Recovering a Radio Ethos: How John Curtin Created Conversational Spaces with Journalists, 1941-1945

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Abstract:

Australia's wartime prime minister John Curtin developed a radio ethos to convey public appearances of a credible prime ministership during the Pacific war. Curtin's ethos of intimacy was obscured in the post-war consensus of mass communication as an impersonal form of address from a political leader to the audience. He elevated journalists' role to portray more public views of the prime minister conversing with citizens as peers. This paper uses newly discovered archives that delve behind the scenes of his broadcasting production. His radio ethos is useful for the study of journalism's role in communication spaces that appear to bridge a divide between a leader and citizens. [1]

Introduction

Backroom political discussions on Australian broadcasting centred on radio's potential to evoke a sense of intimate conversations during World War II. Radio's unique qualities allowed Australia's wartime prime minister, John Curtin, to cultivate a rhetorical ethos, conveying a personal character of credibility to individual listeners between 1941 and 1945. His ethos was overlooked in the post-war consensus of mass communication as a formal, unidirectional mode of broadcasting. This study conducts a rare analysis of Curtin's private rehearsals, confidential journalists' notes and secret government memoranda to recover this ethos (Commonwealth of Australia, 1943; Department of Information, 1941; Dixon, 1942-1944; *Parliament in Session*, 1944). Curtin focused on radio's capacity to signify reciprocal relations between him and the individual listener, and also mobilise mass audiences in a war defending "national character" (1942a). The issues of personalised media and speaker-audience interactions have re-emerged in research into the Fifth Estate of networked individuals (Castillo, 2006; Cohen & Salazar, 2005; Fulton, 2015; Hartley, 2000; McIntyre, 2012). This article sets out to reveal fresh insights into Curtin's broadcasting techniques for developing his radio ethos to win the support of journalists and public audiences during World War II (hereafter 'the war').

According to Aristotle's concept of ethos, a speaker performs rhetorical acts to appear as 'the good man' to citizens by signifying the traits of *arete* (virtue), *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and *eunoia* (a caring attitude). Aristotle advanced the Greek term, *ethos*, for recommending a speaker's development of a personal character, or persona, to evince credibility among listeners.

> Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible … character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses (Aristotle, trans. 2010, p. 7).

Curtin had studied privately to become 'a greater man', as he later recommended to his youngest child, John Francis (1936). When Curtin was a labour-oriented newspaper editor, he commended the rhetorical works of classical Athens 'to glimpse at the world of thought in which lived the [ancient] Greeks'. He emphasised the educative purpose of the classical performer's rhetorical display: 'The one has a message to deliver. If the message is disliked, it has a mission to make it loved' (1917). Journalists noted that he attributed his parliamentary success to the efforts of the orators who mentored him at Melbourne's Yarra Bank; he regarded the speakers' corner as 'my university and I met and heard there some of the finest men in the world' (*Age*, 1942a, p. 4; Prime Minister's Department, 1941-1945, p. 139; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1942a, p. 10).

When Curtin became the Australian Labor Party (ALP) prime minister, he cultivated uniquely close relations with journalists (Alexander, 1971; Dixon, 1942-1944). He was the first leader of an Australian political party and the first prime minister to use live broadcasting to announce an election policy speech directly to radio audiences through a national hook-up (1943; *The Age*, 1943). Of the nation's 125 stations, Curtin invited journalists to his talks at Canberra's 2CY studio that connected to international networks during peak times (*Daily Examiner*, 1943; *West Australian*, 1942). He gave more frequent, informal radio talks than his prime ministerial predecessors (1941-1945). Previously, Australian leaders would broadcast an election speech to select audiences in town halls (*Sun*, 1940; *Sunday Times*, 1937). Moreover, Curtin was the first prime minister to invite ABC reporters to his confidential, twice-daily news briefings (Department of Information, 1941; Dixon, 1942-1944). A government advisor privately noted, 'working pressmen who accompany him everywhere are his good friends' (McLaughlin, 1945). Journalists mainly cooperated to portray him as a trusted friend and neighbour to wartime audiences (Attiwill, 1945; *The Truth*, 1942a; Wise, 1945).

