

**'With divided mind and unsure steps':
South Africa from referendum to republic,
August 1960 – May 1961**

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another university or institution for any degree, diploma, or other qualification.

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Abstract

In October 1960 the South African government held a Whites-only referendum on whether South Africa should become a republic. The establishment of the republic is often seen as the 'last battle of the Boer War' and therefore interpreted as a political matter with Afrikaners in opposition to English-speaking South Africans. The referendum question did not solely affect South Africa's constitutional structure. Numerous voters and politicians were concerned that South Africa would be excluded from the Commonwealth and would become increasingly isolated due to the apartheid policy upon becoming a republic. After gaining a narrow majority in favour of a republic, the government withdrew South Africa from the Commonwealth in March 1961 and proceeded with the establishment of the republic in May of that same year. Despite the 52% vs 48% outcome of the referendum, the period is often seen as a period of increasing unity between white political groupings. The lack of opposition from white citizens to this process is frequently interpreted as a sign of increased support for the National Party. This thesis explores the events and motivations from the referendum to the republic as a complex political issue by examining public opinion and voter motivation. The primary sources used in this thesis are editorials and readers' letters published in mainstream newspapers. Readers' letters and editorials were examined at three intervals: during the referendum campaigns, in reaction to the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, and at the establishment of a republic which coincided with anti-apartheid demonstrations. These opinions were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively in conjunction with archival source material. This thesis utilises an in-depth analysis of white public opinion to explore the factors that politically motivated the white electorate in their acceptance or rejection of a republic. The thesis argues that the economy and racial politics were decisive factors in determining the outcome of the referendum and the reactions to the events that followed. The establishment of the republic is often seen as part of the National Party's road to political domination and as being driven by white cultural-political divisions. Close analysis of public opinion highlights how this process was, however, one of 'divided mind and unsure step' for numerous members of the white electorate.

Keywords: South Africa, Republic, Referendum, Commonwealth, National Party, United Party, English-speaking South Africans, Newspapers, Public Opinion

Samevatting

In Oktober 1960 het die Suid-Afrikaanse regering 'n referendum slegs vir blanke mense gehou om te bepaal of Suid-Afrika 'n republiek moet word al dan nie. Die stigting van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika word dikwels gesien as die 'laaste slag van die Boereoorlog' en gevolglik benader as 'n politieke kwessie waar Afrikaners in opposisie was met Engelssprekende Suid-Afrikaners. Die referendumvraagstuk het egter nie alleenlik oor Suid-Afrika se konstitusionele struktuur gehandel nie. Talle blanke kiesers en politici was besorg dat Suid-Afrika, indien 'n republiek gestig sou word, van die Statebond uitgesluit sou word weens die apartheidsbeleid en toenemend geïsoleerd sou word. Nadat die regering die referendum met 'n skraal meerderheid ten gunste van 'n republiek gewen het, het Suid-Afrika in Maart 1961 uit die Statebond onttrek en voortgegaan met die stigting van die Republiek in Mei 1961. Ten spyte van die uitkoms van die referendum (52% teen 48%), word dié tydperk dikwels beskou as 'n tyd van toenemende eenheid tussen blanke politieke groeperings. Die gebrek aan teenstand van blankes af met betrekking tot die stigting van 'n republiek, word dikwels gesien as 'n teken van toenemende ondersteuning vir die Nasionale Party. Hierdie tesis ondersoek die gebeure en motiverings vanaf die referendum tot die stigting van die Republiek as 'n komplekse politieke kwessie deur die openbare menings en motiverings van blanke kiesers te analiseer. Die primêre bronne wat vir die tesis gebruik is, is redaksionele hoofberigte asook lesersbriewe wat in hoofstroomkoerante gepubliseer was. Lesersbriewe en redaksionele hoofberigte is tydens drie intervalle ondersoek: gedurende die referendumveldtog, in reaksie tot die onttrekking uit die Statebond asook met die instelling van 'n republiek wat saamgegaan het met anti-apartheiddemonstrasies. Die menings is kwantitatief en kwalitatief benader en tesame met argiefbronne nagegaan. Hierdie tesis gebruik 'n analise van blanke openbare menings om nuanse te gee aan die faktore wat blanke kiesers gemotiveer het om 'n republiek te aanvaar of teen te staan. Die tesis voer aan dat sowel die ekonomie asook rassepolitiek belangrike motiveringsfaktore was wat die uitkoms van die referendum en die reaksies op die daaropvolgende gebeure bepaal het. Die stigting van die Republiek word dikwels gesien as deel van die Nasionale Party se pad na politieke dominansie, voortgedryf deur blanke kultureel-politieke groeperings. Hierdie analise van openbare menings beklemtoon hoe die gebeure egter 'n proses was van 'verdeelde ingesteldheid en onsekere treë' vir telke blanke stemgeregtigdes.

Sleutelwoorde: Suid-Afrika, Republiek, Referendum, Statebond, Nasionale Party, Verenigde Party, Engelssprekende Suid-Afrikaners, Koerante, Openbare Mening

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List of acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
ARCA	Archive for Contemporary Affairs
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
NAC	National Action Council
NLCT	National Library of South Africa, Cape Town
UP	National Union Party
NP	National Party
OB	Ossewabrandwag
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PP	Progressive Party
RIMA	Robben Island Mayibuye Archive
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
MK	uMkhonto we Sizwe
UCTL	University of Cape Town Library
UWCA	University of the Western Cape Archive
WCARS	Western Cape Archive and Record Services

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Chapter One

Introduction

For years Afrikaner nationalism had argued that the establishment of a republic alone could, and would, create that so far elusive thing, white national unity in South Africa, a unity urgently necessary to enable us to tackle our great problems of white-non-white relationships, and to set the country firmly on the path of peaceful and stable progress.
M. Ballinger, 1969¹

On 5 October 1960, South Africa held its first national referendum for the minority white electorate. In this referendum white voters were asked whether they supported the government's efforts to proceed with plans for the Union of South Africa to become a republic. White voters above the age of 18 participated in the referendum in all four of the provinces in the Union, as well as in South West Africa. Except for a high anti-republican vote in Natal and a high pro-republican vote in the Free State, the results in the other territories were very close. The final result saw a majority of 4.1% voting in favour of the Union becoming a republic. Since the government required only a bare majority, the date for South Africa's transition to a republic was subsequently set for 31 May 1961.²

South Africa's road to the establishment of a republic was not without controversy. In March of 1961, South Africa submitted a request to remain a member of the Commonwealth of Nations once it assumed republican status. The general practice was that former British colonies that assumed republican status were allowed to remain members of the Commonwealth. Due to the South African government's contentious racial policy at the time, the other Commonwealth member states did not readily accept the application. After several days of debate on the issue at the 1961 Commonwealth Conference in London, South Africa opted to establish a republic that would not be a member of the Commonwealth. As a result, the establishment of a republic is often

¹ M. Ballinger, *From Union to Apartheid: A Trek to Isolation* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 449.

² T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa- A Modern History* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1978), 288.

associated with the country's increasing international isolation.³ On 31 May 1961, South Africa became a republic, inaugurating C.R. Swart as their first state president. Although the day was a day of celebration for many Whites, it was accompanied by a stay-at-home protest by the black majority against the government's racial policies.⁴

The establishment of the South African republic occurred at one of the most controversial moments in South Africa's apartheid history. The referendum, the London 1961 Commonwealth Conference as well as the establishment of a republic were all shaped by the preceding Sharpeville massacre of 1960. These events simultaneously form part of two different historical narratives. On the one hand, these events form part of the history of white group divisions within South Africa. On the other hand, these events also form part of anti-apartheid history and the turn to armed struggle.

This thesis will examine the process of South Africa becoming a republic by exploring how the white electorate responded to both historical undercurrents. This study will explore the reactions and discussions surrounding the referendum, the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference as well as the establishment of a republic, as found in popular white newspapers at the time. It will attempt to merge the reactions and responses of the white electorate regarding white group divisions as well as racial divisions in South Africa into one narrative. The aim is to analyse white political motivation at a very volatile point in South Africa's history.

1.1 Historical background

The events explored in this thesis have often been located in the context of divisions within the white minority. The origins of these white divisions can be traced to very early in South Africa's colonial history. Contention between the two groups of European settlers, the British and the Dutch, originated from their struggle for political control of colonial territories in Southern Africa. The height of disagreements and contention between descendants of British settlers and those of Dutch settlers (also known as

³ H. Giliomee, *The Last Afrikaner Leaders: A Supreme Test of Power* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2012), 74.

⁴ T. Karis and G. M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge: Protest and Hope, 1882-1934, Volume 3*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 349.

Boers) can be found in the Anglo-Boer wars. These conflicts resulted from the British colonial administration's imperialistic desire for consolidation and their pursuit of the mineral-rich northern areas controlled by the Boers. In 1902, after two and a half years of war, a peace treaty was signed and the British administration took control of the two Boer Republics in the north of South Africa.⁵ The conflict had a lasting negative effect on relations between these two white groups. The imprisonment of Boers in concentration camps as well as the implementation of the British scorched earth policy had a lasting impact on Afrikaner culture, specifically Afrikaner views on British colonial rule. Instead of defeating the Boers' aspirations of territorial independence, the consolidation of the territories under British control resulted in an intensifying desire to reclaim sovereignty which started to form part of Boer- or Afrikaner culture.⁶

In 1910 the political amalgamation of the colonial territories of South Africa was formalised with the establishment of the Union of South Africa. The British controlled Cape and Natal colonies, as well as the former Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, amalgamated to become a dominion under British control. One of the main reasons for the establishment of the Union was to aid the economic cooperation that already existed between the different colonial territories.⁷ Despite the cultural distinctions between the two white groups of settlers as well as their history of conflict, the establishment of the Union also represented a growing feeling of South African nationalism amongst some of the white settlers. Especially in the Cape Province a nation-building project known as 'South Africanism' promoted white unity and reconciliation between the Boers and the British. This sense of South Africanism was a type of dual loyalty which established that a commitment to the British crown was acceptable as long as it was accompanied by the pursuit of the progression of South

⁵ I. R. Smith, 'The Origins of the South African War (1899–1902): A Re-Appraisal', *South African Historical Journal*, 22, 1 (1990), 54–5.

⁶ R. De Villiers, 'Afrikaner Nationalism', in M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume 2*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 368; Venter also remarks how, at present, such aspirations can still be found in Afrikaner towns such as Orania hoping to re-establish independent territories, A. Venter, 'Die Doodloopstraat van die Afrikaner-Republiek van 1961', *Tydskrif Vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 51, 4 (2011), 535.

⁷ L. Thompson, 'The Compromise of Union', in M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume 2*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 343.

Africa.⁸ With the establishment of the Union of South Africa, white unity and political consolidation were promoted at the expense of black political exclusion.⁹

Regardless of this political unification and the associated aspirations for white unity, some of the Boers or Afrikaners still held resentment regarding how the Anglo-Boer Wars had played out. They felt they had not received equal territorial, cultural or economic status like British settlers during the establishment of the Union. One of the essential grievances was the perceived 'inequality' regarding territorial independence, with some Afrikaners feeling that without an independent territory of their own, they were being denied some of the fundamental freedoms that British settlers enjoyed.¹⁰ Thus where the British settlers, also known as English-speaking South Africans, were seen as having their sovereignty situated in Britain, the re-establishment of a sovereign South African Republic became an integral component of Afrikaner nationalism.¹¹ Some Afrikaners were also concerned with their economic and cultural position, feeling that they were also not on equal footing with English-speaking South Africans in these spheres. The notion of establishing equal political, economic, and cultural status for Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans became a key point of reference for Afrikaner nationalists and their political organisation, the National Party (NP). All those who saw themselves as Afrikaners did not however unanimously share in these aspirations. The appeal of South Africanism and white unity had garnered support from some Afrikaners who disagreed with the exclusive brand of nationalism that was developing in the NP. This rival political grouping later established themselves as the United Party (UP) and was primarily supported by English-speaking South Africans. Since the UP valued the connection between the Union and Britain, Afrikaners who

⁸ S. Dubow, 'Colonial Nationalism, the Milner Kindergarten and the Rise of "South Africanism", 1902-10', *History Workshop Journal*, 43 (1997), 27.

⁹ For the purposes of this thesis the term 'black' will be used to describe groups who were not of European descent. Where applicable the group specific terms 'African', 'Coloured', 'Indian' etc. will be used. S. Dubow, 'South Africa and South Africans: Nationality, Belonging, Citizenship', in R. Ross *et al.* (eds.), *The Cambridge History of South Africa, Volume 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 33.

¹⁰ D. O'Meara's article points to some of these grievances in the aims set out by the Afrikaner cultural organisation, *Die Broederbond*. *Die Broederbond* was a secretive Afrikaner organisation that sought to further specific Afrikaner political aims. See D. O'Meara, 'The Afrikaner Broederbond 1927–1948: Class Vanguard of Afrikaner Nationalism', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 3, 2 (1977), 156–86.

¹¹ S. Van Der Merwe, 'Die Totstandkoming van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika 31 Mei 1961' in F. A. Van Jaarsveld and G. D. Scholtz (eds.), *Die Republiek van Suid-Afrika*, (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1966), 141.

supported this side of the political spectrum were often accused of having divided loyalties. This conflicted with Afrikaner nationalists' aspirations that South Africa should not be inferior to Britain in any way. Therefore, Afrikaners who supported the UP and their associated causes were often accused of being 'traitors'.¹²

The distinctions between these two white political groupings became very convoluted. The NP was essentially established as an Afrikaner political grouping, and although English-speakers predominantly supported the UP, it was not exclusively an English-speaking party. Two historical examples illustrate the complexity of the political rivalry between the NP and the UP. The political career of Jan Smuts highlights some of these white group dynamics. Smuts had been a Boer general in the Anglo-Boer War and subsequently became Prime Minister. However, despite his role on the side of the Boers in the war, he was not well-liked by Afrikaner nationalists who blamed Smuts for having sided with Britain in the two World Wars.¹³ Smuts, a proponent of the reconciliation and South Africanism, thought that South Africa should be loyal to Britain since it was a member of the Empire, but should also enjoy a great deal of autonomy.¹⁴ Thus, even though Smuts had played a significant role in the Anglo-Boer War, he did not automatically have Afrikaner support based on his legacy and 'Boer war hero' status. This can be attributed to his view on territorial independence not aligning with that of a great deal of Afrikaners and Afrikaner nationalists.

Another set of events that illustrates this division between the white groupings is the political challenges regarding South Africa's participation in the two World Wars. At the time that the First World War commenced in 1918, South Africa was still a dominion under British control. The South African government at the time did not hesitate to join the war in support of Britain, despite some calls that they should remain neutral. The measure of autonomy that South Africa had subsequently achieved complicated the question of participation in the Second World War. The Status Act of 1934 had given

¹² Anon., 'Politics and Opinion in South Africa- The Conflict of Loyalties', *The World Today*, 3, 4 (1947), 170.

¹³ S. Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

¹⁴ L. Grundlingh, "'In the Crisis, Who Would Tamper with the Existing Order ?' The Political and Public Reaction of English-Speaking South Africans to the 1914 Rebellion', *Historia*, 59, 2 (2014), 169.

'legal enforcement to South Africa's independent status' as a dominion.¹⁵ Therefore South Africa's participation in the Second World War in support of Britain became a much more contentious topic. Prime Minister Hertzog posed the question of neutrality in the war to the members of parliament. For some English-speakers the only option was to automatically join the war at Britain's side because of their loyalties, regardless of South Africa's relatively independent dominion status.¹⁶ The National Party opposed participation in support of Britain and demanded neutrality in the war.¹⁷ In the end, parliament voted in favour of South Africa's involvement in the Second World War. The decision to participate in the war impacted the white community in several ways. For Afrikaner nationalists, the participation in the war heightened their desire for sovereignty to form a country that was under no obligation to provide military support to Britain. For numerous English-speakers it was becoming clear that the newly formed UP under the leadership of Smuts valued their British heritage. As a result, by the end of the war, the UP had become the political party for 'the overwhelming majority of English-speakers'.¹⁸

The political history briefly discussed above cannot solely be characterised in terms of white divisions. Although white divisions steered the political history of the first part of the twentieth century, it was also shaped by white and black race relations. With the establishment of the Union in 1910, the institution of a white-controlled political system in South Africa became formalised.¹⁹ The newly established Union also resulted in the formalisation of racial discrimination with the introduction of oppressive laws such as the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911 and the Natives' Land Act of 1913.²⁰ These acts restricted the job opportunities of black workers and allocated only a small portion of the land as black living space. In response to the continued subjugation of Africans the South African Native National Congress (later renamed the African National Congress, ANC) was formed in 1912 to unify Africans against the laws that were limiting their

¹⁵ J. Lambert, 'An Identity Threatened: White English-Speaking South Africans, Britishness and Dominion South Africanism, 1934–1939', *African Historical Review*, 37, 1 (2005), 51.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁷ De Villiers, 'Afrikaner Nationalism', 373.

¹⁸ Lambert, 'An Identity Threatened', 68.

¹⁹ P. Bonner, 'South African Society and Culture, 1910-1948', in R. Ross *et al.* (eds.), *The Cambridge History of South Africa, Volume 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 254.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

fundamental freedoms.²¹ These laws are reflective of the broader political landscape of the time in which upwardly mobile black workers and the urbanisation of Africans was seen as a threat to white governance and the colonial status quo.

Racial segregation was an integral part of colonial society and none of the major political parties that enjoyed a measure of success after the establishment of the Union were racially progressive. Most of the proposed racial policies focussed on maintaining white control in order to foster paternalism, or to protect the white population. An example of how racial fear became politicised can be found in the 1929 election and the associated 'back peril' slogan employed by the National Party at the time. In the previous election campaign of 1924, finding a solution to the 'native question' was also a part of the election campaign but was mainly portrayed as an 'economic question'.²² In contrast, the 1929 election saw the use of emotive racial fear propaganda aimed at encouraging Whites to vote for the re-election of the ruling party to maintain the status quo.²³ Later during the mid-1900s, both the NP and the UP promoted some form of white political domination, even though they had different approaches on how to go about dealing with the so-called 'native question'. Mostly the UP was known to be the more liberal party in this regard, as they promoted at least some form of political representation for all races in the central government. In contrast, the NP systematically went about removing all other racial groups from the common voters roll.²⁴

During the pivotal 1948 election, the National Party won the majority of seats and claimed parliamentary control from the United Party.²⁵ The NP's 1948 victory was only won by a narrow margin in a surprise victory with the introduction of the concept of 'apartheid' presented during the NP's election campaign. Apartheid, directly translated into 'separatism', was used to describe a proposed process by which black and white people would be systematically separated by removing Africans from white urban areas

²¹ F. Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us: A History of the ANC* (London: James Currey Publishers, 1988), 34&39.

²² H. J. Lubbe, 'The Myth of "Black Peril": *Die Burger* and the 1929 Election', *South African Historical Journal*, 37, 1 (1997), 110.

²³ *Ibid.*, 119.

²⁴ G. Baines, 'Revisiting Urban African Policy and the Reforms of the Smuts Government, 1939-48', *Workshop on South Africa in the 1940s* (2003), n.p.; See also H. Giliomee, 'The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929 -1948', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 2 (2003), 390.

²⁵ Thompson, 'Compromise of Union', 363.

in order to maintain the status quo. The concept of the 'apartheid' system as a form of racial segregation captured the imagination of voters who feared the rapid urbanisation of black labourers.²⁶ With the NP in power, the years that followed saw increasing Afrikaner domination of political, social and economic facets of the country, as well as an increase in the systematic separation of South Africa's racial groups and white domination under the apartheid policy.²⁷

Despite this increased political control, various Afrikaners still felt that they were not on equal footing with their fellow white English-speaking citizens because South Africa was not an independent nation. As part of their attempts to gradually establish South African autonomy, the NP systematically dismantled the remnants of the British monarchy in South Africa. The most notorious examples are probably the removal of 'God save the Queen' as the national anthem as well as the removal of the Union Jack as a national flag in 1957.²⁸ Plagued by a sense of ineptitude English-speaking South Africans' political participation is described as being 'apathetic' in the years following the NP's 1948 electoral victory.²⁹

The same sense of apathy is not found in the political activities of Africans who were experiencing increased oppression after the NP's 1948 parliamentary victory. One of the first new apartheid laws that had been passed after the NP's electoral victory was the 1949 Mixed Marriages Act, whereby marriage between people of different races was declared illegal by the government.³⁰ This was followed up in 1950 by legislation prohibiting sexual relations between people of different races as well as legislation forcing all citizens to register according to racial grouping. Furthermore, the government also proceeded to allocate separate urban living areas to groups based on these racial

²⁶ Giliomee, 'Making of the Apartheid Plan', 391.

²⁷ D. Posel, 'The Apartheid Project, 1948–1970', in R. Ross *et al.* (eds.), *The Cambridge History of South Africa, Volume 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 343.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 326.

²⁹ J. Lambert, "'An Unknown People': Reconstructing British South African Identity', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37, 4 (2009), 609.

³⁰ Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act- Act No. 55 of 1949; See R Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 119.

classifications.³¹ The increased oppression was accompanied by an intensification of the opposition against the apartheid laws and systems. From the 1950s onward the ANC evolved into a multi-racial and mass resistance movement.³² The landmark Suppression of Communism act of 1950 was one of the governments more effective measures to limit the efforts of apartheid's opponents. The definition of communism was so broad that almost any action against the government could be suppressed under the stipulations of this law.³³ In 1955 members of different organisations such as the mainly black supported ANC, the Indian Congress, the Coloured Peoples' Organisation and the primarily white Congress of Democrats convened to form the Congress of the People. At this Congress, the Freedom Charter, which promoted equal access to land and education as well as equal political participation, was accepted by all these organisations. This, in turn, led to the arrest of several of the leaders involved in the drafting of the Freedom Charter and resulted in the 1956 Treason Trial.³⁴ Despite growing unrest and increased efforts to subjugate the governments' opponents, the majority of resistance efforts against apartheid would remain peaceful until 1961.

The increasing demand for equal political inclusion of all races was by no means unique to South Africa. The Second World War had escalated the call for equality, especially in former colonies in Africa and Asia and an international wave of decolonisation started with India's independence in 1947. African nationalism and the desire for self-governance was also gaining traction. The first inclusive election in an African colony was held in the Gold Coast (later known as Ghana) in 1951.³⁵ At the time there were ongoing debates regarding the readiness of colonies to govern themselves. Some colonialists and government officials in Europe still held the paternalistic view that Africans needed Westernisation before they should gain independence. However, some

³¹ See respectively: Immorality Amendment Act- Act No. 21 of 1950; Population Registration Act- Act No. 30 of 1950; Group Areas Act- Act No. 41 of 1950. See L Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2014), 190; S. J. Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2002), 334.

³² D. Everatt, *The Origins of Non-Racialism: White Opposition to Apartheid in the 1950s* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), 33.

³³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 37.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁵ The eventual outcome was that the Gold Coast gained full independence in 1957.

British diplomats started realising that the risks in taking a prolonged road to independence were far greater than the dangers of moving towards independence too quickly.³⁶ In the era of the Cold War, the risk was too great of losing partnerships with mineral-rich colonies if these colonies opted to partner with communist countries that were willing to aid them in their pursuit of independence. This reality resulted in a rapid decolonisation process and by 1960 a total of 17 colonies were set to gain independence from the Belgian, French and British colonial powers.³⁷

The dichotomy between South Africa and the rest of the African continent at this particular point in time is evident. While numerous former colonies were establishing systems of political inclusion, South Africa was pressing on with its political system of racial exclusion. That did not entail that South Africa was not also moving towards independence from the British monarchy. In South Africa, the call for independence from minority white rule was also intensifying. The government and a large portion of the white electorate were adamantly upholding a white-controlled political structure during the time that independence was being negotiated for numerous states in Africa. The Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola, as well as the white settler government in Rhodesia, are examples of colonies in Africa that similarly clung to white rule under the guise of warding off communism. The preservation of these Western governments was defended on the basis that they promoted the civilisation of indigenous people and kept communism at bay.

The differing views and approaches to decolonisation in the mid-twentieth century were also evident in the South African political landscape. In 1959, several of the UP's more liberal white representatives broke away to form the Progressive Party (PP) which promoted the accelerated racial integration of South African society.³⁸ In the same year the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) broke away from the ANC to form a more militant anti-apartheid organisation. It gained support from those who were growing impatient with the ANC's programme of passive resistance against the government.³⁹ While these

³⁶ M. Meredith, *The State of Africa- A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (London: The Free Press, 2006), 90.

³⁷ Anon., 'Africa 1960: The Newly Independent Countries', *Africa Today*, 7, 5 (1960), 10-1.

³⁸ Davenport, *South Africa- A Modern History*, 284.

³⁹ W. Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 159.

parties were following programmes which promoted accelerated decolonisation, the white ruling parties in South Africa did not think it wise for colonial-style segregation to come to an end in 1960 already.

After their 1948 electoral victory, the NP gradually secured their power. The NP did manage to increase their support base, particularly amongst white Afrikaners, but also secured their power by exploiting the electoral system. The 1948 election was won by the NP based on their parliamentary representation, even though they had won 140 000 fewer votes than the opposition. Similarly in 1953, the NP won 61% of the seats in parliament but had only received 45% of the votes.⁴⁰ Thus, even though the NP had a relative parliamentary control, they did not necessarily have the individual voter support needed to win a referendum. To win the support of a more extensive section of the white electorate, the NP began expanding their ideas of Afrikaner nationalism into a broader white nationalism to which English-speakers could also ascribe in order to maintain the status quo in South Africa.⁴¹

After Hendrik Verwoerd became Prime Minister in 1958, the establishment of a republic became something that he hoped to see through during his term. Verwoerd had strongly advocated for the establishment of a republic early on in his career as the editor of the nationalist newspaper *Die Transvaler*.⁴² Early in 1960 Verwoerd announced that he intended to pursue the establishment of an independent republic in South Africa through the means of a referendum. For some nationalists, the announcement of the referendum at the beginning of 1960 was symbolic since it was the fiftieth anniversary of the Union's establishment.⁴³ Few, however, could have foreseen the events which would take place that year that significantly impacted South Africa's international status and internal politics. While there was little reason why South Africa could not transition to a republic like so many African states, the NP government was receiving increasing international criticism for apartheid at the time.

⁴⁰ B. Bunting, *The Rise of the South African Reich* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 133.

⁴¹ A. Wessels and D. Du Bruyn, 'Vrees as Faktor in die Regse Blanke Politiek in Suid-Afrika Tydens die Tweede Dekade van die Apartheidsera, 1958-1969', *Journal for Contemporary History*, 33, 1 (2008), 1–16; N. M. Stultz, 'The Politics of Security: South Africa under Verwoerd, 1961–6', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 7, 1 (1969), 8.

⁴² Giliomee, 'Making of the Apartheid Plan', 378.

⁴³ Van Der Merwe, 'Totstandkoming van die Republiek', 188.

The first event that would pose a challenge to Verwoerd's republican endeavour came with British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's visit to South Africa in early 1960. In an address to the South African parliament, which became known as the 'wind of change' speech, Macmillan indicated Britain's unwillingness to continue supporting the Union in terms of their racial policy. The phrase 'wind of change' referred to the unavoidable reality of African nationalism that was present on the continent. It was contrasted with the National Party's apartheid policy in the context of progressive decolonisation. The veiled criticism in Macmillan's speech had a negative impact on South Africa's international political status.⁴⁴ It is said that the address was one of the factors that contributed to the rise of support for Verwoerd, even from English-speaking South Africans who felt their loyalty towards Britain betrayed by the British Prime minister.⁴⁵

Shortly after Macmillan's speech, members of the PAC gathered at Sharpeville, an urban black settlement south of Johannesburg, on 21 March 1960 during a peaceful protest against pass laws.⁴⁶ The demonstration resulted in the mass shooting of 69 non-violent protesters by police - an act that intensified criticism from the international community against apartheid and the NP government. Turmoil followed as similar protests were held in the townships of Langa and Nyanga in Cape Town in 1960, causing major disruptions for law enforcement. The National Party responded by passing the Unlawful Organisations Act, which banned African nationalist groups such as the PAC and the ANC, as well as declaring a state of emergency.⁴⁷ Just one day after the banning of these organisations, Prime Minister Verwoerd was shot and wounded by David Pratt, a local farmer. Verwoerd survived the event and Pratt, whose actions were motivated by his dislike of apartheid, was declared legally unfit to stand trial due to his mental state.⁴⁸ The event at Sharpeville and its consequences were seen as a moment of crisis for those in South Africa. Fear of the tense and turbulent situation

⁴⁴ S. Dubow, 'Macmillan, Verwoerd, and the "Wind of Change" speech', *The Historical Journal*, 54, 4 (2011), 1102.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1110

⁴⁶ In line with segregated living spaces, blacks South Africans were required to carry passes or identification reference books in order to be permitted into white areas. These laws introduced under the Natives Law Amendment Act in 1952 restricted the free movement of black South Africans.

⁴⁷ D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Michigan: Ravan Press, 1996), 100.

⁴⁸ T. Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and Its Aftermath*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 169.

led to a sharp increase of white people emigrating from South Africa, mainly to Britain.⁴⁹ Some historians argue that Sharpeville resulted in increased support for the government in the long run. In contrast, others who studied the event in detail conclude that Sharpeville represented a 'crisis of confidence' for the government, even if it was short-lived.⁵⁰

In June 1960, however, circumstances in the Congo would play into the NP's political narrative that Whites had to unify to protect themselves from the uneducated black masses. Shortly after the Congo's independence, disruptions and violence led to the accelerated exodus of white settlers from the former Belgian colony, many of whom sought refuge in South Africa.⁵¹ This intensified fears of the 'black peril' amongst some white South Africans and these racialised fears were further utilised by the Afrikaner nationalists to gain support for white minority rule in South Africa.⁵²

Considering the Sharpeville massacre, the state of emergency and the increasing international criticism, Verwoerd's decision to continue with the republican referendum is often described as a gamble.⁵³ Verwoerd could not have known in which way the events of 1960 would influence the electorate to vote on the referendum question. Proceeding with the referendum was a bold step to take since Verwoerd did not have complete control of his cabinet nor did the NP have the majority of the popular vote.⁵⁴ Since the white English-speaking and Afrikaner population groups were somewhat similar in size, with Afrikaners slightly outnumbering English-speakers, Verwoerd would need some English-speakers to vote for a republic to win the referendum. To improve the chances of securing a win in the referendum, Verwoerd declared that a bare majority in favour of a republic would be deemed sufficient to proceed with this constitutional change. In doing so, he was deviating from the principles of his NP predecessors such as Malan,

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁵⁰ Dubow, 'Macmillan, Verwoerd, and the 1960 "Wind of Change" Speech', 1109; Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 175.

⁵¹ L. P.C. Passemiers, 'South Africa and the "Congo Crisis", 1960-1965' (PhD thesis, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, 2016), 55.

⁵² Wessels and Du Bruyn, 'Vrees as Faktor in die Regse Blanke Politiek', 83-4.

⁵³ S. Dubow, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa From Smuts to Mandela', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 45, 2 (2017), 297.

⁵⁴ Dubow, 'Macmillan, Verwoerd, and the 1960 "Wind of Change" Speech', 1109.

who would only have settled for a two-thirds majority vote in deciding to establish a republic.⁵⁵ A second compromise that Verwoerd made regarding South Africa's republican status pertained to Commonwealth membership. Traditionally, some Afrikaner nationalists longed for a republic with no connection or obligation to the British empire, and without a connection to the Commonwealth.⁵⁶ Verwoerd decided to pursue a republic that would remain a member of the Commonwealth to gain support from the English-speaking South Africans. While they did not ascribe to the republican goals of the Afrikaner nationalists, some English-speaking South Africans felt a sense of loyalty to the British connection that would be upheld through Commonwealth membership. This move would further garner support from those who were not anti-republican but wanted to keep the association with Britain because they benefitted financially from the Commonwealth connections.⁵⁷

Although the NP's commitment to maintaining South Africa's Commonwealth membership did much to allay the fears of those who had economic ties with other Commonwealth countries, Commonwealth membership could not be guaranteed.⁵⁸ In theory, the Commonwealth membership of countries gaining independence from Britain was subject to the approval of the other Commonwealth countries. While most countries were readily accepted as members of the Commonwealth, it was evident that this might not be the case for post-Sharpeville South Africa. Already at the 1960 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, it had become clear that not all the Commonwealth member states would be unquestioningly supportive of the application for continued membership if South Africa became a republic.⁵⁹ The issue of continued Commonwealth membership would only be decided after South Africa indicated that it intended to become a republic. Since the referendum was set for October 1960, there was no way for the electorate to be sure if South Africa would be allowed to remain a member of the Commonwealth.

⁵⁵ G. Sussman, 'The Referendum as an Electoral Device in National Party Politics, 1917-60', *Politikon*, 33, 3 (2006), 273.

⁵⁶ L. Koorts, 'An Ageing Anachronism: D. F. Malan as Prime Minister, 1948-1954', *Kronos*, 36 (2010), 118.

⁵⁷ Dubow, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa From Smuts to Mandela', 297.

⁵⁸ O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 105.

⁵⁹ O. Geysler, *Watershed for South Africa, London 1961* (Durban: Butterworth Publisher, 1983), 70.

The state of emergency resulting from the Sharpeville massacre was ended a mere five weeks before the referendum. With the referendum drawing closer, political parties fervently campaigned to gain support for their stance on the republican issue. As the official opposition, the UP campaigned for their supporters to oppose a republic because there was no guarantee that South Africa would remain a member of the Commonwealth, thereby insisting that the loss of Commonwealth membership would be detrimental to South Africa's defence and economic security. The newly formed Progressive Party urged their supporters to 'reject *this* Republic' by saying that even though republicanism was acceptable, a racially divided republic under Verwoerd and apartheid was unacceptable and out of step with international developments.⁶⁰ The National Party, in turn, campaigned to gain support for a republic by calling all white voters to unify and support a republic for a better future. Their argument was based on the insistence that a republic would finally restore equality between Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans, and therefore also remove the last stumbling block on the road to true white unity. White unity, in turn, was seen as being necessary in order to solve the 'racial problems' that South Africa was facing. On 5 October 1960, 90.7% of the white South African electorate voted in the referendum. The result was 52% in favour of South Africa becoming a republic and is described as 'a close, but still, comfortable majority'.⁶¹ Particularly in the Natal province, the anti-republican sentiments were reflected with the 76% of the province's white electorate opposing the establishment of a republic.⁶²

With the necessary mandate to establish a republic the Union was set to gain independence on 31 May 1961, exactly 51 years after the establishment of the Union on 31 May 1910.⁶³ The months between the referendum and the long-awaited Republic Day would however not be without its challenges. The question of South Africa's Commonwealth membership was set to be addressed at the March 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference held in London. Ahead of the conference

⁶⁰ Davenport, *South Africa- A Modern History*, 288.

⁶¹ O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 105.

⁶² P. S. Thompson, *Natalians First -Separatism in South Africa 1909 -1961* (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1990), 166.

⁶³ 31 May became a public holiday after the establishment of the Union.

Verwoerd attempted to garner support from other Commonwealth member states for South Africa's continued Commonwealth membership, especially from other white-controlled nations such as Australia and Canada. As mentioned, before the referendum some members, mainly new African member states, had made it clear that they were hesitant to voice their approval for South Africa's membership application due to the apartheid policy. The conference devoted several days to discussing the apartheid policy as part of South Africa's application for continued membership. After a few days of deliberations and a perceived stalemate, Verwoerd withdrew the application and decided that the republic would cease to be a member of the Commonwealth upon its establishment.⁶⁴ The withdrawal from the Commonwealth did not bring about the immediate negative implications for South Africa's trade with Commonwealth countries as the UP had suggested during their referendum campaign.⁶⁵

The prospect of a new South African constitution that would accompany the establishment of a republic also presented an opportunity for anti-apartheid groups to show their disapproval of the racially divided political system. In March 1961 members of banned resistance movements convened the All-In African convention and requested that the new republican constitution should allow for South Africans of all races to participate in the political system. The conference threatened that a mass stay-away would be held to coincide with the establishment of a republic in May if their request for a more democratic constitution was not entertained. The government was not willing to part with the apartheid policy and responded with police action to suppress the stay-away. Despite the increased security measures, on 29 May 1961, a reported 50% of black workers did not go to work. The second day of the stay-away proved less successful, and the strike was called off on 30 May 1961.⁶⁶ The republic was established relatively peacefully on 31 May 1961, and despite a short-term instability in the markets, the economic and political situation stabilised.

⁶⁴ Geyser, *Watershed for South Africa*, 85.

⁶⁵ M. Makin, 'South Africa's Departure from the Commonwealth in 1961: Post-Mortems and Consequences', *African Historical Review*, 29, 1 (1997), 163.

⁶⁶ S. Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives in the Wake of the Sharpeville-Langa Violence in South Africa, 1960?', *The Journal of African History*, 56, 1 (2015), 119–42.

When the strike was called off, Nelson Mandela, in his capacity as the organiser of the stay-away, reflected on the events that transpired and the government's reaction to the requests made by the All-In African convention. He said in an interview that unless the government took the demands of the black South African majority seriously, there would be no other choice for liberation movements but to abandon peaceful protest and resort to violence.⁶⁷ On 18 October 1961, the first general election was held in the newly established republic; it continued to exclude other races from the white-dominated political system. This election saw the NP increase their parliamentary majority by two seats.⁶⁸ Within two months after the 1961 election the ANC's newly established military wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), detonated the first bomb, signifying the anti-apartheid movement's turn to armed resistance.⁶⁹

1.2 Literature review

This thesis is primarily concerned with white minority public opinion, political decision making and white identities during the events associated with South Africa becoming a republic. These events lend themselves to investigation from this perspective because the establishment of the republic is as mentioned earlier often described as the last battle of the Anglo-Boer War.⁷⁰ Studies that explore white identities and South Africanism focus on events that followed on from the Anglo-Boer Wars. For example, recently Bronwyn Strydom investigated the origins of South Africanism in higher education in her article "'To Buttress the Ideal of National Unity": Broad South Africanism and Higher Education in the Early Twentieth Century'. She explains how white unity was an endeavour undertaken by government and educational institutions after the South African War.⁷¹ The discussion of white identities in the early twentieth century is often explored by focussing on the nature of the project of South Africanism

⁶⁷ N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 236.

⁶⁸ N. M. Stultz and J. Butler, 'The South African General Election of 1961', *Political Science Quarterly*, 78, 1 (1963), 86.

⁶⁹ S. Ellis, 'The Genesis of the ANC's Armed Struggle in South Africa 1948–1961', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37, 4 (2011), 673.

⁷⁰ J. Hatch, 'South Africa Crisis in the Commonwealth', *Journal of International Affairs*, 15, 1 (1961), 68.

⁷¹ B. L. Strydom, "'To Buttress the Ideal of National Unity": Broad South Africanism and Higher Education in the Early Twentieth Century', *South African Historical Journal*, 68, 2 (2016), 163–79.

as well as by focussing on Anglo-South Africa relations. Saul Dubow also explored the functionality of South Africanism in his article 'Scientism, Social Research and the limits of "South Africanism": The Case of Ernst Gideon Malherbe'.⁷² This article also primarily focuses on the first part of the twentieth century.

When exploring the relationships between English-speaking South Africans and Afrikaners one historical occurrence that has garnered a great deal of interest from historians has been South Africa's participation in World War Two. Scholarly articles that focus on this event approach the topic by focussing on one or the other of the two white political groupings. John Lambert examined South Africa's participation in the war from the English-speaking perspective in his article 'Their Finest Hour? English-speaking South Africans in World War II'.⁷³ Lambert explores how the majority of English-speaking South Africans believed that they could not stay neutral and had an obligation to participate in the war in support of Britain. According to Lambert, Afrikaner nationalists interpreted this conviction as English-speakers being more devoted to Britain than to South Africa, and called for an end to 'dual loyalties'.⁷⁴ The idea of a 'divided loyalty' by South Africans who felt a commitment to Britain would later be used during the referendum campaign. Lambert also focussed particularly on English-speaking identity in his article 'An identity threatened: White English-speaking South Africans, Britishness and Dominion South Africanism, 1934-1939'.⁷⁵ In this article, he explored how South Africa's political status, as well as mounting Afrikaner nationalism, influenced how English-speakers saw themselves shortly before the Second World War. Albert Grundlingh has also written on white identity relating to World War Two by focussing on Afrikaners in his article 'The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's defence force during the Second World War, 1939-45'.⁷⁶ He explored the factors that motivated some Afrikaners to enlist in the war

⁷² S. Dubow, 'Scientism, Social Research and the Limits of "South Africanism": The Case of Ernst Gideon Malherbe', *South African Historical Journal*, 44, 1 (2001), 99–142.

⁷³ J. Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans in World War II', *South African Historical Journal*, 60, 1 (2008), 60–84.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁵ Lambert, 'An Identity Threatened', 50-70.

⁷⁶ A. Grundlingh, 'The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939–45', *The Journal of African History*, 40, 3 (1999), 359.

against Germany, despite the insistence by Afrikaner nationalists that they wished to remain neutral. Grundlingh explains that South Africanism had particular ideological relevance for those who enlisted voluntarily. Clearly World War Two has been used as a focal point for exploring white identities in South Africa.⁷⁷

Shortly after World War Two, the British Royal Family visited South Africa in 1947. This event has also received scholarly attention in terms of understanding English-speaking and Afrikaner relations in South Africa. In 2017 Lambert wrote an article entitled "'Welcome home": White English-speaking South Africans and the Royal Visit of 1947'. In the article Lambert focussed on English-speaking identity, suggesting that the tour signified the end of an era. It was the last time that English-speaking South Africans were 'able to define themselves as British people in a British nation'.⁷⁸ In 2018 Hilary Sapire and Albert Grundlingh published an article on the Afrikaner reactions to the tour entitled 'Rebuffing Royals? Afrikaners and the Royal visit to South Africa in 1947'. These authors emphasised the contested nature of the tour because of South Africa's participation in World War Two. This had 'caused bitter political divisions within Afrikaner ranks and stimulated radical populist nationalism'. They assert that the tour had diverse meanings attributed to it, with even the right-wing Afrikaner organisation the Ossewabrandwag hoping that the tour would foster white unity even though they had vehemently opposed the tour itself.⁷⁹ In 2018, Graham Viney's *The Last Hurrah – South Africa and the Royal Tour of 1947* was published. His conclusion also pointed to the contested nature of the tour. He suggested that the tour and British loyalist outpourings contributed to the 1948 victory by the National Party, as it aggravated the antagonism felt by young Afrikaners.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ See also A. M. Fokkens, 'Afrikaner Unrest within South Africa during the Second World War and the Measures Taken to Suppress It', *Journal for Contemporary History*, 37, 2 (2012), 123–42; N. Roos, 'The Springbok and the Skunk: War Veterans and the Politics of Whiteness in South Africa during the 1940s and 1950s', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 3 (2009), 643–61.

⁷⁸ J. Lambert, "'Welcome Home": White English-Speaking South Africans and the Royal Visit of 1947', *South African Historical Journal*, 69, 1 (2017), 120.

⁷⁹ H. Sapire and A. Grundlingh, 'Rebuffing Royals? Afrikaners and the Royal Visit to South Africa in 1947', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 46, 3 (2018), 524&543.

⁸⁰ G. Viney, *The Last Hurrah- South Africa and the Royal Tour of 1947* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2018), 316.

It is generally accepted that most of the progress made in terms of South Africanism and white unity was lost at this time. Lambert noted this in an article entitled 'An identity threatened: White English-speaking South Africans, Britishness and Dominion South Africanism'. He wrote that after the Second World War, English-speaking South Africans had become 'British' again in the eyes of Afrikaners and that any form of Anglo-Afrikaner cooperation that had flourished under the banner of 'South Africanism' was starting to dissolve.⁸¹ In a study entitled '"An Unknown People": Reconstructing British South African Identity' Lambert focussed on what happened to English-speaking identity following the 1948 election. He concluded that English-speaking South Africans had 'lapsed into a fatalistic apathy'.⁸² Dubow also hinted at this in his chapter entitled 'South Africa and South Africans: Nationality, Belonging, Citizenship' and explained that before 1948 citizens were categorised as either British subjects or Union nationalists but that the former ceased to be defined as British subjects around the time of the 1948 election.⁸³ In an article entitled 'How British was the British World? The case of South Africa' Dubow thought that this transition from being British subjects to being 'English-speaking South Africans' signalled a break with the British world, maintaining that 1948 signalled the end of South Africanism.⁸⁴

With the apparent end of South Africanism, as well as the faltering of white unity, research conducted on white identities in the second half of the twentieth century has languished. White identity and white political decision-making during the period shortly before the referendum and the establishment of a republic has not attracted the same degree of scholarly interest. Such information as there is on white relations and identities during the 1960 and 1961 period are confined to the conclusions in articles and books mainly focussed on other processes.

Even where the English-speaking community has been studied, concentration on the British connection has resulted in a narrow focus on the Natal province. Natal had a

⁸¹ Lambert, 'An identity threatened', 65; See also J. Lambert, 'Their Finest Hour?', 81

⁸² Lambert, 'An Unknown People', 609.

⁸³ Dubow, 'South Africa and South Africans', 54-5.

⁸⁴ S. Dubow, 'How British Was the British World? The Case of South Africa', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37, 1 (2009), 16.

stronger connection with Britain than other areas in South Africa and has been described as the last outpost of the British Empire in South Africa.⁸⁵ Yet when examining events associated with the establishment of the republic, the characteristics of the Natal referendum campaign are not representative of the broader white South African English-speaking population. Natal only contributed to 17% of the anti-republican vote and should not be used as a generalised image for the English-speaking population in the other three provinces, as Lambert often does.⁸⁶ Although British-cultural connections were an essential aspect of English-speaking identity, the focus on Natal has distorted understanding of the events discussed in this thesis. In order to understand the referendum and the establishment of a republic in terms of white relations, it is important to examine the other 83% of the anti-republican vote located elsewhere than Natal.

By contrast, where the referendum has been approached from the perspective of Afrikaner nationalists, several dedicated volumes have been the outcome.⁸⁷ Even in general academic texts, these events are often viewed from an Afrikaner nationalist political perspective. They are seen as indicative of the consolidation of the power of the NP or of Verwoerd. A number of studies that mention the referendum do so only in the context of Verwoerd's rise to power. In *Forty Lost Years*, Dan O' Meara specifically describes how Verwoerd was increasingly seen by the faithful as having been saved from death by assassination for the divine purpose of establishing a republic.⁸⁸ This focus on Verwoerd as the hero of republicanism is also found in Giliomee's *The Last Afrikaner leaders* and *Die Afrikaners*.⁸⁹ It should, therefore, be no surprise that there is an array of biographies on Verwoerd that also briefly discussed the referendum in this

⁸⁵ J. Lambert, "'The Last Outpost': The Natalians, South Africa and the British Empire', in R. Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 150–77.

⁸⁶ Lambert, 'The Last Outpost', 161; For a specific example of this see Lambert, 'An Identity Threatened', 56.

⁸⁷ H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners- 'n Biografie* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2004); For Afrikaner nationalist perspectives see M. C. E. Van Schoor and J. J. Van Rooyen, *Republieke en Republikeine* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1960); M. C. E. Van Schoor, 'Die Herlewing van die Republikeinse Ideaal 1902-1961', in F. A. Van Jaarsveld and G. D. Scholtz (eds.), *Die Republiek van Suid-Afrika: Agtergrond, Ontstaan En Toekoms* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1966), 141–84; S. Van Der Merwe, 'Totstandkoming van die Republiek', 186–227.

⁸⁸ O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 105.

⁸⁹ Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 474-5; Giliomee, *Last Afrikaner Leaders*, 73–7.

context.⁹⁰ Such justification as there is for this interpretation should not be extrapolated to explain wider changes within white relations and identities. Problematically, the results of the referendum are often used to make inferences about the nature of white relations. For example, in *Die Afrikaners*, Giliomee mentions that a majority of 74 000 votes in favour of a republic was seen as a sign of unification between the two white groups. The author does not contextualise that this was only a 4% majority.⁹¹ The question is, then, if a vote of 52% against 48% is a sign of unity?

The use of these results to support inferences about white political relationships has resulted in contradictory assertions. For example, Dubow discusses these events in his 2014 publication entitled *Apartheid 1948-1994*, where he claims that the NP was able to persuade people that safety against black radical retribution was to be found in the establishment of a republic. According to Dubow, it was this argument that persuaded English-speakers to vote for a republic. English-speakers, he asserts, were less committed to Britain during the referendum campaign than they had previously been and responded to the call for unity made by Verwoerd when English-speakers presumably started voting for the NP in the 1961 election.⁹² By contrast, Lambert claims that English-speakers were still very much married to Britain and the monarchy. In his article 'An Unknown people: Reconstructing British South African Identity' he writes that 'in 1960 there was a final and vigorous rallying to the monarchy and the Commonwealth during the Republican referendum'.⁹³ He makes similar claims in his chapter entitled 'English speaking South Africans: Uncertain of their identity' published in Fransjohan Pretorius' *A History of South Africa*.⁹⁴

Compared to the referendum, South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth has been well documented and studied. Scholars have offered in-depth analyses by focussing on the events leading up to Verwoerd's withdrawal from the conference and

⁹⁰ A. Hepple, *Verwoerd* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967); H. Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2016).

⁹¹ Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 475.

⁹² Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85.

⁹³ Lambert, 'An Unknown People', 609.

⁹⁴ J. Lambert, 'English-Speaking South Africans: Uncertain of Their Identity', in F. Pretorius (ed.), *A History of South Africa- From the Distant Past to the Present Day* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2014), 608.

the impact it had on South Africa's international relations. Given that the discussion of South Africa's apartheid policy at the 1961 Prime Ministers' Conference was seen as unprecedented, much attention has also been given to the proceedings of the conference itself. Several articles written at the time attempted to ascertain whether South Africa's departure from the international organisation could have been avoided and to understand the relationship between South Africa and other member states after the former's departure. S. A. de Smith's article 'The Commonwealth and South Africa'; J. Hatch's article 'South Africa Crisis in the Commonwealth' as well as *The Round Table* article 'A Leaf Falls - South Africa Outside the Commonwealth' all provide insight into how these events unfolded.⁹⁵

Subsequently, a number of scholars revisited South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth, exploring the roles played by the other Prime Ministers at the conference. Here, the work done by O. Geysler and F. Hayes provides valuable information.⁹⁶ Geysler's detailed volume, *Watershed for South Africa, London 1961*, provides further information on the role players at the conference itself as well as the practical implications of the conference for South Africa. There was a renewed focus on South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth when it became apparent that South Africa wished to return to the Commonwealth in 1994, after the end of apartheid.⁹⁷ Examples are M. Makin's, 'The Prodigal Returns: South Africa's Re-Admission to the Commonwealth of Nations June 1995', as well as E. Anyaoku's, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa: Restoring a Relationship'. These articles explored the reasons behind South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth as well as the relationship South Africa had with the Commonwealth after 1961.⁹⁸ More recently R. Hyam sought to re-evaluate the Commonwealth by choosing to focus on Britain and its relationship with

⁹⁵ S. A. de Smith, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa', *University of Malaya Law Review*, 3, 2 (1961), 167–90; Hatch, 'South Africa Crisis in the Commonwealth', 68–76; Anon., 'A Leaf Falls- South Africa Outside the Commonwealth', *The Round Table*, 51, 203 (1961), 219–23.

⁹⁶ Geysler, *Watershed for South Africa*, 85; F. Hayes, 'South Africa's Departure from the Commonwealth, 1960-1961', *The International History Review*, 2, 3 (1980), 453–84.

⁹⁷ M. Makin, 'The Prodigal Returns: South Africa's Re-Admission to the Commonwealth of Nations June 1995', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 4, 1 (1996), 100–117.

⁹⁸ E. Anyaoku, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa: Restoring a Relationship', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 1, 1 (1993): 1–8.

South Africa over the years.⁹⁹ In 2017 Dubow published an article, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa from Smuts to Mandela', focussing on the Commonwealth's relationship with South Africa. The article noted how the Commonwealth's transformation had been shaped by its changing relationship with South Africa.¹⁰⁰ M. Makin examined the impact that South Africa's departure had on its international relations as well as its economic consequences.¹⁰¹

Since these books and articles mainly approached South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth as a part of the history of international relations or as an aspect history of international criticism against apartheid, they have little to say about white South Africans' reactions to the outcome of the Commonwealth Conference. What has been written, attempts to draw conclusions regarding the impact of withdrawal on the white electorate. In a chapter on African nationalism published in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, L. Kuper mentioned the reaction of white South Africans to the Conference. The chapter notes that it 'aroused their patriotism, and indirectly benefited the government's position, while events elsewhere in Africa contributed to the solidarity of white opinion'.¹⁰² The reason given for this reaction is that 'interference [into domestic affairs] undoubtedly struck a responsive chord in the thinking of many white South Africans, undermining their traditional hostility to nationalist policies on domestic issues'. Kuper argued that the conference caused white interests to merge and created a consensus regarding the outside world regardless of differences on domestic issues.¹⁰³ For him, white unity and patriotism was a reaction to international criticism. For Makin the fact that trade agreements with Britain remained in place, caused the English-speaking opposition to choose 'racial solidarity above ethnic identity' and 'soon lost its concern over the symbols of the British connection and became reconciled to a republican

⁹⁹ R. Hyam, 'The Parting of the Ways: Britain and South Africa's Departure from the Commonwealth, 1951-61', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 26, 2 (1998), 157-75; R. Hyam, 'South Africa, Cambridge, and Commonwealth History', *The Round Table*, 90, 360 (2001), 401-14.

¹⁰⁰ Dubow, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa From Smuts to Mandela', 284-314; For the changing nature of the Commonwealth, also see Anon., 'British Interests, South Africa, and the Commonwealth', *The Round Table*, 61, 241 (1971), 3-7.

¹⁰¹ Makin, 'South Africa's Departure from the Commonwealth', 156-71.

¹⁰² L. Kuper, 'African Nationalism in South Africa', in M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume 2*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 488.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

future'.¹⁰⁴ However, competing interpretations can be found in the literature. For example, in *The Road from Sharpeville*, B. Sachs wrote that 'the English are as disturbed as the Afrikaners by the rising tide of colonial revolt', but they were unwilling to enter into a conversation on the matter with Verwoerd because he did not keep South Africa in the Commonwealth.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, H. Kenney's biography of Verwoerd asserted that the reaction to leaving the Commonwealth was 'plenty of understandable resentment among the English-speaking as a group', and because of this 'it was years before they would start supporting the Nationalists *en masse*, and then only after Verwoerd's death'.¹⁰⁶

Hard on the heels of the Commonwealth Conference was Republic Day. Afrikaner nationalist histories have portrayed the establishment of the republic as a triumphant event. In the well-known nationalist volume *Vyfhonderd Jaar Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, the section explaining the referendum and the establishment of a republic is entitled 'The triumph of Afrikaner-nationalism'.¹⁰⁷ However, Republic Day was by no means an uncontested event, as the proposed stay-away by the ANC increased tensions. Many general histories of South Africa do not mention the May 1961 stay-away reinforcing the notion that the establishment of a republic was an unproblematic consolidation of Afrikaner political power.

Where the stay-away is concerned, other historians have shifted their focus to anti-apartheid resistance movements and have approached the events in light of the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre. These narratives examined the republic from the perspective of the rise of African nationalism and the turn to armed resistance in South Africa.¹⁰⁸ While the republic and the stay-away are not always mentioned in histories of the anti-apartheid struggle, it is seen as a pivotal moment in the transition to armed struggle such as in Francis Meli's book *South Africa Belongs to Us: A History of the ANC*. This particular text referred to the stay-away within the context of the last days of

¹⁰⁴ Makin, 'South Africa's Departure from the Commonwealth', 156.

¹⁰⁵ B. Sachs, *The Road from Sharpeville* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1961), 92.

¹⁰⁶ Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, 206.

¹⁰⁷ B. J. Liebenberg, 'From the Statute of Westminster to the Republic of South Africa', in C.F.J. Muller (ed.), *500 Years: A History of South Africa* (Pretoria: Academia, 1969), 400.

¹⁰⁸ Kuper, 'African Nationalism in South Africa', 468.

non-violent resistance to apartheid but did little more than mention the lack of response to their requests from the government.¹⁰⁹ There is little research on the impact of the stay-away on white attitudes. It is important to examine the event as a part of the changing white minority political landscape. As discussed in the background section to this chapter, the Sharpeville massacre and the 'Congo crisis' are all said to have caused fear amongst the white electorate. The stay-away, occurring between Sharpeville and the turn to armed struggle, helps determine the extent to which fear of black nationalism had an impact on white society.

What is clear from the literature discussed above is that it contains contradictions and sweeping generalisations. Missing from them all is a close inspection of the opinions and motivations of the white electorate during the period from the referendum to the republic.

1.3 Problem statement

This thesis will examine the opinions of the white electorate as they were expressed during a period of change. The aim is to understand what motivated the electorate to make its political choices. The choices and responses of the electorate have usually been analysed by looking at election results, political statements or even the editorials found in newspapers. These sources, especially when used in isolation, are inadequate for gaining insight into the opinions of the electorate. This thesis will rely heavily on the opinions and reaction of voters as they were expressed in readers' letters written to the editor of major newspapers. It will further make use of editorials, general reports as well as opinion articles found in these newspapers. Political pamphlets and publications as well as articles by contemporaries which provide analysis or commentary on the events as they occurred will also be consulted. The use of these other sources in a comparative manner is integral to establishing the degree to which readers' letters and editorials stood in isolation. This thesis will examine often understudied events by examining underutilised source materials found in newspapers. By scrutinising these

¹⁰⁹ Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us*, 143.

newspapers as key forums of public opinion, this thesis will provide new insights into understanding the shifts that took place within white society.

