

**SECOND EQUAL PLACE GETTER IN THE 1995 INDUSTRIAL
RELATIONS RESEARCH PAPER COMPETITION**

**Contesting Symbolic Space: The Struggle over the
Employment Contracts Act 1991**

Jane Scott*

Introduction

This article is based on research concerning the relationship between the neo-liberal project in New Zealand and the mass media since 1984.¹ New Zealand has undoubtedly experienced a major shift in public policy orientation in correspondence with structural changes in the political economy. The assumed role of government under social democratic Keynesianism was questioned and restructuring of the state became central to the neo-liberal project. The resultant policies reorganised economic, political and social priorities, were rapidly implemented and had a detrimental impact upon various sectors of society. Consequently, such policies had to be rationalised and strategically promoted in order to marginalise opposition and allay public scepticism.² As neo-liberalism was being transmitted to the public, New Zealand's media system was undergoing changes in terms of the surrounding economic environment and media-government relationships. Such circumstances enabled both the fourth Labour Government and the succeeding National administration to routinely communicate their messages. This claim required illustration. To this end I undertook research on the debate conducted in and through the media over the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act (1991).

* M.A. (Auckland). This paper was submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Auckland.

¹ Jane Scott, "Neo-liberalism at Work: Media-Politics and the Employment Contracts Act", MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 1995.

² See Stuart Hall who has explored Thatcherism in Great Britain as a political project engaged in an ideological struggle to achieve dominance (Hall, 1988a, 1988b).

My empirical enquiry contained a cross media analysis³ of Employment Contracts Act (ECA) coverage from its introduction to parliament in December 1990 to legislative enactment in May 1991. The focus was not only on the arguments presented by key players, but also on the language and visuals of the mediated texts. This contributed to an account of how constructed political realities are conveyed in media messages. The consequent range of debate was assessed according to whether oppositional views could make headway. A range of factors - ideological, economic, political - contributed to the capacity of key actors to construct political realities promoting the plausibility of certain courses of action. The media, it is argued, were a key component of this process. Patterns of news coverage both shaped and were shaped by the activities of institutions and individuals.

The purpose of this article is to consider the differential symbolic resources available to capital and labour in periods of major industrial relations controversy. The power to define and impose an understanding of issues and events is held, not surprisingly, by the economically powerful groups in society. Nevertheless, it is more straightforward to control the circulation of wealth than the circulation of meaning. It is true that material and symbolic resources are not equally available to all political actors/groups, but the possession of such resources does not necessarily predetermine their ability to secure dominant interpretations of the "real". When an issue is placed on the political agenda, groups mobilise and commence the battle for symbolic dominance; that is, part of the battle involves gaining access to the media, "to the systems of information production and distribution" (Schlesinger, 1990: 82). During the period in which the issue is debated, there is a dynamic interaction among groups and between groups and the media. Within each group, strategies are devised and revised to monitor opponents and media representations of the issue.

However, the rules of the game are not impartial, certain political actors and vested interests, by virtue of their institutional status and financial resources, assume legitimacy and authoritativeness within the media domain. In the case of the ECA debate, other critical variables shaped media coverage of the policy path: the government's communication strategy; the degree of elite consensus; the defects of New Zealand's media; and the ideological coherence of the pro ECA debate.

In what follows I will, first, outline the structural inequality between capital and labour in terms of interest articulation. This is important because it explains the uneven resources available to capital and labour in their struggle for symbolic dominance. Second, I will explain the nature of news production, together with shifts in the economic and political environment of media organisations. In light of these aspects, I will summarise the findings of the media coverage of the ECA debate.

³ All items on the Employment Contracts Act on prime time television news on TV1 and TV3, together with current affairs programmes, and in the four metropolitan daily newspapers - the New Zealand Herald, the Dominion, the Christchurch Press, the Otago Daily Times. Broadcast items on National Radio and articles in magazines were occasionally perused.

Material resources available to capital and labour

According to Offe (1985) the conflict which ensues from the capital-labour relation⁴ is not played out across upon even ground. On the one hand, the capitalist firm presides over a range of capital goods which have been amalgamated to produce a unified whole. On the other hand, the individual worker only controls his/her own labour power, which must be sold in competition with other individual workers in the same position.⁵ Under these circumstances, the bargaining power of each individual worker is compromised by the employer's capacity to transact with another worker (or to introduce labour saving technological devices). The only strategy available to labour is to associate; that is, to organise labour through the union movement. Theoretically and historically, this represents an attempt by labour to counter the in-built capacity of capitalists to "merge" capital goods.⁶

In this context, capital has three forms of representation. The first is the individual enterprise comprising the fusion of capital goods. The second is the informal negotiations and discussions with workers' associations. The third is that of employer organisations. Labour, on the other hand, has only one representative association with many tasks to perform. Given that workers are not physically separable from their labour power, a range of interests need to be represented. These include wages and conditions of employment, job satisfaction, health, leisure time and employment security. Unions confront the problem of coordinating these heterogenous interests, many of which are not quantifiable. Capitalist enterprises and their business associations have fewer and more homogenous needs and these may be fulfilled through top level directives or agreements without on-going collective decision-making. Both business organisations and unions depend for their operations upon financial members. However, unions also require members to act purposively and collectively; that is, to go on strike and to picket.

Furthermore, associations of labour structurally depend upon the decisions of capital. For example, employers can improve efficiency in the production process through the shift from labour intensive to capital intensive operations, thereby reducing the wage bill. This strategy releases, to a degree, capital's dependence upon labour. But wage workers in the labour

⁴ In Offe's view, labour power cannot be understood as an exchangeable commodity because it cannot be physically separated from the worker. The employer is dependent upon the willingness (brought about through incentives or coercion) of the worker to function as required. This amounts to a conflict between capital and labour over the amount and standard of work performed. Because work performance is an on-going issue, it cannot be settled contractually. Consequently, prior to any labour market regulations, tensions exist which induce both parties to promote their own interests through whatever means available (Offe, 1985: 177).

⁵ In Offe's words "the atomised form of living labour that stands in conflict with the integrated, or liquid, form of 'dead' labour causes a power relationship; the capital ('dead' labour) of each firm is always united from the beginning, whereas living labour is atomised and divided by competition" (Offe, 1985: 178).

