

## 3.4

# Monarchy or Republic?

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This chapter considers whether New Zealand should become a republic, with its own president, or continue to have the English monarch as head of state. Although some recent prime ministers, including Jim Bolger (National 1990–97) and Helen Clark (Labour 1999–2008), have been avowed republicans, the lack of any clear public mandate for change has kept the future of the monarchy off the political agenda. Following his first meeting with the Queen after becoming prime minister, John Key promised that, while he regarded a republic as inevitable, it would not happen under his government. The republican movement responded by repeating its demand for a referendum. A view supported by the United Future leader and government minister, Peter Dunne, who challenged the prime minister to follow the Australian government's example and make a referendum a matter of priority.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on survey data,<sup>2</sup> this chapter will measure the strength of republican sentiment among New Zealand voters, highlighting the social variables of age, gender, education and ethnicity. It is frequently claimed that support for republicanism is strongest among the well-educated postwar generations (see, for example, Jesson 1996, p. 55). On the other hand, deep pro-monarchist feelings are said to be held by late middle-aged and elderly voters, as well as by Māori. A perception that public opinion among Māori is heavily in favour of the monarchy has divided the pro-republican movement, with some warning against advocating a hasty change of the status quo. They reason that, because the nation's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), was a personal agreement between Māori chiefs and Queen Victoria, any attempt to remove the sovereign would be seen by most Māori as a threat to their rights under the Treaty (for example, Mulgan 1997, p. 66; Tunks 1996, p. 117). Finally, the chapter will reflect on what, if any, impact Australia's 1999 republican referendum had on public opinion in New Zealand. This allows us to speculate on the possible impact of another Australian referendum on public opinion in New Zealand.

## THE HEAD OF STATE

Any consideration of the future of the monarchy has to be placed in context. The present constitutional arrangement of New Zealand is that of a constitutional monarchy. In common with Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and more than a dozen other countries, the head of state is Queen Elizabeth II. There are certain implications of this shared arrangement, which is the result of the evolution of the British Empire into the Commonwealth. We will commence with a brief look at the nature of the office of head of state, before considering specific details of the evolution of the office within both the Commonwealth and New Zealand.

The term 'head of state' frequently arises in discussions of political structures. Yet despite our familiarity with the term, it is hard to agree on a single definition. Indeed, prior to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, 'head of state' was virtually unheard of and rulers were generally referred to generically as 'princes'. In the absence of a clear definition of head of state (which is usually used in distinction to that of head of government), there is only a collection of common principles. There is some agreement on the powers and responsibilities possessed by many heads of state. These can generally be divided into four categories. The first category includes those powers which relate to the position of supreme government authority. The role of constitutional guarantor, and serving as the living symbol of the nation, fall into this category. The second category includes powers related to the creation of law. The promulgation of legislation and signing authority on international treaties demonstrate this power both within and outside the country. The third category involves jurisdiction over the administrative and political agents of government. The appointment of officials is an example of this. Fourth, control of the state's monopoly on physical force is generally vested in the head of state. Formal command of military forces is an example of this fourth area of responsibility.

These four categories, and the responsibilities within them, are commonly described as within the purview of heads of state. They may, however, be exercised on the advice of a head of government, or by the head of government on delegated authority from the head of state. However, it is important to note that not all nations employ heads of state which exercise all of the powers addressed above. More importantly, from the perspective of New Zealand, in not all countries does a head of state personally exercise these powers and responsibilities.

Elizabeth II, best known globally as Queen of the United Kingdom, is currently the second longest-serving head of state in the world. She is presently the only person recognised as the head of more than one state (excepting the anomalous example of Andorra, of which the President of France is a co-prince). This is primarily a product of the nature of the evolution of the British Empire into the Commonwealth. But as a direct consequence the head of state is represented in each of her realms by a Governor-General. For most practical purposes, except the appointment of a new Governor-General, this office is de facto head of state, and the next section will be concerned particularly with the office of Governor-General.