1.4 Methodology

Methodologically this thesis navigates a the contested space regarding the use of media publications as the main source of information for sociological and historical inquiries. While most historians agree that media-research is useful and necessary, there are different interpretations regarding the extent to which they can be used successfully. For those who adopt a Marxist perspective, using the media as a source of information can be specifically problematic due to their views on the societal structure. Some philosophers, such as Louis Althusser, are of the opinion that the status quo is in part maintained by ideological state apparatuses such as the media.¹¹⁰ From this point of view, the media can do little more than provide an image of what information was used by the state to maintain the status quo. In a capitalist system, however, not all media outlets are state-controlled. There is a case to be made that in privately-owned media companies information can be used and manipulated to suit the goals of the investors. One view that is not often found in studies on the media, but is also important to keep in mind, is that newspapers can often be subject to pressures from below.¹¹¹ To this extent, when newspapers are a commodity, readers must also be given what they want to read or else they would simply take their business and readership elsewhere.

This section will first draw on social sciences research and guidelines to identify problem areas, and will then describe how this thesis will address these challenges. There are several ways in which an analysis of the media can be focussed. Some see the media as propaganda and specifically try to focus on the meanings that those in power wished to convey to citizens. While various researchers are of the opinion that it is very difficult to establish the extent to which the media influences readers, there are also numerous cases to be made that the media also serves as a reflection of a specific

¹¹⁰ K. G. Tomaselli *et al.*, *The Press in South Africa* (Belville: Anthropos, 1989), 10.

¹¹¹ G. Pounds, 'Democratic Participation and Letters to the Editor in Britain and Italy', *Discourse & Society*, 17, 1 (2006), 34.

society.¹¹² One way in which researchers have approached this element of the media is by using letters written to and published by the editors of newspapers as a reflection of public opinion. Although this will only be one component of the methodology used in this thesis, it is nonetheless important to examine the extent to which 'letters to the editor' can be used in this regard.

There are a variety of interpretations regarding whether the readers' letters published in newspapers can be used as a measure of public opinion. One of the main arguments against the practice of using readers' letters for this purpose is that letters are selected by the editorial team for publication. In this way, the letters that end up being chosen for publication are often selected to support a certain point of view or to promote a specific interpretation of events that fall in line with the commentary provided by the editor. The letters to the editor section in newspapers was often one of the only public platforms the citizens had. Karen Wahl-Jorgensen commented on this by saying that in the past there were 'few outlets available to the public for voicing opinion' and that the letters written to newspapers have become 'mediated sites of public discourse'.¹¹³ Since it is important to understand public opinion in historical contexts and there is often limited sources where these opinions were voiced and documented the use of these sources is necessary. The question should not be whether these letters and articles should be used to measure public opinion, but how they should be effectively used to do so.

L. Sigelman and B. J. Wakosz have looked at finding explanations behind historical events by examining readers letters published in newspapers. They have further shared their ideas regarding how letters to the editor can be used as a public opinion thermometer. According to their analysis, the publication of readers' letters usually encapsulates a range of viewpoints in times of political crises and when people are emotional about an issue. They furthermore suggested that using many different publications will also enhance the representativeness of opinions found in these

¹¹² J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (Harlow: Routledge, 2010), 97.

¹¹³ K. Wahl-Jorgensen, 'Letters to the Editor as a Forum for Public Deliberation: Modes of Publicity and Democratic Debate', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 18, 3 (2001), 303.

published letters.¹¹⁴ Susan Herbst sets out in her article on public opinion to show that even a cultural artefact, such as a film, can be used as a means of gaining insight into public opinion. She also warns that because the measuring of public opinion can be challenging, she ensures not to take the data and analysis too far regarding what it reveals.¹¹⁵ But beyond simply 'using' these letters, the method employed when examining these letters, as well as editorials and other newspaper articles, is content analysis. It is important to note, however, that some researchers admit that there are no clear guidelines on how to do content analysis.¹¹⁶ In order to avoid that the content analysis of newspaper articles results in a mere description of the newspaper contents, some guidelines have to be set for content analysis.

J. D. Startt and W. D. Sloan are of the opinion that the study of newspapers can only be successful when these newspapers are studied within the context of a specific time and when they are not approached in isolation.¹¹⁷ Moreover, analysis of newspapers in this regard should include both quantitative and qualitative aspects to provide correlation when making sense of newspaper articles. As mentioned above, using multiple publications to provide a basis for comparison is also integral to understanding what meaning is to be found within these media messages.

These abovementioned challenges and guidelines must also be addressed in the context of this thesis. The concerns about state control and newspaper ownership are confronted with a unique situation in South Africa. The government did have a direct link to some of the newspapers. Several NP members started their careers as the editors of Afrikaans newspapers and Afrikaans newspapers had a specific link to nationalist culture, with one of the main publishing houses being called '*Nasionale Pers*'. However, this Afrikaans and government influenced section of the press was much smaller in scope than the well-established English-language press. In the Cape Province, the

¹¹⁴ L. Sigelman and B. J. Walkosz, 'Letters to the Editor as a Public Opinion Thermometer: The Martin Luther King Holiday Vote in Arizona', *Social Science Quarterly*, 73, 4 (2019), 944.

¹¹⁵ S. Herbst, 'Public Opinion Infrastructures: Meanings, Measures, Media', *Political Communication*, 18, 4 (2001), 455.

¹¹⁶ J. Macnamara, 'Media Content Analysis: Its Uses; Benefits and Best Practice Methodology', *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, 6, 1 (2005), 15.

¹¹⁷ J. D. Startt and W. D. Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication* (San Ramon: Routledge, 2003), 117.

circulation of daily English newspapers was at least double that of the Afrikaans newspapers, and in the Transvaal provinces, the English daily newspapers reached circulation numbers of three times that of the largest Afrikaans language daily newspapers.¹¹⁸ Although the English-language press surely had their part to play in the maintenance of the status quo, they were notoriously critical of the NP government. With a readership that included English-speaking and Afrikaans readers as well as black South Africans, the English-language press gave voice to a broader range of opinions and perspectives in spite of their own bias towards the NP.

Government control of the media can, however, also occur through censorship. In 1960 there were a few laws in place that could limit the publication of information. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 made it illegal to publish information that promoted communism.¹¹⁹ The Riotous Assemblies Act of 1956 made it illegal to promote hostility amongst black and white by promoting the attendance of meetings that had been declared to be illegal.¹²⁰ The Unlawful Organisations Act passed shortly after the Sharpeville massacre prohibited the publication of certain information on the ANC and the PAC.¹²¹ The English-language press had been a thorn in the side of the NP government for some time, and they were looking for a means to control the press. Already in 1950, a press commission had been established to investigate the nature of the press and its role in the portrayal of South Africa to the rest of the world. The report of the commission was however only presented in 1962.¹²² Despite additional censoring laws pursued in later years the government never obtained direct control of the media. The well-known member of the *Rand Daily Mail's* editorial team, Benjamin Pogrand wrote that the press was 'free and yet unfree' since government action was mostly reactive when they thought that newspapers had overstepped.¹²³

In order to use these sources in a South African context, it must also be questioned whether newspapers were, in fact, a public forum for citizens. Television as a personal

¹¹⁸ M. Broughton, *Press and Politics of South Africa* (Cape Town: Purnell & Sons, 1961), 304–6.

¹¹⁹ W. A. Hachten, *The Press and Apartheid* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 114.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹²² G. S. Jackson, *Breaking Story: The South African Press* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 18.

¹²³ B. Pogrand, 'The South African Press', *Index on Press Censorship*, 5, 3 (1976), 10.

source of information was an established phenomenon by the 1950s, yet South Africa did not participate in this process. To control the media, the government did not allow the use of television broadcasts services in South Africa until 1976. Although radio services were available, there was a heavy reliance on print media as an information service. Ron Krabill identifies the print media as being the most influential between print and radio media, especially amongst the elite and minority groups.¹²⁴ The radio service of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was viewed as being manipulated by the government much more than the press was. The English-press was notoriously loathed by the NP, serving as a platform for anti-NP sentiments.

In line with the recommendations that public opinion can best be measured in a society during times of instability, here too the examined events occurred at a time of 'crisis'. The referendum leading up to the establishment of the republic dealt with the emotive topic as well as moments often described as a crisis, and correspondingly some newspapers voiced a variety of different interpretations and reactions to these events.

1.5 Source selection and collection

The previous section noted that comparison was integral to understanding these newspaper articles and published letters. The thesis will examine and compare six different daily newspapers. To be representative of the debates occurring in these newspapers at the time, the biggest English and Afrikaans daily newspaper were selected. Below Table 1 indicates the circulation figures for South Africa in 1959. These circulation figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulations were published in *Press and Politics of South Africa*.¹²⁵ The circulation figures accompanied by an asterisk indicate the three daily papers with the largest circulation numbers in both language groups. The largest daily English-language newspapers chosen for this thesis are *The Rand Daily Mail*; *The Star*; *The Cape Argus* and the largest daily Afrikaans-language newspapers are *Die Vaderland*; *Die Transvaler*; and *Die Burger*.

¹²⁴ R. Krabill, *Starring Mandela and Cosby: Media and the End(s) of Apartheid* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 45.

¹²⁵ Broughton, *Press and Politics of South Africa*, 304–6.

Table 1: South African newspaper circulation figures, 1959¹²⁶

Transvaal	Language	Circulation
<i>The Rand Daily Mail</i>	English	114 142 *
<i>The Star</i>	English	170 894*
<i>The Pretoria News</i>	English	18 152
<i>Die Vaderland</i>	Afrikaans	47 571*
<i>Die Transvaler</i>	Afrikaans	40 811*
Cape Province		
<i>The Cape Argus</i>	English	95 353*
<i>The Cape Times</i>	English	66 522
<i>Die Burger</i>	Afrikaans	42 754*
Natal		
<i>The Natal Mercury</i>	English	55 967
Free State		
<i>Die Volksblad</i>	Afrikaans	27 465

The selected newspapers, based on their circulation numbers, are thus representative of only two of the Union's four provinces. As was pointed out in the literature review, the topic of the referendum is often approached by referring to Natal. Natal was the only province with a large majority anti-republican vote, but only contributed to about 18% of the anti-republican vote. Similarly, the Orange Free State, with its large pro-republican majority vote contributed a mere 13% to the overall anti-republican vote. The newspapers were chosen from the two provinces with the closest voting figures to obtain a broad range of opinions from the larger cities in South Africa. These newspaper articles were collected from the microfilm reels located at the University of South Africa's main library as well as from the National Library in Pretoria. The comparison between newspapers is not sufficient to deduce meaning. As mentioned in the methodology section, the examination of the newspapers in the context of their time is the key to successful content analysis. In order to make use of such contextual

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

evidence, sources and publications from various other archives and collections were also consulted. Where sections have been quoted from Afrikaans-language newspapers, the quote provided is a direct translation of the text that appears in Afrikaans in the newspaper.

Archival documents and sources were also used for comparison with newspaper articles. In the National Archive in Pretoria, sources provided information on the organisational elements of Republic Day. The Western Cape Archive and Record Services provided more documentation regarding the political campaigns for and against the republic. Here, as well as in the National Library in Cape Town, party political pamphlets and items were examined which provided useful information regarding the main arguments used by each political party. The Archive for Contemporary Affairs at the University of the Free State contains an array of political materials, personal documents, books and newspaper clippings pertaining to the events discussed in this thesis. Various items and publications documenting the participation, reaction and reflections on the events discussed in this thesis also proved to be of value. The Robben Island Mayibuye Archive located at the University of the Western Cape houses documents pertaining to the May 1961 stay-away and its successes. The Robben Island Mayibuye archive, as well as the archival materials located at the University of Cape Town, contains anti-government and underground publications and circulations that proved to be valuable sources of information for comparison.

With regard to style and referencing, mention has to be made of the efforts that have been taken to address some of the challenges associated with newspaper-based research. Great effort has been made to ensure that the newspaper articles collected for the thesis have been meticulously referenced. As such, the majority of the newspaper articles used in this thesis contain full references to page numbers and also indicate authors. In some instances, the authors of letters to the editor have evidently used pseudonyms and these have been included as the name of the author. In instances where readers letters and opinion articles did not have a name credit for the author, the author has been indicated as anonymous (anon.). This was also the case where the illustrators of cartoons could not be identified based on their signature in the

frame of the cartoon. For the general newspaper articles published in these newspapers, the authors were not indicated and as such were also not specifically identified as anonymous in the footnotes. The vast majority of newspaper articles were collected by the PhD candidate, but in some instances newspaper articles were sources from clipping boxes or clipping services. In these cases, the page numbers were seldom indicated and have been referenced as having no page (n.p.). In the rare cases where these articles also did not indicate the date that the article was published on, it has been referenced as having no date (n.d.). For reference to sections within this thesis, p has been added to indicate page number so as to avoid confusion.

While it is always better to consult the original source materials, there has been some limitation in this regard with the closure of public and private libraries earlier during 2020. For the majority of the thesis, the original parliamentary debates have been sourced and used. For some of the references of parliamentary debates in Chapter Four, an alternative source had to be identified. For this purpose, use has been made of *Keesing's Contemporary Archives- Weekly Diary of World Events 1961 -1921*, Volume 12, which contains verbatim sections from the parliamentary debates. Both the abovementioned source as well as the original parliamentary debates make use of columns, and these columns have been indicated by adding a 'c' in front of the column number (for example Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c98).

1.6 Chapter outline

This thesis comprises three empirical chapters covering the three events noted in this introduction. In order to retain the integrity of each event, this has meant that Chapter Two on the referendum is considerably longer than the others. Chapter Two examines the time leading up to the referendum and focuses on different aspects of the referendum campaign as they were discussed and reflected on in the newspapers. The newspaper coverage of this chapter focuses on publications between August 1960 and October 1960, ending shortly after the referendum on 5 October. Chapter Two examines the campaign launched by those who supported the republican cause and

explores the reactions of voters. It explores how the pro-republican campaign argued that the establishment of a republic would provide citizens with an ideal future and white unity. Their main line of argument was that the republic would provide solutions to South Africa's internal challenges. Chapter Two examines articles and letters published in the press in order to grasp response to this line of argument. Chapter Two also covers the anti-republican campaign and their dystopian view of a future republic. The line of argument used by the anti-republicans was that there were no guarantees for the future in a republic, whether in terms of continued Commonwealth membership or economic trade advantages. They argued that surety on a secure South African future should come before a republic was established. Chapter Two examines the reactions of voters as well as their participation in these debates by looking at articles and letters published in the press. This chapter seeks to answer questions regarding the referendum vote as well as provide more insight into what the referendum results meant. It uses discussions regarding the respective referendum campaigns to gauge public opinion regarding these issues and to gain insight into what motivated voters.

Chapter Three explores the days leading up to South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, as well as the immediate aftermath. It traces how the events that occurred in London were portrayed in the local press. It also explores the reactions to the withdrawal as evidenced in newspaper articles and published letters. It suggests that the conference was an important event, shaping the notion of what it meant to maintain the status quo. Discussions on the aftermath of the withdrawal are examined in relation to the conventional wisdom that the loss of Commonwealth membership was readily accepted. Chapter Four focusses on the events surrounding South Africa's Republic Day as well as the accompanying stay-away. It explores the dichotomy between a day of celebration and the fear that encompassed it. How voters reacted to the events and specifically what requests they made of the ruling party during the tense situation are investigated. The chapter explores the opinions of voters as they were expressed in letters especially where these concerned the tension associated with the establishment of a republic. Chapter Four analyses discussions regarding apartheid and the establishment of a republic. Chapter Five offers a brief summarising conclusion.

Chapter Two

The 1960 republic referendum and voter motivation

I have especially brought one message... that the republic must be established, but if it is established by all of us working together, it will be our greatest power for solving all our problems and for promptly achieving prosperity.
H.F. Verwoerd, 31 May 1960¹²⁷

The 1960 republican referendum was the first national referendum to be held in South Africa.¹²⁸ As such, it holds a peculiar place within the political history of South Africa, mainly because it is inherently different from the elections that preceded and followed it. Where elections worked on a constituency basis which transferred percentages into seats in parliament, the referendum was held on a straightforward majority basis. During an election, the voters would have to choose from a variety of options, whereas the choices in this referendum were limited. Based on the choices between political parties, voters had the option of choosing between five political parties in the 1958 election and seven political parties in the 1961 election, not counting the alternative option of deciding not to vote at all. In the referendum, the options open to the electorate were limited to voting in favour of a republic; voting against a republic; or not voting. The limited choices open to voters during a referendum make it challenging to draw conclusions based on the outcome of the referendum. A choice as in a referendum between one of two options would be nearly impossible to accurately interpret without taking into account the reasons why people formed their opinions before they voted. This is evident from the divergent interpretations of the referendum results found in the literature. It can be challenging to compare the results of an election with the results of the referendum. However, some scholars have attempted to compare the results of the 1960 referendum and 1961 election. For example, Stultz and Butler formulated an

¹²⁷ Verwoerd's speech during the Union Festival on 31 May 1960 as published in A. N. Pelzer (ed.), *Verwoerd aan die Woord: Toesprake 1948 -1962*, (Pretoria: Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel, 1963), 380.

¹²⁸ Sussman, 'The Referendum as an Electoral Device in National Party Politics, 1917-60', 259–75.

equation to make deductions regarding the 'probable overall strength of the Government'.¹²⁹ Stultz and Butler's assumption regarding the growth of support for the NP has remained an essential source for academics ever since its publication in 1963.¹³⁰ Their inferences regarding the 1961 election have been used to hypothesise about the significance of the 1960 referendum results.¹³¹

This chapter will use qualitative analysis of the debates surrounding the referendum to address and evaluate some of the assumptions and inferences that researchers have made regarding the referendum. As discussed in the literature review, the referendum results are often interpreted as being a sign of increased support for the NP. Closely connected to this interpretation is the view that Verwoerd was taking a risk in holding the referendum because the NP had not yet been able to secure a majority vote.¹³² As far as group divisions are concerned, the general interpretation is that there was a marginal increase in support for the establishment of a republic from English-speaking voters. There are several reasons usually given for this perceived increase in English-speaking support in the 1960 referendum. Some academics suggest that the Sharpeville massacre and the 'Congo crisis', in conjunction with the NP's race-based fear propaganda, garnered support from voters who wanted to maintain the status quo. Another explanation that is often given is that English-speaking voters were responding to Verwoerd's call for unity between white groups in the run-up to the referendum.¹³³

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate the abovementioned interpretation of the referendum results, by using a different approach. Rather than look for explanations for the ultimate referendum result, this chapter will firstly examine the content of the referendum campaigns to draw conclusions about the results that followed. The separate sections of this chapter will be based on the central debates that took place during the referendum campaign. These main arguments or topics can be found in the parliamentary proceedings of 20 January 1960, when Verwoerd announced his intention

¹²⁹ K. A. Heard, *General Elections in South Africa, 1943- 1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 145; N. M. Stultz and J. Butler, 'The South African General Election of 1961', *Political Science Quarterly*, 78, 1 (1963), 86–110.

¹³⁰ Dubow, 'South Africa and South Africans', 17–65; Passemiers, 'South Africa and the "Congo Crisis"', 203.

¹³¹ Stultz and Butler, 'The South African General Election of 1961', 107.

¹³² Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 474.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 475; De Villiers, 'Afrikaner Nationalism', 394.

to hold a referendum on the republican issue. The first section of this chapter will deal with a topic that is often discussed in connection with republicanism but is not often associated with the referendum. When Verwoerd made his announcement on a possible republican referendum, questions regarding the nature and style of a republic were raised. In response to the announcement, the opposition questioned the democratic nature of both the referendum and the proposed republic. The opposition was hoping to get more clarity on whether the proposed republic would be a Kruger-style republic, where the president had a great deal of unconstrained power, or if it would follow a more democratic style. This section will thus examine the debates regarding the democratic nature of both the referendum and the proposed republic. It will further explore the basis of fear of and mistrust in the government, as it played out during the referendum campaign.

The announcement of a republican referendum took place during a parliamentary discussion on racial policy on 20 January 1960. It was also introduced as part of a process to promote the policy of separate development by establishing a white republic.¹³⁴ Accordingly, the second section of the chapter will deal with the various aspects of Verwoerd's proposed white republic. It will examine the concept 'white republic' as an inclusive term, whereby a republic was promoted and evaluated based on its ability to unify the Afrikaans and English-speaking sections of the electorate. It will explore the notion that English-speakers were responding positively to the government's call for unity. Furthermore, it will also explore the concept 'white republic' as an exclusive term, insofar as it promoted the establishment of a white sanctuary republic as protection against Africans and African nationalism. This section will speak to the notion that racial fear motivated people to vote for a republic and the interpretation that the referendum result was indicative of white support for the NP's racial policy.

The third section of this chapter will focus on another question asked by the opposition in response to the announcement in Parliament regarding whether the proposed South African republic would remain a member of the Commonwealth. Perhaps because Verwoerd committed to retaining South Africa's Commonwealth membership in the run-

¹³⁴ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c96-8.

up to the referendum, this topic is often overlooked as a contributing factor to the referendum result. This section will explore how the future of a proposed republic and its place within the international community formed an integral part of the respective referendum campaigns. These three sections will explore the debates surrounding the referendum by examining how these debates played out in political propaganda materials, editorials and readers' letters published in these newspapers during the two months leading up to the referendum. It is important to take into account that these sections will explore the proposed republic as a hypothetical future state ahead of the referendum. This future state played out in the minds of the electorate in two ways, namely the state that they believed would be established as well as the state that they hoped would be established. Understanding these approaches to the proposed republic helps us to understand the referendum outcome since we can not only see how these imagined republics of the future motivated people to vote, but also how they reflected on their society. The three sections will deal with the topics of the hypothetical state as well. Section one will explore the proposed republic as a state that would either be free or oppressive. Section two will examine the future republic as it was interpreted either as a possible inclusive or exclusive cultural entity. Section three will look at the future republic as being either a possible role-player in international affairs or being excluded from the world stage. Only after these views of the future state have been explored will the referendum results be discussed in the fourth section of this chapter. It will then be brought into connection with the preceding sections to reach meaningful conclusions.

There remains a distinct party-political factor to the referendum campaign. As such, identifying distinctions in terminology is important for this analysis. The promoters of the anti-republican outlook, which are examined in this chapter, mainly consisted of the UP, the PP and several English-language newspapers. Although the UP and PP had only recently split, they decided to work alongside each other in the months leading up to the referendum to oppose the republic. These parties and their supporters will be referred to as 'the opposition'. Their supporters were not anti-republican or English-speaking by default. As such, the term 'anti-republican' can be used to refer to a person from any group or political party. Similarly, a republican was not bound to a political party or

cultural grouping. When speaking of 'republicanism', this term is usually used regarding the NP's strive for a republic and has a political connotation. The use of the term 'Nationalist' specifically refers to leaders or representatives of the NP government. The use of the term 'Afrikaner nationalist' or 'nationalist' is used to refer to supporters of the Afrikaner nationalist principles of the NP or those who supported their ideology. This again differs from supporters of the NP who did not declare any such strong ideological convictions. The use of the terms 'English-speaker' and 'Afrikaner' are based on the presence of these terms in the source materials.

The newspapers consulted in this chapter vary in their readership. The English-language newspapers had both English-speaking and Afrikaans readers who interacted with the paper, whereas the Afrikaans-language paper seldom published the views of English-speakers. The English-language papers all published readers' letters that were in disagreement with editorial views on the referendum and the volume of letters published is one of the primary sources of public discourse used in these newspapers. Conversely, the Afrikaans-language newspapers seldom published letters on the topic of the referendum that did not agree with the NP's republican discourse. This chapter will thus not be able to come to detailed conclusions regarding how either English-speakers or Afrikaners voted. It will, however, be able to indicate whether the interpretations of the referendum in existing literature are correct in their conclusions. Most importantly, it will look beyond cultural motivators associated with the Boer-war to understand the other important factors that played a role in the outcome of the referendum. This chapter will show that the referendum and its associated debates were as much focused on the future of a republic as it was on the Union's past.

2.1 The future republic as a constitutional state

The opening chapter introduced the historical significance of republicanism as well as its links to Afrikaner culture. This historic republicanism tainted the electorate's perception of what a republic would entail. Although the 1948 NP electoral victory did not result in the immediate establishment of a republic, the Afrikaner nationalist aspiration of establishing a republic was never completely dormant. Nationalist leaders

prioritised other political aspirations and temporarily put the republican goal on hold. However, in the years leading up to the referendum, several steps that were taken by the NP increasingly contributed to South Africa's status as a sovereign nation. Some examples of changes that contributed to this constitutional development were the legalisation of the Union parliament's sovereignty as well as the institution of the Union's own flag and anthem. In his 1960 announcement of a republican referendum in parliament, Verwoerd himself also referred to several of these changes by calling them 'gradual developments' in the process of establishing a republic.¹³⁵ The NP had always promoted their republican ideals in their party constitution, but from the mid-1950s, they became more candid about their intentions to pursue the establishment of a republic. In a party-political newspaper circulated in 1954, the NP declared that South Africa was entering the final phase on the road to becoming a republic in light of the support they had gained in the provincial elections that year.¹³⁶ Although republicanism was always clearly recognised as an inherent characteristic and goal of the NP, Van Schoor acknowledges that until the announcement of the referendum at the beginning of 1960, the nature and style of the desired republic remained uncertain in nationalist circles.¹³⁷ This indicates that the future republic and its style of governance manifested itself in various forms within the minds of politicians and the electorate.

Over several years and in combination with deteriorating British sentimentality the historical objections against a republic started losing significance. During the 1950s several English-speaking citizens had publically proclaimed their support for a republic or had written to nationalist leaders to discuss the conditions under which they would be willing to vote in favour of a republic.¹³⁸ Laurence Gandar observed such a change in attitude in an editorial in the *Rand Daily Mail* after the announcement of a referendum in 1960, writing that 'if six or seven years ago, the government had announced its intention to hold a referendum on a republic, there would have been protest demonstrations

¹³⁵ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c105.

¹³⁶ Archive for Contemporary Affairs (hereafter ARCA), Hendrik French Verwoerd collection PV93 (hereafter PV93), File 1/47/1/2, National Party Transvaal: Die Nasionale Partynuus No 9, October 1954.

¹³⁷ Van Schoor and Van Rooyen, *Republieke en Republikeine*, 226.

¹³⁸ ARCA, Eric Hendrik Louw Collection PV4 (hereafter PV4), File 86, Letter from: Alexander Steward To: Eric Louw, February 1959.

throughout the country. Today the prospect has caused little fuss and few hard words'.¹³⁹ Although devotion to the British monarch and the historical sentimentality of anti-republicanism was losing traction, other foundational objections such as the style of the proposed republic remained central for those opposing the republic. This was the reason why those English-speakers who were open-minded about the establishment of a republic were specific about the conditions and grounds on which they would support a republic. The NP was also aware that the nature and style of the desired Afrikaner republic were of specific concern to some members of the English-speaking population and would remain a foundational point of conflict for republicans and anti-republicans. This was revealed by an analyst reporting to the NP on the republican issue in 1954. He believed the biggest stumbling block on the road to a strong republic was 'the fear of the English-language population group for the loss of their identity as a cultural group through political action in the republic'. According to him, the most critical task would be to convince English-speaking South Africans that a republic would be a true partnership based on the equality of the different white groups.¹⁴⁰

The basis for these fears of cultural and political exclusion can be found in the ideological origins of Afrikaner republicanism after the end of the South African War. After the war some right-wing Afrikaners felt oppressed and restricted by the government and systematically became more nationalist and militant. These right-wing undercurrents and desire for a sovereign Afrikaner republic were manifested in the notorious 1942 draft republican constitution. This document was published in *Die Transvaler* and *Die Burger* in 1942 under the instruction of D.F. Malan.¹⁴¹ Since Malan would lead the NP to victory in the 1948 election only a few years later, the proclamations of this draft republican constitution subsequently became associated with the National Party and their republican ideals. This published draft constitution was adapted from a document entitled 'The Boer Republic' which was drafted in 1941 by the

¹³⁹ L. Gandar, 'The Republic: Why Not a Positive Attitude?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 January 1960, n.p.

¹⁴⁰ ARCA, J.A.M Hertzog collection PV451 (hereafter PV451), File 1/446/1/1, Bylae by Bondsraadnotule: Ons Republikeinse Strewte, 27 September 1954, 9-10.

¹⁴¹ At the time that Malan gave instructions for the publication of the draft constitution, he was a member of the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP). Within a few years the party would become the NP and win the 1948 election.

right-wing Afrikaner cultural group, the Ossewabrandwag (OB).¹⁴² The OB's ideas regarding republican state structure were considered to be 'radical' and 'authoritarian' and some of these principles were also adopted in the 1942 draft constitution.¹⁴³ The principles of the 1942 draft republican constitution that were considered to be the most controversial were the authoritarian approach to the powers of the president; the systematic promotion of Afrikaner culture as the official culture; the demotion of English to an additional language and the breaking of all ties with Britain and the Commonwealth. Numerous nationalist leaders and supporters were not enthusiastic about the fascist elements of this document and Malan eventually distanced himself from the draft constitution.¹⁴⁴

Furthermore, the perceived disregard for English-speaking culture and sentimentalities elevated fears that a republic would bring some form of oppression for those Whites who were not Afrikaners. In the years that followed, the NP worked to distance themselves from this controversial document and ardently advocated that they would support equal language rights for both white groups.¹⁴⁵ Despite these efforts and the 17 years that had passed before 1960, the NP found it challenging to escape the stigma created by the draft constitution.¹⁴⁶

The republican question, as well as the 1942 draft constitution, received renewed attention when Verwoerd unexpectedly became Prime Minister in 1958 upon the untimely death of J.G. Strijdom. Verwoerd's first speech in Parliament as the Prime Minister took place on 18 September 1958 and was a retaliation against the opposition's insinuation that Verwoerd was not a supporter of democratic principles. These

¹⁴² The cultural organisation Ossewabrandwag was more militant in their views and often at odds with organisations such as the Broederbond. The fascist ideals of the Ossewabrandwag lost them a great deal of support after 1945. See Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 395.

¹⁴³ C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel- Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009), 407–9.

¹⁴⁴ Van Schoor, 'Die Herlewing van die Republikeinse Ideaal 1902-1961', 180.

¹⁴⁵ ARCA, United Part Information Service Collection PV256 (Hereafter PV256), Addendum C, National Party Information Office: *Equal Language Rights*, circa 1953.

¹⁴⁶ See for example 'Republikeinse Beginsels', *Die Transvaler*, 13 May 1958, n.p. where clear indication is given of a republic based on christian-democratic principles and equal English- and Afrikaans language rights. The contention between the NP and the draft constitution is discussed in Van Schoor, 'Die Herlewing van die Republikeinse Ideaal 1902-1961', 181.

accusations were based on Verwoerd's contributions to the 1942 draft constitution. Making specific reference to the 1942 draft constitution, Verwoerd insisted that the NP had never accepted the document or its principles and that any future republican constitution would therefore not be based on the 1942 draft. He declared that once a republic was established 'the fear that a democracy would not be maintained in the Republic, and that the language rights of both groups will not be acknowledged' would disappear.¹⁴⁷ It was evident that Verwoerd would be pursuing the establishment of a republic during the remainder of his term in office. In response to this renewed discussion on republicanism, the editor of *The Cape Argus* insisted that voters were not against a co-operative republic, instead suggesting that they were merely requesting that the fundamental principles of a republic had to be agreed upon before collaboration could be considered.¹⁴⁸

The situation would be further complicated by a report published in *Die Transvaler* regarding a statement made by Verwoerd at an NP Congress in November 1958. *Die Transvaler* reported that Verwoerd had said that people would have to be forced to participate in a republic in order to understand its value 'even if time and numbers do not justify it yet'. Even though *Die Transvaler* amended their article the following day to indicate that Verwoerd had not said this, the damage had been done.¹⁴⁹ In commenting on this correction, the editor of *The Star* insisted that it did little to dissipate fears of undemocratic tendencies in a republican regime. He said that these fears were 'surely not so unreasonable' considering that 'nobody knows what a republic would look like, and neither Dr Verwoerd nor any other Government spokesman has ventured to say'.¹⁵⁰ It would still be another two years before the referendum would be held. However, the fears based on the 1942 draft constitution were already resurfacing alongside the resurgence of republicanism. Some UP leaders even insisted that there had not yet been any statements made on the type of republic, because the nationalists were aware

¹⁴⁷ Verwoerd, *Verwoerd Aan die Woord*, 156&165.

¹⁴⁸ Editorial, 'Uninviting Invitation', *The Cape Argus*, 5 November 1958, n.p.

¹⁴⁹ 'Premier Corrects Republic Report', *Pretoria News*, 8 November 1958, n.p.

¹⁵⁰ Editorial, 'A Brand New Formula', *The Star*, 10 November, 1958, n.p.

that their desire for a totalitarian system would scare the voters.¹⁵¹ In a UP circular, they further exploited these fears by referring to the policy of the NP as one of 'Afrikaner domination' and interpreted republicanism as a racial-dominance policy 'aimed at the English-speaking section'.¹⁵² These misgivings were not only promoted by the UP but also by sections of the English-language press. As late as December 1959 the editor of *The Star* commented that a republic gained on the promise that it would be democratic 'would simply be the prelude to a whole string of further agitations aimed at moulding the new constitution into something nearer the heart's desire of republican extremists'.¹⁵³ By the time that Verwoerd made his announcement in parliament, scepticism regarding the democratic nature of nationalist republicanism was already a part of the discussion.

Verwoerd announced a possibility of a republican referendum on 20 January 1960 during a motion of no confidence debate brought against the government by the opposition. In his response statement, Verwoerd asked for the confidence of parliament to hold a referendum on the issue of whether South Africa should become a republic. He announced the referendum by saying that it would not be an election but a simple referendum so that the electorate could vote on the issue as they wanted to, regardless of their party-political allegiance. He further insisted that the referendum should in no way be used as a vote of no confidence against the government since voters should be able to make their choices without any guilt about party-political affiliation.¹⁵⁴ During the announcement, Verwoerd took great care discussing the structure and style of the proposed republic whilst promoting the equality of both white language groups in South Africa and outlined a republic which was markedly different from the 1942 draft republican constitution.

There were three essential aspects of the referendum and the proposed republic that remained unanswered after these January parliamentary discussions. Firstly, while the

¹⁵¹ 'Nats. Afraid to Reveal Totalitarian Plan', *Cape Times*, 18 November 1958, n.p.

¹⁵² ARCA, PV 256, Addendum C, United Party Information Service: *The Basic Policies of South African Parties*, circa 1958.

¹⁵³ Editorial, 'Come into My Parlour', *The Star*, 1 December 1959, n.p.

¹⁵⁴ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c98.

intention and practicalities of holding a republican referendum had been discussed, the actual date of such a vote had not been indicated. When questioned on this, Verwoerd stated that the referendum would not take place before May 1960 and that at least two months notice would be given ahead of the referendum when a final decision had been made.¹⁵⁵ Secondly, Verwoerd gave no clear indication of whether the government intended to remain a member of the Commonwealth if South Africa became a republic. He said that this decision would rely on international affairs and the nature of the Commonwealth at the time that the referendum was held. He declared that the government's stance on the matter would be indicated ahead of the referendum.¹⁵⁶ Thirdly, although the parliamentary discussion had given clarity on certain principles for the new constitution, no new draft constitution for the proposed republic had been formulated or presented to the electorate. On 3 August 1960, after the NP's parliamentary assembly, the government officially announced that the referendum would take place on 5 October 1960.¹⁵⁷ At the time of the announcement, South Africa was still operating under the emergency conditions which had been instituted in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre. This state of emergency only ended on 31 August 1960, a mere five weeks before the referendum. The NP also announced that they intended to apply for South Africa to remain a member of the Commonwealth upon becoming a republic. However, there was still no new draft constitution on which the proposed republic would be based. The lack of a new constitution and fear of the 1942 draft constitution does not appear to have been the most influential factor in the outcome of the referendum, but it was a factor which is often underrepresented in the literature. This is crucial to understanding how the hypothetical republic manifested in the minds of the electorate and ultimately played a role in the outcome of the referendum.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, c100.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, c106.

¹⁵⁷ Van Schoor and Van Rooyen, *Republieke en Republikeine*, 242.

2.1.1 A bare-majority referendum

The discussion on the democratic nature of the government was mainly focussed on the state structure of the proposed republic. However, some initial objections were aimed at the process of the referendum itself, which was deemed as unfair. Gary Sussman explained that the concept of a referendum was a long-held ideal for the NP since they had used the concept of establishing a republic by referendum to broaden their electoral appeal. The NP could have established a republic through a parliamentary vote, but a national referendum had been a part of the political pledge of the NP for several years.¹⁵⁸ In his parliamentary announcement about the republican referendum, Verwoerd declared that the question would be determined by a bare majority. He explained that steps would be taken by the government to establish a republic even 'if there is a majority of one in favour' in the referendum.¹⁵⁹ The NP explained that a bare-majority referendum was the only way in which the republican question could be settled without a minority forcing their will upon a majority.¹⁶⁰ This was a departure from what Verwoerd's predecessors had envisioned with a referendum, with most having committed to a republic established based on a qualified majority in a referendum.¹⁶¹

This new 'majority of one' approach was seen as undemocratic or underhanded by the opposition since this was a departure from the promises made by the NP in the past.¹⁶² In their party principles, the NP had never committed to establishing a republic based on a two-thirds majority. However, their declaration that a republic would be established by 'the broad will of the people' was often interpreted as such.¹⁶³ The UP accordingly declared that the NP was deviating from what they had promised since 'former leaders of the Nationalist Party pledged themselves to an 'overwhelming' majority for a republic,

¹⁵⁸ Sussman, 'The Referendum as an Electoral Device in National Party Politics', 237.

¹⁵⁹ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c99.

¹⁶⁰ Western Cape Archive and Record Services (hereafter WCARS), Nationalist Party A1227 (hereafter A1227), National Party Information Service: The Advent of the Republic, 1 August 1960, 6.

¹⁶¹ Sussman, 'The Referendum as an Electoral Device in National Party Politics', 237.

¹⁶² ARCA, Cathy Taylor Collection PV71 (hereafter PV71), File 1/11/4/11/1 vol2, United Party: The Policy of the United Party- Against the Republic, circa 1954, 3.

¹⁶³ ARCA, PV93, File 1/47/1/2, National Party Transvaal: Die Nasionale Partynuus No 9, October 1954.

which Dr Verwoerd has changed to a majority of one'.¹⁶⁴ Both the UP and the PP advocated that this was evidence that the NP could not be trusted to adhere to any promises made ahead of the referendum. In a circular, the PP argued that Verwoerd's refusal to adhere to the promises of his predecessors should serve as a reminder that a government that was willing to break one promise would have no qualms with breaking others.¹⁶⁵ Since the proposed state structure was based on what Verwoerd had said in parliament, the UP proposed that his assurances in this regard could also not be trusted.

These objections were not only based on the pledges of former leaders of the NP but were also based on the referendum itself being undemocratic because it could be determined by just one vote. The editor of *The Cape Argus* advocated that a bare majority vote should not be considered as valid and insisted that an important event such as constitutional change would be undemocratic if it were based on a majority of one vote.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, several readers writing to the English-language newspapers argued that only a two-thirds majority vote should be considered as valid, mainly because anything less would result in a republic forced on people who did not want it.¹⁶⁷

It should be noted that these readers often stated that they were not against a republican form of government, but rather against a change that was not based on the broad will of the people. The UP used the idea that a republic was being forced on the people to suggest that the NP did not shy away from authoritarian measures to reach their goals. The UP specifically said that the NP could not be trusted on the issue because the coming republic was being 'dictated' to the country.¹⁶⁸ This is even more apparent in De Villiers Graaff's objection to the passing of the referendum bill in parliament in May 1960. He specifically stated that the provisions in the referendum bill,

¹⁶⁴ WCARS, United Party A1230 (hereafter A1230), United Party Division of Information and Research: Facts about the Republic, August 1960, 6.

¹⁶⁵ WCARS, Progressive Party A1229 (hereafter A1229), Progressive Party Fact Paper: 12 Reasons Why Verwoerd's Republic Must Be Rejected, n.d.

¹⁶⁶ Editorial, 'A Bare-Majority Republic', *The Cape Argus*, 1 January 1959, n.p.

¹⁶⁷ E. E. Lewis, 'A Republic Based on Shallow Foundations Is Suicidal', *The Star*, 2 September 1960, 8; E. W. Woodruff, 'Demands "good" Republic', *The Star*, 1 September 1960, 8.

¹⁶⁸ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: Keep our Union as it is, n.d.

which gave the Prime Minister leeway to make changes to the law was the type of legislation typically only found in dictatorships.¹⁶⁹

While the UP focussed their objections on the mechanisms of the referendum; the PP objected that the referendum would be undemocratic because it would be decided only by the white electorate. Although the move away from a broad majority vote was seen as a deviation from NP policy, the principle that only white citizens would decide the republican question had always been a part of the NP's policy.¹⁷⁰ The PP objected to Verwoerd's assertion that the 'white electorate will decide the destiny of their South Africa', by insisting that everyone affected by such a radical change should have a say in the matter.¹⁷¹ In a circular which listed reasons why a republic should be rejected, they argued that the establishment of a republic would affect everyone and should therefore not be decided by less than one-fifth of the population.¹⁷² They pointed out that a Whites-only referendum would be 'in conflict with the principles of western civilisation' and therefore undemocratic.¹⁷³

Here it becomes evident that the NP, the UP, and the PP had differing interpretations of what was considered to be 'democratic'. This was also clear from readers' letters written to the editors of the English-language press. These published letters insisted that a Whites-only referendum would be invalid and that the republic should be rejected based on the fact that only the opinions of the white population would be considered. A reader's letter published in *The Cape Argus* aptly summarised the weight of the situation by describing the process as a 'racial referendum where three million Whites are called upon to decide what form of government 14 million people of all races are to have'.¹⁷⁴ In a letter published in the *Rand Daily Mail*, one reader also objected that 'there can be no validity in a referendum in which 80% of the country's inhabitants are debarred from

¹⁶⁹ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, May 2, 1960), c6420.

¹⁷⁰ WCARS, A1227, National Party Information Service: The Advent of the Republic, 1 August 1960, 7; ARCA, PV93, File 1/47/1/2, National Party Transvaal: Die Nasionale Partynuus No 9, October 1954.

¹⁷¹ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c100.

¹⁷² WCARS, A1229, Progressive Party Fact Paper: 12 Reasons Why Verwoerd's Republic Must Be Rejected, n.d.

¹⁷³ WCARS, A1229, Progressive Party Fact Paper: The Progressives and the Republic, August 1960, n.d.

¹⁷⁴ E. Du Toit, 'Republican Issue and Racial Policy', *The Cape Argus*, 20 September 1960, 14; See also M. Mackenzie, 'Louw's Call for White Unity is Seen as Typical Nat Propaganda', *The Cape Argus*, 5 September 1960, 9.

voting'.¹⁷⁵ The editor of *Die Vaderland* saw these objections as a laughable attack against republicanism, proclaiming that 'in their fervour against the republican state structure there is even a complaint against the restriction of the referendum to Whites only'.¹⁷⁶ After the referendum bill had been passed in May 1960, this decision was final. Anti-republican groups continued to use these objections against the referendum in the anti-republican campaign to advocate that the NP was untrustworthy or undemocratic. Although these objections against the referendum were seemingly concerned with the mechanics of the referendum, they do reveal awareness about the democratic nature of the future republic. This awareness exposes political motivations that reach beyond the traditional interpretation of the referendum being determined by cultural affiliations. This is even more prominent in the objections directed at the republic based on its state structure.

2.1.2 The need for a republican constitution

The concern regarding the democratic nature of the proposed republic is also apparent in references to the proposed state structure for the republic. As mentioned previously, the lack of any proposed state structure before the January 1960 parliamentary discussion, meant the structure of the republican state had manifested itself in the minds of the electorate in a variety of ways. One of the first questions that had been posed by the opposition during the 20 January 1960 parliamentary debate was to inquire what type of state structure the proposed republic would have and to gain clarity on the subject. Verwoerd admitted that he specifically had to deal with the questions regarding the nature of the presidency because he knew that this would be of crucial concern to the opposition. The concern regarding the style of the presidency was based on the 1942 draft constitution and the style of the old-Boer republics. Some nationalists and Afrikaners desired that the state structure of the proposed republic should be similar to that of the old Boer republics. In Paul Kruger's republic, also referred to as a Kruger-style republic, the president had relatively unrestricted power.¹⁷⁷ This measure

¹⁷⁵ W. H. Pay, "'Same Crisis' Face Natal in 1909', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 September 1960, 8.

¹⁷⁶ Editorial, 'Eie Knyptang', *Die Vaderland*, 13 September 1960, 8.

¹⁷⁷ Heard, *General Elections in South Africa*, 103.

of uninhibited presidential power was also present in the 1942 draft constitution and the NP was well aware that members of the electorate feared that the envisioned republic would be a non-democratic state.¹⁷⁸ In his January parliamentary announcement, Verwoerd admitted that the form of government was of concern to the opposition because it was a 'well-known fact that many republicans are still personally attached to the old republican system'. He then declared that the Boer republic principle, whereby a president was concurrently the head of state and the head of government, was not suitable for a modern republic. He explained that the proposed republic would have a different president and prime minister as well as two houses of parliament so that the sovereignty of the electorate could be maintained.¹⁷⁹ The explanation given for this departure from the older republican style was that it was the duty of the government not to be led by tradition. Instead, the government had to establish a governance structure that would be best for the 'present-day circumstances' and that the current state could 'simply not accept' these older republican forms.¹⁸⁰

In their republican campaign, the NP argued that the Union's constitution would essentially remain unchanged. The only difference between the Union and the republic would be that the Queen was replaced by a president.¹⁸¹ In light of the numerous objections against the older republican state structure, Verwoerd was attempting to remove one of the barriers keeping some anti-republicans from voting for a republic. In his chapter on the referendum, Heard suggested that Verwoerd's detailed explanation of the proposed state structure during the January parliamentary sitting had successfully removed this barrier. Heard mentioned that the opposition used speculations regarding the 1942 draft constitution for their anti-republican cause. He argues that the issue of state structure which 'could have been one of the most contentious aspects of the

¹⁷⁸ The fears held by anti-republicans was discussed in NP inner circles. See ARCA, PV451, File 1/446/1/1, Bylae by Bondsraadnotule: Ons Republikeinse Strewe, 27 September 1954, 9-10.

¹⁷⁹ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c101-2.

¹⁸⁰ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c101.

¹⁸¹ J. J. Human, *South Africa 1960- A Chronicle* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1961), 151.

referendum... was in fact resolved before the campaigns began'.¹⁸² However, a more in-depth analysis of the source material reveals that this is not necessarily the case.

The constitutional changes that a republic would bring remained a topic of discussion in letters and editorials in the weeks leading up to the referendum. This reveals that the anxieties regarding the 1942 draft constitution were by no means altogether removed by Verwoerd's January statement.¹⁸³ These anxieties were exploited by opposition parties who insisted that the NP had undemocratic tendencies and would establish an undemocratic republic. Beyond referring to the 1942 draft constitution to make this point, the UP also used the example of the 1955 Senate Act.¹⁸⁴ The Senate Act had enlarged the Senate and increased the number of NP representatives in the Senate from 31 to 77.¹⁸⁵ In their anti-republican pamphlet, the UP linked this to undemocratic tendencies by asking: 'What is democracy to men who... packed the Senate when they could not get their way by constitutional means?'¹⁸⁶ Anti-republican platforms and political parties pushed the concept even further by insinuating that the NP also harboured fascist ideals.¹⁸⁷

Verwoerd's announcement that the republican state structure would be different from the much-desired Boer-republican form was seen as being sudden and unexpected. Therefore, the anti-republicans suggested that this sudden change was cause for suspicion. In the absence of a new draft constitution, some anti-republicans suggested that the new state structure outline was just a front and that Verwoerd had always favoured a more autocratic system. The editor of *The Star* also cautioned that the sudden move away from the 'romantic illusions inherited from the Kruger era' was unexpected and warned that 'it may be too optimistic to imagine that they [these ideals]

¹⁸² Heard, *General Elections in South Africa*, 103–4.

¹⁸³ See Chapter Two, p45.

¹⁸⁴ WCARS, A1229, Progressive Party Fact Paper: 12 Reasons Why Verwoerd's Republic Must Be Rejected, n.d.; WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: A Commentary on Politics To-Day, August 1960, 10.

¹⁸⁵ Bunting, *Rise of the South African Reich*, 129&151.

¹⁸⁶ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: A Commentary on Politics To-Day, August 1960, 10

¹⁸⁷ Editorial, 'Come into My Parlour', *The Star*, 1 December 1959, n.p.

are never likely to be resurrected'.¹⁸⁸ To showcase Verwoerd's 'true intentions', the UP published excerpts from Verwoerd's time as editor of *Die Transvaler* in the 1940s, when he wrote that a republican constitution had to do away with the 'evils of a British-Jewish' constitutional system.¹⁸⁹ They further reminded their supporters that the danger was not just associated with Verwoerd, but that most of the NP politicians who were asking for a republic were 'men with a history of extremism and broken promises'.¹⁹⁰ The lack of a new constitution gave credence to these warnings and the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* linked this directly to the 1942 draft constitution. He wrote that this draft constitution was 'notorious for its outline of a complete Afrikaner Nationalist dictatorship' and warned that the enthusiasm for the draft experienced in the weeks leading up to the referendum was 'an unpleasant reminder of what many republicans may have in mind'.¹⁹¹ He further stated that the NP's verbal assurances were a deficient response to these concerns, especially for those 'who felt that they were being asked to sign a blank cheque' in the referendum.

Similarly, an editorial entitled 'A Dark Secret' published in *The Star* insisted that the lack of a new draft constitution was suspicious. The editor said that until the new constitution was formulated, voters would 'be endorsing a blank cheque'.¹⁹² *The Star* also published a request to the government that voters needed to see, on paper, what the republic would be like since people would not be willing to vote for a constitution without knowing its contents.¹⁹³ The fact that the editors of the two largest daily newspapers in the Transvaal province expressed these concerns regarding the 1942 draft constitution and the lack of a new draft constitution should be seen as evidence that the issue at least had some relevance in the weeks leading up to the referendum.¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, the republicans and the NP insisted that Verwoerd's January outline of the proposed republican state structure provided voters with adequate information to know for what

¹⁸⁸ Editorial, 'Old Firm, New Name?', *The Star*, 1 September 1960, 16.

¹⁸⁹ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: A Commentary on Politics To-Day, August 1960, 10

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁹¹ Editorial, 'Warning Signs?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 16 September 1960, 11.

¹⁹² Editorial, 'A Dark Secret', *The Star*, 28 September 1960, 16.

¹⁹³ P. V. Pistorius, 'Test-Match Type of Emotion Is Republic Menace', *The Star*, September 2, 1960.

¹⁹⁴ For newspaper circulation numbers see Broughton, *Press and Politics of South Africa*, 304–5.

they would be voting. The editor of *Die Burger* specifically mentioned that after the NP Congress in Bloemfontein in August, it was clear what the future republic would look like and that it would be acceptable to the entire electorate. He argued that it was because of this clarity that the opposition had to create suspicions about the intentions of the NP.¹⁹⁵

Heard seems to suggest that the 1942 draft constitution was only used as propaganda by opposition parties, but it was also discussed on other platforms and in the public domain.¹⁹⁶ A reader's letter published in *The Star* questioned the legitimacy of promises made by the NP by asking: 'Are South Africans, in the light of the Nationalist Party's record, not entitled to stigmatize these new [republican] promises simply as a colossal bluff, made with only one object, to secure the English-speaking support for a republic?'¹⁹⁷ Another reader saw voting for a republic as handing the NP 'a blank cheque to rule our country' as they saw fit.¹⁹⁸ Other readers based their concerns about the coming referendum on the belief that the NP did not envision a democratic republic and declared their fear that Verwoerd had fascist or totalitarian plans for the republic.¹⁹⁹ One reader writing to *The Cape Argus* insisted that Verwoerd wanted to establish 'a one-party state as Hitler did' and insinuated that the voting rights of the electorate might be taken away in a republic.²⁰⁰ A newly established republic, according to another reader, would be a breeding ground for such ideals since 'pro-Nazism and all the totalitarian ideas it symbolises' would be uninhibited in a republic that detached itself from Western standards.²⁰¹ The debate on the democratic nature of the proposed republic motivated some voters to oppose a republic based on the belief that the NP would institute an authoritarian system. These voters held a particular view of the future republic and the possible negative changes that it would bring.

¹⁹⁵ Editorial, 'Die Beeld is Duidelik', *Die Burger*, 1 September 1960, 12.

¹⁹⁶ Heard, *General Elections in South Africa*, 103.

¹⁹⁷ A. G. Gladwin, 'Feels S.A. English are Being Bluffed by Nationalists', *The Star*, 7 September 1960, 8.

¹⁹⁸ W. Austin, 'Is the World a Safer Place to Live In?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 September 17 1960, 8.

¹⁹⁹ S. V. Halls, 'Spider and the Fly Story Is as Old as the Hills', *The Cape Argus*, 17 September 1960, 12.

²⁰⁰ S. J. Hodgson, 'Voting for the Right to Vote Again', *The Cape Argus*, 1 September 1960, 15.

²⁰¹ G. Seath, 'Dr. Verwoerd's Policies are Extremely Relevant to Republican Issue', *The Cape Argus*, 9 September 1960, 13. Similarly one reader wrote that the anti-republicans were trying to 'save our country from the perils of dictatorship'. See V. Tunbridge, 'Advertisement for the Republic Stirs Comment', *The Star*, 26 September 1960, 8.

Again, it is important to note that these readers and editors did not express an unchangeable opposition against a republican form of state or republicanism per se, but instead questioned the NP's intentions in establishing a republic. Numerous readers even started their letters by declaring that they were not against the republic in theory. In practice, however, they found problems with various aspects of the proposed republic. This concept is perhaps most evident in the referendum campaign slogan of the PP, which urged voters to 'Reject This Republic'. While the notion of a Kruger-republic had a historical connotation, the referendum campaign labelled the proposed republic as a 'Broederbond republic'.²⁰² Further, the NP promised that some of the undesirable characteristics of a Kruger-style republic would no longer be applicable, the proposed republic held other undesirable characteristics for anti-republicans.

A 'Broederbond republic' dealt more with concepts of democracy as expressed earlier in this section and readers used the concept to object to a type of republic where their democratic rights could be in danger.²⁰³ One reader writing to *The Cape Argus* declared that he had no problem with a republic, but that he would not support a 'Broederbond republic'. He said a newly established republic would only follow the same structure as the Union 'for only as long as it takes to complete the final moves to create a Broederbond dictatorship, in a one-party state'.²⁰⁴ Here too a discernible difference in the interpretation of the concepts of 'democracy' and 'constitution' becomes apparent as politicians, editors and readers discussed the democratic principles they thought would be absent from the proposed Nationalist republic. For the UP, as well as some readers writing to the English-language newspapers, fears regarding the undemocratic nature of a republic were mainly associated with their personal democratic rights as white citizens. This interpretation of 'democracy' was used to object to a referendum based on a bare-majority vote since it would infringe upon the rights of the white electorate. Here, this interpretation of 'democracy' also opposed a republic associated with totalitarianism and one-party systems, as these principles would infringe upon the rights of the white

²⁰² See Chapter One, footnote 10.

²⁰³ F. E. Bolt, 'Votes Must Be of Same Value', *The Cape Argus*, 26 September 1960, 11; Halls, 'Spider and the Fly Story', 12.

²⁰⁴ E. W. Pritchard, 'Booklet Leaves Us without a Valid Reason for a Republic', *The Cape Argus*, 13 September 1960, 11.

citizens. Within the constraints of a white-controlled political system, the UP referenced the NP's exploitation of the Union's legal system to highlight that the NP had a different interpretation of what it meant to be 'democratic', as opposed to using apartheid as a means to object to the system itself.²⁰⁵ Figure 1 shows an advertisement that was published in the *Rand Daily Mail* by a private citizen. The advertisement insinuated that undemocratic concepts, such as censorship and state control, would be characteristic of the proposed republic. It is interesting to note that the sponsor of the advertisement only identified themselves as a 'young South African' and made no mention of cultural groupings or even used the term anti-republican. The proposed republic was not being opposed, but instead, a certain governance style was rejected. The sponsor was urging the electorate to 'Vote No', but not to be anti-republican or opposed to the republic per se.

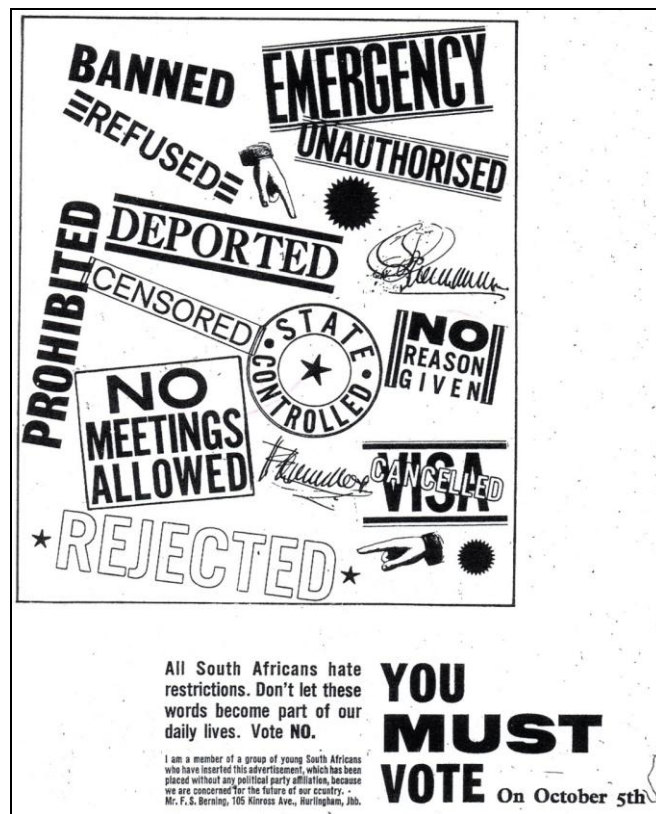


Figure 1: You must vote on October 5th- *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 September 1960

²⁰⁵ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: A Commentary on Politics To-Day, August 1960, 9-10.