This study is informed by the conception of ethos in assessing Curtin's relatively new broadcasting techniques. Communication and information are fundamental sources of power in the public sphere, according to Castells (2007, 2008). First, this article's literature review reveals gaps in the research of Curtin's intimate style of broadcasting. Secondly, this study outlines its methodological approach to ascertain his ability to persuade journalists to report favourably on his radio talks. Thirdly, the findings are made that he extended his radio relations to give privileged status to journalists within his prime ministership. His radio techniques opened more public glimpses of the prime minister conversing with listeners. This radio ethos is relevant for exploring the meaning of power in conversational communication involving political leaders, journalists and citizens.

Literature review

Contemporary researchers have theorised that Aristotle's notion of ethos extends to an audience's perceptions of a speaker's credibility. Communication researchers have drawn upon the Aristotelian traits of *arete*, *phronesis* and *eunoia* for ascertaining a speaker's ethos (Carroll, 2004; Dix, 2015; Marsh, 2006; Smith, 2004). A speaker's persona needs to manifest these components to be persuasive:

> There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character – the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill (Aristotle, trans. 2010, p. 60).

Aristotle implied a fourth component of ethos: the speaker's prior reputation (Carroll, 2004; Smith, 2004). A speaker should persuade another person to give an account of the orator's credibility to the audience.

> With regard to moral character: there are assertions which, if made about yourself, may execute dislike, appear tedious, or expose you to risk of contradiction … Put such remarks, therefore, into the mouth of some third person (Aristotle, trans. 2015, p. 18).

This paper shows Curtin's ability to persuade journalists to act in the role of 'some third person' by promoting them as his 'continuous trusted personal contact' for portraying his prime ministership (Alexander, 1971; Aristotle, trans. 2015, p. 18).

Aristotle's interactive concept of ethos was gradually obscured during the development of political rhetoric for an expanding public sphere. Modeled in Aristotelian fashion, Cicero's *De Oratore* explored the conception of ethos to generate a political speaker's 'enthusiasm and something like the passion of love' (trans. 2016, p. 95). An innate rhetorical genius, or *ingenium*, was the least mentioned requisite for oratorical performance (López, 2013). Cicero's follower, Quintilian, recognised a speaker's need to cultivate audience perceptions as appearing as 'the perfect orator, who cannot exist unless a good man' (trans. 1891, p. 4). Furthermore, Quintilian recommended artful improvisation through continual practice to cultivate appearances of speaking extemporaneously (Holcomb, 2001). Medieval scholars published few rhetorical treatises by the eleventh century (Augustine, trans. 2010; Murphy, 1974). Rhetoricians extended the conception of ethos to forms of print journalism by the Renaissance (Raymond, 2005). Scholars of modern democracies adopted Grimaldi's definition

of rhetoric as involving all human discourse including political communication (1972; Moss, 1997). A narrow, unidirectional conception of ethos became prevalent with the rise of twentieth-century fascism. Political scholars were troubled by the notion that an orator only needed to appear credible by delivering a persuasive speech, regardless of the public's prior knowledge of the speaker's reputation (Adorno & Horkheimer 1944; Bell 1960; Habermas 1989; Peters, 1996). Contemporary researchers have adopted a broader conception of ethos based on reciprocity between the speaker and audiences (Carroll 2004).

Research of the Fifth Estate has recovered radio's early role in redefining the boundaries between the public and private spheres. Douglas (2004) and Lindgren (2016) ascertained that radio has created the semblance of intimacy between the speaker and listener. Hayes (2000) and Lacey (1996) found a conversational broadcasting style developed in Germany and the US during the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, Hayes has discussed the reciprocal style of US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's fireside chats to American listeners from 1933 to 1944. Kenny (2004) noted that the wartime British prime minister, Winston Churchill, accentuated a cinematic, descriptive quality in his speeches that inspired listeners to visualise a united citizenry. This article brings new perspectives on government-media relations by revealing Curtin's persuasion of journalists in developing an ethos of a more intimate, informal prime ministership.

