemic, then the sins of the industry don't matter. Postmodern approaches to audience reception provide a very weak foundation for a critical assessment of media messages.

By rejecting these extremes and focusing on a commonsense approach to the meanings of the items, this study recognises culturally shared codes of meaning and competencies, and focuses on the ‘preferred readings’ of the texts. William Gamson claims that the content analysis researcher should be “... agnostic on the issue of how the news is understood.” This is what this research is attempting to be. We are not disbelieving and aloof atheists claiming that either the audience agree or disagree completely with our interpretation of the items. Rather, we have developed a series of categories and a strategy that reflects the notion that the audience and this researcher agree on certain fundamentals of meaning and interpretation, but are unlikely to be in total accord as to every facet and nuance of understanding.

In any event, this study is primarily concerned with the changing nature of the content of One Network News, not with how that content is interpreted. Regardless of one's


theoretical approach to audience activity, the audience cannot interpret what a media outlet does not offer. For as McGuigan observes:

...The materiality of the text is not only to do with its activation in use but depends on its prior existence: it is materially produced, it is made available, it is offered for popular appropriation. Some texts get made, some do not; some stories are told, and some are not.

The purpose of this research is to examine which texts get made, and whether they continue to get made following deregulation and the associated changes to the organisational requirements for the news at TVNZ. This survey is a 'practical scientific inquiry'. While theoretical studies are important, it may be worth noting the opinion of James Desse:

"In the social sciences, practical scientific inquiry often makes a greater contribution to theoretical studies than the other way around."

3: The Methodology.

3.1: Defining the Population.

The period covered by the macro-analysis is from 1984 to 1996. This period is chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, both terminal dates were election years, and rather important ones at that. The 1984 election signalled the beginning of a new era in New Zealand politics and society. The election itself was a snap election, and offered New Zealand a choice between the incumbent National Party on the right, and the new economic thinking of Labour and The New Zealand Party, on the left. The

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nation was in fiscal crisis and the two directions on offer diverged very widely. The 1996 election was equally important as it offered for the first time a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) vote. The ideological field held by the two main parties, National and Labour, was much narrower by this time, but the New Zealand First Party held the middle ground and could go either way, and along with it, the election. Also, given that it was an MMP election, the extreme left and right of the spectrum could possibly win representation in Parliament.

Secondly, as the results of the macro-analysis will show, election years presented significant and interesting peaks in political coverage, a coverage that, particularly after 1990, fell away considerably during non-election years. It was therefore important to start and finish the sample during election years to accurately chart the flow of political coverage both within and between election years.

Thirdly, the year 1990 sits conveniently between the Broadcasting Act of 1989 and the Broadcasting Amendment Act of 1991. These two pieces of legislation represent the two most significant pieces of legislation concerning the deregulation of the New Zealand broadcasting environment, and 1990 is thus a useful mid-way mark between pre-deregulation Television New Zealand and the post-deregulation organisation. The drive toward deregulation had started much earlier than 1989, and its effects continued after 1991, the survey extends an equal distance in both directions from 1990. 1984 and 1996 are each six years (and two elections) either side of that point. The six-year period allows patterns in the data, both pre- and post- deregulation, to form and stabilise.

Fourthly, previous content analysis of One Network News had confined themselves to 1985-1990,172 1985-1992,173 and 1985-1994,174 without systematic inclusion of election year data. As the next chapter shows, elections years provided some very interesting patterns in the data.

174 Comrie and McGregor, Balance and Fairness in Broadcast News.
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, 1984 was as far back as the available data would permit. The University of Auckland's Robert and Noeline Chapman Audio-Visual Archive was the source for the news footage used here. The Chapman Archive began systematic video-taping One Network News only after the 1984 election. Before then it had recorded the broadcast on audio-tape and, often, only the news segments (the sections devoted to news items rather than sport, weather etc.) As this survey required records of the complete bulletin, including advertising, the pre-1984 audiotapes were unsuitable.\textsuperscript{175} If 1984 was as far back as the survey could go, then to maintain a balance with 1990 at the centre, 1996 was as far forward as it should go.

3.2: The Sample.

For each year in the survey, fifteen bulletins have been selected using a random number table across the year, excluding weekends. Weekends were excluded as the lack of regular political and economic activity on these days made them significantly different from weekdays, and as such, their inclusion might have skewed the findings for extraneous reasons. The bulletins were the early evening news programme aired on Television New Zealand's Channel One (referred to here as One Network News). While the size of samples used in content analysis is important, little consensus exists as to the best size for a sample to be both representative of the population from which it comes, and not too unwieldy for comparison.\textsuperscript{178} Daniel Riffe et al have conducted research into different sample sizes,\textsuperscript{177} and also reviewed other studies of sample size.\textsuperscript{178} In their later research, they found that two randomly selected days a month

\textsuperscript{175} For the 1984 tapes, we have estimated the amount of non-news footage based on an average of the non-news elements from the full recordings available in the Chapman Archive. Only two of the years used in the sample had incomplete bulletins.

\textsuperscript{176} Comrie, The Commercial Imperative in Broadcasting News, pg. 188.


provided the most efficient means of sampling broadcast news output. However, in the earlier article, they also cite Stemple's 1952 research on newspaper samples, which shows that increasing the sample size beyond twelve issues did not significantly improve accuracy. As the later piece did not refute the former one, we chose to take the middle ground between these two findings, with fifteen bulletins a year, randomly selected but adjusted to ensure that no more than two bulletins appear in any given month.

This sample size of fifteen bulletins also provides for three constructed weeks across the year. However, the Chapman Archive could not provide all the selected days as full bulletins. Often, particularly in the earlier years in the survey, the recording was stopped after the main news bulletin when the programme went to regional news, and was not resumed for the weather and the final words from the anchor. As these elements needed to be recorded (for reasons to be discussed shortly) we chose the closest weekday for which a complete recording was available. The result was that the constructed week structure was not strictly adhered to for all the years in the sample. This is a weakness, as constructed weeks are the widely-recommended means of charting content. As the worlds of commerce and government operate primarily on a five-day, forty-hour week, the information from these sources tends to be spread over the working week. While all news does not come from these sources, a substantial amount does. For this reason, the constructed week with an equal representation of weekdays for each week follows wider patterns in work and politics and the information they provide. Weekend bulletins are excluded for the same reason – they tend to feature more sport, more international news and less serious domestic items than weekday bulletins.

179 Riffe, Lacy, and Aust, 'The Effectiveness of Random Constructed Day and Constructed Week Sampling.
180 Riffe, Lacy, Nagovan and Barkin, 'The Effectiveness of Simple and Stratified Random Sampling.
182 Stempel, 'Content Analysis', pg. 125.
183 Stempel, 'Content Analysis', pg.125.
In summary, where possible, three randomly constructed weekday weeks were used, with no more than two days from each month, and each month in the year represented. Weekends were excluded.

The selected bulletins are listed in Table 3.1. The table lists the year and bulletin sample number, the weekday and the date of each bulletin used.

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<td>96.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>96.13</td>
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<td>96.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>96.15</td>
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<td>05/12/96</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From January 1984 until July 1988, the bulletin began at six-thirty in the evening, and ran for an hour. After July 1988, the programme moved to an earlier six p.m. timeslot. Within this hour were the regional news programmes, inserted between the sports segment, and the weather plus a closing monologue from the anchor. The national news sections amounted to about forty minutes including advertising.
weather, sport and anchor chit-chat. This format prevailed until April 1989, when the national news programme was cut from approximately forty minutes of the hour to a half-hour show, with the Holmes programme beginning at six-thirty. The regional news segment was moved to Channel Two, and was subsequently dropped altogether. This pattern of half an hour of national news followed by half an hour of Holmes, continued until early 1995, when the half-hour was increased to an hour and the Holmes programme moved to seven o’clock.

The sample included the entire national news sections of all the bulletins in the survey, from the beginning of 1984 to the end of 1996. It did not include the regional news segments. The reason for this was that the regional news differed from region to region and the Chapman Archive contained only the news recorded in Auckland. No other regional archives in the country contain complete news bulletins dating as far back as the Chapman Archive does. From 1984 through to 1989 (when regional news moved to Channel Two), sample measuring was paused during the regional news segment, and restarted afterwards to capture the final national weather and news segments.

Given their direct influence on the size of the news segment, it is important to be able to measure all the elements of the national bulletin, including weather, anchor introductions and sign-offs, the commercial breaks and the musical introductions and exits to the programme. My aim is to measure non-news elements, such as headlines, teasers, advertising, and the routine sport and weather sections of the programme to determine if these elements have increased or decreased relative to the conventional news coverage. Moreover, given the routine insistence that sport and weather are news segments of legitimate journalistic significance, it is necessary to assess their priority compared to other forms of news.

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184 Sport and weather are ‘routine’ sections because they concentrate only on their respective topics. They are both ‘news’, but are differentiated from the news sections in this study by the fact that they only report on their respective themes. The news sections, on the other hand, have a great deal more ground to cover.
3.3: The Subject Categories.

The development of subject categories is the single most important step in the analysis of content. In 1952, Bernard Berelson said in a review of existing studies that:

"Content analysis stands or falls by its categories. Particular studies have been productive to the extent that the categories were clearly formulated and well adapted to the problem and to the content."

His criticism still stands. The intention of this research is to examine whether content changed over the sample period. To do so, rather than follow other models of subject category, I developed an unusually detailed and comprehensive set of my own. The reasons are outlined below.

The analysis of subject matter is relatively easy for broadcast news stories. The items are discrete in that they virtually always deal each with one major issue or subject. The item itself is a reliable unit of topic analysis as it is the main ‘natural’ unit employed by the producers of symbolic material. The item is like a very short story and it generally deals primarily with a single subject. The content analysis focus upon the categories. Each item is treated as containing a single dominant subject matter, and placed in a single category. Again, following Berelson, subject matter categories are best for trend analysis:

"Subject matters are usually quite obvious in a body of communication content and hence easily analysed. Subject matter categories have been especially used in trend studies in various media with the same categories analysed at different points."

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185 Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication*, pg. 141.
187 Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication*, pg. 150.
Despite recommending specific subject matter categories, Berelson recommended a rather narrow range of categories, and in my view, did not adequately cover the range of subject matter found in the sample period. Berelson, however, like other researchers, recommends that the analyst develop a range "... most relevant to the particular problem at hand." The particular problem faced in this research was to detect the most notable changes within and between broad categories, such as political news or crime news. This demanded especially close investigation into what sorts of, say, 'political content' had changed – all political coverage, or the coverage of some political activity relative to others? The problem is that while small, statistically insignificant changes to particular types of content can be aggregated into larger content groups and so display results more clearly, the reverse is not the case:

...The investigator who discovers that his [sic] initial categories are so broad that important distinctions are lost, cannot disaggregate results without completely recoding the data.

Given the size of the sample, we thought it best to develop a large number of categories, with some small categories that could be collapsed into broader ones rather than finding it necessary at the end to re-code large areas of the sample.

In theory, following a standardised classification system would have been better, for it would have allowed a clearer comparison to be made not only between this research on the New Zealand experience with deregulation and other domestic research (most notably Margaret Comrie's work), but also with media content changes in other countries. Unfortunately, a standardised category system does not exist. Internationally, no single model has been developed that has not received its share of criticism. According to Holsti, this is due to the fact that: "We are lacking a general theory of communication from which [a general theory of categorisation] can be

188 Berelson, Content Analysis in Communication, pg. 141.
190 Berelson, Content Analysis in Communication, pg. 149.
drawn." Media researchers of today are no closer to a 'unified' theory of communication than they were when Holsti wrote this, thirty years ago. It is still true, however, that the "... most interesting content analyses will probably always depend on categories developed especially for the data at hand.""167

Comrie followed a system developed by Deutschmann (1959) and modified it slightly to "... accommodate New Zealand conditions and the changes to society since 1985.""193 Her system used fourteen categories to examine changes to subject matter between 1985 and 1990. Her category system was deemed too broad for the larger period covered by this study. For example, Comrie places Agriculture and the Environment in the same category."194 However, throughout the 1990's, the environment became an increasingly contentious issue, while agricultural news declined as people moved off farms and into the cities.

Our focus demanded exhaustive categories in order that all the items could be placed within some specified category, with the smallest possible number placed in a miscellaneous category. It also demanded that the categories be as exclusive as possible so that no item had to be placed in more than one category."195 While the former requirement demanded a large number of categories for varied subject matter over thirteen years of news broadcasting, the latter demanded a precise placement, and strict adherence to a third principle of content categorisation: that a single classification criterion be used."196

In order to meet both these conditions, we developed an organic approach to building an exhaustive category system. When a new, previously absent subject came up, a category was developed for it. Constant crosschecking of the data to ensure the same subject matter was not encoded in different categories preserved the exclusivity of the categories. The single classification criterion, rigidly adhered to, was that the primary

"167 Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities, pg. 102.
"192 Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities, pg. 102.
"195 Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities, pg. 99.
"196 Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities, pg. 100.
theme of the item constituted its subject. This proved workable. Broadcast journalists and producers of news stories routinely follow a pre-determined *news-angle* in approaching the subject matter, often ignoring or reducing elements in the item that contradict a recognisable and easily accessible story-line, and highlighting those that further that line. Although most items featured a number of individuals, organisations or other entities, the primary angle of the item was routinely maintained. Of course, there were often one or more sub-themes in the items. However, due to time and other routine constraints of broadcast media story telling, and organisational views of audience behaviour, journalists and producers strongly favour developing a major theme in an item.

Although most of the items in the sample were introduced by the studio anchor, the on-location reporter’s introduction sometimes differed from the studio anchor’s, which offered a brief synopsis of what was coming but did not develop an entire story package in the same way that the item did. In all cases across the sample, the primary theme in the developed item - rather than the anchor’s summary - was used as the classification criterion. Difficult cases were discussed and resolved with Dr Atkinson’s supervision.

The classification system is detailed below in Table 3.2.

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158 Cohen, ‘Mods and Rockers.’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Abbr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Domestic News; Politics; Misc.</td>
<td>DNPM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Domestic News; Politics; Policy.</td>
<td>DNPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Domestic News; Politics; Taxation, Finance, Inflation.</td>
<td>DNPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Domestic News; Politics; SOE's, Assets, Public Service.</td>
<td>DNPO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Domestic News; Politics; Health.</td>
<td>DNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Domestic News; Politics; Education.</td>
<td>DNPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Domestic News; Politics; Accommodation.</td>
<td>DNPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Domestic News; Politics; International Relations.</td>
<td>DNPIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Domestic News; Politics; Strategy, Polls, Elections, Personalities.</td>
<td>DNPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Domestic News; Economics; Misc.</td>
<td>DNEI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Domestic News; Economics; Interest Rates, Prices.</td>
<td>DNEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Domestic News; Economics; Consumer Information.</td>
<td>DNEIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Domestic News; Economics; International Trade and Investment</td>
<td>DNEIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Domestic News; Economics; Sharemarket, Corporate Affairs</td>
<td>DNES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Domestic News; Economics; Health.</td>
<td>DNEH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Domestic News; Economics; Education.</td>
<td>DNEEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Domestic News; Economics; Accommodation.</td>
<td>DNEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Domestic News; Social Conflict, Race Relations, Immigration.</td>
<td>DNSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Domestic News; Labour and Employment, ACC, Wages, Conditions.</td>
<td>DNL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Domestic News; Agriculture, Farming, Fisheries (Non-Maori)</td>
<td>DNAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Domestic News; Justice, Police, Law Changes</td>
<td>DNJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Domestic News; Crime Misc.</td>
<td>DNMCM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Domestic News; Crime; Customs, Security, Jails.</td>
<td>DNCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Domestic News; Courts; Crime; Property.</td>
<td>DNCCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Domestic News; Courts; Crime; Violent.</td>
<td>DNVCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Domestic News; Crime; Property.</td>
<td>DNVCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Domestic News; Crime; Violence.</td>
<td>DNVCV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Domestic News; Road Accidents, Road Toll, Vehicular Crime.</td>
<td>DNRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Domestic News; Accommodation, Health, Education, Misc.</td>
<td>DNAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Domestic News; National Defence, Military, NZ Forces Overseas</td>
<td>DND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Domestic News; Transport, Travel and Tourism.</td>
<td>DNTT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 Domestic News; Environment.</td>
<td>DNEV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Domestic News; Health and Technological Developments.</td>
<td>DNHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Domestic News; Accidents and Disasters; Man Made.</td>
<td>DNDM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 Domestic News; Natural Disasters, Accidents and Weather Extremes.</td>
<td>DNDN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 Domestic News; Human-interest, Historical Items.</td>
<td>DNH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 Domestic News; Celebrities and Obituaries</td>
<td>DNCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Domestic News, Miscellaneous.</td>
<td>DNM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 -International News; Politics; International.</td>
<td>INPI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 -International News; Politics; Domestic.</td>
<td>INPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 International News; Economics, National and International.</td>
<td>INE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 International News; War, Uprisings, and Violent Political Activity.</td>
<td>INW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 International News; Social Conflicts (excluding terrorism).</td>
<td>INSC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4: The Category System.

A full description of each category can be found in Appendix I. The fifty-six categories represent an exhaustive system for cataloguing the 6551 items and other programme elements recorded over the sample period. To a degree, every decision made was subjective – this researcher alone determined the central theme of every item, and slotted it into a category. The most important aspect of this subjectivity was that it remained consistent over every year of the sample; the same subjective decisions were made for every element coded. As an added precaution, to avoid slippage in that consistency over the time it took to code everything from 1984 to 1996, we coded samples from each decade consecutively. Thus, we began with the year 1996, then coded the year 1984, then 1995, then 1985, and so on; moving towards the middle from both ends of the spectrum. To check intra-coder reliability after completing the original task, we began with the year 1990, and moved out again; 1989, then 1991, etc, to make doubly sure that each entry remained loyal to the original classification system. This form of reliability is called stability – the degree that the process does not change over time. The coding checks ensured a greater degree of stability and fewer intra-coder inconsistency errors.
Because of the range of the category system, some decisions were easier to make than others. Items about natural disasters seldom contained political dimensions as their central subject. The difficult categorisations were those that were closer in subject matter, which occurred particularly in reportage of various types of political activities or economic issues. To a degree, virtually all the political items revolved around a function of Parliament; that of discussing and making policy. The distinctions we had made between coverage of various types of political activities reflect the distinctions made within the items themselves. To reiterate, if the focus of the item was on policy, it was coded Policy. If the focus was elsewhere, it was coded as such. These fine distinctions presented a series of results that displayed some interesting patterns, in some cases showing a clear move away from the coverage of particular types of political activity, and towards others. While some of the finer categories proved informative, others were less so, with no discernible patterns (at least to our eyes) emerging from the data. The parentheses suggest a possible use for data-base this research has developed. Others may find, for example, the peaks and troughs in the amount of reportage of Economic News, Inflation useful as a measure of the relative salience of inflation over the sample period.

As discussed above, the small categories can be compounded into larger ones, while the opposite is impossible without re-coding. All the Domestic News; Political categories could be collapsed into a single domestic political news category. The two International News; Politics categories can be collapsed to present a single international politics category. Those two broader categories can be lumped into a single view of the changing level of political coverage on One Network News over the sample period. This coalescing of the smaller into the larger produced some very interesting results, which are the subject of the next chapter. By the same token, the fact that these larger categories combine smaller ones makes coding practices more transparent for the critical reader. The exhaustive coding scheme illuminates the sub-categorical make-up of the larger, ‘carpet-bag’ categories, and makes the data-set more easily adjustable in response to critical questioning.

A final word on the category system, and the sample period itself. This era in New Zealand saw radical re-structuring to the public service. Much care has been taken with the placement of items to ensure that the government withdrawal from many
areas of the public sector was reflected in the data. However, the shrinking of the New Zealand state is itself highly political, and successive governments' political, if not financial involvement in many areas of 'de-regulated' or state owned industries remains accessible to media scrutiny. The recent state involvement in the affairs of TVNZ, Timberlands, Air New Zealand, electricity generation and the telecommunications industry are evidence of this.

4: The Measurement of the Length of Elements in the Sample.

All news, sport and weather items were measured as whole items, timed in seconds. Item length coding was not as straightforward as one may have thought. The majority of items had a clear beginning and end, usually signalled by the anchor. Typically, the anchor would introduce an item, and my timing would begin. If the item involved a track (a complete report filed by a staff journalist in the field), the journalist would signal the end of the piece, the programme would return to the studio for the introduction to the next item, and we would stop timing that item. If the item was a voice-over (the anchor would introduce a story, then would continue talking over moving pictures) then the timing began with the introduction, and ended with the introduction of the next item. Sometimes, and mostly in the earlier part of the sample, the anchor would read a series of short, usually international news items over pictures, with 'wipes' between the vision signalling a new topic. Such items were timed as individual stories.

Margaret Comrie noted in her study that producers and editors tended to assign different parts (or 'layers') of large news stories to different journalists, each tackling different aspects of the story. This tendency continued, and increased after 1990, usually with a return to the studio and the anchor introducing the next aspect and next journalist. Such items were measured separately, and sometimes coded in different

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categories, as each aspect of the larger story generally had a different angle on the issue or event, and so fell into a different category subject.

Sport items were measured as individual stories, in the same manner as news items. The weather segment was measured as a single item, although during the early 1990's, a practice of 'teasing' the weather with a quick roundup of the day's weather developed, usually before the advertising break leading to the weather segment. During 1991, this round up moved to the end of the programme, after the Holmes show, when the programme returned to the news studio for signing-off. Both these round-ups were coded Weather, as they contained a fair degree of weather information, rather than simply teasing the audience. By 1993, this practice had been abandoned.

Commercial breaks were measured as whole units, from the beginning of the first advert, to the return to the news programming. The only elements that were not measured as complete items were presenter chit-chat and banter. This was measured from its beginning to the return to informational programming, and consisted mostly of short pieces of 'throw' to another segment of the programme. For instance, passing over the presenting from the news section to the sports or weather sections. As the sample moved through the mid-1990's, these pieces of chit-chat grew more frequent and more expansive.

5: Intercoder Reliability.

We coded all material in the survey twice. Two other coders conducted intercoder reliability, Dr. Joe Atkinson of the Political Studies Department at the University of Auckland, and Mark Boyd, Foreign Editor at One Network News, TVNZ. It is important when testing for intercoder reliability that the testers are well versed in content analysis methodology at a practical level, and also aware of media practices at a functional level. Both these men have had a long association with media, one

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Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities, pg. 136.
primarily academic, the other, primarily occupational, however it is worth pointing out that Atkinson was a journalist before becoming an academic, and Boyd recently conducted his own content analysis of *One Network News’s* election coverage for a Masters Degree in this department, so both men were familiar with the theoretical issues involved in media, as well as practical considerations.

Boyd and Atkinson checked 39 bulletins with 1339 different elements timed and coded, and achieved very high levels of intercoder agreement. Boyd agreed with 1286 decisions, or 96% of coding decisions. Atkinson returned 1192 agreements, or 89.02%. The dates checked are listed below in **Table 3.3**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Mon, 18.04.94</td>
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<td>Tue, 02/06/92</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Fri, 03.02.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs, 18/04/96</td>
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<td>Fri, 07/06/96</td>
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<td>Mon, 07/10/96</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.3: Intercoder Reliability Testing Dates.**

6: Some Limitations of this Content Analysis.

There are some inescapable limitations to content analysis in the study of news. Firstly, there are three stages in the transmission of content in a typical communication event, yet this survey only looks at one. The sender of the message encodes information; the message is transmitted and then is decoded by the receiver...
of the message, becoming a representation of the original information. A simple
diagram, Figure 3.1 below, may clarify the model.

Figure 3.1: A Simplified Communication Model

Both the encoding and the decoding of messages are complex processes about which
there has been much academic debate. This content analysis does not examine
either process, only the transmission stage of the model: what the content of the
messages was as determined by a commonsense approach to the meaning of the
content, and how it changed over time. By looking at changing content, this survey
made some references about the encoding of content, in particular, what types of
information were coded and why it changed. The micro-analysis chapter looked more
closely at the transmission process, focusing on one type of message, specifically
Domestic Political Policy, and how the messages themselves had changed over the
sample period. Explored in that chapter are conclusions, drawn from the research,
about the changing conditions of the encoding process at One Network News.

219 Klaus Krippendorff, 'Theories and Analytical Constructs,' In Gerbner, Holsti, Krippendorff, Paisley
and Stone (Eds.) The Analysis Of Communication Content, pg. 4.
pag 101.
Anderson and Sharrok claim content analysis cannot examine what the media does not report on, but it can indicate its changing focus over time. The hypothesis is that content structures of *One Network News* have changed over time, and in a roughly predictable direction, and content analysis is a highly reliable means of testing whether this is the case. By looking at what is reported at one time, and comparing it to other times, such an analysis can build up a view of what subjects received more or less attention as the financial and regulatory structure of the organisation changed. In this light, Anderson and Sharrok’s criticism of content analysis misunderstands this feature of comparative research. By showing which subjects received a high level of attention at one time, but not another, it indicates which subjects move in and out of salience over time. Cross-cultural comparison would undoubtedly widen the range of subject possibilities beyond those present, but the range of news topics is not infinite, and our scheme is more comprehensive than many. The necessary bridging assumption - that no systemic differences exist in this external world that could independently account for such content changes - is a matter for empirical investigation.

The sample size was large; thirteen years is much longer than other examination of changing content at *One Network News* so far been conducted, but the lack of videotaped resources from before 1984 was a limiting factor here. Large-scale change to the presentation of content had begun in 1989 (as explored in the Chapter 5), and TVNZ was gearing up for competition even before that. While we placed 1990 as a convenient centre-year for the sample, it would have been interesting to track further back along the archives to see if patterns in the data continued before 1984. On the other hand, the long period of the sample after deregulation, 1991 to 1996, provided ample time to determine how firmly the changes had bedded in.

The fifteen days per year sample size was adequate when examining some of the larger subject categories, and when some of the smaller categories were collapsed into

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20 Anderson and Sharrok, ‘Biasing the News, pg. 315.
21 Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication*, pg. 29.
22 Spicer, Powell and Emanuel, *The Remaking of Television New Zealand*. 

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larger ones, but it was of less use in examining patterns in some of the subject categories with smaller returns. A plausible alternative view is, of course, that there were no significant patterns, regardless of the sample size, in some of the subject categories. To the extent that this study confirms previous research based on smaller samples, content analysis appears to be an unusually robust research tool. Of course, this assurance will not satisfy professional apologists; but then, nothing would.

7: Validity of Results.

The proof of this sort of research is, as always, in the pudding. It is important, having developed a series of results, to compare those findings with the results of other researchers'. The researcher must ask himself, are these results consistent? Are they supported by other information regarding the phenomenon? Do they appear to be a valid series of findings? If the results do not appear to corroborate other findings, the researcher must look closely for methodology reasons but, if none are found, the researcher should endeavour to be equally receptive to findings which appear counter-intuitive or which falsify initial expectations.

Naïve empiricism involves random trawling through data for interesting patterns. Its Achilles heel is the accidental universal; a pattern which is apparent but with no explanatory purchase. This study is set against a solid backdrop of established theoretical and empirical knowledge, and it looks in a focused (and knowing) manner for expected temporal changes in news content. This is a very far cry from naïve empiricism, and to the extent that it contributes to an accumulating body of wisdom, its findings will not be easily overturned by the detection of occasional errors.

The findings of this survey, as reported in the next chapter, do largely confirm the findings of other researchers. They closely resemble, and indeed advance, the findings of Margaret Comrie's work, both on her Ph. D, and in other studies she has

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28 Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities, pg. 143.
undertaken. They also replicate and confirm the work by Joe Atkinson, Alan Cocker, and Wayne Hope, both in terms of explicit media content findings, and also reflecting wider issues in broadcasting and deregulation in New Zealand. The findings, given that they are drawn from a much larger sample size than previous research, both in terms of scope and depth, offer substantive evidence for many academic anecdotal criticisms of the media published in New Zealand over the sample period. Perhaps most tellingly, they confirm much academic theory regarding the effects of commercialisation on news content, but also a more general view held by sections of the New Zealand public that the One Network News nightly six o’clock bulletin is ‘not what it used to be’.

8: Looking Ahead.

The next chapter examines the coded data, while Chapter 5 introduces a narrower, more tightly focused qualitative analysis of a single news subject in order to examine whether the presentation of content had also changed.

20 Comrie and McGregor, Balance and Fairness in Broadcast News.
22 Cocker, A Toaster with Pictures.
24 McManus, Market Driven Journalism.
Chapter IV: The Macro-Analysis of News Content; The Findings.

1: Introduction.

We now turn to the real heart of this thesis, the content analysis. This chapter presents the results of the research, but begins by summarising the hypotheses.

Commercialisation was expected to increase, with presentational and revenue elements (advertising and promotions) increasing at the expense of the news segment. Within the news segment itself, we anticipated more Morselisation meaning shorter stories, sound-bites and shot length. Depoliticisation was expected to occur, with a reduction in coverage of expressly political issues replaced by more psychological and less overtly political crime and other types of items. We anticipated more Gaming Orientation, meaning reduced coverage of political issues and events over the period and especially during election years and increased ‘horse-race’ style coverage with a greater reliance on polling data, and less discussion of policy issues.

Personalisation was expected to increase, meaning more stories about victims, particularly victims of crime, while the use of expert voices would be replaced by the voices of ordinary people. More Tabloidisation was anticipated, resulting in an inversion of serious journalistic norms, with an increase in reportage of the frivolous and sensational at the expense of unemotional reportage of serious topics. We expected more Decontextualisation, meaning fewer cited sources and references to verifiable evidence in favour of more universalised narratives. The number of stories situated in Auckland was expected to increase at the expense of regional coverage as a result of the move of TVNZ’s central office to Auckland in the late eighties meaning more Centralisation. Increasing Trivialisation was expected meaning an increase in the use of theme music and presenter chit-chat, and associated with this we expected more Familiarisation; that is the adoption of a dual anchor format and an extension of
the 'news family' to include weather and sports presenters, all to designed to foster para-social interaction.

We expected an increase in Atomisation, meaning a reduction in stories about collective action like unionism at the expense of stories about individual actors portrayed as villains and victims as in crime coverage. Finally, we anticipated more Commodification; a reduction in stories that serve the needs of the audience as citizens, and an increase in stories that serve their needs as consumers.

The following chapter looks first in Section 1 at changes to the entire bulletin, including the allocation of time to the news section and non-news elements. It looks in Section 2 at the non-news elements themselves, and the changing allocation of time to advertising as compared to news reportage. The section ends with an overall look at changes to news priorities between 1984 and 1996.

Section 3 looks at changes to the news section and the allocation of time to news categories. A summary graph begins this section. It then looks at those news categories that returned the most salient results, beginning with political news. The categories begin with those of the largest reductions over the period and then with those with the largest gains.

Note here that not every news category is graphed. Some categories returned results that are too small to be of much interest. This suggested that the allocation of time to these categories had not changed much as a result of deregulation, or that they were too narrowly defined to return useful results. It may also be a combination of both factors. This was predicted by the methodology, which allows smaller categories to be grouped together, or collapsed into larger ones. For example, political reportage is a normative function of the news, but because we want to look at what political reportage consisted of, and if it changed in considerable ways, the domestic political category is split into a number of sub-groups like policy, strategy etc. Where the returns provide salient information, they are graphed – either as collapsed categories or as single categories. Where the results are too small or irregular, they are not graphed, although some are discussed. The results from all the news categories are presented at the end of Section 3 in Table 4.5 as a summary to this section.
Section 4 looks at changes to item length, and Section 5 presents some comparisons between the changes to various categories and length of news and non-news items. Section 6 examines some of the smaller categories that returned interesting results. Section 7 summaries the chapter, presenting the top five news category losers and gainers, and charting the range of change to the entire bulletin.

2: Changes to the Entire Bulletin.

This section looks at changes to the entire bulletin. This includes everything that occurred in each bulletin, from the opening to the closing titles, including advertising breaks, presenter exchanges, teasers and headlines, sport, and of course the news segment. Comparing the amount of time dedicated to non-news elements in relation to news elements provides an insight into the relative importance of each as commercial pressures increased, both before and after deregulation.
Figure 4.1: News vs. Non-News

Note on the Graph: This graph is represented as an averaged, sample bulletin for each year. This was achieved by totalling all the seconds in each year, and totalling all the seconds in each category. The year and category totals were divided by 15 (the number of bulletins each year). The graphs also feature a data table below the graph showing the data for each entry. Raw figures are available for comparison in Appendix II.

Beginning in 1984, Figure 4.1 shows an average or sample bulletin length of forty minutes. The rest of the news hour until 1989 was dedicated to regional news programming with a news-magazine format. Holmes was introduced as a separate half-hour show in 1989, reducing news bulletin’s length to half-an-hour. In early 1995, One Network News lengthened from a half-hour to an hour-long bulletin, and Holmes moved to seven o’clock. The chart clearly shows this increase in news bulletin duration, but a smaller increase in the length of the news segment. Despite the entire bulletin increasing twenty minutes between 1984 and 1996, the news segment increased by only four and a half minutes. Non-news elements more than doubled, from fifteen minutes per forty-minute bulletin, to thirty-two minutes per sixty-minute bulletin. Another way of examining the data is to nullify the differences.

214 All news items combined vs. all non-news elements combined, expressed as the amount of minutes and seconds in a sample bulletin.
in total programme length, and examine the category results as percentages of the total results.

Figure 4.2: News vs. Non-News.223

Note on the Graph: To develop percentages, each category total is divided into the annual total, the result multiplied by one hundred. Because of variation in bulletin length, both over the year (Summer bulletins are generally shorter) and between the years some results tended to be skewed by programme length. Presenting the data as percentages irons out those kinks.

Figure 4.2 shows the steady shrinkage of the news segment. From 1984, the news segment shrunk as a percentage of the entire bulletin, until 1990 when it occupied less than half the bulletin, and non-news items became a majority element of the programme. There was a slight reverse in 1991, but news remained in the minority, a process which increased in 1993, and again in 1996 when it fell to 46% of the bulletin – a fall from a 1984 high of 61%. In total, the news segment shrunk over the period by 15% of the bulletin. However, deregulation did not begin until 1988/89, so if commercial pressures are to blame, why had it shrunk 11% by the end of 1989? The

223 The size of the news segment: all news items combined vs. non-news elements combined, expressed as percentage of entire sample bulletin. (NB: y axis begins at 35% for clarity).
answer lies in the pre-deregulation expectations of One Network News management, and the creeping commercialism brought about by the reduction in real income from the frozen licence fee. By 1989 TVNZ received less than 7% of its total income from the license fee.