## EVOLVING MONARCHY

New Zealand's form of government, in common with other countries established predominantly by settlers from the British Isles—excepting only the United States of America—is that of a constitutional (or limited) monarchy. In 1840 the monarchy meant the 'British' monarchy. It was the Queen of the United Kingdom (not England as the Treaty styled her) who concluded the Treaty with Māori chiefs at Waitangi. With the growth of the newly settled colony, the British government progressively entrusted more powers and responsibilities to the colonial parliament and executive. This process was accelerated during the early part of the twentieth century when New Zealand, together with several other long-established British colonies, notably Canada and Australia, were granted the status of a 'dominion'.

Each dominion shared allegiance to the Crown. Although the personification of the Crown was the sovereign, it included the sovereign's advisers also. Initially, these were primarily those based in the United Kingdom, but later came to include those located locally. Over time, each dominion began to develop its own concept of the Crown. Beginning in the 1930s the sovereign acted in relation to New Zealand only on the advice of New Zealand ministers. As the Queen came to be regarded more and more as the Queen of New Zealand, and only incidentally as the sovereign of these other countries, so a distinct New Zealand Crown evolved. Thus the once-single imperial Crown slowly evolved into a multiplicity of national Crowns. This meant that obligations once undertaken by the British Crown were now the responsibility of the New Zealand Crown. This can be illustrated with reference to the Crown's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi. Although for all practical purposes such obligations were vested in the ministers of the New Zealand government, Māori continued to hold the sovereign responsible for upholding the terms of the Treaty. In 1984, for instance, Māori bypassed the New Zealand government by appealing to Queen Elizabeth to uphold the provisions of the Treaty. But it was to the Queen of New Zealand, not that of the United Kingdom, that they appealed.

This evolution of a distinct New Zealand Crown went hand in hand with the nationalising of the office of Governor-General. During the early part of the twentieth century the Governor-General was seen as the local agent of the British government. Despite being granted a measure of personal discretion, successive appointees were expected to refer contentious matters to British ministers or senior Whitehall officials. Although this link began to attenuate from the 1920s, the essentially British nature of the institution persisted for as long as appointments were limited to those who were not only born, but also domiciled, in Britain. As well as representing the Crown, the office of the Governor-General in New Zealand had come to represent, to some extent, the values and attitudes of a particular slice of British society transplanted into New Zealand, namely the aristocracy.

The first New Zealand-born Governor-General, Sir Arthur Porritt,<sup>3</sup> was appointed in 1967, and while this did not produce any significant immediate change in the functions of the office, it did mark the beginning of a transition in its character and style. Porritt was an eminent surgeon and former Olympic sprint medallist who, at the time of his appointment,

was a (honorary) member of the Queen's Household. Like other prominent expatriate New Zealanders, such as the scientist Ernest Rutherford, he became well known only after leaving New Zealand. However, having forged a dual New Zealand–British identity, Porritt was seen subsequently as an important transitional figure in the nationalising of the office of Governor-General. When Porritt returned to Britain on the completion of his term, a former New Zealand High Commissioner to London, Sir Dennis Blundell, became the first New Zealand-born Governor-General who was also a New Zealand resident. He held the post from 1972 until 1977. Because neither Porritt nor Blundell was a member of the British aristocracy,<sup>4</sup> there was no expectation among New Zealanders that they would conduct themselves as if they were. Moreover, while they represented the Queen, they did not in any sense represent Britain.

Thereafter every appointee has been a New Zealander, appointed (as indeed they have been formally since 1941 and informally since 1910) by the Queen on the advice of the New Zealand Prime Minister. While the powers of the office are limited, each modern incumbent has the potential to shape the character, and also the role, of the office of Governor-General in response to changing conditions and expectations. More recent appointments include the first Māori Governor-General (Sir Paul Reeves 1985–90), followed by the first woman (Dame Catherine Tizard 1990–96). Both were notable for stamping their distinctively New Zealand qualities and personalities on the office of Governor-General.<sup>5</sup> That two of the three most recent appointments (Sir Michael Hardie-Boys 1996–2001 and Dame Silvia Cartwright 2001–06) were former Court of Appeal and High Court judges respectively is a reflection of the potential for constitutional uncertainty surrounding the appointment and termination of coalition governments under the new electoral arrangements of the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system. The current Governor-General, Sir Anand Satyanand, was both a District Court judge and ombudsman.