This study also contributes to filling gaps in the literature on Australian political broadcasting of the wartime era. Richardson (2010) has discussed radio's role in the federal election of 1931 that contributed to Joseph Lyons's United Australia Party (UAP) victory; he helped open the ABC the next year. Griffen-Foley (2009) found that the early wartime prime minister, Robert Menzies, used commercial broadcast networks to counter the rising press criticisms of his policies. As Day (2006) ascertained, Curtin was a town hall speaker who was uncomfortable with the need to perform for media audiences; however, he gradually developed a broadcast persona of a plain, humble and hard-working man, an image that resonated with wartime audiences. According to Petersen (1993), Curtin supported legislation allowing the ABC to decide when and in which circumstances political speeches should be broadcast. Griffen-Foley (2002) and Brett (2007) have traced the relations between Menzies's electoral success and his broadcasts. Menzies's radio talks included the 'Forgotten People' broadcasts for middle-class listeners when he was in the Federal Opposition from 1942 to 1944. This study is the first analysis of Curtin's radio strategies to develop a more personalised style of prime ministerial broadcasting.

Scholars have analysed this period as an era of press pre-eminence. Curtin's prime ministerial predecessors, Lyons and Menzies, preferred to confer with the newspaper proprietor, Sir Keith Murdoch. Lyons directed the ABC to appoint its first Canberra news correspondent, Warren Denning, in 1939 because of his deteriorating friendship with Murdoch. Denning and the ABC's federal news editor, Frank Dixon, recruited experienced press journalists. Later, Menzies's censorship policies contributed to his acrimonious media relations. Differing from Menzies, Curtin required the ABC to broadcast more Pacific-oriented news rather than rely on BBC material about the conflict in Europe (Inglis, 1983; Lloyd, 1988; Petersen, 1993). Similarly, the Department of Information (DOI) shifted from its censorship role to promote Australia in radio programs and films (Hilvert, 1984).

Although several scholars have delved into Curtin's interactions with newspaper journalists, this study has found that he expanded the ways that a prime minister communicated with radio reporters (Day, 2006; Lloyd, 1988; Lloyd & Hall, 1997). Curtin created the role of Australia's first prime ministerial press secretary, appointing his media advisor, Don Rodgers, to the position. He extended his news briefings by giving more informal talks than the structured conferences of Roosevelt, Churchill and Canada's wartime Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. Australian journalists agreed to censor contentious news on confidential military plans (Coatney, 2016). No previous researcher has focused on Curtin's deliberate tactics to develop his radio ethos to win broadcast journalists' support of his prime ministership.

Methodology

This study's multi-method approach includes qualitative and quantitative analyses to assess Curtin's ability to persuade journalists to portray his radio ethos to public audiences. An analysis has been made of the secret notes of DOI advisors, W. Macmahon Ball and Colin Dean (Commonwealth of Australia, 1943; Department of Information, 1941). No previous researcher has used these contemporaneous discussions, as well as radio reporters' off-the-record notes and journalists' recollections, as sources for providing insights into Curtin's media tactics (Alexander, 1833-1957; Commins, 1971; Coulter, 1995; Denning, 1936; Dixon, 1942-1944; Holt, 1978). Moreover, the ABC reporters' accounts differ from the annotated collection of notes by newspaper reporter Frederick Thomas Smith (Dixon, 1942-1944; Lloyd & Hall, 1997). The ABC notes also contrast with the relatively diplomatic tone of the letters prepared by journalist Harold Cox (1944-1946) for Murdoch. Furthermore, this study has delved into Mackenzie King's diaries (1893-1950), Churchill's correspondence (Curtin, 1944a), Roosevelt's news briefings (1942), and Curtin's filmed rehearsals, lodged at the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library (*Parliament in Session*, 1944). These sources have been used to ascertain Curtin's media skills.

Therefore, this study analyses Curtin's radio messages to ascertain how he appeared to be the 'symbolic embodiment of trust' (Castells, 2007, pp. 241-242). Moreover, this article uses a dramaturgy approach to explore

the more stylised aspects of his radio tactics. The 'art of speech' can be a device of outwardly deprecating personal control while gaining credibility and power for appearing as an 'ordinary', like-minded citizen (Uhr, 2002, p. 278).