As discussed in Chapter 2, TVNZ management began preparing for deregulation as early as 1985. Even before this, the frozen licence fee meant inflation was eating into TVNZ's real income, forcing them to reduce costs and adopt a more commercially oriented approach to programme production, including news. In 1985, TVNZ developed an aggressive and expensive international programme buying strategy in order to deny the anticipated competition the best of overseas programming. Preparations also included a re-evaluation of the news bulletin. In 1986, one hundred and fifty job losses were announced, despite a licence fee increase, and the first branding advertising of the BCNZ began. In 1987, TV3 won the rights to the third channel (although an appeal was lodged immediately), and in 1988, the One Network News moved from a six-thirty slot to a six o'clock slot in order to expand the amount of primetime, and so the chargeable hours of primetime advertising rates. Dual anchors began to read the news toward the end of 1988. In 1989, the new newshour began, with the half-hour Holmes show following directly on from the half hour of news, and TV3 began broadcasting news in direct competition with One Network News.

The shrinking news segment graphically illustrates the commercial imperative that had begun to creep into the organisation four years before actual deregulation and competition. It is apparent from the more horizontal tendencies of the graph after 1984 that, even if this were the case between 1984-1990, the rate of descent could hardly have been continuous before 1984. The reducing news segment between 1984 and 1990 clearly reflects the effects of deregulation, competition and of a commercial mindset on the news segment as identified by McManus. The relationship between news and non-news elements after 1990 was less volatile, which indicated a reasonably stable post-deregulatory institution, although as a percentage of the

25 Spicer, Powell and Emanuel. The Remaking of Television New Zealand, pg. 73.
26 McManus, Market Driven Journalism.
bulletin, the news segment did shrink, again slightly, after the move to a full hour of news in 1996. These results confirm previous research on commercialisation of *One Network News*. They also confirm earlier empirical findings on the effects of commercialisation on broadcast news, both domestically and internationally. The move toward deregulation was accompanied by a decrease in the news segment, and an increase in non-news elements. After deregulation, the bulletin consisted of more non-news elements than actual news. The stabilised de-regulated content maintained and even slightly increased the gap, but the movement was less pronounced than during the radical re-formatting of the programme in the pre-deregulation period. Commercialisation signifies a change in the relationship between news and non-news. 

**Figure 4.3** presents a breakdown of non-news elements for further analysis (*Weather, Sport, CB* and *Chit-chat*).
Figure 4.3: Weather, Sport, Chit-chat and Advertising Expressed as Time.

Figure 4.3 again illustrates the problems with presenting the findings in minutes and seconds. While large increases in all the non-news categories are evident with the move to a news hour in 1995, the graph is less informative than it would be if the results were presented as percentages, because the increases are obscured within the longer bulletin when everything else also increases. As such, Figure 4.4 is more illustrative, and minutes and seconds will not be used again in this study except in discussion of item, shot, sound-bite and segment sense when they make more sense. The next graph looks at the foregoing information expressed as percentages.

214 Non-News Elements: Weather, Sport, Chit-chat and Advertising expressed as the amount of minutes and seconds per category in a sample bulletin.
Figure 4.4: Weather, Sport, Chit-chat and Commercial Breaks.

Figure 4.4 more clearly displays the variations between the non-news elements as a percentage of the bulletin over the sample period.

Weather: Displaying a slight variation until 1989, the percentage of the bulletin given over to weather peaked in 1990 at 8.8%, then fell away again to 6.3% in 1996: an average 1% increase over the sample period. Weather can be regarded as a non-news element since, from a citizenship perspective, it is a physical given and not responsive to public debate. The weather segment may have a marginal role in giving voice to regional identities, and contributing to a sense of common nationhood, but weather generally only becomes news when serious disruption is apparent – at which point it does appear in the bulletin outside its designated segment, and is coded here as news in the normal way. After 1986, however, the separate weather segment gained a higher profile, with new formats in 1986 and 1988, when younger women, including an ex-beauty pageant winner, took over the role from the traditional ‘weather lady’ – generally mature women who read the weather over still graphics. By 1988, the

Non-News Elements: Weather, Sport, Chit-chat and Advertising, expressed as percentage of entire sample bulletin.
weather graphics had been computerised, and in 1995 a powerful computer was installed to run the weather graphics. The computer was used only for animating the graphics, not to aid weather prediction. By 1993 the weather presenter had become a regular member of the ‘news-family’, engaging in nightly banter with the dual-anchor team, and exhibiting a distinctly companionable personality, lightening the mood toward the end of the bulletin, and fostering para-social interaction between the studio team and the audience.

The increase in weather as a percentage of the bulletin after 1988, coupled with the highly personalised presentation style can be taken to confirm an increase in Familiarisation and Trivialisation. That weather reportage expanded in the deregulatory years of 1988 to 1990, and then largely settled down, suggests the gradual institutionalisation of an initial decision to increase the prominence of non-news but popular elements like weather. This institutional trend is also reflected in other elements of news and non-news categories.

*Sport:* The trajectory of the Sport category over the sample period seems to contradict our expectations about the effects of commercialisation on content. Sport decreased over the sample period by nearly a percentage point; the same amount that weather increased. There was a 3% dip in the Sport category in 1989, and although it recovered after 1991, it remained a sharply lower percentage than in the pre-deregulation years. One possible explanation may be the commercial and competitive drive for female viewers as a result of deregulation. Females tend to do most of the household shopping. As such, they are a highly desirable sector of the audience for advertisers wishing to capture their attention. As commercial television competes for audiences desired by advertisers, Sport, mostly male-oriented in its appeal could be considered less likely to capture and keep female viewers for the advertising breaks. To reduce the amount of sports coverage would have been a plausible commercial response to this problem. This interpretation would be reinforced if more female sports were included in the sports section over the sample period.

*Commercial Breaks:* The remorseless rise of advertising as a percentage of the bulletin was indicative of the Commercialisation of the programme. Starting from 12.9% in 1984, advertising increased to 23.7% of the average bulletin by 1996.
Advertising was the single largest increase of any category, news or non-news, in the study. In terms of time, advertising increased from five minutes per forty minutes, to fourteen minutes per sixty. Table 4.1 shows that once the advertising is removed, the bulletin increased by only eleven minutes between 1984 and 1996, despite a twenty minute increase in bulletin length. The drop in bulletin length to 30 minutes after 1988 coincided with the arrival of the half-hour Holmes show, and the advent of commercial competition with TV3. In short, whereas Sports, Weather and Chit-chat respond variably to bulletin expansion and contraction, the Commercial Breaks increase inexorably, regardless of the length of the bulletin.

Table 4.1. Sample Bulletin Length After Removal of Advertising Breaks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bulletin Length</th>
<th>Adverts</th>
<th>Bulletin Length Minus Adverts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>39:10</td>
<td>05:02</td>
<td>34:08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>37:38</td>
<td>05:36</td>
<td>32:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>37:54</td>
<td>06:12</td>
<td>31:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>38:41</td>
<td>06:54</td>
<td>31:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>37:44</td>
<td>06:10</td>
<td>31:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>32:39</td>
<td>06:07</td>
<td>26:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>31:01</td>
<td>05:44</td>
<td>25:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>31:48</td>
<td>06:48</td>
<td>25:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>32:16</td>
<td>06:40</td>
<td>25:36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>32:45</td>
<td>07:00</td>
<td>25:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>32:50</td>
<td>07:00</td>
<td>25:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>59:31</td>
<td>14:06</td>
<td>45:25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.4 displays a steady rise in Commercial Breaks between 1984 and 1987, with a small drop in 1988-1990. This rise in Commercial Breaks as a proportion of the bulletin may have represented a heightened reliance on commercial revenue at TVNZ as the costs of preparing for deregulation rose. Despite an increase in the licence fee in 1986, the income from the fee failed to keep pace with costs. The rise in advertising in the post deregulation period clearly shows increasing Commercialisation, in line with our expectations.

Chit-chat: The banter between the presenters, introductions, headlines and teasers over the advertising breaks and other promotional material increased over the sample from 3% to 8% of the sample bulletin. Remaining steady for the first three years, Chit-chat rose from 3.2% to 10.2% between 1986 and 1990; a dramatic increase that coincided with the introduction of a dual-anchor format in 1988. It remained fairly steady between 1991 and 1996, dropping back to the 8% recorded at the end of the sample. This indicated the stabilised institutional approach to non-news elements after 1990. Elements such as Chit-chat serve no useful journalistic function, but do serve a commercial one. They work to encourage para-social interaction by creating an illusion of intimacy. They also allow the bulletin to be refashioned as an emotional
roller-coaster to retain viewer interest around the advertising breaks, confirming the expectations raised by Atkinson's paper on the Hawkesby affair.22

The introductions and headlines highlight items of importance, and are of interest to the audience. Comrie found a wide range of items were highlighted in this way, and were intended to appeal to a wide range of viewers. The lead story was often the most important, but other, less important items such as human-interest, disaster items and sport were also routinely headlined and teased. By 1990, the final year in Comrie's study, sport and human-interest items were the most regularly highlighted categories.23

Teasers, designed to keep the viewer watching over the advertising break were also heavily sport and tabloid-orientated by the end of the period covered by Comrie's study. Although not formally examined in this study, sport and tabloid-orientated items dominated teasers and headlines in the bulletins we watched through to 1996. Promotional material began to make a more frequent appearance in the bulletins we watched after 1990.

The rise in Chit-chat as a category of non-news tends to confirm Commercialisation, Familiarisation and Trivialisation of One Network News.

The years 1984-1987 display a fairly steady relationship among non-news items, and between non-news items and the rest of the bulletin. With the exception of advertising, there was very little change in these categories over this period. The years 1988 to 1991, on the other hand, displayed a great deal of change in non-news items, with sharp increases in all categories except Sport, which was one sixth of the bulletin before deregulation, and was beginning to creep up again three years after deregulation. After 1991, the results again stabilised, with only advertising showing a steady rise. These data are consistent with the hypothesis that the changing institutional arrangements of One Network News during the deregulatory period, 1989-1991, would fundamentally alter the size of non-news categories, and the

22 Joe Atkinson, 'Parasocial Dysfunction in the TVNZ News Family: The Hawkesby Affair.'
proportion of news to non-news. A relatively stable pre-deregulation content consisting of more news than non-news was replaced by an unstable period of non-news incursion into the news segment, before another relatively stable post-deregulation content structure emerged; one in which Commercialisation, Familiarisation, and Trivialisation characterised the bulletin. By 1996, Commercial Breaks had overtaken Sport in priority providing a graphic illustration of Commercialisation. Chit-chat overtook Weather, meaning more Familiarisation and Trivialisation. The move from a hybrid public service broadcasting/commercial monopoly operation to a fully commercial and competitive broadcasting operation had a measurable impact on the content of non-news and the size of the news segment over the sample period. By comparing sample bulletins from the beginning and end of the period, very distinct changes in the distribution of news categories, and in the relationship with non-news elements are readily apparent.
Figure 4.5: Changes in the Entire Bulletin, 1984 and 1996.

Note on the Graph: Figure 4.5 shows the distribution of time to collapsed categories for the years 1984 and 1996 (including Weather, Sport, Chat and Commercial Breaks.) The first Y Axis shows the percentage of an entire sample bulletin that each category occupied, in 1984 and in 1996. The second Y Axis is the percentage of change to these categories. Table 4.2 is the same information, shown as a table. The collapses are reasonably straightforward. Politics All, for example, comprises all domestic and international political news categories added together, then expressed as a percentage of the total bulletin.

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23 Full Collapse of Categories - 1984 vs. 1996, change as a percentage of entire sample bulletin, represented a percentage of entire sample bulletin and percentage change, 1984 and 1996.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Collapsed</th>
<th>1984</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics All</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>-16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour News All</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Fisheries</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Conflict All</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health And Technology All</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment All</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INW All</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Defence All</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice All</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Items All (DNRA,DNAM,DNTT)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disasters All</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI/C/O/M All</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics All</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime All</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weath/Sport/CB/Chit-chat All</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.5 and Table 4.2. show that apart from economics and justice, public affairs coverage declined, while tabloid news elements and bulletin packaging increased. The increased amount of Weather, Sport, Advertising and Chit-Chit-chat is clearly visible. Displaying the findings as percentages shows time as a finite resource within the bulletin – if more attention is paid to one category of news, or non-news, then time allocated to other categories is sacrificed. The very large increase in non-news elements (15%) was matched by the very large decrease in the category, All Political News, which shrunk by 16% to nearly a third of the 1984 levels. The Depoliticisation of One Network News is explicit in this comparison. The graph provides a foretaste of changes in the proportions of other subject areas within the news segment, and it is to these that this study now turns.
3: Changes within the News Segment.

Figure 4.6: Change as a Percentage of the News Segment 1984 and 1996.\textsuperscript{224}

Note on Graph: This graph shows the distribution of time to collapsed news categories for the years 1984 and 1996 (and so excludes Weather, Sport, Chat and Commercial Breaks). The first Y Axis shows the percentage of an entire sample news segment that each category occupied, in 1984 and in 1996. A percentage of the entire news segment was developed by adding all the seconds in the news categories for each year in the sample, then all the seconds in each category, then dividing the category totals into the news segment total, and developing a percentage. The sample news segment for each year was reached by dividing the totals by the number of bulletins recorded in each year (15). The second Y Axis is the percentage of change to these categories. Table 4.3 provides the same information, but shown as a table.

\textsuperscript{224} Full Collapse Categories - 1984 vs. 1996, change as a percentage of the news segment, represented as a percentage of the entire news segment and percentage change 1984 and 1996.
Table 4.3: Collapsed Categories as a Percentage of Entire Sample News Segment, 1984 and 1996.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Collapsed</th>
<th>1984</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics All</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>-20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour News All</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>-6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Fisheries</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Conflict All</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>-1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health And Technology All</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Defence All</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment All</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INW All</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Items All (DNRA,DNAM,DNTT)</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice All</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disasters All</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI/C/O/M All</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics All</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime All</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.6 and Table 4.3. show that, if we confine our attention to the news segment itself (those elements of the bulletin left after non-news items are removed), the reduction of Politics All between 1984 and 1996 becomes glaringly obvious, and is the largest reduction in any collapsed category in the survey. Between these two ‘bookend’ years, the explicitly political output of One Network News content reduced by more than half, dropping from 40.5% to 20% of the news segment. Labour news was the second largest loser with a 6.1% decrease in items on employment issues. Agriculture and Fisheries news, Social Conflict and Health and Technology issues all also diminished. Defence issues remained unchanged, while Environmental reportage, War, Road Accidents, Accommodation, Health and Education news and Justice issues all displayed small increases. Disaster News, Human-interest, Celebrity, Obituaries and Miscellaneous news all recorded proportionally larger increases. All Economic News items recorded an even larger increase, and Crime the largest increase of all. These findings confirm previous research findings on the effects of commercial pressures on news values.

The rise of economic reportage was particularly interesting, however, as critical media theory generally posits that populist, market-led media tends to move away
from the reportage of complex issues like economics to issues which are more easily, quickly and cheaply produced, such as crime, human-interests or disaster news. As will shortly become apparent, however, a closer examination of Economic News and changes to sub-divisions within that category is a classic case of exception proving the rule.

The following graphs look more closely at changes to different news categories over the period.

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22 McManus, Market Driven Journalism.
Figure 4.7: All Political News.\textsuperscript{26}

For a closer examination of the changes to the news segment over the period, we begin in Figure 4.7 with the collapsed category subjected to the largest percentage change, \textit{All Politics}. The demise of political items is readily apparent here as a post-deregulation pattern of recurrent peaks and troughs. The largest annual fall came at the beginning of the deregulatory period in 1989. Like changes to the entire bulletin, the results indicated a highly stable system of news priorities before this period, a large change during the deregulatory period, and a very stable pattern after deregulation (the cycles are discussed below). The 10\% fall in political news in 1989 coincided precisely with changes to the regulatory framework of TVNZ, and the

advent of direct competition with TV3. Following this first deregulatory plunge, the coverage of political issues continued to fall more gradually. The Depoliticisation of the bulletin is thus glaringly apparent if political news is conventionally defined as news about public affairs.27

An obvious feature of these results is the cyclical peaks of political reportage during election years: 1987, 1990, 1993 and 1996, and steep falls in the immediate post-election years. As the survey did not go back further than 1984, we could not be absolutely certain that the 1984 high was a peak due to election coverage, but the subsequent years and patterns of election year peaks make this a plausible assumption. The slight drop in coverage after 1984 could be read as a foretaste of this pattern, as could the slight increase in 1987. After 1987 however, this weak election year cycle became far more pronounced, with slightly less coverage at each election cycle. This pattern suggested that, post-deregulation, One Network News’s interest in political issues and events was confined to election contests (offering some confirmation of the Gaming Orientation hypothesis, but also reflective of a journalistic attachment to election coverage) rather than reflecting a continuous interest in the development and implementation of policy. This latter function of media represents a vitally important role in democratic accountability as it alerts the audience to the accuracy of various election campaign promises and gives them clues about the ability of the Government to implement them. Given the importance of political accountability, it is of profound concern that Domestic News: Politics, Policy dropped further than any other single category in the survey. The following graphs look at other aspects of political reportage.

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27 It is worth noting, that Depoliticisation may also be called re-politicisation, since the so-called ‘other news’ of human-interest stories is scarcely apolitical. See, for example, John Langer, Tabloid Television: Popular Journalism and the ‘Other News,’ Routledge, London, 1988, who finds ominously conservative political implications in human-interest stories.
Figure 4.8: Domestic vs. International Political News.

Figure 4.8. shows that when we break-down all political news into its Domestic and International components, we find that the post-deregulation pattern of domestic election year peaks did not apply to the pre-deregulation years; in fact, the opposite of the post-1990 pattern occurred. In the 1987 election year, domestic political coverage dropped away from the previous year, but rose the year after. The 1988/1989 slump in political coverage included both domestic and international political news, the Politics All (see Figure 4.7) coverage election year peaks and troughs in domestic news was consistent with the Gaming Orientation hypothesis that One Network News coverage of domestic political news in non-election years was considerably less than in election years. The 1987 slump in domestic coverage was difficult to explain, but the leap in international coverage provides a plausible reason. The international coverage of that

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234 A collapse of all the domestic political news categories; Domestic News; Political, Policy (DNPP) Taxation, Finance, Inflation, (DNPT) SOE’s, Assets, Public Service, (DNPO) Health, (DNPH) Education, (DNPE) Accommodation, (DNPA) International Relations, (DNPIR) Strategy, Polls, Elections, Personalities (DNPS) vs. all a collapse of all the international political news categories: International News; Politics International (INPI) and Domestic, (INPI), represented as a percentage of an entire sample news segment.
year was associated with the coup in Fiji. If international political events demanded attention and political coverage was not to be increased overall, then coverage of domestic political activity would have had to be sacrificed. The large slump in both international and domestic political coverage follow the same pattern as other results in relation to the Depoliticisation of the bulletin as a response to deregulation and competition. Post-deregulation, international political coverage after 1990 increased, attributable to the Gulf War and the fallout from the collapse of the Soviet Union, but then dropped away considerably the following years. In 1992, the small increase in international political coverage was mainly concerned with the US presidential elections in which three parties contested the election, which was won, after a close race, by the Democrat Bill Clinton. After 1992, international political coverage continued to decline, reaching a low-point in 1994. In both domestic and international coverage of political events and issues, therefore, Depoliticisation of the bulletin was a distinctive if occasionally interrupted, trend.

The expanded category system allows us to look even more closely at international and domestic political coverage and, in the international arena, at coverage examining the political issues of single nations as well as political issues between nations.
Within the international political news category, Figure 4.9 shows that coverage of news concerned with politics between nations increased until 1986, then fell away sharply in 1988. The slight increase in 1990 was mainly concerned with the Gulf War and after this period coverage of the international political system dropped again to less than 1% of the average news segment. While it could be argued that the end of the Cold War in the early 1990’s contributed to the reduction in news about international political relations as relations between the eastern and western blocks became less tense, it would be difficult for anyone to claim the international system after 1992 deserved to be ignored. New sources of international tension like emerging ethnic conflicts arose during this period and continue today. In a normative journalistic sense, international relations remained an important issue for media organisations as new issues emerge (such as environmental and human rights concerns) to threaten the stability of the system. John McManus’s work on local television news in the US suggests that market research reveals an audience

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\(^{20}\) International Politics, News Concerned with International Political Issues (INPI) (news between other nations) vs. International Domestic Political Issues (INPD) (news within other nations), represented as a percentage of an entire sample news segment.
preference for domestic rather than foreign news, and this may be a factor here. Whatever the reason, the virtual absence of political coverage of the international system was a fairly stable pattern post-deregulation, and the lack of this sort of coverage could not be democratically advantageous to citizens of a small, outward-looking nation like New Zealand.

One Network News coverage of international news concerned with the domestic political arrangements of other countries follow a more erratic pattern than did coverage of the international system. A very large peak in 1987 followed a steady reduction from 1984 to 1986. One Network News coverage of the Fiji coup in 1987 was extensive, and given Fiji’s proximity to New Zealand, and the racially inspired nature of the coup, extra attention was understandable. The small increase in 1990 was mainly concerned with the domestic political structure of the Soviet Union, which was undergoing radical change during that year – providing spectacular visual coverage - change which continued through 1991 - 1992. The increase in coverage of the domestic political arrangements of other countries was small, although the events were important both to the Soviet people and the international system. The next peak in coverage of the internal politics of other countries was in 1996 and reflected election activities in the United States. The election was a dramatic televisual affair; one that catered to the demands of commercial television. It was a highly personalised election with tabloid elements relating to the moral fibre of the participants. It was also orchestrated as a highly visual affair by all three campaign teams.

It seemed likely that the commercialised One Network News saw this election as a contest worth covering, precisely for the ‘horse-race’ style American coverage they purchased from the American networks, while regarding the complex, but geo-politically more significant collapse of the Soviet Union as less ‘newsworthy’. The coverage of foreign elections (predominantly British and American) indicate the growing importance of Gaining Orientation as a feature of political coverage. From 1992, coverage of foreign domestic politics continued to decline.

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26 McManus, Market Driven Journalism.
The following graphs look more closely at domestic political coverage by expanding the domestic political coverage category into those categories that returned the most interesting results.

Figure 4.10: Domestic Political Policy News (DNPP) vs. Domestic Political Strategy News (DNPS).^25

Figure 4.10 portrays coverage of domestic political policy news items, i.e., those explicitly concerned with political policy discussion and implementation. These peaked in 1988 and decreased sharply after 1990. In 1985, 1986 and 1987 there were three major events concerning New Zealand’s international relations with other countries. The nuclear free policy of the fourth Labour government strained relations with the US. The Rainbow Warrior bombing created tensions with France, and the coup in Fiji heightened tensions among South Pacific nations. The reportage of policy discussions in Parliament was preoccupied with these events. (See Table 4.4 for a clear picture of this.) In 1988, the Labour Government enacted a large number of policy promises in relation to state assets (see Table 4.4). This explained the peak

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^25 Domestic News; Politics, Policy (DNPP) vs. Domestic News; Politics, Strategy, Polls, Elections, Personalities, (DNPS), represented as a percentage of an entire sample news segment.
in policy news that year. The steep fall the following year is probably attributable to a temporary halt in the reform process, or internal divisions within the Labour Government. 1990 was an election year, and the post-deregulation election year peak and trough pattern had become evident. After 1991 policy coverage never obtained more than 3% of the entire news segment. Policy coverage is perhaps the most important aspect of conventional political coverage, yet this single category recorded the greatest reduction of any category in the survey. There was less (proportionally) domestic policy coverage after deregulation than any other of the fifty-six categories in this study. While the large swings in this category before deregulation were attributable to political activity, the stable but reduced amount after deregulation points to a change in the institutional approach to political policy reportage. Once again, Depoliticisation was the consequence.

Before deregulation, stories about Elections, Personalities and Strategy appeared at roughly the same rate as Policy stories. There was little change in this category during the deregulatory period, 1989-1991, but in the 1993 election year it shot up to far out-strip Policy coverage. Policy and Strategy news ran roughly parallel to each other both before and after deregulation, but their relative positions were reversed. This strongly suggested a movement from one institutional arrangement to another, from a focus on political policy to a new focus on political personalities, strategies, polls and elections. A focus on the personal coupled with a reduction in policy coverage indicates Depoliticisation within political coverage itself. Like the coverage of the political arrangements of other countries (INPI see Figure 4.9) and the emphasis on US election contests, this domestic emphasis on election coverage generally, and the rise in coverage about election strategies and poll results also reaffirms Gaming Orientation as an increasingly prominent staple of political coverage.

Domestic political news about political strategies, personalities, polls and elections was the only political news category to increase over the sample period. As Table 4.4 shows, however, as all political news declined, strategy, personalities, polls and election news grew to occupy a greater proportion of domestic political news, from 23% in 1984, to 48% in 1996. Domestic policy news, by contrast, shrunk from 33% to 15% of domestic political news. So, as political coverage declined it also became
more negative and cynical, focusing not on policy, but on ‘horse-race’ style coverage and personality issues. This is in line with other research on election campaigns and media discourse, namely Thomas Patterson’s work. Again, this provided proof that *Gaming Orientation* was associated with deregulation. These results clearly signalled a shift in news coverage away from issue-based coverage of politics, towards a more cynical preoccupation with political games and strategy. Table 4.4 summarises all the changing percentages of the bulletin of all domestic political categories.

### Table 4.4: Individual Domestic Political News Categories

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misc. (DNPM)</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy (DNPP)</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax (DNPT)</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOE’s (DNPO)</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health (DNPH)</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educ. (DNPE)</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accom. (DNPA)</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.R (DNPIR)</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy (DNPS)</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data is represented as a percentage of entire news segments.

As can be seen from this table, many of the smaller domestic news categories produced returns that were too small to be of interest, or appeared to have no specific patterning. However, some of these areas merit brief discussion.

The results from the category *Assets, State Owned Enterprises* and the *Public Service* (DNPO) show the pre- and post deregulation patterns that are becoming familiar. The category was fairly stable before 1988, experienced volatility during the deregulatory period, and settled to a lower, but stable proportion of the news segment after 1990. It is perhaps not surprising that the passage of such a radical break with the public

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service past as the 1988 SOE Act would have resulted in an increase in policy discussion and implementation, and in explicit discussion of state asset activities and performance in general. The increase in One Network News items concerned with the deregulation of many New Zealand industries presumably indicated the broadcaster’s proper regard of deregulation as important, certainly for itself, and presumably for the audience as citizens. The sudden and persistent reduction in items about deregulation after 1990 could still have been a product of that deregulatory process and its impact on news values. Certainly, its virtual disappearance in 1991 is hard to explain as just the end of this first round of radical reform.

The coverage of political issues and events related to health experienced a peak in 1993 and 1994, but otherwise remained low. Health reform was a political football throughout the 1990’s, but there seemed no single health reform issue that dominated in 1993 and 1994. There is no obvious explanation for this blip in the data.

The peaks in political reportage on New Zealand’s international relations (DNPIR) in 1985, 1986 and 1988 can be explained by external events such as the ANZUS row that resulted from the Labour Government’s nuclear free policy, the Rainbow Warrior bombing, subsequent relations with France, and the Fiji coup. The Fiji coup had an impact on a number of categories as it was an issue of international political news concerned with the domestic political circumstances of other countries (INDP), it affected the region and so relations among South Pacific nations (INPI) and many of the items looked at its affect on New Zealand (DNPIR) (like all the items in the survey, each one was placed according to the main focus of the story). The other smaller increases later in the sample, 1992 and 1995 appear to have no single-issue explanation. The pre- and post deregulation differences in proportions of the news segment in their cases may be explained by events other than deregulation, although the general reduction in DNPIR would fit the hypothesis of Depoliticisation.
3.1: Summary of Political Coverage.

Having examined the most salient political news categories, it is clear that the transformation of TVNZ had a profoundly negative impact on political content. Overall, political coverage was dramatically reduced and it stayed down. Within that large category, most of the smaller political categories followed a distinctive pattern of a reasonably stable higher level of coverage before deregulation; a sharp reduction during deregulation, and a reasonably stable lower level after deregulation. Some sub-categories also appeared to reflect major political events, such as New Zealand’s international political relations during a period of conflict with both the United States over our nuclear weapons ban, France over the Rainbow Warrior bombing and also the Fiji coup. Even this category, however, received more attention before deregulation than after; despite international political relations being undiminished in importance to New Zealand. Indeed, given globalisation and the eradication of trade barriers, it was, if anything, more significant than ever before.

The examination of political coverage as a proportion of all news items confirms our prior expectation that deregulation and the introduction of commercial pressures would produce a news product that was more Commercialised, Depoliticised, Contested and Personalised. The reduction in news that served the audience’s political needs - their needs as citizens – also confirmed the hypothesis that the news product was increasingly Commodified.
3.2: Labour News.

The sample category that recorded the second largest reduction after Political News was Labour News. Only domestic items relating to labour news were recorded, but there was only one item about international labour relations included in the survey. The following graph looks at this category and finds an unfamiliar pattern.

Figure 4.11: Domestic News: Labour and Employment (DNL).\(^{234}\)

![Graph showing the percentage of Domestic News coverage for Labour and Employment from 1984 to 1996.]

Figure 4.11 reveals a distinctive see-saw pattern in Labour News coverage – up one year and down the next. The peaks from 1984 got lower and lower, while until 1990, the troughs remained about the same. 1987 - 1988 and 1995 - 1996 were the only years in which the amount of coverage did not immediately increase the following year. While the pattern of gradual decline might have been expected as a consequence of Depoliticisation, the peaks and troughs are not readily explicable. Labour and Employment, ACC, Wages and Conditions were fairly wide-ranging in their coverage, and with the exception of the Employment Contracts Act of 1991,

\(^{234}\) The Category Domestic News: Labour covered Labour and Employment, ACC, Wages and (working) Conditions.
there was no single focus. Reportage of labour disputes after 1991 reduced considerably, but if this was a consequence of the Act, which made organised labour disputes difficult, it was a temporary respite. By 1994, coverage was back up to near 1989 and 1991 levels. Other labour issues, such as working conditions and ACC were reported on sporadically. It is tempting to conclude that this pattern of peaks and troughs is an artefact of a carpet-bag category within which a variety of unrelated factors are at work, but the sheer regularity of this pattern suggests otherwise. Future research is necessary.
3.3 Health and Technology Coverage.

Figure 4.12: All Health and Technology News.

Figure 4.12 shows the combined total of domestic and international coverage of health and technology issues. *Health and Technology* reportage was generally 'soft' news, often akin to *Human-interest* items. The stories, particularly after deregulation, frequently featured experimental health technologies, which were highly speculative and far from being available to the consumer. Before 1990, *Health and Technology* items tended to focus on technological issues such as the US space program. After 1990, medical breakthroughs at the experimental stage became a common feature this category. Other *Health and Technology* items were often concerned with dietary findings, such as 'fatty foods are bad for you,' and other such truisms after 1990. The graph shows a steady decrease in *Health and Technology* stories as until 1989, when they began to increase again. As many of the items were couched in terms of consumer-news – 'news you can use' - particularly those featuring survey findings on diet and exercise, they tended to commodify the audience by offering solutions that

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235 All Domestic News; Health and Technology (DNHT) and International News; Health and Technology, (INHT) and The Total of the Two Categories as a Percentage of the News Segment.
were best consumed (such as fruit and vegetables, joining a gym etc.), to problems that were a result of over-consumption. Those items featuring medical breakthroughs, and in particular new developments in pharmaceutical drugs, again tended to commodity the audience by offering them new products to buy.

It is a pity this category was bundled together into Health and Technology, as the more differentiation of the categorisation would have shown more clearly this shift from stories about science and technology to stories about consumer medicine and technology. However, the results present a post-deregulation increase in items that served the needs of the audience as consumers, rather than citizens, and as such, are consistent with the Commodification thesis.

The next graph looks at the coverage of disaster and accidents, both domestically and internationally.
3.4 Disasters and Accidents.

Figure 4.13: Domestic Disasters and International Disasters.

Figure 4.13 presents a fairly stable pattern before deregulation, an increase during the deregulatory period, followed by a fairly steady pattern afterwards, although increased proportion of the news segment dedicated to disaster news. As such, it confirms the hypothesis that deregulation increased the amount of *tabloidisation* – news given over to the dramatic and the sensational. Disaster news before 1988 was sometimes spoken information over still pictures of flood, storm damage etc. After 1989, disaster news was always accompanied by moving pictures showing the aftermath of the damage, usually with eye-witness accounts of what happened. These dramatic

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Domestic News: Accidents and Disasters; Man Made Disasters and Accidents (DNMD) and Disasters and Accidents, Natural Disasters and Weather Extremes (DNND) summed to produce (Dom. Disasters) and International News: Man Made Disasters and Accidents, (INDM) and Natural Disasters and Weather Extremes, (INDN), summed to produce (Int. Disasters). (Dom. Disasters) and (Int. Disasters) summed to produce (Total) represented as a percentage of an entire sample news segment.
pictures and dialogues of suffering often conformed to the 'community at risk' stories identified by John Langer as typical of the Tabloidisation and Personalisation found in popular commercial television news reportage.39

While health and technology, disaster and crime news might have been included in the Human Interest category, we felt it would provide more interesting results to break them down, and develop a separate Human Interest category devoted to those items that could only be called human-interest. As discussed in the methodology, these were items that featured the bizarre, the surprising and the novel. Another distinguishing feature of the Human-interest item was humour or strong visual appeal made by an event or issue that was not very important. The following graph looks at these and other related categories.

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39 Langer, Tabloid Television, pp. 104-133.
3.5: The Human Interest Story.

Figure 4.14: All Human-interest Stories (HI), Celebrity and Obituary News (CO) and Miscellaneous News (Misc.).

Figure 4.14 reveals a stable pre-deregulation Human-interest, Celebrity, Obituary and Miscellaneous news pattern with the total amount hovering between 6% and 8%. During the deregulatory period, the amount increased, and except for a 4% fall in 1991, and the peaks and troughs after 1992, continued to increase as a proportion of the news segment. The increase in human-interest and celebrity news provides direct evidence for Curran et al's hypothesis. Increasing Tabloidisation, Trivialisation, Depoliticisation, and Atomisation were the results of increasing human-interest and

214 Domestic and International Human Interest (DNHI) and (INHI) summed to produce all Human Interest, (HI) and Domestic and International Celebrity and Obituary News (DNCO) and (INCO) summed to produce all Celebrity and Obituary News (CO) and Domestic and International Miscellaneous News (DNM) and (INM) summed to produce all Miscellaneous News, (Misc.), and a Total – represented as a percentage of an entire sample news segment.