⁶ This response, or historical process, is as follows: capital is merged under the command of capitalist enterprises; workers respond to the structural power imbalance by forming associations; the capitalist enterprises continue the merging activity and organise their collective interests through establishing their own associations.

market will always be dependent upon capital's willingness to employ. Offe identifies this as a relationship of "asymmetrical dependence". Workers have an inherent interest in the profitability of employers' enterprises, but employers are not as compelled to consider the well-being of workers. Unions, moreover, are less able to secure external institutional support for their actions. By contrast, business associations are uniquely placed to lobby government leaders and to exert indirect control over public policy, because the state relies upon the profitability of capital.⁷ This is an important point when considering the Employment Contracts Act. Fractions of capital were lobbying the two major political parties for labour market deregulation from the mid 1980s.⁸

Offe's analysis functions as an explicit rejection of the pluralist assumption that interest groups compete on a level playing field for political influence and that the state, as independent adjudicator, pays equal attention to each and every group. Offe's approach suggests that capital exercises political and economic power from a position of structural dominance. From here, it is important to identify aspects of the media system which effectively promote ruling interests.

The media dimension

The role of the media contributing to the political outcomes of industrial relations struggles, has received insufficient critical analysis.⁹ The modern mass media have assumed the capacity to communicate political agendas over and above traditional intermediary institutions such as political parties, interest groups, families and schools. News organisations, especially television, have become a vital source of political knowledge and information for the citizenry. This is especially the case when the issue at stake lies outside the interpersonal world. Thus, in the case of political struggles over industrial relations, the question of what gets communicated is vitally important. The problems, causes, and solutions which are politicised can set parameters of debate. Consequently, certain interpretations of the issue are favoured over others and only some courses of action appear plausible.

The news is a manufactured product which is shaped by the routine practices of journalism, the characteristics and structure of media organisations and all those institutions, groups and individuals with an interest in the communication of political information. Furthermore, mediated information is generated in the context of wider economic, ideological, and social processes. Hall and others, in an early study of news production, constructed the "primary

⁷ "The dependency of the state apparatus upon the performance of capital . . . is unparalleled by a reciprocal dependency relationship of the capitalist class upon the state. This structural asymmetry is exploited and fine-tuned by the operation of business associations, but it is by no means constituted or created by them. Their success is not accomplished by or because of the organisation itself; rather, it derives from a power relationship that is logically and historically prior to the fact of any collective action of businessmen" (Offe, 1985: 192).

⁸ Proponents of a deregulated labour market aimed to increase labour market flexibility by removing the legal and institutional "barriers" which enhanced to a degree the ability of unions to generally represent the interests of workers and negotiate the terms and conditions of employment.

⁹ For British research see Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980).

definition" model, (Hall et al., 1978). They argued that those with material and political resources define the parameters of debate since they have guaranteed, structural access to the news media.

There are in-built features to the media system which contribute to this process. First, the need for a continual supply of news, together with the constraints of time and resources, lead news organisations to rely regularly on a few easily accessible sources. Such sources tend to be those who have proven reliable in the past and whose access to authoritative information gives credibility (various officials and elites). Parliamentary press gallery reporters, for example, are stationed next to routine legitimated news sources. Government media minders and well-resourced interest groups, with expert knowledge of news formats and styles, prepare statements and press releases. Secondly, the way in which media organisations routinely select news stories is influenced by their own notions of what is newsworthy. There are no absolute guidelines, but there is a shared "news sense" about audience appeal and effective communication, along with learned professional codes of "objectivity" or "balance". News stories compete on this basis for media attention and many fall by the wayside. Thirdly, once selected for coverage, news stories are constructed according to formats for presentation.¹⁰ Some aspects of an issue are selected for emphasis, producing a news "frame" which privileges a particular understanding of the issue at stake. News frames are typically highly patterned and conventional; that is news workers have pre-determined notions of how an issue should be reported.

To summarise, selected news stories emphasise and define particular issues, actors and events. A range of routine practices and devices are employed to communicate these stories - reliance on legitimated news sources, adherence to the norms of objectivity, the construction of news frames and story formats, the search for newsworthiness. These simply emerge out of the need to effectively and efficiently organise news work and comply with "professional" standards of journalism. However, routine news work reduces the range and depth of political debate. Official perspectives predominate, stereotypes are reproduced, isolated events are prioritised and issues are dramatised, personalised and fragmented.

This account of news work stands as a summary of news production, but it is not historically situated. As an organisational outcome, news is also shaped by shifts in the economic and political environment. The deregulation of broadcasting and telecommunications and the increased concentration of ownership and control of the media are significant in this respect. These developments were inextricably connected to the economic power and global reach of transnational corporations. They required highly advanced lines of communication for intra- and inter-organisational purposes. The finance sector expanded to service such large-scale corporate activity and it too required sophisticated communications systems. More specifically, from the late 1960s the search for increased levels of productivity and profits, which could no longer be solely extracted from traditional manufacturing and heavy industry

¹⁰ The most basic format is that of the story, which contains a beginning, middle and end, highlighting a moral issue. As Tiffen further notes: "The story format favours resolution over doubt, the concrete over the abstract, the narrative recounting of recent, finite events over the analytical account of continuing conditions", (Tiffen, 1989: 65).

sectors, led to a growth in the "information" sector. The rapid development in communications technologies provided new information goods and services for exchange in new markets with the prospect of new growth (Garnham, 1990: 117). Technological innovation in the field of communications removed, to a large degree, the limits to the size and expansion of transnational corporations. The speed with which such corporations can access information and co-ordinate commercial activities greatly enhanced their economic influence (Deetz, 1992: 209).

The operational freedom of such corporations has been enhanced by the policy actions of individual nation states. To varying degrees, the initiatives of governments worldwide over the last decade have been geared towards privatisation. This has variously involved the corporatisation of the public sector, the privatisation of state assets and the deregulation of the environment within which corporate activity occurs in terms of laws governing the nature of ownership and control (Murdock, 1990: 10-14). The extent to which individual nations placed political-legal limitations upon conglomerates determined the structure of domestic media operations. In a recent comparative study, Cocker argues that the extension of the free market ethos into the broadcasting arena was more complete in New Zealand than elsewhere (Cocker, 1992: 12). The deregulation of broadcasting and the removal of legal restrictions governing merger and takeover activity from the late 1980s have impacted upon political discourse. Commercialisation of the media industry has resulted in staffing and resource cuts forcing news and current affairs programmes to rely on pre-packaged material from official sources and news agencies. Consequently, news media products are formularised across all mainstream outlets. The drive to maximise audiences for advertisers restricted the extent to which certain topics of public interest could be covered. Increasingly, the media disseminated infotainment rather than public affairs journalism. In this regard, style becomes valued over substance, and personalities prevail over policy. Little room is left for in-depth analysis of political matters.