This paper also ascertains how Curtin made his Pacific radio messages seem inclusive to listeners. This analysis draws upon Brett's approach of delving into a political leader's broadcast timing and programming that helped to evoke illusions of conversing with listeners at home (2007). An examination is made of the selection of words, oratorical pace and reading ease of the radio talks given by Curtin (1941, 1942a, 1943, 1944b) to determine his ability to relate with more citizens about the Pacific war.

To evaluate whether Curtin delivered messages in 'the specific language of the media', this article compares his radio scripts' readability and broadcast speaking rate. This study's readability measurements include the Flesch Reading Ease score and the Flesch-Kincaid score. The recommended Flesch-Kincaid score for most public documents is about eight, close to the reading level of 'middle-brow' newspapers and suitable for an eighth-grade student (Day, 2008; Lim, 2003). An accessible public document should have a Flesch Reading Ease score between 60 and 70, with a lower number indicating more complicated language. Expert recommendations have varied on the optimal pace of public speech, with different scholars recommending between 100 words and 125 words a minute (Lim, 2003; Nichols & Stevens, 1957).

Also Frow's (1995) insights have informed this study into the elevation of wartime journalists as a 'knowledge class', who presented authentic messages of credible leadership. This study ascertains how the journalists reported on Curtin's radio messages (*The Age*, *The Canberra Times*, *Life* and *Time* magazines*, The New York Times*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Washington Post*, *The West Australian*, 1941-45). Therefore, this analysis is based on the Pew Research Center's 'Project for Excellence in Journalism' formula (2008) that a news article is deemed 'positive' if two-thirds of the statements appear to support a leader (Public Broadcasting Service, 2009). This multi-method approach contributes to the increasing research into the role of journalism in bringing together the political and personal spheres.

Findings and discussion

Before Curtin's prime ministership, the government's media advisors privately recommended more informal broadcasts and news conferences. The DOI advisors privately suggested 'the Prime Minister once a week or once a fortnight should go on the radio stations, and keep close intimate contact with the people'. The proposal could rectify the '[i]nsufficient use' of broadcasting. The controller of broadcasting, W. Macmahon Ball, urged Menzies's Minister for Information, Hattil Spencer Foll, to adopt the 'friendly fireside chat' form of Roosevelt's broadcasting. As a former ABC broadcaster, Ball disliked a formal tone because 'this has been done so often in the past'. Instead, Foll cancelled the scheduled broadcast for which Ball had prepared the draft script. Menzies delegated prime ministerial briefings to department bureaucrats, who gave twice-weekly confidential conferences to editors, leader-writers and radio commentators. After Menzies's resignation from the prime ministership on 29 August 1941, DOI officials were discussing 'we do absolutely nothing to give any background of Australian affairs.' They proposed that Menzies's successor, Arthur Fadden, give a weekly or fortnightly 'confidential background talk' to newspaper editors in Sydney and Melbourne. A department official reasoned: 'I feel that if a real attempt were made to be frank with the newspaper people in this way we could look for a tremendous degree of co-operation' (Department of Information, 1941, pp. 2, 8, 19, 42).

Soon afterwards, a parliamentary vote of no-confidence defeated the UAP-Country Party government on 3 October 1941. The infrequency of the conferences did not affect the forthright style of Australian reporting. America's CBS advisers secretly noted that the Australian radio commentaries were 'the saltiest in the world – even more pungent than the Germans when they really go to town' (Department of Information, 1941, p. 94).