214 Curran, Douglas and Whannel, "The Political Economy of the Human Interest Story."
celebrity coverage. The 10% difference between the 1984 and the 1995 bulletin meant that in 1995, there was 10% less room for other types of content. The reduction in 1996 was possibly a fluctuation around a rising mean, but it is impossible to be sure.

The 1993 peak in celebrity news was mostly domestic, and largely centred on TVNZ programme presenters, and as such was largely a matter of network self-promotion; a predictable activity associated with Commercialisation. The 1995 increase in Human-interest news included both domestic and international items, featured in their own segment called One More. This was a longish (particularly given the average length of items by this period – see Figure 4.21) segment that featured entertaining items such as singing dustmen and the English Chelsea Flower Show. Also that year, a replica of the HMS Endeavour was launched, and sailed around New Zealand. TVNZ was a principle sponsor of the Endeavour project, and One Network News covered its progress extensively, which boosted the human-interest category. This journey held little of value in terms of normative journalistic principles, but provided a vehicle for network self-promotion, eliding the network and national identity in the classic manner of popular journalism.

Human-interest and celebrity news are typically ‘soft’ items that either applaud individual human endeavour (particularly in the case of celebrities), or berate people for their stupidity or personal failings. Soft items were used from 1984 to 1988 at the end of virtually every bulletin recorded in the study. Usually coming after the weather, these items were screened before the final send-off from the anchor, presumably to lighten the mood of, at that time, the largely sombre bulletin. During the deregulatory period, soft items became more common – continuing to appear at the end of the bulletin, but also quite often before advertising breaks. The use of dual-anchorage allowed the change of pace and tone to the bulletin that soft items bring. It is difficult for a credible news-reader to move immediately off the back of an item about tragedy and human suffering, for example, to one that is light and fun. If the bulletin employs two anchors, the change in pace and tone is easier.20 One presenter can introduce an item featuring human suffering, and the next introduction by a

different anchor, can introduce an item featuring, for example, a celebrity divorce. This ability to change pace and tone allowed for a general increase in human-interest and soft items after 1990. The changing of the pace and tone of the bulletin is an attempt to ensure predictable audience flow over the whole programme and to ensure viewer retention - sign of professional success for commercial news editors.

The positioning of soft stories before advertising breaks serves a useful function for the advertisers as well. By delivering an audience to the advertising on the back of a soft, funny, triumphant or other 'good news' item, the broadcaster delivers an audience more receptive to the advertising messages than one that arrives straight after an item characterised by tragedy or disaster. Also, the audience is more receptive to the broadcaster's teasers for up-coming news items, which themselves are usually human-interest or sport. Studies on teasers have found they may have a temporary influence on the cognitive capacity of audiences, improving their receptivity to advertisers messages, particularly to advertising with an emotional appeal. By inserting soft items before the teasers, the broadcaster thus serves the needs of the advertisers, not the audience. Although not a formal part of this study, we have found, through an ongoing interest in content, that by mid-1999, One Network News was regularly inserting soft items before every advertising break.

The next set of graphs looks at the categories with the largest increase over the sample. Economics and Crime recorded the largest collapsed-categories increases in the survey, which in the case of economics, seemed to contradict our expectations. However, a closer analysis of the category reveals a confirmatory pattern.

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36 Cameron, et al. 'The Role of News Teases in Processing TV News and Commercials.'
3.6 Economic News.

Figure 4.15: Domestic Economic News (DNE) and International Economic News (INE). 244

![Graph showing the percentage of economic news segments from 1984 to 1996.]

Economic – mainly of the domestic variety – recorded the second largest percentage increase in the sample. As Figure 4.15 shows, while international economic news had decreased, it seems this was unrelated to deregulation, with only a small amount before 1989 and very little afterwards. A 2.6% peak matched a 2.2% high in 1984 in 1992, but otherwise, International Economic news occupied only a small percentage of the bulletin. Neither peak was related to single-issue reportage. It is included here as it does effect the Total figure in 1984 and 1992, but otherwise is too small a category to be regarded as significant, and could have been discarded altogether.

Domestic Economic news, however, generally increased across the sample, with both the peaks and troughs in the data increasing as a percentage of the total amount of news categories. Economic news is generally ‘serious’ or ‘hard’ news, and as such,

244 Economic News: All Domestic Economic News (DNE) and All International Economic News (INE) and the Total of All Economic News (Total), represented as a percentage of an entire sample news segment.
the commercialisation of the bulletin after 1989 might be expected to reduce it. But, since economic news covers the operations of the free market, its increase per se is not inconsistent with Commercialisation and Commodification, since a commercial corporation might well prioritise such a focus. This is confirmed when we deconstruct the category Domestic Economic News to uncover sub-category patterns which do confirm our expectations.

Most sub-categories of Domestic News; Economics were too small and fluctuated with no obvious patterns and without a discernible connection to deregulation. These indeterminate categories are listed at the end of this chapter. On the whole, they remained fairly similar from the beginning to the end of the survey, with one exception, the Sharemarket report.
Figure 4.16. *Domestic News, Economic, Sharemarket and Corporate Affairs* was not only the category with the single largest increase in the *Economic News* collapsed category, but the largest single-news category increase in the entire sample. Increasing from 1.5% in 1984 to 8.4% in 1996, the 6.9% growth in reportage about the sharemarket and corporate affairs was indicative of the changing view of audiences' interests. As such, it appeared to undermine some of the more populist claims of commercial television, but it can also be read as an exception that proves the general rule.

The growth of this sort of coverage consisted partly of an increase in the fixed amount of time in the bulletin devoted to reportage of the state of the sharemarket. A daily sharemarket report was, after 1992, followed by a reports on the state of the New Zealand dollar in relation to other currencies, and the state of the long-term interest-rate market; ninety day bills for example. While this information may be relevant to a small sector of the audience, i.e.: those with shareholdings and interest related investments, it was of little significance to the majority of the audience. Populist,
market-led news organisations often claim to be satisfying the demands of the majority of the audience.

It seems difficult to justify this claim in light of these results, unless one thinks of the sharemarket report as a sort of indicator of the health of the nation, like the weather, meaningless to the uninitiated, except as an indicator of normality, but serviceable as a cheap marketing signal of serious journalist purpose - the health of the nation equated with the health of the market - without the need for more costly investigation of deeper meaning. The other aspect of the growth in this category was news items about successful business people and their companies. After 1992, an item usually followed the sharemarket report on the business world. These items, at least as found in this sample, generally consisted of congratulatory pieces on individual business people.

Again, it is difficult to credit the popularity of these often-uncritical items when the majority of the audience did not enjoy great wealth and economic power. However, by positioning the sharemarket as important for all, and by holding its most successful participants up for congratulations, market-led news organisations tended to present the operations of capitalism as normal or even commendable. While perhaps not indicative of the increasing power of corporate interests, it can be seen as a token effort to chart an increasingly influential financial sector. Certainly, the growth in economic news, led in large part by this sort of reportage, did support the hypothesis that commercial, market-led news adopts a more Commodified view of the audience – their needs as consumers are taken to outweigh their needs as citizens. Table 4.5, which compares all news categories 1984 to 1996, clearly shows the reduction in Political Policy reportage (Depoliticisation) and the increase in Sharemarket, Corporate Affairs reportage (Commodification). These two categories mark the greatest reduction, and greatest increase of any categories in the sample, and provide a clear snapshot of the changed view of news content six years before and six years after the deregulation mid-point of 1990.

The final set of graphs in this section looks at the coverage of crime issues and activities.
3.7: Crime News.

Figure 4.17: Domestic and International Crime News.\(^{245}\)

Crime news recorded the greatest increase of all the collapsed categories, again with the domestic variety contributing to the bulk of this increase. As Figure 4.17 shows, the pattern of Domestic Crime, did not follow as consistent a pattern in relation to deregulation as some of the other categories, but the general increase after 1990 supports the hypothesis that the post-deregulation product would focus more on victims; that is, with Personalisation. Crime reportage is easier to produce than many other types of news content as it lends itself to archetypal human-interest story telling such as an evil menace preying on innocent victims. These narratives seldom require much investigation, since the central players in the drama are easily identifiable (villain, victims and police), and available from official sources - the police themselves - who are the principle beneficiaries, since they feature mainly as heroes.

\(^{245}\) Domestic Crime News, All (DNC All) is the sum of Domestic Court Crime and Incidence Crime, which includes Violent Crime and Property Crime. International Crime was a single category. Domestic Crime and International Crime were added together to develop all Crime coverage, and the graph is expressed as a percentage of the entire sample news section.
Also, the events of most crime are reasonably uncomplicated (although the issue of crime usually is, but the underlying causes of crime are seldom examined). The increased focus on crime, and on particular types of crime, is consistent with *Tabloidisation* of the bulletin after deregulation. Generally melodramatic, spectacular, violent or sensational crimes became, by 1996, the second largest component of the news segment in the bulletin, comprising 17.9% compared to 20% for political news, which remained the largest. While political news shrank by 20% over the survey period, crime news grew by 10% - a radical turn-around in news values.

The data also reveal an often-noted feature of crime reportage. If we accept the naïve proposition that news reports criminal behaviour in order to make the audience aware of crime levels and to take precautions or petition parliament if the levels are too high, then the reportage of the first three years in the sample made sense. The total domestic crime reportage during this period hovered around 6%, with a slight dip in 1986, and a range of no more than 2.6%. One could reasonably believe the actual occurrence of crime in New Zealand over this period remained at reasonably similar and stable levels. Certainly, the data in the graph for the years 1984-1986 supports this hypothesis. However, if we look at the years 1992 to 1994, domestic crime reportage peaked to 21.3% of the bulletin in 1992, it dipped steeply to 6.3% in 1993 and climbed again to 17.9% of the bulletin in 1994 – a range of 15% over three years. Again, if crime reportage followed crime occurrence, then the data suggests that crime occurrence in New Zealand over a three year period, decreased by 15% in a single year, then increased by 11.6% the following year. However, according to a Statistics New Zealand Report, in only one year since 1970 has the offence rate per thousand people changed by more than 7% in a year, and that was 9% in 1981 – the year of the Springbok Tour when arrests for disorderly offences were unusually high. According to the same report, the offence rate per 1,000 members of the population fell 6% in 1994, yet *One Network News* coverage of domestic crime grew by 12% in the same year. To quote from the report: “The offence rate remained fairly steady between

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1992 and 1996." After deregulation, the bulletin was clearly reporting crime for reasons other than the civic concerns of its audience.

The post-deregulation peak and trough, see-saw pattern of crime coverage is both distinctive and familiar. *Human-interest* (Figure 4.14) displayed a similar pattern. Such see-saw patterns were uncommon pre-deregulation and their prevalence post-deregulation poses an explanatory puzzle. There are a couple of possible explanations. The first is that the changes to the levels of these sorts of content reflect the different editorial decisions of succeeding executive producers and daily news editors. There were a number of different executive producers in charge of *One Network News* through the 1990's. These changes in content could be a reflection of changes to the senior management of the news organisation.

A second possibility is that the changes could reflect the results of *One Network News* own audience research. The peaks and troughs could represent attempts by the organisation to respond to criticism from the audience; too much of a particular subject one year resulted in a reduction the next, and vice versa; greater attention to a topic constituted a response to audience allegations of previous neglect. The truth may be a combination of both factors. Herbert Gans classic study of determinants of news selection found that journalists routinely ignore audience research, dismiss letters from audience members as cranks (more common in television news than print), dislike a statistical procedure which casts doubt on their own work, and they dislike criticism from the business departments of their organisations. However, news executives can be fired on the basis of poor ratings, which mean less revenue, and so a tension exists between executives, and line-producers, editors and journalists. Gans also found that the power of the researchers to influence executives was growing in the late 1970's. Journalists, editors and producers are particularly dependent on the admiration of their superiors "When I asked journalists for whom they were writing, producing or editing, they always began with their superiors, and some went no

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The results of Figure 4.17 and other graphs showing a distinctly see-saw pattern after deregulation may reflect this tension between business concerns and normative journalists considerations at One Network News. It would appear from the dislocation between crime reportage and crime figures after 1986, that the researchers and executives are winning because categories like Crime and Human-interest are more likely to reflect changes in content choices made by producers and editors than reflecting the levels of the occurrence of these types of subject matter because their occurrence remains reasonably stable over short time periods. The fact is that crime lends itself to simple-minded melodrama and morality tales that are a mainstay of the western narrative tradition. British Cultural Studies research suggests that crime stories and moral panics are created for audience gathering, not reality-mirroring purposes. In any event, the fluctuations in the coverage reflect neither external occurrences, nor a blanket commercial demand for criminal coverage, but internal editorial decisions, perhaps influenced by ratings considerations.

Editorial judgement is a natural and inevitable aspect of item selection. However, the differing views of various senior management staff through the 1990’s are insufficient to account for such major swings in content selection, and they may also reflect the increasingly centralised control in the hands of the Auckland Television Centre – TVNZ’s corporate headquarters. Comrie’s work examined effects of the move to Auckland and the dismantling of regional news offices, found a reduction in geographical diversity, with the majority of domestic items sourced in Auckland. While we have not investigated whether Auckland crime statistics provide a closer fit to variations in crime reportage on One Network News, this researcher can speak from personal experience. In the 1990’s, the only look-out for ‘spot stories’ between 10pm and 6am was out of the Auckland Television Centre. This researcher manned the police, fire and ambulance communication frequency scanners for the Auckland region only, and at the behest of my managers, the vast bulk of events this researcher

Cohen, ‘ Mods and Rockers.’
Shoemaker and Reese, Mediating the Message.
responded to were crime. Both the increase in items coming out of Auckland, and the effects on content selection of new senior management probably reflected the
*Centralisation* of the organisation.

If this undifferentiated crime category is relatively uninformative about editorial decision-making, however, unpacking it into sub-categories is much more revealing.
Figure 4.18 deals with trends within crime reportage. *Court* crime reportage involved news items that examined cases before the courts. *Incident* crime represented criminal events that were reported soon after they happened. From hovering around 2% in 1984, 1985 and 1986, *Court* reportage generally trended upwards after 1987. While there were some dips in the data, the general increase indicated the higher priority placed on court reportage after deregulation. After 1995 television cameras were allowed into courtrooms. While this could explain the increase in 1996, it cannot explain the peak in 1992. It is worth noting, however, that one spectacular crime may be more heavily covered more than its normative journalistic value demands, and this can skew the figures on crime coverage, but not the police statistics. The large dip in the data the following year, 1993, is also hard to explain.

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285 Domestic News; Courts; Crime; Property (DNCCP) and Courts; Crime; Violent (DNCCV), summed to produce Court Crime (Court) vs. Domestic News; Crime; Property (DNCP) and Crime; Violence. (DNCV) summed to produce Incident Crime (Incident) represented as a percentage of an entire sample news segment.
except perhaps as an editorial reaction to the over reporting of crime the previous year.

A similar pattern occurred with *Incident* crime reportage. While remaining at fairly static levels before deregulation, the reportage of incident crime varied wildly after deregulation, raising again the notion that changing news executives, audience research and a centralised bureaucracy influenced the levels of this sort of reportage. The next graph looks at property crime versus violent crime, and reveals this rise in 1992 and dip the following year involved both of the sub-categories, reinforcing our tentative impression that editorial-policy decisions account for these fluctuations.
Figure 4.19 shows that while Property Crime remained at a fairly low level over the sample period, it had doubled by 1996 to 4.1%. Most property crime reportage was concerned with fraudulent activity rather than burglary or intentional damage to property. Property crime is far more common than violent crime, and yet Violent Crime reportage more than tripled, moving from 3% to 10.5% of the news segment. The patterns of violent crime reportage were similar to the other crime patterns in that it remained fairly stable prior to a sudden increase between 1987 and 1989, with unstable but gradually increasing levels in the post-deregulation period. The steady rise of violent crime reportage after 1986 is consistent with the gearing up of TVNZ for competition, while the see-saw pattern after 1991 reflects the likely tensions between audience maximisation, and the demands of normative journalism.

257 Domestic News; Courts. Crime; Property (DNCCP) and Crime; Property (DNCP) summed to produce Property Crime (Property) vs. Courts; Crime; Violent (DNCCV) and Crime; Violence. (DNCV) summed to produce Violent Crime (Violent) represented as a percentage of an entire sample news segment.

The increase in violent crime generally confirms the hypothesis that the deregulated product would be more *Personalised, Depoliticised, Atomised* and *Tabloidised* than the pre-deregulation product, and that the levels of occurrence would not determine the levels of reportage.  

3.8: Summary of Changes to the News Segments.

Table 4.5 below shows all the categories in the news segment as percentages for the endpoint years of 1984 and 1996, and the percentage of change in each category, ranked from the biggest losers to the biggest gainers. There are too many categories to represent this data graphically, but the top five losers and gainers are summarised at the conclusion of this chapter. What these findings serve to emphasise is that political news has suffered heavily while crime news has increased dramatically. Of the top five largest reductions, three were political (domestic political policy, *DNPP*, international political relations between countries, *INPI*, and domestic news about New Zealand's international relations, *DNPIR*), while three of the top five largest increases were related to crime (domestic court reportage about crime against property, *DNCCP*, international justice news, *INJ*, and domestic court reportage about violent crime, *DNCCV*).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbr.</th>
<th>Category Description</th>
<th>1984 %</th>
<th>1996 %</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DNPP</td>
<td>Domestic News; Politics; Policy.</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>-7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPL</td>
<td>Domestic News; Labour and Employment, ACC, Wages, Conditions.</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>-6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INPI</td>
<td>International News; Politics; International.</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>-5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPIR</td>
<td>Domestic News; Politics; International Relations.</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INE</td>
<td>International News; Economics, National and International.</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>-2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INPD</td>
<td>International News; Politics; Domestic.</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>-1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNAF</td>
<td>Domestic News; Agriculture, Farming, Fisheries (Non-Maori)</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNJ</td>
<td>Domestic News; Justice, Police, Law Changes</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPO</td>
<td>Domestic News; Politics; SOE's, Assets, Public Service.</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>-1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPT</td>
<td>Domestic News; Politics; Taxation, Finance, Inflation.</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>-1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNSC</td>
<td>Domestic News; Social Conflict, Race Relations, Immigration.</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>-1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNCM</td>
<td>Domestic News; Crime Misc.</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNEC</td>
<td>Domestic News; Economics; Consumer Information.</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNEV</td>
<td>Domestic News; Environment.</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHT</td>
<td>International News; Health and Technology.</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNCP</td>
<td>Domestic News; Crime; Property.</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNM</td>
<td>Domestic News, Miscellaneous.</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPM</td>
<td>Domestic News; Politics; Misc.</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNEM</td>
<td>Domestic News; Economics; Misc.</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>-0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHI</td>
<td>International News; Human-interest, Historical Items.</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>-0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPH</td>
<td>Domestic News; Politics; Health.</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNTT</td>
<td>Domestic News; Transport, Travel and Tourism.</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INM</td>
<td>International News; Miscellaneous International News.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPE</td>
<td>Domestic News; Politics; Education.</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNHT</td>
<td>Domestic News; Health and Technology.</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSC</td>
<td>International News; Social Conflicts (excluding terrorism).</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DND</td>
<td>Domestic News; National Defence, Military, NZ Forces Overseas</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDM</td>
<td>International News; Disasters and Accidents, Man Made.</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Domestic News: Economics; International Trade and Investment</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNEI</td>
<td>Domestic News: Economics; Interest Rates, Prices.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNEIT</td>
<td>Domestic News: Economics; International Trade and Investment</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCO</td>
<td>International News; Celebrities.</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDN</td>
<td>International News; Natural Disasters and Weather Extremes.</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNEA</td>
<td>Domestic News; Economics; Accommodation.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPA</td>
<td>Domestic News; Politics; Accommodation.</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNEH</td>
<td>Domestic News; Economics; Health.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNCC</td>
<td>Domestic News; Crime; Customs, Security, Jails.</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INW</td>
<td>International News; War, Uprisings, and Violent Political Activity.</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>International News; Crime.</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNDN</td>
<td>Domestic News; Natural Disasters and Accidents and Weather Extremes.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNRA</td>
<td>Domestic News; Road Accidents, Road Toll, Vehicular Crime.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNEE</td>
<td>Domestic News; Economics; Education.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INEV</td>
<td>International News; Travel Tourism and Environment.</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPS</td>
<td>Domestic News; Politics; Strategy, Polls, Elections, Personalities.</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNAM</td>
<td>Domestic News; Accommodation, Health, Education; Misc.</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNCV</td>
<td>Domestic News; Crime; Violence.</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNDM</td>
<td>Domestic News; Accidents and Disasters; Man Made.</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNCO</td>
<td>Domestic News; Celebrities and obituaries</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNCCP</td>
<td>Domestic News; Courts; Crime; Property.</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNHI</td>
<td>Domestic News; Human-interest.</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INJ</td>
<td>International News; Justice, Police, Law, Customs, Inquiries, and Inquests.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNCCV</td>
<td>Domestic News; Courts; Crime; Violent.</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNES</td>
<td>Domestic News; Economics; Sharemarket, Corporate Affairs</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4: Changes to Item Length.

We began this chapter with a discussion of a basic structural feature of the bulletin—the amount of news vs. non-news—and now we turn to look at another important structural feature: individual item length (structures within items will be analysed in the next chapter). A distinctive change to the news segment was the Morselisation of the news, with item length shrinking, and the pace of the bulletin accelerating. The following table and graph looks at the changing lengths and amounts of items in the bulletins.

Table 4.6: Distributed Item Length in Election Years, Represented as a Total of All Items as a Percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Num</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Num</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Num</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.01-1.30</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.31-2.00</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.01-2.31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.31-3.00</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.01-3.30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.31-4.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>4.01+</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>208</td>
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Table 4.6 and Figure 4.20 show the deceasing item length, and increasing item number in the bulletins. Table 4.6 presents the data in 30 second increments but Figure 4.20 shows the same information, but in one minute intervals for easier comprehension. The figures and tables present election year information only, as changes to presentational structures tend to be more gradual than changes to content.

What is interesting about the data is the number of items in the entire survey per year, and the sharp increase in 1996 for the hour-long bulletin. In 1984, there were 251 separate news segment items recorded for the year. In 1996, there were 353 items, an increase of 41% in the amount of items in the news segment recorded for the year, yet during the same period, the news segment increased by only four and a half minutes per bulletin. So, for each bulletin recorded in 1996, 23 more news items had to fit into four and a half minutes more news segment. This cramming of many more items into slightly more space in spite of the move to the full news hour, brought about an increase in items of thirty seconds or less (a very short time in which to tell a complex story), from 56 in 1984, to 130 items in 1996. The shift to an hour-long format was
not used to alter this basic structure of the bulletin. It was even less inclined to devote time to complex news discourse than it had been at half the size.

Items of less than a minute were a decreasing percentage of the bulletin until 1987. They steadily increased thereafter, becoming more numerous than items of one to two minutes in 1996. Items between one and two minutes were stable, but began to fall away until, in 1990, they were replaced by shorter items as the most common item length. Items from two to three minutes in length increased in number until 1987, fell sharply in 1990, but regained some ground after deregulation. Items of two to three minutes were 1% more of the bulletin than in 1984, but were 5% less than 1987. The increase in items of this length was an encouraging sign. However, items longer than three minutes were already declining in 1987, and continued to do so over the survey period. The Morselisation effects of deregulation were evident here. The pace of the news segment had increased with many more items of shorter length crammed into only slightly more space. The opportunity to slow down the pace of the bulletin was squandered.
The pace of the entire bulletin did not increase, only the pace of the news segment. As Figure 4.21 shows, instead of reducing the pace of the bulletin, the opportunity created by the move to the news hour was used to further expand non-news aspects of the bulletin. The average length of a news item shrank by eight seconds over the survey period. It had been increasing until 1987, the year before the deregulatory period, but then lost seventeen seconds between 1988 and 1990. A slight recovery in 1991 became a stable post-deregulation pattern. By now, this extraordinarily consistent developmental pattern of news structure should be familiar to the reader - steady pre-deregulation, instability during the deregulation period, and renewed stability thereafter at a lighter or lower level. The average length of non-news elements actually decreased before 1990, but then steadily accelerated after 1990. If we look at specifics, like the collapsed category, Political News All, and the non-news element, Weather, the contrasting movement in average lengths is glaringly apparent.
After decreasing in average length until 1990, Figure 4.22 shows that *Weather* had two large jumps in its average length. It increased in 1991 with the introduction of the weather personality, Jim Hickey, and again in 1995 with the move to the hour-long bulletin, and the introduction of a powerful weather-graphics computer. This growing reliance on technological wizardry rather than conventional newsgathering and presentation confirms Atkinson’s earlier work on changes to *One Network News* as a result of deregulation. The relatively greater importance that the deregulated *One Network News* placed on weather pointed to the changed view of audience needs in this newly commercial environment. Weather was widely popular, politically unproblematic, spectacularly visual and allowed the bulletin to pay lip-service to its recently abandoned regional responsibilities. The shrinking average length of political items reflects the relative value *One Network News* came to place on the two different types of information – despite the fact that the weather (at least the description of weather) is reasonably straightforward and political information often complex. Ironically, the relative simplicity of weather compared to political news is acknowledged by the on-screen presence of a ‘personality’ weather man, as contrasted
with the serious, and titled political correspondents. The patterning of this data strongly reflects our expectations of the deregulatory process.

The following section further examines some comparisons in the data.
5: Some Comparisons.

Before summarising this chapter, it is worth reiterating some of the more dramatic contrasts between political news and other sampled categories.

Figure 4.23: Politics Policy News vs. Chit-chat.

While *Political Policy* news is important for the audience – it allows a direct view of the activity of elected officials - *Chit-chat* offers them nothing except the opportunity to identify with the manufactured *bonhomie* of the presenters. Figure 4.23 shows that *Chit-chat* began increasing dramatically in 1988 with the move to a dual anchor format, a longer musical introduction to the bulletin, and an increase in teasers before the advertising breaks.
When comparing *Domestic Political* and *Domestic Economic* news, Figure 4.24 shows that economic news rises and political news drops until the two are nearly parallel. It is clear that political information is much more widely useful to citizens than economic information, particularly given the types of economic information that were leading the increase in economic news (see Figure 4.16). The frequently-levelled criticism that public service broadcasting, even in the hybrid New Zealand model is more elitist than commercial broadcasting (see Chapter 1), is brought into question here. Political information, at least arguably, is less elitist than uncritical corporate and sharemarket information, yet market-populist broadcasting in New Zealand brought a reduction in the amount of political news, and a sharp increase in information designed for economic – particularly financial - elites. Wayne Hope looked at this issue in New Zealand over the same period. He found that across much of New Zealand's media, political discourse was merged or replaced with market discourse. He interpreted this as reflecting an obscurantist move from relations of production to those of exchange in an attempt by commercial media organisations to divert attention from the excesses of capitalism.\(^6\) The changing allocation of time to

\(^6\) Hope, Media Representations of the New Zealand Economy.
these two topics by One Network News would appear to support his claims about merging discourses, if not obscurantist strategies.

Figure 4.25: Political News vs. Crime News.

By comparing political news to crime news, Figure 4.25 presents similar problems for those who chose to defend market-populism as more egalitarian and useful ('news you can use'). Political news is supposed to allow anyone in the audience to follow political events, which enables them to develop a sense of their political interests, and the knowledge to act in them. Crime news, particularly the most common types of crime news (i.e. violent crime) may encourage a sense of fear and helplessness among audience members, not empowerment. Crime coverage is not always so shallow or emotional, and political coverage can be obscurantist and melodramatic, but the shift in priorities shown here remains disturbing. Even with political news focused on cynical game-playing, its importance to the electorate remains and replacing political news with crime news, regardless of relative 'quality', is a worrying development.

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Finally, Figure 4.26 compares political news and Human-interest, Celebrity, Obituary and Miscellaneous news items to gain an inkling of the relative importance placed on political information in the post-deregulation news segment. After 1994, political news and human-interest, etc. items are allocated a similar amount of time. In 1984, there was a 28.4% difference in their time allocation. In 1996, there was a 7.2% difference. This represents a significant change in news priorities at One Network News. The belated reversal of this trend in 1996 may represent a change of heart by TVNZ’s news managers, but 1996 was an election year, and as such, represents a regular peak in political coverage, and is unlikely to be sustained.

There were a number of categories that did not return meaningful results or stable patterns. Many of these categories were too small to be of interest, and were collapsed into larger categories. However, some of the smaller categories, while not returning obvious patterns, did return interesting results. The next section looks at these categories.
6: The Smaller Categories.

International coverage about justice issues is one of the top five gainers when comparing 1984 to 1996. This would seem to contradict many of our expectations, as justice issues (which are more complex than crime stories), and especially overseas justice issues would seem at odds with previous research.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DNJ</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
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However, as Table 4.7 shows, 1996 was a very unusual year for reportage of international justice issues. The increase in *International News: Justice, Police, Law, Customs, Inquiries, Inquests (INJ)* in 1996 was a product of disproportionate coverage of legal wrangles in Australia over the ownership and broadcasting rights of *Superleague*, a rugby league competition.

Changes to smaller categories tended not to reflect deregulation, but could be responsive to external matters. International news about war, for example, was fairly steady most of the time, but experienced a large peak during the Gulf War.

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<tr>
<td>INW</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
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As Table 4.8 reveals a large peak in war reportage in 1991 as almost entire bulletins during January and February were dedicated to Gulf War news, mainly of US army footage of guided weaponry. The reportage was very light on information, and presented a US-centric view of the conflict. This US military news provided, according to a BBC critic, "Immediacy without understanding, drama without information." Drama and immediacy, however, were perfectly suited to the commercial news requirements of post-deregulation *One Network News*. The general

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22 Eldridge, (Ed.) *Getting the Message*, pg.11.
increase in War coverage after deregulation fitted in with these commercial requirements. Ongoing post-Cold War conflicts, particularly in Europe, were a major source of conflict coverage, and were most often sourced from US networks. Generally, multi-national forces were involved under the auspices of the UN. Although coverage of the conflicts themselves increased, coverage of the international political system (International News, Politics, International see Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.8), declined during the same period. For commercial news operations apparently war made for good television, whereas the geo-political explanations for it did not.

Farming, agriculture and fisheries news almost out of sight in the post-deregulatory period.

Table 4.9: Farming, Agriculture and Fisheries.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DNAF</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Like Labour News, Table 4.9 covers collective agriculture and fisheries issues rather than individual successes and failures in this important sector of the economy. While the category may to be small to be reliable, it offers some support for the Atomisation hypothesis.

Similarly, small categories like Domestic News; Road Accidents, Road Toll, Vehicular Crime (DNRA), Domestic News; Transport, Travel and Tourism (DNTT) and Domestic News, Accommodation Misc (DNAM) showed an increase over the period, but were not particularly compelling given their small size.
Table 4.10: The Total of Road Accidents, Tourism and Accommodation (DNRA, DNTT and DNAM).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
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</tbody>
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The increasing focus on road accidents shown in Table 4.10 tends to suggest an increase in victim stories and Tableloidisation and Personalisation, but such a conclusion would require further research into narrative patterns and the bald pattern of this data is not compelling enough by itself to support this conclusion. Still, the increase in small, random, decontextualised items is not inconsistent with Atomisation.

Finally, coverage of social conflict and race relations seems at odds with the occurrence of social conflict in New Zealand over the period.

Table 4.11: Coverage of Domestic Social Conflict and Race Relations.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DNSC</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 4.11 reveals that reportage on these topics decreased after 1992, in the face of major events such as the Moutoa Gardens occupation and the fiscal envelope dispute during the mid-1990’s. These were the most serious events in Maori politics during the 1990’s, yet they were woefully under-reported by One Network News. The 1995 Waitangi Day protests marked a new era in Maori radicalism, and “…one of the most turbulent periods in New Zealand’s race relations history.”33 yet One Network News coverage of racial issues and social unrest continued to decline. As other data has shown, the reduction of reportage of collective social issues like race relations offers support for the Atomisation hypothesis. The reduction in coverage of minority groups is consistent with other research on the under-representation of minority groups in commercial media systems. Perhaps the decline in Maori affairs was a blessing in

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disguise, since its tone in the past had been generally negative. At least TVNZ was politically correct enough to lapse into silence if this interpretation is correct, or perhaps Depoliticisation - the avoidance of politically problematic topics is at work here.

The remaining small categories are not worth discussing, but are listed, along with all the empirical findings, in Appendix II.

7: Summary.

There was a large scale shift of the allocation of time to various topics within One Network News between 1984 and 1996. In some categories the shift was extreme, with major reductions in news concerned with collective social issues like politics and increases in individualised event-centric news like crime. In other categories, the shift was less obvious. Health and Technology, Defence and Environmental news categories showed only small differences.

For many categories there was also a distinctive pattern of pre-deregulation stability, then a great degree of instability represented by large falls or increases as percentage of the news segment, followed by a post-deregulation stability. This, combined with knowledge about what else was happening in the wider New Zealand society, strongly suggests that the deregulatory process was responsible for the changes. The period of instability began around about 1988/1989, and continued until 1993/1994, which was an unexpected result. Our prior and perhaps somewhat naive expectation was that the deregulatory period, 1989-1991, would have seen most change to the bulletin. Our content analysis shows that the period of instability in content to have been much longer, peaking in 1991/1992, before returning to the level of pre-deregulation stability in 1994/1995. Had this research gone back further than 1984 and forward beyond 1996, my own more casual observations would suggest the stability pre- and post-deregulation continued in both directions. Having said this, it is necessary to acknowledge the global creep towards commercialisation. It is possible that deregulation accelerated a process already underway at TVNZ, a process that was
being felt globally, not just in New Zealand. Further research might establish whether these patterns were stable before 1984, and after 1996.

Although extending longer than anticipated, the distinctive deregulation-linked instability provided evidence for the hypothesis that the journey through deregulation was responsible for much of the change to content. TVNZ's anticipation of deregulation meant the process of change began before deregulation was legally in place. The long period of continuing change in the early 1990's is consistent with a learning period where continued tinkering with content allocation progressed towards perfecting the post-deregulated bulletin in the eyes of TVNZ management, who themselves were listening to international consultants specialised in highly competitive markets.