Although for most purposes the Governor-General is the head of state, the country is not a *de facto* republic, but rather a 'localised' monarchy (Ladley 1997). Appointees derive their status from both their constitutional position at the apex of the executive branch of government and from their role as representative of the sovereign. The office can be said to have three principal roles: community; ceremonial; and constitutional.<sup>6</sup> It is perhaps in their community leadership role, which includes both public engagements and commenting on social trends and issues, that Governors-General are most conspicuous. According to Dame Catherine Tizard (1993, p. 4), it is the responsibility of the Governor-General to both acknowledge a sense of community spirit and affirm those civic virtues that give New Zealand a sense of identity and purpose. This aspect of the community role is not only demanding, but potentially perilous, with incumbents being required to tread a fine line between the bland and the politically controversial. The ceremonial role, in contrast, is constrained by New Zealand's lack of a strong tradition of overt symbolism, pomp, and ceremony. Events such as the State Opening of Parliament have rarely played a major part in public life in New Zealand. The dangers inherent in the community leadership role were illustrated in 2002 when Dame Silvia Cartwright was criticised in some quarters for suggesting that the parental right to discipline children should be reassessed. She

attracted further controversy by observing that imprisonment was not an effective way to reform criminals. In both cases she was drawing upon her prior experience as a High Court judge rather than as Governor-General, but that did not isolate the office from criticism.

The third, constitutional role flows from the position of the Governor-General as representative of the sovereign. This said, most of the powers of the office derive from acts and regulations rather than the royal prerogative. The Governor-General assents to bills and orders-in-council, opens and dissolves parliament, appoints ministers, and makes a range of other appointments. Once seen as an instrument of imperial will, the Governor-General is occasionally now seen as a constitutional safeguard against executive despotism.<sup>7</sup> However, arguments that the Governor-General can act as a guardian of the constitution appear to overstate the case. New Zealand's economic and social policies have been dramatically altered over the past two decades, without intervention from the Governor-General. This reflects the fact that the Governor-General can only intervene to preserve the constitutional order itself. Like the sovereign, the Governor-General will almost always act only on the advice of ministers responsible to parliament. However, as we have seen, the importance of the constitutional role was doubtless an important factor in the selection of Hardie-Boys and Cartwright following the introduction of MMP in 1996.

While the office of Governor-General has evolved over time, so too has that of the sovereign and of the monarchy as a whole. Just as the evolution of the executive government through the twentieth century often saw the diminution of the role of the Governor and then Governor-General—a process seen as strengthening the political independence of the country—so the Queen's role has also diminished at the expense of the Governor-General and other members of the executive, especially (in recent years) the prime minister.

## ARGUMENTS FOR A REPUBLIC

A maturing sense of nationhood has caused some to question the continuing relevance of the monarchy in New Zealand. However, it was not until the then prime minister personally endorsed the idea of a republic in 1994 that the issue aroused any significant public interest or debate. Drawing on the campaign for a republic in Australia, Jim Bolger proposed a referendum in New Zealand and suggested that the turn of the century was an appropriate time symbolically for this country to break what he described as its remaining constitutional ties with Britain. Far from underestimating the difficulty of his task, he readily conceded that 'I have picked no sentiment in New Zealand that New Zealanders would want to declare themselves a republic'.<sup>8</sup> This view was reinforced by national survey and public opinion poll data, all of which showed strong public support for the monarchy. Nor did the restrained advocacy for a republic from Helen Clark, prime minister from 1999, do much to change this.

Public sentiment notwithstanding, a number of commentators have speculated that a New Zealand republic is inevitable and that any move in that direction by Australia would have a dramatic influence on public opinion in New Zealand. Australia's decision in a

national referendum in 1999 to retain the monarchy raises the question of what effect, if any, that decision had on opinion on this side of the Tasman.