Curtin had been rehearsing broadcast techniques in the Aristotelian tradition of basing rhetorical acts around the power of his intended audience. According to Aristotle, a speaker's performance of ethos was an art requiring practice 'to discern the real and the apparent means of persuasion' (trans. 2010, p. 6). Curtin initially appeared to federal journalists to lack the innate rhetorical genius that Cicero had described as *ingenium* (trans. 2016). Informed by the rhetorical treatise of artful improvisation, he privately shouted practice speeches when apparently alone in his upper-level office at night as a newspaper editor; his loud tones startled a staff member returning to collect a forgotten parcel downstairs (Courtney, 1982). After Curtin won a parliamentary seat in the 'radio election' of 1931, the ABC's Denning recalled that he seemed 'only a back-bencher with little prestige'. Five years later, Denning (1936) recounted that Curtin's political ability 'holds so much promise' as he developed his broadcasting performances. He also reportedly delivered the 'shortest political speech on record' at the time by condensing his prepared script to a three-minute, extemporaneous radio bulletin for local reporters during his train stopover in Kempsey, New South Wales (Buggy, 1937a). According to the *Sun's* Hugh Buggy (1937b, p. 2), Curtin '[m]etamorphosed from the dry and academic speaker with the school master manner to a resonant and vigorous campaigner'. *Smith's Weekly* reported that 'Curtin's ultimate strength is his character' (Murray, 1937). Curtin's intended audience of journalists began coercing him to conform to their professional practices by

demanding a credible radio ethos from him to present to citizens.

As Curtin became the prime minister on 7 October 1941, he used production techniques, 'couched in the specific language of media', to create public impressions of being an 'ordinary' Australian (Castells, 2007, pp. 241-2). He personally invited about 10 journalists who dubbed themselves, 'Curtin's Circus', to accompany him to his public speaking appointments, including following him to Canberra's 2CY station to report on his nationwide broadcasts (Alexander, 1971; Daily Examiner, 1943). Since he disliked reading speeches, he secretly rehearsed his talks by practising slight alterations of his lines. Afterwards, he was able to read comfortably aloud on paper to the microphone, creating an off-the-cuff impression to the journalists as they reported from their seats by the glass observation window in the outer studio (Gollan, 1943; *Parliament in session*, 1944; Rodgers, 1971). This type of façade resembles Aristotle's advice that an orator must:

> … disguise his art and give the impression of speaking naturally and not artificially. Naturalness is persuasive, artificiality is the contrary' (trans. 1995, p. 2239).

Curtin (1941) emphasised a mutual obligation of national 'duty' when broadcasting Australia's first independent declaration of war to announce the Pacific battles on 8 December 1941. A few moments before his broadcast, he mentioned to journalists that he recalled a poetic quotation, and scribbled it on his script. He conveyed a caring attitude by directly addressing, 'Men and women of Australia', and emphasising their common responsibility: 'it is my solemn duty tonight to sound the tocsin … I proclaim a call unto you'. His quotation of the Victorian poet, Swinburne, accentuated national sacrifice: 'With flight outflying the speared sun, hasten thine hour and halt not til thy work be done.' Through these rhetorical acts, he generated news of speaking spontaneously with 'calm, icy deliberation' to reassure listeners (*The Herald*, 1941; Wise, 1945).

More journalists reported on the intimacy of Curtin's radio talks as he extended his prime ministerial broadcasting to international listeners. For example, he delivered the prime minister's first direct broadcast from Canberra to some 700 US stations connected to NBC at the peak evening time (*The West Australian*, 1942). Conveying an ethos of practical wisdom, he addressed listeners as:

> you who are, or will be, fighting … you who are sweating in factories and workshops to turn out the vital munitions of war … all of you who are making sacrifices in one way or another to provide the enormous resources required for our great task (1942a).

He also appealed to shared ideals:

> We are, then, committed heart and soul … Be assured of the calibre of our national character … We are too strong in our hearts; our spirit is too high; the justice of our cause throbs too deeply in our being for that high purpose to be overcome (1942a).

The Herald reporter, Joseph Alexander (14 March 1942), noted in his diary that Curtin confided he gave the broadcast 'because of an impression that the US was inclined to concentrate on the defence of India rather than of Aust [Australia]'. A *Time* journalist (1942) affirmed his radio talk 'should have roused the fight in the entire U.S. public'. He was dubbed 'Australia's Miracle Man' in *Look* magazine because 'he does speak to the "Heart"' (cited in *The Sun*, 1942, p. 5). Furthermore, the American news broadcast inspired a BBC musical melodrama to 'convey the feeling of the Pacific' to British listeners (*The Sun*, 1943, p. 4).