For the PP, some English-language newspaper editors, and a portion of their readers, the undemocratic nature of a republic was rooted in its race-based exclusions. This group also mainly objected to the referendum because it would be a Whites-only referendum. In line with their 'Reject This Republic' slogan the PP declared that they would be willing to vote for a republic with the characteristics of a 'true democracy', meaning one that gave voting rights to 'civilised citizens of all races'.²⁰⁶ This was also the view of a reader writing to *The Cape Argus* who declared that 'there can be no democracy when the overwhelming majority of the population is discriminated against'.²⁰⁷ Some readers also voiced their opinions that even if the new constitution was based on the existing constitution of the Union, that it would still be undemocratic because of its racial discrimination. In line with this, a reader's letter published in *The Cape Argus* stated that the case for a republic 'would have validity only if you had a supreme, rigid constitution... that could protect all people of all races against the arbitrary tendencies of an authoritarian-minded government'.²⁰⁸ A commentary article in this publication also urged that 'the true reason why no proposal for a republic should be considered' was because it 'fails to offer constitutional guarantees for the fundamental rights...of all our people'.²⁰⁹

This section again shows that the referendum outcome cannot be interpreted only based on cultural group divisions whereby the white electorate voted in the referendum based on their heritage. Instead, some voters were more concerned with the principles of democracy, albeit based on their different interpretations of the concept. Some members of the electorate believed the NP's promises and viewed the proposed republic as a potential democratic state, whereas other voters believed the exact opposite. Even though the objections to a republic were aimed at the NP, they were not based on cultural divisions or a dislike of Afrikaner culture and republicanism. This element is seldom discussed in relation to the referendum, and its absence from the literature detracts from the concept of change and instability that some voters

²⁰⁶ WCARS, A1229, Progressive Party Fact Paper: We Say No!, n.d.

²⁰⁷ Pritchard, 'Booklet Leaves Us without a Valid Reason', 11.

²⁰⁸ Seath, 'Dr. Verwoerd's Policies Are Extremely Relevant', 13.

²⁰⁹ B. D. Molteno, 'A Republic of Serfs- Unless We Get Guarantees', *The Cape Argus*, 1 September 1960, 16.

associated with a republic. It is also important to note that these anxieties that existed regarding the new constitution would be vital in interpreting the road to the establishment of a republic after the outcome of the referendum. The creation of the new constitution shortly before the Prime Ministers' Conference in 1961, as will be explored in Chapter Three, is therefore an important element of the aftermath of the referendum. Most importantly, this section introduces the idea that, even though the government promised that the state structure would stay the same in a republic, not everyone perceived the future in their proposed republic as stable and unchanging. This aspect will become more evident in the section on the Commonwealth and will be developed to show that a republic represented change and instability to numerous voters.

2.2 The future republic as a white cultural entity

The establishment of a republic is mostly seen as an Afrikaner cultural aspiration and is undeniably linked to culture and heritage. The referendum is thus occasionally described as the last battle of the Boer war and essentially characterises the referendum as a battle between Afrikaners and English-speakers of British descent. The outcome of the 'battle' is interpreted mainly in two ways. On the one hand, historians such as Lambert have focussed on the division between the groups and explained that the referendum signified a rallying behind the monarchy.²¹⁰ These interpretations focus on group distinctions to interpret the referendum's outcome as an expression of these divisions. Conversely, other historians such as Giliomee have chosen to interpret the referendum results as a sign of unity.²¹¹ This interpretation most probably sprouted from the referendum campaign itself, in which the NP called on the electorate to unify. As a result of the successful republican vote, it is assumed that it was won on the call for unity. The interpretation that the electorate had regarding the future republic, revealed a similar dichotomy in terms of group relations and cultural divisions. Some voters saw a republic as an exclusive cultural entity while others hoped that it would unify the white electorate. In general, most voters had personal interpretations regarding the ideal

²¹⁰ Lambert, 'An Unknown People', 609.

²¹¹ Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 475.

republic, which either coincided or contrasted with the government's proposed republic. This idea of an inclusive unified republic caused voters to embrace or reject the republic that was being proposed by the government.

For the government, unity was an unavoidable consequence of the establishment of a republic. In addressing fears regarding the type of republic that would be established, Verwoerd insisted that the only thing that would change in a republic was the head of state, but that the remainder of the constitution would remain intact. Accordingly, the republicans argued that since this was the only element that would change, there were no constitutional reasons to oppose the coming republic. Anti-republicans counter-argued that if that would be the only change made, that the change to a republic was not needed at all since it would serve no purpose. They insisted that the Union was already completely sovereign and would not gain greater independence or freedom by becoming a republic and replacing the Queen, as a symbolic figurehead, with a president.²¹² The pro-republican campaign would address this issue and argue that there was, in fact, a great need for the establishment of a republic. While insisting that there would be little change to the structure of the state, the pro-republican campaign argued that the establishment of a republic would bring about a significant change in the psyche of the white electorate and that this change was both desirable and necessary.

This unifying effect of a republic would become the main focus of the republican campaign as Verwoerd insisted that a republic was the only way by which the white South African population could be united.²¹³ The idea that a republic would lead to greater unity was not, however, a concept exclusive to the 1960 referendum campaign. In their 1954 pamphlet declaring that the establishment of a republic was near, the NP urged that a republic was 'necessary for national unity'. This pamphlet also quoted from an article that was written in 1946 regarding republicanism, which stated that national unity 'can only be accomplished if we shed our divisions for a united loyalty to our own South African Republic'.²¹⁴ Verwoerd also said that it was this unifying capability of a republic which motivated him to pursue the NP's republican ideals during his term.

²¹² WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: Keep our Union as it is, n.d.

²¹³ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c104.

²¹⁴ ARCA, PV93, File 1/47/1/2, National Party Transvaal: Die Nasionale Partynuus No 9, October 1954.

Shortly after becoming Prime Minister in 1958, Verwoerd had declared that he would act to establish a republic 'because it would bring about loyalty towards one country alone' and that as a result conflict between Afrikaner nationalism and English nationalism would disappear.²¹⁵ His speech in parliament was also aimed at dispelling doubts that existed regarding the 1942 draft constitution and the subordination of the English-language.²¹⁶ To convince the electorate that the language and culture of English-speaking people would not be marginalised in a republic, he declared that the 'language and other rights' of English-speaking and Afrikaans people would be protected.²¹⁷ In the NP's pamphlet 'Advent of the Republic', the connection between constitutionalism and white unity is identified. The pamphlet stated that in a republic 'confused ideas about the constitutional position will no longer exist' and would therefore lead to greater unity.²¹⁸ As such, disagreements about republican state structure were portrayed as hindering white unity. These pro-republican arguments regarding unity were probably most evident in Verwoerd's speech at the Union festival on 31 May 1960. In this speech, he insisted that the Afrikaners were 'stretching out the hand of friendship' to the English-speaking voters. He said that some Afrikaners were abandoning their ideal old Boer-republican constitution and accepting a republic under the existing Union constitution. He maintained that the English-speakers had now only to respond to this call for friendship by participating in and voting for a mutually acceptable republic.²¹⁹ Verwoerd did acknowledge that the lack of a constitution was still a concern for voters but maintained that it was an unnecessary distraction. He insisted that 'the constitutional issue is obscuring agreement on most of the problems we have to deal with and that we lack unity and strength because of obstructions which need not last any longer'.²²⁰

This proposal for unity and inclusivity was, of course, reminiscent of the promotion of unity and South Africanism associated with the establishment of the Union in 1910. Since white unity was desirable for most white South Africans, this aspect of the pro-

²¹⁵ Verwoerd, *Verwoerd Aan die Woord*, 153.

²¹⁶ Geyser, *Watershed for South Africa*, 50.

²¹⁷ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c105.

²¹⁸ WCARS, A1227, National Party Information Service: The Advent of the Republic, 1 August 1960, 8.

²¹⁹ Human, *South Africa 1960*, 110–11.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

republican campaign was of interest, even to traditional anti-republicans. For most of the voters and editors participating in the discussion before the referendum, there were few disagreements regarding the value of a unified white populace. A letter to the editor of *Die Transvaler* written by an English-speaking South African asserted that the two groups, English-speakers and Afrikaners, did not hate each other. This reader declared that the English-speakers were 'extending a hand of friendship to the Afrikaners' in return since the desire for friendship was mutual.²²¹ Nowhere was this as clearly indicated as in the attitude and words of the editor of *The Cape Argus*. He urged his English-language readers to at least consider voting for a republic as a sign of good faith. He argued that 'it should be possible to welcome the hand of friendship and say what the essentials are that will make the invitation for co-operation acceptable'.²²² The desirability of unity was also discussed in other English-language newspapers. Even though the editor of *The Star* and the *Rand Daily Mail* did not take a positive stance on the republican question, they did advocate that national unity was desirable. In an editorial, the *Rand Daily Mail* concurred that the call for unity was 'earnest and important'.²²³ A columnist from *The Star* agreed that 'the promise of national unity in a republic- even the possibility- is an enticing one', adding that 'I do not think there is one South African of whatever political conviction, who does not fervently pray for unity'.²²⁴ Although unity was desirable to a large portion of the electorate and was being discussed within the context of the referendum, it was not necessarily the reason why voters supported a republic. Instead, if republicanism was not as contested as it had been previously and unity was generally desirable, the question regarding why 48% still voted against a republic becomes even more pronounced.

The following section will look at two views of the republic as a cultural entity. It will examine how the proposed republic was seen as an exclusive cultural entity as well as

²²¹ B. G. Buckinger, 'Hand van Vriendskap Aan Afrikaners', *Die Transvaler*, 1 September 1960, 6.

²²² Editorial, 'The Reasoned Response', *The Cape Argus*, 2 September 1960, 16; This was a regular occurrence in the editorials of this publication. Another similar editorial argued that it was impressive how some NP leaders were offering a hand of friendship to the English-speaking community and that it was preferable that the call for cooperation would 'not be met by a blank rejection'. Also see Editorial, 'The Fateful Choice', *The Cape Argus*, 1 September 1960, 16.

²²³ Editorial, 'What Is "Unity"?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 September 1960, 8.

²²⁴ Junius, 'Unwise to Predict the Result of the Referendum', *The Star*, 1 September 1960, 12.

how the ideal or envisioned united republic influenced voters to vote for or against a republic in the referendum. It will also be explored how voters responded to the proposed republic as an exclusive racial entity, and whether the notion of a 'white republic' significantly added to the pro-republican vote.

2.2.1 A culturally exclusive republic

The 1942 draft constitution also plagued the referendum with its principles of cultural oppression or exclusivity. The draft constitution had specifically advocated for Afrikaans as a superior language at the expense of English. The notion of a specific 'type' of republic as discussed earlier in this chapter, was not simply vested in the historicity of republicanism and state structure. A Broederbond-style republic, or a republic based on the 1942 draft constitution, was also undesirable for a portion of the electorate based on the notion that it would be an exclusive Afrikaner republic. As such, some anti-republicans saw the notion of 'unity' as being exclusive and that the NP's proposed 'unity' meant submitting to Afrikaner ideals and culture. This idea that 'unity' meant submission was not only based on the historical clash of cultures, but also on the manner that republicans campaigned in the months leading up to the referendum. The discussion in the pro-republican media possibly did further harm to the promotion of a future republic where white citizens would be equal and unified. Despite the insistence that a republic would offer a 'common' goal to the white electorate, the Afrikaans-language press specifically depicted the proposed republic as an Afrikaner goal. Various cartoons published in the Afrikaans-language press used the caricature of a woman wearing a Voortrekker bonnet in their personifications of the proposed republic.²²⁵ The Voortrekkers referred to the group of Afrikaners or Boers who moved away from the British Cape Colony to establish the Boer-republics, and the use of the Voortrekker symbols undeniably linked the establishment of a republic to Afrikaner heritage.

²²⁵ 'Vrolik, Vasberade', *Die Vaderland*, 9 September 1960, 11; A similar portrayal of the republic can be found in 'Vriend in die Ware Sin', *Die Vaderland*, 12 September 1960, 11. For an example of such an image, see Figure 4 on p70.

Furthermore, several articles in Afrikaans newspapers insisted that the Afrikaners had earned their republic because they had been the victims of the Union for 50 years. This gave the impression that the ownership of a republic would somehow belong to the Afrikaners. Here, the Afrikaans-language press promoted that Afrikaners had not been on equal footing with English-speakers politically or financially and that the achievement of a republic would not only rectify this but also serve as compensation. This depiction placed the two groups into the categories of perpetrator and victim, thereby placing a burden of guilt on the anti-republicans or English-speaking citizens. In line with this, the editor of *Die Transvaler* labelled any previous collaboration between the two white groups as a 'false cooperation', having insisted that it had not been based on true equality. He explained that since 1910, Afrikaners had been willing to occupy a subservient position in the name of unity but that only the establishment of a republic would lead to true equality between English-speakers and Afrikaners.²²⁶ *Die Transvaler* was not the only paper to suggest that to vote against a republic was to prolong the oppression of Afrikaners. The editor of *Die Burger* also described the establishment of a republic as an 'Afrikaner-necessity', advocating that remaining a Union would do more damage to the Afrikaner than becoming a republic would to the English-speaker. According to his interpretation, the establishment of a republic was a right and freedom that was owed to Afrikaners.²²⁷

The pro-republicans predictably also used references to the South African war to promote that Afrikaners were 'common victims' bound together by the heritage of a 'shared national tragedy' and therefore deserving of a republic.²²⁸ Historians identify this collective Afrikaner identity, based on the suffering of Boers in the South African war concentration camps, as being established as early as the 1930s. This notion of the victimisation of the Afrikaners was also expressed in readers' letters published in *Die Transvaler* and further engrained the roles of victim and perpetrator. One reader wrote that a vote in favour of a republic from English-speakers would help to heal the wounds

²²⁶ Editorial, 'Ware Samewerking', *Die Transvaler*, 19 August 1960, 8; See also J. H. Kotze, 'Gelykheid vir Albei Groepe in 'n Republiek', *Die Transvaler*, 3 September 1960, 3.

²²⁷ Editorial, 'Die Afrikaner het dit Nodig', *Die Burger*, 2 September 1960, 12.

²²⁸ E. Van Heyningen, 'Costly Mythologies: The Concentration Camps of the South African War in Afrikaner Historiography', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 3 (2008), 495&498.

that the war had left on Afrikaners.²²⁹ Another letter suggested that those who opposed a republic, for which numerous women and children had laid down their lives during the South African war, were *volksvyande* (enemies of the Afrikaner nation).²³⁰ This portrayal of a republic as an Afrikaner aspiration or being owed to the Afrikaners to rectify perceived past injustices did not necessarily gain more support for a republic. Not only did it reprise the republic as an Afrikaner aspiration, but it also seriously undermined the government's call for unity.²³¹

In reaction to this depiction of an Afrikaner republic, commentators writing in the English-language press indicated that a republic was being established only to 'satisfy the sentiments of the Afrikaner' and was, therefore, a sentimental and 'sectional goal'.²³² This view of a republic as an exclusive Afrikaner state instilled fear in a section of the electorate who thought that the government would not provide equal language and cultural rights in a republic. Despite the NP's explanation that they wanted to establish a South Africa which guaranteed 'equal rights and status for both language-groups', some voters voiced their concern that this was just a false promise made to gain support.²³³ A combination of factors such as the lack of a new constitution as well as a record of the removal of British-English symbols such as the Union Jack contributed to this sense of distrust in the government's promises. The UP also exploited this anxiety by insisting that the overtures of unity, as well as the promise of equal cultural rights, would not necessarily be present in a republic. Since the institution of the Union flag and a new national anthem, the English-language was seemingly one of the only 'English' cultural elements that were still officially a part of the Union.

Consequently, fear towards the new republic was based on the possible exclusion of the English-language as promoted by the 1942 draft constitution. To this extent, the UP promoted that voters should bear in mind that once a republic was established, 'it may

²²⁹ A. M. Venter, 'Republiek die Waarborg', *Die Transvaler*, 19 September 1960, 6.

²³⁰ D. H. Jacobs, 'Nou Haastig oor die Republiek', *Die Transvaler*, 12 August 1960, 18.

²³¹ For examples of how this was perceived in the English-language press as undermining the call for unity, see Junius, 'Unwise to Predict the Result of the Referendum', 12; Gladwin, 'Feels S.A. English are Being Bluffed by Nationalists', 8.

²³² Molteno, 'A Republic of Serfs', 16; Anon., 'Sectional Goal', *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 October 1960, 8.

²³³ Anon., 'Aktuele Vrae oor die Republiek: Verdeeldheid?', *Die Transvaler*, 3 August 1960, 15.

not be long before they consider the English-language to be a dividing factor' that had to be removed.²³⁴ Similarly, one reader explained that he would vote against a republic because he did not believe that his language would be protected. This reader wrote that 'English-speaking South Africans regard their language... as a proud heritage and most certainly will defend it'.²³⁵ However, the protection of the English-language was not the only concern brought about by this notion of an Afrikaner republic. Casting the Afrikaners into the role of victim and the English-speakers as perpetrators also made readers question the place that English-speakers in general would have in a republican society. One reader wrote that voting for a republic meant permanently making English-speakers 'second class citizens' and that those who wanted South Africa to be 'a decent place for your children to inherit' should vote against a republic.²³⁶ Another reader wrote that English-speakers already occupied an inferior position. This reader did not believe in the government's promise of equality and asked: 'today we [English-speakers] are treated as inferior, so why, when the Nationalists should have achieved their republic, should they improve the treatment of us?'²³⁷ Similarly, in Figure 2 a cartoonist depicted English-speakers as participating in this call for unity by holding the unity stake in place. Verwoerd is depicted as swinging a mallet to hit the stake but hitting the English-speakers on the head instead. The cartoonist is also insinuating that English-speakers would somehow lose out or be hurt by Verwoerd's mission to establish unity.

²³⁴ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: Facts about the Republic, August 1960, 6.

²³⁵ G. R. Johnson, 'Potholes in the Road to South African Unity', *The Star*, 7 September 1960, 6.

²³⁶ J. T. Ripper, 'Republic Is "Only One Step"', *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 September 1960, 4.

²³⁷ R. MacDonald, 'How Long Will English Last in a Republic?', *The Star*, 29 September 1960, 8.

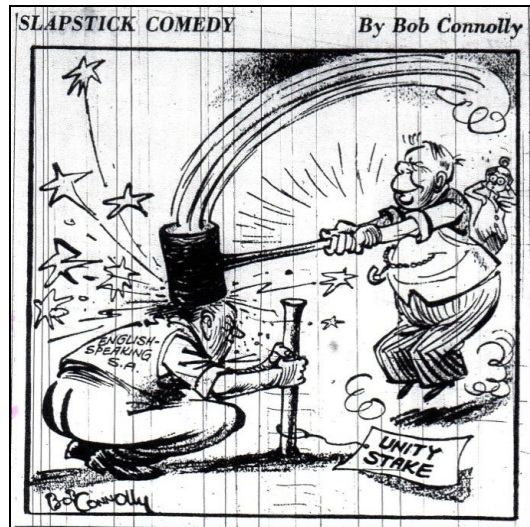


Figure 2: Slapstick comedy- *Rand Daily Mail*, 21 September 1960

Some of the abovementioned fears or misgivings link with the constitutional issues and fears regarding a draft-republican constitution. However, fears were not based solely on the 1942 document, and it was also the 'track record' of the NP that motivated some readers to oppose a republic. Here again, the anti-republicans strongly suggested that the NP could not be trusted to guarantee equal language rights or the equal treatment of both cultures based on their governance since coming to power in 1948. Several letters declared that the NP's actions showed that they had no respect for the culture of English-speaking South Africans. A letter published in the *Rand Daily Mail* described these sentiments by stating that a republic would mean nothing more than Afrikaner domination and blamed the NP for heaping 'humiliation after humiliation on English-speaking South Africans'. This reader further stated that the removal of 'our flag, our anthem and our language' was indicative of a 'rabid Anglophobia' which highlighted the arrogance in the NP's call for unity.²³⁸ Other readers also claimed that the NP had 'trampled on everything that the English-speaking section respected' and had not done enough to win the respect of the English-speaking people.²³⁹ Similarly, the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* insisted that the NP had systematically excluded certain British features

²³⁸ Pay, 'Same Crisis Faced Natal in 1909', 8.

²³⁹ F. Cocker, 'Co-Operation with Nats Unacceptable', *The Cape Argus*, 22 September 1960, 15; See also Gladwin, 'Feels S.A. English are Being Bluffed by Nationalists', 8; J. J. Pretorius, 'A Matter of Pride', *The Star*, 9 September 1960, 8.

like the flag and anthem. He argued that they should not claim that unity was 'a spontaneous coming together of two sections, for it is merely a case of the use of political power to extinguish, slowly but deliberately, a particular set of sentiments held by one section of the population'.²⁴⁰

The NP's dealings with the English-speaking community were also seen as creating more division based on language. The government's policy of separating schools based on language was regarded as a government strategy to avoid the amalgamation of the two sections of white society. Specifically, in the context of the referendum, the separation of schools was used to argue that the NP was not genuinely interested in unity and that unity would not be realised in a republic. In an anti-republican advertisement series published in the *Rand Daily Mail*, the UP included the separation of schools as a reason to vote against a republic (See Figure 3). This advertisement argued that 'separate schools' did not promote unity. For readers professing their anti-republican sentiments along these lines, the division of schools was a deliberate sectional policy, with some calling it 'white apartheid'. One reader highlighted the divisive nature of the policy by describing it as a 'strictly enforced policy of kraaling off in education carried out in the name of mother tongue tuition'.²⁴¹ The perception that the English-speakers' culture and the English-language were already undermined by the government and would be further marginalised in a republic evidently played a role in motivating some individuals to vote against a republic.

²⁴⁰ L. Gandar, 'Ten Reasons Against this Republic now', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 September 1960, 10.

²⁴¹ W. M. Crook, 'The Unity of the Python and the Rabbit', *The Star*, 8 September 1960, 8; The notion of 'kraaling off' in schools is also discussed in J. Sinclair, 'Appeasement Does not Pay- at Munich or in South Africa', *The Star*, 15 September 1960, 8.

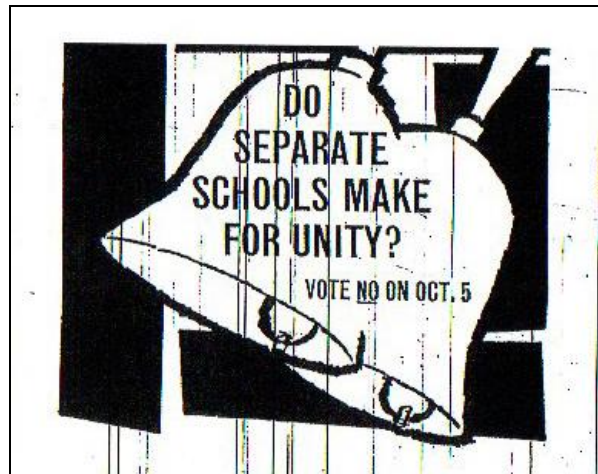


Figure 3: UP advertisement, Separate schools- Rand Daily Mail, 23 September 1960

Contrary to Heard's assessment, mistrust created by the 1942 draft constitution played into anti-republican attitudes towards a republic. There was an overarching fear amongst anti-republicans that an exclusive republic would be established and that specific 'English' cultural elements would be excluded from such a republic. These fears were influenced by the fact that the prospective republic was based on a verbal guarantee, and not a tangible and documented proposed constitution. Some voters would, however, not make their choices based only on the proposed republic but rather on an ideal, imagined republic.

2.2.2 The imagined cultural inclusivity of the future republic

The proposed republic was not only interpreted as an exclusive Afrikaner state. This section will approach another interpretation of a republic which is associated with the promotion and desirability of white unity. It deals with the view and hope that a republic would be a truly South African state where both white sections were included and united. There was no difference of opinion regarding what such an ideal state should look like, but there was a difference in opinion regarding whether the proposed republic would be such an ideal unified state. For pro-republicans, the ideal state and the proposed state were compatible with each other and did not rely on excluding English-speakers from a republic. Instead, it merely required that citizens become 'more South

African'. For some republicans, a more unified state could only be brought about by removing 'foreign' elements that were hindering the natural growth of unity. These voters saw a republic as being able to save the anti-republican electorate from the 'foreign' connections that were holding them back from unity. While sections of the anti-republican electorate also saw unity and even republicanism as desirable, they believed that it should not be forced on the citizens. In essence, their ideal unified republic, although desirable, would not be brought about with the NP in power.

When examining the 'unexpected changes' to the principles of a republic as Verwoerd discussed them in parliament, the content of republicanism had admittedly evolved. However, there was one of the fundamental principles of republicanism that had not changed or disappeared since the inception of republicanism in South Africa. Republicans continuously insisted that the monarchy or the British crown was something foreign to South Africa that had to be excluded.²⁴² This concept had also evolved over the years so that a republic would be more inclusive of both Afrikaners and English-speaking citizens, whereby English-speakers were no longer themselves seen as foreigners. The notion that Britain or British sentimentality was foreign, however, never really dissipated. As such, the NP portrayed republicanism as a truly South African aspiration during the 1960 referendum campaign and anything that was not pro-republican was portrayed as foreign and an extension of the British monarchy.

The NP advocated that, since the monarchy was foreign, a republic would be the only authentic South African state form. As such, any loyalty to the Queen was seen by nationalists as being at odds with a truly South African identity and was known as 'dual loyalty'. During their republican campaigns of the 1950s, the NP had continuously promoted that English-speakers had a divided loyalty both to South Africa as well as to the British monarchy. The NP insisted that someone with such a dual loyalty could not

²⁴² Earlier examples of the Nationalist idea of the foreignness of the Monarchy as opposed to the truly South African characteristics of republicanism, and the need to form a South African nation can also be found in Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 13, 1942), c33; ARCA, PV93, File 1/47/1/2, National Party Transvaal: Die Nasionale Partynuus No 9, October 1954.

become a true South African.²⁴³ The notion of dual loyalty thus served the republican campaign well. The NP promoted that monarchism or dual loyalty was keeping white South Africa divided, but that by voting for a republic this could be rectified.

In contrast to the portrayal of voting for a republic to fix past mistakes, the establishment of a republic would be beneficial to everyone as it would be a solution to the burden of 'dual loyalty'. A columnist writing for *Die Transvaler* explained that 'divided loyalties' would be eliminated with the establishment of a republic and would result in a more unified white society.²⁴⁴ While all anti-republicans were seen as monarchists, it was mostly English-speakers who were seen as having dual loyalty to 'the land of their origins' and because they 'do not see South Africa as their only home'.²⁴⁵ The 'monarchist' devotion to the monarchy was portrayed as unnatural and uncomfortable. A cartoon (Figure 4) published in *Die Vaderland* depicted a monarchist as standing with one foot in South Africa and one foot in England. The cartoon insinuated that after the referendum in favour of a republic, the monarchists would stand more comfortably since their divided loyalties would have been removed.²⁴⁶ Generally, the pro-republicans labelled all anti-republicans as monarchists with a measure of loyalty or devotion to Britain and the reigning monarch.

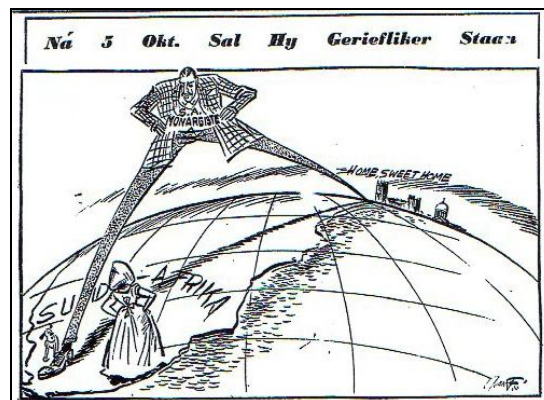


Figure 4: Na 5 Okt. sal hy geriefliker staan- *Die Vaderland*, 28 September 1960

²⁴³ ARCA, PV93, File 1/47/1/2, National Party Transvaal: Die Nasionale Partynuus No 9, October 1954.

²⁴⁴ Anon., 'Aktuele Vrae Oor Die Republiek: Verdeeldheid?', 15.

²⁴⁵ A. Lintvelt, 'Moeite Werd om te Probeer', *Die Burger*, 21 September 1960, 10; Anon., 'Dink na', *Die Vaderland*, 2 September 1960, 12.

²⁴⁶ 'Na 5 Okt. sal hy Geriefliker staan', *Die Vaderland*, 28 September 1960, 13. English translation of cartoon title: 'After 5 Oct. he can stand more comfortably'.

An element of truth can be found in this portrayal, as some anti-republicans were motivated by their devotion to Britain and its monarchy. The distinctive geographical nature of strong pro-British sentiments, as discussed in the introduction, was also evident in the referendum campaign itself. References to the pro-British sentiments in the Natal province can be found in all the examined Afrikaans newspapers, with the Natal province being referred to as 'little England'.²⁴⁷ The English-speaking citizens in Natal were also described as a sectional pro-British group who were 'hateful towards Afrikaners'.²⁴⁸ For a columnist writing in *Die Vaderland* the call for cooperation was 'particularly directed to those English-speaking people of Natal who still believe in a hereditary monarchy'.²⁴⁹ The review of these newspapers also found similar references in Transvaal publications.²⁵⁰ An anti-republican letter published in *The Star* mentioned that 'the centre of the English-language group is the British queen who is enshrined in the hearts of the British people everywhere no matter what geographical portion of the globe they occupy'.²⁵¹ Another reader wrote that it would be impossible to establish unity between the two groups 'as long as cabinet ministers throw cheap jibes at the British queen'.²⁵² These sentiments are, however, not widespread in the examined publications, and it was instead the republican insistence that all anti-republicans were un-South African that attracted the attention of readers writing to the examined English-language newspapers. As such, numerous anti-republicans did not associate their cause with the retention of the monarchy and instead insisted that they were not against republicanism but rather against an NP-ruled republic. The *Rand Daily Mail* commented that the term 'monarchist' was an odd concept for anti-republicans because they did not identify as monarchists or see their cause as supportive of the monarchy.²⁵³ This did not stop the nationalists and the Afrikaans editors from insisting that anti-republicans were fighting for the retention of British rule because of their sentimental attachments.

²⁴⁷ Gee Hand, 'Saam Bou Ons 'n Nasie', *Die Transvaler*, 9 September 1960, 8.

²⁴⁸ Anon., 'Geesdrif in Durban', *Die Burger*, 21 September 1960, 10; Gee Hand, 'Saam Bou Ons 'n Nasie', 8.

²⁴⁹ L. Karovsky, 'Why English-Speaking South Africans Must Vote for a Republic', *Die Vaderland*, 7 September 1960, 10.

²⁵⁰ M. Owles, 'The Queen Not a Foreigner', *The Star*, 16 September 1960, 8.

²⁵¹ V. H. Temlett, 'No Higher Status Possible for South Africa', *The Star*, 21 September 1960, 6.

²⁵² Johnson, 'Potholes in the Road to South African Unity', 6.

²⁵³ Gandar, 'Ten Reasons against this Republic now', 10.

The republicans further portrayed the monarchy as being foreign and unsuitable by insisting that the monarchical system had been unable to unify the white populous of South Africa. In a brochure, the NP argued that a republic would be able to bring national unity, since 'under a monarchical system the country has unfortunately not developed the desired state of unity during the past 50 years'.²⁵⁴ It is important to note that this view of the proposed republic placed the blame on the monarchy, and not on the citizens themselves. The editor of *Die Burger* also suggested that the monarchy was the root of division in South Africa but that there could be a 'new attempt at nation-building through the coming republic'.²⁵⁵ The monarchy was not only portrayed as the cause for division but also as unnaturally and unnecessarily keeping white groups divided. A cartoon published in *Die Vaderland* (Figure 5) depicted the Crown as a wedge between these two sections of the white population.²⁵⁶ The Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking communities were depicted as two branches of the same tree. This further contributed to the notion that unity between the two groups was a 'natural' occurrence that was being hindered by the 'unnatural' presence of the crown. This is perhaps the clearest indication of how the crown was continuously seen as foreign, but republicanism was inclusive of English-language speakers.

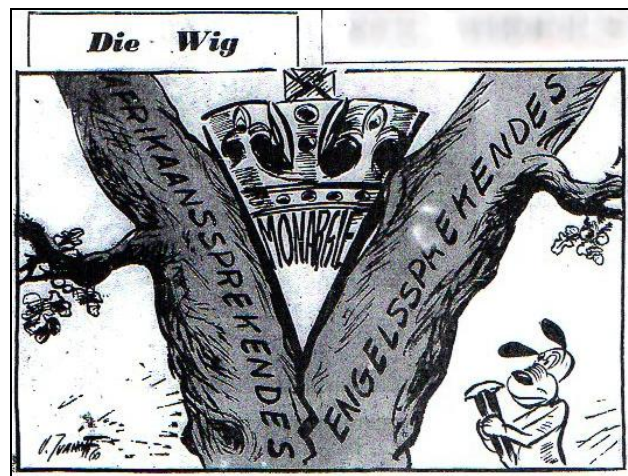


Figure 5: Die wig- *Die Vaderland*, 29 September 1960

²⁵⁴ WCARS, A1227, National Party Information Service: The Advent of the Republic, 1 August 1960, 9.

²⁵⁵ Editorial, 'Die Derde Mag', *Die Burger*, 23 September 1960, 12; See also Editorial, 'Hulle Veg Sonder Moed', *Die Transvaler*, 6 August 1960, 6.

²⁵⁶ 'Die Wig', *Die Vaderland*, 29 September 1960, 14. . English translation of cartoon title: 'The wedge'. This sentiment is also found in Anon., 'Antwoord op 'n Vraag', *Die Burger*, 6 September 1960, 10.

In line with this, the leading anti-republican opposition party was blamed for keeping the monarchy alive in South Africa by inducing an artificial British sentimentality for political gain. The pro-republican press insisted that the UP were not monarchists at heart, but that they were exploiting pro-British sentimentality to retain their supporters. As such, the leader of the UP De Villiers Graaff, was labelled as the 'leading proponent of monarchism' and was blamed for having kept British loyalty alive in South Africa.²⁵⁷ Two cartoons published in *Die Burger* contributed to this line of argument. In Figure 6, the cartoonist depicted the leaders of the UP as 'English' ladies. The description of the cartoon explained that some 'English' ladies were still referring to England as home. The cartoonist was insinuating that the only people who were still referring to Britain as home were the UP leaders themselves, and that sentimental attachment to the Crown or Britain did not reflect the broad will of the people.

Similarly, another cartoon (Figure 7) insinuated that the UP was attempting to motivate voters who were apathetic about voting against a republic by encouraging their sentimentality with a dose of 'Union Jack pills' and 'God Save the queen Drops'.²⁵⁸ There is some accuracy in this depiction since references to the removal of the flag and anthem were used by the UP in their anti-republican campaign.²⁵⁹ This, in turn, made the editor of *Die Burger* proclaim that the UP had to realise that unity would not be achievable by clinging to British symbols which were offensive to Afrikaners.²⁶⁰ The blame was thus clearly placed on the UP for having forced the issue of sentimentality on their supporters. The majority of the blame is placed on the monarchy and the UP, with English-speaking South Africans, in turn, being the victim being held back from unity.

²⁵⁷ Etam, 'Nee-Mens', *Die Transvaler*, 31 August 1960, 6.

²⁵⁸ 'Apatie', *Die Burger*, 14 September 1960, 13. English translation of cartoon title: 'Apathy'.

²⁵⁹ ARCA, PV71, File 1/16/4/1/6, United Party Division of Information and Research: Information Guide and Speakers' Notes, 1960, 122.

²⁶⁰ Editorial, 'Aan 'n Afrikaanse Monargis', *Die Burger*, 29 September 1960, 12.



Figure 6: Home, sweet home- *Die Burger*, 21 September 1960



Figure 7: Apatie- *Die Burger*, 14 September 1960

It should, however, be mentioned that no outright declaration of devotion to the crown or the monarchy can be found in the materials circulated by the UP as part of their anti-republican campaign. The majority of arguments found in these party-political materials promoted reasons to oppose the proposed republic rather than reasons to retain the monarchy. The editor of *Die Burger* also highlighted this in his analysis of the anti-republican campaign. He wrote that the supporters of the monarchy distanced themselves from support for the Queen since there was 'no love and respect for the monarchy' in the country.²⁶¹ As such, republicans insisted that there were no valid reasons given by the anti-republicans for why the monarchy had to be retained.²⁶² This is most clearly seen in a cartoon series published in *Die Burger*. The cartoon series followed the fictional characters of Mona, a monarchist, and Libbie, a liberalist as they discussed the republican referendum. In Figure 8 Mona, who represents the 'monarchists', can be seen explaining that she was opposing the republic simply because she did not feel like uniting with the republicans. In another cartoon which followed the same line of argument, she is shown asking Libbie whether he had any good reasons for her to be a monarchist since she herself did not have any.²⁶³ This promoted the notion that monarchists did not have any valid reasons for opposing a republic and were basing their decision regarding a republic on emotion and sentimentality.

²⁶¹ Editorial, 'Onwaardige Argumente', *Die Burger*, 5 September 1960, 8; See also Editorial, 'n Eie Staatshoof', *Die Transvaler*, 9 August 1960, 6; Similar argument in *Die Burger* found in Anon., 'Spinnerakke', *Die Burger*, 20 September 1960, 12.

²⁶² Editorial, 'Hulle Veg Sonder Moed', 6.

²⁶³ Honiball, 'Libbie en Mona', *Die Burger*, 23 September 1960, 13.



Figure 8: Mona and Libbie 1- *Die Burger*, 8 September 1960

The end of this Mona and Libbie cartoon series also highlighted how the envisioned republic would promote the formation of a united white nation by removing foreign elements. As the date of the referendum approached, Mona the monarchist is depicted as having doubts about voting against a republic. In Figure 9, she is depicted as wondering whether she would be capable of maintaining her anti-republican chants until the day of the referendum. In a later cartoon (Figure 10), she causes Libbie to faint upon asking how she could say no in a referendum in October, which is the most beautiful month in the year. 'Vote yes in the most beautiful month' was the slogan chosen for the referendum in a slogan competition held by *Die Burger* and is portrayed as having convinced Mona that she could not vote against a republic. This is again emphasised in the cartoon in Figure 11 where Mona informs Libbie that she would indeed be voting in favour of a republic, even if the only reason was to put an end to the cartoon series that was making a mockery of the two characters. When taking into consideration that Mona was initially depicted as a monarchist who strongly opposed a republic (Figure 8) the cartoonist is portraying a proposed 'character development' for the monarchists. In the final cartoon for the 'Mona and Libbie' cartoon series (Figure

12), the two characters are standing in the queue to vote on referendum day. Mona is in the queue to vote 'yes' in favour of a republic, which indicates that she has had a change of heart. Furthermore, she is being carried on the shoulders of the other republicans, which illustrates that this change has resulted in friendship or unity. Her title at the top of the cartoon is no longer 'monarchist' but 'former-monarchist' (*oud monargis*), suggesting that she has taken the necessary steps to be included in a unified republic.



Figure 9: Mona and Libbie 2- *Die Burger*, 15 September 1960



Figure 10: Mona and Libbie 3- *Die Burger*, 1 October 1960



Figure 11: Mona and Libbie 4- *Die Burger*, 3 October 1960

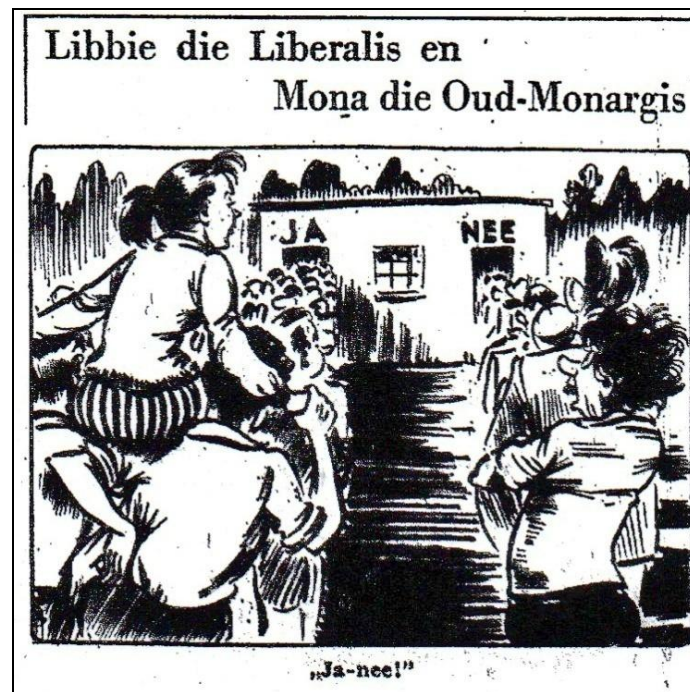


Figure 12: Mona and Libbie 5- *Die Burger*, 4 October 1960

This notion of needing to vote for a republic to be a part of a unified white society was not just hinted at in this cartoon series but was openly discussed by republicans. It was especially the portrayal of particular groups of people and their characteristics as 'foreign' which caused disappointment amongst anti-republicans. Verwoerd already introduced this concept of 'foreignness' when the referendum was announced in parliament in January. While discussing the possible impact of the establishment of a republic on society, he said that he was making an earnest appeal to everybody 'to co-operate and to achieve something which will put an end to the 150 years' struggle between South African Nationalism and what is to some extent a foreign nationalism'.²⁶⁴ In the same debate, another NP member of parliament echoed this sentiment by saying that a republic should be seen as an opportunity to remove foreign elements. He explained that 'by foreign I do not mean people who came from abroad or anything of that nature, but I mean people who were born South Africans but have never been able to grasp the essence of the development of South Africa'.²⁶⁵ Here it was not simply the monarchy that was portrayed as foreign. The concept was also being extended to say that certain people, or at least their cultural identities, were foreign to South Africa. In the Libbie and Mona cartoon series it was depicted that having such a 'foreign' nationalism could be rectified simply by voting for a republic.

Some pro-republican platforms further insinuated that voting against a republic would be so un-South African that it could be considered unpatriotic. The editor of *Die Transvaler* insisted that the establishment of a republic would be the only way in which a truly South African patriotism could be achieved.²⁶⁶ This sentiment was not only limited to the pro-republican Afrikaans newspapers. Although the editor of *The Cape Argus* was not an ardent republican, he did implore voters 'to rise above partisan differences and consider a great issue in a spirit of thoughtfulness, patriotism and friendship' when they voted.²⁶⁷ There were also letters published in the English-language newspapers which expressed that the establishment of a republic and the call for cooperation were truly

²⁶⁴ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c104.

²⁶⁵ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 21, 1960), c125.

²⁶⁶ Editorial, 'Almal Glo Republiek Sal Wen', *Die Transvaler*, 4 August 1960, 7.

²⁶⁷ Editorial, 'Sufficient Answer', *The Cape Argus*, 15 September 1960, 12.

South African actions. A letter published in *The Cape Argus* promoted the opinion that 'every true South African' would applaud the call for co-operation made during the referendum campaign.²⁶⁸ Similarly, a letter published in *The Star* saw republicanism as equal to patriotism and wrote:

To every true South African the republic embraces the idea of an independent nation... How can any true South African be so negative as to vote against the logical constitutional development of our beloved country in the achievement of our highest status as a free and independent state?²⁶⁹

In essence, republicans argued that voting for a republic was the only way of putting South Africa first, and to be patriotic meant being a republican.²⁷⁰ Shortly before the referendum, Verwoerd sent out a pro-republican letter to the electorate in which he addressed them as 'Dear friend'. In this 'Dear friend' letter, voting against a republic was portrayed as counterproductive. The letter confronted anti-republicans with the question: 'Will you, through not voting for a republic, let South Africa continue as a state in which the English- and Afrikaans-speaking sections cannot unite?'²⁷¹ This notion of patriotism was, however, more apparent in newspaper articles. For example, the editor of *Die Transvaler* described De Villiers Graaff's actions against a republic as 'the top point of unpatriotic action'.

Similarly, several letters declared that voting against a republic would be unpatriotic, and one published in *The Cape Argus* proclaimed that 'no monarchist can be a good South African' since they did not put their country first.²⁷² In limited examples, some readers' letters expressed that this anti-South African action was an English-speaking characteristic. One such a letter declared that English-speakers who did not vote for a

²⁶⁸ J. Smit, 'Spirit of 1910 Bringing a New South Africa', *The Cape Argus*, 16 September 1960, 13.

²⁶⁹ S. F. Steyn, 'S. Africa's Logical Constitutional Development', *The Star*, 6 September 1960, 10.

²⁷⁰ Anon., 'Aktuele Vrae Oor die Republiek: Verdeeldheid?', 15; Anon., 'Gevit Oor Nasionale Eenheid', *Die Vaderland*, 24 September 1960, 6.

²⁷¹ ARCA, PV 71, File 1/11/4/11/1 vol2, H.F. Verwoerd: Dear Friend Letter, 21 September 1960.

²⁷² J. H. Kotze, 'Stem Vir Republiek is Stem vir Volk', *Die Transvaler*, 25 August 1960, 1; G. Kloppers, 'Maak 5 Oktober 'n Versoendag', *Die Transvaler*, 25 August 1960, 8; J. S. Wilson, 'Arguing the Facts and the Logic of the Republican Question', *The Cape Argus*, 1 September 1960, 14.

republic were 'selfish, greedy and unpatriotic'.²⁷³ Another described what he saw as an 'apparent lack of love for the fatherland found with my English-speaking fellow citizens' as an 'un-south African action'.²⁷⁴ In general, however, this was mainly directed at anyone who opposed a republic.

This interpretation clashed with the interpretations of nationalism or South Africanism held by the anti-republicans, who mostly saw voting against a republic as the only way to be truly South African. Not only did this label of being unpatriotic offend anti-republicans, it also caused them to reflect on the concepts of South Africanism and patriotism. The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* was strongly opposed to the idea that being anti-republican was unpatriotic and said that 'in an effort to produce his republic he [Verwoerd] virtually accuses half of the electorate of being traitors'.²⁷⁵ It was this specific pro-nationalist interpretation of patriotism that most frustrated the anti-republicans. The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* pointed out that it had become unfashionable to demonstrate any affection for the royal family 'since it is branded as disloyal', while the nationalists 'equate their own traditions with South Africanism'.²⁷⁶ He also stated that this was a clear sign of the NP's 'delusion that they have a monopoly on South African patriotism'.

Likewise, a political commentator for *The Cape Argus* discussed the notion that patriotism somehow meant being pro-republican. He said that 'this reasoning was based on the assumption that the true test of a good South African in relation to one of English descent, is whether he supports what the Nationalist party prescribes as beneficial for our country'. He further claimed that it was 'confounded impudence... for anyone to arrogate to themselves a monopoly of South African patriotism or an inalienable right to condemn other South Africans for refusing to accept their criterion of what is best for our common fatherland'.²⁷⁷ A reader repeated this sentiment in a letter to the editor by blaming the nationalists of having 'dual loyalties' since their loyalty to Afrikanerdom took

²⁷³ P. McEwan, 'Dringende Beroep on Engelssprekendes', *Die Transvaler*, 28 September 1960, 8; Also published as P. McEwan, 'The Choice before English-Speaking South Africans', *Die Vaderland*, 22 September 1960, 19.

²⁷⁴ Anon., 'Verheug Oor Engelstalige se Houding', *Die Vaderland*, 21 September 1960, 8.

²⁷⁵ Editorial, 'The Big Smear', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 September 1960, 8.

²⁷⁶ Gandar, 'Ten Reasons against This Republic Now', 10.

²⁷⁷ H. G. Lawrence, 'Enough of These Gibes at the English-Speaking!', *The Cape Argus*, 19 September 1960, 10.

priority over their loyalty to South Africa. This reader urged that the referendum was essentially a choice between South Africanism and a specific brand of Afrikaner nationalism which he called Verwoerdism.²⁷⁸ A commentator writing in *The Cape Argus* similarly urged the nationalists to 'stop trying to win us over to the Afrikaner cause'. His interpretation was also that he was patriotic towards the country, but not towards cultural groupings. He declared: 'We are already won over', he declared, 'not to Afrikanerdom but to South Africa'.²⁷⁹ Here there is a discernible desire for the establishment of a unified patriotic South African society, but to these anti-republicans this was irreconcilable with a nationalist republic. One reader wrote that the only way of 'putting South Africa first' was to vote against the establishment of a republic, proclaiming that 'a single overriding loyalty to South Africa demands that we say no to a republic'.²⁸⁰ Those opposing a republic based on culture or heritage might have been sincere in their desire for a white unified South Africa, maybe even a white unified republic. They did not, however, believe that a republic that was being proposed by the NP would be such a republic.

These specific references to South Africanism clearly show the differences between the South Africanism that was introduced with unification in 1910 and South African nationalism that was being discussed at the time of the referendum. Whereas the 1910 brand of South Africanism allowed for distinct cultural differences as long as there was a common devotion to South Africa, the 1960 brand of South African nationalism being proposed by the government demanded that citizens ascribe to a South African culture. This was also evident in Verwoerd's speech at the Union centenary festival, where he said that both Afrikaners and English-speakers had to let go of sentimentality. Here he claimed that Afrikaners were willing to sacrifice their older sentimental attachment to a Boer-style republic and were only asking English-speakers to make their own sacrifices in order to establish a newly united nation.²⁸¹ As the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* pointed out, a republic that was being offered by the NP would mean that 'most English-

²⁷⁸ V. G. Davies, 'Real Issue before S. Africa', *The Cape Argus*, 21 September 1960, 11.

²⁷⁹ J. Colman, 'Republic: Pros, Cons- and a Wry Conclusion', *The Cape Argus*, 15 September 1960, 9.

²⁸⁰ S. Vieyra, 'How to Safeguard a Republic from Debacle', *The Star*, 19 September 1960, 8.

²⁸¹ Verwoerd, *Verwoerd Aan die Woord*, 377.

speaking and many Afrikaans-speaking South Africans will find themselves debarred from unity, because it is conformity, not unity, that is demanded'.²⁸²

This concept of South Africanism had gradually changed over time, and Lambert suggested that South Africanism as an ideal had started to dissipate by the end of the 1940s.²⁸³ René De Villiers argued that the lack of concern regarding the changing of the flag or the anthem is testament to the 'degree to which Afrikaner Nationalism's ideas had come to be accepted as representing South African opinion'.²⁸⁴ However, the discussion regarding patriotism as well as the continuous use of the phrase 'South Africanism' indicates that these concepts were not only still in use, but also that the adherence to the Afrikaner nationalist interpretation of patriotism was not unchallenged. Lambert also insists that these changes had not been undisputed but instead explains this dispute as being motivated by a desire to maintain British connections. An analysis of these newspapers suggests that it was more likely that it was the Afrikaner nationalist view of the future that was being rejected as opposed to a republic or unity being rejected. Several readers insisted that unity already existed or that the NP would be unable to unite South Africa. These letters indicate that they objected to the process of unity, and not unity itself. One reader wrote that 'it is the extremists in both parties who blind us to the great degree of unanimity which does exist between the two present major political parties'.²⁸⁵ Another commentator wrote in *The Cape Argus* that 'for the most part this division of South Africans into Afrikaans- and English-speaking is superficial and unreal'. The commentator stated that there were South Africans who held different opinions, but no such thing as different brands of South Africans.²⁸⁶ Similarly, another reader wrote in a letter to the editor of *The Star* that 'South Africa's future lies with Afrikaner-English intermarriage' and since this cooperation was occurring

²⁸² Editorial, 'Unity', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 September 1960, 8.

²⁸³ Lambert, 'Their Finest Hour?', 81.

²⁸⁴ De Villiers, 'Afrikaner Nationalism', 394.

²⁸⁵ F. Karro, 'Coalition Promises Peace and Prosperity, Reader Believes', *The Cape Argus*, 15 September 1960, 18.

²⁸⁶ Lawrence, 'Enough of These Gibes at the English-Speaking!', 18; See also C.H. Brink, 'We Have Co-Existence in Business, so Why Not in Politics?', *The Cape Argus*, 8 September 1960, 13.

naturally the only option was to 'leave things as they are and let this growth continue undisturbed'.²⁸⁷

The government's call for unity clearly affected the outcome of the referendum. The readers' letters, which advocated that the call for unity was essential and would make them vote in favour of a republic, gave substance to the writing of historians such as Giliomee. Evidently, the call for unity and co-operation was a contributing factor for some English-speaking voters supporting a republic. However, some nuance has to be added to this interpretation. These English-speaking voters would likely have supported a republic regardless of the notion of 'white unity' being attached to the referendum.

Furthermore, it can also be argued that these English-speakers were voting in support of unity, but not necessarily that they did so in response to the government, since the desire for unity was not exclusive to the referendum campaign. More importantly, it must be noted that this 'call for unity' also had the opposite effect on members of the electorate. The desire for a unified white society, and possibly even a unified white republic, was a relatively common desire amongst the electorate. It was precisely this reason that made some voters vote against a republic since they did not see this ideal society being brought to fruition in an NP-controlled republic. It is possible that the call for unity caused just as many people, if not more, to oppose a republic because it became associated with the functions of society as opposed to being simply a change in the state structure.

2.2.3 The racial exclusivity of the future republic

The motion of no confidence, during which Verwoerd made his announcement regarding the referendum, also dealt with the NP's policy of separate development. The policy of separate development was an adaptation of apartheid and had only been instituted the previous year with the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959.²⁸⁸ The republican referendum was connected to South Africa's racial policy since the creation of an independent white republic was part of the plan to establish several

²⁸⁷ J. L. Hofmann, 'Fears Check the Natural Growth of a Nation', *The Star*, 16 September 1960, 8.

²⁸⁸ Bunting, *Rise of the South African Reich*, 129.

independent black territories or homelands under the Bantu Self-Government Act. South Africa's racial policy received much more attention during the 1960 referendum campaign than it had received during previous discussions on republicanism. This was undoubtedly a consequence of the 'wind of change' speech, the Sharpeville massacre, the rise in independent African nations, as well as the 'Congo crisis'. The Verwoerd era was defined by two significant changes in the NP's political objectives: the establishment of a republic and the development of a policy promoting the self-governance of the 'Bantu' homelands.²⁸⁹ The independence of the homelands was negotiated and planned by the NP government and only brought to fruition in 1972, however it was not theoretically far removed from the establishment of the republic and the referendum. South African independence in 1961 was a foundational step of the policy of separate development, setting in motion the establishment of the white republic which was later followed by the establishment of independent African homelands. It was this reorientation to the policy of separate development which intertwined the government's racial policy with the proposed republic.²⁹⁰ The NP was promoting the establishment of a republic for the protection of white society as well as the safeguarding of sound racial policy.

In their 1955 view on the republic, the NP had stated that the 'colour question' required people to stand together for a republic in order to solve the various challenges facing the country.²⁹¹ Numerous earlier references to and discussions on the republic only made limited mention of racial policy or the colour question, presumably because a republic as envisioned by the nationalists would by implication be a white-ruled system. In their Q&A booklet on the proposed republic, the NP promoted that a republic would undeniably be beneficial for 'non-Europeans' since 'a united nation will be better able to solve our present racial problems'.²⁹² This argument was seen as baseless by anti-republicans, who thought that a republic would not bring unity amongst Whites and

²⁸⁹ Davenport, *South Africa- A Modern History*, 281&301.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 281. Davenport discussed the evolution of the policy, pointing out that Verwoerd had never committed to full independence of the homeland territories before 1959.

²⁹¹ ARCA, PV93, File 1/47/1/2, National Party Transvaal: Die Nasionale Partynuus No 9, October 1954.

²⁹² WCARS, A1227, National Party Information Service: The Advent of the Republic, 1 August 1960, 10.

would therefore also not solve other racial challenges.²⁹³ Regardless, the NP insisted that numerous South Africans supported their race policy, but voted for other parties because of their fear of constitutional changes accompanying a republic. Furthermore, the explanation was given that political parties were too focused on issues of division and unity, as opposed to spending time on finding solutions to racial conflict.²⁹⁴

During the referendum campaign, the NP portrayed a republic as a solution to solving South Africa's racial challenges and as a safeguard against racial conflicts. The 'wind of change' speech and the 'Congo crisis' were used as evidence that a republic was needed for 'white survival'. The editor of *Die Burger* wrote that Macmillan had 'thrown the Whiteman in Africa to the wolves' and that South Africa had to seek shelter against the wind of change in the form of a sovereign republic. He insinuated that unity resulting from a republic was vital to survival.²⁹⁵ The focus on the perceived abandonment of Whites also resonated with several readers writing to the Afrikaans-language newspapers. One reader wrote that the West was playing 'a literal chess game with living chess pieces where the rules of the game makes no provision for the white citizens'.²⁹⁶ The editor of *The Cape Argus* also promoted this as a reason for why a republic should seriously be considered. He wrote that 'it was Macmillan, not Dr Verwoerd who plunged white South Africans into insecurity' and reminded English-speakers that they still had to work together with the nationalists since Macmillan had declared all of them to be expendable.²⁹⁷ For others, the events of the 'Congo crisis' were a more decisive factor than the 'wind of change' speech. One reader referenced the events in the Congo and pleaded with voters to support a republic since it was the duty of every white person in South Africa to vote for a republic in order to 'retain' the

²⁹³ Anon., 'A "Unifying" Influence?', *The Star*, 17 September 1960, 8; See also Pritchard, 'Booklet Leaves Us without a Valid Reason', 11.

²⁹⁴ WCARS, A1227, National Party Information Service: The Advent of the Republic, 1 August 1960, 10.

²⁹⁵ Editorial, 'Skuiling in die Wind', *Die Burger*, 9 September 1960, 12.

²⁹⁶ N. Palmos, 'Vereistes vir Voortbestaan', *Die Vaderland*, 14 September 1960, 8; See also Editorial, 'Almal Glo Republiek Sal Wen', 7.