Another distinctive pattern in the data of some of the categories were steep peaks and troughs after deregulation. Crime reportage, for example, having been reasonably stable pre-deregulation, recorded a pattern of peaks and troughs, year in year out, following deregulation. These peaks and troughs were unrelated to crime figures, for crime levels do not fluctuate short-term to the degree the reportage did. This suggested that post-deregulation, crime reportage was linked to elements other than its statistical occurrence.

Those categories that did not return regular patterns were often strongly linked to events beyond the deregulation of broadcasting in New Zealand. Domestic News - International Relations for example, returned peaks and troughs related to New Zealand's external international relations, which, while generally very stable over the period, were marked by some important and well-covered events, like the Rainbow Warrior bombing, and the ANZUS response to our nuclear free stance.

Some categories did not return any obvious patterns at all, and no reason could be found for this other than they were too small to generate such patterns over the sample. This suggests they were not staple news-fare, and thus not important drivers in relation to normative change. As discussed in the methodology, this was predicted, and the system of collapsing categories allowed for this by adding most of these smaller categories together, and so creating, on the whole, regular patterns.
Finally there was a marked restructuring of time allocation to non-news elements over the sample. *Chit-chat* increased to occupy, by 1996, 10% or six minutes of the average bulletin. Advertising breaks and the weather segment increased in length and, in the case of advertising, frequency. but the opportunity to reduce the pace of the bulletin with the move to an hour in 1996 was squandered. *Sport* reduced as a percentage of the entire bulletin, which was a surprise. However, commercial logic in relation to female viewers may have explained this small reduction.

To summarise the findings, we have represented the top five category losers and gainers from Table 4.5 as a graph in Figure 4.27.
Although it emphasises the end-points and omits the often eventual journey between them, Figure 4.27 reaffirms that political news suffered heavily while crime news increased dramatically. Of the top five largest reductions, three were political: policy news (DNPP); news about the international political system (INPI); and news about New Zealand's role with in that system (DNPIR). Three of the top five largest increases were related to crime; court news about property crime (DNCCP); news about justice events and issues in other countries (DNJ); although this result was skewed by a single issue, and court reportage of violent crime (DNCCV).

Notable here, also, is the crude symmetry of the changes to the news segment. Sharemarket reports and corporate affairs (DNES) neatly replace policy news, while crime stories crowd out political information. The increase in human-interests news (DNHI) and decrease in news about labour and employment conditions (DNL) and international economic news (INE) confirmed expectations about the collective and complex being replaced with the individualistic and tabloid. The displacement of sharemarket reports, corporate information, human-interest and crime stories over
political and collective information offers confirmation of our expectations of increasing *Personalisation, Tabloidisation, Atomisation, Commodification* and *Depoliticisation.*
Figure 4.28: The Range of Change to the Entire Bulletin.

Note on the Graph: The Range of change was determined by subtracting each category from its counterpart of the previous year. This produced a series of annual changes. All the category totals were arranged from the smallest percentage change to the largest, creating a Range of maximum and minimum change to each category each year. This number was the Range of change in each year.

In summary of the changes to the bulletin, Figure 4.28 looks at the Range of change between each year in the sample. The effects of deregulation became clear. From to 1987 there averaged about a 6.5% change to the allocation of time to categories each year. This low rate of change pointed to very stable view of news values. Between 1987 and 1988, the bulletins were very similar with only a 4% change between the two years. However, after 1988, the organisational view of news values changed considerably. There was large-scale change in 1988-89, and even more so in 1990-1992. The changes to news values declined thereafter, indicating the organisation had settled into its post-deregulation structure. Between 1994 and 1996, the level of change returned to roughly pre-deregulation levels, indicating a very settled view of news values. It was clear from this chart that One Network News before deregulation...
held stable news values. The journey through deregulation created significant change to those news values, and post-deregulation, those changes stabilised again.

In short, our main hypotheses were confirmed rather than falsified by the macro-analysis of content: there had been change to content at *One Network News* and that change was consistent with our expectations about the effects of the journey from a hybrid monopolistic public service/commercial-broadcasting organisation to a fully commercial, competitive broadcasting organisation. The demise of public-affairs coverage came with the expected growth of 'soft-news', and the re-structuring of content coincided closely with the re-structuring of New Zealand’s broadcasting environment. Thomas E. Patterson found similar results in U.S. broadcasting, but attributed it to increasing competition and increasing demands for profit rather than deregulation.34

There is no disagreement here. As we argued in Chapter 2, deregulation in New Zealand meant TVNZ moved to a commercial, competitive and profit-centric footing – mirroring the US model.35 New Zealand broadcasting in 1984 was not like US broadcasting, but by 1996, it had become so, confirming the claims of the 1998 Bertelsmann Stiftung, multi-national study that the 1998 New Zealand model was essentially the same as the US model.36 Patterson started with a commercial broadcast environment that has never seen much regulation, and charted the effects of increasing competition and profit imperatives on news output. He found a steady demise in public affairs broadcasting, and an increase in soft news. We started with a regulated, hybrid system and charted the effects on news outputs of the move to a competitive and profit driven system in New Zealand. The only difference is that Patterson starts further down the commercialised track from me. Despite this, our results are reassuringly similar.

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34 Patterson, Doing Well and Doing Good.
36 Bertelsmann Stiftung. *Public Interest Programming*.
What is distinctive about the New Zealand case is a clear demonstration that a Government decision to unleash the tide of commercialism can have such an immediate and radical effect on the quality of television news. Changes to organisational focus do matter. Their political and cultural repercussions are profoundly important. As this study details, the consequences of a deliberate shift from the public service end of the organisational continuum to the commercial end are news outputs that are more Commercialised, Morselised, Depoliticised, Contested, Personalised, Tabloidised, Centralised, Trivialised, Atomised and Commodified.

Ten of the twelve detailed hypotheses were strongly supported by this analysis. However, this macro-analysis was bolstered by a more in-depth micro-analysis of a single core category – political policy news coverage. This micro-analysis offers further evidence for many of these detailed expectations, and explicit evidence for the remaining two.

1: Introduction.

The previous analysis examined how the ratio of broadcast news topics selected for presentation changed. This chapter examines the presentation itself. One of the most vital roles media play in wider democracy involves reportage of political policy formulation and implementation and coverage of issue debates. It could be argued that increased human-interest coverage of non-political topics does not matter if political issue coverage itself is otherwise unaffected. But if the same tendencies are also creeping into this core area of coverage, then the essence of serious journalism is being undermined.

We look below at how policy reportage had changed over time. This chapter is arranged by first quickly recapping the specific hypotheses we are testing for here. We then take a look at the methodologies and at what quantitative aspects of the discourses employed in the studio introductions and the journalists' texts we will be investigating. The chapter then turns to those quantitative elements, beginning with relevant and redundant facts, then the assertions of journalists – those with evidence and those without, those attributed to a source, and those made solely by the journalist. We then look at vanishing on-screen questions. A more qualitative discussion of the studio introduction and the journalists' texts is then attempted.

Moving away from elements connected with journalists and the studio team, we turn to a quantitative examination of sources used in the items, and standard presentational elements like sound-bite length and shot-length. The sound-bites and sources used are then treated in a more qualitative manner, and finally a qualitative analysis of the visual elements is undertaken. The chapter finishes with a summary. The full verbal transcripts, with visual annotations, can be found in Appendix IV.
Again, we are considering the two main hypotheses – that there has been change, and that that change is related to deregulation. We are also examining specific hypotheses where they relate to change within the presentation of items. These are:

1. **Morselisation**: The pace of the bulletin will be speeded up – in this case, the pace of the individual items themselves will increase, with shorter item length, sound-bites and shot length.

2. **Personalisation**: The use of expert voices within items will be replaced by the use of ‘ordinary’ voices of people.

3. **Tabloidisation**: The inversion of serious journalism norms will occur within items, with an increase in reporting of the dramatic, the spectacular and the sensational at the expense of serious reportage.

4. **Decontextualisation**: There will be a reduction in the number of cited sources and references to verifiable evidence.

In order to focus on the core of public affairs journalism, this analysis consists of an in depth examination of two items from the *Domestic Political Policy* category for each election year in the sample period - two each from 1984, 1987, 1990, 1993 and 1996. Each item is discussed and compared. Two items per election year was considered to be sufficient to develop a qualitative layer of analysis to supplement the foregoing quantitative data. In any event, there were only two entries in the *Domestic News, Politics, Policy* category in 1993. The items were chosen at random from election years. Election years were used because the changes in presentation tend to be more gradual than the changes in topic selection, and so patterns are likely to appear with greater clarity in triennial observations than they would have if the study had included every year in the sample. Furthermore, it is during election years that political policy reportage is both more salient and more prevalent. If serious policy reportage doesn’t occur here, we should be doubly concerned. Many of the items deal with policy promises and the means of implementing them. It is precisely this sort of item that demands a careful analysis of often-complex information. Previous research suggests, however, that the move from journalistic to commercial demands on *One*
*Network News* will involve a drift from less informative to more entertaining styles of presentation.207

Each of the items we examine is reduced to those component elements that can be measured and compared, and these are analysed statistically to see whether patterns can be discerned. If there has been change in the presentation of political policy, then this micro-analysis seeks to chart those objectifiable elements in much the same manner of the larger, macro-analysis. In this way, we hope to determine if there is systematic evidence of qualitative changes to presentation.

The most measurable elements in the news are variables like item, sound-bite and camera shot length. However, this study would be incomplete without an examination of the language and discourse used in the presentation of policy information. Such an analysis raises a more complex problem, and our solution is to reduce the verbal and visual texts to argumentative or rhetorical essentials: facts, questions, assertions and attributed assertions, and evidence. These elements are tabulated and analysed to determine if patterns emerge over the sample period.

2. **Studio Introductions and Journalists Texts – The Empirical Analysis.**

2.1: **Methodology.**

The methodologies for the empirical analyses vary, and are discussed before each graph. However, our general methodological framework closely follows guidelines laid down by the Annenberg Public Policy Centre for their Campaign Discourse Mapping Project.208 Some elements of television media texts are fairly easy to count:

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for example, sound-bite or camera-shot lengths. The quantification of other elements is more problematic, and requires more complex judgements about assertions made in the items, the role of the person making them, whether the statements are attributable to other people or are the opinion of the speaker, or if they refer to facts or supposition and so on. These elements are of particular importance in relation to political policy coverage, for this coverage is generally concerned with meaningful argument; with the pros and cons of proposed policy. For political reportage to have relevance for citizens, it must give them opportunities to examine the propositional basis of decisions made by their prospective leaders. It is not enough that the news covered elections - it must also cover the success or failure of policy promises made during the election period. It is one thing to be in opposition and make promises, but it is the work of government to enact those promises. The success or failure of government in fulfilling its promises is supposed to determine the success or failure of a particular government during elections. If the media does not examine political policy, the electorate cannot know the grounds on which policy is proposed, and therefore, will find it difficult to judge a government's policy performance.

In examining the performance of campaign policy-reportage in US presidential elections, the Annenberg Project focused on changes to the structure and presentation of political argument, and detected a decrease in complex argumentation and an increase in negative statements made by candidates in relation to their rivals. The Annenberg team also found the presentation of candidate statements by the news media increasingly stripped them of evidence for claims, thus reducing complex arguments to simple, often-negative assertions without evidence.

Following Annenberg guidelines, we chose eleven categories for an analysis of the discursive elements of political policy items on One Network News over the sample period. Each statement in an item was placed in one of these categories and counted. Changes to these categories were then measured over time. The discourse analysis categories are:

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20 Curran, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere.'
21 The Annenberg Public Policy Centre, Report of the Campaign Discourse Mapping Project, pg. 9
1. Facts Relevant to Issue/Event.
3. Assertion: Evidence Provided.
4. Assertion: No Evidence Provided.
7. Questions.
10. Acknowledged Source - Ordinary People.

Other measurable elements in the items were sound-bites and shot lengths. These were measured for all the items used this chapter. The categories used are listed below, and are examined in Section 5.

1. Longest sound-bite (non-journalist)
2. Shortest sound-bite (non-journalist)
3. Average sound-bite (non-journalist)
4. Longest shot (not including anchor intro)
5. Shortest shot
6. Average shot

We also examined sound-bites and categorised them in terms of three modes of discourse. These finding are to be found in Section 5, and the categories are listed below.

1. Acknowledged Source – Partisan Authorities/Spokespeople
2. Acknowledged Source - Expert
3. Acknowledged Source - Ordinary People
2.2: Relevant Facts and Redundant Facts.

Facts in news items can be sub-divided into facts relevant to the main issue, and those peripheral or of no relevance to it. These two types of referrals can be mapped over time.

1. Facts Relevant to Issue/Event
   - Facts are verifiable statements of truth or as much can be ascertained as truth at the time the statement was made.
   - Relevancy is determined by what the statement adds to furthering an understanding in the audience of the issue or event under discussion.

   1. For example, on Friday 18/06/84, in an article reporting on continuing pressure on the NZ dollar, the journalist said: "The bank's been acting as a guarantor for the New Zealand dollar, agreeing to honour future transactions at today's rates." This is a statement of verifiable fact, is relevant to the issue and, at the time of broadcast, true.

   2. In the same item, the journalist said: "Mr Lange, who spent today away from Parliament working at home..." While this was a verifiable fact, it had no bearing on the issue at hand, or if it did, its relevancy to the item was not explained. As such, it was placed in the next category as a Visual or Redundant Fact, explained below.

2. Visual or Redundant Facts
   - Visual facts are statements that refer to aspects of the visual texts that need no clarification, or serve no informational function relevant to the issue or event.

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2. Item Number 84.9. These items can be found at the end of this chapter.
at hand. As such, the information they offer is redundant – it is shown visually and requires no additional clarification.

- Redundant facts are statements of verifiable truths that are peripheral or superfluous to the issue or event.

- Included in this category are the introductions and sign-offs of reporters by name and function, for example: "Here is political correspondent, Richard Harman"

1. For example, on Tuesday 10/09/96, in a item reporting on closures to Plunket centres, the journalist said: "It was all a bit much for some junior protesters..." This is a spoken over pictures of a child asleep in a pram at a protest over the closure of some Plunket offices following budget cuts. While this statement and accompanying pictures are humorous, it bears no useful relation to the issue. Secondly, should a sleeping child be referred to as a 'protester'?

2. In the same item, the journalist said: "Jim Bolger was up north today for another school visit." This is a verifiable fact, but adds nothing useful to the issues under discussion.

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Item Number 96.5
Figure 5.1: Relevant vs. Visual or Redundant Facts.

Note on the graph: All elements graphed were shown as an average of the two sample items used in each election year. This was intended to smooth out any unusual spikes found in single items. Because of the differing lengths of the items, and differing number of quantifiable elements in them, it was preferable to examine them relative to one another rather than as raw figures. By representing the findings as a percentage of the total, patterns were easier to determine. The total was the sum of all the measured discourse elements occurrences (number not length) – so the number of occurrences of Relevent Facts, Redundant Facts, Journalists Assertions and Attributes Assertions, Assertions With Evidence, Assertions Without Evidence, Questions and Sound-Bites. All elements are graphed as percentages of this total. This appeared to be the best way of displaying the findings given the small sample size. Raw figures are available for comparison in Appendix III. The lengths of some of these elements were too short to measure accurately, and provided little of interest in comparison.

Figure 5.1 clearly shows the increase of Visual or Redundant Facts after 1987, and their dominance after 1990. The rise of visual and redundant information after 1987 can be attributed to deregulation and the arrival of mostly American news consultants like Professor Fred Shook, who advocated ‘writing to the pictures’.

commercials), with visual surprises and action to keep the viewer involved. After deregulation, it was deemed important for One Network News to keep the viewer 'involved'. Commercial competition with TV3 became a prime consideration. If there was no visual story, according to Shook, there was no onscreen story. After deregulation, it was deemed important for One Network News management wholeheartedly embraced Shook's ideas, and his influence was readily apparent. The rapid demise of relevant facts after 1990, and continuing after 1993, is a disturbing trend. While the emphasis on visual facts is an understandable function of the commercial emphasis on pictures as a means of rapidly conveying information, the demise of verbal facts information is a concern. The reduction of information relevant to the issue raises the obvious questions as to how informational, let alone educational journalism can be conducted without factual, relevant information.

The pattern of the change should be a familiar one to the reader. Like the patterns uncovered in changes to macro-content, this graph displayed a distinctive pre-deregulation and post-deregulation structure. The years 1984 and 1987 were stable, with the ratio of relevant to redundant facts remaining about the same. Between 1987 and 1993, there were wide-scale changes to that distribution, and after the deregulatory years, while change continued, its rate slowed down. By 1993, redundant facts had displaced relevant facts. This inversion of journalistic norms – the displacement of relevant facts by redundant facts – is an example of the increasing Tabloidisation of the items after 1987. The reduction in verifiable evidence is also consistent with Decontextualisation.

2.3: Journalists Assertions, Evidence vs. No Evidence.

When a journalist makes an assertion, they can do so either with or without evidence for the validity of that claim. They can also attribute the assertion to someone else – 'So and so said today that the ...'. When they do the latter, the onus of evidence is placed on the source, who may or may not support the claim with evidence. This is explained below.

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1. Journalists Assertion: Evidence Provided

• An assertion by the journalist is a statement that claims something is so. This is different from a fact, as the journalist may have asserted something to be true but that is difficult to verify. Also, the journalist may have qualified an assertion by stating it as a probability, rather than as a certainty.

   For example, on Thursday 24/09/87, in an item about an Opposition conference, the journalist said: "... and it’s their recent election defeat that’s likely to be uppermost in delegates minds." If, for example, the next sound-bite was a delegate confirming this supposition, the evidence was provided in the form of a source.

2. Journalists Assertion: No Evidence Provided

• If, using the example above, the statement by the journalist is not confirmed, then the supposition is not evidenced, and the statement appears to be a matter of the journalist’s opinion rather than an objective and dispassionate account of the event or issue.

   For example, on Monday 08.11.93, in an item about the Government reportedly making concessions to stay in power, the journalist said: "But already the Prime Minister is looking at areas where he might be able to make concessions to the minor parties. Youth rates is one." The first sentence is confirmed by the Prime Minister’s sound-bite that follows this statement: "If we are going to be working co-operatively with others to form a government, then we have to be prepared to listen to some of their concerns”. As such, it is evidenced, and is categorised as Journalists Assertion: Evidence Provided. The second sentence ‘youth rates is one’ is not confirmed by this sound-bite, or elsewhere in the item, and so is not
evidenced, and so is a *Journalists Assertion: No Evidence Provided.*

3. Attributed Assertion: Evidence from Source
   - *Attributed Assertions* are statements made by the journalist but attributed to someone or something else, i.e., ‘Mr Bolger said today that…’ or ‘The report states that…’ *Attributed Assertions* are evidenced if the source provides some proof that the statement is true. They are also evidenced if the source confirms what the journalist said the source had said or was saying. This category is problematic as the tense most often used when indirectly quoting somebody, or attributing an assertion, is the present tense. To solve this problem, any statement that is made by the journalist and attributed to a statement or report made or being made by someone else is treated as an attributed assertion, regardless of tense.

   - For example, on Monday 02/07/84,\(^\text{277}\) in an item about New Zealand’s per-capita debt, the journalist said: “*Sir Robert draws support for his argument on New Zealand international debt prepared by Wellington stockbrokers Jarden and Company, Jarden in turn relies on information from a leading American bank, Morgan Guaranty*” – The source is acknowledged and evidence provided.

4. Attributed Assertion: No Evidence from Source
   - A statement made by the journalist attributed to some one else who does not confirm the statement. Also, included here are sound-bites and direct quotes that provide no evidence for their own claims.

   - For example, on Friday 18/06/84,\(^\text{278}\) in an item about pressure on the New Zealand dollar, the journalist said: “*One bank describes Friday’s scramble as near panic.*” While, the claim

\(^{277}\) Item Number 84.8

\(^{278}\) Item Number 84.9
that 'Fridays scramble was a near panic', is attributed to 'one bank'. the journalist does not identify the bank, nor do representatives from the bank confirm that this is how they describe the 'scramble'. 
The implications of Figure 5.2 are fairly obvious. In 1984, only 10% of all measurable discourse elements in the survey were assertions made by the journalist without attribution. Of all the elements in the sample in 1984, 36% were assertions and statements attributed to other people or reports etc. By 1996, this situation had neatly reversed, with 35% of the elements being assertions made by the journalist with no attribution to a source or report. This indicated the increased centrality of the journalist in the presentation of the item. Rather than the journalist attributing statements to others, by the journalist had assumed the role of expert (displacing the genuine experts, see Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.4) and offering far less useful information. With the increased centrality of the journalist, was an increased emphasis on the journalist as a personality, introduced by name and role (‘Here is Political Editor, Linda Clark’ etc), and signing off reports with name and station identification (‘Linda Clark, One Network News’). While a journalist making statements of little informational value contradicts the tenets of normative journalism, the commercial emphasis on ‘writing to the pictures’ calls for comment on the visual aspects of the narrative. The journalist is more accessible to this task than non-journalist sources as the latter are seldom present in the editing booth where the pictures were spliced together. The end result, as shown by Figure 5.1 and Figure
5.2, was, by 1996, the journalist was making more statements of less relevance. Attributed statements had not decreased as steeply as statements by the journalist had risen, but they had also decreased. A survey of the sample items showed factual statements were increasingly made by non-journalist sources, over the sample period, while the journalist was reduced to largely redundant commentary on the visual elements. In the quest for more excitement and pace, some conventional elements were simply excised. Thus, for example, in the later years in the sample, the journalist had ceased to question the assertions made by the sound-bites (see Figure 5.4). What 'facts' there were tended to be attributed to those with a vested interest in the issue, rather than made by the journalist as an independent mediator. This lack of verification of facts was another example of the Decontextualisation of information post-deregulation. The pattern of change was the familiar one of institutional learning.
In the previous two graphs, the period of the most significant change was between 1990 and 1993. It was during this period that the ratio of elements effectively reversed. In Figure 5.3, this reversal is shown to have happened earlier, and after 1990, was narrowing closer to a reversal of earlier practices. The pre-deregulation ratio shows a slower rate of change, then large movement during the deregulatory period, then a return to a slower rate. The fall in evidenced assertions in 1990 appears to be a result of one item featuring 11 attributed assertions without evidence in the form of a long series of statements cataloguing the National Party’s campaign promises with no evidence or explanation as to how these impressive, if not, unrealistic goals were to be achieved. Such ‘bullet-list’ presentations may be entirely appropriate for conveying the gist of policy promises; nevertheless they remained truncated and incomplete forms of knowledge, and further elaborations would have been possible, if not desirable. The skewed result, is evidently a product of the small sample size, however, this result needs to be treated with caution. Still, even if the above result is discarded, there is plenty of other evidence of Morselisation and Decontextualisation.

Sample Number 90.5
Figure 5.4 looks at questions posed by the journalist and confirms that questions asked on-camera, or as sound off-camera, had vanished from the sample by 1990.

2.4: Questions Posed by the Journalist.

Figure 5.4: Disappearing Questions.

This graph illustrates an important side-effect of diminishing sound-bite length. In the quest to speed-up the bulletin and cram more items into a smaller news segment, a process of incremental eradication was undertaken. As Figure 5.4 reveals, the eradicated element was the journalist's question. All the questions asked in 1984 and most asked in 1987 were in response to sound-bites featuring political leaders. They were asked to qualify their answers in relation to conflicting information gathered from other sources. This interviewing practice encouraged statements from external sources that were verifiable, reasoned and relevant to the issue. As such, the sound-bites tended to contain lengthy and complex answers to the questions posed by the journalist (see Figure 5.6). The demise in questions was accompanied by a demise in the informative quality of the sound-bites (see Section 6: Discussion, The Sound-Bites). After 1987, the questions were asked off-camera, and not broadcast and so the audience had to assume the answers were relevant responses to the questions posed.
As the questions were not broadcast, the relevance of the answers became less of an issue, and the sound-bites tended to become very short statements rather than reasoned responses to overt queries. Because the journalist no longer questioned onscreen sources, the factual claims previously elicited were no longer made. Sound-bite assertions became statements of 'truth', regardless of how fatuous they were. For example, Jim Anderton talking about Plunket closures in 1996 asserted that "If the country is wealthy enough to give away two thousand, five hundred billion dollars to its richest citizens, it should be wealthy enough to look after its most vulnerable."280 This unqualified and decontextualised claim, offered without elaboration, was not examined by the reporter – an extraordinary lapse given the amount of money claimed to be 'given away to its richest citizens'. Without challenge, the claims of elites with vested interests had become by 1996, largely meaningless - uninformative declarations rather than considered statements of position on issues, and the public accountability of politicians to the electorate suffered accordingly. Kathleen Hall Jamieson observes that:281

*The likelihood that the public will be misled in an election campaign can be minimised if the candidates' views are available and tested by each other and the press... and if they accept responsibility for defending their own claims and the claims others offer on their behalf.*

Here again, an apparently technical decision to speed up the bulletin is shown to have profound democratic consequences, in this case, the loss of argumentative engagement.

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280: Item Number 96.5
3: The Ambience of the Studio and the Introduction to the Stories – Discussion.

The studio introduction appears to be a standard component in story presentation. A studio anchor introduced virtually every item in the survey, although the style and content of that introduction changed considerably over time. In 1984, the studio was notably austere. The anchor was shot in medium close-up, sharing the screen with a large image over his right shoulder, cueing the audience about the nature of the story. The set itself was very sombre. The background was a beige coloured wall, and with the reader in the foreground. He was a late-middle aged man wearing a grey suit and tie, was unsmiling and he offered little in the way of facial or posturing cues as to the nature of the story. The spoken text in both cases was very straightforward and concise, with no wordplay or attempts to involve the audience in anything else but the item.

In 1987, little had changed in the studio introduction to individual stories. The white male reader was a little younger, and his suit somewhat more colourful. The background wall had changed to grey rather than beige, and featured a thin red stripe running along the bottom. The picture over the right shoulder had moved to his left shoulder, and featured more colour than 1984. The reader was still shot in medium close-up, the language remained straightforward, although the use of slang - “The National Party Leader made a pitch for the votes of top Auckland businessmen today,” - was a move away from the very dry language used in 1984 (a foretaste of things to come).

Another new element in 1987 was the use of dual readers, one male and one female (the dual anchor format was dropped later that year, but re-instated in 1988 with Richard Long and Judy Bailey, who shared studio presentation for the rest of the sample, and remain the primary anchors today.) Each item was introduced by only one reader, but both readers were shown in the opening wide shot of the studio and
shots used for movement to either commercial breaks or during throws to other members of the studio team (sports and weather people).

By 1990, the presentational format was very different. Richard Long and Judy Bailey were the co-anchors. When there had been two anchors in 1987, only one introduced an item. By 1990 however, a wide shot including both readers was used in many stories with each reading a segment of the introduction. The male read both sample items for 1990. He was a middle-aged man wearing a dark suit, and shot in a much tighter close up than in previous years. The background was a colourful swirl of different shades of blue. It was actually a map of the world, but was shown slightly out of focus during the tight close-ups. The image over the left shoulder had shrunk in relation to the tighter close-up, and featured more elements. In 1984-1987, it featured single elements such a pile of dollar bills or a party logo. In 1990, it began to feature two or more superimposed symbols. In the first item, a party logo was superimposed over a photograph of the Beehive, in the second, a computer generated image of dollar bills went through the middle of the symbols for male and female gender.

The second notable area of change was the language used. This had become significantly more conversational and idiomatic than that used in 1984, for instance:

1984:

"Pressure on the New Zealand dollar continued today. There has been heavy trading on the foreign exchange markets triggered by the snap election and speculation of possible devaluation."284

"The Prime Minister is challenging remarks made by his political opponents about the amount of money New Zealand owes other countries. The Labour leader, Mr. Lange, and the leader of the New Zealand Party Mr. Jones, both say the level of debt for each person living in New Zealand is the highest in the world."285

283 Item Number 90.1
284 Item Number 84.9
285 Item Number 84.8
1990:

"It took over seven months to push the pay equity legislation through parliament, it will take the new government just two weeks to throw it out. The law gave women the right to equal pay to work of equal value, but National is intent on throwing it out before Christmas. Here is political correspondent Rae Lamb."^296

"The National Party too made a big announcement today, its election manifesto. The glossy publication contains policies which party leader, Jim Bolger, says are aimed at the undecided voter. Here is political reporter, Chris Ryan."^297

The 1984 items were concise descriptions of the items they were introducing. Both read like newspaper articles and avoided phrasing and language that gave any hint of the broadcaster's position on the item. The second item in 1984 reported the views of the three main political protagonists of the time without giving any particular weight to any of them. Although the introduction placed the views of two party leaders against that of the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Muldoon, it reported that the Prime Minister was challenging those remarks.

The 1990 items contained more rhetorical flourishes by comparison, particularly the first. The opening line of the first placed two phrases in stark contrast, pointing out the irony of dismissing legislation in weeks that took months to develop. The second sentence highlighted the intrinsic fairness of the legislation, juxtaposed with the intrinsic meanness of National in “throwing it out before Christmas.” The verb “throw” was used twice (the second time as an adverb) and was a loaded term in this context, suggesting callousness on the part of the government in repealing pay equity legislation. The second item from 1990 was selective in the information it offered. Nowhere in this introduction, which twice told the viewer that National was making an important announcement (using the potentially invidious words “big”, and “glossy”) did it reveal that all the manifesto announcements had previously been made by National, and covered by this broadcaster.

296 Item Number 90.1
297 Item Number 90.5
There was very little change to the set or style of presentation of the studio introduction in 1993. It was, however, the year with the least political policy news in the entire study. There were only two political policy related items in the entire sample year. The language used was again conversational rather than formal.

In 1996, the studio introductions were colourful and the language was more evocative than ever before in the survey. While the male reader was wearing a sombre grey suit, the female was dressed in a bright red dress. The language and delivery in both items was fast-paced and snappy.

The introduction to the first item had little to do with the subsequent text. "The Government’s spending priorities are under attack. Day two of the election campaign and Labour, the Alliance and New Zealand First all say the Government needs to spend more on health and education, and they say New Zealand’s youngest citizens should be top priority in those areas. Our campaign team is following the leaders and our coverage begins with political editor Linda Clark." This item did cover government spending priorities, but the focus was on Plunket cuts and protests, and the item’s text itself did little to explain what the attack was or how the opposition parties planned to prioritise spending.

In this item, Government spending on social services was under criticism from Opposition sources. Government spending across the board was also criticised, but the item focused narrowly on the most controversial and potentially emotional aspects of protests about cuts to Plunket services where vulnerable victims could be identified. The Government’s spending priorities were said to be “under attack”, and New Zealand’s “youngest citizens” needed to be “top priority.” Both phrases were emotion-laden rather than informative. Margaret Comrie’s thesis elaborates on the emergence of emotional language in the broadcasts. In a working paper for the Department of Human Resource Management, she continued her examination of the increase in emotionally loaded words and the subsequent loss of neutrality between

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28 Item Number 96.5
1985 and 1990. She argues that emotionally loaded words tend to signal the way an item should be interpreted, for example using the term ‘riot’ rather than ‘protest’ or ‘disturbance’ cues reception in particular ways. The loss in objectivity is self-evident.

The second item, made a transparent attempt to include both the readers and the audience in the issue with the lines, “And we are likely to be safer on the streets in the coming weeks. New Zealand First leader Winston Peters wants to make personal security an election issue. And, as Leigh Pearson reports, other politicians are already climbing on board” But, it was not explained how with “…Winston Peters wanting to make personal security an election issue”, we would “be safer on the streets”, or why “in the coming weeks.” Perhaps the reference to Peters was meant to be sarcastic. In any case, the introduction could be read as knowingly dismissive of the claims of politicians. The final line that “other politicians are already climbing on board” looked like a sneer at the bandwagoning of politicians, and the game-playing of political campaigners.

Finally, in 1996, the throws to the journalist were more pretentious than in previous years. Rather than simply stating the name of the journalist, the audience was now informed of specialisation with the claim that One Network News now had a ‘campaign team’ and a ‘political editor’ following the leaders. In short, the more vivid and busy studio set was accompanied by more colourful and evocative language in the anchor introductions and throws.

4: The Journalists Texts – Discussion.

The style and substance of the journalists’ texts changed slowly from 1984-1996. In all the sample items except for 1996, the journalist began with a long monologue at the start of the item, and then sought support for his or her assertions from the central

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21 Item Number 96.11
protagonists, usually placing them in opposition to one another while providing the conceptual linkage between the opposing camps. The structure followed a predictable pattern, and was easy to understand. The journalist presented an issue or event and examined the argument from the point of view of the most prominent combatants, and usually summed up in a closing monologue.

In first item from 1984 (the story about pressure on the New Zealand dollar), the journalist explained what was going on, who was involved, and allowed the Prime Minister to explain how the government intended to address the issue. He went on to explain the likely ramifications of the issue, which led into a second journalist who developed a second point. The second journalist mimicked the first. He identified the related issue and allowed the central protagonists to present their arguments about it. This item featured more text from these protagonists than it did from the journalist himself – the only time this happened in the survey period.

The second 1984 item was about the growing per-capita debt. In this item, the journalist spent nearly a minute outlining a complex issue: "Sir Robert Muldoon says that their claim is wrong, and adds that it is irrelevant anyway. Sir Robert draws support for his argument from a report on New Zealand's international debt prepared by Wellington stockbrokers Jarden and Company. Jarden in turn relies on information from a leading American bank, Morgan Guarantee. The report says the size of our debt per head of population is the eleventh highest in the world, but Sir Robert says there is nothing alarming about that. He says countries above us on the table, like oil rich Norway and Kuwait are wealthy. At the other end of the table, China, India and Pakistan have a low level of debt for each person. Sir Robert says wealth and a high level of debt per head of population frequently go together at the same time a low level of debt ties in with poverty." The reporter both cited and explained in detail the source of the report from which he drew all his evidence. He contrasted this information to the arguments of the Prime Minister, then allowed the Prime Minister to present a point in support of his argument. The journalist then further examined the issue, also allowing the Leader of Opposition to present an argument opposed to that of the Prime Minister.

^85 Item Number 84.8
The journalist in both of these items presented the information in a manner that was comprehensive and concise. As in serious print reportage, the most salient facts were given first, opinions on both sides canvassed in depth, and language was used economically. Both these issues were complex and ongoing, and were reported as such. Little effort was made to simplify or ‘dumb-down’ the issue. In neither of these items did the journalist return to either sum up the item or to provide an opinion as to the likely outcomes. Instead, both items ended with long, responsive sound-bites from the Leader of Opposition, a form of argumentative engagement.