Curtin applied a broadcasting style to his parliamentary speeches as he emphasised reciprocal relations with listeners. The ABC's Commins (1971) recalled that he seemed to pitch off-the-cuff parliamentary speeches directly to him for relaying to the public. For example, he intended his parliamentary messages to be broadcast during the Battle of the Coral Sea by announcing:

> I put it to any man whom my words may reach, however they may reach him, that he owes it to those men, and to the future of the country, not to be stinting in what he will do now for Australia (1942b; Rodgers, 1971).

He began his talk by reassuring the nation of his 'devotion to duty'. Through the use of an enthymeme, Curtin (1942b) implied that he shared the service personnel's work ethic of virtue; Aristotle (trans. 2010) had recommended a speaker's development of enthymemes, or logical reasoning, as proofs of an ethos. Commins recollected that:

> … when Curtin announced the battle outcome, which was actually only a stalemate, 'it was one of the most memorable moments of my parliament life … I've never known one man in all my time at Parliament able to hold the Parliament, have them absolutely breathless (1971).

Journalist Edgar Holt (1978) recalled he was impressed by Curtin's calmness, poise and patience before the battle. Reporters cooperated to convey the battle as a heroic act rather than a military setback (*The Age*, *The Canberra Times*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The West Australian*, 9 May 1942).

International journalists reported favourably on Curtin's broadcast insistence that the Allies should not neglect the South-West Pacific zone (e.g., *Time*, 1941-1944; *The Times*, 1944-1945). A British correspondent opined that his broadcasting generated more discussions among listeners than any other BBC programs for many months (Truth, 1942b). The White House reporters increasingly asked Roosevelt about the Australian administration's messages to overseas audiences (1942, January 13, March 24, 29, 31). Roosevelt jokingly replied: 'Well, I think we have pretty good contact with them … I am afraid there is not going to be any real story about rows. It spoils your stories, of course, but there we are' (1942, March 24, p. 4, March 31, p. 247). Both leaders referred to journalism industry terms to signify their goodwill to the reporters while directing the conversations to a story of Allied unity.

As the ABC's Dixon regarded Curtin's broadcasting as 'legitimate news', a radio reporter accompanied the prime minister's election campaign (ABC, 1943, 1944, p. 44). Likewise, *The Age* (1943, p. 2) commended Curtin's 'unique' broadcast as '[c]ontrasting with the usual atmosphere of the Prime Minister's policy speech'. An announcer introduced his election broadcast by playing a triumphal march, *Entry of the Gladiators* (Argus, 1943a). This style was consistent with the advice of the DOI's Dean to include a popular classic 'full of confidence and joie-de-vie' (Commonwealth of Australia, 1943, p. 35). Curtin (1943) accentuated his public obligation, 'I give you an account of the government's trusteeship'; and stressed the 'heart-breaking pains' to make 'it clear to you the character and calibre of the war effort'. At the 2CY studio, journalists reported that he confided several times to them through the window that he was nervous; he hurriedly searched his script to correct the wrongly numbered pages, moments before airtime (*The Argus*, 1943a; *The Daily Examiner*, 1943; Gollan, 1943). In fact, his personal secretary recalled that she and Rodgers carefully arranged the scripts to fill the allocated timeslot for live radio (Joyce, 1997). Such techniques were not always contrived. Mackenzie King (June 1, 1944, p. 552) observed that Curtin was 'quite nervous' when he was about to address Canada's Parliament. King wrote in his diary that Curtin 'told me he always felt that way'. Even so, journalists credited Curtin for achieving the ALP's greatest election victory at the time because of his 'prestige' and 'popularity' (*The Argus* 1943b, p. 9; Whitington, 1943, p. 1). He was allowing more public glimpses into his broadcasting to signify he was a natural speaker and ordinary Australian, invoking the practice of artful improvisation (*The Argus*, 1943a, 1943b; *The Daily Examiner*, 1943; Gollan, 1943).