²⁹⁷ Editor's response to L. G. Murray, 'Nat Assurances Regarded as Window-Dressing for Referendum Day', *The Cape Argus*, 1 September 1960, 12; The editor responded in a similar fashion to the letter written by S. Newman, 'Dealing with Principles- and Politics', *The Cape Argus*, 2 September 1960, 15; See also Editorial, 'The Fateful Choice', 16.

land'.²⁹⁸ Accordingly, the editor of *Die Transvaler* urged voters that sacrificing their sentiments would be a small price to pay for the establishment of a republic that would safeguard the future of the nation and civilisation.²⁹⁹ The NP strongly promoted this aspect of their proposed republic during the final weeks leading up to the referendum. On 9 September the NP circulated a pro-republican poster which stated that a republic could 'unite and keep S.A. white' (Figure 13).

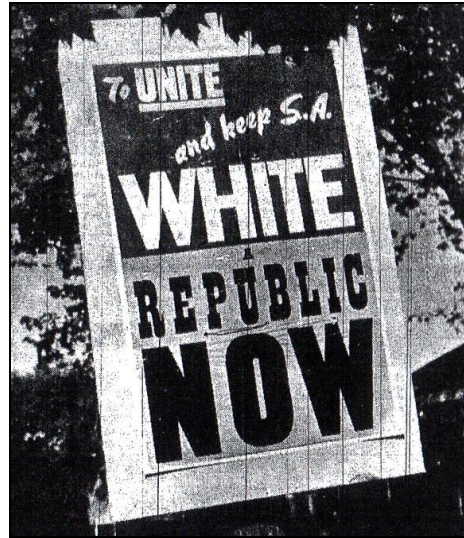


Figure 13: NP pro-republican poster- Rand Daily Mail, 9 September 1960

The 'Dear Friend' letter also used these arguments to promote the republican cause.³⁰⁰ In the letter, Verwoerd noted that it was important to build 'one South African nation' so that attention could be given to 'what is of vital importance - the development of a safe future for our white population'. He advocated that without the establishment of a republic, children would 'experience all the suffering of the Whites who are being attacked in and driven out of one African territory after the other'.³⁰¹ Several articles and letters also advocated that a republic and the accompanying unity was a necessary

²⁹⁸ L. Kruger, 'Hou Koers!', *Die Transvaler*, 19 August 1960, 8.

²⁹⁹ The concept of 'sentiment' was not always explained, and could refer to a sentimentality regarding the Monarchy or regarding the desired Kruger-style republic. Editorial, 'Die Storms Word Feller', *Die Transvaler*, 2 August 1960 6; Editorial, 'Voorspoed die Doelwit', *Die Transvaler*, 18 August 1960, 1.

³⁰⁰ ARCA, PV 71, File 1/11/4/11/1 vol2, H.F. Verwoerd: Dear Friend Letter, 21 September 1960.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

component of white survival, and the editor of *Die Burger* even stated that white South Africans had to 'unify or die' since the dangers for Whites were a present reality.³⁰²

The promotion of these sentiments is crucial to understanding the referendum results, mainly because of the importance that has been given to racial fears by historians. Dubow argued that it was mainly fears of 'black domination' that convinced English-speakers to endorse a republic.³⁰³ Similarly, Passemiers also argued that events in the Congo more than likely contributed to the NP winning the referendum.³⁰⁴ An analysis of the letters reveals that this was the reason why some voters supported a republic. For some readers, the focal point was retaining the land for Whites. A letter published in *Die Vaderland* advocated that 'when we go over to a republic, South Africa must be declared a white republic where Whites have sole rights and final say. Other non-white races should be seen as immigrants'.³⁰⁵ English-speakers writing to the editors of the English-language press also expressed these sentiments. A letter published in *The Star* argued that despite the government's shortcomings 'they are sincere in their desire to retain for the white man his hard-won stake in this part of Africa and we should be grateful that they are at the head of our State'.³⁰⁶ Numerous letters dealing with racial fears were concerned with policy changes. This point of view was that racial integration and liberal policy were the causes of disturbances elsewhere in Africa and that the fight was not against Africans, but against liberal policies. A letter published in *Die Vaderland* proclaimed that a majority referendum result against a republic would be 'the end of the white race' because it would mean that a 'policy of liberalism and integration... will be forced down on us if they [the opposition] are ever in power'.³⁰⁷ A letter also published in *Die Transvaler* made mention of UP supporters who would be voting for a republic in order to protect the Whites in South Africa and because the racial programme would

³⁰² Palmos, 'Vereistes Vir Voortbestaan', 8; Editorial, 'Die Antwoorde', *Die Burger*, 26 September 1960, 10.

³⁰³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85.

³⁰⁴ Passemiers, 'South Africa and the "Congo Crisis"', 221.

³⁰⁵ A. P. Du Preez, 'Republiek Moet Blank Wees', *Die Vaderland*, 22 September 1960, 19; See also S. M. Weitz, 'Enigste Toevlug', *Die Vaderland*, 28 September 1960, 12.

³⁰⁶ C. Sroka, 'Englishwoman Believes Fellow Countrymen Will Be Big Enough to Forgive and Forget', *The Star*, 7 September 1960, 8.

³⁰⁷ A. M. Venter, 'Wat Kan Gebeur as "Nee"-Mense Wen', *Die Vaderland*, 22 September 1960, 19.

only 'be safe in our own hands'.³⁰⁸ Similarly, another published letter argued that a republic was a guarantee that the future would remain 'safe in white hands'. This reader contrasted this with monarchist policy which 'through its liberal attitude... asks that the nation and our descendants should commit suicide, like in the north of Africa where such policies did not bring peace, but chaos, murder, rape and communist insurgency'.³⁰⁹ These opinions also surfaced in the English-language press. A letter published in *The Star* pleaded for a vote in favour of a republic since:

unity amongst all sections of the white population of this country and the separate development of the Bantu in their own field is the only solution to a definite future for generations to come and will avoid... the chaotic state of affairs experienced in central Africa.³¹⁰

The support for a republic based on 'fears of black domination' or the fears of integration policies was by no means universally accepted. The anti-republicans objected to the use of these racial narratives by insisting that they distracted from the overall debate regarding the referendum. In a commentary article, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that the use of this 'black boggy' was a 'shameless and blatant attempt to win votes for a republic by playing on colour fears and prejudices'.³¹¹ The editor further advocated that this race-based propaganda had reduced the referendum to a question of whether or not you wanted 'your daughter to marry an African... or be ravished by a Congolese soldier'.³¹² The editor of *The Star* also insisted that the NP was 'showing a reckless disregard for their responsibilities to South Africa by the revival of the old electioneered war cries about the black menace and "voting white"'. He further called it an appeal 'to the crudest racial instincts' and 'a shameless attempt to stampede the electorate in both language groups into a "white front" where they will gang up against the non-Whites'.³¹³ Thus, the use of racial narratives in the pro-republican campaign led some voters to believe that their votes would represent a vote for or against apartheid. Several readers

³⁰⁸ J. M. Jansonius, 'Bly in V.P. Dog Gaan Stem Vir Republiek', *Die Transvaler*, 23 August 1960, 1.

³⁰⁹ Venter, 'Republiek die Waarborg' 6.

³¹⁰ L. Bick, 'A Plea for a Republic', *The Star*, 30 September 1960, 6.

³¹¹ J. R. Neame, '"Black Boggy" Is Back', *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 September 1960, 1.

³¹² Editorial, 'Appeal to Fear', *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 September 1960, 8.

³¹³ Junius, 'Back to the Days of "a Black Manifesto"', *The Star*, 9 September 1960, 11.

writing to the English-language press declared that they would oppose a republic because it might be taken as support for apartheid.³¹⁴ In a letter published in *The Cape Argus*, one voter claimed that:

if we, the South African electorate, endorse the ideologies of the National Party by allowing them to win the referendum, we are inevitably placing ourselves in direct contradiction to all the political and social forces of world history today; especially concerning Africa as a whole and African nationalist politics in South Africa in particular.³¹⁵

Another letter published in this newspaper advocated that there were certain aspects of the proposed republic that could not be accepted. He stated that 'as desirable as white unity may be, we see no virtue in it if it takes the form of a ganging up by the Whites against the non-Whites - a strengthening of both white and black nationalism'.³¹⁶ This view also links with the interpretation discussed earlier, that unity was conditional and that 'conformity' was expected. The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* explained that it was becoming clear that unity was exclusive and that those who disagreed with the race policy would not be part of the unity until they give up on their ideas.³¹⁷ Another commentator writing for the *Rand Daily Mail* strongly objected to the republican slogan of 'Unite and keep South Africa white' by arguing that it implied that 'anyone who opposes it [the republic] can hence be denounced as a kafferboetie or a traitor'.³¹⁸ This racial element of exclusive unity is perhaps most apparent in the Mona and Libbie cartoon series published in *Die Burger* (Figures 8- 12). As previously discussed, Mona is portrayed as changing her previous position by voting for the republic. In contrast, Libbie, as a representative of liberalism, did not undergo any such changes as is depicted as standing in line to vote 'no'. Libbie is not surrounded by friends as Mona is, and is therefore also excluded from this new sense of unity.

³¹⁴ W. Greenberg, 'Nat. Unity Call "Insulting"', *Rand Daily Mail*, 7 September 1960, 2; Z. J. De Beer, 'Reforms, Not Republic, Will Bring True Unity, Says Dr. Zac de Beer', *The Cape Argus*, 12 September 1960, 11; Lewis, 'A Republic Based on Shallow Foundations', 8.

³¹⁵ J. Rubin, 'Vote against Republic and Refuse to Endorse Nat. Govt. Policies', *The Cape Argus*, 15 September 1960, 13.

³¹⁶ De Beer, 'Reforms, Not Republic, Will Bring True Unity', 11.

³¹⁷ L. Gandar, 'The Fateful Republic of Wrong Motives', *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 September 1960, 10.

³¹⁸ Junius, 'Back to the Days of "a Black Manifesto"', 11.

Some voters were evidently persuaded to vote for a republic in response to racial fear propaganda. Conversely, this section has also shown that those who were considering voting for a republic based on the desire for unity, were dissuaded if this unity implied that they also accepted the NP's racial policy. The most interesting aspect regarding the referendum that has come to the fore is that some voters did not see a republic as the answer to their anxieties regarding racial conflicts on the continent, as is often suggested. For example, a letter that advocated voting against a republic did so by stating that voting for a republic 'will be voting for disaster - for the end of South Africa as the home of the white man and as the most civilised state in Africa'.³¹⁹ The proposed republic did not necessarily represent the safeguarding of white interests to all sections of the electorate. The phenomenon that racial fear caused some to oppose a republic will become more evident in the following section dealing with South Africa's Commonwealth membership.

2.3 The future republic and the international community

A connection between Commonwealth membership and republicanism in South Africa had existed ever since the establishment of the Commonwealth. In examining the discussion surrounding the Commonwealth as it played a role in the referendum, historians have often approached the Commonwealth connection as an element of British sentimentality amongst English-speakers. Lambert, for example, argued that there was a 'final and vigorous rallying to the monarchy and the Commonwealth' by English-speakers during the referendum campaign.³²⁰ Dubow again argued that the referendum had revealed that 'English-speaking South Africans were far less wedded to Britain and the multi-racial Commonwealth than they had been a generation or more before'.³²¹ While these statements are somewhat contradictory, both seemingly approached the topic as English-speaking pro-British sentimentality. As this section will reveal, it was the advantages of Commonwealth membership rather than the sentimentality of the connection that carried weight with members of the electorate.

³¹⁹ Pritchard, 'Booklet Leaves Us without a Valid Reason', 11.

³²⁰ Lambert, 'An Unknown People', 609.

³²¹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85.

Where the previous sections were mainly concerned with the domestic factors associated with the proposed republic, this section will focus on the expected position that the proposed republic would have within the international community. It mainly deals with the uncertainty regarding South Africa's Commonwealth membership if South Africa chose to become a republic. The topics of the two previous sections dealt with promises made by the government. However, Commonwealth membership and South Africa's place within the international community would not primarily be determined by the NP and were therefore even more unpredictable.

This link between Commonwealth membership and autonomy was rooted in the history of republicanism in South Africa. During the period when the 1942 draft constitution was published, the possibility for independent countries to retain their Commonwealth membership was different from what it would be in later years. At that time the interpretation was that the establishment of an independent republic by a former British colony would lead to that country's exclusion from the Commonwealth. As such, Ireland left the Commonwealth in 1948 when the Republic of Ireland was established.³²² For some Afrikaner nationalists, this exclusion from the Empire was as much an inevitable outcome of republicanism as it was a desire. This is apparent from the statement made by Malan in parliament in 1942 regarding a future republic. He stated that it was in the highest national interest to establish 'a republic dissociated from the British Crown and Empire and free and independent of any foreign power'.³²³ This was thus not merely an implication of becoming a republic, but that a republic 'dissociated' from Britain was also a desired characteristic at that stage. After the publication of the 1942 draft constitution, the nationalists had subsequently renounced some of its principles, such as the policy on language equality. Their stance on Commonwealth membership was never fully renounced, and for more than a decade, the NP insisted that the value of Commonwealth membership would have to be assessed at the time that South Africa was going to establish a republic.³²⁴ The NP eventually only indicated their final stance on Commonwealth membership for the first time a mere five weeks ahead of the

³²² Geyser, *Watershed for South Africa*, 76.

³²³ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 13 January 1942), c33.

³²⁴ ARCA, PV93, File 1/47/1/2, National Party Transvaal: Die Nasionale Partynuus No 9, October 1954.

referendum. This late announcement that South Africa would seek to remain a member of the Commonwealth upon becoming a republic was not the only factor that contributed to scepticism and uncertainty regarding South Africa's future within the international community.

In the years after the Second World War the international community was adapting to increasing demands for decolonisation. This also influenced the Commonwealth and its relationships. When India and Pakistan gained independence in 1947, they both requested to remain members of the Commonwealth. They were granted permission to remain members of the Commonwealth as independent nations in 1949, and this example was subsequently followed by other countries who remained members after gaining their independence.³²⁵ This policy change also altered the nationalists' view of their proposed republic, since Commonwealth membership and republicanism were no longer mutually exclusive. The question that the nationalists now had to answer was whether the establishment of a republic and leaving the Commonwealth should still be approached as a simultaneous process.³²⁶ Since the electorate would not necessarily support a republic dissociated from the Commonwealth the decision was made that the two issues would be approached separately.³²⁷ Information released by the NP from 1950 onward insisted that the two questions would be approached separately and that the desire for continued Commonwealth membership would be determined by the value that it would have for South Africa at the time that a republic was established.³²⁸ However, this policy change did not convince everyone that the desires of a republic 'dissociated' from Britain had dissipated entirely. During the referendum campaign the UP referenced past statements made by NP leaders to argue that it was an objective of the NP to establish a republic outside the Commonwealth.³²⁹

The separation of these two questions was aimed at convincing the electorate to support a republic on the basis that ties with the Commonwealth would not necessarily

³²⁵ Geyser, *Watershed for South Africa*, 76.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

³²⁷ Van Schoor, 'Die Herlewing van die Republikeinse Ideaal', 181.

³²⁸ ARCA, PV93, File 1/47/1/2, National Party Transvaal: Die Nasionale Partynuus No 9, October 1954.

³²⁹ ARCA, PV71, File 1/16/4/1/6, United Party Division of Information and Research: Information Guide and Speakers' Notes, 1960, 122.

be broken. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, various English-speakers were declaring that they would not be against a republic so long as it had a democratic constitution and remained a member of the Commonwealth.³³⁰ In 1958 this was also a major discussion point as some Afrikaans-language news platforms also argued for a republic that would remain a member of the Commonwealth. That year the editor of *Die Burger* argued that most people would accept a republic under this condition.³³¹ The newspaper also conducted a survey on the issue and reported that 80% of participants were in favour of a republic inside the Commonwealth.³³² *Die Transvaler* also conducted a similar survey which resulted in 61% of participants supporting a republic inside the Commonwealth and 39% voting for a republic outside.³³³ Regardless of the subjectivity and voluntary participation of these surveys, it did indicate that a referendum based on the retention of Commonwealth membership could significantly sway the vote in favour of a republic. At the same time as these surveys predicted a positive change in favour of a republic, the debate on the technicalities of continued Commonwealth membership and whether South Africa would be allowed to stay started to surface. Voters might have indicated support for a republic within the Commonwealth, but analysts argued that there would be no way of ensuring that South Africa would be allowed to remain a member.³³⁴ This sparked a debate in the press regarding whether it would be possible for other Commonwealth countries to exclude South Africa.

In light of the uncertainty regarding the process of continued Commonwealth membership, Verwoerd was equally vague and calculating in his statements on the issue when he announced that a referendum would take place. During the 20 January parliamentary session, Verwoerd said that he could make only one promise regarding Commonwealth membership, which was that the government's intentions would be indicated before the referendum. He also added that their stance on Commonwealth membership would be determined by the nature and value of the Commonwealth at the

³³⁰ ARCA, PV4, File 86, Letter from: Alexander Steward To: Eric Louw, February 1959; ARCA, PV4, File 1/4/6/1, Typed newspaper extract under the heading 'Hepple favours Republic', 23 September 1955.

³³¹ Editorial, 'Suggestions on the Republic', *Die Burger*, 10 May 1958, n.p.

³³² A summary of the survey was found in Gandar, 'The Republic: Why Not a Positive Attitude?', n.p.

³³³ '61 Persent Vra 'n Republiek Binne Statebond', *Die Burger*, 6 June 1958, n.p.

³³⁴ 'Niemand Kan S.A. Uitskop', *Die Vaderland*, 13 May 1958, n.p.

time that a referendum was held. He did, however, mention that it was in South Africa's best interest to remain friends with Britain.³³⁵ At the time it seemed, according to the assessment of the *Rand Daily Mail's* editor, that Verwoerd would announce that South Africa wanted to remain a member of the Commonwealth.³³⁶ To gain some clarity on the situation, Verwoerd discussed the details of Commonwealth membership with Macmillan during his visit to South Africa. The British Prime Minister arrived in South Africa late in January 1960, shortly after Verwoerd's announcement on a republic. Of specific concern during these discussions was that Ghana had already spoken out against South Africa's race policy and indicated that it might vote against South Africa if an application for continued membership was submitted to the Commonwealth. Macmillan assured Verwoerd that he did not believe that there would be problems regarding South Africa's Commonwealth membership since Ghana's Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, could easily be convinced to support the application.³³⁷ Macmillan insisted that Verwoerd attend the May 1960 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London to get more clarity on the matter of South Africa's proposed membership application. Despite the sentiments expressed in the 'wind of change' speech, Macmillan told Verwoerd that South Africa's readmission would be supported by Britain.

When the opposition parties requested a discussion of the referendum and a republic in parliament in March to gain clarity on the Commonwealth issue, Verwoerd based his comments on the discussions he had with Macmillan just a few weeks prior. The main point of concern was whether South Africa would remain a Commonwealth member upon assuming republican status. This query regarding membership was not unjustifiable considering the desire in some NP quarters to re-establish a republic which had no connections to Britain or the Commonwealth.³³⁸ The concept of Commonwealth membership had also been open to interpretation since India had been allowed to remain a member of the Commonwealth. In contrast, Ireland, had been independent

³³⁵ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, January 20, 1960), c106-8.

³³⁶ Gandar, 'The Republic: Why Not a Positive Attitude?', n.p.

³³⁷ Geysler, *Watershed for South Africa*, 64-5.

³³⁸ Van Schoor, 'Die Herlewing van die Republikeinse Ideaal', 182.

since 1922 and chose to break ties with the Commonwealth in 1948 due to irreconcilable differences.³³⁹ Verwoerd responded by insinuating that there was little chance for South Africa to be excluded since other countries also benefited from South Africa's membership. The most important points that came forth from the discussion were that Verwoerd saw Commonwealth membership as beneficial in certain situations, but that it would be of no relevance to solve South Africa's internal problems and racial challenges.³⁴⁰ He also said that being part of a group of like-minded states in the protection of Western civilisation against communism was a valuable connection. Thus, at that point, before the Sharpeville massacre, Verwoerd still described the Commonwealth as being like-minded countries that would understand and support South Africa's position.³⁴¹

The Commonwealth had originally been appropriately named, given that the organisation had primarily focused on the economic ties between Britain and its former dominions and colonies. After the Second World War, the Commonwealth started shifting its focus as race and racial policy began to take centre stage and decolonisation in Africa was expedited.³⁴² The Sharpeville massacre would make these changes within the Commonwealth even more pronounced. The intensified international scrutiny of the NP government in the wake of Sharpeville meant that the support from other Commonwealth member states would not necessarily be as predictable as Macmillan had suggested earlier that year. Several of the Commonwealth countries proclaimed their misgivings with the events that had transpired at Sharpeville and by the time of the May 1960 Prime Ministers' Conference, international opinion toward South Africa had drastically changed. One more element that would contribute to the unfavourable proceedings of the Prime Ministers' Conference was that Verwoerd himself would be

³³⁹ A. K. Bahl, 'Significance of India's Membership of Commonwealth', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 20, 3 (1959), 247–54; F. Bongiorno, 'H. V. Evatt, Australia and Ireland's Departure from the Commonwealth: A Reassessment', *Irish Historical Studies*, 32, 128 (2001), 537–55.

³⁴⁰ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 21 March 1960), c3778-9.

³⁴¹ Geysler, *Watershed for South Africa*, 66.

³⁴² For more information on the changing nature of the Commonwealth see E. Buettner, "'This Is Staffordshire Not Alabama": Racial Geographies of Commonwealth Immigration in Early 1960s Britain', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42, 4 (2014), 712; N. Harper, 'The Multi-racial Commonwealth: Proceedings of the Fifth Unofficial Commonwealth Relations Conference, Lahore, 15–27 March, 1954', *Australian Outlook*, 10, 1 (1956), 52.

unable to attend the conference. Since Verwoerd was still recovering from the attempt on his life, the Union's Minister of Foreign affairs, Eric Louw, was selected to attend the conference on his behalf.

Macmillan was reportedly not very fond of Louw, and the conference proceedings did not fare well for post-Sharpeville South Africa. At the conference Louw vigorously defended the apartheid policy and insisted that questions regarding South Africa's race relations counted as interference in domestic matters. After the conference, the media reported that Louw had been uncompromising, and the proceedings at the conference further intensified the division between South Africa and the other Commonwealth nations.³⁴³ The conference did, however, provide more clarity on the procedure that South Africa would have to follow if the country wanted to remain a member of the Commonwealth upon the establishment of a republic. It was made clear that South Africa would need to gain permission or approval from the other Commonwealth member states for continued membership after the change in constitutional status. The outcome of such an application would thus be impossible to predict ahead of the referendum since the Commonwealth members would not declare their stance on the application ahead of the 1961 Prime Ministers' Conference.

Nevertheless, the 1960 conference was an indication of what South Africa might expect if it did apply for continued membership as a republic. Traditionally, Commonwealth Conferences followed the unwritten rule that the internal affairs of any of its member states were not open to discussion. However, at the 1960 conference, this rule was not adhered to as several of the attending prime Ministers asked questions regarding the racial situation in South Africa. It was clear that the racial policy of South Africa would be considered open for discussion and taken into account by the other member states. In the statement issued by the Commonwealth after the 1960 conference, the discussion of internal affairs was warranted since the Commonwealth was a multiracial organisation and wanted to adhere to principles of multi-racialism.³⁴⁴ It was evident that

³⁴³ Geyser, *Watershed for South Africa*, 65-6.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

the Commonwealth was changing and would not shy away from considering South Africa's racial policy as part of the membership re-admission process.

Srinivasan labelled this period as the 'African Commonwealth' to note a shift in power as a result of new incumbent African member states. These new African states were often more vocal about their concerns because they had fewer international platforms upon which to voice their opinions.³⁴⁵ These changes undeniably had decolonial undertones, and Ward describes this transformation as the 'disintegration of white solidarity across the Empire and Commonwealth'.³⁴⁶ There had been a sense of solidarity and support amongst the 'older white states' within the Commonwealth, presumably because they understood the challenges faced by the other white states in spreading their ideas of Western civilisation. The NP used this argument in their pamphlet discussing the question of Commonwealth membership ahead of the referendum. They advocated that South Africa would retain its membership based on the support of the white states since 'Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand are the countries with the strongest influence in the Commonwealth. Like South Africa, they are white states'.³⁴⁷ Even though the NP argued that South Africa would be able to rely on these old allegiances, the fact that South Africa's readmission would be complicated by their racial policy was becoming more pronounced. South Africa would not be able to rely on the policy of non-interference or unquestioning support from other white states. Initially, only Nkrumah had voiced his misgivings about South Africa, but the 1960 Prime Ministers' Conference saw Pakistan's Ayub Khan and Malaysia's Tunku Abdul Rahman also inquiring about South Africa's racial policy.³⁴⁸ During the conference, Canada's Prime Minister had told Louw that his country would never support the policy of apartheid and recommended

³⁴⁵ K. Srinivasan, 'Nobody's Commonwealth? The Commonwealth in Britain's Post-Imperial Adjustment', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 44, 2 (2007), 261-2.

³⁴⁶ S. Ward, 'Run Before the Tempest: The "Wind of Change" and the British World', *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft*, 37, 2 (2011), 200.

³⁴⁷ University of Cape Town Library Special Collections (Hereafter UCTL Spec. coll.), BA 320.968MALA, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: Commonwealth Relations- Membership of South Africa, August 1960, 12; WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: A Commentary on Politics To-Day, August 1960, 10.

³⁴⁸ Geysler, *Watershed for South Africa*, 70.

that some changes needed to be made.³⁴⁹ He did not at that time make any specific statements regarding his opinion on South Africa's possible membership application. It was, however, becoming clear that South Africa might not be able to rely on the unquestioning support of the other Commonwealth states as Macmillan had suggested in February.

It was only on 3 August 1960 that the electorate would get more clarity on the matter of Commonwealth membership. Along with announcing the date of the referendum, Verwoerd also discussed the stance that would be taken on Commonwealth membership. He declared that if the electorate did give the mandate for South Africa to become a republic, an application would be submitted for continued membership of the Commonwealth. Along with this, he declared that the 'government was convinced that permission would be granted' to retain membership, as had been the case when other member countries had become independent.³⁵⁰ More importantly, Verwoerd gave a clear indication that if South Africa was not granted re-admission to the Commonwealth, it would in no way hinder the establishment of a republic. This highlighted the fact that there was no way to know ahead of the referendum if South Africa's Commonwealth membership status could be retained. The opposition saw the NP's statement regarding its desire to retain South Africa Commonwealth membership as unconvincing. In their political column published in *The Cape Argus*, the UP declared that some sections of the NP had essentially been the 'anti-Commonwealth party' and that some nationalists did not believe in the Commonwealth and did not truly want to remain members.³⁵¹ As such, the UP's political columnist declared that this 'sudden conversion' in favour of the Commonwealth was 'beyond belief' and that the nationalists should not be offended if voters questioned the legitimacy of their desire to remain in the Commonwealth given their long record of opposing this connection.³⁵² One political correspondent proposed that this was the NP's plan from the start and that after a republic was established, plans would be made to take South Africa out of the Commonwealth. According to this

³⁴⁹ Hayes, 'South Africa's Departure from the Commonwealth', 466.

³⁵⁰ Van Schoor and Van Rooyen, *Republieke en Republikeine*, 242.

³⁵¹ F. Cronje, 'Nats Do Not Believe in Commonwealth', *The Cape Argus*, 26 August 1960, 9.

³⁵² F. Cronje, 'Sudden Conversion of Nationalists is Beyond Belief', *The Cape Argus*, 7 September 1960, 12.

correspondent, the NP's desire to retain South Africa's membership was 'just a bluff to get votes'.³⁵³ Several readers also wrote to the editors to voice their opinions that the NP was only bluffing with these claims to get support from voters.³⁵⁴ One reader wrote a letter to the *Rand Daily Mail* describing the NP's decision on the Commonwealth as a 'strange ideological somersault' considering their record of 'rallying against Commonwealth connection for almost 25 years'.³⁵⁵

There was a fair amount of speculation regarding the NP's sincerity to remain a member of the Commonwealth. The majority of the anti-republican debate focused on the possibility and consequences of losing Commonwealth membership and whether this justified voting against a republic. Again, these objections were not aimed at the establishment of a republic in principle but were rather aimed at the consequences that such a step would have for South Africa. Ironically, the expression of 'putting South Africa first' associated with South Africanism was also used by anti-republicans who concluded that voting against the establishment of a republic under the specific circumstances would be best for the future of the country. Several anti-republicans proclaimed that, in light of the Sharpeville massacre, the Prime Minister's conference and increasing international criticism, it was not the right time to establish a republic. One reader's letter published in *The Star* explained: 'Let us not take risks by establishing a republic at the present time and under present conditions'.³⁵⁶ In January 1960 Laurence Gandar, editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*, had encouraged people to be positive about a republic because he expected that Verwoerd would declare that the proposed republic would seek to remain a Commonwealth member.³⁵⁷ However, in September he advocated against a republic after what had transpired during the year. A week before the referendum he wrote: 'There is no longer blanket opposition to the principle of a republic as such. The main arguments now are directed at the timing of

³⁵³ J. R. Neame, 'The Truth is Kept Dark', *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 August 1960, 9; J. R. Neame, 'Just a Bluff to Get Votes', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 August 1960, 9.

³⁵⁴ R. P. Bunter, 'Nationalists Want to Leave the Commonwealth', *The Star*, 8 September 1960, 8; A. S. Kruger, 'We Changed Our Minds- Verwoerd', *The Star*, 18 August 1960, 9.

³⁵⁵ A. Cross, "'Strange Ideological Somersaults' of the Nats.", *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 September 1960, 8; For a similar argument see Bunter, 'Nationalists Want to Leave the Commonwealth', 8.

³⁵⁶ R. A. Harvey, 'Republic Would Mean Taking Serious Risks in World Market', *The Star*, 19 September 1960, 9.

³⁵⁷ Gandar, 'The Republic: Why Not a Positive Attitude?', n.p.

the referendum, the international background against which it is being held, the type of republic that might be forthcoming, and the consequences for South Africa that it might bring'.³⁵⁸

Similarly, the PP vocalised that they were not against a republic as a form of state, but that they were against a nationalist republic which could be excluded from the Commonwealth based on the apartheid policy.³⁵⁹ Jan Steytler, the leader of the PP, insisted that it was the 'wrong republic at the wrong time' since South Africa would continue to be condemned if it did not change its racial policy.³⁶⁰ The PP said that since South Africa's Commonwealth membership relied on the other states, it would most certainly not be granted. The blame for this was placed on Verwoerd for 'taking South Africa to the fringes of the Commonwealth' and thus making South Africa's role in the Commonwealth very precarious.³⁶¹ The term 'Verwoerd republic' was thus used by the anti-republicans to denote that a republic under Verwoerd's leadership and with apartheid as its racial policy would be ostracised by the international community and should, therefore, be rejected.³⁶² Regardless of their attempts to do so, the NP could not escape the link between republicanism and Commonwealth membership simply by insisting that the two issues would be addressed separately. Although the debate regarding Commonwealth membership ended up being highly speculative, it formed the most substantial part of the referendum campaign. Most of the concerns expressed by anti-republicans writing to these newspapers were based on this possible loss of Commonwealth membership.

³⁵⁸ Gandar, 'Ten Reasons Against This Republic Now', 10.

³⁵⁹ WCARS, A1229, Progressive Party Poster -We Say No!, 1960.

³⁶⁰ 'Wrong Republic, Wrong Time, Says Steytler', *The Cape Argus*, 4 August 1960, 4.

³⁶¹ South African National Library Cape Town (hereafter NLCT), General Collection, A.P. 329.968 REP, Progressive Party: Dr. Verwoerd's Republican Referendum, n.d.

³⁶² S. Newman, 'Voting for a "Verwoerdian" Republic', *The Cape Argus*, 26 August 1960, 15; Uitlander, 'Prefers Blacks to Broederbond Republic', *The Star*, 8 August 1960, 12.

2.3.1 The unpredictability of Commonwealth membership

From the start of the campaign various anti-republican platforms advocated that the uncertainty of Commonwealth membership was reason enough to vote against a republic. The PP's campaign planners stressed that a significant part of their campaign was to emphasise that South Africa would be forced to leave the Commonwealth.³⁶³ It was this issue regarding Commonwealth membership that the *Rand Daily Mail* saw as the 'crux of the referendum'.³⁶⁴ The UP also used their party political pamphlet to inform the electorate that South Africa would be forced to leave the Commonwealth if an application for continued membership was submitted.³⁶⁵ The UP insisted that widespread international criticism of South Africa meant that losing Commonwealth membership was inevitable and not simply unpredictable.³⁶⁶ The anti-republicans were technically also speculating about the outcome of the membership application, since they also had no way of knowing. In their campaign, they focussed on how much of a risk it would be to establish a republic without knowing how Commonwealth membership would affect a republic's future security. The UP thus urged voters not to take the risk and 'gamble with our membership' by voting for a republic.³⁶⁷ The leader of the UP, De Villiers Graaff, also reminded the electorate of this perceived risk by insisting that 'one adverse vote' would mean that 'S.A. is out'.³⁶⁸

Anti-republican English-language newspapers also used this line of argument. The *Rand Daily Mail's* editor noted that becoming a republic would place Commonwealth membership in the hands of non-white republics, which were already critical of South Africa's political situation.³⁶⁹ The notion of gambling with South Africa's future was used

³⁶³ UCTL Spec. coll., Colin Eglin Papers BC1103, Memo written by the Progressive Party Director of Information: A Public Relations Promotion to Save South Africa, June 1960, 5.

³⁶⁴ 'Republic "Will Mean Expulsion"', *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 August 1960, 1.

³⁶⁵ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: A Commentary on Politics To-Day, August 1960, 3.

³⁶⁶ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: Facts about the Republic, August 1960.

³⁶⁷ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: A Commentary on Politics To-Day, August 1960, 10; National Library of South Africa, Cape Town (Hereafter NLCT), General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, United Party: Referendum News, n.d.

³⁶⁸ L. Symons, 'Graaff Explains Danger', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 August 1960, 2.

³⁶⁹ Editorial, 'Black-Red Republics', *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 October 1960, 10; See also Editorial, 'In or Out', *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 September 1960, 8.

by several publications, with the *Rand Daily Mail's* editor stating that the government had 'placed a massive each-way bet on the issue'.³⁷⁰ The editor later also wrote that South Africa would be at the mercy of other Commonwealth states, and wondered whether it was wise 'to take even the slightest risk of losing our Commonwealth membership at so a critical time in our history'. Similarly, the editor of *The Star* said that South Africa 'dare not risk it' since the loss of Commonwealth membership would have profound implications.³⁷¹ Several readers writing to the English-language press also proclaimed that voting for the establishment of a republic would be a risk or a gamble since there was no clear way of knowing if it would be able to retain Commonwealth membership.³⁷² For one reader writing to the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*, the loss of Commonwealth membership was not just risky, but unavoidable.³⁷³

The NP's republican referendum committee responded to these doubts and uncertainties by publishing a pamphlet entitled *Commonwealth Membership-Membership of South Africa* in August 1960 which mainly addressed the issue of whether South Africa was at risk of losing its membership. The opening paragraph indicated that this line of argument was reactionary and stated that 'United Party leaders argue that when South Africa becomes a Republic, she will be expelled from the Commonwealth. The National Party holds the opposite view'.³⁷⁴ One of the main arguments put forth in the pamphlet was that South Africa would be able to count on the support of other Commonwealth countries when applying for continued membership. The pamphlet stated that Britain was the country with 'the most powerful influence in the Commonwealth' and would, therefore, take a leading role in ensuring South Africa's membership. This insistence relied heavily on the perceived hierarchy of the Commonwealth and the connection between 'white' states. To this extent, the pamphlet declared that the 'most influential members of the Commonwealth', such as Australia

³⁷⁰ Editorial, 'Renegade Outlook', *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 August 1960, 8; Editorial, 'Republic Roulette', *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 August 1960, 8; Editorial, 'Republic- a Gambler's Throw', *The Star*, 4 August 1960, 16.

³⁷¹ Editorial, 'We Dare Not Risk It', *The Star*, 19 September 1960, 16.

³⁷² M. Kirkman, 'Dr. Verwoerd's Gamble on a 1,000 to One Chance', *The Star*, 7 September 1960, 8; C. B. Ronyane, 'When Eire Became a Republic', *The Star*, 15 September 1960, 8.

³⁷³ H. Barenburg, 'What Republic Will Cost', *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 October 1960, 4.

³⁷⁴ UCTL Spec. coll., BA 320.968MALA, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: Commonwealth Relations- Membership of South Africa, August 1960, 3.

and Canada were not in favour of forcing South Africa to leave the Commonwealth. They furthermore insisted that India and Ghana had received support to remain members and that it should be no different for South Africa.³⁷⁵

The NP's associated Afrikaans newspapers also participated in refuting the claims that the loss of membership was even a real possibility.³⁷⁶ *Die Transvaler's* editor insisted that the 'Union government is however convinced that Britain and the older members will retain their authority in the Commonwealth' and would choose South Africa over countries like Ghana, who was openly opposing South Africa's continued membership.³⁷⁷ Another portrayal from the editor of *Die Vaderland* was that a way would be found for South Africa to stay within the Commonwealth because British law was 'flexible' and that only the Prime Minister of Britain would be able to remove South Africa from the Commonwealth.³⁷⁸ The NP relied on Macmillan's statements that he believed the contribution of South Africa will be of strength to the Commonwealth to argue that 'it is reasonable to deduce... that South Africa as a republic will be just as welcome in the Commonwealth as it is while still a monarchy'.³⁷⁹ Numerous republican publications presented this as meaning that South Africa was of great value to Britain and would therefore not be excluded from the Commonwealth.³⁸⁰

This value that the nationalists insisted South Africa had for Britain was not just of the historical and friendship variety, but also monetary.³⁸¹ One NP minister reportedly said that Britain would 'move heaven and earth' to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth because Britain could not afford to lose one of its biggest markets.³⁸² The editor of *Die Vaderland* also wrote that Britain would lose both a good client as well as international prestige if it listened to what Ghana was prescribing for the Commonwealth. He said

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

³⁷⁶ 'Lord Home', *Die Burger*, 21 September 1960, 10.

³⁷⁷ Editorial, 'Aktuele Vrae oor die Republiek', *Die Transvaler*, 13 August 1960, 3.

³⁷⁸ Editorial, 'S.A. as Klant vir die Statebond', *Die Vaderland*, 2 August 1960, 8; See also Editorial, 'Statebond Buigbaar', *Die Vaderland*, 2 September 1960, 12.

³⁷⁹ UCTL Spec. coll., BA 320.968MALA, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: Commonwealth Relations- Membership of South Africa, August 1960, 7&10.

³⁸⁰ 'Ons Handelsooreenkomste', *Die Transvaler*, 14 September 1960, 6; J. P. Naude, 'Ekonomiese Rol van S.A. in Statebond', *Die Transvaler*, 15 September 1960, 6; 'Lord Home', 10.

³⁸¹ Naude, 'Ekonomiese Rol van S.A. in Statebond', 6.

³⁸² P. J. Wapenaar, 'Britse Verleë oor S.A. as Goeie Klant', *Die Vaderland*, 7 September 1960, 5.

that it was clear that 'it is of the utmost value for Britain and other white members to remain friends with South Africa'.³⁸³ A reader writing to *Die Vaderland* similarly stated that South Africa was rich in resources and that Britain would not be willing to lose out on these resources and markets simply because Ghana did not want to support South Africa's membership application.³⁸⁴ This sentiment was also found in numerous letters written to the English-language press. One letter even declared that the Commonwealth could not 'afford to let us go' and insisted that South Africa would not be forced to leave the Commonwealth.³⁸⁵

It was the reason why South Africa's membership was uncertain that was of importance to the Progressive Party. They focused on the fact that the policy of apartheid was the main reason for the uncertainty regarding South Africa's Commonwealth membership. They argued that an apartheid republic would surely be removed from the Commonwealth whereas another republic, one under different leadership and with a different racial policy, would be welcomed and secure within the Commonwealth. The UP also insisted that widespread international criticism of apartheid meant that losing Commonwealth membership was inevitable.³⁸⁶ In their defence, the NP claimed that since the other countries indicated that a South Africa under monarchical rule was still welcome in the Commonwealth, the simple fact of becoming a republic would not endanger membership.³⁸⁷ The objection here was that the rejection of South Africa's membership application based on apartheid was impossible since it was a domestic issue that could not have any bearing on Commonwealth membership.³⁸⁸ There was a belief that South Africa would not be removed based on international criticism since that would mean that Commonwealth countries were interfering in another member's internal

³⁸³ Editorial, 'S.A. as Klant vir die Statebond' 8.

³⁸⁴ J. G. Peens, 'Republiek Het Niks te Vrees', *Die Vaderland*, 29 September 1960, 8.

³⁸⁵ D.G. Swart, 'Question of Membership Challenged', *The Cape Argus*, 29 September 1960, 14; See also Sroka, 'Englishwoman Believes Fellow Countrymen Will Be Big Enough to Forgive and Forget', 8; J. W. Gadown, 'Time for Considered Reasoning, Not Sentiment, Hysteria', *The Cape Argus*, 28 September 1960, 14.

³⁸⁶ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: Facts about the Republic, August 1960.

³⁸⁷ UCTL Spec. coll., BA 320.968MALA, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: Commonwealth Relations- Membership of South Africa, August 1960, 3-5.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

affairs.³⁸⁹ Since interfering in domestic affairs was 'against the rules' some NP leaders said that a vote against South Africa would not occur since it would lead to the disintegration of the entire Commonwealth.³⁹⁰ The Afrikaans-language newspapers also argued that such a policy shift would lead to the dismantling of the Commonwealth. In multiple editorials, *Die Transvaler* argued that Britain would not allow South Africa to lose its Commonwealth membership because 'that would mean the end of the Commonwealth'.³⁹¹

The republicans did address the possibility of the loss of Commonwealth membership even though they insisted that it was highly unlikely. The NP argued in their pamphlet *Commonwealth membership* that it would not be 'worthwhile remaining a member of a Commonwealth which interferes in a member state's domestic affairs'. The NP further argued that if South Africa was excluded based on its racial policy, that it would be indicative of a Commonwealth which 'had assumed a totally different character, namely that of a non-white dominated organisation' and that membership of such an organisation 'would in fact be harmful'.³⁹² The editors of *Die Transvaler* and *Die Vaderland* both insisted that such a scenario would call for serious consideration whether Commonwealth membership was even worthwhile.³⁹³ This was one of the arguments that also had an impact on readers of the English-language newspapers. One reader writing to *The Star* commented on the change within the Commonwealth by insisting that people did not 'realise that the Commonwealth of nations, as we have known it for years, has already ceased to exist by virtue of its fundamental principle of

³⁸⁹ 'Vreemdes Kan Unie Nie Voorsê', *Die Vaderland*, 4 August 1960, 1; J. H. Grobler, 'Twee Argumente wat Nie Steek Hou Nie', *Die Transvaler*, 25 August 1960, 2.

³⁹⁰ J. M. Jansonius, 'Min. Louw Waarsku', *Die Transvaler*, 17 August 1960, 7.

³⁹¹ Editorial, "'n Sedeprediker Beantwoord', *Die Transvaler*, 23 September 1960, 8.

³⁹² UCTL Spec. coll., BA 320.968MALA, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: Commonwealth Relations- Membership of South Africa, August 1960, 11-2.

³⁹³ Editorial, 'Aktuele Vrae Oor die Republiek', 3; Editorial, 'Vluggees by Ver. Party', *Die Vaderland*, 5 August 1960, 12.

non-interference in domestic matters' and that 'white states' were not coming to South Africa's aid.³⁹⁴

Based on the pro-republican interpretation that South Africa was not at risk of losing its membership, the editors of *The Star* and the *Rand Daily Mail* specifically accused the NP of misleading the electorate. The editor of *The Star* attacked the pro-republican faction's propagandists and said that they were not giving voters the facts. He wrote that it would be a tragedy if all of South Africa voted for a republic believing that Commonwealth membership would be automatic and reminded readers that South Africa would not be forced out of the Commonwealth if it remained a Union.³⁹⁵ The nationalists were further blamed for insinuating that Britain could in some way save South Africa from being excluded from the Commonwealth since all the members were equal and would vote equally on the membership application, with Britain not having any 'deciding vote'. The insinuation that South Africa could rely on Britain for Commonwealth membership was described as a perversion of the facts, and detracted from the real risk of losing membership in the case that South Africa became a republic.³⁹⁶ A cartoon entitled 'Phoney', published in the *Rand Daily Mail* (Figure 14), ridiculed the reasons behind the National Party's insistence that South Africa would stay in the Commonwealth. The cartoon depicted a large volume of papers containing the NP's reasons why South Africa would remain a Commonwealth member. The papers were either blank or simply contained the word 'because', thereby insinuating that there were no valid reasons for the NP to think that South Africa would remain a member.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ F. Van Eeden, 'Commonwealth Has Become a Little Uno', *The Star*, 5 September 1960, 6; See also F. van der Merwe, 'No Help for S.A. from West', *The Star*, 22 August 1960, 8; Swart, 'Question of Membership Challenged', 14.

³⁹⁵ Editorial, 'A Very Real Danger', *The Star*, 27 September 1960, 16.

³⁹⁶ Editorial, 'Perversion of Facts', *The Star*, 29 September 1960, 16.

³⁹⁷ Connolly, 'Phoney', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 September 1960, 8.

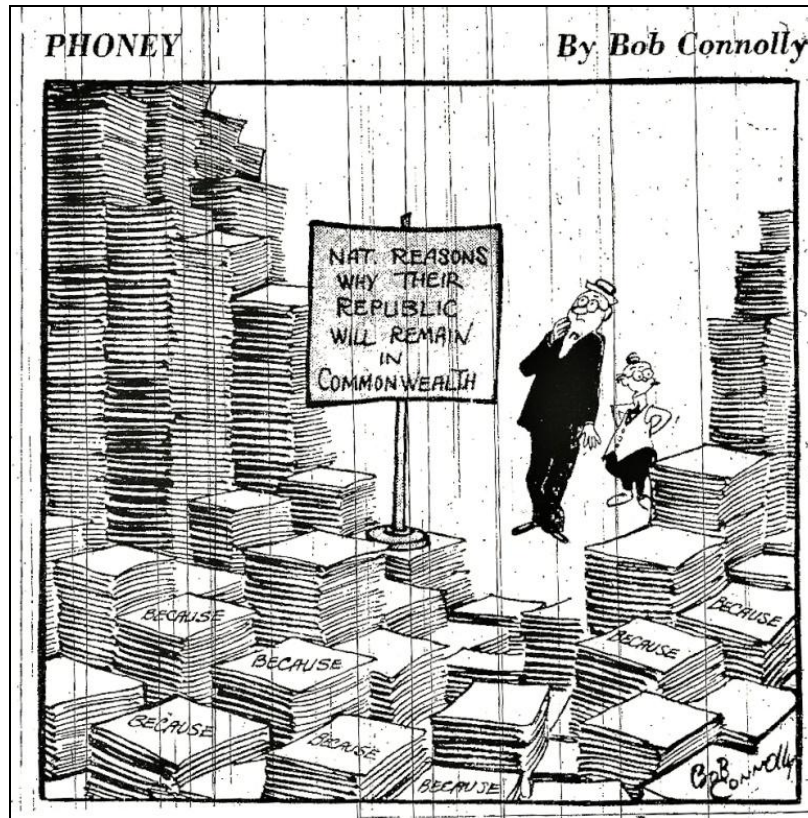


Figure 14: Phoney- *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 September 1960

The risk factors regarding Commonwealth membership associated with voting for a republic seemingly transcended the boundaries of cultural identities. One self-identified Afrikaner even wrote to the editor of *Die Transvaler* to ask why they were less than truthful regarding the risks that becoming a republic would have for continued Commonwealth membership.³⁹⁸ The conflicting views regarding Commonwealth membership made the situation very uncertain in the eyes of the electorate and therefore caused anxiety regarding the consequences of losing this membership. The anxiety of the electorate was not just focused on race relations on the African continent, but also on the risk of losing Commonwealth membership.

³⁹⁸ J. Smit, 'Suid-Afrika en die Statebond', *Die Transvaler*, 1 October 1960, 6.

2.3.2 The implications of a republic outside of the Commonwealth

During the parliamentary discussion in March when Verwoerd discussed the government's opinions on Commonwealth membership, he admitted that South Africa's association with the Commonwealth was economically advantageous.³⁹⁹ The view that South Africa economically benefitted from the Commonwealth and could lose those benefits by becoming a republic was one of the most important features of the anti-republican campaign. This aspect of the campaign and the amount of support it garnered stood in contrast with the interpretations that English-speaking citizens, in particular, wanted to retain connections with the Commonwealth for sentimental reasons. As such, much of the anti-republican campaign was focused on reason and not on the emotional appeals used by the republicans. One of the main motivational factors in the anti-republican campaign was that becoming a republic would have detrimental consequences for the economy because of the loss of Commonwealth membership.

In their August 1960 pamphlet 'Facts About the Republic', the UP supported this claim mainly by referring to the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA). According to this pamphlet, the sugar agreement ensured that Britain imported sugar from South Africa at a higher price, even though they would have been able to acquire sugar at a lower price from Cuba if the CSA had not been in place. The pamphlet promoted that 'it would seem most reasonable to assume that, on leaving the Commonwealth, South Africa would automatically be debarred from any further participation in the CSA'.⁴⁰⁰ In another pamphlet series, the UP devoted 16 pages to present an image of a republic outside of the Commonwealth. The pamphlet stated that the risk to prosperity and security was not worth it since 55% of South Africa's exports went to Commonwealth countries, and the loss of these markets would hurt the economy.⁴⁰¹ The PP distributed a similar circular in the form of a fact sheet. In their *12 Reasons to Oppose the Republic*, the

³⁹⁹ Geyser, *Watershed for South Africa*, 66.

⁴⁰⁰ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: Facts about the Republic, August 1960, 3.

⁴⁰¹ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: A Commentary on Politics To-Day, August 1960, 8; NLCT, General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, United Party: Referendum News, n.d.

unpredictability of Commonwealth membership was represented as the possible loss of 'the most tremendous economic advantages' because South Africa would presumably lose its guaranteed markets. It was not only the loss of markets but also the challenges of establishing new trade agreements in an increasingly hostile international arena that was emphasised by the PP. According to their depiction, no one would want to trade with South Africa while the country was under the NP's apartheid rule since a loss of Western support would lead to increased economic boycotts. They argued that this, in turn, would have several devastating effects for the South African economy as trade preferences and markets relied on these Commonwealth connections.⁴⁰² Beyond providing Commonwealth export market values, these pamphlets argued that 'loss of that preference will endanger our total Commonwealth market'.⁴⁰³ The PP warned the electorate that such a sequence of events 'would bring South Africa to her knees within weeks'.⁴⁰⁴

This focus on the economic advantages of Commonwealth membership did not go unchallenged. Even before the publication of these party-political pamphlets, the connections between Commonwealth membership and the possible loss of economic preferences were being disputed. Already in June 1960, *The Cape Argus* published an article about the statements made by Dr Jan Graaff, an economist and brother of the opposition leader De Villiers Graaff. Dr Graaff had stated that South Africa's existing trade agreements with Britain would not be affected by South Africa's Commonwealth membership since they were not exclusively based on Commonwealth membership.⁴⁰⁵ These sentiments did not necessarily sway voters who had read the information on both these viewpoints. One reader thought that even though the loss of trade might not be a direct consequence of losing Commonwealth membership, the possibility did exist that Britain could nullify these agreements if it thought there were reasons to do so amid increasing international criticism.⁴⁰⁶ One reader's evaluation was that Dr Graaff had not

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

⁴⁰³ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: A Commentary on Politics To-Day, August 1960, 6.

⁴⁰⁴ WCARS, A1229, Progressive Party Fact Paper: 12 Reasons Why Verwoerd's Republic Must Be Rejected, n.d.

⁴⁰⁵ J. Graaff, 'Imperial Preferences are Not Affected by Commonwealth Link', *The Cape Argus*, 29 July 1960, n.p.

⁴⁰⁶ S. G. Du Toit, 'Britain Could Withdraw Preferences', *The Cape Argus*, 5 August 1960, 16.

removed any fears about the impact that republican status would have on trade preferences. According to this reader, even though Dr Graaff did make valid points, his opinions were based on countries in different circumstances than South Africa.⁴⁰⁷ Similarly, a letter published in *The Cape Argus* stated that 'Dr. Graaff's whistling in the dark will not ward off real dangers to the Union' because his analysis was just one interpretation and did not give any assurances regarding South Africa's economic future.⁴⁰⁸

The anti-republican English-language press also strongly encouraged its readers to evaluate the economic consequence that the establishment of a republic and the loss of Commonwealth membership would have. For example, *The Star* published a series entitled 'What we stand to lose' in which the benefits that South Africa enjoyed as a Commonwealth member were evaluated. According to *The Star's* editor, this series highlighted the 'tangible trade benefits' of Commonwealth membership.⁴⁰⁹ In another evaluation of this kind, an article on the front page of *The Star* stated that 'Commonwealth privileges will be lost' and that it would be impossible to list the multitude of ways in which South Africa would be affected if it were to lose Commonwealth membership.⁴¹⁰ The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* himself wrote that it would be a 'grave financial blow' if South Africa lost Commonwealth membership and that there would be 'difficult and dangerous times ahead'.⁴¹¹

The fear that South Africa was at serious risk of losing some of these trade agreements strongly resonated with readers. As such, the republicans also addressed the issue by refuting the connection between Commonwealth membership and trade agreements. Initially in their August pamphlet on Commonwealth membership, the NP had stated that there were 'mutual advantages' in Commonwealth membership because of 'imperial

⁴⁰⁷ R. D. Pilkington, 'Republic and Trade Preferences: Fears Not Removed by Dr. Graaff's Views', *The Cape Argus*, 8 August 1960, 9.

⁴⁰⁸ R. A. Marvey, 'Dr. Graaff's Whistling in Dark Will Not Ward off Real Dangers to Union', *The Cape Argus*, 17 August 1960, 11.

⁴⁰⁹ Editorial, 'What We Could Lose', *The Star*, 27 August 1960, 8.

⁴¹⁰ 'The Commonwealth- Privileges Will Be Lost', *The Star*, 26 August 1960, 1; See also Editorial, 'Reductio Ad Absurdum', *The Star*, 14 September 1960, 16.

⁴¹¹ Editorial, 'Four Voices', *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 September 1960, 8; Editorial, 'No Slight Risk', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 September 1960, 12; Editorial, 'Cause for Pride', *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 October 1960, 10.

preference tariffs... between Commonwealth countries'. Here the NP had agreed that the Commonwealth trading partnership held 'economic advantages to its members'.⁴¹² However, in their pamphlet entitled 'South Africa and Commonwealth Preferences: The Present Position', circulated in September, the NP seemed to argue that the opposite was true. The pamphlet stated that the agreements that had been set up between Commonwealth countries in 1932 were no longer of much value to its members, mainly due to an increase in product prices after the Second World War. It also said that a well known South African economist, Dr A. J. Visser, had calculated the concessions that South Africa made towards other Commonwealth members based on these agreements and that these far outweighed the concessions that they received. Accordingly, the pamphlet proposed that if South Africa's Commonwealth membership ended, 'the Union would immediately impose extra import duties... thus collecting approximately £3 million'.⁴¹³

The NP, as well as the editor of *Die Transvaler*, insisted that there were alternative markets for South African products that possibly offered more favourable trade agreements.⁴¹⁴ The republicans further promoted that the establishment of such alternative trade agreements was inevitable in the changing world economy and insisted that 'even if South Africa remains a monarchy, new export markets will still have to be developed'.⁴¹⁵ Several Afrikaans newspapers took this notion even further by insisting that a republic would be better off since the independence and international prestige that came with the establishment of a republic would stimulate economic growth.⁴¹⁶ Verwoerd himself also insisted that there would be no adverse economic implications and that the establishment of a republic would stimulate mercantile development. He therefore urged that 'economic advancement requires immediate resolution of this

⁴¹² UCTL Spec. coll., BA 320.968MALA, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: Commonwealth Relations- Membership of South Africa, August 1960, 6.

⁴¹³ NLCT, General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: South Africa and Commonwealth Preferences- The Present Positions, September 1960, 3&5.

⁴¹⁴ 'Ons Handelsooreenkomste', 6; See also 'In die Statebond -Voorkeur 12 Persent', *Die Transvaler*, 31 August 1960, 1.

⁴¹⁵ NLCT, General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: South Africa and Commonwealth Preferences- The Present Positions, September 1960, 4&6.

⁴¹⁶ J. A. Neethling, 'Republiek Sal S.A. Ekonomie Baie Stimuleer, Sê Sakeleier', *Die Vaderland*, 13 September 1960, 5; See also P. de Klerk, 'Republiek Sal S.A. Se Aansien in die Wêreld Laat Styg', *Die Transvaler*, 5 September 1960, 2.

[republican] dispute.⁴¹⁷ These arguments were based on the assumption, as the anti-republicans pointed out, that other countries would want to trade with South Africa based on these higher prices and the Union's diminishing international status. The NP also insisted that trade would continue with Britain regardless of South Africa's membership status, as had been the case for Ireland when they decided to leave the Commonwealth. By using the example of Ireland, the NP alleged that 'expulsion from the Commonwealth does not necessarily bring about the termination of Commonwealth preferences' and additionally stated that with the 'present good relations between Great Britain and South Africa reciprocal beneficial trade arrangements would be possible'.⁴¹⁸

In an editorial *Die Transvaler* ardently supported this claim by pointing out that 'no economists of note' had provided evidence that loss of Commonwealth membership would necessarily lead to the loss of markets.⁴¹⁹ Interestingly these arguments also resonated with some readers of the English-language press. Letters published in both *The Cape Argus* and the anti-republican *The Star* also used these arguments. One reader labelled the assumption of the loss of markets as 'bogey' and others said that the close cooperation between South Africans in a republic would lead to an improvement in South Africa's economic status.⁴²⁰

The NP's interpretations of the impact of republicanism and the possible loss of Commonwealth membership were, however, not generally supported in these newspapers and on other platforms. This focus on the agricultural sector made the readers question the risks of establishing a republic. The UP specifically promoted the idea that the loss of markets and agreements relating to the export of fruit to Britain 'would be disastrous for South Africa's farmers'.⁴²¹ *The Star* also reported that without Commonwealth export agreements, South African agriculture 'would have crashed in bankruptcy' and since farmers produced crops explicitly for exportation, there would be

⁴¹⁷ ARCA, PV 71, File 1/11/4/11/1 vol2, H.F. Verwoerd: Dear Friend Letter, 21 September 1960.