Apart from a few notable constitutional changes, such as abolition of the upper house and the introduction of a Bill of Rights, the present constitutional system very much reflects this country's colonial heritage. Writing in the 1950s, the historian Keith Sinclair argued that New Zealanders' claim to being 'more British than the British' had its roots in a deep-seated desire to be associated with the perceived moral and military superiority of the Britain of Queen Victoria (1959, pp. 297–9). The outpouring of loyalty and admiration with which the predominantly British immigrant population greeted royal visitors was a recurring reminder of New Zealand's close relationship with Britain. This link was retained while it suited New Zealand's strategic interests. But the military and political realities of conditions in the South Pacific and Far East from the 1940s rendered the link with Britain—if not with the monarchy—less important than that with the United States. From the early 1950s, Britain's postwar military and economic decline began to nudge a reluctant New Zealand government away from dependency, both psychological and real. Landmark events in the country's journey towards full independence included: the 1951 ANZUS Defence Agreement with Australia and the United States; the emergence of a stronger sense of regional identity under the third Labour government (1972–75) of Norman Kirk; and Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (now the European Union) in 1974. The last decision effectively ended a trade relationship in which up to 90 per cent of New Zealand's farm produce had been destined for British consumption.

New Zealand's new post-colonial status was reflected in a number of largely domestic changes. These included the relaxation of restrictions on non-United Kingdom immigrants, especially refugees and business migrants from Asia; the growing penetration of the United States culture and politics through the vehicle of mass communications, notably television; and the rise of individualistic, meritocratic and internationalist values as a result of globalisation and the economic and welfare reforms of successive neo-liberal governments. Reinforcing these trends was the decision of the voters in 1993 to replace the simple plurality electoral system, which had long been an integral part of the Westminster democratic model (Lijphart 1999, p. 21), with the German model of proportional representation. According to the prime minister of the time, the new electoral arrangement promised to be the catalyst for 'a clear break with the British system of government that we have followed thus far'.<sup>9</sup> It was said that 'the tide of history is moving in one direction'.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, so the argument went, it was time for a republic. Although understanding of the operation of MMP has improved since its introduction, signs that it heralded more radical reforms have yet to emerge. It may even have resulted in greater caution.

But it is also possible to argue for a republic on the grounds of New Zealand's growing military and political isolation from Britain. The Thatcher government was conspicuously unwilling to become involved during the dispute with French government officials following the sinking of a Greenpeace vessel in Auckland Harbour in 1985. The 'Rainbow Warrior Affair', as it came to be called, together with the fourth Labour government's anti-nuclear

stance (which was strongly opposed by both London and Washington) were to become defining events in the development of a more assertive New Zealand identity (Alley 1987, p. 209). By the beginning of the twenty-first century the only remaining links with Britain of particular consequence were politico-cultural and historic. By this time, it could be argued, New Zealand had largely shed its British identity in favour of that of a South Pacific nation, with a trade, foreign and defence policy focus on the region of Asia-Pacific.<sup>11</sup> This was illustrated by the New Zealand Labour-led government's failure to support the 2003 decision of the British Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to commit troops to President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq. The monarchy has been indigenised—especially in its Treaty of Waitangi context—as its British aspects and attributes have withered (or been deliberately dismantled).

New Zealand republicans might consider it appropriate that their nation become a republic when Australia adopts that system of government, though that reason, on its own, implies a lack of independence of spirit—following Australia's lead where once we may have followed that of Britain, or more recently, the United States.<sup>12</sup> But there are also more substantial reasons. Perhaps the most persuasive is that the country's constitutional system ought to rest on firmer constitutional foundations than it does at present. Parliamentary sovereignty has arguably been inadequate when it comes to protecting individual rights and ensuring the accountability and integrity of governmental institutions. An entrenched constitution would help, though entrenchment is not contingent upon the country becoming a republic (see chapter 3.1). There are also some concerns about the adequacy of the present position of the Governor-General, particularly the prerogative (and unwritten) nature of many of the powers of that office (Winterton 1998). There is no certainty, however, that the powers of the head of state would be any more clearly defined in a republic, nor more readily asserted (assuming that the latter were desirable).