In the 1987 items, a degree of change was apparent in the journalists’ texts. The first item\(^{243}\) began by describing a conference centre. This introduction and description of the location was evident in every item for the rest of the sample, but had been absent in the 1984 items. Typically, the journalist described the event and where it was taking place; such as: “When National Party members gather here at the Michael Fowler centre tomorrow...”\(^{244}\) or “The country’s top women in politics were at Government House today for a lunch honouring women in government.”\(^{245}\) The formulaic introductions matched the words with the pictures, and provided movement and activity during typically the longest part of the journalist’s text; the description of the issue. They also indicate an attempt to provide a vicarious experience for the audience.

The 1987 items were also notable for the emergence of a more informal and colloquial style of discourse. In the first item,\(^{246}\) the phrases “get-together”, “new look” and “parliamentary line-up” represented a move away from the formal style of discourse of 1984. The journalist also made assertions concerning the delegate’s likely states of mind: “... and it’s likely to be the recent election defeat that’s uppermost in delegates’ minds...” which were highly speculative.

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\(^{243}\) Item Number, 87.4
\(^{244}\) Item Number, 87.4
\(^{245}\) Item Number, 93.1
\(^{246}\) Item Number 87.4

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In the second item, more informal discourse than 1984 was again evident in the slang used: "swanky" and "glass towers." Such idiomatic language was more allusive than the precise style of the 1984 items. Another feature of the second item was the evident lack of balance. The Leader of Opposition had his message paraphrased by the journalist: "Mr. Bolger's message was a simple one, that they [successful businessmen] had nothing to fear from a National government." The journalist then paraphrased Mr Bolger's attack on the political opposition: "He says the next Labour caucus will be more left wing, and warned that plans to return to financial controls and a traditional socialist approach to banking and credit." A member of Government was given a short reply, saying he was disappointed with the speech, but there was no identification of the spokesperson. The only indication that he was an MP was a red handkerchief and red tie, the traditional colours of Labour, the Government. He may have been widely known at that time, but he did not appear in any other political reportage in our sample, and we could find no other reference to him. On balance, the Leader of Opposition had two sound-bites, one at the podium and one after his speech restating campaign promises, and there was another sound-bite from one of his party supporters admiring the speech, in effect only one anonymous opportunity had been given for rebuttal to the roundly-attacked Government.

Both 1987 items were reasonably straightforward, but offered less information and more inference than the 1984 items. The party leaders were said to "hope to steer the people who fill these seats (over footage of empty seats in a conference centre) away from dwelling too heavily on..." and "It is hoped the selection of people like Ruth Richardson..." The journalist was making these claims without providing evidence for them, and on behalf of vaguely identified subjects. In 1984 the journalist had positioned himself outside the issue, and reported on it as an event external to both himself and the viewer. The emergence of a new type of discourse in 1987 brought the journalist much closer to the issue and produced journalism more akin to opinion.

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than reportage. The lack of balance in the second item indicated the emergence of reportage favouring emotion over facts and conversational language over the more restrictive demands of normative journalism.

By 1990, these trends had strengthened. In the first item, the contrasting phrases used in the studio introduction were repeated and expanded on in the opening lines. The passage of the pay equity legislation through the house took, "...months of work and years of preparation..." but the government was said to be "...in a hurry to be rid of it." From these contrasting phrases, it was apparent that the producer (who normally writes the studio introductions) and the onscreen journalist thought the government callous in its dismissal of a hard-won and intrinsically fair piece of legislation. The next part of the journalist's report dealt with the issue at hand, but reiterated the point about undue haste: "...the public had only four days to prepare." There was only one sentence in defence of the Bill, and that was from the Committee Chairman, who denied the undue haste, but nothing in the item explained why the pay equity legislation was being repealed, making it seem arbitrary. The rest of the item was concerned with pay equity cases in arbitration. That "Newspaper boys and girls are caught in the middle" would seem to further indicate the their sense of injustice. There were no doubt many groups and individuals at the time who were engaged in arbitration, but none was more innocent or photogenic than children. The laughter, which accompanied a young woman's description of her wage, reinforced the notion of the absurdity of repeal. All endorsement of the pay equity bill was implied, as was criticism of its repeal, but neither the worth of the former nor the reasons for the latter were given.

The second 1990 item was a presentation of National Party's policy promises. The item displayed more attributed assertions without evidence than in previous samples. It contained no examination of the economic validity, desirability or achievability of the policy promises. It opened by saying the Leader of Opposition had already made

\[\text{Footnotes:}\]
\[301\] Item Number, 90.1
\[302\] Item Number, 90.5
all the promises at issue, and today they were being repeated. *One Network News* had already covered the release of the opposition’s election manifesto, but the point of repeating the exercise was not explained. The audience was told that the document being released that day was "expensive" and "glossy" in order, presumably, to highlight its importance (or perhaps to hint at its exaggerations). The item then went on to list these policy promises: "National, if it becomes government, is promising to achieve economic growth of 3%, halve unemployment and get inflation down to below 2%. It also promises to get single figure interest rates while still achieving a balanced budget." This impressive set of promises was presented as spoken text over graphics repeating the spoken text, but nowhere was it justified, challenged or examined with logic or evidence. The next set of policy promises - "Along with economic goals, National is promising more private health care. There will be welfare cuts especially for those on domestic purposes benefits. Superannuation will be linked to inflation under a national government and 900 extra police jobs will be created. National also promises an education system emphasising job skills." - were presented over pictures matching each promise (i.e. pictures of hospital beds during ‘health care’, cut to welfare office pictures under ‘domestic purpose benefit’ etc) but again, no promises were examined or their ramifications explored.

The item did include a sentence and a sound-bite from the Leader of the Opposition stating his commitment to these promises, but no criticism from the Government or any other institution or individual opposed to these policies. The item was effectively a repeat broadcast of the National Party’s superficially impressive policy goals. Presumably a similar bullet-list of Labour Party promises featured in another bulletin, but it did not appear in the sample.

The political policy reportage of the 1990 items represented a further development of tendencies evident in 1987. In first item on pay equity legislation, the studio presenter’s text and journalist’s text were slanted toward one piece of legislation and against another. This was made evident through contrasting phrases, emotive imagery, and the selection of children as “victims”. However, with the exception of a single sentence, the item developed very little information about the issue itself.
The audience was not told why or how the legislation was to be repealed, nor was it informed to any great depth what the legislation was about. The item alluded to a great injustice, but did not say what the injustice was, or whom it would affect. The second item – Opposition policy promises - was little more than a party political broadcast; a series of policy promises were reported verbatim with no analysis or criticism apart from a audio-visual allusion to ‘glossy’. Ironically, as reportage was increasingly shorn of investigation and analysis, it also became more self-important. In 1990, the now formulaic journalist piece to camera and verbal sign-off emerged. In both items, the journalist provided additional information without developing it, and signed off back to the studio. With increasingly personalised journalism, the performance rather than the substance of television news was becoming paramount.

These trends continued in 1993. The first item11 concerned the Labour post-election leadership coup and attempts to heal the wounds within the party. The item contained a great deal of supposition about the emotional states of the subjects that the journalist pretended to be privy to. A lunch honouring women was labelled a “brief respite” for the Leader of Opposition, as she “...begins the task of healing the wounds in the Labour Party...” The language was evocative and cliché-ridden. How could the journalist know the luncheon was a respite, and why necessarily brief except for the clichéd expectation that all respites were necessarily brief and by extension, ‘life is hard’ - an attitude of conservative fatalism consistent with John Langer’s examination of the human-interest story.12 The imagery of ‘wounds’ was equally evocative: a harried woman struggling to revive a wounded animal. While this may fit the demands of imaginative story telling, it did not inform the audience. The sentence structures and phrasing were no longer those of serious print journalism. The luncheon was the least salient fact in the item, yet it was the first described.

The closing section of this item depended heavily on the visuals to make its meaning clear (this last point is further elaborated in the section on Visual Texts): “By re-appointing the old finance team, Ms Clark has indicated that her approach to the leadership might not be as radical as perhaps some of her supporters might hope.” A

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11 Item Number, 93.1
12 Langer, Tabloid Television.
reference to ‘her’ leadership not being as radical as some of her supporters might hope was incomplete as a purely verbal text, but the pictures focused unaccountably on Dame Catherine Tizard as the lines were spoken. The inference here, unsupported by the item and, in any event, a separate issue, was that the Governor General, Dame Catherine was displeased with the Leader of Opposition’s appointment of the old finance team.

The second item\(^3\) was just as confused. The studio introduction had very little to do with the item itself. The studio introduced an item about the Government making policy concessions to Ruth Richardson, their Finance Minister.

Studio introduction: “On the political stage Mr. Bolger was suggesting National may make major policy concessions to stay in power. The party is prepared to look at introducing minimum youth pay rates, and he says further privatisation is a minor issue. But he won’t commit to a Cabinet or whether Ruth Richardson keeps her job. Here is political correspondent Richard Harman.”

The item itself did discuss in a very minor way the likelihood of policy concessions, but did not discuss Ruth Richardson at all. Having stated the election result was still unclear, it moved from policy concessions of the ‘Government’ to the activities of the ‘Opposition’, and then on to the rather garbled opinions of the minor parties. While the opening section of the spoken text was fairly straightforward, it led into a sound-bite that was not relevant to what had just been discussed.

In the quest for brevity, sense was being lost as the second lead into the Prime Minister’s second sound-bite was even less cogent and the journalist’s text was only vaguely supported by the sound-bite. The journalist said: “Indeed Mr. Bolger is suggesting that radical free market economic reform is now over.” The Prime Minister is then shown saying something much more ambiguous, “The great bulk of the change that has been put in place over the last nine years will remain because it has demonstrably had the support of the two major political parties who still overwhelmingly represent the constituencies of New Zealand, but there may have

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\(^3\) Item Number, 93.3
been some other suggestions around that may have moved or have not have moved, that probably won't now."

This sound-bite appeared to have been included less for the information it conveyed, than the hints it might supply about the Prime Ministers character or intelligence.

Although the journalist said the election result was unclear, he added that the Government was meeting as usual, but the Opposition was “intent on giving every appearance of also being the Government.” The track did not explain that the incumbent remains the Government until a new Government is formed, but alluded to confusion in Parliament, and the ‘self-serving’ claims of politicians. The growing tendency was to rely increasingly on the common knowledge of the audience: that is, on untested assumptions.

The second half of this item was a disconnected series of sound-bites from the former Leader of the Opposition, David Lange, the Leader of Opposition, Mike Moore, and the leaders of the two smaller parties. None seemed to bear any relation to another, other than the implication that Moore was responding to Lange’s criticism. Again, politics is presented as a gaming-orientated conflict between childish and self-serving factions:

David Lange, former leader of Labour Party: “The Labour Party has not once captured the hearts of the people that used to represent it.”

Cut to Mike Moore, Leader of Opposition: “David is a generous person.”

Voice of interviewer, off camera: “He wasn’t very generous this morning.”

Mike Moore: “I don’t accept that, you’re going to have to accept that, we are not a party of zombies, I mean, so what, who cares? It’s a different age.”

Cut to journalist: “Meanwhile, Alliance Leader Jim Anderton is predicting a new style political future.”
Cut to Jim Anderton, Leader of Alliance: “Well, I think we will get the formation of new parties, and I think the two major parties, Labour and National are going to find it very difficult to hold their show together. I mean, they talk about the Alliance having difficulties, well that’s kindergarten stuff compared to the factions that are within both Labour and National.”

Cut to Winston Peters, Leader New Zealand First: “Well we are not here to upset the apple cart, we are here to surely act in the national interest. We have made that commitment. Our national interest concept goes beyond and above this party and we are constitutionally bound to it.”

The obligatory piece to camera at the end of the item failed to explain the previous sound-bites, or to summarise the item, but the implication was clear: that there was no loyalty among thieves. The piece to camera simply stated that there was more drama to come: Journalist: “The next chapter in this drama will probably come on Thursday when both major parties have their caucus meetings. Richard Harman, One Network News.”

The year 1993 represented a low point in political policy reportage. The foregoing examples were the only two instances of policy reportage in the entire sample year, despite the fact it was an election year. Both seemed confused and unclear, and neither had much to do with issues of substance. Both required the background knowledge of politics only available to newspaper readers or National Radio listeners, and provided little in the way of information to those who were capable of reading between the fairly blurred lines.

By 1996, the quantity of policy reportage had increased from 1993 levels, but its quality had not. In the first item,** where Opposition parties attacked Government spending priorities, the verbal text confined itself to describing the pictures with very little information concerning the issue under review. The first three sound-bites were from ordinary people affected by the changes to Plunket and Kindergarten funding structures, but not involved in the decision making process concerning those changes:

** Item Number, 96.5
Cut from studio to journalist: "A convoy of push-chairs in central city Auckland today. Down one end, kindergarten teachers protesting for more pay. Down the other, Plunket parents fighting to keep their centres open. It was all a bit much for some of the junior protesters, but for the mums and dads, some of them on lunchtime leave there is a lot a stake."

Cut from journalist to a person called Josephine Lio: "People go to these places for time out, support and staff, but now that they are closed, where do we turn to?"

Cut to an unidentified person: "If these are going to be centres closed, then I'll be sitting at home with the baby crying and screaming and not knowing what to do next."

Cut to a person called David Van Schaardenburg: "Well it's children's welfare basically and we believe that probably the policy, in terms of spending of the Government morals (sic) are wrong."

Nowhere in the item were decision-making elites canvassed about why the centres were being closed and what the likely ramifications were. The Prime Minister was captured speaking on camera (to call it 'interviewed' would be stretching it). The journalists said: "Jim Bolger was up north today for another school visit. He insists holding the line on social spending is the responsible thing to do." The item then cuts to the Prime Minister saying: "Its good economics, it enables us to say, it enables me as Prime Minister to say, that we will be in a position to afford to invest wisely in all areas of social policy, and we will do it." He did not specifically comment on Plunket or kindergarten spending. The journalist listed those areas where Plunket operations had closed, but did not interview the local Regional Health Authority which she said was responsible. Instead, she took sound-bites from more members of the public. She then claimed that the Opposition parties agreed with the protesters, although none did so in their sound-bites. The sound-bite from the Leader of the Alliance was very hard to understand: "If the country is wealthy enough to give away two thousand, five hundred billion dollars to its richest citizens, it should be wealthy enough to look after its most vulnerable." Nowhere in the item was this extravagant claim examined.
The closing sound-bite from the Prime Minister bore little relation to the issue. The journalist closed with an assertion about the National election strategy, “selling itself”, followed by a series of unsourced and unevidenced assertions about government policy. She then said the protesters didn’t agree with the Prime Minister’s assertion, but neglected to point out they were protesting against something more specific (Plunket closures), and had not commented on wider National election policy at all. The link, if there was one, was imposed by the journalist.

The second 1996 item was even more vague. The item was about law and order promises by New Zealand First. The horse-race style of political campaign coverage was evident in the opening line of the journalist’s text. “With an election just months off, the campaigning is slowly turning to law and order.” The implication was that all campaigns eventually turn to law and order. The next sentence was an example of how cryptic the conversational discourse predominant in these items had become. What was meant by, “Winston Peters leaving immigration, attacking the Government’s record on crime”? We know immigration bashing was a Peters’ crusade. Are to assume this is what is being cynically referenced here? The line: “Police say it’s rare that Mr. Peters accuses the government of cutting front line police. He is promising 300 more.” was again confusing for those who did not know the background. Did this mean police were criticising Mr. Peters? Did the word “rare” connote a sarcastic dig? If so, why would they do so if he was promising more front line police? The subsequent sound-bite did not clear-up this confusion.

The next section recalled a National campaign promise of six years earlier promising 900 more police, but did not reveal if that promise had been realised, and went on to say 540 police staff were to be lost. Did they mean from the 900 National promised six years ago? Or did they mean from current figures? The figures were decontextualised and confusing. The sound-bite from Labour bore no relation to the journalist’s introduction to the sound-bite, and she stated that a similar sound-bite from another Opposition party politician was different from the Labour position. Her piece to camera contradicted all the preceding text without resolving the
contradictions and confusion in it, and introduced a new element without explaining how or why a new police computer would free up staff for front line duty:

Phil Goff, Justice, Labour: “I think its time to be tough also on the causes of crime and to do something more for victims who are overlooked in our concern for the offenders far too often.”

Journalist returns: “Another politician, another message on crime. Jim Anderton’s blaming social problems.”

Jim Anderton, Leader Alliance: “So I say get tough on the causes of crime, get tough on poor housing, get tough on unemployment.”

Journalist returns: “Police Minister John Luxton says crime levels haven’t changed in four years, and the police’s new computer will free up more staff for front line duty. Leigh Pearson, One Network News.”

In any event, the implications of Peter’s policy were not examined. The stylistic structures were similar to the first 1996 item discussed. While the first item had a fair amount of journalist’s text, a large percentage of it was devoted to the description of the visual text. In the second, what little journalist’s text there was, was potentially confusing. The sound-bites in both items did nothing to clarify the issues. The juxtaposition of decontextualised sound-bites was used instead to convey the impression that politicians would say anything for a vote. Since the politicians are no longer being given an opportunity to justify their views, they speak only in bald and disconnected assertions, giving viewers no chance to assess their comparative logic or wisdom. The view of politics we are left with bears a closer resemblance to the New Zealand Herald’s cartoon, The Politician, than it does to serious political journalism.

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4.1: Summary.

The journalist's text has changed radically over the sample period. In 1984, the journalist's text was very similar to written journalism, but spoken aloud. Like print journalism, the most salient facts were given first, the evidence cited, the protagonists views introduced, canvassed and contrasted in relation to one another. The journalist was external to the issue and the individuals involved. The trends that emerged in 1987 continued through the sample. These trends were towards informal, more conversational discourse, and more journalist-involvement, i.e. a decreasing distance between the issue or event and its participants, and the journalist. The texts described the feelings and thoughts of the participants and the language became more connotative than denotative with an increasing level of inference and analogy rather than factual and straightforward accounts of the issues. Where the earlier forms of discourse assumed an intelligent but ignorant audience and so made the propositional connections explicit, the new conversational style was glibly and artfully knowing, relying on common knowledge – what everybody knows that everybody knows – as a basis for making (or alluding knowingly to) unevideanced inferences about clichéd political behaviour. This was news with a nudge and a wink, rather than with propositional logic; it both flattered and patronised the audience, assuming that what they already knew was all they needed to know. It also guaranteed that new or controversial viewpoints would have a hard task of getting through the news filter. The demand for common knowledge reduced the possibility of learning anything uncommon or politically challenging.

The news discourse by 1996 was more confusing than illuminative. The texts of 1993 and 1996 juxtaposed potentially contradictory audio-visual elements. They introduced both pictorial and verbal elements that often undermined earlier statements, without explaining their significance or resolving the mysteries. The texts had moved a considerable distance from the text spoken as written texts of 1984, and in doing so, had created a discourse that was easy to follow, but full of vague allusions and unanswered – and unasked – questions.
Within the journalists’ texts, *Tabloidisation* and the inversion of the norms of serious journalism took place after 1987. While earlier reportage was similar to print reportage, after 1987 it became increasingly distinctive as commercial television reportage. Facts relevant to the issue were replaced with facts drawing attention to the visual elements of the item. The story ‘angle’ was ‘proved’ visually, surprises were built into the spoken and visual texts, emotional language replaced informational language, and the journalists themselves were more strongly identified, becoming a central element in the items. These changes were those advocated by TVNZ’s news-writing consultants like Fred Shook, and while conforming to the experience of other commercial news environments, the increasing *Tabloidisation* made the items allusive rather than explicit, and less informative than earlier years. The lack of internal coherency in the spoken texts, the failure to address the claims of those quoted (usually politicians) and the reduction in cited evidence confirmed increasing *Decontextualisation* after deregulation. Combined, these changes to the journalists’ texts reduced the amount of issue-related content available in the items, but increased the human-interest and gaming-orientation. The emphasis on creating news with this entertainment-orientation reduced its ability to inform. By 1996, the selected items were reduced to disconnected snippets of political posturing, and politics itself a game of personality and rivalry. These items were easy to understand at the level of street-talk, but failed to answer - or ask - the more precise and complicated questions they did in 1984.

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Shook, *Television Field Production and Reporting.*

5: Sound-bites and Sources - Empirical Analysis.

5.1 The Findings.

Figure 6.5. The Frequency and Length of Sound-bites.

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<td>Average Length</td>
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<td>13.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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Note on the graph: A sound-bite is a direct quote on-camera from a person other than the journalist. This graph shows two things, the amount sound-bites as a percentage of the total number of all discourse elements in the items, and the average length. The total number of discourse elements was the sum of all the measured discourse elements occurrences (not length) – so the number of occurrences of Relevant Facts, Redundant Facts, Journalists Assertions and Attributes, Assertions, Assertions With Evidence, Assertions Without Evidence, Questions and Sound-Bites. The graph also shows the average length per year for sound-bites.

As Figure 6.5 shows, the percentage of sound-bites in relation to other discourse elements declined up to 1990, and then returned in 1996 to the levels of 1984. The lessening amount of sound-bites from 1984 to 1990 initially appeared as a failure of One Network News to deliver direct, on-camera quotes from protagonists in an issue; an essential function of broadcast news as it allows the individuals close to an issue to speak for themselves. After 1990 sound-bites rose again, but by tracing the average length of a sound-bite over the sample, the drop in sound-bite length is clear. In 1984, sound-bites of an average 30 seconds in length occupied 21% of all the
discourse elements sampled\(^3\). The items featured four or five long sound-bites, allowing for a complex and developed argument. By 1996, there was the same average number of sound-bites, but their average length had dropped to only six or seven seconds. The result was a slightly higher number of sound-bites, six or seven, but each was of a much shorter duration. This was consistent with the hypotheses of \textit{Morselisation}; an increasing number of shorter sound-bites, increasing the pace of the items, but disabling the development of complex argumentation. In 1984, the sound-bites in both items were sourced from the two main parties. In 1996, coverage of a wider political spectrum under MMP accounted for the larger number of occurrences, but they were treated in a much more cursory way, with each person speaking for only six or seven seconds. Another feature of the sound-bites in later years in the sample is their disconnection from one another. In 1984, the sound-bites had answered each other directly, often preceded or interrupted by the journalist relating what the other had said. By 1996, the sound-bites are self-enclosed. They appear not to refer to either each other, or even in some cases to the issue under discussion. The audience did not hear the question, so the sound-bite often seemed to come from left-field, and little or no attempt was made by the journalist to relate what was said by one representative to what someone else had said.

A closer look at sound-bite lengths may offer a clearer picture of the growing emphasis on brevity over comprehension.

\(^3\) All the discursive elements measured were; \textit{Relevant Facts, Redundant Facts, Journalists Assertions and Attributes Assertions, Assertions With Evidence, Assertions Without Evidence, Questions and Sound-Bites.}
Figure 5.6. The Longest, Shortest and Average Sound-bites

Figure 5.6. indicates a reduction in range between the longest and shortest sound-bites between 1984 and 1987, a gap that narrowed further in 1996. In 1984 the sound-bite continued until the speaker had made their point. If that took 15 seconds, or 45 seconds, the sound-bite carried on to accommodate the entire argument. In 1987 there was a five second difference between the longest and shortest sound-bites. By 1996, there was a one second difference between the shortest and longest sound-bite length, indicating the vast majority of sound-bites were about six or seven seconds long, with none longer than ten seconds. These findings are closely aligned to the results of other analyses of discourse elements done in New Zealand and overseas.\textsuperscript{32} So, from 1987 the sound-bites were either edited to fit into pre-ordained lengths, or the comments themselves were constrained into 10-15 second brevities. Despite this being an extremely limited amount of time in which to develop an argument, nothing exceeded these limits in the 1996 sample. What was apparent in this was that, from 1987, the sound-bites were used, not as an opportunity for participants to debate or develop an

argument, but as a formulaic and undifferentiated device (in length at least) for balancing a story by including opposing comments. While a token form of balance is achieved by such a structure, it seldom aids understanding of the issues involved. While the number of sound-bites increased they were all about seven seconds long. Again, Morselisation is apparent by 1996, with the length of sound-bites ranging only four seconds between their shortest and longest duration. The packaging of news into formulaic morsels inevitably promotes form over substance, and is basically hostile to reasoned discourse. It may have marketing benefits, but not journalistic ones.

5.2: Sources.

Another feature that could be quantified and examined was the distribution of sources in the items. Obviously, with political policy items, the dominant voices would be those most closely involved - the political policy makers and their opponents. However, other voices featured across the sample, both as sound-bites and referred to as sources for attributed assertions and as evidence for journalists’ assertions. By collating these voices, it was possible to chart changes to the structures of these items with regard to who provides evidence.

4. Acknowledged Source– Partisan Authorities/ Spokespeople

- **Partisan Authorities** are representatives of the state apparatus. These include politicians, police, members of government-sponsored committees etc. **Partisan Spokespeople** are employees of large organisations that are the subject of the item. Essentially, this category identifies partisan voices speaking on behalf of the state, parties and pressure groups, etc.

- Example: If the item is about a large commercial operation, then official representatives of that organisation are categorised as *Partisan Authorities/Spokespeople*.
5. **Acknowledged Source- Expert**

- *Experts* are generally from organisations outside of government, but who are recognised for their knowledge about certain subjects. These are non-partisan, but informed voices. For the sake of clarity, Government representatives who are experts but express partisan views, are placed under the *Partisan Authorities/Spokespeople* category.

- They are also individuals outside large commercial corporations who are in a position to examine an issue, but are not directly affected by it.

6. **Acknowledged Source - Ordinary People**

- *Ordinary People* are bystanders, eyewitnesses or participants in an issue or event, but with no other qualification for examining it except their immediate, personal experience.
The Figure 5.7 shows that news is mostly messages from authority, and that this tendency increased over the sample period. In 1984, experts accounted for more than 40% of all the acknowledged sources, and partisan voices accounted for the rest. In 1987, this gap had widened, and by 1990, the expert as a source had disappeared entirely, and did not resurface for the rest of the sample. The use of authorities as sources and sound-bites rose until 1993, then dipped as ordinary people rose to fill the commentary role once filled by the experts. While the appearance of ordinary people in the items conveyed the impact of political decisions on the electorate – helpful to politicians and other leaders intent on monitoring the public mood - they were no substitute for experts. Experts might not only demonstrate the impact of such decisions, but offer alternatives and critique policy from an informed rather than an indignantly emotional or bewildered position. If, as was the case by 1996, partisan authority figures offered only statements designed to assert their positions without reference to contrary positions, and criticism of policy came only from those immediately affected by it, a kind of balance was achieved between criticism and defence of policy. However, this was a balance that offered no intermediate alternatives or neutral solutions, and see-sawed between the extremes of advocacy and derision. The expert, the informed mediator with some critical distance from the
issue, had, by 1990, been replaced with the voice of ordinary experience on one hand, and (as demonstrated in Figures 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3) by the journalists themselves. The danger in replacing the expert voice with that of the journalist was compounded by the fact that, as previously shown, the journalist over the sample period was increasingly less critically involved and able only to comment on peripheral strategies or psychological aspects of the narratives. *Personalisation* increased over the sample as the expert voice disappeared and its critical distance was lost to the emotional and self-referential voice of ordinary experience.

6: The Sound-bites – Discussion.

Sound-bites are an integral element of political coverage. They allow a political position to be identified with a protagonist, and potentially allow the protagonist to air a view that is indisputably his or her own. This informational function of sound-bites diminished as the study moved through the sample. The 1984 sound-bites were longer and more detailed than those of 1996. The 1996 sound-bites were provided without context, which, more often than not, rendered them vague or disinformative.

In the first 1984 sample\textsuperscript{13} (about pressure on the New Zealand dollar), sound-bites from other sources exceeded the journalist’s text as a proportion of the entire item. The journalist gave the sound-bites context at the outset, then the replies were questioned, which provided more context. Another set of questions and answers responded to those given by the first person interviewed; in this case, the Leader of Opposition answered issues raised by the Prime Minister. The result was the development of a claim from the Prime Minister, contextualised and substantiated by the journalist, and a response from the Leader of Opposition that answered the claim and further developed the argument. In the second sample\textsuperscript{14} (about growing per-capita debt) the first sound-bite from the Prime Minister was preceded by a clear description of its context, in this case an attack on a political opponent to illustrate a point. The reply from the Leader of the Opposition was also provided with context,

\textsuperscript{13} Item Number, 84.9
\textsuperscript{14} Item Number, 89.8
and represented a detailed and complex answer to the issues raised by the journalist. This response was further questioned by the journalist, in fact openly contradicted with a set of statistics, and the Leader of the Opposition replied by naming the source of his data and its significance.

The voices of authority featured heavily in all 1984 items, but also present were the voices of expert opinion, often used to mediate the claims and counter claims of the policy makers. In both items, these two sources were almost equally prominent as sources appealed to by the journalist to provide evidence for the journalist’s texts.

In both cases, the sound-bites were lengthy and complex. The items began with the journalist providing the wider context of the issue at hand, and then narrowing the description to introduce the sound-bites from the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. While the initial questions are not included in the broadcast, responses are detailed, and remain within the context provided. The journalist questioned half of the responses from protagonists on-camera, and the replies provided further argumentation. In these items, the pieces closed with the final words from the Leader of the Opposition, challenging the Prime Minister’s argument. While this may be regarded as a bias in favour of the Leader of the Opposition, he was the subject of the initial attack and was properly given an opportunity to defend himself. As we shall see, 1984 was the only year in the survey in which the subject’s words closed the item as the focus of political policy items became more journalist-centred.

The 1987 sound-bites were slightly briefer, and less context was provided. Rather than discussing the argument, the journalist tended to state what the sound-bite would say, then the sound-bite repeated it. Often, however, the sound-bite went on to offer information not introduced by the journalist. These new elements were not discussed by the journalist, and remained unexplored. The sound-bites tended toward complete statements, but were too brief to permit reasoned argument rather than unexamined assertion. Another element was the diminishing role of the expert. In 1987, the meditative role of the expert was considerably less than that of 1984. The number of references to authoritative sources had also decreased, although less dramatically.
The sound-bites from the samples in 1990 were shorter and less relevant. Only half of them offered any information relevant to the issues discussed by the journalist. Though they offered little information, the sound-bites worked to lighten the piece with banter and laughter. Decreasing reference to authoritative sources continued from 1987, and the first references to ordinary people affected by policy appeared. As Atkinson notes, the changes to the structure of One Network News storylines in the 1990 were due to an active drive for a younger audience:315

"...More emotionally coloured, victim oriented portrayals (means) less information about the more complex and also the more problematic aspects of public affairs... The emphasis on drama, entertainment, action, simplicity, immediacy and personalisation has almost nothing to do with any ineluctable characteristics of television, and everything to do with attracting a wider and more youthful audience."316

However, as Atkinson also points out, "...allowing ordinary people to express helpless outrage in vanishingly brief interviews, can scarcely be said to empower them."316

In 1993, the length and amount of sound-bites began to increase, and in the first item,317 (about the Labour Party post-election coup) they presented a reasonably well-argued position rather than the bland assertions of the previous election year. Both Michael Cullen and Peter Dunne of the Labour Party were quoted at length and in some detail. The sound-bites were introduced with context, and the speakers allowed to develop a position. This represents an anomaly in the general trends, but it is worth noting that both Peter Dunne and Dr Michael Cullen are particularly adept at using the media and unusually literate speakers. However, only the Labour Party was represented. Oppositional voices or revenue experts did not challenge the content of the sound-bites, nor did the journalist examine the claims. Perhaps this was why the two central figures in the item were given a longer time to talk.

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315 Atkinson, 'The State, The Media and Thin Democracy', pg. 162
317 Item Number, 93.1
The second piece from 1993 (about National Party concessions to stay in power) featured more oppositional voices, but they were not given much context, and thus rendered difficult to decipher. Secondly, the Opposition sound-bites themselves seemed very garbled, particularly those from the two minor parties. The Prime Minister was awarded a long sound-bite, and although he presented a reasonable argument, the details were not challenged by the oppositional voices. Instead, they were quoted as discussing quite different issues. Also, the use of ordinary people or expert voices had disappeared completely, the only sources referred to for evidence were the authority figures themselves.

By 1996, these tendencies had settled into practices. The sound-bites were not argument; rather they were assertions and opinions, provided with little context or evidence. Also, the voices of ordinary people had totally eclipsed those of expert opinion as a source of verification for the claims made by the journalists and the authority figures. All the sound-bites were short and appealed directly to emotion rather than reason. In the first item, the Leader of the Opposition talked of 'mothers and little children' missing out on social services. The Leader of the Alliance Party talked of the 'country giving away' to its 'wealthiest citizens' 'two thousand, five hundred billion dollars'. This inflated claim was neither supported with evidence, nor examined or challenged by the journalist or anyone else. Anne Batten of New Zealand First offered what she thought the country 'should be doing' without examining why it was not. The sound-bite from the Prime Minister was not much better developed. His short statement was confusing given the context of the item and the journalist's introduction to it. He claimed, against the weight of the rest of the item, that 'holding the line on social spending is the responsible thing to do' (journalist's introduction to the sound-bite) but argued that it was good economics to have avoided in investing in social spending [in the past], so we could invest in social spending [in the future]. The lack of clear temporal qualification turned his comment

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318 Item Number, 93.3
319 Atkinson, 'Hey Martha!'  
320 Item Number, 96.5
into a tautology. The second item from 1996\textsuperscript{321} was even more confusing. There were three sound-bites from Opposition Parties, but none from the Government. The first sound-bite from Winston Peters, Leader of New Zealand First, was introduced in a way that made little sense out of the subsequent sound-bite. The second and third sound-bites presented very similar sentiments, but had very little to do with their introductions. In both cases, the opinions of the individuals were presented rather than statements of party position or policy.

The changes in sound-bite introduction, length, content and contextualisation were dramatic over the sample period. In 1984, the journalist worked the text around the sound-bites. The political protagonists got to speak for themselves. By 1996, it appeared the journalist had gained prominence, while the subjects of the item were either ordinary people affected by policy changes, or politicians, who seldom got an opportunity to discuss policy at length. The advice of news consultants appeared to have had a dramatic impact. For example, Fred Shook had advocated: “Keep sound-bites short. They should be used as exclamation points, and are not a substitute for your own reporting.”\textsuperscript{322} Rather than the central element of the story they had been in 1984, by 1996 sound-bites had become just another element in capturing and keeping an audience: glib visual ‘proof’ that the journalist had been doing his or her job, and reassurance to the viewer that they too, were ‘in the know.’