The relations between media and government have also shifted over the last 15 years. First, governments have pressured the media to circulate particular political ideas and information. Official restrictions on the freedom of the press and broadcasting are part of New Zealand's history. This continues in various old and new forms: friendly and informal meetings with journalists, briefings to broadcasting executives and legal intimidation (Scott, 1995: 54-61). Secondly, governments have built up their own publicity and press relations activities.¹¹ Under the fourth Labour Government, information management and public relations became an intrinsic part of the political process. The "media machines" built up around governments provide media organisations with a steady stream of ready-made stories to suit both news formats and public consumption. Press secretaries and media minders write speeches, act as gatekeepers between journalists and politicians, manage press conferences and mastermind

¹¹ Such techniques can be traced back to the 1970s, specifically to the advertising campaigns surrounding the 1972 and 1975 elections.

media strategies which will shape or shift public opinion. The media industry provided a major pool of talent from whom to recruit government media minders¹².

Furthermore, public relations, consultancy and advertising firms became routinely involved in the release of government policy. Each policy initiative was marketed as a commodity to the consuming public. The political advertising campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s were promotional propaganda rather than information, opinion rather than facts. The merger between politicians and public relations, consultancy and advertising firms includes a third partner, business. For these firms, government relations activities involve not only providing a service for politicians, but also for their commercial clients. The latter are assisted with the presentation of proposals to government at the same time as being provided with information as to government activities. Basically, the central task of the consultancy firm is to arrange meetings between its clients and key ministers (Scott, 1995: 65-69).

Collusive relationships between the media, government and business elites were evolving prior to neo-liberalism and broadcasting deregulation. The combined effect of these trends has been to narrow political discourse. More specifically, stretched media resources have enabled authoritative sources to gain further definitional advantage. The power to set the parameters of political debate is not necessary uncontested. It is just that when a number of powerful political forces together promote a particular definition, and certain factors inhibit the ability of journalists to contest this definition, an "official" view of reality emerges. The critical variables include staff cuts, declining budgetary resources for investigative journalism, the shift towards infotainment formats to maximise audience share, along with government strategies of news management.

Transforming industrial relations

The historical class compromise between capital and labour¹³, institutionally expressed by the industrial relations system, had become a major obstacle to the neo-liberal project. With the ECA, emphasis was placed on the freedom of choice of individual workers at the workplace, with unions relegated to the periphery. The magnitude of change will not be documented here, but will be illustrated by comparing the primary objectives of New Zealand's first industrial relations statute with the ECA:

¹² These arrangements suited both media workers and politicians. On the one hand, with pay and conditions deteriorating and redundancies rife in the media industry, the media requirements of politicians provided an appealing career shift. On the other hand, politicians received the services of those with journalistic expertise and media contacts, (Scott, 1995: 61-64).

¹³ Offe's schema explains, theoretically and historically, why industrial relations are conducted within a more complex system of codes and statutes than that of simply common law. The extent to which the structural imbalance between capital and labour is corrected depends upon the nature of the legal and institutional framework imposed upon the activities of unionism. Such a framework may also be expressive of union rights. More specially, a system governing industrial relations may be the focus of conflict and struggle within and between capital and labour.

To encourage the formation of industrial relations and associations, (Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1894).

To promote an efficient labour market, (Employment Contracts Act 1991).

That such a radical overhaul of industrial relations could be initiated in 1990 is due to a number of factors, some of which relate to the material resources available to labour and capital. First, the structural changes of the previous six years had not only weakened the union movement, but also removed its peak organisation from the consultative process. The rejection of semi-formalised corporatist principles meant that there was no place for the union movement in wider political and economic discussions.

Second, although the fourth Labour Government had not followed through with labour market deregulation, it had dismantled the kind of macro-economic regime necessary for any corporatist-style arrangements. There were, in effect, no regulatory impediments to National's radical industrial relations programme. All that remained was the existing industrial relations law. To strongly oppose the Employment Contracts Act, the Labour Opposition would have had to deny the efficacy of its own economic "restructuring".

Third, the key economic advisers to government, the Treasury and the Reserve Bank, were ardent promoters of the neo-liberal project and a "free (labour) market". Treasury had not succeeded in its determination to deregulate the labour market during Labour's terms in office, but, throughout the 1980s, it had developed its proposals to present to the incoming, traditionally anti-union National Government. Also during this period, the Business Roundtable, which had become a key government lobbyist, advocated the kinds of changes to industrial relations which informed the Employment Contracts Act. It was soon joined by the Employers' Federation. National had been studying its industrial relations policy in liaison with these groups and was preparing to make it a key election issue in 1990. Proponents of a deregulated labour market had thus been developing proposals for some time and the re-arranged interest group system (whereby trade unions and other groups had been marginalised as "vested interests") assisted their promotional work (Scott, 1995: 80-93).

Fourth, the ideological climate was conducive to the proposal for a deregulated labour market. The neo-liberal project was informed by economic theories which understood the economy to operate in a self-regulating manner. There was no need for state intervention. Indeed, regulatory measures inhibited the free play of market forces, producing sub-optimal outcomes. At the end of 1990, the political terrain upon which policy discussion took place had shifted to the right. National's attacks on the trade union movement and collective bargaining principles were bolstered by the already assembled frames for neo-liberal discussion. A plausible case could be made for the Employment Contracts Act in terms of the individual rights of workers and the incompetency of the state in regulating the (labour) market. Dissolving union structures could be cited as a panacea for the low growth and high unemployment of 1990/1991. Thus, the union movement confronted the rightward shifting political terrain within a rearranged interest group system. Its inability to widen frames for debate had a direct impact on news coverage.

Communicating the Employment Contracts Act debate

When the Employment Contracts Bill was introduced to parliament in December 1990, the National Government was largely in control of the flow of information. Key words in newspaper headlines and television commentary provide evidence that the government was the primary news source. Television news items were framed by reporters' commentary, interspersed with brief sound bites extracted from speeches and statements of key players. It was the commentary and not the statements of the interviewees which structured the range of argument. Yet, aspects of the policy selected for emphasis were voluntary unionism and the sweeping away of rigid regulatory practices.¹⁴ These comported with the government's promotional slogans - individual freedom and choice, and flexibility (leading to increased productivity, growth and jobs). The pronouncements of government drove news stories, while unions were called upon to respond as secondary actors.