⁴¹⁸ NLCT, General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: South Africa and Commonwealth Preferences- The Present Positions, September 1960, 5.

⁴¹⁹ Editorial, 'Onjuiste Bewerings', *Die Transvaler*, 21 September 1960, 6.

⁴²⁰ Bick, 'A Plea for a Republic', 6; Gadow, 'Time for Considered Reasoning, Not Sentiment, Hysteria', 14.

⁴²¹ NLCT, General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, United Party: Referendum News, n.d.

'disastrous surpluses' without external markets.⁴²² A reporter for *The Cape Argus* also wrote that, according to economists, South Africa's sugar markets would take a knock if trade with Commonwealth countries were lost.⁴²³ This notion was supported by several farmers in the fruit-producing region of the Cape Province. In a circular addressed to their 'fellow-farmers', they implored fruit farmers of the region to vote against the republic based on the dangers that would come with such a constitutional change. By explicitly focusing on the duty-free imports and exports, the newsletter quantified the losses that farmers would face if they were subjected to standard trade agreements, as could be the case if South Africa were not a Commonwealth member. The newsletter called on farmers to consider these facts when they went to the polling station and to vote for what would be best for South Africa, the future of their children, and their lifestyles.⁴²⁴

This was also discussed by the readers of *The Star*, the *Rand Daily Mail* and *The Cape Argus* in the letters written to the editors of these publications. One citrus farmer specifically wrote that he was upset that Verwoerd was gambling with his future and that he would have to suffer because Verwoerd had taken that risk on behalf of South Africa.⁴²⁵ In line with this, another reader was convinced that the NP was simply saying that they wanted to retain Commonwealth membership because the prospective loss of membership might scare farmers into voting against a republic.⁴²⁶ One reader with particular expertise had attended the Commonwealth fruit producer's conference of 1959. He wrote that South Africa would be subject to quotas and duties, just like other non-Commonwealth countries, if it were not a member-state. He stated that it would be 'ruin for the apple industry if South Africa loses free access to Britain' and that 'leaving the Commonwealth may well be disastrous to many industries and too many people'.⁴²⁷

⁴²² J. W. Patten, 'What We Stand to Lose (III)', *The Star*, 28 September 1960, 11; For a similar analysis on sugar trade preferences see J. W. Patten, 'What We May Lose (VI)', *The Star*, 30 September 1960, 11.

⁴²³ W. Nussey, 'S.A. Might Lose Sugar Market under Republic', *The Cape Argus*, 6 September 1960, 14.

⁴²⁴ NLCT, General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, Home of Deciduous Fruit Western Cape: Newsletter, September 1960.

⁴²⁵ Kirkman, 'Dr. Verwoerd's Gamble', 8.

⁴²⁶ Cross, 'Strange Ideological Somersaults', 8.

⁴²⁷ J. C. Molten, 'Ruin for Apple Industry If S.A. Loses', 10 August 1960, 10; See also E. W. Pritchard, 'Figures Help to Clarify the Trade Picture', *The Cape Argus*, 29 September 1960, 14.

The fear that the proposed republic would have disastrous economic consequences was even promoted in advertisements paid for by private citizens. An informal association calling themselves 'a group of young South Africans' published a series of images in the English-language newspapers in the week before the referendum. A significant portion of these anti-republican advertisements propagated the negative economic implications associated with the proposed republic. The advertisement that most clearly illustrates these presumed devastating consequences (Figure 15) warned that families would have to 'economise' on necessities such as milk and bread if there were adverse economic consequences. Some of these images (Figure 16 & 17) displayed factories and industries closed for work, and in doing so, targeted not only business owners but also workers and administrative staff. The UP also followed a similar approach with a series of images which portrayed reasons to vote against a republic. With the catchphrase warning that the 'dawn of the republic is the dusk of prosperity' (Figure 18), these advertisements portrayed the proposed republic as causing personal losses for businesses and individuals. Another part of this series (Figure 19) used the image of a noose to say that there would be no return from an impoverished republic and thus associated a republic with mortal danger. These abovementioned materials promoted that the establishment of a republic would lead to economic decline and would therefore also have a negative impact on the well-being of families. This resonated with some of the readers and was even labelled as the 'bread and butter consequences of leaving the Commonwealth'.⁴²⁸ Several readers did reveal in their letters to the English-language newspapers that they felt a personal liability associated with the proposed republic. In *The Star*, one reader wrote that Verwoerd was gambling 'the property of all South Africa on the 1000 to one chance that we will be allowed to stay in the Commonwealth'.

Similarly, a letter to the editor of *The Cape Argus* stated that their vote against a republic was based on the fact that he had money invested in South Africa.⁴²⁹ Another said that no one should be fooled into thinking that by voting republican they were

⁴²⁸ W. G. Baldwin, 'Republic Involves Risk to Our Standard of Living', *The Cape Argus*, 22 September 1960, 15.

⁴²⁹ A. D. Wylie, 'Believes Republic Would Open Doors to Large-Scale Immigration', *The Cape Argus*, 8 September 1960, 13.

'buying peace and quiet' for the future since the proposed republic would not be a peaceful one.⁴³⁰ There was even a letter published in the pro-republican newspaper *Die Burger* that claimed that economic prosperity after the establishment of a republic was just speculation and further advocated voting against a republic that would be established on presumptions.⁴³¹

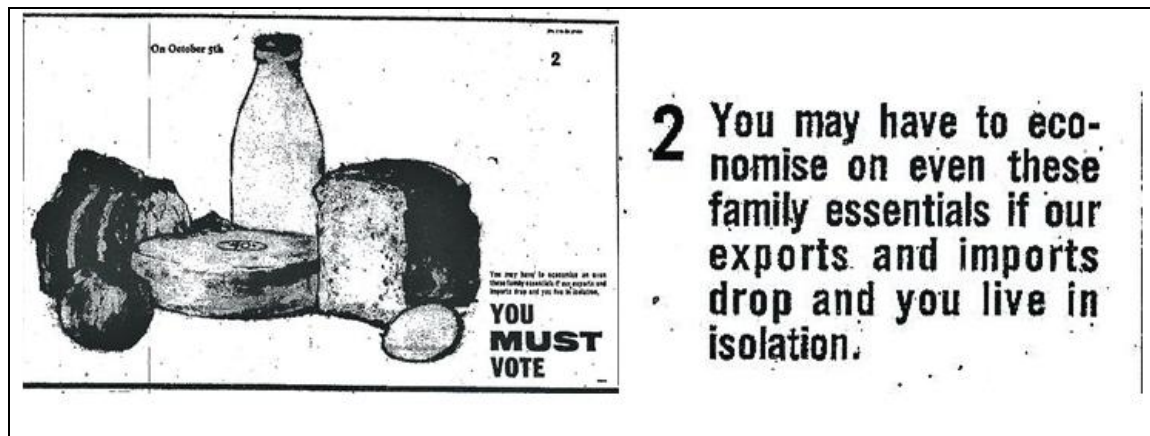


Figure 15: Group of young South Africans advertisement- Reason 2-
Rand Daily Mail, 4 October 1960

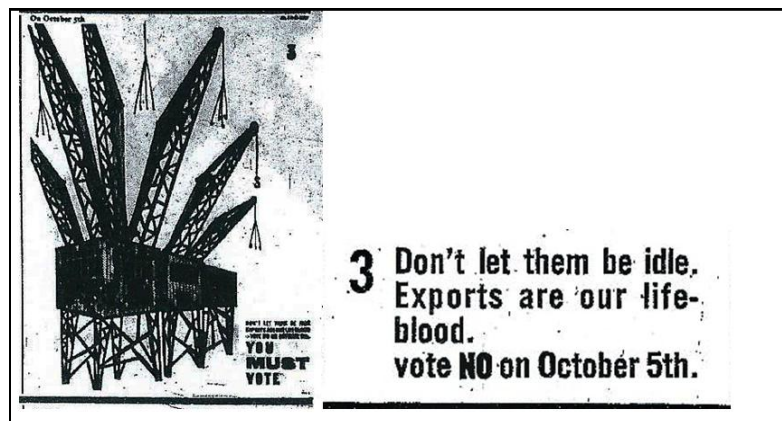


Figure 16: Group of young South Africans advertisement- Reason 3-
Rand Daily Mail, 4 October 1960

⁴³⁰ J. H. Kelly, 'An Irishman Puts Dr. Verwoerd Right on Eire', *The Cape Argus*, 31 August 1960, 11.

⁴³¹ H. J. Zeeman, 'Hy Stem Teen die Republiek', *Die Burger*, 6 September 1960, 10.

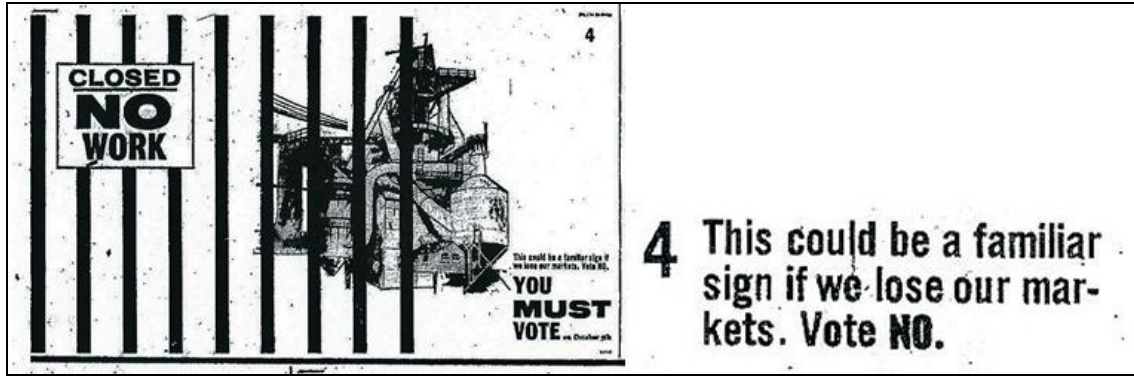


Figure 17: Group of young South Africans advertisement- Reason 4- *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 October 1960

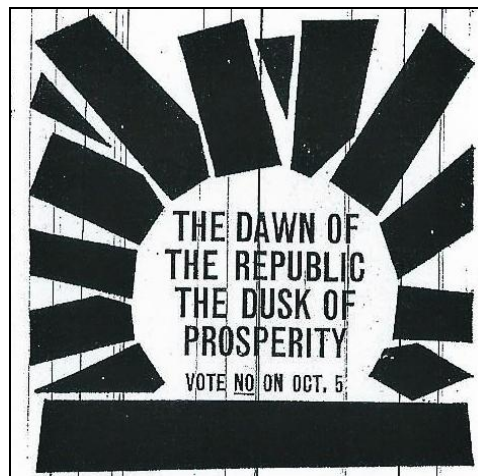


Figure 18: UP advertisement, Dawn and dusk- *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 September 1960

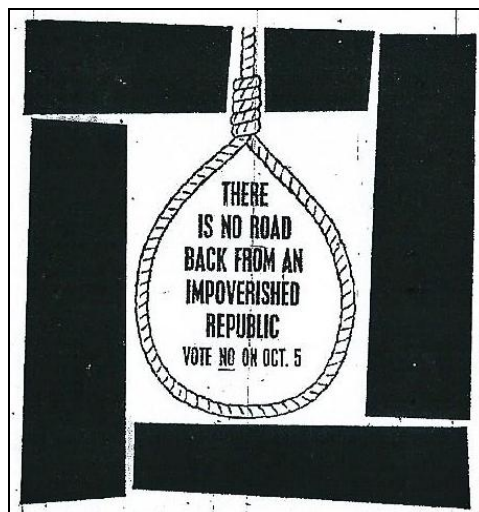


Figure 19: UP advertisement, No road back- *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 September 1960

This link between the possible loss of Commonwealth membership and the loss of economic stability reveals that fear and anxiety regarding a republic probably had a significant impact on the referendum vote. It is important to note that the proposed republic did not symbolise keeping the status quo in place. Instead, numerous voters saw a republic as being synonymous with change. In this regard, some voters were convinced that a future republic would bring changes that would negatively impact their economic future. While the perceived consequences of economic loss received the most attention in the media, this was not the only negative consequence that was being associated with the loss of Commonwealth membership. Anti-republican leaders voiced their concerns about South Africa's possible isolation by saying that if South Africa were to become a republic, the country would be 'expendable'.⁴³²

The UP and the PP insisted that this would be specifically detrimental in the context of the Cold War. In their pamphlet 'Facts About the Republic', the UP stated that South Africa could be 'isolated from her friends when the whole world is in a state of unrest'. They further urged that the Commonwealth offered protection and that 'in defence matters, South Africa has the advantage of full information on the development of new weapons, of new strategies, of new military techniques' which were obtained through the connections with other Commonwealth countries.⁴³³ In their 'Fact Paper', the PP similarly stated that without a Commonwealth connection South Africa would be 'deserted by our Western allies and the powerful arm of defence they offer us against aggression' and the 'menace of the modern powers'.⁴³⁴

The belief that South Africa needed international support and the protection of other states was also supported by the anti-republican English-language press. An editorial in *The Star* stated that South Africa was risking being driven into a state of isolation that could spell 'political disaster for South Africa'.⁴³⁵ Similarly, the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* wrote that any move away from the Commonwealth would be 'breaking its [South

⁴³² 'Union as a Republic Is Expendable, Says M.P.', *The Cape Argus*, 3 August 1960, 6.

⁴³³ WCARS, A1230, United Party Division of Information and Research: Facts about the Republic, August 1960, 1-3.

⁴³⁴ WCARS, A1229, Progressive Party Fact Paper: 12 Reasons Why Verwoerd's Republic Must Be Rejected, n.d.

⁴³⁵ Editorial, 'We Dare Not Risk It', 16.

Africa's] only lifeline with the Western world'.⁴³⁶ This connection to the Western world was interpreted as being integral to South Africa's place as part of the Western Bloc in the Cold War. Several readers also repeated the notion that protection, especially protection by Commonwealth members, was of key importance for South Africa's future. For one reader writing to the editor of *The Star* the choice in the referendum was between 'the retention of membership of an association of friendly countries which can rely upon the advice, assistance and protection of the other members in matters of defence, finance, beneficial commercial bargaining' or becoming 'a small obscure republic with few friends and many enemies'.⁴³⁷ Another reader predicted that South Africa's exclusion from the Commonwealth would lead to the country's exclusion from the United Nations and other international forums, eventually ending in 'war with South Africa against the world'.⁴³⁸

The most prominent aspect of this supposed isolation that was discussed by readers and editors was that decolonisation and changes on the African continent posed a threat to South Africa. The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* wrote that the possible loss of Commonwealth membership could lead South Africa to 'complete and utter isolation at the tip of a hostile continent'.⁴³⁹ South Africa's place on the continent was similarly crucial to the editor of *The Star*, who reported that the possibility of isolation was 'the real issue at the Referendum on October 5'. He wrote that South Africa was face to face with a 'crisis of virtual isolation in a hostile world'. He argued that 'if it embraces that isolation by voting for a republic, well knowing that this may place its Commonwealth membership in jeopardy, its enemies will close in around it, its friends retire disconsolate to a greater distance'.⁴⁴⁰ Several readers saw this as a good reason not to vote for the republic. To one reader the concern regarding South Africa's defence was a deciding factor as he claimed that 'if we become a republic there will be no one to help us! But if we remain a member... Commonwealth defence forces can be called upon by

⁴³⁶ Editorial, 'Life-Line', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 August 1960, 8; See also Editorial, 'Republic- a Gambler's Throw', 16.

⁴³⁷ W. Bacon, 'The Real Choice', *The Star*, 8 August 1960, 12; For similar sentiments from another publication see J. C. Hall, 'Risk of Armed Intervention Feared If We Become a Republic', *The Cape Argus*, 22 September 1960, 14.

⁴³⁸ J. Copeland, 'South Africa Will Have Earned the World's Censure', *The Star*, 6 September 1960, 10.

⁴³⁹ Editorial, 'Steps to Isolation', *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 September 1960, 10; See also Editorial, 'Needless Risk', 8.

⁴⁴⁰ Editorial, 'Isolation: South Africa's Peril', *The Star*, 28 September 1960, 16; See also Editorial, 'Reductio Ad Absurdum', 16.

us to help defend our country from aggression from beyond our borders'.⁴⁴¹ For another reader who wrote to the editor of *The Cape Argus*, becoming a republic would force South Africa to be one tiny isolated white republic that had to face 'black Africa' by itself.⁴⁴² Similarly, another reader wrote that if the nationalists were afraid of what had happened in the Congo that the safest thing would be to remain a member of the Commonwealth and to vote against a republic for the well-being of the country.⁴⁴³

In some instances, the literature suggests that a republic was won based on fear of what had happened in the Congo and to maintain the status quo. This section has shown that the proposed republic was not necessarily associated with stability. Fear that the transition to a republic would bring isolation or economic decline meant that some voters saw the proposed republic as presenting an uncertain future. This is perhaps most clearly indicated by the UP's referendum pamphlet (Figure 20) which advocated that South Africa should remain as it was in order to secure its place within the Commonwealth and the international community. In combination with the misgivings that some voters had regarding the economic implications of losing Commonwealth membership, it becomes clear that the maintenance of the status quo was much more closely related to the anti-republican campaign.

⁴⁴¹ W. Austin, 'If Union Were Attacked Commonwealth Forces Would Come to Our Aid', *The Star*, 20 September 1960, 8.

⁴⁴² E. Blair, 'Our Strength Lies Not in a Republic', *The Cape Argus*, 23 September 1960, 13.

⁴⁴³ C. Stackard, 'Advice given to Nats: Look at Congo', *The Cape Argus*, 29 September 1960, 14; See also 'Republic Could Drive African States into Permanent Hostility', *The Star*, 30 September 1960, 26.

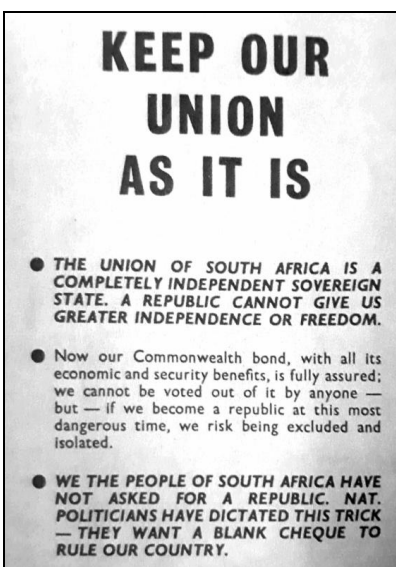


Figure 20: UP pamphlet- Keep the Union as it is

The NP refuted the belief that a republic would lead to isolation and economic decline. They insisted that based on South Africa's strong position as a gold producer 'it is, therefore, very doubtful if any of Sir de Villiers Graaff's scare stories concerning South Africa's economy will come true'. This claim was used in conjunction with the statements made by Dr Jan Graaff in July when he said that there would be no economic consequences if South Africa no longer had Commonwealth membership.⁴⁴⁴ The editor of *Die Vaderland* similarly wrote that this anti-republican campaign was 'based on theoretical speculations accompanied by haunting images'.⁴⁴⁵ As such, the NP blamed the opposition for trying to 'stampede the people'.⁴⁴⁶ To counter these 'haunting images', the republican press ridiculed this fear-based element of the campaign by insisting that the opposition parties were overreacting. A cartoon which provided this sort of commentary was published in *Die Transvaler* under the heading 'Morbid Campaign' (Figure 21). The cartoon depicted a noose hanging from the pages of a newspaper to convey the message that the anti-republicans were using 'gallows

⁴⁴⁴ NLCT, General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: South Africa and Commonwealth Preferences- The Present Positions, September 1960, 6.

⁴⁴⁵ Editorial, 'Statebond Buigbaar', 12; See also Editorial, 'Staak die Agitasie Nou', *Die Transvaler*, 1 August 1960, 6.

⁴⁴⁶ NLCT, General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: South Africa and Commonwealth Preferences- The Present Positions, September 1960, 8.

propaganda' in their campaign. Several opposition leaders were also depicted as sitting in a doctor's office, seemingly suffering from an ailment. The doctor in the cartoon is shown explaining to the nurse that the diagnosis of their ailment is not a *gal aanval* (biliary colic) but rather a *galg aanval* (an ailment caused by a noose).⁴⁴⁷ By depicting the opposition leaders as suffering from a fictitious ailment, the cartoonist was pointing out that the fears instilled by the anti-republicans were imaginary and that the opposition leaders themselves had fallen victim to their own fear propaganda.

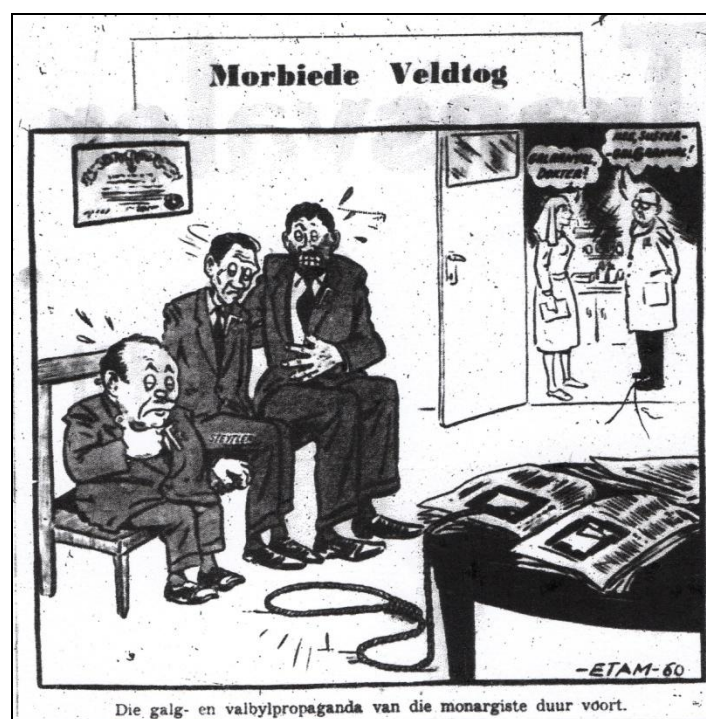


Figure 21: Morbiede veldtog- Die Transvaler, 20 September 1960

This republican counter-campaign attempted to show that the anti-republican campaign was foundationless and relied on this propaganda simply because they wanted to oppose the establishment of a republic but had no adequate reason to do so. In the NP's republican pamphlet they insisted that this was 'nothing but an attempt to create confusion'.⁴⁴⁸ For the editor of *Die Vaderland*, the use of the old political trick of

⁴⁴⁷ Etam, 'Morbiede Veldtog', *Die Transvaler*, 20 September 1960, 2. English translation of cartoon title: 'Morbid Campaign'. For similar examples see Etam, 'Die Galgkompleks', *Die Transvaler*, 17 September 1960, 2.

⁴⁴⁸ NLCT, General Collection A.P. 329.968 REP, Information Service of the Republican Referendum Committee: *South Africa and Commonwealth Preferences- The Present Positions*, September 1960, 12.

promoting fear was so extensively used in the anti-republican campaign that he insisted it was proof that the arguments against a republic were obsolete.⁴⁴⁹ Similarly, the editor of *Die Transvaler* wrote that the case against a republic was so weak that a myriad other faults and lies had to be found to oppose the advent of a republic.⁴⁵⁰ This newspaper also published a cartoon (Figure 22) which related to the use of fear propaganda by the anti-republicans. In the cartoon, the opposition leaders were depicted as digging through a garbage bin to find arguments for their anti-republican campaign. The items that they found, such as 'impending poverty' and 'Ghana's growing agitation' are depicted as 'being garbage' and in turn to be considered nonsensical and outdated. The description of the cartoon further indicates that these 'garbage arguments' had nothing to do with the question of South Africa becoming a republic.⁴⁵¹ The editor of *Die Vaderland* urged voters to be aware of these 'political flight-tactics' of the opposition parties and to carefully consider whether they wanted South Africa to fall for such intimidation.⁴⁵² This is ironic since the NP and various republican newspapers regularly used race-based fear tactics to promote support for the establishment of a republic.

⁴⁴⁹ Editorial, 'n Slegte Bondgenoot', *Die Vaderland*, 26 August 1960, 12.

⁴⁵⁰ Editorial, 'Hulle Veg Sonder Moed', 12.

⁴⁵¹ Etam, 'Bewapening', *Die Transvaler*, 5 August 1960, 2. . English translation of cartoon title: 'Armament'.

⁴⁵² Editorial, 'Vluggees by Ver. Party', 6.



Figure 22: Bewapening- *Die Transvaler*, 5 Augustus 1960

The politics of security is often associated with the NP, and the literature portrays the NP and the proposed republic being representative of security and the maintenance of the status quo.⁴⁵³ This analysis of the referendum campaign has shown that the republic proposed by the NP did not represent security for various members of the electorate. On several accounts, the anti-republicans had successfully managed to convince members of the public that the establishment of a republic would have been a risk that could have disastrous consequences. Wessels and Du Bryn specifically associate fear with the perceived increase in support from English-speakers for the NP during 1960 and 1961.⁴⁵⁴ However, this section has shown that fear of the unknown as well as fear of African nationalism in a potentially unfederated state were strong elements that kept English-speakers, and possibly also Afrikaners, from supporting the NP at the time.

⁴⁵³ Stultz, 'Politics of Security', 3–20; Passemiers, 'South Africa and the "Congo Crisis"', 201.

⁴⁵⁴ Wessels and Du Bruyn, 'Vrees as Faktor in die Regse Blanke Politiek', 9.

The anti-republicans used fear propaganda in their campaigns to scare voters from voting for a republic that, according to them, would not be secure. In this instance, the NP was thus not associated with security but rather with uncertainty. It is possible that fear contributed to a republican majority, just as it is evident that fear contributed to such a large anti-republican vote. However, it is almost impossible to determine which of these two interpretations carries more weight. Instead of dismissing fear as an element of anti-government sentiment, both of these interpretations are significant and must be acknowledged.

2.4 The significance of the election results

On 5 October 1960, 90.8% of white South African voters participated in the referendum. The combined result in the four provinces of the Union was 830 520 votes in favour of the republic and 763 861 votes against.⁴⁵⁵ This meant that 51.8% of voters chose in favour of the establishment of a republic in South Africa and 47.7% voted against it.⁴⁵⁶ Together with the votes from South West Africa, the referendum resulted in a 52.3% vote in favour of a republic, which provided the NP with the mandate needed to establish a republic. The anti-republican vote within the Union was lost by 66 659 votes.⁴⁵⁷

For several years before the referendum, the NP had guaranteed that a republic would only be established based on the broad will of the people.⁴⁵⁸ Although this did not necessarily mean that a two-thirds majority was required, it is valuable to note that the vote in favour of a republic was nowhere near the two-thirds majority mark. The republic majority vote in the referendum was 14.3% less than a two-thirds majority.⁴⁵⁹ Since the NP never really explained what the term 'qualified majority' implied, it is difficult to determine if the referendum results adhered to such a 'qualified majority'. According to Sussman, Verwoerd's predecessor, J. G. Strijdom, had hoped for a 50 000 majority in

⁴⁵⁵ For the purposes of interpreting the referendum within the confines of South Africa, the results from South West Africa has been excluded from this analysis.

⁴⁵⁶ The other 0,4% of votes were spoilt votes.

⁴⁵⁷ Heard, *General Elections in South Africa*, 113.

⁴⁵⁸ Sussman, 'The Referendum as an Electoral Device in National Party Politics' 267.

⁴⁵⁹ This is calculated by subtracting 52.3% from the 66.6% of a two-thirds majority.

favour of a republic. The final republican majority in the referendum exceeded this number, yet it remains unclear whether this proves that the referendum win was a great success or a narrow victory. This is complicated even more by the fact that the number of eligible white voters was significantly smaller when Strijdom expressed this ideal.

The 1960 referendum was the first time that the voting age was lowered to 18 years, as opposed to the previous voting age of 21. According to election results published by Schoeman, there were 237 000 more participants in the 1960 referendum than in the 1958 election.⁴⁶⁰ A 1959 report on election figures from Verwoerd's personal papers indicated that lowering the voting age to 18 years would add at least 108 274 voters to the voter's roll in preparation for the 1960 referendum. Furthermore, the report indicated that 65% of these young voters were presumably Afrikaners. The report concluded that there would be a predicted increase of 70 378 republican votes ahead of the referendum.⁴⁶¹ Even when taking into account the proportional rise of anti-republican votes caused by the lowered voter age, these perceived young republican voters could still have contributed as much as 1.9% to the republican vote. Although these calculations are highly speculative, it can be argued that without these voters the republican vote could easily have been 50.4%, based on the calculations made by the republicans themselves.

In Heard's analysis of the referendum results, the referendum results have been interpreted as a swing in favour of the NP.⁴⁶² By comparing the referendum results to the elections that preceded the referendum, scholars have concluded that there was a swing in favour of the government.⁴⁶³ What complicates the issue further is the use of 'estimated' majorities by scholars such as Heard, since the turnout of an election was different from the turnout in the referendum. Heard also approaches the referendum as being a straightforward battle between the UP and the NP. However, this chapter has shown that the referendum was by no means a party-political battle. The variety of interpretations of election results has resulted in diverse conclusions regarding the

⁴⁶⁰ B. M. Schoeman, *Parlementêre Verkiesings in Suid-Afrika* (Pretoria: Aktuele Publikasies, 1977), 365-7.

⁴⁶¹ ARCA, PV93, File 1/47/3/2, Totale stemme in die Unie van Suid-Afrika, 1959.

⁴⁶² Heard, *General Elections in South Africa*, 101.

⁴⁶³ Stultz and Butler, 'The South African General Election of 1961', 106-7.

significance of the referendum results. It is difficult to determine the significance of the referendum because of these discrepancies in election results. Despite this challenge, there is one thing that can be agreed upon. The NP increasingly maintained their hold over parliament, as there was a significant increase in the number of seats that they held in parliament which resulted in a two-thirds NP majority parliament in 1961. Although this is an indication of the NP's political power it is impossible to equate the number of seats in parliament to actual voter support due to the proportional representation system. For the purpose of comparison, the election results have been tabulated in Table 2. The results in the table were duplicated from Schoeman's publication and have been cross-referenced with the election results as they were published in the press.⁴⁶⁴

Table 2: Election results for the four provinces of South Africa

	1958 General election		1960 Republic referendum		1961 General election	
	NP%	UP%	Pro rep%	Anti rep%	NP%	UP%
Turnout	89.6%		90.9%		77.5%	
Cape	55.3	43.2	50.2	49.9	40	42.5
Natal	30.6	67.5	23.8	76.2	16.7	48.9
OFS	72.8	26.4	76.7	23.3	72.2	27.5
Transvaal	54.5	43.8	55.6	44.4	53.5	30.4
Percentage of total votes	55.1	43.3	51.5	47.9	45.9	36.3

⁴⁶⁴ Schoeman, *Parlementêre Verkiesings in Suid-Afrika*, 405.

As can be seen from Table 2, the 1958 election saw a 55% vote in favour of the NP. Based on a 55% endorsement, the republican referendum would not have been such a great risk. Sussman also commented on the 1958 election by saying that it was 'the first time that the NP secured half the absolute vote... in other words, a referendum could be won'.⁴⁶⁵ However, some scholars insist that the 1960 referendum was the first time that the NP received a majority of the votes. This interpretation, in turn, would have made the referendum more of a gamble and would lead to the conclusion that there was a significant rise in NP support from 1958 onward. In line with this interpretation, Giliomee even called the period between 1960 and 1961 the 500 days in which Verwoerd 'built up his authority as a leader'.⁴⁶⁶ The discrepancies regarding the interpretation of election results make it difficult to analyse the referendum. There are various reasons that can explain the different interpretations and statistics regarding the election results. The results from the 1961 elections are complicated by the nature of the election. In this election only disputed constituencies voted and therefore it becomes very difficult to compare the outcome of the election with other election results. Some interpretations of the election results could possibly have emanated from Heard or Stultz and Butler's 'estimated' votes used in their analysis.

The 1958 election under the leadership of Strijdom was the first election in which the NP managed to increase its support above 50%. When looking at the results as they appear in Table 2, the decreasing percentage of votes for the NP and a republic appears to oppose the notion of a rise in support for the NP. The NP had increased its seats in parliament, but this gain in political power is not necessarily a sign of an increase in voter support.

What the referendum results reveal in this context, is a possible decline in voter support for the NP and their causes. After the 1958 election, the republican referendum vote saw a 3.6% decrease in support, according to Table 2. If the assumption is made that all Afrikaners should have supported a republic, this would have resulted in at least 55%

⁴⁶⁵ Sussman, 'The Referendum as an Electoral Device in National Party Politics ', 272.

⁴⁶⁶ Giliomee, *Last Afrikaner Leaders*, 73.

of the electorate supporting a republic.⁴⁶⁷ Yet, from the analysis in this chapter as well as other scholarly works, it is clear that some English-speakers voted in favour of a republic.⁴⁶⁸ This support from some English-speakers, combined with the lowered voting age makes the decline in support from Afrikaners for the proposed republic even more pronounced.⁴⁶⁹ The analysis of the referendum thus becomes less about the reasons why a small percentage of English-speakers supported a republic, as has often been the focus of referendum analysis, and more about why a republic was not won with a more significant majority.

Based on the analysis in this chapter as well as the referendum results it is possible to say that the referendum was won on a narrow margin. Even if some will insist that 52.3% overall victory is not a narrow margin, it can still be said that it was surprising that the proposed republic was not approved by a greater number of voters. Based on the analysis of this chapter, it is possible to argue that the referendum outcome was not a show of support for the NP but rather a moment of wavering from the electorate. The historical significance of the referendum is not simply the result and the establishment of a republic. Of equal significance are the reasons behind such a narrow majority in what should have been an easy win.

2.5 Conclusion

A common interpretation of the referendum is that it was pre-determined by English-Afrikaner group divisions. In some cases, the literature represents the referendum as the last battle of the Boer war. There is some truth in this argument since the historical aspects of republicanism did come to the fore during the referendum campaign. These historical connections are clear from the elements of pro-British sentiment in the Natal province during the time of the referendum.⁴⁷⁰ However, as explored in this chapter, an analysis of the provinces which contributed the majority of the votes cast in the

⁴⁶⁷ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴⁶⁹ As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, a referendum gave voters limited choices. As such, a lowered republican vote would not be caused by the division caused by having multiple political choices.

⁴⁷⁰ Thompson, *Natalians First*, 167.

referendum, indicates that voters were not only motivated by traditions and heritage. Traditions and heritage did form a part of the discussions regarding the referendum, but editors and members of the electorate seldom argued against the republic based on sentimentality. The use of heritage and sentimentality was much more prevalent in the pro-republican campaign and newspapers. Where anti-republicans did use the past to motivate their choices, they did so mainly because they wanted assurances that a republic would be inclusive and would not follow the older Boer-republic structure. There is no doubt that some form of sentimentality did play a role even for the anti-republicans. However, it was not the most prevalent element in the anti-republican campaign, nor was it a significant motivational factor for members of the electorate who were seriously evaluating their political choices.

The interpretation that the government's call for unity and cooperation was one of the main reasons that English-language voters supported a republic is also often found in the literature. In reference to identity as a motivating factor in the referendum, Stultz and Butler have credited what they perceive to be a rise in support for the NP in the referendum and the 1961 election to 'English-speakers responding to the government's call for unity'.⁴⁷¹ There is a sense of truth in this interpretation since some voters did declare that they saw the call for cooperation as sincere, and would respond by voting for a republic. However, the analysis of the referendum campaigns shows that unity was a desire amongst the electorate, which the NP then successfully associated with republicanism. It was not, however, a government initiative, and it is quite possible that some English-speakers who voted in favour of a republic, did so not in response to the government but in the spirit of South Africanism. It seems that a sense of nationalism or 'new South Africanism' already existed before the referendum, but not everyone agreed on how exactly to put 'South Africa first'. On this topic, Dubow said that the response to the call for unity was 'one of the factors' that might have contributed to the NP 'significantly strengthening its position'.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷¹ Stultz and Butler, 'The South African General Election of 1961', 107.

⁴⁷² Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85.

Based on the election results as they have been discussed above, it is arguable whether the NP's increasing hold over parliament should be connected to voter sentiment in this way. Regardless, the concept of unity was no doubt a motivating factor for some to vote for a republic but this did not necessarily make a significant difference in gaining enduring support for the NP. Furthermore, Dubow also suggested that the referendum demonstrated the government's willingness to expand Afrikaner nationalism into a broader white nationalism. Yet, the decade leading up to the referendum had already indicated the NP's insistence that a republic would bring about a new nationalism and devotion to South Africa. The analysis of the referendum campaign showed that this aspect of republicanism had become less exclusive as time progressed but had been a part of the NP's republicanism campaign for several years before the 1960 referendum.

Dubow further stated that the referendum campaign revealed that 'English-speaking South Africans were far less wedded to Britain and the multi-racial Commonwealth than they had been a generation before'.⁴⁷³ Again there is a sense of truth in this since the Commonwealth might well have represented the last connection to Britain for some anti-republican voters. However, it would be more accurate to say that the referendum campaign revealed a change in the nature of people's attachment to the Commonwealth. The focus on the economic and political advantages of Commonwealth membership was probably one of the largest motivating factors that stole votes away from the republicans. The anxiety expressed by businessmen and farmers also indicated that the possible loss of Commonwealth membership vote could have been one of the largest contributing factors that caused Afrikaners and supporters of the NP to vote against a republic.

Concerning South Africa's racial policy, some have also interpreted the referendum results as an indication of white support for apartheid.⁴⁷⁴ Although there was support for a republic based on racial policy, several aspects of the referendum campaign reveal that this is not the most pervasive interpretation regarding racial policy. Not only did the

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ L. I. Rubin, 'White Politics', in J. A. Davis and J. K. Baker (eds.), *Southern Africa in Transition* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1966), 20–37.

anti-republicans warn that a vote in favour of the proposed republic may be taken as a support for the racial policy, but the NP themselves encouraged the electorate to vote on the principle of a republic alone and not to vote based on party-political policies. As discussed, some voters did proclaim that they supported a republic to speed up the enforcement of the racial policy. Conversely, since it was evident that South Africa's racial policy was one of the main factors that could lead to exclusion from the Commonwealth, some who were supportive of apartheid voted against a republic based on the fear that South Africa might lose Commonwealth economic advantages.

Also, relating to the NP's racial policy is the interpretation that racial tensions, such as the 'Congo crisis', motivated people to support a republic. Several scholars argue that the 'Congo crisis' of 1960 had the immediate effect of making people so afraid of racial conflict that they supported a republic. In the analysis of the referendum debates, it has become evident that this was indeed a motivating factor for members of the electorate. Passemiers thus correctly stated that racial tension in the Congo was a motivating factor for people supporting a republic.⁴⁷⁵ However, the assertion that this voting in favour of a republic was a way to maintain the status quo is not necessarily accurate. As was seen in this chapter in the analysis of race policy and motivation, the establishment of a republic was seen as having numerous adverse and unpredictable consequences that did not represent maintaining the status quo. Numerous voters who expressed their desire to vote for a republic based on racial fears were interested in the changes that a republic would bring. They expressed that a republic would be based on the rapid implementation of the new policy of separate development and was the quickest way to change South Africa into a completely segregated society.

On the other hand, some voters used their fears of a Congo situation to motivate voting against a republic because they wanted to maintain the status quo by ensuring that South Africa would remain a member of the Commonwealth and would not be isolated in an increasingly hostile environment. It is important to identify that a republic was not synonymous with maintaining the status quo in the eyes of all the voters. Dubow probably makes a valid argument that racial fears convinced some English-speakers to

⁴⁷⁵ Passemiers, 'South Africa and the "Congo Crisis"', 221

vote for a republic, however, the analysis of the referendum results has shown that it is also valuable to understand why some Afrikaners voted against a republic. The fact that a republic was not necessarily synonymous with maintaining stability means that racial tension in Africa was likely another factor that motivated Afrikaners to vote against the republic.

For each of the abovementioned interpretations from existing literature, there is at least some supporting evidence or an element of truth in such claims. However, for each of these statements that aim to explain the referendum results, there is an opposite truth to be found in the analysis of the referendum. For example, where voters did support a republic based on the policy of apartheid, some rejected a republic for the same reason. Since some of these conclusions are difficult to quantify it might never be possible to determine which conclusion bears more weight. For some of the conclusions made in this chapter, it can be estimated that they carry more weight than the interpretations found in existing literature.

The nuance which this chapter has added to our understanding of voter participation in the referendum is vital to understanding the establishment of a republic in general. It is important to note that the republic being proposed by the NP was seen as unpredictable, even by voters who had voted in favour of a republic. A republic represented change within a hostile environment to numerous members of the electorate. Equally as important to understand is that the electorate, rather than being motivated by the past, were motivated by the future. The desire to establish a republic or to bring about unity should not be misconstrued as the reason why people rejected or supported a republic. One element that most voters seem to have had in common was to vote according to whether their imagined or ideal future was reconcilable with the republic that was being proposed by the NP. The referendum was not won with a significant victory, and the loss of NP supporters during the referendum is evidence that a republic by no means represented the maintenance of security in the months leading up to the referendum.

Chapter Three

The 1961 Commonwealth Conference: A turning point for a republic

Hendrik Verwoerd, with the mantle of Nonquase sitting uneasily on his shoulders,
leading a people forth to their own self-destruction in answer to the dreams and
visions he sees, and the voices which he hears.

L. Bernstein, April 1961⁴⁷⁶

The 52% yes vote in the 1960 referendum provided the NP government with the necessary mandate to proceed with the establishment of an independent South African republic. The March 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was the next event that would have an impact on the establishment of a republic. South Africa's continued Commonwealth membership upon becoming a republic would be decided at this conference ahead of the establishment of a republic in May 1961. Despite Verwoerd's efforts to maintain South Africa's membership at the conference in London, the Afro-Asian Prime Ministers were unsympathetic towards the apartheid policy and Verwoerd decided to withdraw South Africa's Commonwealth membership.

Victory in the referendum and the subsequent establishment of a republic is often portrayed as a significant victory and an Afrikaner nationalist triumph. The manner in which some historical volumes connect the referendum to the establishment of a republic gives the impression that the process, from the referendum to a republic, was a swift Afrikaner nationalist victory achieved with very few challenges.⁴⁷⁷ There are, however, contradictions in historians' interpretations of these events and the impact that South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth had on the electorate, particularly on English-speaking voters.

Analyses of the events leading up to the establishment of a republic are often reliant on the estimate that English-speakers increasingly started supporting the NP during the

⁴⁷⁶ L. Bernstein, 'S.A.'s Break with the Commonwealth', *Fighting Talk*, April 1961, 4.

⁴⁷⁷ Hepple, *Verwoerd*, 165.

1961 election.⁴⁷⁸ The motivation for this support as well as the point at which English-speaking favour shifted towards the NP is unclear, since numerous historians provide varying interpretations of the events. One popular interpretation is that Verwoerd gained considerable political support from both Afrikaners and English-speakers during 1960 and 1961. H. Giliomee's *The Last Afrikaner Leaders* discusses the period as one where Verwoerd had built up his political power in the 500 days between the 'wind of change' speech and the establishment of a republic.⁴⁷⁹ The evidence provided for such an increase in support from English-speakers is often the number of seats gained by the NP in the 1961 election.⁴⁸⁰

Furthermore, the Commonwealth Conference is regarded as an integral part of the process by which Verwoerd started gaining favour with English-speakers. Numerous historians point to a 'lack of outrage' after the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, especially amongst English-speakers. Here De Villiers used this subdued response to the loss of the British connection as evidence that 'Afrikaner Nationalism's ideas had come to be accepted as representing South African opinion'.⁴⁸¹ Others also view the loss of Commonwealth membership as a turning point for white political opinion. Alexander Hepple advocated that 'Verwoerd rushed forward confidently to seize the republic with ease' and that he managed to turn the defeat at the conference in London into a victory.⁴⁸² In their analysis of the 1960s political landscape, Du Bryn and Wessels used the term 'majority' or 'vast majority of Whites' to explain white reaction to political events and the apartheid policy at the time.⁴⁸³ This in itself becomes problematic since the 1961 election results did not necessarily indicate that the majority of South Africans supported apartheid or that English-speakers started supporting the NP.⁴⁸⁴ Regardless of the actual number of votes in the election, historians ignore the 45% vote for the NP

⁴⁷⁸ Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, 51; Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85; Stultz and Butler, 'The South African General Election of 1961', 107.

⁴⁷⁹ These 500 days would last from Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech on 3 February 1960 to the establishment of a Republic on 31 May 1961. Giliomee, *Last Afrikaner Leaders*, 73-7.

⁴⁸⁰ Wessels and Du Bruyn, 'Vrees as Faktor in die Regse Blanke Politiek', 9.

⁴⁸¹ De Villiers, 'Afrikaner Nationalism', 394.

⁴⁸² Hepple, *Verwoerd*, 165&182; See also Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 480.

⁴⁸³ Wessels and Du Bruyn, 'Vrees as Faktor in die Regse Blanke Politiek', 9.

⁴⁸⁴ See Chapter Two, pp126-7.

and instead exaggerate electoral support based on the number of seats gained in parliament. Dubow wrote that the 1961 election revealed that 'significant numbers of English-speaking voters were persuaded to support him [Verwoerd] in order to protect white supremacy'.⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, O'Meara argued that the 1961 election showed that 'most white South Africans were more than ready for his [Verwoerd's] promised walls of granite around their privileges'.⁴⁸⁶

There are also several interpretations of these events, specifically of the Commonwealth Conference, that stand in direct contrast with the abovementioned portrayal. Some scholars are of the opinion that the events that took place at the 1961 Commonwealth Conference had a devastating impact on the English-speaking community. According to Sachs, the departure from the Commonwealth 'was a final wrench, following a succession of irritations and insults and convinced the English once and for all that they could have no truck with Dr Verwoerd'.⁴⁸⁷ Similarly, Lambert believes that the events in London angered English-speakers, writing that 'the advent of the Republic in 1961 marked a traumatic end to their relationship with Britain'.⁴⁸⁸ *The Round Table* also reported that the negative feeling after the exclusion was not confined to English-speakers and that English-speaking South Africans experienced the situation as a 'blow to their pride and to their sentiment, and it left them with a feeling of insecurity and a conviction that they had been bamboozled by the Government'.⁴⁸⁹ Such a sense of 'anger' and 'resentment' stands in stark contrast with Dubow's analysis that the process revealed that English-speakers were less wedded to the Commonwealth than they had been a century before.⁴⁹⁰ Similar to the discussion in the previous chapter, there was also a dichotomy between rational and sentimental voters and their reactions after the Commonwealth Conference.

⁴⁸⁵ S. Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives?', 131.

⁴⁸⁶ O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 109; For similar arguments also see Makin, 'South Africa's Departure from the Commonwealth', 160.

⁴⁸⁷ Sachs, *Road From Sharpeville*, 81.

⁴⁸⁸ Lambert, 'English-Speaking South Africans: Uncertain of Their Identity', 607-8.

⁴⁸⁹ Anon., 'South Africa: Republican Debits and Credits', *The Round Table*, 51, 204 (1961), 419.

⁴⁹⁰ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85.

In terms of the political impact that the Commonwealth Conference had on voters, Kenney's appraisal of Verwoerd's legacy suggested that these events postponed the advent of English-speaking support for the NP and Verwoerd. Kenney asserted that the reaction to the withdrawal was 'plenty of understandable resentment among the English-speaking as a group. It was years before they would start supporting the Nationalists *en masse*, and then only after Verwoerd's death'.⁴⁹¹ In his analysis of Verwoerd's legacy, Stultz is also of the opinion that English-speakers never truly identified with a republic, but that instead Verwoerd himself became a symbol for white unity for English-speakers only upon his assassination in 1966.⁴⁹² Other interpretations of the event are more nuanced and consider different outcomes. Davenport included both interpretations in his analysis by stating that some English-speakers resented the loss of the British connection, while others were forced into the arms of the nationalists by events in Africa.⁴⁹³ Without evidence and in-depth research to support these claims, it remains unclear which of these interpretations is the most accurate, or if they are both equally true.

Another discrepancy exists within the literature that focuses on this era. Since some historical volumes suggest that Verwoerd had gained support from English-speakers at this time, the motivation behind such a 'change of heart' should also be examined. Some authors focus on how Verwoerd had managed to become a figurehead of white unity.⁴⁹⁴ It is this image of unity, which had presumably led English-speaking voters to support the NP.⁴⁹⁵ Others again argue that it was the NP's segregation policies that persuaded voters to shift their support to the party. Dubow describes the situation as one where 'significant numbers of English-speaking voters were persuaded to support him [Verwoerd] in order to protect white supremacy'.⁴⁹⁶ While Dubow references Kenney as the source for this information, Kenney appears to be more distinct in his commentary. He wrote that later English-speaking support for the NP 'may seem [to be]

⁴⁹¹ Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, 206.

⁴⁹² Stultz, 'Politics of Security', 13.

⁴⁹³ Davenport, *South Africa- A Modern History*, 289.

⁴⁹⁴ Wessels and Du Bruyn, 'Vrees as Faktor in die Regse Blanke Politiek', 9.

⁴⁹⁵ Stultz, 'Politics of Security', 13.

⁴⁹⁶ Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives?', 131.

Verwoerd's ideal of a white South African nation, united in its resistance to... black domination' but also remarked that it was 'probably more an alliance of necessity than of choice'.⁴⁹⁷ This is a small but essential distinction since it differentiates between a white electorate who ascribed to the nationalist ideology of white supremacy and an electorate who supported a system they believed to be best suited to maintaining white political rule and societal function. As Kenney further elaborated, 'the English have had no option but to submit... whether they like it or not, the Afrikaner's struggle is also their struggle'.⁴⁹⁸ Lambert too gives the impression that political changes within South Africa at the time were facts that English-speakers eventually had to 'accept' and come to terms with as opposed to them being won over to the nationalist side.⁴⁹⁹

This review of the literature points out that there is clarity needed in the interpretation of the impact that the Commonwealth Conference had on the electorate. Several of the assertions made by these scholars are correct, but some of these statements may be challenged. For example, several historical volumes have commented on the aftermath of the Commonwealth Conference and use it to explain the perceived increase in votes in the 1961 election. However, if the exit from the Commonwealth did lead to disregard for Verwoerd as some scholars suggest, it stands in contrast with the perceived increase in support for the NP in the 1961 election. Adversely, if the election results indicate a decline in voter turnout and overall support for the NP, then the level of support for Verwoerd after the conference described by some scholars might not be accurate.

Several issues regarding the impact of the Commonwealth Conference need to be addressed. Firstly, it needs to be determined whether Verwoerd received support or opposition for his decision to withdraw South Africa's membership application, specifically from English-speakers. In the case that Verwoerd had support from the electorate for his decision; the question remains whether this translated into political support for the NP or whether it remained isolated support for his decision. If an increase in support for either Verwoerd or the NP can be identified, especially amongst

⁴⁹⁷ Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, 51.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ Lambert, 'English-Speaking South Africans: Uncertain of Their Identity', 607.

English-speakers, what motivated people towards such political change needs to be investigated. The answers to these questions cannot be gauged by examining the results of the referendum and retrospectively imposing an interpretation of the Commonwealth Conference. This is mainly because several circumstances had changed in the months between the referendum and the establishment of a republic. The previous chapter demonstrated that the referendum had left several unresolved issues in its wake that could complicate the establishment of a republic. The proposed republic's Commonwealth membership as well as the new republican constitution had been influential factors during the referendum and still had to be resolved. An in-depth look at the months between the referendum and establishment of a republic is of great importance for understanding public opinion at the time.

The months that followed not only brought a great deal of attention to the republican process but also led to increased isolation for South Africa. During a large part of the referendum campaign South Africa was still in a state of emergency after the events at Sharpeville, thereby limiting some of the protests against the establishment of a racially segregated republic. Journalist Lewis Nkosi wrote that Africans were not very concerned with the referendum itself because it would not have a significant impact on their daily lives. However, the anti-republican referendum campaign had successfully linked the proposed republic with the NP's racial policy by focussing on how it could stand in the way of continued Commonwealth membership. The referendum had predominantly been interpreted as a white political issue, but subsequently the establishment of a republic and the reconstitution of South Africa quickly started gaining interest with other racial groups. Already on 20 October 1960 Oliver Tambo, exiled Deputy President of the ANC, issued a statement declaring that the outcome of the referendum would give the government a 'fresh mandate' to enforce the apartheid policies which had caused the Sharpeville massacre.⁵⁰⁰ This resistance to the coming republic would eventually also contribute to the outcome of South Africa's Commonwealth membership application.

⁵⁰⁰ <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/statement-behalf-south-africa-united-front-1960-new-york>, accessed 12 September 2019.

After the Sharpeville massacre, the UN Security Council declared that apartheid was a possible threat to world peace and security and that steps had to be taken by the NP to ensure racial harmony. In January 1961 Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the UN, visited South Africa to gain insight into the situation. During their meetings, Verwoerd had rejected the idea of multi-racial integration and instead seemed more interested in expanding the existing policy of apartheid in order to make it more acceptable to critics.⁵⁰¹ These types of inquiries were not merely limited to political institutions such as the UN. The World Council of Churches also held a summit in Johannesburg in December 1960 to investigate the injustices of the apartheid system. While the summit conference recommended that black South Africans should be granted political rights, some of the South African churches instead put up a theological defence in favour of apartheid. In particular, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), a religious institution closely linked to the foundation of apartheid and the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, rejected the proposed equality between races. This was by no means a unilateral declaration and led to division within the church. However, since the World Council of Churches strongly promoted that all races were equal, the result was that DRC decided to leave the international religious organisation.⁵⁰² These events meant that in the months following the referendum South Africa remained the focus of international scrutiny and criticism. It appeared that the anti-republican narrative, which argued that Verwoerd was leading South Africa into increased isolation and danger, had some validity.

Verwoerd would have been aware of the environment of international criticism and hostility already after the previous year's Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. However, he continually insisted that South Africa's membership application was a mere formality and that the application was not supposed to be influenced by domestic affairs. Internally the white political community was more focussed on the implications of becoming a republic rather than re-evaluating its racial policies. Although racial policy

⁵⁰¹ Giliomee, *Last Afrikaner Leaders*, 78.

⁵⁰² Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives?', 129. Also see <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/reinstatement-of-south-africa2019s-dutch-reformed-church-likened-to-return-of-the-prodigal-son>, accessed 12 September 2019.

had no doubt played a role in the pre-referendum narratives, it was the proposed constitution as well as South Africa's Commonwealth membership, which remained the key discussion point in parliament in the months following the referendum.

The new proposed republican constitution was published in the government gazette on 9 December 1960, two months after the republican referendum. Despite the uproar and speculation regarding the 1942 draft constitution ahead of the referendum, Verwoerd did remain true to his promise that no great changes would be made to the existing constitution. In commenting on this proposed constitution, analyst Elizabeth Landis described it as a 'sober, lawyerlike document... similar to the statute which it replaces' which had discarded some of the 'more obvious fascist trappings' of the feared 1942 draft constitution.⁵⁰³ There were continued objections from those who thought that the NP would later make changes to the constitution by abusing their senate majority. Specifically, a group of UP politicians from Natal raised their concerns even before the publication of the proposed constitution. They sent a resolution with requests for the new constitution to Verwoerd, and on 1 December 1960, a secret meeting took place between a delegation of Natal politicians and the Prime Minister.⁵⁰⁴ The Natal delegation expressed that there was a 'fear that in the Republic our rights and traditions will not be secured as we would wish them to be'.⁵⁰⁵ The Natal delegation, therefore, requested that certain clauses, which provided equality between the two white language groups, should be entrenched in the constitution. Verwoerd, in turn, advocated that he had promised a constitution without any major changes and that such entrenchments would result in a constitution which differed from the one that he had promised. He also pledged that, in light of the objections raised regarding the constitution ahead of the referendum, ample time would be provided for investigation of the new constitution.⁵⁰⁶

When the Constitution bill was discussed in parliament at the beginning of 1961, the debate followed a similar pattern to that of the secret meeting with the Natal delegates.

⁵⁰³ E. Landis, 'The New Order in South Africa', *Africa Today*, 8, 8 (1961), 4&6.

⁵⁰⁴ ARCA, PV 93, File 1/30/5/2, National Party: Party affairs Natal, Resolution regarding the Republic and Natal, n.d.