\textsuperscript{321} Item Number, 96.11

\textsuperscript{322} Shook, \textit{Television Field Production and Reporting}, pg. 8.
7: The Visual Features - Empirical Analysis.

Figure 5.8. Longest, Shortest and Average Shot Length, Not Including Studio Introduction.

Note on the graph: The length of a shot, either a still, a pan or zoom shot. Shot length was recorded from beginning of one shot until a shot change (an edit cut). The studio introductions were not included in this category.

Mirroring the results from sound-bite range (see Figure 5.6) Figure 5.8 shows decreasing shot lengths over the sample. The longest shot by 1996 was less than ten seconds, while the average dropped from eight to four seconds. The shortest shot fell to two seconds by 1990 and remained there. Morselisation of speech was mirrored by shrinking shot length. There were more and faster editing cuts in the later years of the sample which may have allowed for more visual information to be presented, but the frequent shot changes found in 1996 often acted as a distraction from the verbal narratives. On the other hand, as discussed, by 1996 the verbal narratives themselves required very little concentration anyway. The impact of news consultants' requirements that the items become more visually exciting was evident here.
8: Visual Features - Discussion.

The earlier items featured long shot lengths and a lack of visual activity. Both the 1984 and 1987 samples featured long, uncut shots of subjects talking, with stationary buildings and interiors to provide visual background for the spoken texts, and shots of journalists sitting at desks talking straight through the camera to the audience. Graphics were seldom used except for hand drawn maps to illustrate the countries under discussion. There was very little natural sound used.

By 1990, there were more visual cuts, shorter shots and more natural sound. The shots themselves featured more movement and activity, and there were virtually no still shots. The graphics were computer generated, and featured heavily in the second item from 1990. The graphics here were echoed in the journalist's spoken texts. This item also featured a segment where each of the policy issues under discussion by the journalist was represented visually; e.g., national superannuation cuts discussed over pictures of elderly people in a rest home. This series of fast jump cuts illuminated the 'writing with pictures' approach to news items encouraged by American news consultants. This advice had been rigorously applied in this item with a series of five separate picture cuts featuring elements as diverse as police, classrooms and hospitals. This second item also featured the journalist piece to camera at the end of the item, a feature that occasionally surfaced in the past, but was to become standard in the coming years.

The trend continued in 1993. Fast shot changes, activity and action dominated the screen, and more natural sound was used. A new feature in the first item, was the use of pictures to go further than just providing a general context for the text. Instead, they were used to insinuate a relationship between the spoken words and the subjects featured in-shot. The journalist text closed with the words; "By re-appointing the old finance team, Ms Clark has indicated that her approach to the leadership might not be as radical as perhaps some of her supporters might hope." As these words were

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323 Item Number, 90.5
324 Item Number, 93.1
spoken, the camera panned from Ms Clark at a reception to rest meaningfully in a close-up of Dame Catherine Tizard. The inference was that Dame Catherine was one of the more ‘radical supporters’, an inference made solely with the selective use of visual cues. The second item in 1993\(^2\) opened with a large graphic logo over the bottom of the screen which read, ‘Election ’93. Concessions.’ Again, quick shot changes predominated with plenty of natural sound underneath the journalist’s voice.

By 1996, the use of natural sound had become extensive, accompanied by long pauses in the journalist’s text. Again, Shook’s advice about ‘building in pauses’ and ‘using sound to provide effect’\(^3\) appeared to have been heeded. The shots were quickly cut and busy. In the first item\(^4\) (about Plunket cuts) and like those of 1993, the pictures were used as an excuse to introduce fictional, story-telling elements, such as the words “It was all a bit much for some junior protesters...” over a shot of a child sleeping in a pram. Placards and banners held by protesters stated the specifics of the protest more often than the journalist’s texts. The second half of the item featured similar introductory structures; natural sound, crowd shots, fast cuts with much activity. Children featured heavily in the entire visual narrative while the spoken narratives emphasised their impending suffering. The second item in 1996\(^5\) (about Winston Peters promising more police) featured a great deal of activity in the shots themselves. The item opened and closed with police activity and, in the middle of the item, a police recruiting advertisement, complete with dancing police and up-beat music.

The changes to the visual texts were extensive over the sample period. Long, still shots were replaced with short, busy shots with a great deal of activity and movement. Natural sound, once virtually non-existent, came to share the auditory texts with the spoken words of journalists and subjects. The pictures in 1984 merely provided a general context to the elements under discussion, for instance; a still shot of the Treasury building if it was under discussion. In 1990, this contextual role of the

\(^{325}\) Item Number, 93.3

\(^{326}\) Shook, Television Field Production and Reporting, pg. 87.

\(^{327}\) Item Number, 96.5

\(^{328}\) Item Number, 96.11
pictures had changed to provide a more specific context for each element under discussion, with rapid, short cuts of pictures for each specific element. Faster visual cuts mean a faster pace in the items, mirroring the faster pace of the shorter journalist monologues and shorter sound-bites. The spoken word, sound and the pictures all became separate elements of the story – but each adding its own voice to the jumbled and 'noisy' narratives. By 1996, the pictures had become a separate text from the spoken narratives, it provided information that, more than offering context, was sometimes needed for meaning to be derived from the spoken texts. The possibilities of listening to the soundtrack without watching the screen had been reduced to keep viewers, 'glued to the box'.

9: Summary.

It was evident from the quantifiable elements of political policy reportage that it had undergone a profound transformation. The dominance of visual, concrete and descriptive information at the expense of abstract and explanatory information by 1996, clearly showed the growing commitment to visual storytelling and the demise of serious, public affairs journalism. The increasing visual and verbal centrality of the journalist mirrored this rise in peripheral information. The journalist was, by 1996, making more unattributed statements, and so claiming greater knowledge of the issues than those of 1984, but these statements themselves were of less and less value as contributions to the debate at hand. Attributed statements decreased, as many of the statements made by the journalists either needed no ascription, or were 'proved' visually. The role of evidence in backing assertions made by the journalist was seriously diminished as assertions without evidence replaced evidenced ones. On-camera questions posed by the journalist ceased after 1987. This meant, firstly, the audience had to take on trust that the non-broadcast question and the broadcast answer were related, and secondly, claims made by the sound-bites were no longer subject to on-screen challenge by the journalist. The sound-bites themselves became shorter, more frequent and of a more uniform length, meaning either the sound-bites were edited to fit format criteria, or designed by the speaker to fit this pre-ordained length. The widening of the political spectrum in NZ after 1993 may have influenced the
increased frequency of the sound-bites, but potential benefits were undermined by the reduction in sound-bite length. Regardless of how media savvy a political figure might be, it is nigh impossible to develop an argument in a single, six second sound-bite. Secondly, the increased complexity of a wider political spectrum required a greater commitment to the positions of all sides in political debates. The reduction in sound-bite length and lack of examination of what was said reduced the possibility that meaningful and reasoned statements could be made. While sound-bites from authority figures increased over the sample period, critical examination and qualification of sound-bite assertions by expert sources vanished, to be replaced by the voices of ordinary people effected by the policies. Sources used by the journalist in 1996 were either their own opinions, opinions of authority figures, or the complaints made by ordinary people. Finally, the journalist’s monologue, the sound-bite and the shot length all shrank, resulting in a faster paced verbal text and a fast moving visual text, neither of which was conducive to serious or even very comprehensible journalism.

This discussion was based upon a small sample, but this also reflects the paucity of domestic political policy items in 1990 and later. The small sample may have led to an over emphasis on some aspects of the changes to these items over the sample period, but presentational practices tend to reflect standard operating procedures which change slowly over time. Changes to such formulaic practices can be tracked accurately across a relatively small number of examples. The general direction of such developments are usually easy to identify.

In any event, the changing structures of the news bulletin were evident throughout the entire study, not just as instanced in this close analysis. Our research has uncovered a coherent assemblage of closely interrelated changes whose clear overall thrust is not at all diminished by occasional exceptions or peripheral sample deficiencies. In many cases, our analysis merely supports confirmatory detail about well known changes. For example, the glaringly obvious shift from a sole to a dual anchorage of the bulletin provides an explanatory context for findings about complementary developments, which, in hindsight, were only to be expected. The move from a single reader placed within a studio set notable for its sobriety, to co-anchors placed within studio sets that became increasingly awash in colour, served functions other than the
dispassionate reading of introductions to news items. At the same time, those introductions themselves became more florid, more colloquial, more conversational and more inclusive. While this may serve the interests of a commercial broadcaster, these attempts at fostering para-social interaction were scarcely intended to enhance the possibility of understanding complex issues among the audience. The formal and measured pace and language of the 1984 introductions required the audience to concentrate on the message, not on the messenger, if meaning were to be derived from it.

Similarly, the texts of the earlier items, and complexity of the arguments presented by the sound-bites, demanded viewer concentration. In 1984, the items were long, they covered complicated political topics in great detail, with evidence often being cited together with source and context. The sound-bites featured the two main protagonists, either responding to the evidence directly, or to each other and at length. Visual texts were minimal, and did not distract the viewer from the information presented by the verbal texts. As the study moved through the sample however, the less complex the verbal texts became, the more complex the visual texts became. As the verbal texts demanded less attention, more of it was consumed by the rapidly changing shot edits, and by colourful and, increasingly meaningful visual texts. By 1996, many verbal texts were incomplete without the accompanying visual texts. The use of colloquial language, a dependency on visual features to help ‘tell the story’, or to make inferences the One Network News shied away from making explicitly, the fast pace and abbreviated arguments - all may have been recommended by news consultants, but if anything these changes made the items themselves harder for an intelligent viewer to understand. Viewer concentration, such as it was, became a function of the engineered need for visual completion, rather than, verbal comprehension.

The replacement of words with pictures is not content-neutral. Pictures are highly correlated with emotion, self-disclosure, immediacy, personalisation and with more experiential modes of discourse typical of tabloid, human-interest story telling. This, in turn, is reductive because pictures are poor conveyors of complex meaning. According to Trevor Pateman; “(pictures reduce) structurally very complex situations to the level of exemplification of very general, a-historical and non-operational
concepts such as ‘trouble’, ‘fear’, ‘violence’, hunger’, ‘bewildermen’s’.

Pictures are useful shorthand, but comprehension of complex issues demands something else provide a more detailed analysis. By 1996, *One Network News* was not providing this analysis for its audience.

The changing nature of the sound-bite, a crucial element in item structure, further limited the possibilities that meaning could be drawn out of the political issues referred to. The 1984 sound-bites were notable for their length and complexity; an argument was seen as being conducted between the party leaders, which featured most of the elements of good debate. They answered each other’s claims directly with counter-claims, that the journalist then challenged, and they subsequently refined. The role of the sound-bite changed considerably after 1984 as it continued to shrink and become less meaningful until, in 1996, it was rendered increasingly disinformative. Argument became less a statement on policy position, than a bald assertion - intention without explanation, righteousness without justification. The voice of the expert, either in bringing policy deficits to attention or examining the claims of the protagonists, dwindled away over the sample period, to be replaced with the indignant, but often ill-informed or entirely self-referential cries ordinary people.

While news can and should provide a forum for those affected by policy decisions, it should not do so at the expense of specialised counter-elites and mediating experts. If, as the empirical study showed, only the voices of the policy makers, opposition parties and those affected were given a hearing, then the debate between the policy makers and those who disagree must be articulated and contextualised by the non-specialised journalist.

Our hypotheses in relation to the presentation of political policy information were open to falsification by the empirical data, but they survived the test. There was widespread change to the structure and content of the items. Most of these changes occurred after 1987, although some were already underway during that year, but the most dramatic changes occurred later, particularly within the journalists texts. It is highly


330 Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*. 

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probable, therefore, that many of the changes were a direct response to deregulation, while others may have been made in anticipation of deregulation and competition. This is consistent with there being a longer learning curve for aspects of news discourse involving the construction of the audio-visual narrative by teams of journalists, with more subtle script-writing flourishes being added later. It is also consistent with Margaret Comrie’s story about journalists being reluctant converts to the new demands of commercial journalism, with the most unwilling gradually weeded out.331

As in the macro-analysis, there was strong patterning across the data that bolstered the theoretical expectation that deregulation would be the fulcrum around which the change centred. As in the macro-analysis, none of the changes recorded increased the seriousness of the news. In presentation terms, the changes rendered some of the items under review quite illogical, with a complexity of discursive structure that tended to confuse rather than clarify. This might seem at odds with the commercial logic of making the information easier to understand in order to attract a wider audience, unless the intention of the commercial bulletin was merely to excite rather than inform.

10: The Hypotheses Evidenced.

Across the micro-analysis, we found strong evidence for the specific hypotheses we were testing in this chapter. Morselisation, Personalisation, Tabloidisation and Decontextualisation were all found to have taken place as a result of the move from a hybrid-public service/commercial model to a fully commercial model at TVNZ.

Beyond the specific hypotheses we were examining in this chapter, we also found evidence for a hypothesis we were looking at in Chapter 4. The rise of human-interest elements within political policy items after 1990 provides evidence for expectations we had about Depoliticisation within the bulletin. Political policy items

331 Comrie, The Commercial Imperative in Broadcasting News, pg. 186
themselves became more depoliticised as they became more \textit{Tabloidised}. Like changes to the entire bulletin, changes within a single category mean some elements replace others. The examination of the 1996 items and, in particular, the item on Plunket closures, exposed more human-interest and tabloid elements than it did overt political elements. Langer, Atkinson, Curran and McManus have all drawn attention to the political implications of the human-interest story.\footnote{McManus, \textit{Market Driven Journalism: Let the Citizens Beware}; Langer, \textit{Tabloid Television}; Curran Douglas and Whannel, \textit{‘The Political Economy of the Human Interest Story’}; Joe Atkinson, \textit{‘Tabloid Democracy.’}} They identify ominously conservative tendencies in the overtly benign reportage, which suggests the bulletin was not so much \textit{de}-politicised as \textit{re}-politicised in a particular ideological direction.
Conclusion: News Who Can Use?

We can now confidently answer the question: has there been change to the content and presentation of news at One Network News between 1984 and 1996? There has been comprehensive change, and that change was a consequence of deregulation and the introduction of commercial and competitive pressures between 1989 and 1991. The next question becomes, then, what are its political implications? Does it even matter at all?

In Chapter 1, we looked at the two ends of a continuum for national broadcasting, the UK model and the US model. We saw how the two models were born of two different approaches to the role of the state and the market. The BBC and commercial broadcasting in the United Kingdom were the product of the view that broadcasting could and should contribute to the social cohesion of a society, while providing a forum for the whole spectrum of that society. Television, it was argued in the UK, should inform, educate and entertain - in that order. This paternalistic approach, led by Lord Reith, considered the value of news should be determined by its impartiality and the pursuit of editorial neutrality, rather than its popularity. To ensure the BBC remained free from partisan influence, it was funded by the licence fee, which every television-owner paid, regardless of their feelings toward the BBC. This helped distance news and current affairs programming from the vagaries of populism, and allowed them the necessary distance to evaluate and report on society, the state, and market – without being beholden to any of them.

Commercial broadcasting in the UK began following a similar tradition. It was encouraged to fill the gaps in the popular entertainment landscape that the BBC had ignored. What emerged was a two-tier model of commercial and public service broadcasting, each operating within its own remit, and each serving its audience in its own way. In 1995/96, the British audience was evenly split between the two different systems. The licence fee continues to collect revenue for the BBC, and advertising dollars fund the ITV companies.
This double-dip into the pockets of the UK audience is justified by a theoretical belief that there are certain things the market is poor at providing, and it is the role of the state to ensure those things are made available. To enable robust and constructive democratic debate, citizens need to be informed, and television can provide a widely accessible, highly useful, richly textured information resource – but only if it is largely free from partisan interests, which includes commercial interests. Commercial, advertising funded television is bound to mass demand, not the supply of specific and particular resources needed for democratic debate. If a citizenry is to participate in the construction of democratic dialogue, they need access to information that may not appeal to everyone simultaneously. Those groups not served well by market economies, such as minority and special interests, must be protected and given a representative footing alongside majority views. For these reasons, a licence fee, levied equally across all television viewers, pays for a service that while all may not enjoy it, all have access to it and are represented by it.

Broadcasting in the US, representing the other end of the spectrum for how a nation may organise and fund broadcasting, was born out of a different theoretical framework for the role of the state and the market. Strongly libertarian from its inception, the United States, after some debate, came to see broadcasting as not much more or less important for a healthy democratic life than any other product available to consumers. While there were some legislative requirements for balance and fairness in representing political views, US television was developed largely independently from state intervention. The market, it was decided, was the best mechanism for determining what resources should be available to the audience. Lawmakers and commercial broadcasters claimed advertising funded, commercial television was perfectly suited to fulfil the desires and demands for political and social information held by the audience. State intervention in this model would only distort the mechanisms of the market. If the audience wanted particular products, commercial broadcasters would supply it as competition led them to vigorously meet demand. Unfortunately, this model tends to serve the demands only of what is wanted by aggregate majorities, not what is needed by communities.
The belated introduction of public service broadcasting in the US was designed to meet what had emerged from their commercial system – a failure to satisfy minority interests. Unfortunately, the system adopted represented, rather than was free from, partisan interests. The PBS was dependent on Government support for its funding, and was expected to lobby the public and market for extra income. The result was a service that was unlikely to completely satisfy anyone's needs. Dependent on the state for partial funding, it was limited in any criticism of state activity. Dependent on corporate largesse for partial funding, it was limited in its criticism of corporate activity. Finally, dependent on wealthy private patrons to top up its coffers, it was limited in how it could represent the interests of poor and underserved minorities.

Public service broadcasting worldwide has found itself under sustained attack from a number of quarters. The 1980's saw a swing away from Liberal approaches to the role of the state and the market. Led by neo-liberals in the US, the UK and New Zealand, the notion that the market is a poor provider of particular social goods, and hence the need for state intervention, came increasingly under attack. Neo-liberal economic thinking claims the state distorts markets it is involved in, creates inefficiency, and is bureaucratic and unnecessarily costly to taxpayers. The withdrawal of the state would allow the market to deliver goods without hindrance or artificiality. If the market were given free reign, the argument went, then it would be better able than the state to deliver social goods. Consumers, went the claim, are far more capable of determining their wants than the state, and the market far better at delivering to those wants than the state. Public service broadcasting was deemed an unnecessary hindrance to the proper functioning of the market.

Technological advances have opened up a second line of attack on public service broadcasters. The earlier scarcity of broadcasting spectrums gave credence to claims that, as a national resource, spectrum space should be managed by the state in the national interest. Recent developments have opened the spectrum for broadcasting by compressing signals, meaning more can fit into the same space. Secondly, new delivery technologies like cable and satellite allow more avenues into the home. Spectrum scarcity is no longer the issue it once was, and channels have proliferated. More channels, argues the neo-liberal, means more choice, which means those social goods neglected in favour of majority audiences by populist, advertising funded
commercial organisations, can now be supplied by smaller, advertising or subscriber funded minority and specialist channels. Therefore, this remit for public service broadcasting is undermined.

However, the free market argument is seriously flawed. Advertising-funded specialist channels are at odds with most advertiser demands. The bulk of advertising remains dependent on a mass audience for mass marketing. Specialist audiences are less attractive to advertisers, unless they happen to be audiences that are particularly useful. Secondly, because public affairs programming is necessarily designed to be accessible to diverse audiences, it shuns specialist or exclusive audiences. Subscriber broadcasting, on the other hand, requires a financial outlay from the individual wanting to watch the programmes. This deselects the poor – who are already a group poorly served by commercial programming.

Furthermore, the proliferation of channels into the home does not equate to a proliferation of programme choices. The harsh economics of broadcasting work strongly in the favour of organisations that can compile the largest audiences. Spectrum expansion is not equivalent to programme production expansion. Competition in broadcasting tends to be between programme distributors, not programme makers. Increased spectrum capacity allows greater distribution, not production.

Technological advances are allowing a massive convergence of telecommunications and entertainment industries. Huge conglomerations now stand astride the globe, bringing to bear wealth and power that far exceed the budgets of most national public service broadcasters. Competition, the neo-liberal panacea, is increasing between commercial organisations, and yet there is little sign anywhere of an emerging commitment to public affairs programming on commercial television. The claims by neo-liberals that the market can better serve the public affairs needs of the audience than public television can, have yet to bear fruit.

For example, Music Television (MTV) assembles almost exclusively teenagers – a particularly attractive demographic for advertisers. Despite this, in most parts of the world, it remains a subscription service and is only advertising-funded in a few places.
Heedless of the reservations canvassed above, New Zealand after 1984 had a Government committed to neo-liberal principles. The history of New Zealand broadcasting had been one of Government intervention in the operations of the nation's main broadcasting organisation, the state-owned, non-profit NZBC and later the BCNZ. Those interventions were sometimes intended to widen the public affairs remit of the organisation, and sometimes to align it to Government wishes. While not having a particularly illustrious history of public affairs broadcasting, the model was rooted in the British tradition, in theory, if not practice.

New Zealand, as it developed, adopted the British tradition of a firm belief in the role of the state to provide the means by which its citizens could actively participate in public life. Taxation and state involvement in parts of the economy were to funnel wealth through the state and back out to provide its citizens with basic standards of health care, education and accommodation. The development of broadcasting added a new forum for public education in the affairs of the state. While the relationship between the national broadcaster and the state was at times tempestuous, the basic philosophy remained that broadcasting should operate in the public's interests, which was not necessarily what the public was interested in.

Political meddling by Sir Robert Muldoon had brought the independence of New Zealand's public broadcaster into disrepute. A frozen licence fee meant a greater reliance on advertising and reduced commitment to public service principles. There were endless changes to the structure of the BCNZ, growing pressure from advertisers for more air-time. There was also a changing emphasis world-wide from a defence of public service to a belief in competition and new technologies which meant that by the mid-1980's, some kind of change was inevitable. What was not inevitable, however, was the extent of the radical restructuring that took place. In the space of a few short years, broadcasting in New Zealand went from a highly regulated public service broadcaster, with some revenue from advertising, to become the world's most deregulated broadcasting environment.

The wholesale adoption of neo-liberal principles came with the wholesale rejection of public service broadcasting. While some provision for minority and special interest
programming was made in the *State Owned Enterprises Bill*, the requirement for profit overrode all else. According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung report, by 1998 the New Zealand broadcasting system had come to bear a close resemblance to the US model. From our survey in Chapters 1 and 2, we saw that the New Zealand broadcasting system before 1988 bore a closer resemblance to the UK model. Broadcasting in New Zealand had moved very quickly from one extreme to the other.

The question this study asked was would the sudden departure from one set of organising principles and adoption of another mean a change to the organisational principles governing news production? Would the introduction of a competitive environment, and the attendant need to maximise audiences bring about a shift in news values?

To answer this, we elaborated two views of news discourse – market populism and democratic populism. Market populism is a form of discourse characteristic of the discourses of commercial broadcast markets, while democratic populism resembles those of more publicly-oriented systems. To test whether the move from one end of the continuum to the other had changed the content and presentation of news content, we developed twelve specific hypotheses.

Chapter 3 detailed our content analysis methods and Chapters 4 and 5 show there has been comprehensive change to the content and presentation of *One Network News* as a result of deregulation. The changes point us to the conclusion that, rather than de-regulation, it may be more useful to talk about the period as re-regulation. The early evening bulletin at the BCNZ was regulated to serve a set of principles. By 1996, it was regulated to serve a different set of principles. Serving the audience needs as citizens became serving them as consumers, public service principles became profit imperatives, and an informational orientation became an entertainment orientation.

Chapter 1 examined the different principles of the two broadcasting markets that mark the two ends of the continuum for how a state may organise broadcasting. The UK was and remains strongly public service oriented and the US strongly

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commercially oriented. Chapter 2 follows broadcasting in New Zealand, from its public service beginnings with limited commercial values, to its current manifestation as a highly commercial system. Chapters 4 and 5 looked at the affect on news.

The Hypotheses.

Turning to the 12 hypotheses, we find evidence for all of them. Let us consider them in turn.

1.1 Commercialisation.

Measuring the content as percentages illustrated that time in the bulletin is a finite resource and capable of being squandered on things other than news. If one category increased, it was at the expense of another. The news section of the bulletin shrank by 15% between 1984 and 1996, with non-news elements moving to occupy a greater percentage of the bulletin in 1990 – the mid-point of the deregulatory period.

Despite the bulletin moving from a half-hour long to an hour show in 1995-1996, the news section increased by only four and a half minutes over the 1984 bulletin. Non-news elements increased from fifteen minutes per forty minute bulletin in 1984, to thirty-two minutes per sixty minute bulletin in 1996. There was a dramatic increase in the space devoted to weather, banter and advertising, with chit-chat increasing with the move to a dual anchor format in 1988. In 1989, the average amount of Chat in the bulletin exceeded the average amount of Political Policy news. By 1996, Chat occupied 8% of the bulletin, the third largest category on average behind Advertising (24%) and Sport (16%). Political Policy dropped from 6% of the bulletin in 1984 to 1.2% of the bulletin in 1996, moving from the third largest category in 1984 to the 17th largest in 1996. Advertising increased from 13% of the bulletin in 1984 to 24% in 1996 – nearly doubling its average proportion.

The increase in Weather was smaller, from 5.3% in 1984 to 6.3% in 1996, but the average weather segment lengthened dramatically – by one minute and 45 seconds.
The only non-news category that reduced over the sample was Sport – dropping 1.7% over the sample – possibly reflecting a commercial response to female audiences. Overall the Commercialisation of the bulletin was one of the strongest findings of the content analysis as presentational elements came to dominate the programme at the expense of news.

However, it also appears Commercialisation preceded deregulation. Figures 5.2 and 5.4 detail how advertising was increasing before 1988, and had in fact, been steadily increasing since 1984. This was in-line with our expectations given the increasing reliance of TVNZ on advertising revenue as costs continued to climb while the licence fee remained frozen until 1986. Deregulation appears to have had the effect of accelerating Commercialisation and, in the post-deregulation period, the proportion of news to non-news elements remained stable until the move to the news hour, which provided extra room for another jump in non-news elements.

1.2: Morselisation.

The pace of the bulletin increased, with average news item length decreasing by eight seconds, to one minute and two seconds in 1996. Item shrinkage was accompanied by an increase in item frequency. In 1984, there was an average of 17 separate news section items per bulletin. After the move to the news hour in 1996, there was an average of 24 news items per bulletin, but the news section itself only increased by four and a half minutes. The lengthening of non-news items, however, contrasted with the increasing pace of the news section. Weather, sport, advertising and chat increased in length, slowing the pace of the elements of the bulletin that needed the least explanation. The average Chat length, for example, increased from 13 to 16 seconds. Weather almost doubled in length, and the advertising break increased in length by 30 seconds, (and from 1.7 breaks to four per bulletin).

While non-news elements took up more space, news was compressed. After 1987, there were fewer long items (three minutes or more), and many more items of less than 1 minute. Morselisation of the news section took place, closely aligned to the deregulatory period, but the process did not include the entire bulletin. The reduction
in news item length, and increase in non-news item length was conducive to para-social interaction. Longer *Chat* interludes and more weather allowed greater scope for the development of personalities and humour, encouraging the audience to identify with the characters on screen. The reduction in the amount of time given to serious news, on the other hand, served no normative news function, but it did allow more stories to be crammed in, and thus more variation in pace and narrative across the bulletin. This confirmed previous New Zealand research, and offered evidence for the *Morselisation* hypothesis.

The pace of political policy reportage sped up considerably, with shorter sound-bites, shot-lengths and shorter over-all length of the items. This meant that political policy items were, by 1996, very fast-paced, as more camera shots and sound-bites were squeezed into shorter items. The changes followed the now familiar pattern of pre- and post-deregulation stability, with a period of instability during the deregulatory period. The reductions were dramatic, and they were institutionalised as the gap between the longest and shortest shot and sound-bite were reduced to a far more uniform and uniformly shorter duration by 1996. In 1984, the range between the longest and shortest non-journalist sound-bite had been 30 seconds. By 1996, it was four seconds. Shot lengths displayed a similar pattern. This reduction in range was not a reduction in frequency. On the contrary, the relative number of sound-bites to other discursive elements returned in 1996 to the same levels it had been at 1984. The item’s pace, therefore, was sped up with more numerous but shorter sound-bites. Further analysis of the individual category, political policy reportage, provided more evidence for the *Morselisation* hypothesis.

1.3: Depoliticisation and Contestation.

The reduction in items with overt political information was dramatic, and closely aligned to the deregulatory period. A very shallow election year peak and trough cycle before deregulation was followed by a large decrease in political reportage in 1989. What followed through the deregulation years was a far more accentuated peak and trough pattern, following election cycles.
As our micro-analysis revealed, within political policy news itself, *Depoliticisation* had taken place as more and more coverage concerned itself with the sport of political affairs (horse-race coverage of elections and the language of winners and losers - *Contestation*) and the human-interest aspects of politics with more discussion centred on personalities and inter-personal relations. The reduction in the analysis of statements made by political elites, the reduction in expert opinion and the increase in the voices of average, ordinary experience as uncovered by the micro-analysis of political policy coverage all supplied evidence for *Depoliticisation* of the bulletin.

The reduction in political news (20.6%) was matched, in the news section, by increases in *Disaster, Crime, Human Interest* and economic news concerned with the sharemarket and corporate affairs, (a combined total of 24.1%). *Depoliticisation* and *Contestation* were very much a factor in the changes to the bulletin between 1984 and 1996, and were closely aligned to the deregulatory process.

However, the rise in human-interest news at the expense of political news may not necessarily mean a *de*-politiciation, so much as perhaps a change in what is deemed 'political'. Human-interest news is not politically neutral. According to John Langer, James Curran, J. McGuigan and many others, the human-interest story is covertly political and conservative. In this light, it may be better to call the changes to *One Network News* a *re*-politiciation of news values.

### 1.4: Personalisation.

The increase in items concerned with victims could be strongly inferred from the large increase in violent crime reportage after deregulation. Crime reportage, and especially violent crime, did not mirror increases and decreases in crime statistics. Indeed, at times they moved in opposition to one another, with a 6% reduction in the reported national offence rate in 1994, but a 12% increase in crime reportage for the same year. The extra coverage awarded to crimes of a spectacular, dramatic or particularly gruesome nature would skew the results of crime reportage, but not

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necessarily the police statistics. It appears that this was the case after deregulation. Before deregulation, crime reportage was neither as high, nor as unstable as the post-deregulation product. We can only conclude from this that after deregulation, One Network News found different reasons for focusing on crime than the transparent representation of daily life in New Zealand.

The prominence of the voices of ordinary people and ordinary experience was associated with the growth of crime, human interest and disaster stories. John Langer has previously drawn attention to the role of ‘ordinary’ experience, and how disruption to the ordinary is a staple of populist news writing. Extraordinary things happening to ordinary people as victims of crime, disasters or other surprising events, while ordinary things happen to extraordinary people (a staple of celebrity news). Stories of this kind are a very common story construction in commercial media, as they conform to simple, yet timeless story constructions as found in melodrama, and entertain rather than challenge the audience.

More specifically, the rise in voices of ordinary experience was seen in the micro-analysis of political policy reportage. In the serious and specialised world of politics, where expert voices are influential in policy-development regardless of whether they gain media visibility, the displacement of expertise by ordinary experience made One Network News less informative. In the 1996 item about Plunket closures, the report quoted from ordinary people three times. While this might lend the item familiarity and immediacy for the audience, it did little to explain the issues. The often emotional and almost always indignant voices of ordinary people affected by a piece of Government policy are not a substitute for a thorough examination of the policy itself. As with other forms of audience integration, Personalisation works to “divert attention from serious issues by replacing analysis with emotion and substituting voyeuristic thrills for knowledge-enabling engagement.”

Langer, Tabloid Television.
The growth in human-interest news about victims and ordinary experience supported the hypothesis of *Personalisation*. This was reinforced by a replacement of expert voices by the voices of ordinary people uncovered by the micro-analysis. Both these changes occurred in close alignment to the deregulatory process.

**1.5: Tabloidisation.**

There appeared to be a sharp reversal of serious journalistic norms due to deregulation. The increase in reportage of human-interest, crime and disaster stories came at the expense of political information. The patterning of these changes was consistent with the notion that deregulation lay at the heart of these changes, for the differing allocation of time to subject matter did not appear to reflect changes in society at large. Political issues and events continued to be important in the New Zealand democracy, while human-interest, crime and disaster events continued to occur at previous levels. The likely explanation, therefore, as to why one set of information was deemed increasingly less important after 1990, and the other more so, was the changing news values at *One Network News*. Our confidence in this conclusion is increased by the fact that the changes occurred in directions consistent with our theoretical expectations. These were not arbitrary moves, but ones clearly motivated by commercial considerations.

Of course, deregulation of broadcasting was not an isolated event. It was reinforced by others factors. Thus, the relationship between diminishing political information and increasing economic news could be said to be reflective of a more mercantilist society after the reduction of state involvement in many industries following the deregulation of other parts of the economy. However, the claim that commercial broadcasting was more representative of New Zealand society as a result of deregulation was tempered by the discovery that the only significant rise in economic information was focused on economic elites and the sharemarket.

The displacement of political information by 'soft' news such as crime etc. indicates that a degree of *Tabloidisation* of the bulletin had taken place. This was confirmed by the micro-analysis of political policy news that showed over the sample there had
been tabloid reductivism within the item itself, with less relevant, visual information occupying a greater percentage of the text than information relevant to the issue at hand. The content of political policy items also came to exhibit more tabloid elements over the survey period. The rise of narrative description by visual means (with commentary tied to the pictures), the emphasis on protest and disruption and the focus on the sensational and spectacular (such as Mr Anderton's bald and unqualified claims about the amount being spent on the wealthy of New Zealand) were prominent features of the 1996 items. Such elements were missing from the 1984 items. Like so much else in this survey, the relevant and irrelevant or visual-referring facts displayed a stability pre-deregulation, then a reversal, then a post-deregulation stability in mirror opposition to the pre-deregulation figures. This pattern, as we shall see, is consistent with the normal processes of institutional learning, where one set of standard operating procedures is disrupted, and gradually come to be replaced by another.

1.6: Decontextualisation.