In some respects the strongest arguments which can be advanced for New Zealand becoming a republic are strictly symbolic. Most important among the symbolic aspects, and that upon which both Bolger and Clark have relied, is that it is 'inappropriate' for 'the Queen of England' to be head of state and to have power to appoint a Governor-General to 'exercise her royal powers on her behalf in New Zealand'.<sup>13</sup> This is so irrespective of the lack of use of those powers. It is this argument that has proven the strongest of those promoted by the republican movement in Australia, though ultimately it proved insufficient to persuade the majority to abandon a known system in favour of an untried one, however much it may have been preferred in principle.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Having looked at some of the factors that might suggest a republic, we will now consider what people actually feel about the monarchy. In 2008, in response to the question, 'Do you think that New Zealand should become a republic with a New Zealand head of state,

or should the Queen be retained as head of state?’ some 49.6 per cent of voters responding to the New Zealand Election Study (NZES) post-election survey expressed support for the monarchy, compared with 32.8 per cent who preferred a republic (see table 3.4.1). While support for the monarchy in 2005 and 2008 was somewhat weaker than in the late 1990s, the 1999 NZES survey coincided with the successful pro-monarchy referendum campaign in Australia. The attention given by the New Zealand media to the Australian debate may help explain the decline in the proportion of ‘don’t knows’ among the 1999 respondents.

Gender and age are often cited as two of the most crucial social indicators of voter opinion towards the monarchy. There is a frequently expressed, though simplistic, assumption that because of their high exposure to an assortment of women’s magazines, many of which feature the monarchy and depict it as a largely matriarchal institution, women are significantly more likely to be monarchists than men. The relative merits of this assumption notwithstanding, in 2008 slightly more men (50 per cent) than women (49 per cent) supported the monarchy (NZES 2008).

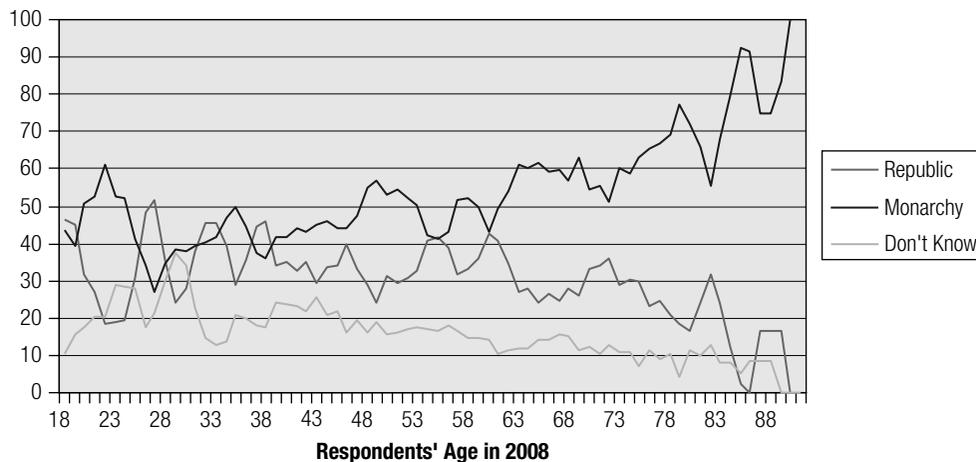
Survey data over the past three elections shows that support for the monarchy tends to increase with age, with close to two-thirds of all 2008 respondents of sixty-one years and over preferring the monarchy (see figure 3.4.1). It is perhaps not surprising that elderly women

**Table 3.4.1:** Voter attitudes to monarchy/republicanism, 1999–2008

<i>Attitude</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2008</i>
Favour retaining Queen as head of state	62.2	51.2	48.7	49.6
Favour NZ becoming a republic	28.1	31.3	33.9	32.8
Don’t know	9.7	17.5	17.1	17.6
	n = 1471	n = 4859	n = 2762	n = 2700

Source: New Zealand Election Study

**Figure 3.4.1:** Attitudes to monarchy by age, 2008



are the most devoted in their support for the monarchy. That said, opinion favours retention of the monarchy in almost every age group—only the eighteen to twenty-year-olds showed a slight preference for a republic.

On the basis of our survey data it is possible to reach the further generalisation that the higher the level of education, the stronger the support for a republic. In 2008, whereas 41 per cent of those with a university degree favoured a republic, the level of support among those with no more than a primary school education was only 31 per cent. As for religious affiliation, recent surveys indicate that Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Methodists tend to be strong supporters of the monarchy, whereas Roman Catholics and those who did not profess a religious faith are not.

Completing the social profile of survey respondents are the views of Māori. Contrary to the perception of Māori as being strong monarchists, considerably more Māori than New Zealand Europeans support a republic (see table 3.4.2). As with respondents generally, support for a republic is stronger among Māori men than women, and among young and young middle-aged voters rather than the sixty-year-plus age group. Although the monarchy enjoys strong support among New Zealand European, especially British-born, respondents, Asians (42 per cent) show a slight preference for a republic over the monarchy (36 per cent).