⁵⁰⁵ ARCA, PV 93, File 1/30/5/2, National Party: Party affairs Natal, The Report on Discussions Between the Prime Minister and a Deputation from Natal, 1 December 1960, 5.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

On both occasions, Verwoerd rejected the requests to entrench any clauses relating to European language or cultural equality because it would be a deviation from the guarantees given that no major changes would be made to the constitution.⁵⁰⁷ However, during the parliamentary debates, De Villiers Graaff argued that a clause about South Africa's Commonwealth membership should be entrenched in the new constitution. Although Verwoerd again responded that he would not be making major changes to the constitution, Graaff rejected the bill claiming that Commonwealth membership had been promised, so entrenching such a clause in the constitution would only be justified. He argued that Verwoerd had given assurances that South Africa would remain a member of the Commonwealth and since people had voted for a republic based on these assurances, steps should be taken to ensure that these promises were kept.⁵⁰⁸

Other members of parliament similarly rejected the new constitution by insisting that the establishment of a republic should not be pursued at a time when criticism and boycotts against the country were increasing. A constitutional change also presented an opportunity for those who opposed apartheid to question the entire democratic foundation of the political system. Just as in their anti-republican campaign, these opposition groups argued that the constitution needed to undergo radical changes. During the parliamentary debates Steytler, leader of the PP, suggested that the reconstitution of South Africa should allow for a qualified franchise and do away with an exclusive constitution which only gave political power to Whites. There were also some objections raised against the political representation system which awarded the NP with an inflated number of seats in parliament. The opposition claimed that the proposed constitution gave little assurance that the government would not use their inflated parliamentary majority at a later stage to make constitutional changes which would infringe upon the rights of citizens.⁵⁰⁹

Contrary to the fears voiced by the opposition parties during their referendum campaigns, the constitution delivered by Verwoerd was aligned with what he had promised at the time of the referendum. The new constitution was approved in

⁵⁰⁷ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 30 January 1961), c327.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, c356.

⁵⁰⁹ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 31 January 1961), c462.

parliament on 24 April 1961 and enacted almost no changes to the status quo or political structure. The importance of this new constitution in the republican process should not be overlooked. In providing a constitution as it had been promised during the referendum, Verwoerd had allayed one of the major fears regarding a republic. There were no clauses in the constitution which specifically singled out and undermined English-speaking South Africans or their culture, as had been the case with the 1942 draft constitution. Where the 1942 constitution had described the break with all elements of the British Empire as a goal, this new constitution did not prohibit Commonwealth membership upon becoming a republic. This insistence on providing the constitution which he promised stood in stark contrast with the pre-referendum portrayal of Verwoerd as a fascist. Despite the proverbial 'blank cheque' provided by the referendum to make changes to the new constitution, Verwoerd had provided the electorate with what he had promised during the referendum campaign.

The new constitution had partially allayed the fears of fascism voiced at the time of the referendum. As such, the parliamentary debates mainly focussed on South Africa's Commonwealth membership. After the Constitution Bill was introduced in parliament, the debate regarding entrenching South Africa's Commonwealth membership in the constitution continued for more than a week without resolve. To find a solution the proposed constitution was referred to a select committee on 9 Feb 1961. The committee would investigate the legalities of the bill and report to parliament on 24 March.⁵¹⁰ This meant that South Africa's Commonwealth membership would already have been decided at the Commonwealth Conference by the time the committee reported to parliament, making any request for Commonwealth membership to be entrenched in the constitution obsolete.

Since the parliamentary debates had temporarily limited the involvement of local politicians on the Commonwealth membership question, most of the attention was now focused on the Commonwealth Conference. The Commonwealth Conference is interpreted as having a significant impact on the white electorate. Therefore, studying the event, its aftermath, and its impact forms an integral part of interpreting the

⁵¹⁰ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 9 February 1961), c1059.

referendum and the establishment of a republic. This chapter will examine the events of the 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference and look at the reactions that can be found in readers' letters, editorials, and articles in the South African newspapers.

The first section of this chapter will examine the first days of the conference (8 -15 March 1961) and the discussion found in the press regarding these events. The second section will examine the withdrawal from the Commonwealth and the responses to the news as it was published in editorials and readers' letters during the two weeks following the withdrawal (16- 28 March 1961). In the third section, these responses will be interpreted and analysed to answer the questions posed in the introduction. This chapter will cast light on the importance of the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, give possible explanations for the reasons behind the different reactions to the withdrawal, and show that this was a moment of crucial importance for white political opinion in South Africa.

3.1 Determining South Africa's Commonwealth membership

In the previous chapter, the discussion on the rules regarding Commonwealth membership highlighted why the 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was so controversial. In principle, South Africa's membership application should have been a mere formality, as had been the case for various other nations after gaining independence. It would have been problematic if apartheid was discussed or queried by the other Prime Ministers, based on the policy of non-interference in domestic affairs. Macmillan was concerned that the issue of South Africa's Commonwealth membership and the insistence by some members to discuss apartheid would have disastrous consequences for the Commonwealth association. Although the British Prime Minister considered the apartheid policy to be questionable, he thought it should not have any bearing on South Africa's membership application.⁵¹¹

Macmillan had hoped that the discussion of apartheid at the 1960 Commonwealth Conference would have diffused the situation even before the referendum had taken

⁵¹¹ Geysler, *Watershed for South Africa*, 70-1.

place. The assassination attempt on Verwoerd had resulted in Eric Louw attending the conference on his behalf. Louw's performance at the conference was seen as a dismal failure.⁵¹² In his memoir, Macmillan revealed that the 1960 conference had not managed to avoid a disaster as he had hoped, but instead had only managed to postpone it until the following year.⁵¹³ To prevent a clash between the Commonwealth nations, Macmillan urged the leaders not to say anything about their attitudes towards South Africa in public ahead of the conference. Macmillan was specifically concerned that Ghana and Malaya would cause trouble in this regard, as both these countries had enforced boycotts against South Africa after the Sharpeville massacre. Their actions already stood in contrast with the Commonwealth's reputation as an association of friendly nations. This occurred even before Verwoerd had indicated that he was going to establish a republic.⁵¹⁴

After the referendum, the establishment of a South African republic became inevitable, and consequently the question regarding continued Commonwealth membership became unavoidable. Shortly after the referendum, Verwoerd had written to Macmillan informing him of South Africa's intention to become a republic and to apply for continued Commonwealth membership. On 24 October 1960, Verwoerd had suggested that the vote on South Africa's Commonwealth membership could be conducted via post, as opposed to waiting for the issue to be resolved at the following year's conference. Macmillan proposed that 'so grave an issue' as South Africa's racial policy could not be dealt with via correspondence and informed Verwoerd that the case would be decided at the next Prime Ministers' Conference. At the end of 1960, it was decided that the conference would take place during March 1961 in London - a year sooner than expected.⁵¹⁵

In his memoir, Macmillan confessed that he felt that he would do everything in his power to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth. He admitted to disagreeing strongly with South Africa's policy but felt that such a domestic matter should have been dealt with

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 67.

⁵¹³ H. Macmillan, *Pointing The Way, 1959 -1961, Volume 5*, (London: Macmillan, 1972), 285.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 286-7; Dubow, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa From Smuts to Mandela', 298.

⁵¹⁵ Macmillan, *Pointing The Way*, 292.

separately and should not be used as leverage.⁵¹⁶ By the end of 1960, the Prime Ministers of Malaya and Ghana informed Macmillan that they would not risk breaking up the Commonwealth by rejecting South Africa's membership application. At this stage however John Diefenbaker, Canada's Prime Minister, who had previously indicated that he would not oppose South Africa's membership, now told Macmillan that he would not approve of South Africa's membership request unless Verwoerd made some concessions.⁵¹⁷ This was a setback for republicans who had used the argument during the referendum that the 'older white states' would come to South Africa's aid. In light of these new complications, Macmillan again urged the other leaders not to make any definitive statements on South Africa's membership application before the conference. In order to avoid conflict on the issue Macmillan decided that, if no agreement could be reached during the conference, it might be best to opt for a formula which would be agreed upon and signed by all the attendees in order to resolve the situation.⁵¹⁸ In such a formula, the attendees would make their disdain for South Africa's policies known, but would not use a domestic issue to exclude South Africa from the Commonwealth.

While a crowd of supporters had gathered to wish Verwoerd well upon his departure from South Africa on 4 March 1961, his reception in London was not as welcoming.⁵¹⁹ In the days leading up to the conference, some British citizens took to the streets of London to protest apartheid. When Verwoerd arrived in London, citizens had lined the streets holding placards telling him to 'go home' and calling him a 'murderer' for the atrocities at Sharpeville.⁵²⁰ There would have been no doubt that South Africa's racial policy was seen as controversial and would be the focal point of the conference. The South African newspapers also published photographs of these protests. Despite Macmillan's warnings, the other Commonwealth leaders and attendees also resorted to voicing their opinions regarding South Africa's membership application upon their arrival in London ahead of the conference. Both Jawaharlal Nehru from India and Abdul Rahman from Malaya indicated to the press that they strongly disagreed with apartheid

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁵¹⁹ F. Barnard, *13 Years with Dr. H. F. Verwoerd* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1967), 87.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

and were looking for South Africa to make some changes to the policy in exchange for being allowed to remain a member of the Commonwealth. Although Macmillan himself thought that the issues of South Africa's membership and racial policy should be approached separately, not everyone felt the same.

Media interest and press reports ensured that it was already known on the eve of the conference that the delegates were divided on how the issue of South Africa's membership should be approached.⁵²¹ Regardless of the apparent disjunction between members, Verwoerd resolutely trusted the policy of non-interference and reportedly believed sincerely that South Africa would remain a member of the Commonwealth.⁵²² The 1961 Commonwealth Conference was attended by Prime Ministers and Presidents of previous or existing territories of the British Empire. Besides Verwoerd and Macmillan, the attendees included Prime Ministers Menzies (Australia); Diefenbaker (Canada) Bandaranaike (Ceylon); Nehru (India); Rahman (Malaya); Holyoake (New Zealand); Balewa (Nigeria); and Welensky (Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) as well as Presidents Makarios (Cyprus); Nkrumah (Ghana); and Kahn (Pakistan). These delegates attended the conference mainly to consider South Africa's application to remain a member of the Commonwealth upon becoming a republic.⁵²³

The delegates represented a multiracial Commonwealth and were considered to be, on the whole, racially divided on the issue of South Africa's membership application. In a cartoon (Figure 23) portraying the Commonwealth members, *The Cape Argus* divided the members into two camps, clearly depicting contention between the two sides. The one camp consisted of South Africa as well as those who had not spoken out against apartheid, namely New Zealand, Rhodesia and Australia. These, except for Canada, were the 'older white states' that would presumably come to South Africa's defence during the discussions.⁵²⁴ Canada as well as was all the former Afro-Asian colonial territories were in the other camp, mainly because they had publically expressed their concerns regarding apartheid and hoped that Verwoerd would make concessions. This

⁵²¹ Geyser, *Watershed for South Africa*, 82-3.

⁵²² L. Gandar, 'Holding the Line for "White Civilisation"', *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 March 1961, 8.

⁵²³ Macmillan, *Pointing The Way*, 297-9.

⁵²⁴ See Chapter Two, p97.

highlighted the division within the Commonwealth as well as the extent of the challenge that South Africa was facing, with more than half of the Commonwealth indicating some concern with South Africa's racial policy. The photographer in the cartoon is taking the supposed 'family portrait' of the members and asking everyone to direct their attention to the camera by looking at the dove of world peace. In the picture, however, not one of the members is focussing on peace and all are glaring at each other instead.⁵²⁵ This division in the Commonwealth partly supported the pro-republican notion put forth during the referendum that the 'older white states' would support South Africa. However, Canada indicated that it would not give automatic support to Verwoerd and was thus turning the odds against South Africa's membership application.

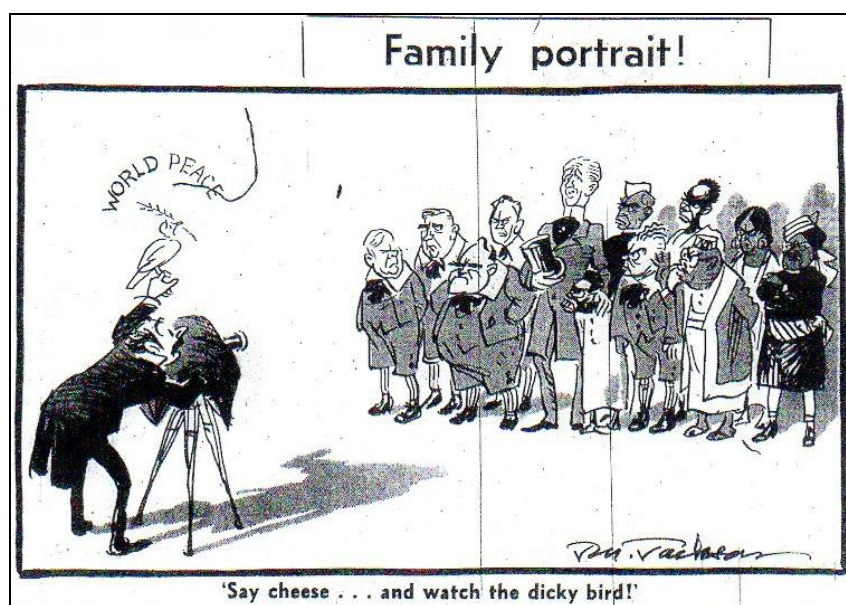


Figure 23: Family portrait- *The Cape Argus*, 8 March 1961

Verwoerd's attendance of the 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference presented a unique situation for the South African electorate and politicians. Just a few months prior the electorate had been virtually divided on the issue of republicanism, but there was a sense of universality in attempting to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth. Verwoerd's secretary surmised that there was a desire, even amongst

⁵²⁵ 'Family Portrait!', *The Cape Argus*, 8 March 1961, 2.

republicans, to remain in the Commonwealth at all costs. He considered that the 'loss of Commonwealth membership would be a major catastrophe' to a large percentage of South Africans.⁵²⁶ The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* similarly reported that 'South Africans of all political persuasions and all colours' were anxiously hoping that Verwoerd would succeed in keeping South Africa in the Commonwealth. He wrote that even nationalists, having been suspected of wanting to break with the Commonwealth, were hoping that Verwoerd would succeed.⁵²⁷ *The Star* also published the observations of a colonial correspondent for *The Times* which supported this view. He remarked that, besides the banned members of the ANC, he could not 'find any section of the community which wanted to leave the Commonwealth' and that the coming republic had at least forced the Afrikaner community to value the Commonwealth connection. The editor of *The Star* also commented on the non-nationalist support for Verwoerd's mission but warned that this should not be misunderstood as support for the NP and their policies, but was purely support to achieve a common goal.⁵²⁸

This observed level of support to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth substantiates the conclusion in the previous chapter that Commonwealth membership was a major influencing factor in determining the outcome of the referendum. Furthermore, this consolidated support for South Africa's Commonwealth membership stands in stark contrast with the divided outcome of the referendum just a few months before. This reinforces the notion that a portion of the white electorate was not opposed to the establishment of a republic *per se* but rather opposed to risking the loss of Commonwealth membership. The desire for unity and agreement that was expressed by readers shortly before the referendum was still present. Again, this seems not to be a response to Verwoerd's call for unity, but more of an agreement amongst the electorate regarding what would be best for the future of the country.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁶ Barnard, *13 Years with Dr. H. F. Verwoerd*, 84.

⁵²⁷ Editorial, 'In the Balance', *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 March 1961, 8.

⁵²⁸ Editorial, 'A Gambler's Throw', *The Star*, 8 March 1961, 16.

⁵²⁹ See Chapter Two, pp60-1.

The 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference officially started on 8 March at Lancaster House in London.⁵³⁰ A version of the conference proceedings was published in the newspapers daily and kept the electorate informed regarding the proceedings. During the first three days of the conference, the proceedings continued relatively peacefully since discussions on international relations were on the agenda. On the first day of the conference, South African newspapers reported that rumours indicated that there was a good chance that South Africa would be allowed to remain in the Commonwealth. On the second day of the conference, the South African press was similarly optimistic about the outcome of the conference. *Die Transvaler's* headline firmly stated that 'S.A. will stay in Commonwealth' and both *The Cape Argus* and *The Star* reported that Verwoerd had made a good start with the other Prime Ministers at the conference. By that weekend it was known that the issue of South Africa's membership would only be decided on Monday 13 March 1961.

The events of the weekend would prove to be damaging to the process of the membership application. The topic of apartheid was no doubt discussed over the weekend by the various Prime Ministers. Reports had also surfaced that Diefenbaker had convened meetings with the anti-apartheid South African United Front. These anti-apartheid activists reportedly also had plans to meet with Abdul Rahman and Nkrumah to persuade them to exclude South Africa from the Commonwealth.⁵³¹ These sentiments were shared by other black South Africans who thought that membership could either be used as leverage or that growing isolation would force the government to consider making changes to its apartheid policy. One reader, who identified themselves as 'African', wrote to *The Star* that they 'believe much could be done for South Africa by expulsion'.⁵³²

The meetings and discussion that took place over the weekend had a negative effect on the prospects of South Africa's membership application. By Monday morning the media reported that Ghana had threatened to leave the Commonwealth if South Africa was

⁵³⁰ Macmillan, *Pointing The Way*, 297.

⁵³¹ 'Diefenbaker Sees United Front Men and Bishop Reeves', *The Cape Argus*, 11 March 1961, 11; Dubow, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa From Smuts to Mandela', 298.

⁵³² J. Mphomane, 'The Union and the Commonwealth', *The Star*, 17 March 1961, 6.

allowed to remain a member, but Nkrumah subsequently denied these reports.⁵³³ The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that even though he had been hopeful about South Africa's prospects, 'a reading of the week-end cables, however, suggests that last-minute pressures and shifts of opinion have left the question more open than was thought to be the case last week'. The editor said that everything came down to whether or not Macmillan could convince the rest of the leaders that domestic matters should have no bearing on the application.⁵³⁴ On Monday morning, the topic of South Africa's membership was on the agenda. Just before the topic of South Africa's membership was introduced, the membership application of Cyprus was also discussed and quickly approved.⁵³⁵ This would also add to accusations that South Africa was being singled out and treated differently from other newly independent nations. During the previous week, several leaders had declared that they were adamant about discussing apartheid as part of the membership application. The media reported that Verwoerd had not objected to the discussion of apartheid and had contributed to the discussion by giving a speech of his own and answering any of the questions that the other members had asked.⁵³⁶ As such, the discussion of South Africa's membership application commenced with a discussion of the NP's policies of racial segregation.

At the time of the referendum, some voters had believed that the Commonwealth would not be allowed to comment or interfere in domestic affairs, while others again voted against a republic out of fear that the Commonwealth would object to apartheid regardless of these rules. This was also a point on which most of the editors and readers were in agreement. Regardless of their pro-or anti-republican sentiments, at the time of the conference proceedings, there were almost no editors or readers who supported the 'interference' into South Africa's domestic affairs. The pro-republican newspaper *Die Transvaler* wrote that if South Africa were excluded based on her racial policy, such interference in internal affairs would mean the end of the

⁵³³ 'Ghana 'threat' to Union', *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 March 1961, 1.

⁵³⁴ Editorial, 'Today's the Day', *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 March 1961, 8.

⁵³⁵ Editorial, 'In the Balance', 8.

⁵³⁶ 'Premiers Clash on Union', *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 March 1961, 1.

Commonwealth.⁵³⁷ Most notably, the objections against the interference into internal affairs was based on the interpretation that South Africa had been singled out and that the other members had been exempted from similar treatment.

During the referendum campaign, the nationalists and republicans had argued that if the Commonwealth was willing to allow interference into internal affairs, then the organisation had changed to such an extent that membership was no longer desirable or beneficial. This 'changing nature' of the Commonwealth was not a uniquely nationalist point of view, and several historians and scholars have pointed to this marked change within the Commonwealth at the time. The changing nature of the Commonwealth noted during the referendum campaign was seen as a submission to liberal notions, specifically ideas regarding race and reform coming from new 'black' member states.⁵³⁸

Both the editors of the *Rand Daily Mail* and *Die Transvaler* insisted that domestic matters should not have any bearing on a membership application. The editor of *Die Transvaler* insisted that South Africa's race policy was unrelated to the question of membership and that it would be wise if members just accepted South Africa's membership request and moved on.⁵³⁹ For the editors of the English-language newspapers, this interference was specifically seen as a problem since the other members were perceived not to have spotless records themselves, and were therefore in no position to judge South Africa's domestic affairs. The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* wrote that Macmillan's insistence that internal affairs should not interfere with membership was supported by 'the fact that Pakistan is a benevolent military dictatorship and that Ghana is well on the road towards a one-party system'.⁵⁴⁰ Similarly, a columnist writing for *The Star* insisted that numerous other Commonwealth member states did not adhere to democratic principles.⁵⁴¹ *The Cape Argus* also

⁵³⁷ 'Byeenkoms in Londen', *Die Transvaler*, 8 March 1961, 6; 'Hoe Lank Sal Statebond Bestaan?', *Die Transvaler*, 9 March 1961, 6.

⁵³⁸ W. Stolk, 'Die Plek en die Rol van die Afrikastate in die Veranderende Statebond Na die Tweedewêreldoorlog' (PhD thesis, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, 1994), 88.

⁵³⁹ Editorial, 'Gevaarlike Voornemens', *Die Transvaler*, 13 March 1961, 6.

⁵⁴⁰ Editorial, 'Today's the Day', 8.

⁵⁴¹ J. P. Jordi, 'In or out of the Club? There Is No Certainty', *The Star*, 8 March 1961, 16.

weighed in on this situation with a cartoon (Figure 24). The cartoon depicted some of the other Commonwealth member states as pointing the finger to the 'undemocratic' mote in Verwoerd's eye. The cartoon is insinuating that the 'undemocratic' sin is apartheid. The cartoon then depicted that all those who were pointing the finger at Verwoerd had their own motes of undemocratic behaviour, such as dictatorships and press censorship.⁵⁴² The cartoonist was implying that the other nations also had questionable domestic practices, but that this had not stopped other former colonies from becoming independent states. Therefore, the message was presented that the other Commonwealth nations were being unfair in their treatment of South Africa.

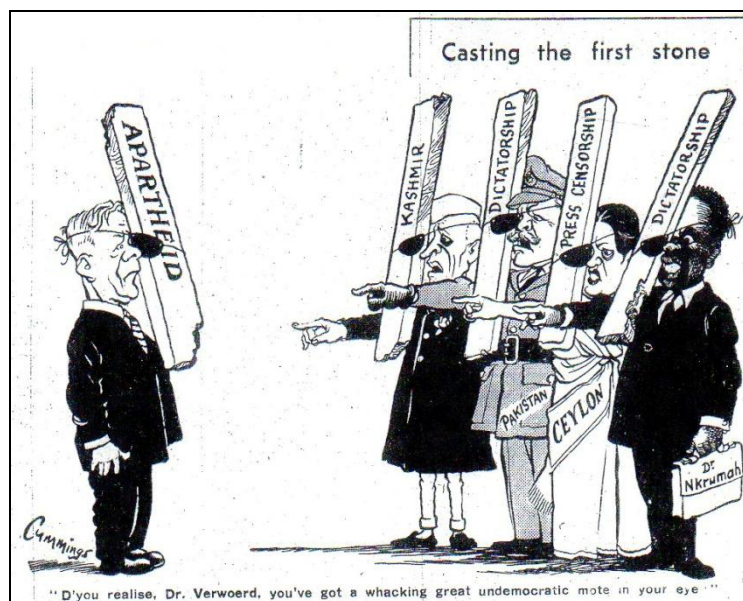


Figure 24: Casting the first stone- *The Cape Argus*, 15 March 1961

On Tuesday 14 March the media reported that no decision had been made on South Africa's membership and that the discussion of South Africa's race policy and membership application would continue. The newspapers also reported that there was an atmosphere of tension and anticipation surrounding the conference proceedings. A columnist for *Die Burger* argued that this was a good sign, based on their analysis that South Africa would have been expelled quickly if the other member states were looking

⁵⁴² Cummings, 'Casting the First Stone', *The Cape Argus*, 15 March 1961, 11.

at refusing the application.⁵⁴³ The consensus was, however, that the prolonged discussions were a discouraging sign for South Africa's membership request.

Regardless of their objection to the Commonwealth's interference, the editors of the English-language newspapers were adamant about reminding the electorate that Verwoerd was to blame for the tense and uncertain situation. They reiterated that such a suspenseful situation could have been avoided if a republic had not been pursued and that Verwoerd was, in fact, receiving support and well wishes from the electorate to relieve South Africa from a situation which he had put them in. The editors of *The Star* and the *Rand Daily Mail* blamed this anxiety and uncertainty on the nationalists by saying that in the course of creating a demand for a republic they 'chose to change our status while our racial situation was at its most controversial'.⁵⁴⁴ This was a repetition of the slogan used during the referendum, that it was not the right time for a republic and that 'this republic' had to be rejected. It had been apparent even before the start of the conference that the editors of these Transvaal-based English-language newspapers would continue with their attack on Verwoerd just as they had done during the referendum campaign.⁵⁴⁵ The editor of *The Star* wrote that the 'objective fact is that Dr Verwoerd, by pressing the republican issue while South Africa's racial situation is so controversial has deliberately imperilled our Commonwealth membership which need never have been in jeopardy at all'.⁵⁴⁶

Since no decision had been reached after two days of deliberations, it was evident that there was some measure of disagreement on the issue of South Africa's membership. The later newspaper editions published on Tuesday 14 March started reporting on Macmillan's proposed formula which was designed to allow South Africa to remain a member state while providing an opportunity for other members to publically voice their disapproval of apartheid. This formula, which Macmillan had considered before the start of the conference, was meant to be a last resort that could be acceptable to all

⁵⁴³ Dawie, 'Uit My Politieke Pen', *Die Burger*, 11 March 1961, 10.

⁵⁴⁴ Editorial, 'This Day of Nerves', *The Star*, 14 March 1961, 16; The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* placed the blame more on Verwoerd than on the nationalists. See Editorial, 'In the Balance', 8.

⁵⁴⁵ The editor of *The Cape Argus*, who had given a measure of support for the republican cause, reserved judgment on the nationalists and Verwoerd until after the withdrawal.

⁵⁴⁶ Editorial, 'A Gambler's Throw', 16; A similar line of argument is used in Editorial, 'In the Balance', 8..

members. The idea was that a statement expressing the other Commonwealth members' aversion to apartheid would be documented and signed by all the conference attendees as a prerequisite for South Africa's continued membership upon becoming a republic. This way, the issues of South Africa's race policy and membership could be separated, while still providing an opportunity for leaders to voice their disapproval of apartheid. The *Rand Daily Mail* reported that there had been 'hours of drafting and redrafting' to find a solution that would be acceptable to everyone but that there would be yet another day of deliberations to find a solution accepted by all.⁵⁴⁷ At the same time as reports of the formula were published, some newspapers reported that Verwoerd was being stubborn and unwilling to make any concessions to retain the membership and that this was leading to the delay in the decision on South Africa's request.⁵⁴⁸

The image of Verwoerd as stubborn and unwilling to compromise already surfaced before the start of the conference. In interviews ahead of the conference Verwoerd had indicated that he was there to cooperate and would try his best to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth, but he also said that he would not change South Africa's race policy or allow others to interfere.⁵⁴⁹ The *Rand Daily Mail* published a cartoon (Figure 25) which depicted a statue of Verwoerd made from granite. The statue's description stated that Verwoerd was 'Sweet reasonableness in solid granite' and supported the notion that Verwoerd, although having declared his willingness to cooperate, had no intention of making any concessions.⁵⁵⁰ With limited access to information at the time of the conference, it was difficult for the electorate to discern whether these claims and portrayals were valid.

⁵⁴⁷ 'Does a Scrap of Paper Hold the Key?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 March 1961, 1.

⁵⁴⁸ 'Talks Go on All Morning Again', *The Cape Argus*, 14 March 1961, 1.

⁵⁴⁹ Anon., 'A Compromise on South Africa?', *The Guardian*, 6 May 1961, n.p.

⁵⁵⁰ Connolly, 'Reject or No?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 March 1961, 8.

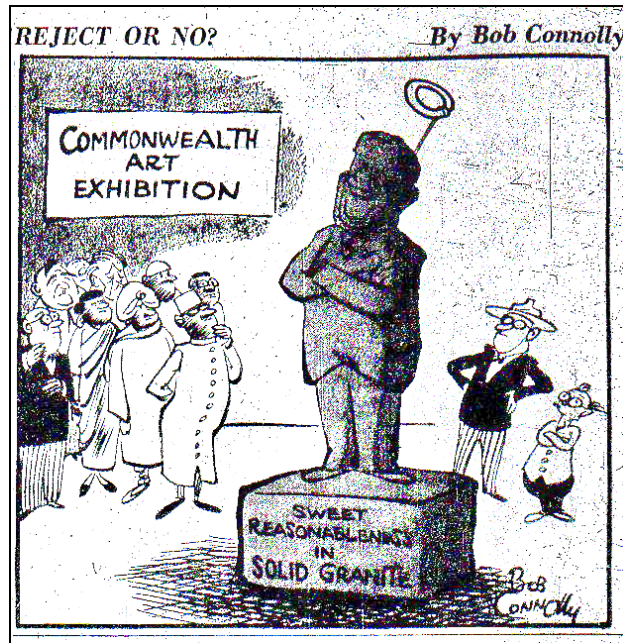


Figure 25: Reject or no?- *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 March 1961

Although the English-language editors attempted to focus on the proposed republic- and by default Verwoerd and the nationalists- as the cause of South Africa's Commonwealth difficulties, it was obvious that the main concern was apartheid. The importance of South Africa's race policy in this matter was clearly indicated by the unprecedented length of the discussions regarding South Africa's membership application. One report even stated that some of the Prime Ministers had prepared statements on apartheid for the conference that spanned more than 100 pages.⁵⁵¹ This focus on racial matters accordingly resulted in a discussion of South Africa's racial policy in the South African press. Similarly, the statements made by other Prime Ministers that they would like South Africa to make concessions also resulted in readers evaluating whether making concessions to retain South Africa's Commonwealth membership was needed or even justified. There were supporters of the notion that concessions should be made in order to maintain South Africa's relationship with the Western block. The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* promoted the idea that change was necessary and wrote that links with the

⁵⁵¹ "'Day of Decision' Becomes a Night of Doubts', *The Cape Argus*, 14 March 1961, 2.

Commonwealth, which were seen as valuable and beneficial, could not continue for long 'if we continue on our present road' of racial segregation.⁵⁵²

As such, it was understood that these concessions would entail some form of adjustment to South Africa's racial policies and possibly integration of racial groups. There were several readers who saw concession and changes to the race policy as dangerous and a risk to stability. Readers writing to both the editors of the English-language as well as the Afrikaans press supported this notion. A reader writing to *The Cape Argus* expressed that he hoped that Verwoerd would be able to show the other Prime Ministers that the 'Bantu' needed the 'Europeans' for further advancement. This reader wrote that 'the Bantu have first to prove themselves willing and able to avail themselves of their opportunities and to have their feet firmly on the rungs of the ladder of economic advancement towards a higher standard of living'.⁵⁵³ Similarly, another letter published in the *Rand Daily Mail* warned that the requests for concessions would not die down until there was complete 'black domination'.⁵⁵⁴

One of the more interesting trends was that various readers called for the acceleration of the separate development policy to prove its effectiveness. While some saw separate development as 'more apartheid', others interpreted it as a way of making concessions by giving more rights to Africans in separate territories.⁵⁵⁵ The editor of *The Star* suggested that since South Africa had only ever experienced apartheid as a system of domination, that it might be a good idea first to give separate development a trial because it would give some concessions in the form of self-rule in the homelands.⁵⁵⁶ In the context of the discussion on concessions and racial policy, numerous readers'

⁵⁵² Editorial, 'Today's the Day', 8; Also see Editorial, 'Why the Union Is Hated', *The Cape Argus*, 15 March 1961, 14.

⁵⁵³ J. L. Buchanan, 'True Picture of the Position of the Whites and Bantu in S. Africa', *The Cape Argus*, 13 March 1961, 9.

⁵⁵⁴ E. Murray, 'Has Appeasement Ever Satisfied Demands?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 21 March 1961, 11.

⁵⁵⁵ The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* explained that separate development was just 'more apartheid'. See Editorial, 'Warning Voices', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 March 1961, 8.

⁵⁵⁶ Although the editor used the term 'apartheid' it is clear from his discussion that he was referring to the principles of separate development. Editorial, 'Give It a Trial', *The Star*, 15 March 1961, 16.

letters in *Die Transvaler* said that the implementation of separate development needed to be accelerated to prove that the 'good-neighbourliness' policy was successful.⁵⁵⁷

After South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, this discussion continued as readers and editors gave their arguments for whether it would be worth making concessions in order to return to the Commonwealth. In the previous chapter, it was indicated that a significant portion of the electorate voted against a republic because they did not want change and wanted to 'keep the Union as it is'.⁵⁵⁸ For these voters, in particular, the status quo would be maintained if a republic were not established. However, the referendum outcome and particularly the Commonwealth Conference had an impact on this notion. It was becoming evident that Commonwealth membership would be associated with concessions and therefore would bring about change. Even if these concessions were not required, the conference had exposed the electorate to the changes within the Commonwealth, which meant that Commonwealth membership was no longer a constant or even a necessary component for maintaining the status quo.

On the morning of 15 March, the South African media reported that there was still no outcome on the question of South Africa's membership. Most newspapers used the term 'deadlock' to describe the presumed standstill of the conference deliberations. This was a tense moment for South Africans, with *The Star* describing it as a day that South Africa stood still.⁵⁵⁹ Although the Afrikaans-language editors did not see exclusion from the Commonwealth as a crisis, the English-language editors still saw the future of the country as being at risk. In an editorial, the *Rand Daily Mail* wrote that 'all South Africa will be waiting in trepidation' for the decision and that 'if we are expelled our whole future is suddenly clouded'.⁵⁶⁰ *The Star* similarly stated that the conference was a time of 'tense indecision' having caused 'a period of suspense, humiliation and danger' and that 'if South Africa is evicted, we at once lose our Commonwealth sources of

⁵⁵⁷ Anon., 'Vind Wil en Weg Waar Bestaan Bedreig Word', *Die Transvaler*, 17 March 1961, 18; Anon., 'Onderskeie Gebiede van Blankes en Bantoes', *Die Transvaler*, 17 March 1961, 18; Anon., 'Onderskei Nie Volgens Kleur', *Die Transvaler*, 17 March 1961, 18.

⁵⁵⁸ See Chapter Two, pp119-20.

⁵⁵⁹ 'The Day South Africa Stood Still', *The Star*, 14 March 1961, 1.

⁵⁶⁰ Editorial, 'In the Balance', 8.

information and probably our markets'.⁵⁶¹ The weight of the situation was portrayed in a cartoon published in the *Rand Daily Mail* (Figure 26) which suggested that South Africans were closely listening to the radio and reading the latest news in anticipation of a result on South Africa's membership application. The citizen portrayed in the cartoon is depicted as pacing and is stressed about the outcome of the news that he is expecting.⁵⁶² The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* further described the conference as a time that had led the country to 'the tensest days it has experienced since the tense days of the war' and that this had caused 'sincere anxiety' about South Africa's continued membership.⁵⁶³ The anxiety expressed by the anti-republicans during the referendum campaign that the future outside of the Commonwealth was uncertain was still present according to the English-language press. At this time, there was almost no information available on what the consequences of the loss of Commonwealth membership would be for South Africa.

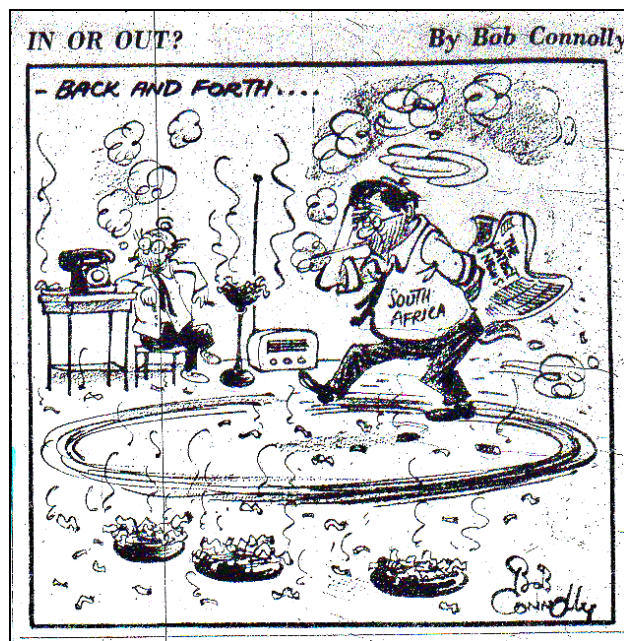


Figure 26: In or out?- *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 March 1961

⁵⁶¹ Editorial, 'This Day of Nerves', 16.

⁵⁶² Connolly, 'In or Out?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 March 1961, 8.

⁵⁶³ Editorial, 'Days of Tension', *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 March 1961, 8; A similar evaluation of the situation is found in Editorial, 'Toetstyd Vir Suid-Afrika', *Die Burger*, 8 March 1961, 10.

By the time that parliament adjourned on 15 March, there had still not been any information from London about the application. Later that evening, the news was spreading that Verwoerd had withdrawn South Africa's membership application and effectively walked out of the Commonwealth. The following day, parliament had a brief recess to receive the official report that South Africa would not remain a member of the Commonwealth after becoming a republic on 31 May 1961. De Villiers Graaff immediately responded by requesting that the house be adjourned so that the matter of South Africa's membership withdrawal could be discussed and managed.⁵⁶⁴ The speaker denied the request and continuously impeded attempts by various other members of parliament to inject a discussion on the Commonwealth into the parliamentary debates.⁵⁶⁵ During the days that followed the speaker of the house continuously denied requests for a discussion of these issues to take place in parliament before Verwoerd's return. This lack of a parliamentary discussion, as well as the absence of more detailed information from London, meant that politicians and the electorate could only rely on news reports for information on what had transpired in London. The proceedings of the final three days of the conference were regarded as highly confidential, and South Africans had little information to rely on other than Verwoerd's statements made at press conferences and statements made by the other Prime Ministers who had been present at the conference.

3.2 The aftermath of withdrawing from the Commonwealth

3.2.1 The initial reaction

There is no doubt that the days of indecision at the conference were tense for numerous South Africans. In the days leading up to the withdrawal, several factors had been blamed for the stressful situation. Some blamed the Commonwealth for allowing domestic affairs to feature during the membership application and others blamed Verwoerd or the nationalists for pursuing a republic in the first place. It is important to gauge the reaction to the withdrawal from the Commonwealth during the immediate

⁵⁶⁴ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 16 March 1961), c3059.

⁵⁶⁵ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 16 March 1961), c3067.

aftermath as well as when South Africans started receiving more information on what had transpired in London. Since the perceived 'subdued' response from the English-speaking voters was used as evidence for a turn in political perspectives, it becomes essential to analyse voter opinion and participation at such a critical moment.⁵⁶⁶

Considering the guarantees made by Verwoerd that the application for continued membership was a 'mere formality', the first reaction after the news broke was sharp criticism, particularly from the editors of the English-language newspapers. One such response came in an opinion column in the late edition of *The Star* on 15 March. The commentator wrote that there would be time for calm consideration later:

but now in the first shock it is time for anger, honest and justified anger at the wanton gamblers who have set the whole future of the country and the fundamental interest of all its people in jeopardy to serve what at best was merely a sectional sentiment and what at worst was party political advantage.⁵⁶⁷

This would be the first of numerous sharp criticisms by the English-language editors directed at Verwoerd's decision to withdraw the membership application. Again, the criticism here did not reveal a broader rejection of republicanism, but an unwillingness to support the establishment of a republic at all costs. The editor of *The Cape Argus* also placed the blame on the leaders of the NP and wrote that the end of the connection with the Commonwealth was brought about 'by the refusal of the Prime Minister and his associates to recognise that the world of 1961 is vastly different from that in which they fashioned their fatal philosophy'.⁵⁶⁸ Also, the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* believed that Verwoerd had caused isolation, uncertainty and negatively impacted international economic connections.⁵⁶⁹ They persisted with their argument that if a republic had not been pursued, South Africa would not have been 'vulnerable' and its membership and future would not have been at risk.

⁵⁶⁶ De Villiers, 'Afrikaner Nationalism', 394.

⁵⁶⁷ 'This Bitter Blow', *The Star*, 15 March 1961, 1.

⁵⁶⁸ Editorial, 'On the Lonely Road', *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961, 14.

⁵⁶⁹ Editorial, 'The Cost of It All', *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 March 1961, 8.

This blaming of Verwoerd by the English-language editors is also evident from the cartoons published shortly after the withdrawal. *The Star* published a cartoon (Figure 27) where Verwoerd was portrayed as participating in a boxing match. Verwoerd is depicted as the boxer who had been knocked out, the winning opponent, and the referee. This is not only a commentary on Verwoerd being to blame for the situation but also that he would see himself as the self-proclaimed winner of the match, even though he had lost.⁵⁷⁰ Another reference to Verwoerd's reckless behaviour can be found in a cartoon (Figure 28) from *The Cape Argus*, which sees Verwoerd jumping from an aeroplane, which represented the Commonwealth. He is portrayed as having jumped from the plane willingly with only an umbrella, representing the future republic, to break his fall. The cartoonist was implying that it was misguided of Verwoerd to abandon the Commonwealth and thinking that the establishment of a republic would be able to remedy the consequences.⁵⁷¹

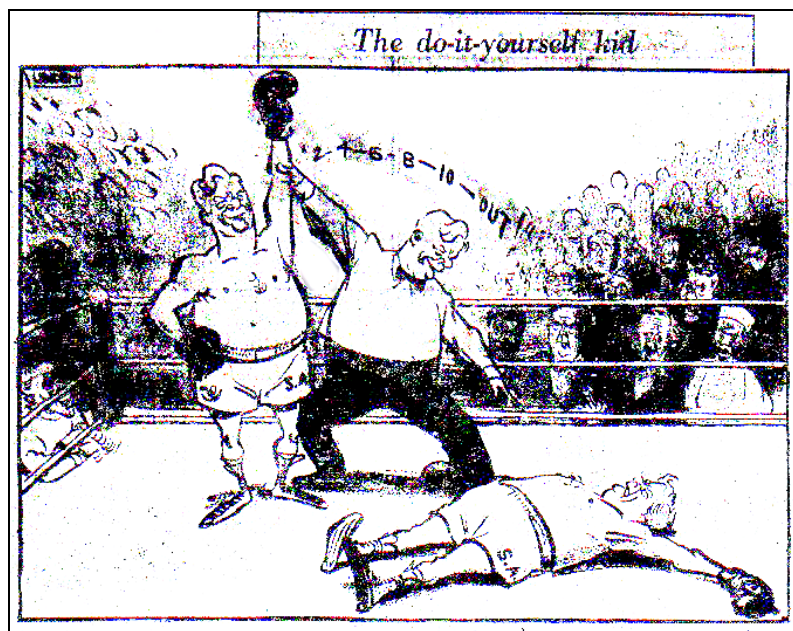


Figure 27: The do-it-yourself kid- *The Star*, 17 March 1961

⁵⁷⁰ 'The Do-It-Yourself Kid', *The Star*, 17 March 1961, 3.

⁵⁷¹ Jackson, 'Jumping from the Commonwealth', *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961, 2.

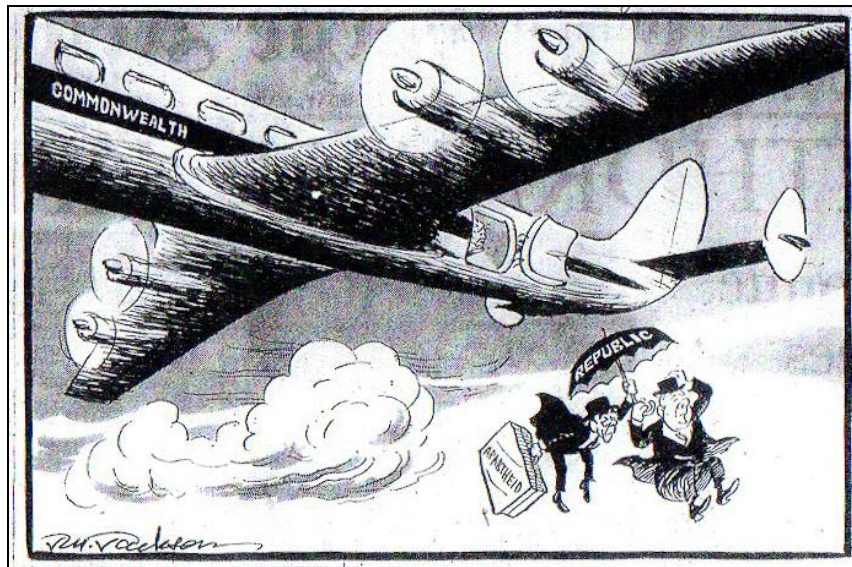


Figure 28: Jumping from the Commonwealth- *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961

Some readers writing to the English-language press blamed Verwoerd for South Africa's withdrawal, with some even claiming that the fact that he 'had failed so dismally might well mark the beginning of the end of his political career'.⁵⁷² Thus, these readers' letters revealed a sense of 'resentment' held by some English-speakers in reaction to the withdrawal. Both Kenney and Sachs have pointed to the alienating effect that the withdrawal from the Commonwealth had on the English-speaking population.⁵⁷³ In line with this, the reaction to the withdrawal revealed some readers were furiously insisting that the previous year's referendum results had been tampered with and that the electorate should never have agreed to a referendum based on a bare majority.⁵⁷⁴ Various reports stated that some members of the public felt they had been 'misled' by promises of a republic inside the Commonwealth and would not have supported a

⁵⁷² N. Anderson, 'Unite in Demand for Another Referendum', *The Star*, 22 March 1961, 6; V. H. Temlett, 'There Is Still Time to Avert Disaster', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 6.

⁵⁷³ Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, 244; Sachs, *Road From Sharpeville*, 81.

⁵⁷⁴ Autolycus, 'When Nats Assured the Electorate Membership Was Their Dearest Wish', *The Cape Argus*, 20 March 1961, 11; Anderson, 'Unite in Demand for Another Referendum', 6; L. Searle, 'Fiddled', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 March 1961, 4.

republic if they had known the outcome.⁵⁷⁵ One reader even advocated that 31 May 1961, the day that the republic would be established, should be a day of mourning.⁵⁷⁶ Reports were also published indicating that some districts would refuse to organise celebrations for the republic to be held later that year.⁵⁷⁷ These sentiments revealed that there were in fact elements of resentment towards the government due to the outcome of the conference and that these sentiments aligned with the views of the English-language editors. The editor of *The Star* thought that, besides the nationalists, 'all other South Africans who wished that Dr Verwoerd would succeed in retaining our membership of the Commonwealth, will be deeply distressed at his failure'.⁵⁷⁸ Similarly, the editor of *The Cape Argus* said that the loss of the Commonwealth connection 'would sadden immeasurably the great mass of English-speaking people and many Afrikaners too'.⁵⁷⁹

The withdrawal from the Commonwealth was not exactly the 'expulsion' that had been predicted by the anti-republican referendum campaign. The result of the withdrawal was that South Africa would no longer be a Commonwealth member, which had been the topic of much speculation during the anti-republican campaign. A fair amount of fear and anxiety was expressed about the impact that the withdrawal would have on the economy. On 16 March, news reports seemed to indicate that the anti-republicans had been correct in their predictions as news of the withdrawal started negatively affecting the markets. In parliament, the opposition was similarly concerned and attempted to determine whether the newly introduced budget had taken into account South Africa's loss of Commonwealth membership and the associated financial implications.⁵⁸⁰ The press kept a close eye on the stock market and the possibility of new trade agreements.⁵⁸¹ The editor of *The Cape Argus* said that regardless of whether South Africa would make new trade agreements, 'the overseas investor must be chary of

⁵⁷⁵ Autolycus, 'When Nats Assured the Electorate Membership Was Their Dearest Wish', 11; 'Verwoerd Challenged to Hold New Referendum', *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961, 3.

⁵⁷⁶ Anon., 'Day of Mourning', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 6.

⁵⁷⁷ 'Caucus View Hardens on Republic Festival', *The Star*, 16 March 1961, 5.

⁵⁷⁸ Editorial, 'One Man's Folly', *The Star*, 16 March 1961, 16.

⁵⁷⁹ Editorial, 'Whither?', *The Cape Argus*, 20 March 1961, 12.

⁵⁸⁰ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 20 March 1961), c3270.

⁵⁸¹ 'Export Preferences Loss Would Cost Union R13m.', *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961, 1.

putting his money into a "going it alone" country' and *The Star's* editor wondered 'whether anyone would want to invest anything in an embattled laager'.⁵⁸² This reaction was also influenced by the negative effects of the Sharpeville massacre on the South African markets only a year before. The anxieties about a dystopian future were also still present with some of the voters writing in the English-language press. In an emotional letter to *The Cape Argus*, one reader expressed their unhappiness and anxiety by stating that:

there are many deeply unhappy South Africans who are filled with fear and apprehension for the future of their country, knowing that their destinies and those of their children are now in the hands of a few fanatical nationalists who have gloatingly flaunted the dubious victory of their republic in such an unseemly manner and with their customary lack of tact and feeling for the many who are mourning the passing of an era, a way of life they loved and the loss of a valued friendly ally.⁵⁸³

The references to Verwoerd as a fascist or totalitarian found in the pre-referendum discussions were almost entirely absent from the discussion on the withdrawal and had probably been nullified by the format of the new proposed constitution. Regardless, the idea that that the NP had won the referendum under false pretences garnered support from the opposition. Some readers writing to the English-language press wondered if the exit from the Commonwealth had actually been the goal of the NP, and the promises of continued membership had just been a ploy to garner public support.⁵⁸⁴ Several leaders of the UP insisted that a new referendum should be held on the question of whether the electorate still wanted to become a republic that would be dissociated from the Commonwealth.⁵⁸⁵ By 17 March, the first news reports containing information directly from Verwoerd were published in the South African media. The

⁵⁸² Editorial, 'Impact on the Economy', *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961, 14; Editorial, 'The Incalculable Price', *The Star*, 16 March 1961, 16; Also see Jackson, 'Income-Tax', *The Cape Argus*, 17 March 1961, 11.

⁵⁸³ M. I. Rosseau, 'Small Consolation When Still Waiting for Unity Promised by Nats', *The Cape Argus*, 23 March 1961, 13.

⁵⁸⁴ Teacher, 'Obligation on Verwoerd', *The Cape Argus*, 22 March 1961, 11; A. Sparks, 'Angry M.P.s Ask: Was It a Bluff?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 March 1961, 9.

⁵⁸⁵ 'Graaff Calls for Second Referendum', *The Star*, 16 March 1961, 7; 'Verwoerd Challenged to Hold New Referendum', 3.

Prime Minister's message was concise and to the point, as he was responding to the events unfolding in South Africa. He said that there would be no new referendum since he clearly indicated ahead of the referendum that a South African republic would not rejoin the Commonwealth on unacceptable terms. In line with this, he further elaborated that instead of submitting to the demands of the Afro-Asian block that was taking over the Commonwealth, he instead wanted to consolidate South Africa's friendship with 'Britain and the other older members, direct'.⁵⁸⁶

Although there was still limited information available concerning what had transpired during the last days of the conference, several reports supported the interpretation that Verwoerd had no other choice but to withdraw South Africa's application. Roy Welensky was reported as saying that the entire situation had been a 'witch hunt' and Menzies had pointed out that the events were evidence of a sad change in the Commonwealth.⁵⁸⁷ Most notably, Macmillan had emphasised some of these sentiments in his statements on the events. He said that Verwoerd had acted stately and courteously and that he had taken 'the only dignified way out'.⁵⁸⁸ In these reports on 17 March, Macmillan furthermore confirmed that South Africa would remain a Commonwealth member until 31 May 1961 and that Britain wanted to keep as many of the existing connections and agreements in place despite the loss of Commonwealth membership. Macmillan explained that he hoped that South Africa would in time return as a key player in the Commonwealth and that the door of Commonwealth membership and friendship always remained open for South Africa.⁵⁸⁹ Shortly after, reports indicated that there would not be immediate devastating financial implications for South Africa based on its existing agreements with Britain and its desire to remain in the sterling area.⁵⁹⁰ One reader writing to *The Cape Argus* remarked that very little had changed and that there was no reason for South Africa to return to the Commonwealth.⁵⁹¹ As

⁵⁸⁶ 'No New Referendum, Says Verwoerd', *The Star*, 17 March 1961, 1.

⁵⁸⁷ 'Witch Hunt Is on, Says Welensky', *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961, 1.

⁵⁸⁸ 'We Will Still Co-Operate- Macmillan', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 March 1961, 1.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ 'Union Remains in Sterling Area', *The Star*, 17 March 1961, 19; 'Further Price Recovery as Buying Interest Revives', *The Cape Argus*, 17 March 1961, 1.

⁵⁹¹ Anon., 'Friends Still Remain', *The Cape Argus*, 23 March 1961, 13.

Makin pointed out in his analysis of the event, 'it soon became apparent that leaving the Commonwealth and becoming a republic would not significantly alter the relationship with South Africa's most important trading partners in the Commonwealth'.⁵⁹²

These positive developments revived the portrayal of Verwoerd as a hero in the Afrikaans press. The Afrikaans press advocated that Verwoerd had resisted being intimidated into accepting the unfair demands of the Commonwealth. The Afrikaans-language editors thus also found a scapegoat in the Commonwealth organisation, just as they had done during their referendum campaign. The pro-nationalist narrative insisted that a changed Commonwealth had treated South Africa poorly and that Verwoerd had shown resilience and strength by walking away. Furthermore, they insisted that the Commonwealth would be weakened by the events which had transpired in London. *Die Transvaler* even went so far as to say that it was the first signs of the end of the Commonwealth and that consequentially the majority of South African voters would not be sad about the withdrawal.⁵⁹³ Menzies' opinion that South Africa had been pushed out of the Commonwealth and that he would have done the same if he had been in Verwoerd's shoes was used as support for this notion. In an editorial published in *Die Transvaler*, Menzies' statements were used as proof that the character of the Commonwealth had undergone changes.⁵⁹⁴ This narrative that the Commonwealth had been contemptuous and Verwoerd had been a bulwark against their unfair requests would not have been difficult for readers of the English-language newspapers to accept. Just a week before these events the *Rand Daily Mail* and *The Star* had already portrayed the Commonwealth in a negative light for allowing domestic affairs to interfere with South Africa's membership application. This was indeed the view adopted by several readers writing to the English-language press. An example of such a letter was published in *The Star*. This English-speaking reader concluded that Verwoerd had done well and that they 'no longer feel the need to owe any allegiance to a

⁵⁹² Makin, 'South Africa's Departure from the Commonwealth', 156.

⁵⁹³ 'Einde van die Statebond', *Die Transvaler*, 16 March 1961, 6.

⁵⁹⁴ Editorial, 'Veranderende Statebond', *Die Transvaler*, 22 March 1961, 8; See also Editorial, 'Britse Posisie in Statebond', *Die Transvaler*, 21 March 1961, 8.

Commonwealth' that would disregard South Africa in this manner.⁵⁹⁵ For other readers this change directly related to the new 'black states' and relief was expressed that South Africa 'no longer has the dubious honour of taking orders from Ghana, Nigeria, India, Pakistan and Ceylon'.⁵⁹⁶ Others thought there was 'no way back' to the Commonwealth and that South Africa had been unfairly singled out and targeted by the other nations.⁵⁹⁷

The English-press editors sharply reacted to the insistence that this made Verwoerd a hero. The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* insisted that the reports from the conference revealed that the discussion of apartheid at the conference hardly constituted interference in internal policy, but that numerous resources would be used to convince the public that Verwoerd had no choice but to take South Africa out of the Commonwealth.⁵⁹⁸ The editor of *The Cape Argus* concurred that 'the nationalist propaganda machine swung into action' but that people would 'resent these attempts at blatant brainwashing' since Verwoerd was to blame for the entire situation.⁵⁹⁹ The editor of *The Star* similarly wrote that 'the dangerous legend is being created that Dr Verwoerd had somehow saved South Africa from having racial "integration" forced upon us' when he had actually made 'us more vulnerable than ever before to these possibilities'.⁶⁰⁰

One day later, on 18 March, South Africans would for the first time receive some concrete information and context from Verwoerd regarding the withdrawal. Verwoerd gave a speech to the South African Club in London, which was broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and numerous South Africans tuned in to hear what the Prime Minister had to say about the events at the conference.⁶⁰¹ Verwoerd told the audience that the other 'immature' leaders could not manage to focus on finding common ground and had instead launched a 'witch-hunt' against South Africa. He

⁵⁹⁵ A. Bridger, 'Union Was Staunch Ally', *The Star*, 21 March 1961, 8; See also L. Jacobs, 'Should Be Proud of Dr. Verwoerd', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 8.

⁵⁹⁶ D. Sacks, 'Membership Is Now Undesirable', *The Star*, 22 March 1961, 6; Also see Anon., 'Friends Still Remain', 13; For another example from *The Cape Argus* see Fairplay, 'Better to Be out of It', *The Cape Argus*, 21 March 1961, 11.

⁵⁹⁷ Anon., 'South Africa Singled out for Attack', *The Cape Argus*, 23 March 1961, 13; See also J. L. Buchanan, 'New Political Body Proposed to Act as a Pressure Group', *The Cape Argus*, 22 March 1961, 11.

⁵⁹⁸ Editorial, 'The Big Lie', *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 March 1961, 8.

⁵⁹⁹ Editorial, 'Verwoerd Is to Blame', *The Cape Argus*, 17 March 1961, 14.

⁶⁰⁰ Editorial, 'Failure of a Mission', *The Star*, 17 March 1961, 16.

⁶⁰¹ Verwoerd, *Verwoerd aan die Woord*, 468–78.

explained that he had been willing to discuss the policy of apartheid and to sign a mutually accepted formula in order to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth. The other members, according to Verwoerd, then demanded that the formula also had to state that member states had to adhere to the principles of multi-racialism and that such an agreement would force South Africa to become a fully integrated country. He said that at this point of the discussions if a vote did allow South Africa to remain a member, several of the other leaders would have left the Commonwealth. Based on this information, he told the audience that 'the only honourable friendly method of solving the problem was to take the decision I did, however hard and sad'.⁶⁰²

The speech did receive some backlash, especially since it was Verwoerd's one-sided interpretation of the event. In the late edition of the *Rand Daily Mail*, an article was published which explained that some of the other Commonwealth Prime Ministers refuted the claims made by Verwoerd during the speech, revealing instead that no one had threatened to leave the Commonwealth if South Africa remained a member.⁶⁰³ Verwoerd's version of events was, however, partially supported when it was revealed that it had been Macmillan's proposal that South Africa withdraw the application in order to avoid an unpleasant confrontation.⁶⁰⁴ Furthermore, Australian Prime Minister Menzies again spoke out and declared that he believed that Verwoerd had no other choice and that he would have done the same if he were in that situation in such a hostile environment.⁶⁰⁵

One of the more important aspects of Verwoerd's speech at the South African Club was his statement about the future of South Africa. In line with the notion that he had saved South Africa from having multi-racialism forced on them, he explained his view that the white race in South Africa should not have to submit or give up their rights while there was another option for justice to all, namely that of separate development. Shortly before the conference, Verwoerd similarly mentioned that it was white South Africans that would be affected by South Africa's racial policy and that those not affected by it

⁶⁰² 'The 'Inside Story' by Verwoerd', *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 March 1961, 1-2.