Seeking evidence for this hypothesis within the micro-analysis chapter, we found a reduction in cited sources and references to verifiable evidence, and regular institutional learning pattern pre-, during- and post-deregulation. The provision of evidence to back up journalists and attributed assertions inverted between 1987 and 1990, and stabilised thereafter. The amount of claims a journalist made versus the amount attributed to someone else followed the same pattern. Decontextualisation had clearly taken place. In the drive for more excitement and pace, some conventional elements were simply dropped. Thus, between 1987 and 1996, fewer sources were cited, less evidence was presented and the journalist came to talk in a more authoritative manner about the issues at hand. The effect, as Atkinson previously noted, was to ensure that, "the report displayed the form, if not the substance, of inside knowledge."358

1.7: Centralisation.

*Centralisation* proved difficult to test for. It was hoped more regional differentiation would be clearer from the items, and could be coded. This was not the case, and the hypothesis was poorly evidenced. We did get some confirmation from crime reportage, where the increase was very likely to have come out of Auckland as the only regional centre that maintained an all-night watch for 'spot news.' Also, the increase in sharemarket news and the bulk of other economic news all came from the main centres and primarily Auckland. These findings were in line with other domestic research.

1.8: Trivialisation and Familiarisation.

There was an obvious increase in presenter banter and chit-chat after the adoption of a dual anchor format in 1988. After 1990, a regular weather person was developed as a 'personality', and a sports person, again developed as a separate 'personality type' was added to the 'news family', joining the more serious main news-readers. The news family was extended after 1990 to include the reporters, who were awarded titles and roles within 'bureaus' such as politics, health and financial news. Before 1990, the journalist had seldom been named by the studio anchor, and never given a title.

The development of the news family involved a large increase in banter between the news-readers and an increase in teasers and promotions. As more advertising breaks were introduced into the bulletin with the move to an hour format in 1995, this extra time was exploited for banter and teasers. *Trivialisation* and *Familiarisation* were strongly evidenced by this study, and closely followed expectations gleaned from international and domestic research.
1.9: Atomisation.

While there was a reduction in news about collective social issues, like unionism, race-relations, and politics, most of the categories (except for politics) were too small to support confident claims. There was a decrease in news of Labour, ACC, Employment and Working Conditions (Figure 4.11), Social Conflict, Race Relations and Immigration (Table 4.11) and Agriculture and Farming (Table 4.9), but a question remains as to whether these issues were decreasing in relevance. Certainly, after the Employment Contracts Act was passed in 1991, there was a decrease in strike activity which might have been expected to attract conflict-focused reportage, but not in general employment issues which were less susceptible to tabloid television techniques. Race relations during the 1990’s were turbulent and divisive, yet reportage on race relations’ issues actually decreased. Finally, by the end of the decade, farming was returning a higher percentage of the nation’s GDP than at the beginning of it, but it too had become less visible. From this, we conclude a partial confirmation for the Atomisation hypothesis. The results from political and crime news are strongly supportive, but other areas deserve further scrutiny.

1.10: Commodification

There was some strong support for the expectation that there would be a reduction in stories that serve the needs of the audience as citizens, and an increase in stories that serve their needs as consumers. The reduction in political news was a reduction in news that served the civic needs of the audience, while the rise in economic news served their needs as consumers (albeit consumers of sharemarket information), and celebrated capitalism rather than democracy. Health and technology news also began to offer the audience solutions they could buy, rather than information about new technological developments with no immediate consumer spin-offs. As such, the hypothesis for increasing Commodification was generally confirmed.
1.11: Summary of the Hypotheses.

Overall, our expectations for changes to the bulletin were realised. Secondly, they were tightly correlated with deregulation. Thirdly, they confirmed previous research findings about change to media systems when competition is introduced or increased.

2. Deregulation and Organisational Change.

One surprise from the findings was that the changes to the bulletin began before deregulation and continued for a while afterwards. Many changes to the bulletin before deregulation were clearly a result of TVNZ’s preparations for the introduction of a third channel. Most changes to the format of the bulletin were in-place before TV3 came on line, including the adoption of a dual anchor format, and other stylistic features. Margaret Comrie’s PhD thesis examining One Network News between 1985 and 1990,339 and her and Judy Macgregor’s work on One Network News between 1985 and 1994,340 found significant changes to the selection and presentation of content in the 1980s. They concluded the organisation was making adjustments to the style and substance of the bulletin in expectation of deregulation, and the findings of this survey support that conclusion.

However, the process of ‘softening’ of news is an oft-noted feature of many media systems worldwide. Increasing commercial pressures in already commercial systems and encroaching commercialism in public systems are common complaints the world-over.341 We must ask ourselves in New Zealand, therefore, how much of the change One Network News in the 1980’s was a product of deregulation, and how much was attributable to this wider, global process?

339 Comrie The Commercial Imperative in Broadcasting News.
341 Sparks and Tulloch, (eds.) Tabloid Tales: Global Debates over Media Standards.
Reassurance comes in form of a recurring pattern of stability before deregulation, instability during and renewed stability afterwards. The same pattern of stability, instability and stability occur in every significant category of the macro-analysis of content and throughout the micro-analysis of a single category. This persistent pattern cannot plausibly be explained except as a result of institutional learning where old routines are jettisoned and news ones eventually cemented in place. We also know from previous testimony given by both management and news workers, that preparations for the new competitive environment anticipated deregulation and the arrival of TV3.\textsuperscript{542} Finally, we know from Margaret Comrie’s interviews that there was a weeding out period within TVNZ while the reluctant old-guard fought a rearguard action against changes, and ‘hard-driving’ managers pressed aggressively ahead, promoting enthusiasts for change. According to Julian Mounter, Chief Executive of TVNZ through the deregulatory period:\textsuperscript{543}

\textit{Managers couldn’t see the need for this structural thinking change... They would answer ‘We don’t have to do that now, TV3 won’t be on air for three years’. I’d reply ‘No, we have to do it now’. That sort of aggression was lacking in the company. Nobody really wanted to be aggressive. At the same time competition was missing in the whole of New Zealand society; people thought of it as dirty pool.}

The instability of content-allocation created by the changes to the broadcasting market in New Zealand continued for a few years after deregulation. This should perhaps not surprise us, as changes take time before they become sufficiently routinised and formulaic to appear in output data as stable structures.

The patterns in the data strongly suggest deregulation played a key part in the changes to \textit{One Network News}. While some gradual changes may be part of a wider, global change to, the major changes were confined to the deregulatory period.


3. Other Patterns.

In some categories there emerged a stable peak and trough pattern after deregulation. The reasons for this are unclear from the data, but it may have something to do with changing senior personnel, and with the endless chase for ratings. The see-saw pattern could possibly reflect audience complaints of too much of one category one year (a peak) and the organisational response to report less of it the next (a trough). Certainly, the figures were not related to the actual occurrence of particular things. For example, crime news peaked and troughed in patterns unrelated to crime levels in the society One Network News reports on. Still, these more cyclical patterns were rare, and often accompanied by long-term rises and falls in expected directions.

The span of the sample was thirteen years, which represented an excellent time frame with which to examine change. The period was long enough for trends in the findings to emerge and solidify; yet not so long that other sociological factors should have been taken into account. As the sample sat six years either side of deregulation, and as the findings show a dramatic change in content selection and presentation immediately before and after formal deregulation, deregulation was clearly a catalyst for change.

4. What of the Audience?

Having established there has been comprehensive change to One Network News as a result of deregulation, we must ask ourselves if it really matters. Throughout this survey, we have largely ignored the audience. Before we finish, however, we need to ponder the political consequences for the audience of these changes to our broadcasting system.

Charting media-effects is a notoriously difficult task. There are many factors at play in the relationship between television viewing and political knowledge. Education levels, age, existing political interests, knowledge and attitudes must be all be taken
into account, which makes developing demonstrable and persuasive connections between viewing and political cognition hard to achieve. Some research has found a positive relationship between media viewing, civic engagement and political cognition\textsuperscript{345}, and others a negative one.\textsuperscript{345}

Recent research, however, has uncovered a far more complex relationship between viewing and political cognition. Kees Aarts and Holli A. Semetko have discovered that when all other factors are controlled, viewing and political cognition moves in demonstrable directions according to whether the programmes being watched are public-service or commercial ones.\textsuperscript{346}

For their study, Aarts and Semetko chose the Netherlands for the homogeneity of the population, the stability of its political system and the fact that broadcasting in the country has undergone significant changes in the last decade. Like other Western European countries, the predominantly public-service oriented system of the Netherlands has seen an intensification of commercial efforts and a rapid expansion of broadcasting channels. Unlike New Zealand, however, public-service broadcasting remains an important and distinctive part of their broadcasting mix.

Their research controlled for age, gender, marital status, degree of urbanisation, region, education levels and a political interest score based on respondents existing political knowledge, political attitudes and strength of party adherence. To test if there was any relationship between political knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, and viewing different broadcasting channels, they cluster-analysed established viewing patterns and found a robust division between television viewers who watched public service channels and others who preferred commercial channels.


\textsuperscript{346} Kees Aarts and Holli A. Semetko, ‘The Divided Electorate: Media Use and Political Involvement’, Paper Delivered to the European Consortium of Political Research Joint Sessions of Workshop, Copenhagen, April 14-19, 2000, pg. 1
They found that political cognisance is positively associated with viewing the public broadcasting news, and negatively associated with viewing the commercial product. When all other factors are controlled, they reported:  

"The more often a person watches public television’s news shows, the more he or she is likely to recognise political leaders, party positions on issues and to know the party composition of the incumbent government. The more someone watches commercial television news, the less likely he or she is to recognise leaders, positions or know the coalition government... If one may choose between watching news on the public service channel and news on the commercial channel, then to regularly opt for the former will have positive effects on political cognition, whereas to opt for the latter will have negative effects."

They also found that, “the effect of watching television’s news for someone who often watches commercial television but never watches public television is even more dramatic.” This includes a negative effect on the probability of having voted and party adherence (and conversely a strongly positive effect for those who watched only public-service television news).

Finally, they found a weaker relationship between watching the news of the two broadcasting systems and existing political interest. This means that:

"For persons with a high political interest, how often they watch television... is not particularly important. Persons who are not very interested in politics are much more affected by watching news on public television (and) in acquiring knowledge about the positions of political parties on some key issues."

347 Aarts and Semetko, ‘The Divided Electorate’, pg. 7
348 Aarts and Semetko, ‘The Divided Electorate’, pg. 9.
349 Aarts and Semetko, ‘The Divided Electorate’, pg. 8
350 Aarts and Semetko, ‘The Divided Electorate’, pg. 9
Public television, they find, leads to a 'virtuous circle' of civic involvement. The more one watches it, the more involved in the democratic process they become, and so the more faith they have in it. Commercial television, by comparison, creates a 'spiral of cynicism' where watching it leads to a lack of interest in the political process and so a lack of faith in its value. The implications of this research for the audience of One Network News are obvious, but made more worrying by the fact we have no fully-fledged public-service option on New Zealand television.

The question becomes then, what are the audiences of predominantly commercial systems doing? Thomas Patterson's recent study of news and audiences in the US found the news content on commercial broadcasting outlets has undergone similar reductions in 'serious' content as this survey found at One Network News. The main difference between the two countries lies in the sudden and swift turn New Zealand television took into commercialism. Patterson, like us, finds a reduction in stories with a public policy component, more 'soft' stories, more sensationalism, more human-interest items, more crime and disaster items, more negative coverage of presidential candidates and increasingly:

"...the journalist has become a direct participant. No longer constrained by the need to have the newsmakers' words and actions at the centre of the story, reporters have become the focus."

These content selection and presentational elements have coincided with intensifying commercial pressures to maximise audiences. Patterson draws a direct link between these changes in political news coverage and a general decline between 1989 and 2000 of trust in government, trust in politicians' honesty and of interest in public affairs.

Commercial audiences in the US are becoming more cynical. They are also turning off commercial news. Patterson notes that between 1993 and 2000, nightly network

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351 Aarts and Semetko, 'The Divided Electorate', pg. 11
352 Patterson, Doing Well and Doing Good, pg. 14.
353 Patterson, Doing Well and Doing Good, pg. 10.
news audiences shrunk by approximately 20%. He also conducted an audience survey which proved that most people pay attention to the news because they want to watch hard news and not soft news. Furthermore, those who prefer hard news are heavier consumers of news than those who prefer the softer varieties, and it is precisely the trend towards softer news that is creating the decline in commercial news' audiences.

There are other factors that explain shrinking audiences in for commercial broadcast news in the US. The Internet and cable television, and television-gaming consoles like the Sony Playstation and others have all eaten into the news audience. However, the response from commercial organisations to offer more 'soft' news to lure audiences to the bulletins seems to be failing. Patterson suggests that:

*To build the news around something other than public affairs is to build it on sand. People attend to daily news year in year out because they are interested in keeping track of their community, their country and their world. Even those who say they prefer soft news say they like hard news nearly as well. Soft news can spice up the news, but it cannot anchor it. Heavy doses of soft news will eventually wear out an audience, just as even the best sitcom eventually loses its audience. Soft news is repetitive and thus, at some point, tiresome. The faces of soft news change daily – today’s murder victim is not tomorrow’s – but they are sadly interchangeable as their numbers mount.*

In the endless quest for ratings, commercial television chases those audience members on the fringes who are most likely to slip away; the low-interest news viewer. In the US, it appears they are doing so at the expense of their core-audience; avid watchers of the news. By attracting fringe audiences, they might be educating them in public affairs, but since the news is softer and correspondingly less nutritious, they are unlikely to stick around long enough to learn much anyway.

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354 Patterson, *Doing Well and Doing Good*, pg. 2  
355 Patterson, *Doing Well and Doing Good*, pg. 2  
356 Patterson, *Doing Well and Doing Good*, pg. 9
The problem is likely to be associated with the 'spiral of cynicism' among commercial news audiences identified by Aarts and Semetko. In a largely commercial broadcasting environment, it appears this spiral become the dominant one, and as it does so it sets off other reverberating spirals in news viewing and softening content. As commercial news operations offer less hard news, interest in public affairs declines, and news audiences shrink, prompting another round of cuts to serious content, and the spiral worsens as broadcasters chase smaller and smaller audiences.

As this study has revealed, One Network News undertook a sudden and severe reduction in its hard-news content, replacing it with softer items and more commercial elements. It appears the New Zealand audience reacted in a similar manner to American ones as commercial intensity increased. According to a report prepared by AGB McNair, audiences for commercial news programmes declined between 1989 and 1993 (the deregulatory period). The report found that:

16% of all people aged five years and over watched an average (daily) quarter hour in news/current affairs programmes in September 1989 compared with 8% in September 1993. The decline is predominantly due to reduced audiences to TV1 news/current affairs, which have not been offset by increases in channel 2 or 3. The overall decline in average viewing levels to One Network News decreased from 31% in September 1989 to 22% in September 1993.

Average viewing levels for One Network News have hovered around the same mark ever since. So, it is clear from this study that the deregulation of the New Zealand broadcasting market has not resulted in an improvement of the public-affairs obligation that One Network News shares with all national news broadcasters. Nor have the changes brought about by deregulation generated bigger audiences for television news products in New Zealand.

5. Summary.

The notion that the news media serve an honourable tradition of informing and enriching democratic debate is part of our cultural inheritance, originally from the UK, but folded into New Zealand's emerging nationhood in the 19th century. It is a notion that informed the first radio regulations, and continued to influence policy decisions about broadcasting. The deregulation, or re-regulation, towards serving commercial rather than political masters in the 1980's was driven by a rhetoric of populism, social levelling and competition in the interests of the audience. However, the forces behind this rhetoric, both in New Zealand and world-wide, are a commercialised cultural apparatus of fantastic reach, and growing integration. The changes uncovered in this study are a result of these forces. More than just a momentary loss of professional direction at One Network News, these changes are part of a wider shift in the political economy of information. It is a shift that unless checked, will see further erosion of public discourse, and with it, our ability or desire to engage in public life.

This paper opened with the observation that my 9 year-old niece understood and enjoyed the news more than I did when I was her age. While the apologists may applaud the widening of the audience for One Network News to include 9 year-olds, we must wonder if this is happening at the expense of the news being much use to anybody else. To answer the question asked at the beginning of this chapter – does it matter that public affairs discourse was savagely reduced after deregulation? – we must answer that it does. It matters terribly. Without public affairs information, the audience is denied essential political knowledge. Without knowledge, meaningful participation in the democratic process is difficult, if not impossible, and the growing withdrawal from active political life has profoundly important consequences.

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Obviously, television is not the only source for public affairs information. But it can be a very good one. In New Zealand, the matter is compounded by the fact that, on television at least, we have no choice. All our national, free-to-air television is advertiser-funded, populist and commercial. Even the United States - that bastion of unfettered free market populism - realised that the market alone could not supply its fabled choice.

Democracy needs to be nourished. Public information is the food of public thought and Diet-News cannot provide enough sustenance for a healthy public sphere. New Zealand needs a more robust fare returned to the menu.
Appendix I: Description of the Categories.

A1.1: Introduction to Political News Categories.

The classification strategy required all items whose central subject was politics to be coded Politics. News items coded as domestic political news were those items whose central or primary theme was political, and which related to domestic rather than foreign events. Care had to be taken with this category as many political items had economic and social dimensions, just as many economic and social items contained political elements.

1. Domestic News; Politics; Misc.

Any domestic political news that could not be fitted into the other domestic political news categories, and did not require its own category due to either its uniqueness or the ambiguity of its central theme was placed in this category. It was rarely utilised, and averaged no more than .1% a year.

For example: On Thursday 02.03.95, there was a thirty-two second item concerning the Speaker of the House suggesting public submissions for commemorations of a New Zealand Day. The item was not concerned with policy, nor did it involve political parties. It was a political item, but could not be classified in any of the other categories.
2. *Domestic News; Politics; Policy.*

Domestic political news that related specifically to policy discussions and implementations. This category required careful thought as many items, political and otherwise had policy dimensions. The classification rested on whether the item's angle was concerned specifically with policy as opposed to other political behaviours.

For example: On Wednesday, 23.11.94, the leader of the Labour Party announced a set of new family and housing policies. This was a short item the subject of which was the detailing of policy only, rather than other political issues affecting New Zealand families and their housing conditions.

3. *Domestic News; Politics; Taxation, Finance, Inflation.*

Domestic political news items in which the subject was finance but not policy discussion of finance, taxation etc.

For example: On Thursday, 14.04.93, the latest economy figures were released, and showed growth across many sectors. The Opposition claimed growth was uneven, with a narrowing of wealth and a widening of poverty. While there were obvious political issues concerning economic management by the government, ensuring the item was categorised in the *Political* section, the subject of this item was not policy formulation or implementation, but economic events and political responses to them.
4. *Domestic News; Politics; SOE's, Assets, Public Service.*

Items concerned with government and its operations in regards to assets and the public service. Again, if policy formulation were the subject of the item, it would have been coded as Politics; Policy.

For example: On Tuesday, 28.05.91, the Government Audit Office was reported to have found the previous Government’s sale of the Government Printing Office poorly managed, and that it could have been sold for a higher price. While, again, policy issues were evident in the item, the subject was not the policy of asset sales in general, but how this was handled (or mishandled). It was not an Economic item either, as it was concerned with Government more than economics.
5. *Domestic News; Politics; Health.*
6. *Domestic News; Politics; Education.*
7. *Domestic News; Politics; Accommodation.*

These three categories were similar in that they covered items concerned with political aspects of health, education or accommodation (including housing), but not items concerned with the policy aspects of these areas. Again, if they were concerned mainly with policy, they would have been coded *Political; Policy.*

The position of *Health* in this coding system had to be treated especially carefully, given the wide-scale and on-going re-structuring of the health sector and the Government's involvement in it. However, the single classification system survived – unless the subject, or the angle of the item was concerned specifically with policy regarding health, the item was coded here.

For example: On Thursday, 21.01.93, a Government committee returned with the opinion that heart treatment waiting lists were too long. While such issues may have been a result of policy, the subject of the story was waiting lists rather than the policies that may have created them.

Another example: On Monday, 12.11.84, a group of doctors rejected a central fee fixing structure implemented as a result of Government policy. However, the subject of the item was anger from the doctors, not an examination of Government policy.

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39 For an assessment of the changes to news coverage of health issues over the period, see Jim Tully, and Barbara Fountain. *The News Toumiquet*, Canterbury, University of Canterbury, 1993.

This category was concerned with New Zealand's political relations with the rest of the world. It did not include economic issues, although these were often related. If the central theme of the item was political, but not New Zealand domestic-policy related, it was coded here.

For example: On Tuesday, 29.05.84, a spokesperson from the West German Greens Party suggested New Zealand take a more active role in international anti-nuclear activities. The central theme of this item was political, and concerned New Zealand/West German relations. While New Zealand nuclear policy was mentioned, the central thrust was not New Zealand domestic policy formulation.


Items concerned primarily with other political (mainly electoral campaigns) behaviour were coded in this category. These included 'horse-race' style electioneering strategies and their coverage, particularly the coverage of poll results and responses to them. *Personality* coverage consisted of items devoted to highly personalised political issues where political figures were involved, but where personalisation of the issue tended to dominate the coverage. The saga of Tuku Morgan's underpants was a good example of this sort of coverage.

For example: On Wednesday, 23.10.85, an MP was suspended from the House for speaking after Speaker told him not to. This item offered little in the way of political information other than a limited insight into the workings of Parliament.

Another Example. On Tuesday, 21.04.87, both Parties were expected to campaign with a 'new look' election campaign style. It was expected to resemble UK and US campaigns with a greater emphasis on televised campaigns and polling data. The item focused on campaign style, which is political, but related to presentation style rather than political substance.

To a degree, all political items involve policy as well as other political behaviours and issues. Many are also concerned with economic issues or social issues. Broadcast news items contain a range of themes, but as discussed above, one is almost inevitably dominant. The large number of political categories and the sometimes narrow distinctions between the categories may have limited some of the findings in this section. For example, Domestic News; Politics; Accommodation returned findings over the sample that were statistically tiny and displayed no distinctive pattern. Accommodation; Health and Education could easily have been lumped together and coded accordingly. However, it is important when conducting a content analysis that the researcher remains faithful to initial coding decisions. The model we developed was to create a category if there appeared to be a significant number of entries for it. If, during one year, Accommodation was a commonly occurring political issue, then it became a category. If, in the following years, it declined as a political issue, the category remained, despite being less utilised. As discussed above, it was easier to aggregate small results than to separate large ones. By developing small categories, all the categories, Domestic News; Politics could be merged in a wide-angle view of domestic political coverage over the sample period, but it also could be disaggregated in order to be inspected in more detail.

A1.3: Introduction to Economic News Categories.

The same principles applied to Economics. Stories on economics generally have wider implications, both political and social. However, if the central theme of the item was economic rather than social or political, it was coded as Economic.

10. Domestic News; Economics; Misc.

Domestic Economic news that could not be made to fit into existing categories. Like Domestic News; Politics; Misc., it was rarely utilised.
11. *Domestic News; Economics; Interest Rates, Prices.*

This category included all economic news regarding interest rates, prices, consumer-index information, balance of payments, and other elements of national spending and saving. While there were obvious political dimensions here, if the central theme was the effects of, rather than the political responses to, these issues, they were coded here.

For Example: On Tuesday, 21.04.87, interest rates rose in response to Government scrapping of interest rate restrictions. Increasing competition between the banks was said to be likely. The item concerned economic responses to government policy, and so rated *Economic.* Had the item examined the Government policy of scrapping the interest rates, or the reasons for it, it would have been coded *Political.*

12. *Domestic News; Economics; Consumer Information.*

This embraced economic news that concerned the issues and rights of the consumer. This was most often used for items warning of dangers to the consumer, product recalls, etc.

For example: On Tuesday, 23.08.94, the Police warned consumers about a toy cutthroat razor that they said was extremely sharp. This was a simple item offering consumer advice. However, some consumer news was more complex, with wider ramifications.

For example: On Tuesday, 12.09.95, there was an increasing number of ‘mega-stores’ opening in New Zealand, a development which had political and economic implications for consumers and retailers. Because the thrust of this item was the effect on consumers and small retailers, it was coded here rather than as *Corporate Affairs.*

Items concerned with New Zealand's external economic relations were coded here. This category obviously had political dimensions, but if the central theme of the item was economic, it was coded as such.

For example: On Wednesday, 23.11.94, three large business deals were signed between NZ and Singapore. The Prime Minister was featured in the item, but the focus was on economic ramifications, as opposed to political.

Another example: On Thursday, 13.05.93, the Prime Minister was in Japan, and negotiated the removal of an apple import ban for NZ produce. Again, there were political implications, which could have been read into the item, but the story-focus was on New Zealand's economic relations with Japan.
14. **Domestic News; Economics; Sharemarket, Corporate Affairs**

This category covered items concerned with the sharemarket and with corporate activity. The sharemarket report (usually a twenty second round-up of the day's sharemarket activity) observations about how the New Zealand dollar was faring against other currencies and other investor information was included in this category.

*Corporate Affairs* were items concerned with the activities of large commercial conglomerations rather than small economic operations.

For Example: On Tuesday 02.06.92, during a drought affecting electricity generation, a privately owned power company was reported as offering incentives to customers to reduce demand. This item was coded here rather than *Consumer Affairs* as it featured a large commercial operation and its activities, rather than those of the consumer.

Another example: On Wednesday, 28.10.92, Fetcher Challenge held a shareholders meeting in which the corporation was attacked by its shareholders, but emerged unscathed. The item focused on a large corporation and its financial health, and so was coded here.
Similar to the Politics, Health, Education, Accommodation categories, these three produced, individually, minor results, but taken together, they develop some interesting patterns. Economics; Health news had to be treated carefully throughout the health reform process to ensure the items were not confused with Politics; Health news.

For example: On Monday, 14.04.86, in a story about Asthma Week, a study reported that Europeans were more likely to suffer from asthma than other ethnic groups, but that Polynesians were more likely to die from the affliction. The report suggested poverty was a factor. While political ramifications were evident here, the item focused on poverty and health, not the political causes of poverty.

A1.4: Summary of Economic News Categories.

Much like the Political section, these economic categories required careful consideration when placing items. If the central or primary theme was economic, it was placed in this section.

Items that featured social conflict as their central theme were coded in this category. However, social conflict often has wider political and economic dimensions. Items where the conflict, rather than its causes or solutions, was the central subject were coded here.

For example: On Tuesday, 30.04.85, the ASB bank was reported to have rejected demands from anti-South African rugby tour groups to drop sponsorship of schoolboy rugby. There had been other incidents of vandalism against the bank. Sport and commerce issues featured in this item, but the central concern was the social conflict that had developed between anti- and pro-tour factions in the community.

Another example occurred on Wednesday, 25.10.89, when anti-abortion activists were blamed for arson attacks on an abortion clinic. The attack had come after months of threats, and there were similar threats to other clinics. The political, economic, religious and health issues surrounding abortion were not examined in this item, only the arson attacks and threats to lives and property. This was more than simply a crime story, however, as abortion is an emotive issue and often the subject of social controversy.

Similarly with *Race Relations and Immigration*; Both are issues with wider consequences, and are products of wider circumstances. If the item concentrated mainly on the events at hand, rather than the political and economic aspects, it was coded in this category.

Labour relations are again often political, and usually economic. Generally speaking, however, the items on labour relations were a combination of both, and so were awarded their own category. *ACC issues, Wages and Conditions* were closely related to labour relations and wider economic issues. As such, they were also coded here.

For example: On Thursday, 07.04.88, there was a strike by motor workers, and a possible settlement was in progress. While this item featured background on the strike including economic conditions, and looked at the political actions of the Combined Trades Union, the item was concentrated on the strike itself.

20. *Domestic News: Agriculture, Farming, Fisheries (Non-Maori)*

Agricultural issues also have far reaching implications given New Zealand’s reliance on its agricultural industry. If the item concentrated on agricultural issues and not their wider dimensions, it was coded here.

For example: On Thursday, 19.06.86, a report looked the NZ meat industry in comparison to the Australian meat industry, and raised questions about NZ practices and the return to the farmer. This item raised geo-economic concerns, technical concerns and political concerns, but the primary subject was farming in New Zealand and how its profits could be improved.

*Fisheries* and agricultural issues that did not allude to Maori sovereignty or other claims were also coded in this category. Maori claims to fisheries and other race-related agricultural issues, such as land rights were coded as *Social Conflict, Race Relations, Immigration.*
21. *Domestic News: Justice, Police, Law Changes*

This category was designed for items that dealt with crime issues that were wider than just criminal acts, for example, the release of crime statistics. *Justice, Police and Law Changes* covered appeals, criminal rights, changes to the law as it affects criminality and police. While law changes are a product of parliamentary activity, this category covered only items that examined how the changes would affect crime, rather than the political policy decisions that created the law.

For example: On Thursday, 19.06.86, the Police Association called for a change in the law relating to undercover police investigations. The Court of Appeal had recently ruled that the names of undercover police would be made available at trial. This item did not examine in any great detail the political implications of the Court of Appeal ruling, nor was its subject parliamentary response. Its primary theme was the dangers to undercover police and how the changes would affect police work.

Another example occurred on Friday, 18.01.85, when the Auckland police asserted there was no internal dispute involving the use of long batons. The item’s focus was on the nature of police weaponry and criminal behaviour. There was a political dimension to this story, but the primary focus was on the weapons and police unity, not the wider social dimensions of crime or armed police.


Items of crime news that could not be made to fit into any other category. Again, there was a very low utilisation of this category over the sample.
23. *Domestic News; Crime; Customs, Security, Jails.*
Crime news that focused on customs and importation issues, the domestic aspects of national security (but not national relations or defence) and jails. While this last type had similarities with criminal rights, the distinction was the focus on jail activity, such as escapees, and the rights of the inmates rather than criminal rights (admittedly a narrow distinction).

For example: On Monday, 07.12.87, over-crowding of prisons was reported to be resulting in the early release of inmates. Over-crowding was becoming a serious issue. Jail conditions were the focus here rather than the political and economic conditions that led to them.

24. *Domestic News; Courts; Crime; Property.*
Items concerned with property crime when it was reported through the courts rather than as incident crime. This included fraud and other ‘white collar’ criminal activities, as well as vandalism and non-violent property theft.

25. *Domestic News; Courts; Crime; Violent.*
Items concerned with violent crime when it was reported through the courts rather than as incident crime. Criminal trials and sentencing contributed a major part of this category.

26. *Domestic News; Crime; Property.*
Property crime when it was reported as an event or incident, rather than a trial.

27. *Domestic News; Crime; Violence.*
Violent crime when it was reported as an event or an incident, rather than a trial.

28. *Domestic News; Road Accidents, Road Toll, Vehicular Crime.*
Crime items that involved vehicles, road accident items and road toll statistics.
29. *Domestic News; Accommodation, Health, Education; Misc.*

News items covering accommodation, health and education that could not fit into either *Political* or *Economic* categories. That is, their central theme was neither economic nor political, and nor were they frequent enough to warrant a category of their own. Developments in health technology and research studies concerned with nutrition, diet, etc. were coded as *Domestic News; Health and Technological Developments.*

For example: On Friday, 05.12.96, the anti-tobacco lobby group ASH was angry that tobacco advertising hoardings were shown during cricket broadcasting.

30. *Domestic News; National Defence, Military, NZ Forces Overseas*

Items that looked at the military, defence and the deployment of New Zealand forces, but not the political ramifications of such, either domestically or in terms of New Zealand’s international relations.

For example: On Friday, 17.07.92, a NZ soldier serving with the UN forces in former Yugoslavia was injured in land mine explosion. The item did not examine why New Zealand forces were serving with the UN. Its central focus was the injury to the soldier, and that the theatre was dangerous.

Another example: On Friday, 26.08.94, a Scorpion tank rolled at Waiouru army base and burst into flames. This item centred on the bravery of one soldier who tried to save his comrades trapped inside. There was no mention of possible causes of the accident, or its ramifications. Arguably, this could have been coded *Domestic News; Accidents,* but because of the army base, it was coded here.
31. **Domestic News: Transport, Travel and Tourism.**

Items covering transport, but not accidents (*Road Accidents*). Rail and shipping issues for instance. *Tourism* covered items whose central theme was not economic or political, but generally, scenic and positive.

For example: On Friday, 26.08.94, a Queenstown company launched a radio station that broadcast entirely in Japanese to cater for local tourists. Very little was mentioned about the economic issues involved.

32. **Domestic News: Environment.**

Environmental items with little or no attention paid to the social, political and economic implications of environmental issues. Such items tended toward the scenic.

For example: On Friday, 29.07.94, a pod of rare Southern Right whales was sighted in Otago waters, the first sighting there for 100 years. The item was highly visual in nature, and offered very little information.

33. **Domestic News: Health and Technological Developments.**

Items that looked at new developments in health technology, including drugs and other technological developments in New Zealand. Health technology very often covered product developments that were still at the laboratory stage, and some years from any possible human consumption. Other health development items covered new studies on diet and other health issues. Items whose primary thrust were health reform, hospital bed numbers etc. were coded either as *Political: Health* or *Economic: Health* depending on the coverage.

For example: On Monday, 06.01.95, the number of NZ asthma sufferers was reported to have decreased, and a new study showed a link between asthma and margarine. The study’s validity, methodology or ranges of findings were not examined.
34. *Domestic News: Accidents and Disasters: Man Made.* Items that covered accidents and disasters, including industrial accidents, were coded here. Small-scale accidents such as mountain climbing mishaps or drownings were coded as man-made, to the extent that the individuals involved were there voluntarily when things turned sour. Accidents where the individuals involved were not at fault, or were the victims of random, natural disasters were coded in the next category.

35. *Domestic News: Natural Disasters and Accidents and Weather Extremes.* Natural disasters and random accidents, such as floods and storms were coded here. Weather extremes that featured in the main news segments rather than in the routine weather segments at the end of the bulletin were also coded here. The routine weather segments were coded *Weather.*

This category was not designed to represent the entire range of human-interest story-telling – by including ‘hard news’ stories of crime and disorder for instance – but was confined to ‘soft news’ treatment of less consequential events or actions. Human-interest stories required care when coding them. If the subject of the item was a domestic event or an issue that itself was not very important, or did not have wide-scale ramifications for the general population, it was coded here. If the item was personalised and contained a high degree of emotion or was obviously designed to appeal to the viewers’ emotions, it was coded here, provided that emotion was the central theme of a largely inconsequential event or issue. Another distinguishing feature of the *Human-interest* item was humour or a strongly visual appeal made by an event or issue that was not very important. Novelty, surprise, the bizarre were features of *Human-interest* items which tended to appear at the end of the bulletins.

For example: On Monday, 22.07.96, there was an amusing story about a national pie bake-off in Christchurch.