However, the Employment Contracts Bill, a major piece of impending legislation, was not foregrounded in the public domain; it had low media visibility. Such neglect can be traced to three factors. First, circumstantial evidence suggests that the government's strategy was to minimise media coverage. The Bill was announced as part of the government's "Economic and Social Initiative", introduced just days before Christmas when political reporting diminishes during parliament's summer recess. Journalists were not entirely unaware of the strategy; they had been alerted to a Logos public relations campaign unveiled a month earlier which proposed that a pre-Christmas release was an appropriate time for "bad" news (Atkinson, 1993). During the weeks prior to the announcement, Cabinet was seen to be working overtime specifically on the vexed issue of social welfare cuts. Since the Employment Contracts Bill was under the routine control of the government's most experienced minister, Bill Birch, press gallery attention turned to the welfare issue, which constituted the first section and greater proportion of the "Initiative"¹⁵. The Employment Contracts Bill was submerged. Moreover, the government's budget for employment contracts promotional material was small (\$240,000) in comparison to welfare cuts (over \$1 million). Certainly the benefit cuts were significant, but employment contracts represented massive structural change with a long-lasting impact. It was logical for the government to portray such radical policy implementation as a normal part of the governing process. If the government did not accord the issue extra-ordinary significance, then presumably neither would the media nor the public.

¹⁴ The *Nightline* reporter on 19 December 1990 announced that "under current laws [workers] have no choice" and "from May next year whether they stay or leave will be entirely up to them . . . the most far-reaching change to industrial law in the past 100 years . . . compulsory unionism, so much a feature of our industrial law for the past 50 years, will once again become voluntary . . . an end to blanket award coverage . . . move away from occupational awards". On the same day, *News at Ten* announced - "centralised wage bargaining and national awards are out . . . workplace agreements are in . . . (workers are left) free to negotiate by themselves . . . workers will be free to choose which union they belong to". The introduction to parliament of the ECB was reported by the *Press* (20 December 1990, p.1) under the headline "Voluntary Unionism says new Bill".

¹⁵ On 19 December 1990, prime time news on both television channels - *One Network News (ONN)* and *Three National News (3NN)* - the "Economic and Social Initiative" was reported, but only with reference to the welfare changes.

Secondly, while the news media do respond to political controversy, significant political players must be willing or able to generate it. However, unlike the benefit cuts, the National caucus was undivided over employment contracts and the Labour Opposition was virtually non-existent. A principled stand against welfare cuts was unlikely to alienate electoral support, but Labour appeared less inclined to stir up popular anti-union sentiment by committing itself against the proposed legislation. The pro-union New Labour Party, with fledgling voter support, was not accorded media attention as a credible political party. As the Bill's major opponent, the Council of Trade Unions (CTU) was uncertain of the appropriate opposition strategy. The CTU's political and industrial resources had been damaged by declining membership and funds throughout the 1980s, and by 1990-1991 rising unemployment worsened its position further. The CTU had little influence over a neo-liberal project which had been introduced by its traditional ally, the Labour Party. After National's November election victory, it was no longer a player in policy debate and this affected the CTU's credibility as an authoritative news source. Although there was not unanimous employer support for the draft legislation, the media responded to positive pronouncements by the major groupings - the Business Roundtable, the Employers Federation and, occasionally, regional employers' associations.

Thirdly, the Employment Contracts Bill faced stiff competition for news coverage. From mid December 1990 through to February 1991, the Gulf War dominated the print and broadcast media. On the domestic front, in the company of the controversial welfare cuts, the Employment Contracts Bill appeared relatively staid and uninteresting.¹⁶ Industrial relations may be an issue familiar and relevant to the public, but awareness of the complexities and origins of the proposed changes were uneven. The typical five second television sound bite interview with passers-by may not have elicited any response.¹⁷ Knowledge of the issue would have been restricted to a few key players, namely the unions and employers' associations. Moreover, the main target of the reforms - the unions - were assumed to be collectively powerful and this ruled them out of populist news frames.¹⁸ In any event, the proposed changes were highly technical (although the general principles were straightforward) and few journalists have specialist knowledge in the field of industrial relations. Moreover, according to one journalist interviewed, they would not have been encouraged to write

¹⁶ Since the deregulation of broadcasting, commentators have noted the shift from public affairs journalism to "infotainment". In order to attract the largest possible audience, to attract advertising revenue, topics of entertainment value predominate (Atkinson, 1994; Edwards, 1992).

¹⁷ Atkinson identifies the shift in television news towards "personalised story-telling . . . elite interviews have been largely displaced by interviews with ordinary people on the street, supermarket or other easily accessible location". This is acknowledged by Television New Zealand, which sees the shift as "a worthwhile contribution to an informed democracy", to which Atkinson responds "allowing ordinary people to express helpless outrage in vanishingly brief interviews, can scarcely be said to 'empower' them", (Atkinson, 1994: 162-163).

¹⁸ Atkinson's content analysis of television news reveals the increase of human interest stories and "more emotionally coloured, victim-orientated portrayals of crime, accidents and natural disasters" (Atkinson, 1994: 162). Unions were not understood to be in the category of "victim". When political issues are covered, they are predominately constructed in personalised terms - the plight of a beneficiary, one family's fight with an individual hospital or the ACC. The Employment Contracts Act was difficult to represent in these terms.

analytical pieces by their editors; the media tend not to take industrial relations seriously (Scott, 1995: 115).