Behind-the-scenes discussions revealed that Curtin's administration treated seriously the DOI's advice on developing an intimate media style. Dean forwarded his 'notes on style' to Curtin's Minister, Ben Chifley. Dean's list included such recommendations as: a 'personal and conversational' tone; a 'subtle appeal to pride'; '[s]implification of language … shorter sentences for detail; longer sentences for description'; and the requisite to '[m]aintain the most positive tone possible'. He also considered a rehearsal to be 'essential' (Commonwealth of Australia, 1943, pp. 34-35). Curtin would rehearse and change his speech and vocal emphases about Australia's alliance with the US in multiple directors' takes. During a stand-up in 'take three' of a sync-sound newsreel, for example, he pointed his finger, moved his head from side to side, looking like he might be addressing an unseen audience, and said: 'We know that our destinies will go forward hand-in-hand and we are proud and confident in that association.' The camera zoomed in closer during 'take four' as he embellished his statement to add, 'we will stand or fall together,' and 'we are proud *and happy* in that association [emphasis added].' He practised scenes to publicise the need to maintain Allied support for the protracted Pacific battles by 1944 (*Parliament in Session*, 1944).

As the war increasingly turned to the Allies' favour, Curtin appealed to ideals of home, family and kinship. For Aristotle, the stylistic quality of 'belonging' fostered the persuasive expression of a credible character (Eden, 2012). Curtin invoked the notion of familiarity to engender British listeners' support for Australia's role in post-war alliances. Speaking from London's BBC studio (1944b), he referred to Australia as 'trustees' of British democracy and affirmed: 'Our sons and daughters are as your sons and daughters.' He also used a personal tone to persuade journalists to continue their practice of self-censorship by referring to the public gossip of his overseas trip with his wife, Elsie. In an off-the-record note, the ABC's Carmichael wrote to Dixon: 'As evidence of the way things get around, Mr. Curtin quoted his own departure from Sydney; just before the vessel sailed some flowers were sent abroad to Mrs. Curtin, addressed to the ship from a city florist in Sydney' (Dixon, 31 July 1944, p. 44). Curtin was expanding his intimate media style since his 'armchair chat' for Perth's labour-oriented station, 6KY, in 1942. Some media commentators accentuated homespun imagery of Curtin's 6KY broadcast as if he were 'thinking aloud from his armchair … his thoughts being carried to his hearers'

(Westralian Worker, 1941, p. 1, 1942, p. 3). The media coverage of Curtin's broadcasting contributed to news discussions that he would answer his own telephone to talk spontaneously with members of the public (Batten, 1945; Gray, 1999; Jackson, 1943).

Likewise, Curtin performed rhetorical acts that signified *arete*, a sense of professional virtue, to federal radio reporters during his prime ministership. He pinned his old Australian Journalists' Association badge on his coat to demonstrate his affinity with the reporters (Rodgers, 1971). After he included ABC journalists in his off-the-record conferences, they would commentate on his private observations of the press, indicating that he cared deeply about newspaper editors' opinions. For example, ABC reporter Frank Jost noted that Curtin appeared 'greatly upset' by leading articles in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *Sun News-Pictorial* for making policy recommendations (Dixon, 3 July 1944, p. 79). Jost's notes about his press rivals provided more insights into Curtin's ability to cultivate positive radio relations; the reporter's colleagues, Smith and Cox, did not raise these issues in their transcriptions of the same conference (Cox, 1944; Lloyd & Hall, 1997). Dixon (4 July 1944, p. 77) sent a memorandum to thank Jost 'for his very full report of the background information given by the Prime Minister'. A scribbled note, '6 copies', indicated that Dixon (3 July, p. 79) circulated Jost's typescript among the newsroom's managers. Some two years earlier, Denning arranged an associate to distribute the regular typescripts to Dixon and news director Bevil Hugh Molesworth. Denning advised the managers: 'It is important that you should appreciate that this information is always of a highly confidential character not intended, in any circumstances, to be publishable in any form' (Dixon, 9 June 1942, p. 83).