Patterns of opinion by party vote confirm the importance of the generational factor in measuring the level and intensity of support for the monarchy (see table 3.4.3). Given the

**Table 3.4.2:** Voter attitudes to monarchy/republicanism by ethnicity, 2008

<i>Attitude</i>	<i>NZ European</i>	<i>Māori</i>	<i>Pacifika</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Other</i>
Favour monarchy	52	44	51	36	52
Favour republic	32	34	37	42	37
Don't know	16	22	12	22	11

Source: New Zealand Election Study n = 4580

**Table 3.4.3:** Voter attitudes to monarchy/republicanism by party, 2008

<i>Party</i>	<i>Monarchy</i>	<i>Republic</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
National	56	31	13
Labour	47	34	19
Greens	35	46	19
NZ First	60	22	18
ACT	53	28	19
Māori party	43	36	21
United Future	81	19	0
Progressives	42	37	21
Did not vote	38	34	28

Source: New Zealand Election Study n = 4859

high proportion of New Zealand First voters over the age of sixty, it is not surprising that the monarchy enjoys strong approval within that party. Similarly, both National's (Vowles, et al. 1995, pp. 22–3) and ACT's strong appeal to middle-aged and elderly Europeans, as well as to medium to high-income earners, helps to account for the enthusiasm felt for the monarchy by those parties' supporters.

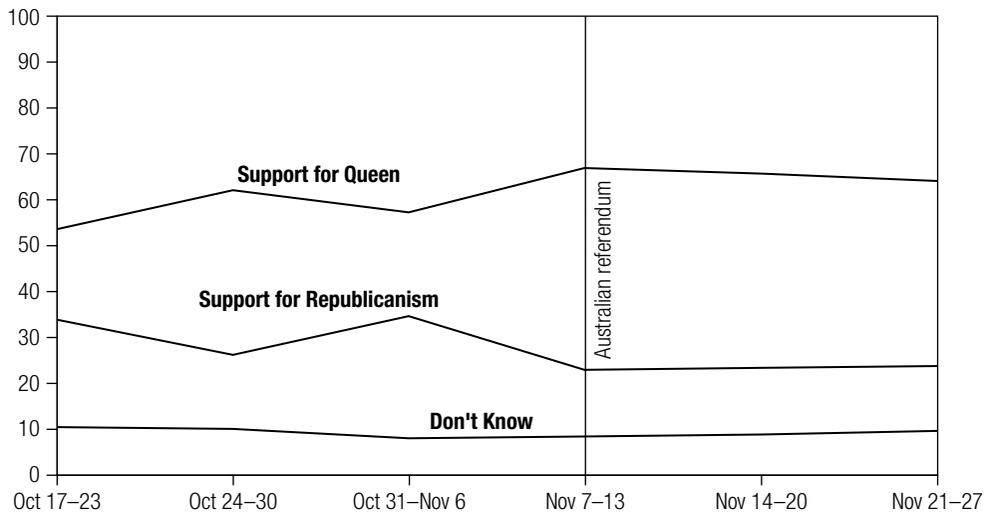
As the results of table 3.4.3 show, the only party with more republicans than monarchists is the Greens. Clearly the Greens's more youthful voters reflect, if less intensely, the pro-republican sentiments expressed by the Green party's parliamentary candidates, the vast majority of whom strongly endorse a republic. Unlike the Australian Labor party, which has long been identified with support for a republic (Warhurst 1993, p. 118), its New Zealand counterpart has played a much more low-key, even ambivalent, role. Although a substantial majority of Labour's MPs and parliamentary candidates favour a New Zealand republic, the party's voters show a preference for retention of the monarchy.