Media visibility of the Employment Contracts Act did increase as nationwide protest action commenced at the beginning of April 1991. However, the media's predilection for dramatic events, produced conventional protest news frames across television and newspapers¹⁹. Protestors were elevated as the agents of events and this down played the political context which had provoked the action - the government's policy proposal. Within protest frames, action was trivialised by focusing on points of human interest. The narrative and visual foci of news reports were on protestors singing, play-acting, dancing and marching in the rain²⁰. Frivolity, however, was not always the overarching characterisation of the protest marches. Participants were said to be concerned about the issue. But they, too, were trivialised through the emphasis on their "mood", their "feelings", rather than on their rational arguments against the Bill²¹. The action was discredited with the media's search for "deviant" behaviour. The antics of a few on the margins of the action were magnified to the extent that entire events became coloured with an aura of illegitimacy.²² The teachers' action was accorded some respect by the media; after all, they were a professional and respectable group, not prone to militant industrial action. This allowed journalists to acknowledge opposition without aligning themselves with pejoratively framed protest action.²³ Nevertheless, the action was undermined by the conventional news frame of disruption to (education) services through

¹⁹ ONN and 3NN on 3 April 1991 and 4 April 1991. "Much of contracts bill flak 'outrageous lies' - Birch", *Dominion*, 4 April 1991, p.2; "Govt standing firm on employment bill", *Otago Daily Times (ODT)*, 4 April 1991, p.4; "Union officials 'selfish'", *Press*, 4 April 1991, p.8; "Thousands vent anger at labour bill" and "Peaceful protest ends in violence", *New Zealand Herald (NZH)*, 4 April 1991, p.1; "1000 march in protest against Bill", *ODT*, 5 April 1991, p.1; "Protests over Bill draw thousands", *Press*, 5 April 1991, p.1; "Education workers unite in mass protest", "Birch stands firm in face of outcry", "Clark non-committal on call for repeal of contracts bill" and "Banks reprimands striking teachers", *Dominion*, 5 April 1991, p.1.

²⁰ For example, on 3 April 1991, 3NN reported that "thousands of medical workers left their jobs in a march despite the weather . . . soaked to the skin but not defeated by the rain . . . hospital workers marched down Queen Street in the pouring rain".

²¹ For example, on 3 April 1991, ONN reported that "The government was left in no doubt today about the anger and outrage against its employment contracts bill . . . they were in a hostile mood . . . bitterness against the government was strong . . . health workers also fear the Bill".

²² For example, on 4 April 1991, 3NN reported that "tempers flared and there were flames in the street . . . the rage of the unemployed burned in the street today and so did effigies of cabinet members. From the start it was a march of anger that was bound to flare up into violence". This was accompanied by film clips of burning effigies. "The financial centre of Auckland was under seige when protestors invaded banks . . . the march turned violent when a group broke away and invaded McDonalds restaurant. Bottles were thrown . . . the protest ended with a takeover of the Aotea Centre and another smoke bomb". The narrative of disorder and violence was sometimes difficult to sustain visually. The lack of congruence between texts and visuals was evident; recurring shots of the effigy burning seemed particularly forced.

²³ For example, on 4 April 1991, 3NN reported "Earlier, thousands of education workers protested peacefully against the employment contracts bill, but the march by unemployed workers and union members turned ugly . . . It's the first time education sector workers have joined together in a protest . . . the mood was different but they were just as serious in their own way".

strike activity²⁴. In addition, the last words were reserved for the official dismissal of teachers' concerns²⁵. The government was not interested in legitimacy being conferred on any protestors. All political activity outside of the parliamentary select committee, where the Bill was under review, was defined as illegitimate.

The conventional frame of disruption caused by strike activity was constant and prominent. This confirmed protest action as illegitimate since it had adversely impacted upon innocent victims (school children, hospital patients); it was "victim" discourse to which television, in particular, was drawn.²⁶ This, too, drew attention away from the policy and the government as its agent. As a legitimated source, the government's actions and reactions are central to news coverage. The pattern of coverage, which defined the protest events as news rather than the political issue which motivated them, enabled the government to respond to the protests and not the issue. It was, for a time, straightforward for the government to feed into the news frames of the protest action. The protestors were irrational for they had been misled by union propaganda. If the opposition movement was simply mistaken in its criticism of the policy, then the government was justified in ignoring it. This position was reported repeatedly in the media and undermined the protest action as inauspicious and ineffective. The latter was accentuated by the media's standard attention to the routine legislative process - bills simply become law.

Indeed, the most salient point communicated was the (inevitable) passage of the legislation. And the dominant news frame represented the introduction of the Bill as an event without a

²⁴ The *3NN* (4 April 1991) graphic displayed a blackboard in which was scribbled "No classes today". Considerable space was devoted to what the pupils got up to on their "unscheduled holiday": "music stores did a roaring trade, so did other traditional teenage haunts like burger bars and video parlours". The accompanying film clips portrayed central Auckland as being over-run with loitering teenagers - an outcome of the "anti-government" behaviour of their teachers. *ONN* focused upon a forlorn schoolboy sitting on an empty bus and on the "parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and friends (who) were left to mind the children for a day". Both channels sent out reporters to burger bars and video parlours to obtain the children's response to their teachers' activity. *3NN*, in particular, gave extended coverage to their idiosyncratic responses.

²⁵ On 4 April 1991, *3NN*, the reporter announced that "today's demonstrations and strikes don't appear to have changed the government's mind". Lockwood Smith asserted: "They've sent me a statement with four reasons why they're on strike . . . three of them aren't valid and one of them relates to union power and I do acknowledge that. The Bill will affect union power". Bill Birch announced: "I think the teachers have been misled by the unions, yes, I think there is overwhelming evidence that the information that the unions have put in front of teachers and a large number of other people has grossly misled them".

²⁶ Prior to the protest action, on 1 April 1991, the *3NN* item was solely about disruption: "Schools and hospitals will be the hardest hit as union members walk off the job . . . schools and hospitals will be disrupted" and on 3 April 1991: "It's likely most schools will be closed by strike action . . . these children and hundreds of thousands more will not be taught tomorrow". *ONN* announced that "hospitals were drained of medical personnel for two hours while skeleton crew took over. Management was prepared for the strike. Auckland Hospital stopped admitting patients six days ago. Routine operations were put on hold". Newspaper headlines followed suit: "Week of action to hit many sectors", *NZH*, 2 April 1991, p.5; "CTU strike would place pressure on businesses", *ODT*, 2 April 1991, p.3; "Teachers strike will leave many schools without staff", *ODT*, 3 April 1991, p.3.

responsible agent; it was a neutral piece of legislation and this served to depoliticise the issue²⁷. The government had projected itself as a facilitator and proponent of imminent legislation. The relaying of routine policy making made the government's position appear non-partisan²⁸. That the policy encapsulated a free market viewpoint was obscured²⁹; the biases and interests of the Employers Federation and the Business Roundtable were dissipated. It seemed as if there was a dominant perspective contained in the Bill itself, against which oppositional voices simply reacted. They were up against ineluctable change, which reinforced their apparent ineffectiveness, and faced the difficulty of defending an existing system whose real and perceived failings could be easily publicised. The failings of the proposed system, on the other hand, could not be empirically demonstrated.