⁶⁰³ 'Premiers Disagree With Verwoerd's Claim', *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 March 1961, 1.

⁶⁰⁴ 'Premier Het Besluit na Oorleg Met Mac', *Die Burger*, 18 March 1961, 1.

⁶⁰⁵ 'Menzies Gives His Version of Commonwealth Break', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 4.

should not be able to determine what the best course of action would be.⁶⁰⁶ It was this focus on the 'survival of the white man in Africa' in the face of a hostile world that convinced some anti-republicans that the withdrawal from the Commonwealth was not misguided.⁶⁰⁷ Thus, several anti-republicans who had opposed a republic based on the threat of losing Commonwealth membership now started re-evaluating one of their main anti-republican objections. Furthermore, the statements made by Macmillan after the conference convinced some English-speakers that Verwoerd had saved Britain from humiliation while maintaining the strong friendship between the two countries by withdrawing the application.⁶⁰⁸ This was a particularly interesting reaction since some voters who had voted in favour of a republic felt they had been misled, while some anti-republicans who had been against a republic during the referendum now felt that the loss of membership had preserved the relationship with Britain. As more information regarding the conference emerged after Verwoerd's return to South Africa, support for his decision to withdraw South Africa from the Commonwealth slowly increased.

3.2.2 Verwoerd returns to South Africa

The Afrikaans-language editors and other nationalists had interpreted Verwoerd's decision to withdraw South Africa's membership application as a heroic deed. Even though there had been a great desire to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth, these editors thought that Verwoerd protected South Africa's reputation because he would not bow down to the demands of other nations. They portrayed Verwoerd as having been targeted by the members of the Commonwealth and as being patriotic for preserving South Africa's honour. The editor of *Die Transvaler* specifically claimed that South Africa had been pushed out of the Commonwealth and defended 'Verwoerd's stately and dignified behaviour'.⁶⁰⁹ This portrayal of Verwoerd as a hero would gain momentum upon his return to South Africa on 20 March 1961.

⁶⁰⁶ <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/video/prime-minister-verwoerd-arrives-in-london-for-press-news-footage/804455502>, accessed 12 September 2019.

⁶⁰⁷ Bridger, 'Union Was Staunch Ally', 8.

⁶⁰⁸ E. Horak, 'Saved Britain', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 6.

⁶⁰⁹ Editorial, 'Vriendskap die Strewe', *Die Transvaler*, 17 March 1961, 8; See also Editorial, 'n Verkeerde Denkgrigting', *Die Transvaler*, 18 March 1961, 6.

Verwoerd reportedly received an enthusiastic welcome at the airport when he arrived back in South Africa. Several historians described the reception as a hero's welcome and linked it to the perceived increase in political support for Verwoerd at this point in his political career.⁶¹⁰ *Die Transvaler* reported that a mighty crowd had awaited the Prime Minister upon his return and published numerous pages of photographs to cement the image that Verwoerd was returning a hero.⁶¹¹ The English-language press refuted these claims by disputing the size of the crowd as reported by the Afrikaans-language media or insisting that the crowd had been assembled and instructed by the NP. *The Cape Argus* responded sharply to the manner in which Verwoerd was welcomed and called it 'intense artificial excitement engendered by Nationalist propagandists'.⁶¹² *The Cape Argus* also published that the welcome was falsely reported to have been much larger than it actually was.⁶¹³ The editor of *Rand Daily Mail* similarly wrote that the big crowd that welcomed Verwoerd back was coached in singing and applause.⁶¹⁴ Historians such as Viney who described the welcome as 'staged' accept this interpretation of Verwoerd's return.⁶¹⁵ Besides the editors' insistence that the nature of the welcome was staged, they also opposed the idea that Verwoerd was at all deserving of such a welcome.⁶¹⁶ Insisting that Verwoerd had been unsuccessful abroad, the editor of *The Cape Argus* posed the question: 'why the cheering, why the ecstatic accolades for the leader of the mission that failed?'⁶¹⁷ These different interpretations of his return also add to the uncertainty of the impact that the withdrawal had on the electorate.

The complexity of the relationship between the NP, the opposition and the voters was evident in the aftermath of South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth. While the opposition and the English-language editors did not support the actions of the Commonwealth by interfering in domestic affairs, they also did not support the actions

⁶¹⁰ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85; Geysler, *Watershed for South Africa*, 99.

⁶¹¹ Editorial, 'n Verkeerde Denkringting', 6.

⁶¹² Editorial, 'Whither?', 12.

⁶¹³ 'Counts for Crowds All Differed', *The Cape Argus*, 21 March 1961, 3.

⁶¹⁴ 'Big Crowd Meets Premier', *Rand Daily Mail*, 21 March 1961, 1.

⁶¹⁵ Viney, *The Last Hurrah*, 326.

⁶¹⁶ Editorial, 'The Cost of It All', 8; Editorial, 'The Conquering Hero', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 16.

⁶¹⁷ Editorial, 'Whither?', 12.

of Verwoerd. However, because the nationalists had insisted that Verwoerd's action had protected South Africa's honour, those opposed to his decision to withdraw South Africa were deemed unpatriotic. This was mainly aimed at the leaders of the opposition, who had declared that they planned to take steps in order to return South Africa to the Commonwealth.⁶¹⁸ In reaction to the withdrawal of the application, the opposition had strongly argued that South Africa should attempt to return to the Commonwealth, even if minor concessions had to be made.⁶¹⁹ There were also several readers that agreed with this interpretation and advocated that South Africa should attempt regaining Commonwealth membership.⁶²⁰ However, several readers' letters were published in the English-language newspapers that proclaimed that the break with the Commonwealth seemed inevitable. Some of these readers criticised the UP for what they considered to be an untimely attack on the NP. One reader even argued that Graaff would not have fared any better at the Commonwealth Conference. This UP supporter also stated that they were upset by the way in which the UP had behaved in a time of crisis.⁶²¹

In the Afrikaans press the UP was similarly blamed for behaving in an unpatriotic manner during such a time of crisis. The editor of *Die Burger* proclaimed sympathy for those who were saddened by these events but again questioned the patriotism of the opposition by asking: 'what kind of South Africanness is this which exploits a difficult situation?'⁶²² *Die Burger* published a cartoon (Figure 29) which depicted a kangaroo and a springbok, which represented Australia and South Africa respectively. The kangaroo is telling the springbok that Australian Prime Minister, Menzies, would be a more suitable South African opposition leader. In reference to Menzies' support for the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, the cartoon insinuates that Menzies sounded more South African and by implication more patriotic than the opposition leaders.⁶²³ *Die*

⁶¹⁸ 'We Would Go Back,' Graaff', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 March 1961, 1.

⁶¹⁹ 'Afrikaner Has Suffered a Grievous Blow', *The Star*, 22 March 1961, 6; 'Postpone the Republic, Says U.P.', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 March 1961, 2; 'Could Be the End', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 6.

⁶²⁰ Temlett, 'There Is Still Time to Avert Disaster', 6; Anon., 'Demand for Means to Remain In', *The Cape Argus*, 21 March 1961, 11.

⁶²¹ R. Lee, 'Sir de Villiers Graaff Should Explain', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 6; See also P. M. Smith, 'A Time for Coalition, Not Recrimination', *The Cape Argus*, 24 March 1961, 15.

⁶²² Editorial, 'Die Getuie', *Die Burger*, 29 March 1961, 8.

⁶²³ 'Menzies Vir die Opposisie', *Die Burger*, 21 March 1961, 11.

Burger furthermore stated that those who criticised the withdrawal were un-South African and published another cartoon (Figure 30) which depicted Graaff as crawling back to the Commonwealth on his hands and knees. The cartoon stated that he was 'chasing an illusion' thereby insinuating that the Commonwealth was not even worth chasing because of the changes it had undergone.⁶²⁴ This stood in stark contrast with the portrayal of Verwoerd as the hero who had protected South Africa's honour, whereas Graaff was willing to make sacrifices in order to return to the 'enemy'- the Commonwealth.

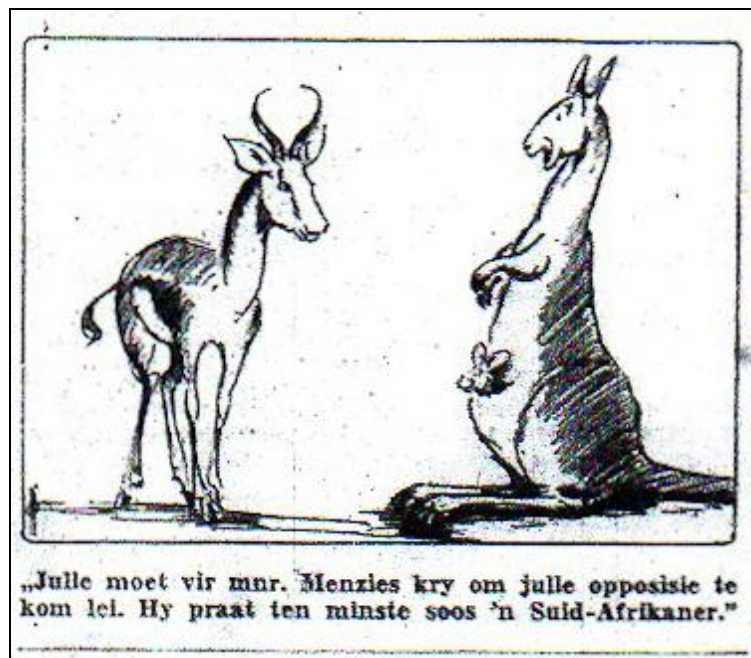


Figure 29: Menzies as leader of the opposition- *Die Burger*, 21 March 1961

⁶²⁴ Editorial, 'Lei die Opposisie', *Die Burger*, 21 March 1961, 11; Honniball, 'Op Pad Na 'n Lugspieëling', *Die Burger*, 25 March 1961, 6. English translation of cartoon title: 'En route to a mirage'.

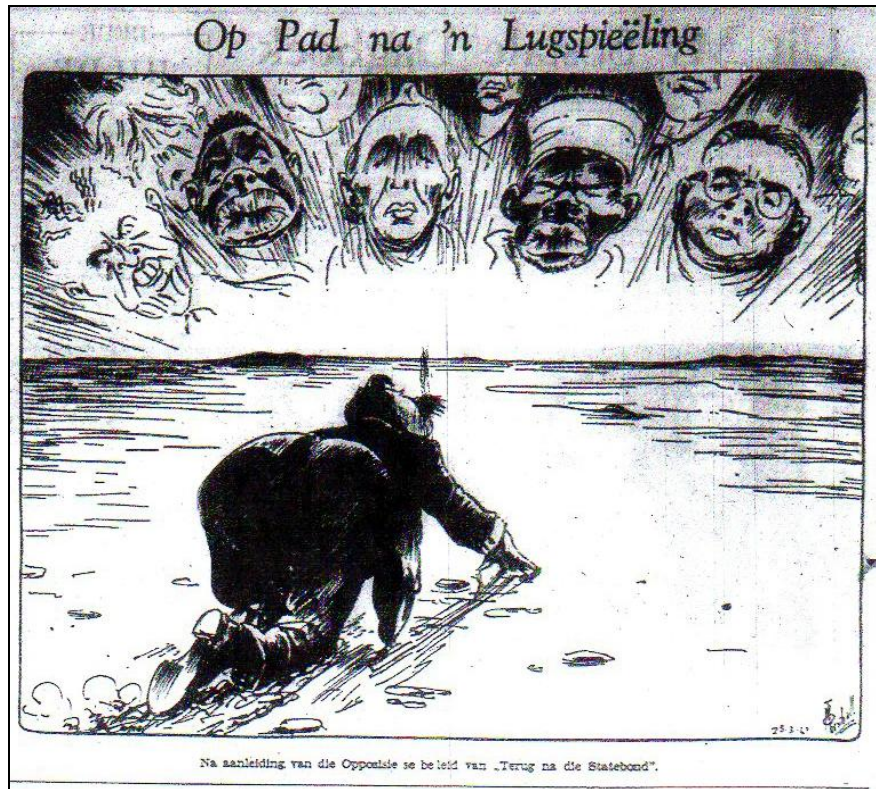


Figure 30: Op pad na 'n lugspieëling- *Die Burger*, 25 March 1961

This argument of patriotism also resonated with non-nationalists. A cartoon (Figure 31) was published in *Die Transvaler*, which suggested that South Africa, a cornerstone and founding member of the Commonwealth, was being removed by member states. By depicting South Africa as a cornerstone, the cartoonist was referencing the foundational role that South Africa played in the establishment of the Commonwealth, and while insinuating that the organisation would crumble without South Africa as a member.⁶²⁵ This would have resonated strongly with supporters of Jan Smuts, the former leader of the UP, who had played a significant role in the establishment of the Commonwealth. These UP supporters would have seen the actions of the Commonwealth as unacceptable behaviour against one of its founding members.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁵ Etam, 'Bouers van die Statebond', *Die Transvaler*, 17 March 1961, 2. English translation of cartoon title: 'Builders of the Commonwealth'.

⁶²⁶ Bridger, 'Union Was Staunch Ally', 8.

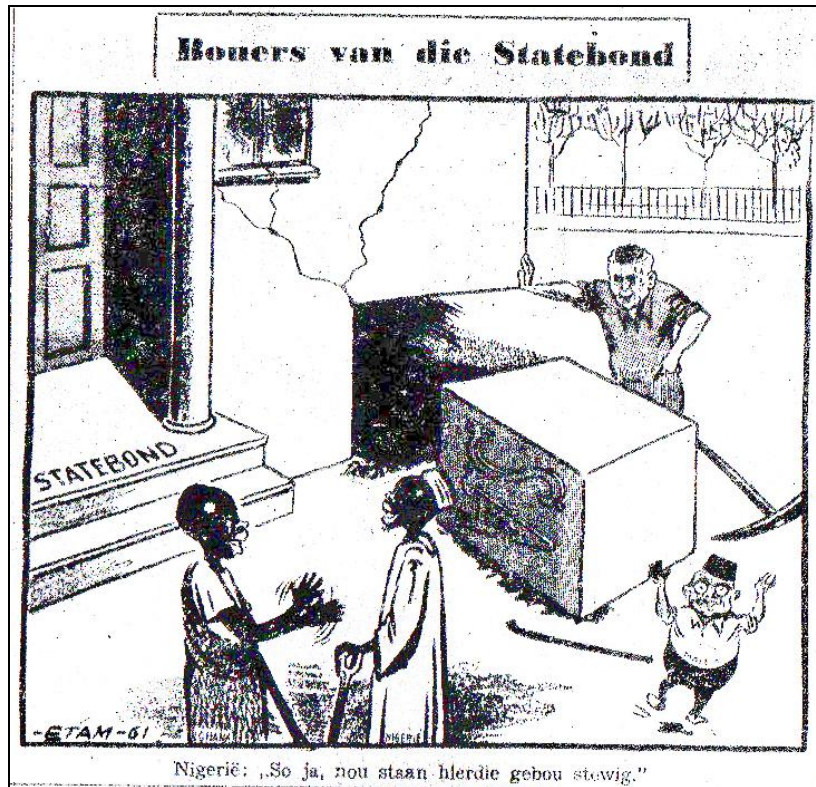


Figure 31: Bouers van die Statebond- *Die Transvaler*, 17 March 1961

On 21 March, after his return, Verwoerd made a brief statement on the conference and withdrawal in parliament and agreed that a debate on the issue would take place two days later when the opposition had received the necessary information and had time to prepare.⁶²⁷ Up until this point, no discussion had been allowed in parliament regarding what had transpired in London and the consequences that leaving the Commonwealth would have. Verwoerd gave a brief statement regarding the reasons why he had withdrawn South Africa's membership application and stated that he did not want South Africa's racial policy to be determined by others, nor did he want the Commonwealth to disintegrate because South Africa remained a member.⁶²⁸

The following day on 22 March the Constitution committee was set to report to parliament regarding its investigation into the proposed constitution. Evidently, it was no longer necessary to include a clause regarding South Africa's Commonwealth

⁶²⁷ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 21 March 1961), c3335.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, c3336.

membership as had previously been requested by the opposition. The opposition persisted with their rejection of a republic established outside the Commonwealth and demanded that the Constitution Bill should be withdrawn and the establishment of a republic should be postponed.⁶²⁹ The formal parliamentary discussion on the withdrawal only took place on 23 March 1961. Verwoerd had already privately had a conversation with opposition leaders regarding the events in London and on 23 March he gave an extended speech in parliament. The speech reiterated several of the pro-nationalist arguments that had been used shortly after the withdrawal. Verwoerd again explained that he had done everything in his power to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth, and when he was unable to achieve this, he chose the path that would be best for all. He listed several 'concessions', such as allowing for apartheid to be discussed, which he had already made during the conference to show that he was willing to reach a compromise in order to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth.⁶³⁰ According to him, it was only when the demands for even more concessions continued that he realised that submitting to some concessions would only lead to more requests until South Africa was a fully integrated multi-racial state. To explain his eventual decision regarding making concessions, he said:

It was perfectly clear to me, however, that those small concessions were to be made... with an ultimate object. It was to be the beginning of undermining our policy and therefore the thin edge of the wedge to create the prospect of full equality.⁶³¹

Graaff's reply to the speech again focussed on the fact that South Africa's membership would never have been in jeopardy if the NP had not decided 'to gamble' with the future.⁶³² The opposition blamed the NP of misleading the electorate and continued to reject the Constitution Bill primarily because it did not provide for continued

⁶²⁹ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 22 March 1961), c3393.

⁶³⁰ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 23 March 1961), c3488-90.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, c3492.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, c3511.

Commonwealth membership.⁶³³ After Verwoerd's speech to the South African Club and following his parliamentary speeches on the issue of the withdrawal, a more nuanced analysis of the events was found in the English-language newspapers. For example, the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* wrote that he believed that Verwoerd 'did his best' at trying to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth, even if the withdrawal of the application had been unjustified.⁶³⁴

This 'sympathetic' interpretation was specifically found in readers' letters published in the English-language press. It is evident that Kenney and Sachs' interpretation of the resentment held by English-speakers after the withdrawal is not misplaced. Yet the analysis of these readers' letters also reveals that there is legitimacy in the interpretations held by Dubow and Hepple that Verwoerd's performance in London had increased his esteem with the English-language electorate. Numerous readers' letters published in the English-language press advocated support for Verwoerd's decision to withdraw South Africa's membership. Some indicated that they saluted Verwoerd since they thought of him as having had no other choice than to withdraw the application. One reader wrote to *The Star* that Verwoerd had saved the Commonwealth from disintegration.⁶³⁵ Another reader's letter in *The Star* stated that 'we should be immensely proud to have a Prime Minister who can deal with such a delicate situation in a dignified and excellent way' and several others expressed similar sentiments.⁶³⁶ One letter published in *The Rand Daily Mail* even proclaimed that 'it will be befitting for those who do not approve of Dr Verwoerd's actions to pack their suitcases... and start swimming to wherever they think they will be happy'.⁶³⁷ Another letter also urged people to examine the situation logically since no one knew what onslaught Verwoerd had to

⁶³³ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 23 March 1961), c3518; See also *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 6 April 1961), c4007-8; R. S. Postma, "'Premier Betrayed Us," Says Steytler', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 March 1961, 13; "'A Gross Betrayal," Mitchell', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 March 1961, 13.

⁶³⁴ Editorial, 'Right or Wrong?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 21 March 1961, 8; See also Ex-service, 'What Right Had He to Do It?', *The Cape Argus*, 20 March 1961, 11.

⁶³⁵ Sacks, 'Membership Is Now Undesirable', 6; Horak, 'Saved Britain', 6; Anon., 'Friends Still Remain', 13.

⁶³⁶ Bridger, 'Union Was Staunch Ally', 8; L. Jacobs, 'Should Be Proud of Dr. Verwoerd', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 8; See also R. Lee, 'Sir de Villiers Graaff Should Explain', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 6.

⁶³⁷ J. L. Nel, 'Should Pack Their Bags', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 March 1961, 4.

face personally and on behalf of South Africa.⁶³⁸ It is to be expected that support came from the pro-nationalist Afrikaans press, yet these sentiments are also clear in the English-language press where readers did not merely support the decision but declared that Verwoerd had taken a courageous stand.⁶³⁹ These letters were evidently not only written by Afrikaners writing to the English-language press, but were also expressed by English-speakers.

The significance of the support for Verwoerd's decision to withdraw the application is not based only on the readers' letters but was also pointed out by the editors. Laurence Gandar was one of the more liberal editors of the major newspapers at the time.⁶⁴⁰ His interpretation of the impact of the withdrawal from the Commonwealth was published in the *Rand Daily Mail* shortly after the conference ended. He wrote in a column that the withdrawal from the Commonwealth would probably strengthen the NP's political position. He argued that there are 'too many opposition supporters who will thank Dr Verwoerd for what they will regard as "standing up to" the other Commonwealth states' and explained that there would 'almost certainly be a net gain in support' for Verwoerd.⁶⁴¹ He wrote that there was no reason to hide the fact that 'he [Verwoerd] has gained substantial political advantage from his performance at the recent Commonwealth Conference'. He described that 'the total effect of these gains has been an appreciable swing of public opinion towards [Verwoerd]' and that Verwoerd had 'achieved the first major break-through of any nationalist leaders into the ranks of the English-speaking people'.⁶⁴² Similar to this interpretation, an editorial published in *Die Transvaler* also commented on the *zeitgeist* shortly after the referendum. The editor wrote that the calm nature of the reaction, even from the English-speaking section,

⁶³⁸ L. Du Plessis, 'Interference in Our Domestic Affairs', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 March 1961, 4; See also Murray, 'Has Appeasement Ever Satisfied Demands?', 11'

⁶³⁹ For Afrikaans letters see: T. Miller, 'Bravo!!!', *Die Transvaler*, 22 March 1961, 17; Anon., 'Gelouter Vir Sy Taak', *Die Transvaler*, 23 March 1961, 17.

⁶⁴⁰ B. Pogrand, *War of Words: Memoir of a South African Journalist* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 18.

⁶⁴¹ L. Gandar, 'Verwoerd's Meaningless Gesture of Defiance', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 March 1961, 10.

⁶⁴² L. Gandar, 'Retreat from the Real World of Colour', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 March 1961, 8.

might not give the impression that one of the most important events in South African history had just taken place.⁶⁴³

A quantitative analysis of readers' letters published in these anti-republican newspapers also reveals a change in attitudes. There is a marked difference in the attitudes towards the coming republic and the events that had occurred in London from those found in pre-referendum debates. In the seven days following the decision to withdraw from the Commonwealth, these English-language newspapers published 22 letters that showed support for Verwoerd's decision.⁶⁴⁴ Although this was only marginally more than those who expressed resentment about the withdrawal, the number of readers' letters urging South Africans to focus on the future republic also outnumbered those who demanded that South Africa return to the Commonwealth. This is significant since these same publications, with the exclusion of some editorials in *The Cape Argus*, strongly opposed a republic based on the uncertainty of Commonwealth membership during the referendum. This again supports the argument that the anti-republican campaign had much more to do with Commonwealth benefits than with fundamental opposition to a republican state. Furthermore, all three of these publications selected more readers' letters for publication which contrasted with the views of the editor as opposed to ones which supported what was published in the editorials. This proves that there can be value in examining the content of readers' letters as a means of measuring public opinion since the letters selected for publication do not always support the editors' point of view.

It is easy to see how historians that use the opinions of prominent newspaper editors or the reactions of politicians as being indicative of public opinion can result in contradictory interpretations of these events. Evidently, there is not only a division in the interpretation found in the literature, but there are even inconsistencies found in these newspaper reports and opinion pieces. In order to understand public opinion, it is imperative to understand what people's motivations were for reacting in a specific way. The following section will analyse the detail of these readers' letters in the context of the

⁶⁴³ Editorial, 'Moedgewend', *Die Transvaler*, 22 March 1961, 8; The 'lack of outrage' from English-speakers is also noted in Anon., 'Why I Back Him', *The Star*, 17 March 1961, 11.

⁶⁴⁴ These were not 7 consecutive days, but the 7 days on which publications appeared during 20 – 28 March 1961.

1961 election and provide an interpretation of the impact that the withdrawal from the Commonwealth had on members of the electorate.

3.3 Understanding the impact of the withdrawal on public opinion

From the abovementioned analysis an appreciable swing in public support for Verwoerd's decision to withdraw South Africa from the Commonwealth can be noted. The discussion of the Commonwealth Conference in the examined readers' letters and editorials furthermore reveals if this support also caused an increase in support for the NP and their racial policy. Whereas the discussion surrounding the referendum had been more concerned with group identities and the economic future of South Africa, the post-conference discussion was more focused on racial policy. There is an important difference between the referendum and the Commonwealth Conference that needs to be noted. During the referendum 'negative' impacts were mainly hypothetical and numerous voters opposed a republic based on how they thought the Commonwealth connection might influence the future. After the conference, a republic outside of the Commonwealth had become inevitable and the consequences of leaving the Commonwealth were no longer hypothetical. The choice now was whether the Commonwealth connection was of such importance that it warranted making changes to racial policy.

For some anti-republicans and opposition supporters, the Commonwealth connection was worth maintaining at the price of some minor concessions.⁶⁴⁵ This coincided with the UP's declaration that they intended to return to the Commonwealth and regain South Africa's membership. The concessions proposed by the UP were not extreme and involved adding 'native representatives' to parliament. Several of the English-language editors also insisted that if South Africa made concessions and slight changes to the racial policy they would be allowed to remain a member of the Commonwealth. The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* wrote that it was a good sign that Britain had declared that the door was not shut to South Africa and that 'given reasonable time to adjust her outlook, to accept Western values and align herself once more with her friends, South

⁶⁴⁵ J. L. Buchanan, 'There Must Be at Least One Concession for the Sake of Unity', *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961, 13.

Africa could be readmitted to the family'.⁶⁴⁶ Readers writing to the English-language press to suggest changes to the race policy in light of the world's criticism, also proposed very moderate changes. One reader's letter published in *The Cape Argus* suggested that 'the bantu must have at least one representative in parliament to express their opinions... even though they [their opinions] need not be adopted'.⁶⁴⁷ Some suggested that South Africa should revert to its pre-1948 race policies before the NP instituted the policy of apartheid.⁶⁴⁸ One analyst also wrote that if the UP had won the 1948 election, South Africa would not have been kicked out of the Commonwealth under the UP's racial policy.⁶⁴⁹ These readers saw the problem as being the NP's race policies and did not see fault with the UP's approach to segregation, which gave limited political rights to Coloured voters or provided for 'native' representatives in parliament.

The question of giving in to the requests from the Commonwealth and making limited changes to the race policy was also raised in Parliament. Verwoerd, however, assured the UP that the Commonwealth would have also criticised their race policy since these demands were aimed explicitly at forcing South Africa to change to an integrated multi-racial state.⁶⁵⁰ There were also readers writing to both the English-language and Afrikaans newspapers who supported this view. One reader writing to the *Rand Daily Mail* agreed with South Africa's racial policies to such an extent that they advocated support for the NP by saying that no other party would be voted in on such a policy now and the only option was to stick with the party that was already in power.⁶⁵¹ A letter published in *The Cape Argus* also indicated this view on racial policy by stating that 'it is we, not they, who have to live in this country with the constant threat of being engulfed by hordes of non-Whites, the vast majority of whom are un-civilised and near primitive'. This reader urged that 'the time has come for us to let the rest of the world know we intend remaining a bastion of white civilisation in Africa by standing firmly in our traditional way of life', going on to ask: 'what possible alternative could we possibly have

⁶⁴⁶ Editorial, 'Odd Man Out', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 March 1961, 10.

⁶⁴⁷ White Citizen, 'A Principle of Civilisation Upset by Nat Racial Policies', *The Cape Argus*, 21 March 1961, 11.

⁶⁴⁸ Reasonable, 'No Option but to Revert to the Union's Pre-1948 Policy, Says Reader', *The Cape Argus*, 17 March 1961, 13.

⁶⁴⁹ Duster, 'This Is the South Africa We Could Have Had', *The Cape Argus*, 23 March 1961, 16.

⁶⁵⁰ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 23 March 1961), c3502.

⁶⁵¹ Murray, 'Has Appeasement Ever Satisfied Demands?', 11.

besides apartheid?'⁶⁵² Although some English-speaking readers staunchly supported the government's apartheid policy, this is not the most prevalent view regarding racial policy found in the published readers' letters.

Instead, a more common trend is that readers wrote and requested that some changes be made to the racial policy or that apartheid at least needed to be re-evaluated. One reader writing to *The Star* stated that the situation called for 'soul searching' regarding the racial policy.⁶⁵³ A similar letter in *The Cape Argus* also advocated that revision of the racial policy was a necessity.⁶⁵⁴ There were also numerous letters written to the English-language press editors which detailed the problems with apartheid in the context of making concessions.⁶⁵⁵ To a limited extent, readers writing to the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger* also expressed these sentiments. The author of one of these letters wondered 'if the entire world is against South Africa, there might not actually be something ever so slightly wrong with our racial policy'.⁶⁵⁶ Another wrote to ask whether denying 10 million people any representation was the only available option and whether it was very Christian to say that only South Africa was right when the entire world was against them.⁶⁵⁷

Some letters published in the English-language newspapers expressed support for Verwoerd and the withdrawal, but distinctly distanced themselves from the apartheid policy. One letter to *The Star* showed support for Verwoerd for taking a stand against the Commonwealth while mentioning that 'many of us disagree with the government's racial policies'.⁶⁵⁸ Another reader writing to the *Rand Daily Mail* described himself as a non-NP supporter yet proclaimed that some non-European countries 'were determined to humiliate us by insisting that they had the right to interfere in our domestic affairs'. The letter stated that 'harsh demands by these infant and immature black governments'

⁶⁵² Anon., 'Time Seen for Stand to Be Made,' *The Cape Argus*, 21 March 1961, 11.

⁶⁵³ M. Kirsten, 'Racialism Is Cause', *The Star*, 21 March 1961, 8.

⁶⁵⁴ H. G. Lawrence, 'For Us It's "Back to the Commonwealth"', *The Cape Argus*, 20 March 1961, 12.

⁶⁵⁵ Duster, 'Apartheid Mark II and Some Unneighbourly Facts', *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961, 14; White Citizen, 'A Principle of Civilisation Upset by Nat Racial Policies', 11; C. Lawrenson, 'Apartheid Will Never Work', *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 March 1961, 10.

⁶⁵⁶ Anon., 'Moedersielalleen in die Wêreld', *Die Burger*, 23 March 1961, 12.

⁶⁵⁷ J. Newman, 'Is Dit die Enigste Weg?', *Die Burger*, 23 March 1961, 12.

⁶⁵⁸ Jacobs, 'Should Be Proud of Dr. Verwoerd', 8.

had harmed the fight against oppressive legislation in South Africa.⁶⁵⁹ Even liberal members of the electorate supported the notion that South Africa had been mistreated and that the Commonwealth had no right to interfere in such a manner. This clearly shows that support for the decision to withdraw from the Commonwealth did not necessarily mean support for the NP's racial policy. Numerous other letters published in the English-language press also revealed that support for the withdrawal was often based on the notion that only South Africa should be allowed to choose their racial policy, regardless of what it might be. In a letter to *The Cape Argus* one reader wrote that, although being devoutly anti-republican, they thought that 'South Africa has plenty of problems, but she must work them out by herself, without outside interference'.⁶⁶⁰ Similarly, another reader wrote to *The Cape Argus* that 'regardless of whether we agree with the Nationalist concept of apartheid or not... what matters is the future of our country outside of the Commonwealth'.⁶⁶¹

This nuance is highlighted in a commentary article published in *The Cape Argus*. Specifically, in reference to the lack of outrage at the break with the Commonwealth from the staunchly anti-republican Natal, this commentator wrote:

Many people had tried for a long time to have both the colour bar and the British connection. Now they had virtually chosen the colour bar rather than the British connection. Even today they will still in the last resort make that choice. To suggest however as the Nationalists are doing that the confusion and uncertainty among Natalians means sympathy for the Nationalist policies is absurd.⁶⁶²

This quote perhaps most clearly explains the disparity between support for the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, after the referendum on the republic had been so divisive. The British connection and the economic advantages of Commonwealth membership were important issues. Yet, when faced with a choice between such connections or the maintenance of the racial status quo, some of those who voted against a republic chose rather to maintain the colour bar.

⁶⁵⁹ Du Plessis, 'Interference in Our Domestic Affairs', 4.

⁶⁶⁰ Fairplay, 'Better to Be out of It', 11.

⁶⁶¹ Anon., 'Meeting the Difficulties Ahead', *The Cape Argus*, 28 March 1961, 13.

⁶⁶² Anon., 'Man in the Street in Natal Is Sad, Angry and Confused', *The Cape Argus*, 24 March 1961, 20.

Up until the Commonwealth Conference, the costs of apartheid outlined in Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech had been mainly hypothetical. The Commonwealth Conference had turned the 'wind of change' speech and the perceived abandonment of Whites by the Western nations into a reality. One commentator writing for *The Star* even asked, in light of the outcome of the conference, if Macmillan had known what the future would hold for South Africa when he gave his speech in Cape Town.⁶⁶³ The editor of *The Cape Argus* also wrote that for a large portion of South Africans, the Commonwealth Conference discussions were the first time that they would grasp 'how unpopular South Africa is abroad'.⁶⁶⁴ The conference had confronted white South Africans with the reality that they would not receive unquestioning support for any segregation policies or intervention against African nationalism from the international community.

After the conference, the discussion on the future had subsequently become more concerned with race policy than with the economy. During the referendum campaign, the anti-republicans had argued strongly against any drastic changes because of the uncertainties associated with them. The conclusion of the previous chapter indicated that numerous voters, who might otherwise have voted for a republic, voted against a republic to maintain economic connections. The use of slogans such as 'keep the Union as it is' and highlighting the 'bread and butter consequences' of establishing a republic highlighted this point of view. However, after the Commonwealth Conference, the opposition and some ardent anti-republicans were arguing that changes needed to be made to retain Commonwealth membership. Thus, the anti-republican front no longer necessarily represented the group that would 'keep the Union as it is'.⁶⁶⁵

Furthermore, with trade agreements seemingly remaining intact, the changes observed in the Commonwealth meant that economic security was not reliant on Commonwealth membership. For some voters, the establishment of a republic outside of the Commonwealth would have started representing the best way of maintaining the status quo. Nowhere is the desire to maintain the status quo by adhering to segregation laws

⁶⁶³ Anon., 'For Whom the Bell Tolls', *The Star*, 18 March 1961, 1.

⁶⁶⁴ Editorial, 'Why the Union Is Hated', 14.

⁶⁶⁵ See Chapter Two, pp119-20.

more clearly indicated as in a mocking letter published on the front page of *The Star*. The author identified himself as a 'cynical reporter' and wrote:

After two days of soul searching I have decided to back Dr Verwoerd and the Nationalist government. I shall do so for the same reason that audiences cheered last night when the Prime Minister appeared in newsreels; for the same reason that kept hundreds of English-speaking South Africa from raising a public outcry at their loss of Commonwealth status. I want to help preserve the easy way of life. I want to preserve my Top Dog status in a land where cheap labour is really cheap. I want to ensure that for the rest of my life, at least my family and I shall always have somebody about to do the menial jobs around my house- jobs like digging holes for trees, looking after younger children, fetching and carrying, serving drinks to my guests and waiting at my table. I want to be sure too that my sons will have no serious competition in their careers and that the jobs they eventually choose will be the soft jobs with a 'master' status. To hell with the rest of the world. I want to be boss.⁶⁶⁶

The letter was clearly meant as satire, as the author was insinuating that South Africa was willing to sacrifice their international connections for the luxuries provided to them by apartheid. However, it is not so much the content of this letter, as the response that is most indicative of changing interpretations of how best to maintain the status quo. In reply to this sarcastic letter, one reader wrote to *The Star* that the content of the letter had perfectly summarised why he supported Verwoerd's decision to withdraw South Africa from the Commonwealth.⁶⁶⁷ Some voters were strongly considering whether to protect their lifestyle at the expense of international connections, or whether those international connections were worth the sacrifice.

The contents of these letters indicate that there is some validity in reports such as Lambert's analysis that English-speakers were angered by how the Commonwealth had treated South Africa.⁶⁶⁸ Regardless of the support for Verwoerd's decision, and even the support for apartheid expressed in a limited number of English-language letters, it is

⁶⁶⁶ Anon., 'Why I Back Him' 11.

⁶⁶⁷ P. Rubens, 'Intelligence', *The Star*, 27 March 1961, 6.

⁶⁶⁸ Lambert, 'English-Speaking South Africans: Uncertain of Their Identity', 607-8.

clear that a distinction must be made between different opinions. A link between support for Verwoerd's decision and support for apartheid is not as apparent from this newspaper analysis or even from the 1961 election results. For example, Rubin states that the 1961 election 'reaffirmed support of the electorate for the government policy of apartheid'.⁶⁶⁹ This analysis is based on an election with a turnout of only 77%, where only 46% of voters directly supported the NP or their policy.⁶⁷⁰ This means that during the 1961 election a mere 35% of registered voters actually voted for the NP or directly 'supported apartheid'. In conjunction with these examined readers' letters it is possible to argue that there was no clear shift in support for the policy of apartheid, specifically from English-speakers, immediately after the Commonwealth Conference. The analysis of these letters also reveals that there was also no marked increase in enthusiastic requests for a fully integrated multi-racial state. Instead, it seems that voters, specifically those writing to the English-language newspapers, wanted to discuss the alternatives to apartheid without outside interference from other nations.

Another factor that is often misused to explain the perceived increase in support for the government is the concept of white unity. According to both Hepple and Stultz, it was a response to the 'unity advances' made by Verwoerd that convinced English-speakers to support the NP in the 1961 election.⁶⁷¹ Verwoerd had also mentioned the concepts of 'unity' and the survival of Whites during his speech at the South African Club in London. Such an appeal to unity was found in the examined newspapers after the Commonwealth Conference. After the conference, the establishment of a republic and further isolation from the international community had become inevitable. In response to this reality, numerous readers writing to the press also proposed that white unity was necessary for the survival of Whites in South Africa. In the Afrikaans press, unity was directly linked to the policy of apartheid and portrayed as integral to resolution of the racial problem. One reader's letter published in *Die Transvaler* insisted that 'Afrikaans and English-speakers must give each other the hand and together with our government

⁶⁶⁹ Rubin, 'White Politics', 20.

⁶⁷⁰ As discussed in previous chapters, not all constituencies voted and analysts often rely on estimated votes as opposed to actual votes.

⁶⁷¹ Hepple, *Verwoerd*, 149.

let our policy succeed'.⁶⁷² The editor of *Die Burger* also urged that 'we must unite behind the only option which is separate development. We must not talk on the issue too long we must rather talk about plans for the future'.⁶⁷³ This call to unite behind the NP or their policy was mainly limited to the Afrikaans language press.

In light of these feelings of unification, the UP's requests for a new referendum and to return to the Commonwealth was criticised in both the Afrikaans and English-language press. The editor of *Die Burger* responded by saying that there was no time to exploit the situation for political gain as the UP was doing. Instead, all attention had to be given to the survival of white South Africans, in light of their abandonment by the rest of the world.⁶⁷⁴ Similarly, a letter published in *The Cape Argus* stated: 'I was appalled by the reaction of the opposition... My own immediate feeling was that he [Verwoerd] was to be admired for having stuck it out for so long in the face of the obvious and implacable hostility'. This reader further stated that 'regardless of whether we agree with the Nationalist concept of apartheid or not I fondly imagined the time had now come when South Africans must stand together to build for our nation the best possible future'.⁶⁷⁵

The larger discussion on 'unity' found in the English-language press did not specifically include support for Verwoerd or for the NP. Letters written in the English-language press mostly supported the concept of unity as a necessity for survival, despite political division. A reader's letter published in *The Cape Argus* urged that a coalition should be formed between the two white groups otherwise South Africans would 'have our Western ways of life swept away by the Wind of Change'.⁶⁷⁶ Despite the remarks made by the editor of *The Cape Argus* that the situation was creating more division, several readers continued to support the notion of unity and cooperation.⁶⁷⁷ Another letter in this publication urged that in light of the Commonwealth withdrawal, South Africans should 'forget animosity and stand together in the firm belief that our age-old faith and love of our country will continue in strength and prove to the world of critics that unity is

⁶⁷² D. Herman, 'Sterk Vertoon Tog Vriendskap Behou', *Die Transvaler*, 22 March 1961, 8.

⁶⁷³ Editorial, 'Die Pad Vorentoe', *Die Burger*, 21 March 1961, 10.

⁶⁷⁴ Editorial, 'Politieke Aanpassing', *Die Burger*, 23 March 1961, 12.

⁶⁷⁵ Anon., 'Meeting the Difficulties Ahead', 13.

⁶⁷⁶ Smith, 'A Time for Coalition, Not Recrimination', 15.

⁶⁷⁷ Editorial, 'On the Lonely Road' 14.

strength'.⁶⁷⁸ A similar reader's letter published in *The Cape Argus* stated that 'in these circumstances the necessity of South Africans forming a united front to face the outside world and the overwhelming mass of our own non-European population becomes imperative'.⁶⁷⁹ A similar letter published in *The Star* stated that an isolated republic outside of the Commonwealth might be the best option and urged that 'hand in hand must come a better spirit of compromise between the two white races and goodwill to bring about the orderly advancement of the non-Whites'.⁶⁸⁰ Here there was also a discernible shift in favour of the coming republic. A reader's letter published in the *Rand Daily Mail* asked that there should be more support for a republic outside of the Commonwealth 'as an indication of European solidarity against outside interference into South Africa's domestic affairs'.⁶⁸¹ However, instead of advocating for uniting behind the government, these readers often argued for the formation of new political parties that would represent this unity.⁶⁸²

An interesting aspect of these discussions on unity was that a number of readers who advocated for unity specifically dissociated with either of the two major political parties. Several of the readers writing to the English-language press calling for unity between the two groups did so to face reality and ensure a prosperous future for a republic, as opposed to unifying in support of political parties.⁶⁸³ One letter published in *The Cape Argus* pleaded that white South Africans had to stand together regardless of their party-political affiliations as a way of 'meeting the difficulties ahead'.⁶⁸⁴ Another reader even pleaded for unity as a means to return to the Commonwealth.⁶⁸⁵ Readers' letters

⁶⁷⁸ T. E. Van Antwerpen, 'Time to Prove Ourselves Right Is Now', *The Cape Argus*, 20 March 1961, 11; See also Horak, 'Saved Britain', 6.

⁶⁷⁹ Buchanan, 'New Political Body Proposed to Act as a Pressure Group', 11; See also Anon., 'Concern for Welfare of "Opressed" Races Seen as Smoke Screen', *The Cape Argus*, 28 March 1961, 13.

⁶⁸⁰ G. Turner, 'Efficiency Can Make up for Loss', *The Star*, 23 March 1961, 27.

⁶⁸¹ Du Plessis, 'Interference in Our Domsetic Affairs', 4; See also Anon., 'Pacts with Spain and Portugal Suggested', *The Star*, 22 March 1961, 6.

⁶⁸² Buchanan, 'New Political Body Proposed to Act as a Pressure Group', 11; P. Van Coller, 'The Disbandment of the United Party Would Help', *The Star*, 1 June 1961, 3; Anon., 'British Immigrants Form Own Political Party', *The Star*, 20 March 1961, 6.

⁶⁸³ Turner, 'Efficiency Can Make up for Loss', 27; Anon., 'Work Harder', *The Star*, 27 March 1961, 6; Van Antwerpen, 'Time to Prove Ourselves Right Is Now', 11.

⁶⁸⁴ Anon., 'Meeting the Difficulties Ahead', 13.

⁶⁸⁵ Anon., 'Demand for Means to Remain In', 11.

published in *The Star* and *The Cape Argus* argued that the success of the coming republic relied on forming another inclusive political party, or finding another leader that had the support of both English-speakers and Afrikaners.⁶⁸⁶ Members of the electorate clearly desired white unity, but not all saw this prospect of unity as being associated with either the UP or the NP.⁶⁸⁷

It is evident that a measure of unity was seen as a component for safeguarding 'civilisation' by sections of both the English-language and Afrikaans electorate. Unity was again presented as a survival plan for the future, just as it had been before the referendum. One reader writing to *The Star* even proposed that such co-operation might lead South Africa to become as prosperous as America.⁶⁸⁸ None of these letters specifically advocated that the white populous had to agree on all policies, but rather that they had to unite for a prosperous and safe future. Within the confines of a republic, they advocated that white unity would secure a future within which they could solve their 'problems' without outside interference.

These factors did not necessarily improve the NP's political position but seemed to have created a moment of political indecision, with voters unsure of what the best option for a safeguarded future would be.

At this time, various voters writing to these newspapers had expressed a desire to secure the future of a prosperous and peaceful state. However, the 1961 election only had a 77% voter turnout, 13% less than the referendum. If voters had been swayed by the Commonwealth Conference to support the NP as some historians claim, it is doubtful that their political choice would have been to not vote. Furthermore, it should be noted that the UP had changed their racial policy shortly after the Commonwealth Conference. Their new racial policy, which proposed a federation of independent racial states, was very similar to the concept of separate development proposed by the NP.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁶ Anon., 'British Immigrants Form Own Political Party', 6; Buchanan, 'New Political Body Proposed to Act as a Pressure Group', 11.

⁶⁸⁷ Smith, 'A Time for Coalition, Not Recrimination', 15; E. Sorenson, 'Coalition Should Be Spontaneous', *The Cape Argus*, 16 March 1961, 13; Buchanan, 'New Political Body Proposed to Act as a Pressure Group', 11.

⁶⁸⁸ Turner, 'Efficiency Can Make up for Loss', 27.

⁶⁸⁹ 'Graaff Expands on His Racial Federation', *The Cape Argus*, 24 March 1961, 3.

Yet during the 1961 election, neither of these policies inspired enough voters to increase the direct number of votes for either of these major parties.⁶⁹⁰

This is also not necessarily indicative of a swing towards the left since the Liberal Party (LP) received a smaller portion of the votes than did independent candidates. Although independent candidates only received 1.4% of the vote, this was more than double the percentage that independent candidates received during the previous election. Regardless of coalitions made after the election, on election day, the votes cast in favour of newly formed political parties and independent candidates amounted to 15.6% of the votes cast during the 1961 election. In the previous election in 1958, spoilt votes, as well as votes cast for independent candidates and minor political parties, barely accounted for 1.5% of the votes cast.⁶⁹¹ In combination with the 13% of voters who had voted in the referendum but not in the 1961 election, it is difficult to see the election results as being primarily indicative of increased support for the NP. Rather the election highlights a shift towards newly formed parties and independent candidates. In line with this, Margaret Ballinger, a prominent leader of the LP, commented on the 1961 election by saying that the results can be 'rightly interpreted as meaning that people are beginning to feel they can no longer simply register their vote for either of the major political parties'.⁶⁹²

Even though the Commonwealth Conference and its outcome had started changing the electorate's perceptions of the political situation in South Africa, voters were divided in their interpretation of what the best course of action might be to remedy the increased tension and isolation in the country. This analysis reveals that there was no immediate and spontaneous increase in support for the NP after the Commonwealth. Even though some of these voters had expressed support for the decision to withdraw South Africa from the Commonwealth, the examined readers' letters did not reveal a specific shift in support for the ruling party or their racial policy.

⁶⁹⁰ See Chapter Two, pp126-7.

⁶⁹¹ Schoeman, *Parlementêre Verkiesings in Suid-Afrika*, 365-7.

⁶⁹² M. Ballinger, 'The Outlook for the South African Republic', *International Affairs*, 38, 3 (1962), 302.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed that there was a definite shift in public opinion towards a republic after the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference of 1961. Furthermore, this shift was accompanied by a change in the perception amongst anti-republicans regarding the desirability and necessity of Commonwealth membership. Several reasons can be given to explain this shift in favour of the coming republic, particularly from anti-republicans and some English-speakers who had rejected a republic during the referendum.

One of the significant factors in the diminishing negativity towards a republic was the new constitution. During the referendum campaign, several readers' letters published in the English-language press had revealed a level of fear that a republic would be established as a fascist state under NP rule. Numerous letters accused Verwoerd of being a dictator or of having totalitarian tendencies. The new constitution, however, allayed most of these fears. Although not all of the references to Verwoerd found in the English-language press after the conference were positive, similar accusations regarding Verwoerd's fascist tendencies are noticeably absent from the post-conference newspaper discourse.

Another factor has to do with the economic stability of the proposed republic. The referendum was partially governed by the insistence that the loss of Commonwealth membership would have devastating economic consequences for South Africa.⁶⁹³ Shortly after the conference, however, it became clear that the loss of Commonwealth membership would not necessarily have any adverse effects on the economy. This also resulted in a marked shift in support for a republic, even if it would be established outside of the Commonwealth. Clearly, pro-British sentimentality was not a significant factor for the anti-republican voters who so quickly changed their views on a republic after the conference. During the referendum, some of the English-speaking voters had opposed a republic based on pro-British sentiment. After the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, these sentiments were also markedly absent from the discussion on

⁶⁹³ See Chapter Two, p114.

the future republic. These voters possibly did not voice their opinions, or they agreed with the interpretation that the loss of Commonwealth membership had actually preserved the connection between South Africa and the Commonwealth. It is certainly possible that English-speaking voters harboured feelings of resentment towards the NP as Kenney has suggested.⁶⁹⁴ This chapter has also shown that such feelings of resentment cannot be attributed to the entire English-speaking community, since numerous letters indicated support for the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, particularly from English-speakers. This chapter has shown how the perceived interference into internal affairs by the Commonwealth led various English-speaking voters to declare that it was better to leave the organisation. This is further supported by the fact that at the end of 1961 the UP said that returning to the Commonwealth was no longer one of its sole priorities since they would only return to the Commonwealth if it were in South Africa's best interest.⁶⁹⁵

The Commonwealth Conference had made the electorate aware of the fact that the international community was intent on dictating what South Africa's racial policy should be and was also eager to force South Africa to form an integrated multi-racial state. From the analysis in this chapter, it is clear that these discussions on racial policy were also contributing factors in this shift in favour of the coming republic. However, this did not necessarily indicate increased support for the government's racial policies. Although this might be true for some voters, particularly some English-speakers, in the wake of the Commonwealth Conference numerous voters called for changes to the racial policy or at least its re-evaluation. This reaction was found mainly in those letters who also supported the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, and even in the Afrikaans-language newspaper, *Die Burger*. This chapter has highlighted that numerous voters, who supported the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, explicitly distanced themselves from the apartheid policy. In light of the analysis mentioned above, it is more likely that these voters supported some form of segregated racial policy other than apartheid. However,

⁶⁹⁴ Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, 206.

⁶⁹⁵ Makin, 'South Africa's Departure from the Commonwealth', 160.

they were supportive of the withdrawal against outside interference because they wanted such racial policies to be determined internally.

Furthermore, as has become evident through the analysis of the 1961 election results, there was no marked increase in individual votes for either of the two major political parties. Some historians argue that the Commonwealth Conference had convinced 'significant numbers of English-speaking voters' to support Verwoerd and that the 1961 election showed that 'most white South Africans were more than ready for his [Verwoerd's] promised walls of granite around their privileges'.⁶⁹⁶ Instead, the post-conference discussions found in these newspapers urged the formation of new political bodies or parties. In line with this, the election results of 1961 also revealed that a substantial number of voters had either abstained from voting or cast their votes for newly formed parties or individual candidates. Although a substantial number of voters probably voted in order to preserve white privileges, they did not necessarily think that the NP had the best plan for the future. This will become even more apparent in the following chapter from the analysis of the intense discussions on racial policy in the weeks leading up to the establishment of a republic.

The years leading up to the establishment of a republic are often described as a time when Verwoerd had managed to consolidate the white electorate. There is a sense of truth in this remark. The electorate had seemingly been consolidated in their view that white South Africans needed to unify to ensure a safe and prosperous future for a republic. There was a sense of agreement that white civilisation had to be protected by enforcing a racial policy. However, an analysis of readers' letters shows an electorate that was not unified or consolidated in their views on what political party or racial policy would best ensure this stability for the future republic.

This chapter has also given insight into the methodology of using readers' letters as a platform for public opinion. In looking at the English-language editors' immediate response to the referendum and taking that to be representative of English-language opinion, as was done by Kenny, it would appear as if there were a significant rejection

⁶⁹⁶ Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives?', 131; O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 109.

of the withdrawal from the Commonwealth by the English-language citizens.⁶⁹⁷ This was, however, not the case. It is noticeable that there was a distinct difference between the reactions from the English-language editors as opposed to a significant section of their readership. While the editors had sharp critical reactions to the withdrawal, the response from the English-speaking citizens is described as a 'lack of public outcry' and as 'subdued'.⁶⁹⁸ The responses found in letters to the editors have also indicated that at least half of the letters chosen for publication did not align with the views of the respective editors. This supports the notion that some publications that cater to a variety of opinions can be used as a way to analyse public opinion. Although these letters cannot be used to impose specific characteristics on the entire electorate, they can give alternative interpretations of events that have generally been viewed only through the opinions of politicians and newspaper editors.

It is clear that the impact that South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth had on the electorate is a critical historical moment. Due to the subdued nature of the response from the English-language community, it has subsequently been misinterpreted as a sign of support for the NP and their racial policy. The chapter provided valuable insight into why some anti-republicans changed their view of the Commonwealth. It has added nuance to existing histories by exploring various motivating factors and showing that support for a republic or for the Commonwealth was not synonymous with support for the NP and their racial policy.

⁶⁹⁷ Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, 244.

⁶⁹⁸ Anon., 'Why I Back Him', 11; Editorial, 'Moedgewend', 8.

Chapter Four

Becoming a republic in a moment of crisis

The advent of the Republic of South Africa was seen by the people of this country, and of the whole world, in its true light on May 31- as a matter of small consequence compared with the major issue: the struggle of the people to end White supremacy and the winning of a South African democracy.

A. Doyle, July 1961⁶⁹⁹

During pre-referendum campaigning it had become evident that a significant number of anti-republicans, as well as pro-republicans, wanted South Africa to remain a member of the Commonwealth. However, after the March 1961 conference, a significant portion of the electorate came to accept the republic and saw withdrawal from the Commonwealth as justifiable. The notion that the Commonwealth nations had abandoned South Africa as a result of apartheid changed the views of numerous anti-republicans regarding the value of the Commonwealth connection.

The longstanding desire to establish a republic was seen as a cultural issue that was intertwined with 'Boer war' sentiments. Yet, the events that followed the referendum had transformed the republican process so that it became more racialised. One of the factors that contributed to this change in the narrative was that the establishment of a republic would not only result in a change of leadership but would also result in a new constitution. As was indicated in the two previous chapters, this was also a key factor for white voters and their initial rejection of a republic. While the referendum itself was of little significance to liberals and anti-apartheid activists, the resulting change in the constitution attracted their attention. Even though the new constitution was likely to uphold the racially exclusive white-minority government, liberal parties and groups took it as an opportunity to request that the constitutional change would lead to better multi-racial representation in parliament.⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁹ A. Doyle, 'Striking out under the Republic', *Fighting Talk*, July 1961, 8.

⁷⁰⁰ Ballinger, 'The Outlook for the South African Republic', 451.

One way in which anti-apartheid groups objected to the establishment of a republic, was to demand that South Africans of all races should be involved in determining the new constitution. The All-In African convention was scheduled to take place at the end of March 1961 and was mainly organised by banned members of the ANC to discuss these demands. In the leaflet announcing the All-In African convention, it was clearly stated that people should unite to reject Verwoerd's *baasskap* or 'fascist' republic and to demand a new democratic constitution.⁷⁰¹

This convention had been planned even before Verwoerd's departure to London for the Prime Minister's Commonwealth Conference.⁷⁰² While Verwoerd was in London, anti-apartheid activists continued their campaign urging world leaders to act against the South African government and in so doing, indicated their intention to oppose the republic.⁷⁰³ Shortly after the withdrawal from the Commonwealth was announced, several anti-apartheid role players rejoiced at the news that South Africa had been made to feel unwelcome in the Commonwealth. The circular *Race Relations News* reported that withdrawal from the Commonwealth had brought a joyful reaction from 'non-Whites' since they saw it as a victory for democracy. The article quoted explicitly from various African news platforms which had shown support for the withdrawal since it was seen as 'the first real sign of the beginning of the end of apartheid'.⁷⁰⁴ For anti-apartheid groups, this association between the establishment of the republic and the continuation of apartheid made Republic Day an important target for protest action.

The All-In African convention was held in Pietermaritzburg on 25-26 March 1961, only a few days after Verwoerd revealed his intention to withdraw South Africa from the Commonwealth. The conference, which was attended by 1500 delegates, served as a platform to discuss the establishment of a national convention which would attempt to bring about constitutional change in South Africa aimed at extending voting rights to

⁷⁰¹ Leaflet announcing the All-In African conference published in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 629–31.

⁷⁰² Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 349.

⁷⁰³ 'Diefenbaker Sees United Front Men and Bishop Reeves', *The Cape Argus*, 11 March 1961, 11; Dubow, 'The Commonwealth and South Africa From Smuts to Mandela', 298.