## IMPACT OF AUSTRALIA'S REFERENDUM DECISION ON OPINION IN NEW ZEALAND

Between 1996 and 1999, the most significant development in the republican debate in New Zealand concerned the Australian government's decision to conduct a republican referendum on 7 November 1999. Prior to the referendum, public opinion in Australia favoured reform. The Australian Election Study of 1998, for example, found that 65.8 per cent of respondents supported a republic, compared with only 34.2 per cent who wanted to retain the monarchy.<sup>14</sup> Since advocates of a New Zealand republic had long held the view that a 'yes' vote in Australia would accelerate the trend towards a republic in New Zealand, the NZES pre-election 'rolling thunder' survey, which was conducted on a daily basis between mid-October and late November 1999, provided a unique opportunity to test any possible contagion effect of the referendum debate and its outcome on public opinion in New Zealand.<sup>15</sup>

As we have seen, the figures in table 3.4.1 suggest that the Australian debate and outcome had the effect of consolidating public support for the monarchy within New Zealand. This is confirmed by the results in figure 3.4.2. Although support levels began at almost precisely the 1996 levels, during the three weeks leading up to the Australian referendum, support for the monarchy tracked upwards, reaching a high of 67 per cent immediately after the Australian referendum results became known.

The election of a Labor government in Australia in 2007 revived the prospect of another referendum on the future of the monarchy. However, the Rudd government did not make the process a high priority.<sup>16</sup> In part, this was because evidence suggested both an element of public apathy at the prospect and a weakening of support for a republic. In the event of a further referendum within the next few years, it can be assumed that it will have a similar effect in New Zealand to the 1999 campaign. Thus there may be an increased polarisation of opinion, though not necessarily majority support for a republic.

**Figure 3.4.2:** Trends in support, 17 October to 27 November 1999

## CONCLUSION

Although the 1999 Australian referendum was lost by the advocates of a republic, support for change has been consistently stronger in Australia than in New Zealand, and especially so since the early 1990s. The significant variation in the popularity of republican sentiment between the two countries can be attributed to a number of factors. These include New Zealand's more homogeneous and largely British immigrant population; its historical slowness in abandoning other relics of colonialism, including imperial honours (recently reinstated) and the right of judicial recourse to the Privy Council; the opposition to republicanism of some prominent Māori leaders; and the absence of a republican tradition either within the Labour and Alliance parties or through the survival of a republican association.<sup>17</sup> However, perhaps the most significant deterrent to the growth of republicanism in New Zealand, at least during the 1980s and 1990s, was the country's preoccupation with economic, political, and electoral change. With the level of public trust in the nation's politicians having reached an all-time low, the idea of replacing the monarch with an elected or unelected president—in either case a vastly more expensive proposition for New Zealand taxpayers than retaining the monarchy—may have represented more change than many voters were prepared to countenance.

There is a further factor that militates against a too-ready assertion that it is only a matter of time before New Zealand becomes a republic. In some respects the very absence of the sovereign from New Zealand has done much to strengthen the institution of the monarchy. Largely entrusted to Governors-General, who have limited terms of office, the Crown has gradually become entrenched as a useful synonym for the government.<sup>18</sup> But it has become

more than that. Although the Crown's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi are now exclusively the concern of the New Zealand government, the personal involvement of the sovereign as a party to the Treaty remains important to many Māori (although, as we have seen in tables 3.4.2 and 3.4.3, support for the monarchy among Māori voters is significantly lower than that for Europeans).

While abolition of the monarchy might not be on the political agenda in New Zealand in the short term, reform may be. In recent years there has been some speculation regarding the possibility of changes to the laws governing succession to the Crown. These include either making Prince William the heir to Queen Elizabeth II, rather than his father, Charles, Prince of Wales, or repealing the Act of Settlement 1700 (12 & 13 Will III c. 2), which excludes Roman Catholics from the Crown. A suggestion has also been made that the eldest child of the sovereign, irrespective of sex, should succeed.

While either the success of a republican referendum in Australia or an unpopular succession to the throne may advance the republican cause in New Zealand, this chapter has shown that the most convincing arguments for change are the influence on public opinion of events in Australia and New Zealand's changing demography. Should Australia become a republic as a result of a second referendum, perhaps following the death of the present monarch, it is not unreasonable to predict that New Zealand may make a similar move soon afterwards.