The news media could not have ignored the prospect of controversy, since political players had begun mobilising from February 1991, but this was represented as skirmishing. The focus was on the battle between government and the unions and not on the substance of the policy debate. This was a media generated frame which confirms the journalistic tendency towards coverage of political game-playing, rather than normative argument.³⁰ Initially, on television

²⁷ This was evident in statement where the Bill itself, and not those who drafted it, were attributed agency: "employment contracts . . . promises to free up the labour relations system . . . voluntary unionism is just one of many changes envisaged by the Bill" (*Nightline*, 19 December 1990). Newspaper headlines, too, left agency unspecified: "Industrial Relations all shook up", *NZH*, 20 December 1990, p.1, repeated in the *Dominion* and *ODT*. Causality is left unspecified through the absence of an active subject (the government) unlike an accompanying headline for the welfare changes: "Govt slices up to 25% off benefit cuts", *Press*, 20 December 1990, p.1. The latter answers the question "what did the subject to?", while the former answer the question "what happened?".

²⁸ Standard news reports concerned with the parliamentary process are common in the press. Reports contained details such as which MPs were to sit on the select committee, which organisations had made submissions, where and when hearings were to be held. Each item invariably contained reminders of the "facts" about the Bill. The standard simple description was a variation on the following: "the legislation opens the way for workplace bargaining through negotiation of collective employment contracts, effectively ending the national award system and introducing voluntary trade union membership". "Flood of submissions for contracts hearings", *ODT*, 15 February 1991, p.4, reported in *NZH*, 15 February 1991, p.5 and *Press*, 15 February 1991, p.4. For readers unfamiliar with the Bill it appeared repeatedly as a fairly straightforward piece of legislation.

²⁹ This was primarily effected through the juxtaposition of the existing and proposed industrial relations system. Several key words and terms were used to describe both systems and they appeared again and again on television and in the press. Those referring to the existing system were: wasteful work practices, slow growth, high unemployment, low wages, regulated, rigid/inflexible, legislated for (environment, petty obstruction arbitrary restrictions, confrontation, century-old system, 100 year old history, no longer appropriate, no choice, barriers to communication, inflexible national awards, undue union influence/immense union power, union intransigence). Those referring to the proposed system were: productivity and efficiency, higher profits/investment confidence, growth, employment/jobs, higher wages, deregulated, flexible, decentralised, free-up, permissive, co-operative/build trust, break with the past, shake-up, breakthrough, cure radical/revolutionary, suit the situation, sweeps away, choice, untrammelled by unionism, union-free contracts, freedom/new freedoms/liberating, encourages enterprise/flexible thinking.

³⁰ A study of election campaign reporting in the United States locates a shift from "a policy centred schema to a game centred schema. When journalists encounter information during an election, they tend to define it in terms of the notion that politics is a strategic game rather than the idea that politics is a process for resolving policy problems" (Patterson, 1993).

news, there were no perspectives sought from other community groups, industrial relations experts, individual employers or individual unions outside of the CTU. The metropolitan daily newspapers provided matter of fact accounts largely preoccupied with aspects of the parliamentary process and political reactions. These coalesced with the television frames of policy implementation and government-CTU jibes. As the conflict between the government and the CTU deepened towards the end of March 1991, press reports increasingly focused on the theme of battle and political tactics.³¹ However, compared to television, the press introduced a wider range of voices: individual employers and unions and, occasionally, domestic and overseas experts³².

Continued opposition to the Employment Contracts Act had prompted media coverage which generated new themes. The policy became depicted more as an object of contestation. Television finally devoted studio interview and current affairs slots to the issue and within these signalled that there were two opposing versions of the legislation.³³ Although a range of contentious issues were raised, the general supposition was that the effects of the policy could not be established. This assisted supporters who were determined to discredit the past and hold out a promising future under the new industrial relations system. Overall, the debate was not sufficiently explored. There was a tendency to personalise the issues and to favour the mainstream (government) perspective. While independent experts were interviewed, they were not invited to debate the policy. Studio debates were clearly understood by television's producers to provide more entertainment if they were set up between political antagonists.

³¹ For example, "Union clash with Birch over reform", *NZH*, 16 February 1991, p.5; "Trade unions cross swords with Birch over labour reforms", *ODT*, 16 February 1991, p.4. On 23 March 1991; Birch decries CTU advt", *Press*, 26 March 1991, p.2); "Govt, CTU snipe over Bill advertising campaign", *ODT*, 26 March 1991, p.4, reported in *NZH*, 26 March 1991, p.5, *Press*, 25 March 1991, p.1, *Dominion*, 26 March 1991, p.2. *ONN*, 23 March 1991 reported that the "trade unions are about to try a new tactic in their fight with Government . . . a battle using words".

³² "Contracts bill hearings strike more controversy", *ODT*, 20 March 1991, p.4; "Contracts bill labelled extremist", *NZH*, 20 March 1991, p.2; "Call to drop obsolete law", *Dominion*, 20 March 1991, p.2; "Experts back CTU warning on labour bill", *Dominion*, 20 March 1991, p.2.

³³ A studio interview on *3NN*, 4 April 1991; *Holmes*, 4 April 1991, *Frontline*, 4 April 1991.

It was left to the newspaper editorials and opinion articles to analyse the origins and effects of the Employment Contracts Act and to provide a wider range of perspectives.³⁴ Collectively, they produced a relatively substantial and grounded analysis of the policy, but they were fugitive pieces. Moreover, opinion articles typically concentrate on one aspect of an issue, failing to draw links to the wider picture. Some themes were simply absent (such as alternatives to employment contracts) or scarcely touched upon (such as the history of industrial relations and unionism in New Zealand). The structural shift in New Zealand's political economy which underlay the move to restructure industrial relations was not interrogated. As such, most of the news content remained within the ideological parameters of the government's desire for labour market deregulation.