And on Friday, 07.06.96, a man was shown to have built a De Haviland Mosquito aeroplane in his back yard.

Or on Thursday, 13.10.88, the most expensive glasses ever to arrive in NZ went on sale. They were made of 18 carat gold.

37. *Domestic News: Celebrities and Obituaries*

Domestic news items concerned with mainly sporting, entertainment or cultural celebrities and their behaviour, activities, and deaths.

38. *Domestic News, Miscellaneous.*

News items that would fit into any other *Domestic News Categories*. This category averaged no more than .3% a year.
A1.5: The Domestic/International Distinction.

A distinction was made between items produced domestically and those brought from external news sources, or dealing with overseas actions and events. If the central focus of the item was not New Zealand, the item was coded here. If the central focus was on New Zealand, or the effects of an activity on New Zealand, it was coded Domestic. Similar categories to the Domestic categories were also used for the International categories, so the analysis could be expanded to distinguish between domestic and international items, or collapsed into, for example, All Political News. Again, the central theme of the item defined its topical category.

39. *International News; Politics; International.*

Items that examined the international system; the political relationships between countries, international political organisations or blocs were coded here. If New Zealand’s role was the central focus, however, this item was coded Domestic News rather than international news, either as Domestic News; Politics; International Relations or as Domestic News; National Defence, Military, NZ Forces Overseas. Items that looked at war or other violent political activity between nations were coded as International News; War, Uprisings and Violent Political Activity.

40. *International News; Politics; Domestic.*

Items that featured the non-violent domestic political activity of nations (other than New Zealand) were coded here.

41. *International News; Economics, National and International.*

News items covering international and national economic activity were coded here. Again, if New Zealand was involved, depending on the central thrust of the item, it was coded as Domestic News; Economic; International Investments and Trade. Generally speaking, items produced by external news organisations seldom referred to New Zealand.
42. *International News; War, Uprisings, and Violent Political Activity.*
Wars, revolutions and other violent political activity including overseas domestic and international terrorism were coded here. Items pertaining to the bombing of the Greenpeace boat, the Rainbow Warrior, were coded as *Domestic*; as *Violent Crime* or *International Relations* or other domestic category, depending on the theme of the particular item.

43. *International News; Social Conflicts (excluding terrorism).*
Coverage of either domestic or international social conflicts, excluding terrorism or other violent political activity, was coded here. Careful consideration had to be given to some items, as violence is a relative term. The distinction made here was that violence involving deaths, or large scale, serious injuries such as a bomb attack, was coded as *International News; War, Uprisings, Violent Political Activity.* All other social conflicts would be coded here.

For example: On Monday, 15.01.96, members of Iraqi and Kuwait communities fought a pitched battle in Sydney. While there were some injuries, they were generally minor. This item was placed in this category.

On the other hand, on Friday, 13.07.84, there was a report from South Africa about a car bomb that killed four people. This item was coded under the previous heading of *International News; War, Uprisings, and Violent Political Activity.*

44. *International News: Justice, Police, Law, Customs, Inquiries, and Inquests.*
Essentially the same category as its domestic counterpart but confined to countries other than New Zealand.

45. *International News; Crime.*
Criminal activities between and in other countries.
46. *International News: Health and Technological Developments.*
Health and technological developments in other countries. Developments in space were also coded here.

47. *International News: Travel Tourism and Environment.*
International travel news, excluding accidents and disasters, and environmental news where New Zealand was not involved, and where economic or political concerns were not central themes.

Essentially the same category as its domestic counterpart, apart form the external origin.

Essentially the same category as its domestic counterpart.

50. *International News: Celebrities.*
International news items concerned with celebrity behaviour, births and deaths.

51. *International News: Human-interest, Historical Items.*
Essentially the same as its domestic counterpart.

52. *International News: Miscellaneous.*
All international news items that did not fit any existing categories, and occurred too rarely to warrant their own category.
A1.6: Non-News Categories.

Weather, Sport, Advertising and Chit-chat were not treated by us as news items. The weather segment is a discrete element within the news bulletin, whose central function is to describe past weather, and attempt to predict future weather patterns, sometimes inaccurately. Sport reportage, like weather, while popular, does not normally present information that is useful in terms of understanding one’s world or one’s place in it. A sporting item with specific social, economic or political implications would be coded elsewhere, for example controversies over a South African rugby tour. Advertising was not programming, and the parasocial banter between the various onscreen presenters contributes little to the informational function of the news bulletin.

53. Weather.

This category was concerned with the weather segments only. During some years, the weather segment was introduced or ‘teased’ with a fifteen or twenty-second round up of the day’s weather, usually before the weather segment was introduced. This tease was also counted as weather. Unusual weather phenomena such as floods, storms and the like were coded as Natural Disaster or Weather Extremes, because they were included in the main news bulletin.

54. Sport.

Sports items were recorded individually, and classed collectively as sport, whether they occurred in the sports section or in the main section of the news. Some sports issues went beyond the simple reporting of sporting triumphs and tragedies, and concerned wider issues, such as television rights and international relations, and as such were classified according to their central themes.

For example: On Monday, 02.07.84, the Labour Government announced it would stop any further rugby tours to or from South Africa. The subject of the item was Domestic News; Politics; Policy, and coded as such.
Advertising included all advertising breaks during the recorded sections of the bulletins. The *Holmes* promotions that appeared after 1989 either opening or closing the advertising sections were counted as *Chit-chat* as *Holmes* often drew heavily on the news content for its own material, and was promoted as being part of the ‘news hour’. After 1995 when *One Network News* went to an hour, *Holmes* continued to be promoted in the TVNZ material as part of the ‘news family’.
56. **Headlines, teasers, in programme promotions for other TVNZ shows, and presenter chit-chat.**

This category was the only one in the sample that did not use whole items as a complete unit. (Advertising was counted as a complete segment). All the elements in this category were timed as discrete units, often no longer than five seconds, with the exception of chit-chat or other elements that lasted less than two seconds. The entire bulletins, from the opening music and scenes, to the last closing scene was measured, and musical and graphical transitions were included as *Chit-chat*. The opening graphics increased by approximately ten seconds over the sample period, and were therefore worth recording as a measure of how allocation of time for various elements of the bulletins had changed.

*Headlines* included the opening series of headlines, the closing and mid-show headlines or ‘re-caps’ when they occurred. Headlines were coded as chit-chat as they tend to serve a mainly promotional function, enticing people to watch rather than as informational elements of the show. This became increasingly the case after 1987.

*Teasers* were the mini-headlines that occurred before each advertising break, encouraging viewers to continue watching through the advertising and return to the programme. Again, these elements increased after 1987.

*In Programme Promotions* were items and spoken elements exhorting the viewer to watch another programme on the same network, usually for more information concerning the subject. *Holmes* was the programme most often promoted, but *Sixty Minutes, Assignment*, nature documentaries and sports shows were also promoted, increasingly after 1995.

*Presenter Chit-Chit-chat* was the time spent by the anchors talking to each other, or to the sports or weather anchors. From virtually nil in 1984, these elements had increased dramatically by 1996.
## Appendix II: The Macro-Analysis Figures.

### A1: Total Time to all Bulletin Categories, 1984 to 1996

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**Note:** The table above shows the code names (DN, ACC, DNL, DNLP, etc.) for different categories and their corresponding times of broadcast. The categories listed are representative of various societal, economic, and cultural aspects, such as labor, agriculture, justice, crime, courts, courts-crime, violence, accidents, road accidents, toll, vehicular crimes, accommodation, health, education, national defense, military, NZ forces overseas, transport, travel, and tourism, environment, health and technological developments, accidents and disasters, natural disasters, accidents, and weather extremes, human-interest, historical items, celebrities, and obituaries. The table is structured to show how these topics are broadcast within specific time slots.
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286
Appendix III: The Micro-Analysis Figures.

A2: The Count, Average and Maximum Length of Political Policy Items.

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A3: Sound-Bites and Shot Lengths.

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<td>Total Quote/Acknowledged Source/Grab</td>
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### Appendix IV: The Micro-Analysis Transcripts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>Friday, 18/06/84</td>
<td>Pressure on NZ dollar continues, prompting government to consider regulation. Reserve bank acts to stem flow. Labour says it will not devalue dollar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Shot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>Pressure on the New Zealand dollar continued today. There's been heavy trading on the foreign exchange markets triggered by the snap election and speculation of possible devaluation.</td>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>Male reader, medium close-up, beige background, Gary suit. Image on right shoulder, notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-49</td>
<td>The possibility of devaluation spent business men scrambling last week. Companies owing money overseas or major importers like oil firms brought large amounts of foreign currency in advance, but at rates of exchange that apply now.</td>
<td>9-20</td>
<td>Tagged – location and journalist. Plain white text, centre bottom. 2 shot changes. 1st city building, still. 2nd city street – cars, people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-34</td>
<td>One bank describes Fridays scramble as a near panic. Business today was a lot heavier but money experts say the market was more controlled, due mainly to the actions of the people here, in the Reserve Bank.</td>
<td>20-34</td>
<td>Journalist – medium close-up, standing in front of reserve bank. Shot tightens up on reserve bank during text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-42</td>
<td>The banks been acting as a guarantee for the New Zealand dollar, agreeing to honour future transactions at today's rates. The banks also made the cost of buying foreign currency in advance a lot dearer.</td>
<td>34-42</td>
<td>External shot, reserve bank. Still.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-47</td>
<td>At the same time the PM has chipped in with a warning to would-be speculators.</td>
<td>42-47</td>
<td>External shot, Beehive. Still.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49-70</td>
<td>Grab Robert Muldoon, Prime Minster. <em>That anyone who speculates against the New Zealand dollar must beware of the fact that he may be stopped from financing his speculations.</em></td>
<td>47-61</td>
<td>Robert Muldoon, medium close-up. Blue background, shot centre, level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-71</td>
<td>Well, we will see if its necessary. At the moment I hope they take the warning.</td>
<td>65-71</td>
<td>Same shot as above of PM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-109</td>
<td>Journalist returns: Speculation over the dollar has not only affected big business. Banks and travel agents report many inquiries from people wanting to know if their overseas holiday is going to cost more.</td>
<td>71-82</td>
<td>2 shot changes. 1st Airport – plane on taxiway. Natural sound at beginning of aeroplane sounds. 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

289
One dealer says the moves by the Reserve Bank have returned confidence to the dollar, a sign the government is not going to devalue. 82-88 6 City skyline – still.

One thing could alter that though, he says, an indication that next months general election could go Labour’s way. 88-93 5 Beehive – still.

New Journalist: The Prime Minister reiterated several times at his news conference that the government would not devalue, and he blamed Labour for the run on the dollar saying the party has a policy of devaluation. 93-104 11 Different journalist, tagged, name location. PM entering a press conference, taking a chair.

He then went on to challenge Mr. Lange to end the speculation. 104-109 5 Journalists at press conference – still.

Grab Robert Muldoon. It would be an appropriate thing for the leader of the Labour party today to come out and say that there would be no devaluation under a Labour government. 109-119 10 Robert Muldoon, medium close-up. Blue background, shot centre, level.

Journalist at press conference: Mr. Lange has said that it would be irresponsible for a government to rule out the use of devaluation, as it would be equally irresponsible to say that you would use it. Its a lot more irresponsible to do what he and Roger Douglas have said and that is to say that there would be a devaluation, and they’re on record as saying that. 119-129 10 2 shot changes, journalists in gallery, close up of journalist asking the question.

Journalist returns: Mr. Lange who spent today away from parliament working at home called a late afternoon news conference to answer Sir Roberts challenge. 129-140 11 Same shot of PM as above.

David Lange, Leader of Opposition. No politician can make a politician can make a policy of devaluation, and no politician can make a pledge not to devalue. Each is irresponsible. What is of concern is for the financial community is that the Prime Minister has said that he wont devalue, and of course they’ve known that every time he has said that firmly in the past, he has. 147-169 22 David Lange, tight close-up, shot mid left profile, white background.

Journalist: The Prime Minister claims though that you and Roger Douglas are on record as saying that there would be devaluation if Labour is elected. 169-176 7 Journalist, different from earlier. Medium close-up.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>176-194</th>
<th>David Lange, medium close-up this time.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want him, in the last year, to prove any suggestion of that</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beside, because there has not been that, he cannot quote it,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and these rather pathetic allegations just simply don’t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wash anymore.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Time 194.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>Monday, 02/07/84</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>The Prime Minister is challenging remarks made by his political opponents about the amount of money New Zealand owes other countries. The Labour leader Mr. Lange and the leader of the New Zealand Party Mr. Jones both say the level of debt for each person living in New Zealand is the highest in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-73</td>
<td>Sir Robert Muldoon says that their claim is wrong, and adds that it is irrelevant anyway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Sir Robert draws support for his argument from a report on New Zealand’s international debt prepared by Wellington stockbrokers Jarden and Company. Jarden in turn relies on information from a leading American bank, Morgan Guarantee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sir Robert Muldoon walking across stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-35</td>
<td>The report says the size of our debt per head of population is the eleventh highest in the world, but Sir Robert says there is nothing alarming about that. He says countries above us on the table, like oil rich Norway and Kuwait are wealthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4 cuts of Jarden and Co report – shot of cover, 2 shots of text, shot of text with ‘NZ doesn’t rate badly’ highlighted. All stills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-46</td>
<td>Shot of electronic board showing countries debts ranked. Still.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-52</td>
<td>Graphic – Map of Asia with Pakistan, India and China coloured in with coloured pens by the look of it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52-73</td>
<td>Journalist sitting at a desk. Medium close-up, plain background, arms leaning on desk, hands clasped. No tag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>73-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Grab Robert Muldoon, PM. I would think Bob Jones would have one of the highest levels of per capita debt in the country. I would also think he is very wealthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-82</td>
<td>PM, medium close-up seated at table with microphones in front. Shot from in front, level. No tag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-127</td>
<td>The Jarden Report says a more accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-88</td>
<td>Ship in port, no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Level of debt levels is the proportion of export earnings that are needed to repay loans and interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-94</td>
<td>The report shows that 22.7 percent of New Zealand exports service the countries debts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-103</td>
<td>The report compares that with Poland at one end of the scale paying eighty percent and the oil rich country of Libya paying 2.8 percent at the other end. There is a word of caution in the Jarden report however.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103-110</td>
<td>Financial experts say no more than twenty percent of the countries exports should be used to pay debts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110-127</td>
<td>New Zealand is just above that level. Mr. Lange questions the accuracy of those figures. He says information from the New Zealand planning council shows that thirty nine percent of our export earnings, not 22.7 percent are used to service debts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127-149</td>
<td>Grab Mr. Lange, Leader of Opposition: When ones overseas debt exceeds fifty percent of GDP, your in trouble. New Zealand owes about eighteen billion and our GDP is just under thirty five billion: we are in trouble. Secondly, when to service that debt, it costs you more than twenty percent of your export earnings, your in trouble. Ours in almost forty percent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149-151</td>
<td>Journalist question: It was my understanding that that figure was actually 22.7 percent, not forty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-170</td>
<td>Leader of Opposition continues: The Bank (?) Council of New Zealand confirms, in its work with other economists, it is costing us in the order of thirty nine percent of our export earnings to service our debt, and growing by the minute.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The National Party begins its annual conference in Wellington tomorrow, and while some post-election recriminations are expected behind the scenes, party leaders want to firmly focus delegate’s attention on the future. In the conference handbook, Nationals leader, Jim Bolger, and President, Neville Young warn of the dangers of blaming any one-quarter for the election defeat, and called for discipline and unity.

When National Party members gather here at the Michael Fowler centre tomorrow, it will be the first get together they have had for over a year. Their annual conference had to be postponed until now because of the election and it’s their recent election defeat that’s likely to be upper most in delegates minds. The party leaders hope to steer the people who fill these seats firmly away from dwelling too heavily on post-mortem’s and recriminations.

Grab Neville Young, President, Opposition Party.

The conference is about looking forward not looking back. People will discuss the campaign, but the conference itself will be arguing about policy direction, exploring ideas on proportional representation, perhaps ID cards.

Journalist returns: Prominence will be given to the new look parliamentary line-up. Its hoped that the selection of people like Selwyn MP Ruth Richardson as the party’s Finance Spokesperson will inspire party faithful, and head off criticism from groups like the Young Nationals who say the political wing must be tough and bold if it is to win over young New Zealander’s.

Grab: Neville Young, President, Opposition Party.

Any party in opposition places a great reliance on its foremost speakers on the front bench in Parliament. They are the
front window of the party to the public in opposition. It is important that they gain the confidence of the members of the conference.

| 97-108 11 | Journalist returns: There are more than fifty remits for discussion, but President Neville Young says that while delegates will have a chance to air their views, the real emphasis will be on the future and where the party goes from here. |
| 97-108 11 | 2 shot changes, 1st of conference handbook, 2nd of Mr. Young in wide shot reading the booklet. |
Opposition releases economic policies to select group of business community. He is careful not to alienate business in drive for many traditional Labour positions.

The National Party leader made a pitch for the votes of top Auckland businessmen today. Lunching with a group of about 50 businessmen at an exclusive downtown restaurant, Mr. Bolger told them that a National government would continue to deregulate the economy.

Auckland’s swanky Westhaven marina was the backdrop for the lunch which had been organised by some of the countries best known businessmen and the audience included some Business Roundtable members. The glass towers of cities like Auckland and Wellington have been referred to often by Mr. Bolger, and he’s travelled the provinces during this campaign. He sees them as evidence of the way the cities have gained from the government’s economic policies at the expense of more rural voters, and his audience included some of the men behind the buildings. Mr. Bolger’s message was a simple one, that they had nothing to fear from a National government.

Our policies will let business people get on with their business with less interference from government or anyone else in their markets. The deregulation of recent years will be retained and in some areas, extended.

Journalist returns: He says the next Labour caucus will be more left wing, and warned that plans to return to financial controls and a traditional socialist approach to banking and credit. Afterwards there was a mixed reaction.

I don’t think there was anything new there.

Leader of Opposition on podium speaking. Medium close-up, shot from in front.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80-89 9</td>
<td>Grab Colin Reynolds:</td>
<td>I think he re-enforced some of the things that many of us had doubts about, and he did it in a very concise way. It was good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89 9</td>
<td>Tight close-up of another man outside.</td>
<td>Tagged. Natural sound beneath speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-103 14</td>
<td>Grab Mr. Bolger, Leader of Opposition.</td>
<td>Journalist – What was the main message of the campaign that you hope they will take home with them? That a National government is a government that they can trust in terms of the particular areas of interest that they have and that we do have a comprehensive range of policies to address the important issues in NZ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-103 14</td>
<td>Leader of Opposition, tight close-up, no tag.</td>
<td>Natural sound beneath speaking. Journalist begins with question, off screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103-109 6</td>
<td>Journalist returns: The PM will speak to the same group of businessmen next week.</td>
<td>Car leaving – shot of tires.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Labour Govt. employment equity law concerning pay parity between men and women, put in place late in their rule, is to be repealed by the new Govt. Grab Labour Select Committee Chairman (National Member). No criticism of the move, no other grabs (except a newspaper delivery girl who is laughed over while making her statement to the committee).

It took over seven months to push the pay equity legislation through parliament, it will take the new government just two weeks to throw it out. The law gave women the right to equal pay to work of equal value, but National is intent on throwing it out before Christmas. Here is Political Correspondent Ray Lamb.

When women’s groups celebrated the passing of the employment equity law back in July, it was the end of months of work and years of preparation before that. But the new government is in a hurry to be rid of it.

A select committee spending two days considering a repeal bill, and thirty five written and thirty five oral submission which the public has had only four days to prepare. The bill’s due back in parliament by Thursday for passing next week. Committee chairman, Max Bradford says they have to stop people going ahead with pay equity claims and compulsory arbitration when both are being scrapped.

Grab Max Bradford, Committee Chairman. What we are trying to do is give certainty to parties who may be in negotiation, or may be contemplating negotiation.

Journalist returns: Newspaper girls and boys are caught in the middle. They are fighting to get an award which improves
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scene Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67-77 10</td>
<td>Grab Newspaper Girl. I do about four hours work for eleven dollars ninety-five... Grab question from committee member off camera. <em>For four hours work?</em> <em>For four hours work (laughter).</em></td>
<td>67-77 10 Fiona Barker, medium close-up, shot above, straight. Tagged name and role. Natural sound – laughter on her affirmation of pay for four hours work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-88 11</td>
<td>Journalist returns: Security guards are watching over these hearings, but so far there’s been no repeat of the protests which marked the bills introduction last week. Ray Lamb, <em>One Network News.</em></td>
<td>77-88 11 2 shot changes – 1st security guard, zooms out of tight close-up, 2nd door of committee room opening, woman emerging with pile of papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>Monday, 17/09/90</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Shot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>The National Party too made a big announcement today, its election manifesto. The glossy publication contains policies which party leader, Jim Bolger, says are aimed at the undecided voter. Here is political reporter, Chris Ryan.</td>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>Male reader, tight close-up, blue suit, blue swirled background. Picture of Beehive with National Party logo in picture box behind right shoulder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-20</td>
<td>All the policies contained in National's manifesto have already been announced. Today at a Wellington restaurant, Jim Bolger did it all again.</td>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>Shot of the election manifesto, sitting in piles on a table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td></td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>Leader of Opposition holding manifesto, close shot. Photo on cover matches the Leader of Opposition’s stance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grab Jim Bolger, Leader of Opposition. <em>Fine fella, fine policies, going to work.</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Leader of Opposition talking to unnamed women at a reception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-28</td>
<td>Journalist returns: 75,000 copies of the expensive glossy document have been printed, and will be handed out to swinging voters in key electorates. National, if it becomes government is promising to achieve economic growth of three percent, half unemployment and get inflation down to below two percent. It also promises to get single figure interest rates while still achieving a balanced budget.</td>
<td>22-32</td>
<td>2 shots of reception – Leader of Opposition talking to figures in crowd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>32-45</td>
<td>Graphic with National party logo – new items roll across screen following the text. Each new item has a smaller graphic indicating its function (I.E. % sign for inflation.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Jim Bolger says he is prepared to be held accountable if the party fails to honour its manifesto.</td>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>Leader of Opposition on a podium reading a speech to journalists and crowd. Shot from behind over shoulder. No tag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-65 15</td>
<td>Grab Jim Bolger: By publishing it six weeks before the election, not after it, we won't throw it away the day after we are elected to govern, we will make it work to the best of our ability and we won't be running away from our record in three years time.</td>
<td>50-65 15</td>
<td>Leader of Opposition in a very tight close-up, shot from beneath chin, right, giving speech. No tag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-105 40</td>
<td>Journalist returns: Along with economic goals, National is promising more private health care, there will be welfare cuts especially for those on domestic purposes benefit, superannuation will be linked to inflation under a national government and 900 extra police jobs will be created.</td>
<td>65-69 4</td>
<td>Shot of hospital beds.</td>
</tr>
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<td>73-77 4</td>
<td>Internal shot of rest home – or place where elderly gather.</td>
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<td>77-80 3</td>
<td>Police parade – internal – shot from behind with policemen with backs to camera standing at attention.</td>
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<td>National also promises an education system emphasising job skills.</td>
<td>80-85 5</td>
<td>Internal – classroom, teacher at blackboard.</td>
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<td>This manifesto doesn't contain all of National's election policies. Areas like foreign affairs and defence haven't been included, but what it does contain are those policies that National believes show the crucial difference between itself and the Labour party. Chris Ryan, One Network News.</td>
<td>85-105 20</td>
<td>Piece to camera – journalist in a tight close-up, standing in front of Beehive. No tag.</td>
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Labour Party tries to “heal the rifts” caused by the post election leadership “coup” (Quote One Network News intro). Cullen gives initial finance policy. Grabs new finance spokesperson, revenue spokesperson, and leader.

Labour Party has a new leader, but the mood for change doesn’t stop there. The party plans to overhaul its economic policy next year, but first Michael Cullen, the man confirmed as finance spokesperson is calling for contributions from all Labour MP’s. This is part of the healing process after the damage caused by the leadership coup. Here’s political correspondent Richard Harmen.

The countries top women in politics were at Government House today for a lunch honouring women in government. A brief respite for Helen Clark as she begins the task of healing the wounds in the Labour party left by the election loss and the leadership dispute.

For a start she has re-appointed Michael Cullen as Finance spokesperson, even though he supported Mike Moore. And he in turn is promising to review the finance policies he campaigned on in the last election.

Grab Michael Cullen, Finance, Labour. Well I’ve already circulated to my caucus colleagues asking them for comments on our economic policy and any submissions they would like to make on it, so that I can prepare some discussion papers for early next year for a review of that policy.

Journalist returns: That review must deal with taxation. Ms Clark has said she would support more taxes on the wealthy to address the poverty question.

But today she re-appointed Peter Dunn as revenue spokesperson. He generally opposes taxation increases, although today he was leaving the door open.

Female reader, tight close-up. Dark suit, swirled blue background. Labour party vision insert over right shoulder.

5 shot changes – starts with Helen Clark stepping out of a car, the rest are of members of luncheon, including Dame Catherine Tizard.

3 shot changes of Michael Cullen at what appears to be a senior citizens persons home. Talking to old woman. Drinking tea.

Michael Cullen, tight close-up, slight left profile. Plain wall paper background of home. Tagged, One Network News, name and

Helen Clark and David Lange walking though parliament. Activity and movement all around.

Peter Dunn and other Labour MP’s leaving elevator in Beehive – action.

Peter Dunn, medium
We need to work out what our expenditure priorities are, in terms of dealing with the poor, the dispossessed, the disadvantaged in our community, and then we need to look at the ways of funding those priorities. I think it's too simplistic an argument to say let's put taxes up as if that is some automatic salvation. We need to do the total picture and then see where we stand.

By re-appointing the old finance team, Ms Clark has indicated that her approach to the leadership might not be as radical as perhaps some of her supporters might hope. Richard Harmen, One Network News.
On the political stage Mr. Bolger was suggesting National may make major policy concessions to stay in power. The party is prepared to look at introducing minimum youth pay rates, and he says further privatisation is a minor issue. But he won't commit to a cabinet or whether Ruth Richardson keeps her job. Here is political correspondent Richard Harman.
| 75-98 | Journalist returns: With the possibility that it could yet hold the largest number of seats, or that it might be able to form a coalition with either or both of the two minor parties, Labour was intent on giving every appearance of also being the government, hence this meeting with Reserve Bank Governor, Don Brash. | 75-80 | Don Brash and Mike Moore, and other senior Labour Party members in office. Wide shot of men in suits, tracks them to a sofa. All one shot. |
| 23 | But already there are cracks appearing in Labour's caucus. | 80-82 | Mike Moore in his office, answering a telephone. Wide shot. |
| 98-101 | Former Labour Leader, David Lange has today been highly critical of Mike Moore’s election campaign. | 82-101 | David Lange on the Holmes set. Tag reads One Network News: Holmes, no date. Tight close-up of Lange, no Holmes. |
| 3 | Grab David Lange, former leader of Labour Party. The Labour Party has not, one, captured the hearts of the people that used to represent it. | 101-115 | Straight cut to Mike Moore, Leader of Opposition in casual clothes, outside with a garden behind him. Tight close-up. No tag. Journalist voice off camera a female, not shown in shot. |
| 14 | Grab Mike Moore, Leader of Opposition. David is a generous person. He wasn’t very generous this morning. Mike Moore: I don’t accept that, you’re going to have to accept that we are not a party of zombies. I mean, so what, who cares? It’s a different age. | 101-115 | Jim Anderton walking through a room - looks like a press conference, many cameras. Supporters applauding him. |
| 4 | Grab Jim Anderton, Leader of Alliance. Well, I think we will get the formation of new parties, and I think the two major parties, Labour and National are going to find it very difficult to hold their show together. I mean, they talk about the Alliance having difficulties, well that’s kindergarten stuff compared to the factions that are within both Labour and National. | 119-134 | Straight cut to Winston Peters, tight close-up. |
| 15 | Grab Winston Peters, Leader New Zealand First. |
| 13 | Well we are not here to upset the apple cart, we are here to surely act in the national interest. We have made that commitment. Our national interest concept goes beyond and above this party and we are constitutionally bound to it. | 13 | suit, office, NZ flag in background. |
| 147-154 | Journalist returns: The next chapter in this drama will probably come on Thursday when | 147-150 | Cut to caucus meeting featured at top of story. |
| 7 | both major parties have their caucus meetings. Richard Harman, *One Network News.* | 150-154 | Cut to same shot of Mike Moore in office on telephone. |
Year | Sample | Date | Notes
--- | --- | --- | ---
1996 | 96.5 | Tuesday, 10/09/96 | Opposition parties attack Govt. policies on health, education and other policy areas. Especially concerning Plunket funding.

### Time | Words
--- | ---
0-22 | The governments spending priorities are under attack. Day two of the election campaign and Labour, the Alliance and New Zealand First all say the government needs to spend more on health and education. And they say New Zealand's youngest citizens should be top priority in those areas. Our campaign team is following the leaders and our coverage begins with political editor Linda Clark.
22-46 | A convoy of push-chairs in central city Auckland today. Down one end, kindergarten teachers protesting for more pay. Down the other, Plunket parents fighting to keep their centres open. It was all a bit much for some of the junior protesters, but for the mums and dads, some of them on lunchtime leave there is a lot at stake.
46-52 | Grab Josephine Lio. People go to these places for time out, support and stuff, but now that they are closed, where do we turn to?.
52-66 | Journalist returns: Plunket centres in Hamilton, New Plymouth, Tauranga and Gisbourne closed earlier this year. The local

### Time | Shot
--- | ---
0-22 | Female reader. Bright red dress. A blue background with the map of the world in it. Very busy. Image of Plunket logo over left shoulder.
22-46 | Tag – large One Network News election coverage bottom right – ‘Decision 96. The Campaign’ Opens on large, colourful crowd. 13 shot changes in this segment, mostly of general crowd scenes protesters banners and babies. Natural sound continues beneath journalist, and she pauses for a protest chant from the kindergarten workers, and then again for one from the Plunket workers. A shot of a child asleep in a pram during the 'junior protesters' text.
46-52 | Women, medium close-up, holding baby. Crowd behind. Tagged with name, Tag features One Network News logo, and covers bottom right hand of screen.
52-66 | 5 shot changes in this segment – 1 features general crowd shots.
RHA had funding problems and the government said not enough families use the centres. These parents fear their centres will close next.

66-72 6
Grab not tagged. If these are going to be centres closed, then I'll be sitting at home with the baby crying and screaming and not knowing what to do next.

73-78 6
Grab David Van Schaardenburg. Well its children's welfare basically and we believe that probably the policy in terms of spending of the government morals are wrong.

78-82 4
Journalist returns: The opposition parties agree.

82-89 7
Grab Helen Clark, Leader of Opposition. When the cuts are going on, isn't it the services to the mothers and the little children that seem to miss out first.

89-94 5
Journalist returns: Labour the Alliance and New Zealand First are promising more money for services like Plunket.

94-102 8
Grab Jim Anderton, Leader Alliance. If the country is wealthy enough to give away two thousand, five hundred billion dollars to its richest citizens, it should be wealthy enough to look after its most vulnerable.

102-108 6
Grab Anne Batten, New Zealand First candidate. We have got quite a large surplus, and we should be doing a lot more spending in these areas and the government simply isn't doing it.

108-130 22
Journalist returns: National was invited to put up a speaker today. It declined, though it did say under National, total spending on Plunket has increased. Jim Bolger was up north today for another school visit. He insists holding the line on social spending is
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<tr>
<td>130-140 10</td>
<td>Grab Jim Bolger, Prime Minister. <em>Its good economics, it enables us to say, it enables me as Prime Minister to say that we will be in a position to afford to invest wisely in all areas of social policy, and we will do it.</em></td>
<td>130-140 10 PM. Tight close-up, not tagged. Very little activity in background, no natural sound.</td>
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<td>140-157 17</td>
<td>Journalist returns: National is selling itself this election as the sensible spender. No bulk promises and a balance of moderate social spending, rapid debt repayment and a continued surplus. Mr. Bolger says that mix is a winning one, but it seems these voters don’t agree. Linda Clark, <em>One Network News.</em></td>
<td>140-157 17 Journalist in front of crowd scene, tagged, medium close-up. Tag reads name, and political editor beneath.</td>
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<td>0-12</td>
<td>And we are likely to be safer on the streets in coming weeks. New Zealand First leader Winston Peters wants to make personal security an election issue. And, as Leigh Pearson reports, other politicians are already climbing on board.</td>
<td>0-12</td>
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<td>12-35</td>
<td>With an election just, months off, the campaigning is slowly turning to law and order.</td>
<td>18-23</td>
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<td>35-42</td>
<td>He is damming the use of security guards by police as in the Hawkes Bay. Police say its rare that Winston Peters accuses the government of cutting front line police. He is promising 300 more.</td>
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<td>42-57</td>
<td>Grab Winston Peters, Leader New Zealand First. No, it won’t make a difference all by itself, and given the better laws and greater surveillance capacity, that will help.</td>
<td>41-49</td>
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**Notes:** Politicians leap on the law and order bandwagon. Winston Peters promises more police.

**Year** | **Sample** | **Date** | **Notes** |
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>96.11</td>
<td>Tuesday, 16/05/96</td>
<td>Politicians leap on the law and order bandwagon. Winston Peters promises more police.</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<td>now 540 are to be lost as police shed staff for a new computer system. Labour’s promising to re-instate them in a get tough crime policy.</td>
<td>49-57 8 3 cuts of hands writing, filing papers and answering phones.</td>
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<td>57-68 11</td>
<td>Grab Phil Goff, Justice, Labour. I think its time to be tough also on the causes of crime and to do something more for victims who are overlooked in our concern for the offenders far too often.</td>
<td>57-68 11 Like previous grab, voice over continues over shot change. Phil Goff. Tight close-up, slight right profile parliament behind. Tag, One Network News etc.</td>
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<td>73-81 8</td>
<td>Grab Jim Anderton, Leader Alliance. So I say get tough on the causes of crime, get tough on poor housing, get tough on unemployment.</td>
<td>73-81 8 Jim Anderton at podium, tight close-up mid left profile, tagged.</td>
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<td>81-93 12</td>
<td>Journalist returns: Police Minister John Luxton says crime levels haven’t changed in four years, and the police’s new computer will free up more staff for front line duty. Leigh Pearson, One Network News.</td>
<td>81-93 12 Police working at night with torches, looking around a property, lots of movement and action.</td>
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</table>
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