Regardless of what happens on the other side of the Tasman, the inevitable attrition among the older groups of monarchist stalwarts may, within the next few years, produce a majority vote for change—provided that a recently detected pro-monarchist trend among young people does not continue. A further demographic variable that could have an impact upon the popularity of republicanism is immigration. Support for the monarchy is strongest among British-born respondents and weakest among immigrants from outside the Commonwealth. The recent increase in immigrant numbers and the diversification of sources to include more immigrants from Asia (especially China, South Korea, and Taiwan), Western Europe and elsewhere will inevitably dilute the symbolism and mystique surrounding New Zealand's former status as a distant but loyal British colony, and may also loosen our attachment to the monarchy.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the role of the Crown in modern government?
- 2 For what reasons might New Zealand become a republic?
- 3 Why do a majority of New Zealanders support the continuation of the monarchy?
- 4 To what extent does the Crown remain important as a Treaty of Waitangi partner?
- 5 In what ways has the Crown developed as a distinct New Zealand institution?

## NOTES

- 1 *New Zealand Herald*, 27 April 2009, p. 5.
- 2 The 1996, 1999, and 2002 New Zealand Election Studies were made possible by grants from the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. The 1996 and 2002 surveys were conducted immediately after the general election. They questioned voters and parliamentary candidates. In 1999, a pre-election survey was conducted on a daily basis during the course of the campaign to track changes in voter attitudes on a range of issues.
- 3 Freyberg was born in London, and although largely brought up in New Zealand, had spent the greater part of his adult life abroad.
- 4 Though, after his retirement, Porritt was to become a *de jure* British aristocrat. It was customary, though not invariably the practice, for the Governor-General to receive a peerage, until Porritt's time.
- 5 Interview with Rt Hon. David Lange, 20 May 1998.
- 6 Government House 1997, p. 3.
- 7 Auckland District Law Society Public Issues Committee 1977, *The Holyoake Appointment*, p. 7.
- 8 *New Zealand Herald*, 6 March 1995, p. 1.
- 9 This is not to suggest that the views of politicians and other opinion leaders are no longer reported. In March 1998, for example, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Richard Nottage, reportedly told business leaders and policy-makers from the Asia-Pacific region that it was only a matter of time before New Zealand had its own indigenous head of state. He acknowledged that having a British monarch as New Zealand's head of state 'looks strange in Asian eyes'. *National Business Review*, 27 March 1998, p. 1.
- 10 *Dominion*, 16 December 1996, p. 12.
- 11 *Evening Post*, 9 May 1997, p. 2.
- 12 Cox, N. 1999, 'Neo-liberal republicanism has no place in this country', *New Zealand Herald*, 5 November, p. A17.
- 13 *Daily News*, 8 May 1997, p. 6.
- 14 The Australian survey asked the question: 'Do you think that Australia should become a republic with an Australian head of state, or should the Queen be retained as head of state?' It found that only 34.2 per cent wanted to retain the monarchy, with 9 per cent holding the view strongly. Two-thirds of all respondents (65.8 per cent) supported a republic. Australian Election Study 'User's Guide', 1998.
- 15 The data presented on attitudes to the monarchy in 1999 comes from an NZES pre-election telephone survey of 3500 New Zealanders, which began on 18 October and continued daily until election day on 27 November. The principal surveyor, Jack Vowles (Waikato University), using a rolling cross-section design, randomly sampled 80–90 eligible voters per day. Funding for the NZES was provided by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, as well as by the University of Waikato and University of Auckland research committees.
- 16 Michael Perry 2008, 'Queen Elizabeth must die or abdicate for Australian republic', Reuters, 27 January, <[www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSSYD6635920080128](http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSSYD6635920080128)>.
- 17 Of all the parliamentary parties, only the Green party of Aotearoa indicated a willingness to place republicanism on its agenda at the 1999 and 2002 elections. Of the newly elected Alliance members of parliament after that election, Green party MP Keith Locke in particular

stated that he would promote republicanism, on the grounds that 'bowing before the British Queen reflects a colonial mentality'. The Republican party of New Zealand was dissolved in 2000, but a new Republic of New Zealand party was established in 2005. A short-lived New Zealand republican movement was formed in the late 1960s. The republican movement of Aotearoa/New Zealand was formed in 1994. Its patron is the author Keri Hulme.

- 18 In this respect the Governor-General is regarded by the Australians for constitutional monarchy as effectively the head of state of Australia (Abbott 1997).

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