But the news media increasingly became sensitised to the extent of the controversy³⁵ and were tantalised by the prospect of a general strike.³⁶ However, at this point, the government began to intimate that the parliamentary select committee would deliver amendments to

³⁴ For example, opinion articles included: Patricia Herbert, "Unskilled workers likely to feel impact of reform", *Press*, 24 December 1990; Bill Andersen, "Where do labour savings go?", *NZH*, 31 January 1991, p.8; W.P. Reeves, "A plan to dismember unions", 1 February 1991, p.6; Patricia Herbert, "Stripping away workers protections", *Dominion*, 20 February 1991, p.14; Bill Birch, "Why labour market reform?", *ODT*, 8 February 1991, p.8; Steve Marshall, "Towards new industrial relations era", *ODT*, 18 February 1991, p.8; Bob Jones, "Contracts bill 'revolutionary stuff'", *ODT*, 25 February 1991, p.8; Andrew Stone, "Birch well-prepared for action", *NZH*, 2 March 1991, p.8; Sian Robyns, "Why women unionists fear the future", *Dominion*, 11 March 1991, p.11; Bill Birch, "How the Minister sees it", *Dominion*, 11 March 1991, p.11; Raymond Harbridge, "A pathway to disorder", *Press*, 20 March 1991, p.20; Patricia Herbert, "Why Employers fear the Birch Bill", *Dominion*, 21 March 1991, p.12; "How Birch's fractious legal baby was born", *Dominion*, 5 April 1991, p.11; Mathew Dearnaley and Andrew Stone, "Dire Warning, or fear mongering", *NZH*, 5 April 1991, p.9; Dearnaley and Stone, *NZH*, "When wage bargaining becomes personal", *NZH*, 6 April 1991, p.9; David Lange, "Tag wrestling with no ref", *Dominion*, 8 April 1991, p.12; Douglas Myers, "Contracts Bill's challenge", *Press*; *NZH*, 27 April 1991, p.8; Bill Birch, "A stepping stone on the path to prosperity", *Dominion*, 1 May 1991, p.10. Editorials included: "The cost of labour reform", *Dominion*, 30 January 1991, p.8; "Employment Contracts Bill", *Press*, 23 February 1991; "Flaws in the labour bill", *Dominion*, 8 April 1991, p.12; "Not yet ideal bill", *NZH*, 12 April 1991, p.8; "Employment Contracts", *ODT*, 26 April 1991, p.8. "Due process for all", *NZH*, 29 April 1991, p.6; "Real test is still to come", *Dominion*, 26 April 1991, p.10.

³⁵ "PM says employment bill's opponents thick", *Dominion*, 9 April 1991, p.2; "Critics of Contracts Bill thick - Bolger", *Press*, 9 April 1991, p.8; "Employers head hits out at misleading criticism", *Dominion*, 9 April 1991, p.2; "Bargaining agent proposals worry companies", *NZH*, 10 April 1991, p.3; "Doctors predict chaos from bill", *NZH*, 9 April 1991, p.3.

³⁶ On 9 April 1991, the *ONN* item reported, with reference to the large union meetings held around the country that day, "there was an overwhelming call for the union movement to use its big gun . . . the unions told workers the ECB is an open declaration of war, a war that workers will win". Newspaper reports followed suit: "CTU ponders unions" call for general strike", *Dominion*, 5 April 1991, p.2; "Pressure mounts for general strike", *Press*, 5 April 1991, p.4; "Big strike on CTU agenda", *NZH*, 5 April 1991, p.2; "Nearly 3,100 vote for general strike", *ODT*, 11 April 1991, p.1; "CTU vows to force change", *NZH*, 11 April 1991, p.1; "Battle of the bill just beginning marchers told", *NZH*, 11 April 1991, p.1. The likelihood of a general strike was reported on *ONN* and *3NN* on 12 April and in newspaper reports: "Calls increase for strike", *Press*, 15 April 1991, p.8; "Unionist gives odds on for strike", *NZH*, 15 April 1991, p.6.

the Bill.³⁷ This received significant media coverage. So, too, did the CTU's decision to reject the call for a general strike, albeit to a lesser degree.³⁸ Thus, the news media had lost its newsworthy theme of opposition growing towards the ultimate form of protest³⁹. With the government seen to be responding to and fairly managing competing interests and the union movement seen to be winding down its opposition, there was no story. When the Bill returned to parliament for its first reading, it was reported as significantly altered.⁴⁰ The proposals for the abolition of specialist labour institutions, favoured by the Business Roundtable and the Employers Federation, had been rejected. Thus, some of the concerns expressed by unions, workers and some media commentators were laid to rest. However, a strong case can be made that the government's concessions were minimal. National had never intended the policy's principles to be fundamentally challenged during the select committee review. The resulting concessions were those which the government, from the outset, had deemed open to debate: specialist labour institutions and personal grievance procedures.⁴¹

The overriding media sense of a "fair compromise"⁴² undermined any real purpose for the final Day of Action on 30 April. News coverage presented a resigned crowd and a disinterested Minister of Labour. News frames of the action replicated those earlier in the month: disruption, frivolity, emotionalism, ineffectuality.⁴³ It seemed that in communicating images of opposition to the Employment Contracts Act, the media had deployed a "business as usual" frame. This included conflict and its resolution through established procedures. The "compromise" frame was in place and the Bill was seen to be proceeding naturally

³⁷ "Bill will be changed says Peters", *NZH*, 9 April 1991, p.3. Max Bradford was quoted as saying that "the very heart of the Bill could be reviewed"; "Bradford signals possible changes to Bill", *ODT*, 11 April 1991, p.1; "Controversial bill may be modified", *NZH*, 11 April 1991, p.1. The *Press* noted that "substantial changes to the ECB will be recommended by Parliament's labour select committee" - "Bargaining compulsion likely in Bill changes", *Press*, 11 April 1991, p.3. On 13 April 1991, *3NN* announced that had been a "breakthrough over Employment Contracts". Bill Birch announced that the submissions to the select committee "made a bigger impression" than mass protests which were "a very crude instrument and the Government would not take much notice of them". The Bill would undergo change on the basis that "several issues had been identified by the select committee", "Birch brushes off protests against the bill", *ODT*, 6 April 1991, p.4.

³⁸ "No general strike call", *Press*, 17 April 1991, p.8; "Strike opposed", *NZH*, 17 April 1991, p.3; "Douglas rejects general strike", *Dominion*, 17 April 1991, p.7; "CTU to assess progress", *Press*, 18 April 1991, p.8; "General Strike: unions to meet", *NZH*, 18 April 1991, p.2; "CTU meets to argue general strike call", *Dominion*, 18 April 1991, p.11.

³⁹ *3NN* briefly announced that the CTU had "stopped short of calling for a general strike". The media were singularly unimpressed with the alternative "day of action" proposed, this was pronounced to be "a sort of Clayton's strike".