ABC journalist Alan Carmichael wrote in a script format to show Curtin's response to journalistic enquiries. According to the script, *The Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent, Ross Gollan, complained to Curtin about a perceived US bias in the reporting of the Allied advance to Normandy, France, in 1944. Curtin replied that the 'braggadocio' of some US reporting was a cause of anxiety to Churchill and King George VI (Dixon, 1944, p. 71). Later, Curtin briefed reporters that his government would sponsor more Australian-oriented radio scripts for ABC news bulletins (Smith, cited in Lloyd & Hall, 1997). He privately admitted to Churchill he aimed to prevent the possibility of Americans saying 'they won the Pacific war by themselves' (1944a). Curtin interacted with journalists as a 'knowledge class' who privately influenced the shaping of his authentic radio ethos for Australian audiences.

Journalists portrayed the prime minister as conversing with individual listeners as friends within a national community. By masking the rehearsals, Curtin persuaded journalists to signify that his initially unpromising voice was resonating with listeners. According to London's *Evening Standard*, British audiences recognised him as the 'voice with a story', who developed 'the proper way to talk' to 'a friendly audience'. The correspondent opined, 'It is a tough, strong, capable voice and does us good to listen to it' (cited in *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 1944, p. 1; and Truth, 1942a, p. 10). A *Time* journalist characterised him as the 'Man with a voice' by reporting: 'Oldtimers say that his voice once had the 'haunting timbre of measured strokes on a Chinese gong.' Today, it is much harsher, but no less effective' (*Time*, 1944, p. 29). Denning's ABC colleague, John Commins, agreed that Curtin retained his gravelly voice (1971). He accentuated a rasping, compelling quality in his broadcasting, as *The Herald-Sun's* Alan Dawes remarked to audiences (1941). According to *The Age* (1945, p. 2), listeners enjoyed his 'periodical talks to the nation' because they liked to 'hear his voice, weigh his words and generally maintain that personal contact with the head of the Government which is eminently desirable'. A journalist from *The West Australian*, John Coulter, recalled that Curtin's tone 'hit exactly the right note' for a newsagency's customers as they listened to one of his broadcasts.

> Those of us who were there stopped to listen to it – which, you know, isn't the very Aussie thing to do. But there was a compelling quality in him that was partly because of the passion he imparted: but, above all, I think the sincerity (Coulter, 1995).

The news representation of Curtin conveyed that wartime listeners pictured him as a friend next door (Attiwill, 1945; *The Canberra Times*, 1945a; Wise, 1945).

Radio reporters began direct broadcasting from the Australian Parliament during Curtin's administration as a way of bringing this 'closer to the people' (*The Canberra Times*, 1945b; Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting, 1945-46). He gave about 12 major prime ministerial broadcasts each year before his death on 5 July 1945 (Curtin, 1941-45). Journalists generally reproduced the selected radio talks favourably in the news and largely supported his prime ministership (*The Age*, *The Canberra Times*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The West Australian*, 1941-1945). Of this study's sample, Curtin radio talks were suitable to an average tenth-grade reading level. The Flesch Reading Ease score for the selected Curtin broadcasts was 54.375, which was appropriate for an audience with at least a lower secondary school education. He spoke an average 139.6 words a minute, somewhat faster than the recommended broadcasting level (1941, 1942a, 1943, 1944b). The news coverage indicated the success of his radio ethos.

Conclusion

Behind the scenes, Curtin elevated the journalists' role as a knowledge class involved in the shaping of his radio ethos. He opened more public glimpses into his broadcasting to signify the credibility of his prime ministership. To appear genuine, he generated the news coverage of his seemingly spontaneous radio performances that masked his rehearsals. This style of an interactive radio persona was only a façade as he signified he was conversing directly with listeners about the Pacific war. Even so, he cultivated journalism's ability to bridge the communication divide between the nation's leader and individual citizens.

This radio ethos indicated the value of extending a leader's broadcast production to involve more journalists and audiences. The wartime reporters expanded public views of the prime minister as an authentic communicator with citizens as peers. The journalists' privileged place inside Curtin's broadcast sessions and parliamentary backrooms also indicated a need to investigate beyond the guise of intimacy. This ethos is relevant for Fifth Estate concerns into the meaning of news conversations intended to signify interactive, accessible governance.

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