⁴⁰ *ONN* referred to the ECB as "revamped" and having undergone "a significant rewrite". *ONN* announced that the Bill returned to parliament "with most of its contentious provisions intact", but these were said to relate to voluntary unionism.

⁴¹ See Walsh (1993).

⁴² "Amended bill strikes balance", *NZH*, 23 April 1991, p.1; "Changes to bill ease concerns", *NZH*, 22 April 1991, p.3; "Balanced contracts bill returns", *ODT*, 23 April 1991, p.4.

⁴³ *ONN* and *3NN*, 29 and 30 April 1991. The Day of Action on 30 April received minimal coverage in the daily newspapers with reports highlighting the entertainment provided at the rallies and Birch's disinterest.

through the parliamentary system. For the time being, the Employment Contracts Act was no longer subject to contestation. On 3 May, the caption for the item on 3NN simply read "It's the Law", while *ONN* announced that "the arguments are now over".

Conclusion

As Offe argues, fractions of capital have an inherent advantage over organised labour in articulating their interests to government. When the Employment Contracts Bill was introduced in 1990, the union movement confronted further obstacles - a "restructured" economy was firmly in place, a traditionally anti-union political party was in power, a traditional parliamentary ally was in disarray and a dominant ideology had exploited general disillusion with "big" government. Thus, the presence, however temporary, of a particular configuration of political and ideological forces influenced the restructuring of industrial relations.

Media coverage of the ECA debate both reflected and contributed to these circumstances. Over the four month period of the ECA debate, there were shifts in media visibility and media frames which incorporated oppositional concerns. But these did not seriously damage the government's promotional efforts and, to a degree, they served to contain the opposition. This was due not only to the normalisation of neo-liberal ideology and the degree of elite consensus, but also to the media's over-reliance on official news sources, the loaded protest action frames and minimal investigative journalism. Yet "primary definition" was not a straightforward process; it had to be won. There were clearly disproportionate symbolic resources available to interested political players, but a dynamic contest, of sorts, occurred.⁴⁴ The government conceded that the Bill needed to undergo amendment. This was part of a damage control strategy to combat the increased media attention devoted to oppositional action and reports of the Bill's deficiencies. Meanwhile the CTU, conscious of the media's predilection for "anti-union" story frames and the government's capacity to exploit these frames for populist purposes, became fixated with the public relations "battle".⁴⁵

⁴⁴ This finding comports with criticisms of the "primary definition" model of Hall et al. (1978). Schlesinger argues that the model is overly structuralist. Sources compete for media attention, albeit with unequal resources: "alternative . . . views and arguments may be incorporated pre-emptively into so-called "primary definers' definitions, thereby both modifying them and at the same time indicating that the boundaries between sources are not always as impermeable" (Schlesinger, 1990: 69).

⁴⁵ It is likely that the industrial dispute between the seafarers and the Railways, which occurred during late March and early April, was both fortuitous for the Government in its promotion of industrial relations "reform" and a concern for the CTU in its defence of the existing system. The dispute dominated the print and broadcast media for nearly two weeks, displacing, yet drawing links to employment contracts news. Moreover, news coverage drew on conventional frames for industrial disputes - the focus on victims of strike action (stranded ferry passengers and freight, and New Zealand's tourist reputation) and on government intervention to manage the situation. The *Dominion* editorial, "Trouble on the ferries", 18 April 1991, p.12, announced that the public would be well disposed toward the Employment Contracts Act having observed "the dying twitches of the old industrial relations era".

Opposition to the ECA was both communicated and contained. This does not mean that the political controversy is totally submerged. Considerable efforts are required on the part of oppositional groups, however, to contest and counter-define the parameters of argument. Such efforts both shape and depend upon changes to the political, economic and ideological environment of industrial relations, which in turn determine the distribution of material and symbolic resources.

References

- Atkinson, J. (March, 1993), *The New Mood: Auckland and the Rise of the Alliance*, *Metro*, Auckland.
- Atkinson, J. (1994), *The State, the Media and Thin Democracy*. In A. Sharp (ed.), *Leap in the Dark: the changing role of the state in New Zealand since 1984*, Auckland: Auckland University Press.
- Bell, A. (1991), *The Language of News Media*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Cocker, A. (1992), *They fiddled while we burned: comparative approaches to thrust of broadcasting deregulation*, paper presented to NZPSA, Auckland.
- Deetz, S.A. (1992), *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonisation: developments in communication and the politics of everyday life*, Albany, State University of New York.
- Edwards, B. (1992), *The Cootchie Coo News*. In M. Comrie and J. McGregor (eds), *Whose News*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Entman, R.M. (1993), *Framing: Toward Clarification of A Fractured Paradigm*. In *Journal of Communication*, 43(4).
- Epstein, R.A. (1991), *Liberating Labour: The Case for Freedom of Contract in Labour Relations*, The Centre for Independent Studies Ltd, Australia.
- Fairclough, N. (1992), *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Garnham, N. (1990), *Capitalism and Communication: global culture and the economics of information*, London, Sage.
- Glasgow University Media Group (1976), *Bad News*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Glasgow University Media Group (1980), *More Bad News*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hall, S. (1988a), *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, London, Verso.

Hall, S. (1988b), *The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the theorists*, C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds) in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Hampshire, MacMillan.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. and Roberts, B. (1978), *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*, London, MacMillan.

Murdock, G. (1990), *Redrawing the Map of the Communications Industries: concentration and ownership in the era of privatisation*. In M. Ferguson (ed.), *Public Communication: the new imperatives: future directions for media research*, London, Sage.

Offe, C. (1985), *Disorganised Capitalism: contemporary transformation of work and politics*, Oxford, Polity Press.

Patterson, T.E. (1993), *Out of Order: how the decline of the political parties and the growing power of the news media undermine the American way of electing presidents*, New York, Alfred A Knopf.

Scott, J. (1995), *Neo-liberalism at Work: Media-Politics and the Employment Contracts Act*, MA Thesis, Political Studies Department, University of Auckland.

Schlesinger P. (1990), *Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism: Source Strategies and the Limits of Media-Centrism*. In M. Ferguson (ed.), *Public Communication: The New Imperatives: Future Directions for Media Research*, London, Sage.

Tiffen, R. (1990), *News and Power*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin.

Walsh, P. (1993), *The Making of the Employment Contracts Act*. In R. Harbridge (ed.), *Employment Contracts: New Zealand Experiences*, Wellington, Victoria University Press.