⁷⁰⁴ Anon., 'The Commonwealth Decision- Non-white reaction', *Race Relations News*, April 1961, 52-5.

citizens of all races.⁷⁰⁵ A National Action Council (NAC) was set up to enforce the demands of the convention under the leadership of its secretary, Nelson Mandela. As part of their action plan, the conference demanded a 'National Convention of elected representatives of all adult men and women on an equal basis irrespective of race, colour, creed or other limitation, be called by the Union Government not later than May 31st, 1961'. The conference further threatened that 'should the minority Government ignore this demand... we undertake to stage country-wide demonstrations on the eve of the proclamation of the republic in protest against this undemocratic act'.⁷⁰⁶ Smaller multi-racial conferences of this kind had already been held from 1957, but despite the international move towards racial integration, the government continued with their exclusive white governance plan. They removed Coloured voters from the national voters roll and the first Coloured representatives were elected by a separate voters roll in 1958.⁷⁰⁷ The 1961 All-In African convention statement declared that racial oppression of 'non-White' people would intensify in a republic because of the continued exclusion of other races from the political sphere.⁷⁰⁸ This view of increased oppression would no doubt have been supported by the fact that Verwoerd withdrew South Africa from the Commonwealth rather than being persuaded by the international criticism of apartheid. The upcoming establishment of a republic had increased the focus on the constitutional and racial division in South Africa.

Three days after the All-In convention, on 29 March 1961, a verdict was given in the treason trial. The accused, which included members of the banned ANC, were acquitted of all charges.⁷⁰⁹ The state prosecutor had failed to produce enough evidence to convince a judge that the accused had committed treason and had intended to encourage acts of violence.⁷¹⁰ Nelson Mandela, who was amongst the acquitted, took

⁷⁰⁵ Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us*, 141.

⁷⁰⁶ University of the Western Cape Robben Island Mayibuye Archive (hereafter RIMA), MCH 07-126-11-17, National Action Council: General Strike, June 1961.

⁷⁰⁷ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 379.

⁷⁰⁸ Resolutions of the All-In African Conference published in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 632.

⁷⁰⁹ The treason trial saw 156 activists accused of treason in 1956. The accused included several leaders of the ANC who were charged with wanting to use violence to overthrow the government and replace it with a Communist state. Dubow, *Apartheid*, 70-1.

⁷¹⁰ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 347.

the lead as the secretary of NAC and informed the government of the demands of the All-In convention. To this end he advised Verwoerd on 20 & 30 April that a non-violent demonstration would be organised to coincide with the establishment of the republic unless a national convention was held. The NAC received no official reply from the Prime Minister or the government in response to these letters.⁷¹¹

The government instead responded to the demands of the NAC with a show of force in an attempt to suppress the planned protest and stay-away. Extensive police raids commenced on 4 May 1961, specifically to search the homes of those acquitted in the treason trial in an attempt to uncover information about the planned stay-away.⁷¹² On the same day, the General Law Amendment Bill (Act number 39 of 1961) was introduced in parliament. This law gave extensive powers to the Minister of Justice, Frans Erasmus, similar to the measures permitted if a State of Emergency had been declared. The bill was heavily criticised by opposition leaders such as De Villiers Graaff for being totalitarian but was nonetheless approved in parliament on 19 May on the understanding that it was only a temporary measure.⁷¹³ During the same session of parliament, the Minister of Justice employed the suppression of Communism Act to order a ban on all meetings that had not received approval by the government. Graaff again called for a parliamentary debate on this issue, but the speaker denied his request. Instead, Verwoerd briefly replied that communism had to be kept out of South Africa and that he was not willing to disclose more information on the security measures since he did not want to 'supply the inciters with information in any way'.⁷¹⁴

Since the government did not respond to the NAC's request, the stay-away was set to proceed as planned. The prospective stay-away confronted South Africans with an undeniably tense situation as it seemed as if a clash between police and protesters was

⁷¹¹ Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us*, 141.

⁷¹² *Keesing's Contemporary Archives- Weekly Diary of World Events 1961 -1962, Volume 12* (London: Keesing's Publications Ltd., nd), c18137.

⁷¹³ The General Amendment Act (Act 39 of 1961) served as an amendment to the Arms and Ammunition Act, Criminal Procedure Act and Riotous Assemblies Act. It was a temporary act set to expire on 1 June 1961, but could be renewed annually for a period of 12 months. Under this act detainees could be held for 12 days without bail and it would be an offence to encourage others to attend banned meetings

⁷¹⁴ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (Cape Town, 19 May 1961), c6947.

inevitable. The strike was planned as a stay-away and the last attempt at non-violent protests, yet the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that some were planning violent disturbances.⁷¹⁵ The previous demonstration held by an African political organisation had resulted in the massacre of 69 protesters at Sharpeville just a year prior. This prospect of violence raised the spectre of a second Sharpeville amongst members of the electorate. It had attracted a great deal of international criticism of the racial situation in South Africa. This, in turn, had resulted in a prolonged period of unrest, economic instability and the implementation of emergency security measures. There was fear that the situation around the Republic Day would play out similarly.⁷¹⁶ For members of the white electorate, the case was further intensified by reports of violent attacks on white settlers elsewhere on the continent, particularly in the Congo and in Southern Rhodesia.⁷¹⁷ Various readers expressed concerns that a similar situation awaited South Africa if the government did not consider calls for African enfranchisement.⁷¹⁸

The entire situation forced South Africa into a quasi-State of Emergency to ensure that the republic was established under relatively calm circumstances on 31 May 1961. The planned three-day strike eventually failed to garner enough continued support to bring the country to a complete standstill. The extreme use of police and military aid contributed to the eventual cancellation of the strike. Ironically, the government's clampdown on black efforts to protest the formation of a republic would contribute to the liberation movement's shift away from peaceful resistance towards armed struggle.⁷¹⁹

The literature on the establishment of the republic is often approached from the interpretation of the two dominant nationalist perspectives. Dubow also observed that the literature on the turn to armed struggle was approached from these two

⁷¹⁵ RIMA, MCH 07-126-11-17, National Action Council: General Strike, June 1961, 4.

⁷¹⁶ Editorial, 'Birth amid Gloom', *The Cape Argus*, 22 May 1961, 16; Editorial, 'The Shadow Behind', *The Star*, 22 May 1961, 16.

⁷¹⁷ Passemiers, 'South Africa and the "Congo Crisis"', 221.

⁷¹⁸ Some saw a non-racial democracy as the only way to avoid the situation. See: P. Brown, 'Angola Has Lessons for Union, Says Liberal', *The Star*, 29 May 1961, 6; D. Curtin, 'Malicious Propaganda', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 May 1961, 5.

⁷¹⁹ Bunting, *Rise of the South African Reich*, 181.

perspectives.⁷²⁰ On the one hand, the establishment of the republic is portrayed as an Afrikaner nationalist victory. In Afrikaner nationalist texts such as C.F.J. Muller's *500 years: A history of South Africa*, the section detailing the establishment of a republic is entitled 'The triumph of Afrikaner-nationalism'.⁷²¹ Similarly, more recent text and revisionist interpretations portray the establishment of a republic as a momentous occasion for the Afrikaner people or as an event that contributed to Verwoerd's rise in power and popularity.⁷²² These texts seldom if ever mention the strike or hint of the disruptions and the quasi State of Emergency that surrounded the advent of the republic. Giliomee's appraisal of Verwoerd's rise to power makes mention only of Verwoerd's swift and resolute response to Sharpeville, and mentions that 31 May 1961 was the 'highlight of his career'.⁷²³ In John Fisher's *The Afrikaners* the republic's establishment is associated with a rise in support for the NP, a similar historiographic trend as discussed in previous chapters.⁷²⁴

For these historians, the establishment of a republic is seen as a moment of white consolidation, as opposed to a moment of white division and unrest.⁷²⁵ The strike is mentioned in some instances, but mostly only to highlight that it failed to cause any significant disruptions. Scher's chapter on the 'Consolidation of the Apartheid State, 1948 -1966', mentions that 'the planned stay-away of black-workers was largely unsuccessful', but does not mention the measures taken by the government to suppress any form of protest or the impact that the strike had on the white electorate.⁷²⁶ Similarly, Kenney's appraisal of Verwoerd's legacy mentions that the stay-away was a 'near-complete failure'.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁰ Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives?', 120.

⁷²¹ Liebenberg, 'From the Statute of Westminster to the Republic of South Africa', 400.

⁷²² Giliomee, *Last Afrikaner Leaders*, 73; J. Fisher, *The Afrikaners* (London: Cassell & Company, 1969); Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*; O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 106.

⁷²³ Giliomee, *Last Afrikaner Leaders*, 73.

⁷²⁴ Fisher, *The Afrikaners*, 343.

⁷²⁵ De Villiers, 'Afrikaner Nationalism', 394.

⁷²⁶ D. M. Scher, 'The Consolidation of the Apartheid State, 1948-1966', in F. Pretorius (ed.), *A History of South Africa- From the Distant Past to the Present Day*, (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2014), 342.

⁷²⁷ Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, 245.

The establishment of the republic is often examined in African nationalist histories; particularly concerning the three-day stay-away. Even in these histories, that prominently feature the stay-away, the consensus is that the strike was a failure. The government's aggressive response and the failure of the strike are used to advocate that armed resistance had become necessary.⁷²⁸ Mandela explained that he believed that a new day was dawning and explained that 'if the Government reaction is to crush by naked force our non-violent struggle, we will have to reconsider our tactics. In my mind, we are closing a chapter on this question on a non-violent policy'.⁷²⁹ In a television interview conducted on Republic Day, he further stated that 'the time has come for us to consider, in the light of our experiences in this stay at home, whether the methods which we have applied so far are adequate'.⁷³⁰

Historians have subsequently also viewed the failed stay-away from this perspective.⁷³¹ For Anthea Jeffery, the failure of the strike was an indication that people were losing trust in the strike as an effective measure.⁷³² Similarly, Kuper described the stay-away as having 'failed in its objectives' and thus having 'closed an era of non-violent resistance'.⁷³³ Yet the notion that the stay-away was partially successful is found in the works of Bunting as well as Karis and Gerhart. Karis and Gerhart stated that it was 'extraordinary that the stay-at-home was as extensive as it was' and pointed out that some factories and schools were closed and that thousands stayed-away from work.⁷³⁴ Dubow, also highlights that 'more than half of Johannesburg's African workers stayed away' on the first day of the strike.⁷³⁵ For Dubow, it is unclear whether the strike was a legitimate final attempt to bring about change, or whether it was a tactical demonstration aimed at proving that change would not be achieved peacefully. He demonstrated this

⁷²⁸ Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us*, 143-4.

⁷²⁹ Video interview with ITN reporter Brian Widlake available online at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/telegraphtv/10154983/Nelson-Mandelas-first-TV-interview-in-1961.html>, accessed 20 January 2020.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷³¹ Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us*, 140-4.

⁷³² A. Jeffery, *People's War: New Light on the Struggle for South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2014), 1.

⁷³³ L. Kuper, 'African Nationalism in South Africa', 468.

⁷³⁴ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 364.

⁷³⁵ Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives?', 137.

by saying that Mandela was calling for mass action during the strike while simultaneously preparing for armed resistance.⁷³⁶

Instead of accepting the stay-away as failed because it did not achieve its primary objectives, Bunting examined the stay-away by evaluating its scale. Bunting points out that it had been 'the greatest national general strike ever held in the country' and the 'overwhelming impact' that the strike had on the country had 'completely overshadowed' the republican celebrations.⁷³⁷ This idea that the strike had been somewhat successful also raises questions regarding how successful the strike had been based on the impact that it had and its original objectives of bringing about a national convention. This aspect of the strike, coinciding with the republic celebrations, is seldom discussed and investigated. In his work on possible alternatives to armed resistance, Dubow has examined the possible alternatives to armed resistance by weaving together these two distinctive nationalist narratives.⁷³⁸ Besides his article on the topic, the literature offers two interpretations of the same event. Furthermore, while Dubow's article offers valuable insight into the undercurrents of political decision-making, he does this by examining the attitudes of policymakers and politicians. As highlighted before, this approach ignores the electorate and their role in the political decision-making process. This thesis is concerned with white political decision-making and concepts of white unity in the run-up to the establishment of a republic. As such, the impact that the planned stay-away had on white opinion is an important aspect of the process of establishing a republic. As has been discussed in the two previous chapters, numerous scholars use the events leading up to the establishment of a republic, in conjunction with the 1961 election, to show increased support for the NP and a sense of white consolidation or unity. These chapters also showed that the white electorate was not unified on several political issues. Considering the turmoil which accompanied the Republic Day celebrations, it also becomes a valuable point in time to measure how the opinions voiced during the referendum campaign had changed or stayed the same.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁷³⁷ Bunting, *Rise of the South African Reich*, 180.

⁷³⁸ Dubow, 'South Africa and South Africans', 120.

This chapter will examine debates and opinions which were found in the white press in the run-up to the establishment of a republic in light of the events surrounding 31 May 1961. It will first explore the impact that the call for a multi-racial convention as well as the planned stay-away had on the electorate. This chapter will examine the fear caused amongst members of the electorate by these events, but also how it made some voters consider the necessity to find alternatives to apartheid. Secondly, this chapter will also explore how white readers responded to the stay-away as well as to the government's questionable methods in trying to ensure peace and order during the Republic Day celebrations. Lastly, this chapter will also consider how the white electorate responded to the establishment of the republic itself, especially considering the cultural distinctions between English-speakers and Afrikaners often associated with the establishment of the republic.

The opinions expressed by members of the electorate after the government had successfully managed to avoid a violent confrontation on Republic Day will also be explored. Based on this response, it can also be determined whether there was an increase in pro-government opinion, as is often suggested in the literature. The chapter will compare the views found in the mainstream media at this time with opinions expressed during the referendum, exploring any connection with the 1961 election results.

4.1 The call for a national convention

The All-In African convention served as a platform for anti-apartheid activists to voice their grievances regarding the new republican constitution, but this event was initially overshadowed by the events of the Commonwealth Prime Minister's conference. When the NAC concluded their conference on 26 March by discussing their resolutions and the planned stay-away, it received little attention in the white press. While the *Rand Daily Mail* was one of the only papers that made mention of the NAC's plans immediately after the All-In African convention, they did not feature the story on the front

page.⁷³⁹ Even in the news report on the resolutions adopted by the All-In African convention, *the Rand Daily Mail* subdued the nature of their demands by presenting it as a call for a 'national parley' or a request for a group of elected representatives of all races to 'discuss' the new constitution.⁷⁴⁰

The resolutions circulated after the conference by the NAC more bluntly referred to the fact that the 'white parliament' was busy discussing the new constitution, therefore, demanded that the drafting of the new constitution should be a racially inclusive process. Firstly, the NAC called for a national convention to be established before 31 May 1961, and that this convention should consist of multi-racial elected representatives who would determine a non-racial democratic constitution. Although this in itself would not have been too radical a concept to entertain, the NAC also requested that this national convention should have 'sovereign powers' to enforce a new constitution. This type of request was not one that the government would have granted. Furthermore, the NAC called for 'country-wide demonstrations' to oppose the Republic if these requests were not met.⁷⁴¹

After the outcome of the treason trial on 29 March 1961, with the acquittal of Nelson Mandela, leader of the NAC, the planned stay-away was overshadowed by the implications of losing Commonwealth membership. Although some reports regarding the planned stay-away had been published earlier in April, the significance of a multi-racial conference only attracted attention amongst the white electorate from mid-April. Efforts were made to bring about such a multi-racial convention or a forum for consultation. Peter Brown, a leading figure in the Liberal Party, organised a multi-racial conference known as the 'Natal Convention' which took place in Pietermaritzburg on 17-19 April 1961.⁷⁴² The conference was attended by several hundred participants and representatives and concluded that moving towards an inclusive constitution and

⁷³⁹ "'Unity" Talks Today', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 March 1961, 2; 'Africans Insist on a National Parley', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 March 1961, 3.

⁷⁴⁰ 'Africans Insist on a National Parley', 3.

⁷⁴¹ Resolutions of the All-In African Conference published in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 632-3.

⁷⁴² Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 359.

franchise was inevitable and necessary.⁷⁴³ However, without government support or intervention, this convention had no power to demand or enact change. Around this time the NAC wrote a letter to Verwoerd requesting that a multi-racial council be convened by the government. The Prime Minister offered no formal reply and Mandela's written appeal to De Villiers Graaff to intervene and avoid violence, was also ignored.⁷⁴⁴

Instead, the government responded a few days later with a series of raids launched during the last days of April. These raids targeted ANC leadership and those involved with the NAC but also targeted publications that participated in spreading information about the stay-away, such as the leftist newspaper *New Age*. No arrests were made at the time, and police declared that they were simply looking to collect information regarding the planned stay-away from the documents that they had confiscated.⁷⁴⁵ On 3 May 1961, the police launched a series of rigorous countrywide raids which resulted in several arrests.⁷⁴⁶ The planned protest or stay-away in combination with police raids was all too familiar in the post-Sharpeville era. The notion that the planned stay-away would lead to a confrontation between activists and the government, or would at least negatively affect the economy, was of real concern to members of the electorate. Already during these last days of April 1961, reports started surfacing that people were stockpiling food in case the tense situation would bring the country to a standstill.⁷⁴⁷

When analysing the reactions from members of the electorate in the newspapers, it is important to note the moment at which the call for a multi-racial convention was taking place. The timing of the requests for a multi-racial convention followed directly on the discussion that South Africa should make concessions to stay in the Commonwealth. Although South Africa's Commonwealth membership was withdrawn, the discussions regarding racial policy remained central discussions about the republic. In line with this, the UP announced a new approach in their racial policy shortly after the call for concessions was made. This federation policy was meant to serve as an alternative

⁷⁴³ Natal Convention Committee, *Proceedings of the Natal Convention*, April 1961, 58-64.

⁷⁴⁴ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 361.

⁷⁴⁵ 'Nie-Blankes Staak Teen 31 Mei Dalk 3 Dae', *Die Volksblad*, 29 April 1961, 5.

⁷⁴⁶ *Keesing's Diary of World Events 1961 -1962*, c181376.

⁷⁴⁷ Nie-Blankes Staak Teen 31 Mei Dalk 3 Dae, 5.

approach or plan to South Africa's 'racial problems'. The UP's policy of racial federation proposed the gradual handing over of power to a federation of racial representative bodies, each selected by the voters of their respective racial groups. The UP's racial model was different from that of separate development because it proposed eventual equal power-sharing in the top structures of the federation as opposed to the development of individual states. It furthermore proposed a system of separate voter's rolls as well as representation based on 'contribution to the National Welfare', which would mean unequal and divided racial representation.⁷⁴⁸

When the UP announced their new federation policy, the situation in South Africa was growing increasingly tense as the establishment of the republic drew closer. The inevitability of a racial clash was also encouraged by newspapers that started reporting that some protestors were planning violent protest action.⁷⁴⁹ One reader writing to *The Cape Argus* reflected on the situation by insisting that any form of a protest would inevitably evolve into a situation of aggression.⁷⁵⁰ To capitalise on the tense situation, Graaff called upon members of the electorate to see the UP's race federation policy as a solution to avoid disaster. He stated that he hoped that it would not be necessary for a 'national tragedy to provide the catalyst' for united support of a better racial policy.⁷⁵¹ Yet such a new system was nothing more than a proposal and would not be able to thwart the planned stay-away. The notion that a 'national tragedy' or a clash between police and protestors could coincide with the establishment of the republic became more prominent in mid-May.

By 3 May, the police had already started conducting their second wave of raids, but the government had more extensive plans to suppress any planned protest on Republic Day. On 4 May the General Law Amendment Act (Act 39 of 1961) was brought before parliament as a countermeasure against the stay-away and possible unrest. The law would make amendments to several other acts pertaining to security measures and the

⁷⁴⁸ ARCA, PV 256, File 10/2/3, United Party Cape Peninsula Council: The Basic Policies of South African Political Parties, n.d.

⁷⁴⁹ RIMA, MCH 07-126-11-17, National Action Council: General Strike, June 1961, 4.

⁷⁵⁰ M. Morris, 'Any Demonstration Will Flare into Violence', *The Cape Argus*, 25 May 1961, 5.

⁷⁵¹ 'Graaff's Policy for Stable South Africa', *Cape Times*, 2 May 1961, 2.

powers of the Attorney-General and the Minister of Justice. The bill allowed police to detain suspects without bail for 12 days and would give police officers of any rank power to prevent or disperse illegal gatherings. Furthermore, promoting or attending banned meetings was punishable by one-year imprisonment. The bill would provide considerable power to the police force and was met with resistance by De Villiers Graaff as well as PP representative, HG Lawrence.⁷⁵²

In their rejection of the proposed amendment act, both these opposition leaders referred again to the 'dictatorial' and 'totalitarian' nature of the amendment bill. The bill's opponents said that it would bring the country under permanent emergency regulations, without a State of Emergency ever being declared. Promises were made that the bill would only be a temporary measure and despite criticism, it was accepted by parliament and instituted on 19 May 1961. Immediately after the bill had come into effect, all public meetings were banned except for those with government mandates.⁷⁵³ After the bill had been passed and the government started implementing stricter security measures, the public's attention started turning away from the impact of the loss of Commonwealth membership and more towards the concept of a domestic threat.

After citizen forces were called up on 21 May, *The Star* reported on its front page that 'Johannesburg has 1000 men under arms'.⁷⁵⁴ The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* was critical of the government's response and wrote that the government was attempting to preserve its place in the status quo 'by physical force and by the abandonment of many democratic practices and liberties'. The editor furthermore said that the social and economic consequences of these government actions would probably be as dire as they had been during the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre.⁷⁵⁵ The editor of *The Cape Argus* also said that the government was pushing the boundaries of justice and democracy under the veil of maintaining law and order.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵² Keesing's *Diary of World Events 1961 -1962*, c18137.

⁷⁵³ Keesing's *Diary of World Events 1961 -1962*, c18138.

⁷⁵⁴ 'Johannesburg Has 1,000 Men under Arms', *The Star*, 22 May 1961, 1.

⁷⁵⁵ Editorial, 'State of Emergency', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 May 1961, 8.

⁷⁵⁶ Editorial, 'The Invisible Enemy', *The Cape Argus*, 22 May 1961, 10.

For the editor of *The Star*, the maintenance of law and order took precedence over the concepts of democracy and justice. He wrote that, although the stay-away from work was not in itself cause for concern, but rather that those who wanted to cause violent disruptions could exploit the situation. This editor said that the security measures were put in place to deter those with violent intentions and therefore 'the mobilisation of a large number of men is justified'. He further clarified by writing that 'if the nationwide call-up, the banning of meetings and the hasty tinkering with the law succeeds in averting another Sharpeville... this action will be endorsed by all law-abiding citizens'.⁷⁵⁷ Although the English-language editors were mostly in opposition to the government, here *The Star* saw the government's actions as justified to avoid violent conflict or a negative impact on the economy.

In the Afrikaans-language newspapers, the editors also commented on the situation similarly by indicating their support for government action. The editor of *Die Transvaler* maintained that non-Whites were planning to disturb the peace and wanted to act violently on Republic Day.⁷⁵⁸ The editor of *Die Burger*, in turn, reprimanded those who criticised the government's security measures. This editor said that the government had the responsibility of stopping real threats, especially in light of the 'violence moving south towards our borders'.⁷⁵⁹ These Afrikaans editors also mentioned a sense of danger or a possible dangerous situation that could result from Republic Day.

The possibility of violence also caused newspaper readers to reflect on the government's security measures, some of them arguing that such a tense situation could only be avoided by holding a multi-racial conference. Yet other members of the electorate supported government control and security measures as the only way to prevent a disastrous situation.

In light of the Sharpeville massacre, the impending stay-away and reports of possible violence convinced some members of the electorate that the situation could result in another such massacre. It was the opinion of numerous readers writing to the English-

⁷⁵⁷ Editorial, 'The Shadow Behind', 16.

⁷⁵⁸ Editorial, 'Die Goeie Uit die Kwaai', *Die Transvaler*, 22 May 1961, 6.

⁷⁵⁹ Editorial, 'Noodmaatreëls', *Die Burger*, 22 May 1961, 8.

language press that the tense situation had to be diffused immediately by calling a multi-racial convention or multi-racial talks.⁷⁶⁰ Thus in the weeks leading up to 29 May 1961, multiple readers' letters called for a convention or racial talks to be hosted by the government. In a letter to the editor of *The Star* one reader noted that there was 'general disappointment that the proposed multi-racial national convention is not taking place'.⁷⁶¹ A reader's letter published in the *Rand Daily Mail* urged that the racial problem was too immense for one person to solve and therefore recommended that a 'convention is needed'.⁷⁶² A similar letter to *The Cape Argus* stated that disruptions in the form of a strike and stay-away could not be avoided if a peaceful conversation during a multi-racial convention was not facilitated. According to this reader, such a demonstration would lead to violence, and therefore the stay-away itself should be avoided by implementing these multi-racial talks.⁷⁶³

These responses align with Bunting's observation that 'the call for a national convention... found support among wide sections of the people, White as well as non-White'.⁷⁶⁴ Politicians such as the leader of the PP, Jan Steytler also called for a multi-racial convention or consultation where representatives of all racial groups could discuss the current racial policy. Steytler warned that the position was 'desperately serious' and stated that he associated himself with 'the recent appeals of prominent citizens for the holding of a multi-racial convention'.⁷⁶⁵ The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* also urged for a multi-racial convention to be called. An editorial published in this paper stated that 'there is great demand in the country for such a gathering' and suggested that the government feared that a convention would expose that African Nationalism 'is not the intractable force it is often represented to be'.⁷⁶⁶ While this editor spoke about the realities of multi-racialism, not everyone saw multi-racialism as racial integration.

⁷⁶⁰ 'Multi-Racialistst Must Get down to It', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 May 1961, 4; 'National Convention Suggested', *The Star*, 23 May 1961, 4. These notions also coincided with the origins of non-racialism and multi-racialism which emerged during the 1950s. Everatt, *The Origins of Non-Racialism*.

⁷⁶¹ S. Kussel, 'Aggression Will Get Us Nowhere', *The Star*, 23 May 1961, 6.

⁷⁶² C. Lawrenson, 'In Brief', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 May 1961, 4.

⁷⁶³ Morris, 'Any Demonstration Will Flare into Violence', 13.

⁷⁶⁴ Bunting, *Rise of the South African Reich*, 179–80.

⁷⁶⁵ 'Position Is Serious, Warns Steytler', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 May 1961, 3.

⁷⁶⁶ Editorial, 'Time for Talks', *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 May 1961, 12.

It is important to note that in these letters and news reports a multi-racial convention was by no means portrayed as synonymous with racial integration. Instead, it was mostly interpreted as a form of racially-inclusive consultation and was often described as 'racial talks'. The NAC had requested a convention with 'sovereign power' to institute a new constitution, but the support found in these newspapers proposed consultation to find a solution to the tense situation. To some, the support for a multi-racial convention was more a reflection of the widespread fear of violence and did not necessarily represent support for universal democratic sentiments.

While there were limited cases where readers proclaimed that they had no qualms with a multi-racial integrated society, for others the focus was on finding a solution for a tense situation on the eve of the establishment of the republic.⁷⁶⁷ Examples of this mentality are found in readers' letters published in *The Star* which proclaimed that there was a sense of urgency to maintain law and order, claiming that 'the only peaceful solution is through mutual consultation'.⁷⁶⁸ Similarly, another letter published in *The Star* advocated for a conference by stating that the majority of South Africans consisted of people 'who seek a peaceful solution to our country's problem'.⁷⁶⁹ In *The Cape Argus* a letter was published which advocated that 'should this government lose control of the situation' that there must inevitably be consultation between all groups.⁷⁷⁰

A columnist writing for the *Rand Daily Mail* also believed that the political was increasingly becoming one based on fear. According to this columnist, some saw apartheid as the only defence against the 'fear of the black masses'. Others believed that 'the white man can be saved only if he consults with... the non-Whites' because they feared that apartheid will 'ultimately provoke the Africans to start a bloodbath'.⁷⁷¹ These sentiments were also voiced in a letter which claimed that the path of either white or black nationalism was 'dangerous if not inevitably bloody'.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁷ Anon., 'Content to Live in a Mixed Community', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 May 1961, 6.

⁷⁶⁸ M. Malherbe, 'Only Way to a Peaceful Solution', *The Star*, 29 May 1961, 6.

⁷⁶⁹ T. Russel, 'Useless to Bay at a Granite Wall', *The Star*, 24 May 1961, 6.

⁷⁷⁰ Anon., 'My Idea of Coalition', *The Cape Argus*, 26 June 1961, 11.

⁷⁷¹ A. Sparks, 'Premier Flaunts His New Power', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 May 1961, 7.

⁷⁷² Russel, 'Useless to Bay at a Granite Wall', 6.

As had been pointed out in Chapter Two, white fears during this point of South Africa's history is most often associated with the perception of growing support for the NP government and apartheid.⁷⁷³ In the analysis of the referendum campaign, it became apparent that white fear also motivated members of the electorate to oppose the government and apartheid. This phenomenon was even more prevalent in the weeks leading up to the establishment of the republic. Numerous readers and editors, who feared a repeat of the Sharpeville massacre and increased violence, saw this as a reason to seek consultation between the races.

It is also interesting to note that this was not only a case of fearing the economic consequences of what had transpired at Sharpeville. Numerous readers expressed their fear that the polarisation between African and Afrikaner nationalism would inevitably have disastrous consequences. Some of these fears were thus not based on the immediacy of the stay-away, but the forces of nationalism in South Africa. The editor of *The Star* even suggested that South Africa might be torn apart by the polarisation of Afrikaner and African nationalism.⁷⁷⁴ The notion that either African or Afrikaner nationalism could be to blame for violent clashes was a recurring theme in some of the letters published in the English-language press since the showdown between these two ideologies was seen as unavoidable.⁷⁷⁵ One letter published in *The Star* exemplified this by stating: 'I will not support African nationalism or Afrikaner nationalism because I believe the only peaceful solution is through mutual consultation'.⁷⁷⁶ While the government might have been willing to extend their nationalism into a broader white nationalism, not everyone was convinced by this idea and instead saw nationalism of any kind as potentially dangerous.⁷⁷⁷

A multi-racial convention was not the only strategy that was seen as a solution to avoid a disastrous or violent situation. Instead, others urged that alternative political strategies and solutions were urgently needed. A reader writing to *The Star* expressed this desire

⁷⁷³ See Chapter Two, p123.

⁷⁷⁴ Editorial, 'Fagan's Responsibility', *The Star*, 23 May 1961, 14.

⁷⁷⁵ Russel, 'Useless to Bay at a Granite Wall', 6.

⁷⁷⁶ Malherbe, 'Only Way to a Peaceful Solution', 6.

⁷⁷⁷ Dubow references the governments willingness to expand nationalism into a greater white nationalism. Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85.

by pointing out that talk of consultation had caused people to think that 'at last something constructive would eventuate and that there was hope for improvement in the present state of tension'.⁷⁷⁸ Letters written to the editors of the English-language press expressed a greater urgency in seeking the re-evaluation of racial policy, as was also evident in the previous chapter.⁷⁷⁹ One of these reader's letters published in *The Star* asserted that it 'was most urgent now to formulate within practical bounds a policy to replace apartheid' and proposed qualified franchise so that representation for all could be implemented without bloodshed.⁷⁸⁰ Other readers expressed a sense of frustration that opposition politicians had not presented a viable alternative to apartheid at that point. One letter published in the *Rand Daily Mail* complained that a multi-racial society was inevitable but that the opposition was not accepting of any policy that addressed this reality.

Similarly, another letter published in this newspaper said that there were numerous alternative policies, but all of them fell short because no one was willing 'to share privileges' with other races.⁷⁸¹ The search for alternative policies was even mentioned by the editor of *Die Transvaler*. The editor wrote that those advocating for a national convention or forms of consultation were using it as a smokescreen to hide the fact that they did not have viable alternative solutions to the racial problem.⁷⁸²

There was one such an 'alternative' approach to racial policy which attracted quite a bit of attention at the time. With 31 May rapidly approaching, the UP politician H. A. Fagan entered the debate on the possible options for South Africa to bring about change while avoiding too much bloodshed. On 23 May 1961, he addressed interested parties in Johannesburg on the topic of racial consultation. With just a few days between his talk and the start of the stay-away, his speech occurred at the height of the debate around a multi-racial convention. The address was described by the editor of *The Star* as being 'called by 600 business and religious leaders in the Transvaal to see what can be done

⁷⁷⁸ Kussel, 'Aggression Will Get Us Nowhere', 6; Also see 'Multi-Racialistst Must Get down to It', 4.

⁷⁷⁹ See Chapter Three, p183.

⁷⁸⁰ F. Brandford, 'Equal Vote- with Education Qualification', *The Star*, 24 May 1961, 6.

⁷⁸¹ Anon., 'Who Is Prepared to Share Privileges?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 May 1961, 4.

⁷⁸² Editorial, 'Die Konvensie-Vyebld', *Die Transvaler*, 23 May 1961, 6.

to save South Africa from being torn to pieces by the polarisation of two nationalisms – Afrikaner and African'.⁷⁸³

Fagan, who was a former Chief Justice, was probably most well-known for the role he played in the Native Laws Commission (also known as the Fagan Commission), set up by the Smuts government in 1946 to investigate possible changes to the system of segregation. The commission recommended that influx control of African labourers into urban areas should be relaxed, suggesting that segregated urban spaces serviced by a migrant labour force were merely impractical.⁷⁸⁴ During the selection of the first State President by the members of parliament in May 1961, Fagan lost to C.R. Swart.⁷⁸⁵ This status as a presidential candidate, as well being a political role player and Member of Parliament, thus attracted considerable attention.

In his speech, Fagan called for the reconstitution of government to allow English- and Afrikaans speaking sections to participate in the ruling of the country. He also advocated for the 'immediate implementation of a policy of consultation with the non-White groups' to alleviate dissatisfaction. He further stated that the issue of extending voting rights to 'non-white' citizens was an issue that would not be settled swiftly since it would rely on extensive debate and conversation. The speech in itself focused on preserving the status quo as well as law and order by facilitating talks with 'non-Whites' to find a peaceful solution.⁷⁸⁶ This cautious nature of Fagan's proposals was reflected in the newspaper reports on the contents of his speech. For *The Cape Argus* the most crucial aspect was that Fagan had said 'consultation is the priority' since it is "too urgent to wait" but *Die Burger* used its headline to point out that Fagan had warned against hasty conventions.⁷⁸⁷ In their analysis, *Die Burger* pointed out that Fagan had warned that 'hasty conventions and constitutions' would not be able to solve all of South Africa's

⁷⁸³ Editorial, 'Fagan's Responsibility', 14.

⁷⁸⁴ Davenport, *South Africa- A Modern History*, 245.

⁷⁸⁵ E. Kahn, 'The New Constitution', *The South African Law Journal*, 78, 3 (1961), 249.

⁷⁸⁶ 'Fagan's Call for Change', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 May 1961, 1.

⁷⁸⁷ 'Consultation Is the Priority Says Fagan', *The Cape Argus*, 24 May 1961, 4; 'Fagan Maan Teen Oorhaastige Konvensies', *Die Burger*, 24 May 1961, 4.

problems and that the 'Congo crisis' was an adequate example of the consequences of a 'half-baked constitution'.⁷⁸⁸

The fact that this was a point of interest for the editors of the Afrikaans-language newspapers showed that Fagan had attracted quite a bit of attention.⁷⁸⁹ Most of the editors and reporters, regardless of their support or critique of Fagan's principles, pointed to the fact that he had aroused a great deal of public interest.⁷⁹⁰ The editor of *The Cape Argus* said that Fagan had addressed 'a vast, unseen and deeply anxious audience' which consisted of 'all South Africans' who were appalled by the NP government.⁷⁹¹ The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* commented that Fagan's meeting at the Johannesburg Town Hall had 'aroused unusual public interest', and there was even an 'atmosphere of pathetic expectancy – at last, a new voice is to be heard with perhaps a new message for South Africa'.⁷⁹² *Die Vaderland* remarked that Fagan had addressed about 3000 people and *Die Burger* described the group as 'a crowd of a few thousand people'.⁷⁹³ The prospect of a different racial policy had garnered the interest of the electorate.

There was a positive response to the speech in the English-language press, and those who were supportive of Fagan's statements saw it as a plausible way to immediately alleviate South Africa's racial tensions to ensure a period of calm within which to discuss alternatives to the policy of apartheid. It is important to note that this reaction was not in the first place motivated by a hatred of racial injustice, but because it seemed to offer a peaceful alternative to the anticipated violence of 'warring nationalisms'.⁷⁹⁴ The editor of *The Cape Argus* was the most positive about the speech and wrote that 'the great majority of non-nationalists will approve his [Fagan's] proposals as a blessed alternative to the present and disastrous granite wall policies of right-wing nationalism'.

⁷⁸⁸ 'Fagan Maan Teen Oorhaastige Konvensies', 4.

⁷⁸⁹ 'Mnr. Fagan Se "Nuwe Voorstelle"', *Die Vaderland*, 25 May 1961, 12.

⁷⁹⁰ 'Reaction Today Heartens Fagan Men', *The Star*, 24 May 1961, 1.

⁷⁹¹ Editorial, 'The Swing to the Right', *The Cape Argus*, 24 May 1961, 12.

⁷⁹² Editorial, 'Waiting for Fagan', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 May 1961, 10.

⁷⁹³ 'Stryd Om Republiek en Taal Iets van die Verlede Sê Fagan', *Die Vaderland*, 24 May 1961, 11; 'Fagan Gevra Om Sy Dienste Aan Land Te Bied', *Die Burger*, 24 May 1961, 1.

⁷⁹⁴ Editorial, 'Fagan's Responsibility', 14; Editorial, 'A Sound Approach', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 May 1961, 8; L. Viljoen, 'Fagan's Proposals Are Basically U.P. Principles', *The Star*, 30 May 1961, 6.

It was argued that the application of Fagan's ideas would ensure a time of peace within which pressing racial problems could be considered through consultation.⁷⁹⁵ One reader writing to *The Star* specifically mentioned that Fagan's plan of 'consultation with all groups in South Africa' was a practical and immediate solution.⁷⁹⁶

Not everyone was as enthusiastic about Fagan's speech. For the editor of *The Star* Fagan's speech 'did not offer South Africa any new formula' but the editor thought that his suggestion of immediate consultation with Africans offered a way in which 'any government could transform South Africa overnight without sacrificing any important principle or even without immediately altering any law'. The editorial stated that this method could avoid violence since 'a talking war was better than a shooting war'.⁷⁹⁷ The editor later wrote that people seemed grateful to be reminded of the more tolerant and realistic spirit that informed political thinking.⁷⁹⁸ Fagan was thus seen as filling the gap between the extremes of Afrikaner nationalism through apartheid and African nationalism through integration. Fagan's speech, so shortly before the declaration of the republic, therefore aligned with the abovementioned opinion that some form of multi-racial consultation would be better than the perceived impending unrest.

The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* took to criticising the content of Fagan's proposals describing it as a 'cautious advance rather than bringing about any radical changes'. He thought it would do nothing more than restore the policies that were in place before the nationalists took power.⁷⁹⁹ The content of Fagan's speech indeed did not offer any solutions to extend voting rights to Africans and even the concessions suggested for Coloured and Indian citizens only restored the measure of political representation that they had before the NP came to power. Some of those who were eagerly awaiting a new formula were disappointed at the limited suggestions offered by Fagan and the similarities to the UP's approach to racial divisions.⁸⁰⁰ The editors of the Afrikaans press also focussed on the fact that Fagan's speech had not really delivered anything new or

⁷⁹⁵ Editorial, 'The Swing to the Right', *The Cape Argus*, 24 May 1961, 12.

⁷⁹⁶ Viljoen, 'Fagan's Proposals Are Basically U.P. Principles', 6.

⁷⁹⁷ Editorial, 'The Fagan Way', *The Star*, 24 May 1961, 14.

⁷⁹⁸ Editorial, 'A Divided Country's Appointment with Destiny', *The Star*, 27 May 1961, 8.

⁷⁹⁹ Editorial, 'A Sound Approach', 8.

⁸⁰⁰ D. Dalling, 'Basson Riding on U.P.'s Back and in Fagan's Shadow', *The Star*, 30 June 1961, 6.

unique. This point of view is probably best seen in a cartoon (Figure 32) that was published in *Die Vaderland* and depicted Fagan as a gramophone. The metaphor here is that Fagan supposedly sounded like a broken record repeatedly voicing the same ideas. Even the cartoon's title suggested that he was simply repeating the 'same old story' and did not bring anything new to the debate.⁸⁰¹ A cartoon with a similar message was published in *Die Transvaler* and depicted Fagan as a bartender mixing a cocktail. The cocktail represented Fagan's new approach and portrayed him as adding ingredients from several other racial policies. The cartoonist suggested that instead of presenting a unique solution, Fagan had given a composite of old solutions.⁸⁰² Despite the critique found in the Afrikaans press, it does reveal that there was a sense of expectation that Fagan would have offered some new plan or a new formula for South Africa's future.

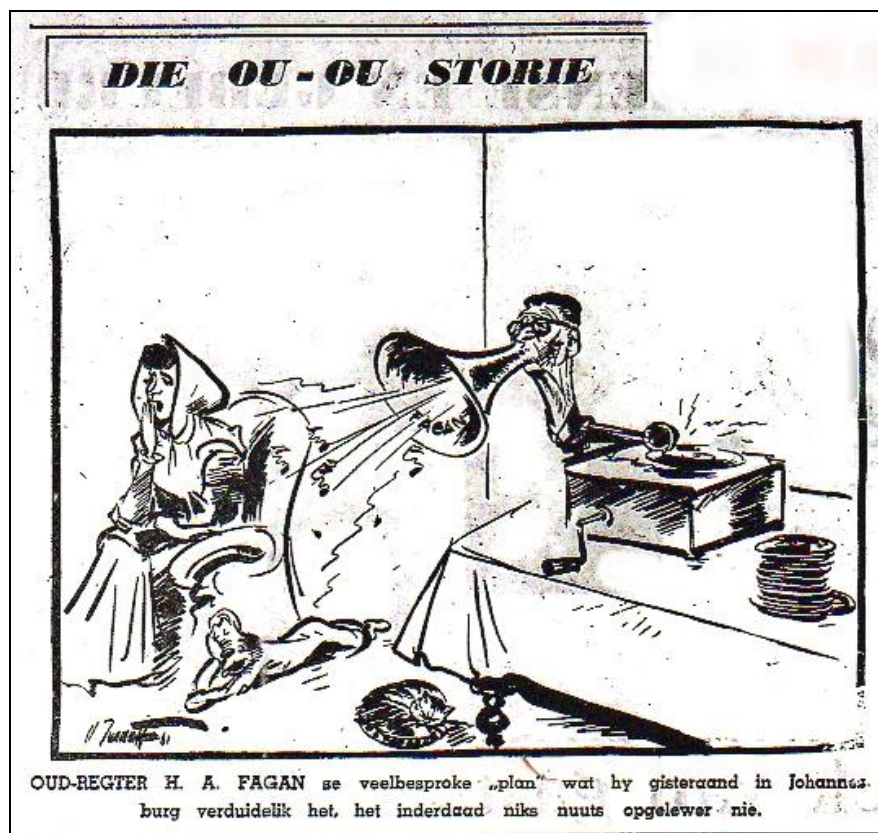


Figure 32: Die ou-ou storie- *Die Vaderland*, 24 May 1961

⁸⁰¹ 'Die Ou-Ou Storie', *Die Vaderland*, 24 May 1961, 11. English translation of cartoon title: 'The old-old story'.

⁸⁰² Etam, 'Die Dop', *Die Transvaler*, 24 May 1961, 2.

The measure of Fagan's success and the calls for political alternatives is often overshadowed by the interpretation that the referendum and the October 1961 election heralded Verwoerd's first breakthrough to the English-speaking population. Shortly after South Africa became a republic, Fagan joined the National Union Party (NUP) which had been formed in 1960. The NUP had been established as a politically inclusive party for English-speakers and Afrikaners and their racial policy was more in line with older UP racial policies.⁸⁰³ Fagan himself notably argued that segregation was a natural process that did not require forced apartheid laws. The NUP's racial plan proposed a separate voter's roll for Coloured voters but did not borrow the UP's new federation policy.⁸⁰⁴

Despite being formed in the year before the election, the NUP managed to garner 4.6% of the overall South African vote in the 1961 election and won one seat.⁸⁰⁵ While some, such as McConnachie, consider this to be insignificant, when these results are viewed in comparison to other newly-formed political parties, 4.6% is a considerable sign of support. Neither the Liberal Party, which was formed in 1953, nor the Conservative Workers Party which was established in 1961, managed to garner more than one per cent of the votes respectively.⁸⁰⁶ Even though the PP received double the percentage votes that the NUP received, it also only held one seat in parliament after the 1961 election. Shortly before the election the NUP formed a pact with the UP, possibly because the UP had hoped it would attract nationalist support.⁸⁰⁷

In his dissertation, McConnachie commented on his perception of the 'poor' performance of the NUP in the election by saying that 'the country was still in the grip of "Republic euphoria" and was not ready for the type of electoral reform advocated by the National Union'.⁸⁰⁸ A closer investigation of the narratives in the weeks leading up to the establishment of the republic, however, reveals something vastly different from

⁸⁰³ A. J. McConnachie, 'The 1961 General Election in the Republic of South Africa' (MA dissertation, University of the South Africa, Pretoria, 1999), 182-3.

⁸⁰⁴ McConnachie, 'The 1961 General Election in the Republic of South Africa', 211.

⁸⁰⁵ Schoeman, *Parlementêre Verkiesings in Suid-Afrika*, 356-67.

⁸⁰⁶ McConnachie, 'The 1961 General Election in the Republic of South Africa', 187.

⁸⁰⁷ Heard, *General Elections in South Africa*, 126.

⁸⁰⁸ McConnachie, 'The 1961 General Election in the Republic of South Africa', 294.

'Republic euphoria'. Instead, these discussions reveal debates based on the fear of violent unrest, as well as the hope that a viable alternative to apartheid would be offered by politicians. The slight shift in votes for the NUP might not have been the desired 'electoral reform' that the NUP had envisioned. Yet the analysis of these discussions regarding racial policy and the multi-racial convention also revealed a growing sense of disappointment with the UP. This disappointment, which is evident in the English-language newspapers, was also noted in the two previous chapters.

Discussing the UP's federation policy at the time, De Villiers Graaff explained that the policy was offered as an alternative to apartheid, and as such was also discussed during the time that people were talking about the multi-racial convention and alternative political strategies.⁸⁰⁹ Despite being offered as an alternative plan against apartheid, it was not necessarily received as such by the electorate. This new approach alienated open-minded voters who had supported the UP based on the notion that the party would someday implement the qualified franchise, and alienated others who thought that it did not offer a concrete enough solution to South Africa's racial problem. Thus, by announcing this racial federation policy, the UP had lost the advantage of its former vague approach to racial policy.⁸¹⁰

In response to the federation policy, some readers commented that the UP had recently begun to look like a reflection of the NP. For one reader writing to *The Star*, the main difference was that the 'United Party represents the section of the population that supports the race policies of the Nationalists but wants things sugar-coated' and further insisted that the UP did not have the courage to oppose apartheid.⁸¹¹ Several other readers' letters published in *The Star* exposed this sentiment, with readers revealing that they would no longer support the UP because of the party leaders' lack of conviction and that the UP had moved so close in policy to the NP that there was no

⁸⁰⁹ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1961* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1962), 15.

⁸¹⁰ S. L. Barnard, 'Politieke oriëntasie in die Suid-Afrikaanse Opposisie sedert 1958' (PhD thesis, Universiteit van die Vrystaat, Bloemfontein, 1979), 159; McConnachie, 'The 1961 General Election in the Republic of South Africa', 248.

⁸¹¹ J. Blum, 'United Party Role Perpetuates a Sham Democracy', *The Star*, 22 May 1961, 8.

reason to support the UP anymore.⁸¹² The UP also received criticism for their lack of leadership and their failure to act in opposition to the government. Some readers expressly referred to a perceived lack of leadership in the UP in a time of crisis and argued that the lack of resistance against the government 'contributed to the strength of the Nationalists'.⁸¹³

In light of the perceived failure of the UP to play a leading role during a time of crisis, several readers and authors even supported the establishment of a different political party altogether. These letters and editorials confirm the assertion made in Chapter Three that some sections of the white electorate were becoming disenchanted with the UP. In support of this, a reader's letter written to *The Star* stated that the NP's rise in power had little to do with racial policy since numerous people did not agree with the NP policy but could not find themselves at home in the UP. He argued that 'the solution to our country's problems lies firstly in the formation of an effective but acceptable opposition party'. For this reader specifically, the goal of a new party would be that it would be under the leadership of 'a true South African such as Fagan' and would be 'capable of restoring South Africa to a happy and prosperous country'.⁸¹⁴ For another reader writing to the editor of *The Cape Argus* 'a coalition of the United Party, moderate nationalists... and possibly some enlightened progressives, seems to be the only way out of the immediate crisis'.⁸¹⁵ The editor of *Die Burger* also offered commentary on this perceived lack of leadership within opposition ranks and wrote that the opposition could not even form a policy which attracted the attention of the electorate, so their supporters had to resolve to running around seeking answers from newspapers and other platforms.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹² Anon., 'Good Luck Japie Basson', *The Star*, 5 June 1961, 3; J. Burger, 'Finds Few Signs of Political Change', *The Star*, 25 May 1961, 17.

⁸¹³ D. Lindberg, 'Opposition Has Failed to Give a Lead', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 May 1961, 4; Blum, 'United Party Role Perpetuates a Sham Democracy', 8.

⁸¹⁴ In this sense a true South African referred to someone who was not part of a perceived sectional movement, such as an Afrikaner nationalist. Such a person would be representative of white society and make calculated steps to ensuring a safe and prosperous future for South Africa, again unlike Afrikaner nationalism. P. Van Coller, 'The Disbandment of the United Party Would Help', *The Star*, 1 June 1961, 3.

⁸¹⁵ V.G. Davies, 'The Way out: Coalition Ideas for Realists', *The Cape Argus*, 24 May 1961, 11.

⁸¹⁶ Editorial, 'Opposisie-Gisting', *Die Burger*, 25 May 1961, 13.

Calls for an alternative to apartheid, a national convention or even a review of apartheid were strong enough for readers as well as editors of the Afrikaans- and English-language newspapers to remark upon it. Historians often interpret the period by insisting that events such as Sharpeville and the 'Congo crisis' had pushed white voters into the arms of the NP.⁸¹⁷ Karis and Gerhart asserted that the events such as Sharpeville had a tendency to 'polarise white public opinion, moving the vast majority of Whites rightward, more securely into the Nationalist laager'.⁸¹⁸ Yet, as was pointed out in previous chapters, the most important and noteworthy anomaly of the 1961 election was the volume of people who did not vote at all. The 1961 election was the first election of the newly established republic; the first election where Verwoerd was Prime Minister and the first national election where the voting age had been reduced to 18. Yet there was significant absenteeism during that election. Furthermore, the total number of votes in favour of opposition parties during the 1961 election does not quite align with the interpretation that a 'vast majority' of Whites were moving rightward.

The analysis of these newspaper articles, editorials and readers' letters reveals that voters were looking for alternative options or even alternative political choices at the time of the establishment of the republic. Notably, this is also a phenomenon found in Afrikaans newspapers and reportedly amongst Afrikaans intellectuals. In its appraisal of the NP and its policies in 1961, *A Survey of Race Relations* noted that there had been a 'dissension within the Party ranks'. The survey described this dissension as a 'ferment of agonised reappraisal of policies amongst Afrikaner intellectuals, especially in the Cape and particularly in regard to the Coloured people'.⁸¹⁹ This reaction was based on the removal of Coloured voters from the common voters roll and some nationalists did not feel comfortable with this rejection of the Coloured community.⁸²⁰ Hepple and Kenny both refer to white intellectuals and nationalists who were asking Verwoerd to make 'concessions' after the events at Sharpeville.⁸²¹ Dubow also referred to NP political role-players asking for concessions after the Sharpeville massacre even if it was mainly

⁸¹⁷ Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 474.

⁸¹⁸ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 349

⁸¹⁹ Horrell, *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1961*, 10.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11-2.

⁸²¹ Hepple, *Verwoerd*, 158-9; Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, 246.

aimed at relaxing control measures such as pass laws.⁸²² The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* stressed how Verwoerd was ignoring calls from within his own party by publishing a cartoon in which Verwoerd is depicted as ignoring calls for consultation (Figure 33). Those who are represented in the sketch as calling for consultation included opposition leaders as well as 'Nationalist intellectuals'.⁸²³

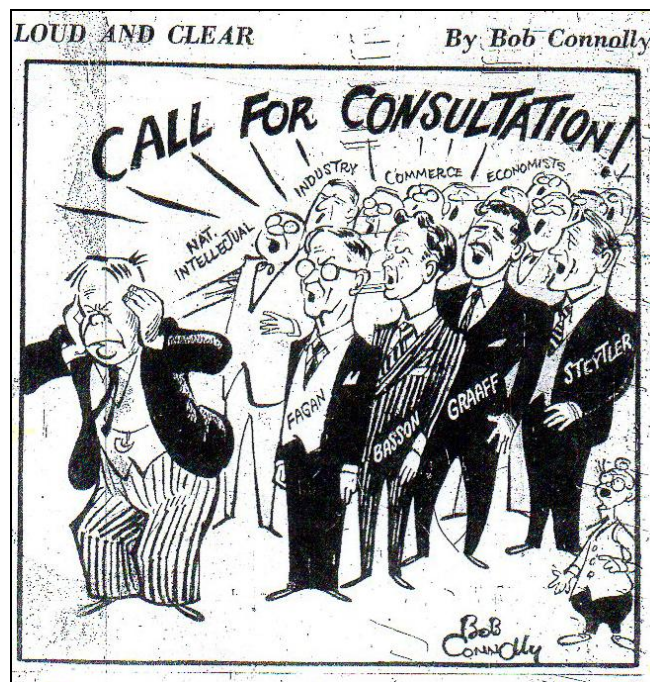


Figure 33: Loud and clear- *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 May 1961

There are examples in the Afrikaans press of individuals calling for re-evaluation of apartheid policies. Although not advocating for the convention himself, the editor of *Die Burger* pointed out that under the surface of the republic there were 'big questions, expectations and concerns' and that large sections of the white public were in the process of 'contemplation and self-reflection'.⁸²⁴ On another occasion, the editor of *Die Burger* also wrote that the establishment of the republic meant that the Afrikaners would no longer have to approach their relations to other groups based on how it would contribute to republicanism. In this regard, he said that the establishment of the republic

⁸²² Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives?', 127.

⁸²³ Connolly, 'Loud and Clear', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 May 1961, 8.

⁸²⁴ Editorial, 'Einde van die Ou Orde', *Die Burger*, 26 May 1961, 12.

opened the door for an Afrikaner nation that was 'more pleasant in their dealings with other groups'. Although he was again vague and did not identify exactly which groups he was referring to, he wrote that the establishment of the republic was also a 'moment for humility, self-reflection and commitment' and added that the welfare 'of millions of South Africans of other languages and colours' had been placed in the hands of those in power.⁸²⁵

Several readers' letters published in *Die Burger* made similar comments about the NP's racial policy, specifically regarding the Coloured community.⁸²⁶ One such a letter evaluated the government's racial policy by insisting that it was not viable since Whites were and always would be a minority group. Instead, this reader proposed that the country should be divided into two groups consisting of 'non-Bantu' people and Africans. The reader suggested the integration of Whites, Coloureds and Asians in one part of the country and the inclusion of all Africans in another part of the county. The letter further asked how 'a policy can be applied to people without their consent' yet was expected not to result in violence.⁸²⁷ Similarly, in a letter published in *Die Vaderland*, one reader wrote that the current approach taken by the government of not providing a platform for "non-Whites" to voice their opinions would lead to 'an outburst or a series of outbursts'.⁸²⁸

Die Burger also reported that Afrikaans-speaking students at Stellenbosch University had published a circular which addressed racial issues and was said to serve as a 'renewal of thoughts' on the topic. The circular urged that the government should revise its policy and recommended the political integration of Coloured people and Asians with white citizens and the advancement of the developments of homelands for Africans.⁸²⁹ Although none of these calls were particularly liberal or called for a multi-racial convention specifically, it does show that Verwoerd's separate development directive was not unquestioningly accepted by Afrikaans members of the electorate. On the eve

⁸²⁵ Editorial, 'Ons Moet Dit Waardig Wees', *Die Burger*, 29 May 1961, 10.

⁸²⁶ S. Stepp, 'Twee Briewe Oor Kleurlingsake', *Die Burger*, 23 May 1961, 10.

⁸²⁷ J. Rabie, 'Drie Alternatiewe Vir S.A.', *Die Burger*, 22 May 1961, 8.

⁸²⁸ W. Grobbelaar, 'Toegewings Bepleit', *Die Vaderland*, 26 May 1961, 13.

⁸²⁹ 'Behoeftte Bestaan Vir Vernuwning', *Die Burger*, 29 May 1961, 7.

of the establishment of the republic there was this sense of reflection on the NP's racial policy. This stands in contrast with interpretations as put forth by Rubin that the establishment of the republic is to be associated and interpreted as a support for the government's apartheid policy.⁸³⁰ This reflection also stands in contrast to the celebratory spirit with which the establishment of the republic is often associated.

However, true to its nature of being the mouthpiece of the NP government, these reports were limited in the Afrikaans press. The editor of *Die Transvaler* accused anyone who supported the calls for a multi-racial convention of trying to unite the opposition groups of all races against the Afrikaners on the day of the republican celebrations.⁸³¹ Similarly, some readers writing to the English-language press were also opposed to the convention even though this was not the most prominent view found in the English-language press. One letter published in *The Star* opposed multi-racial consultation and explained that although they believed 'non-white' groups should share in the benefits of Western civilisation, the 'bearers of civilisation should not allow themselves to be engulfed by those who are less developed'. This reader explained that for this 'sharing in the benefits of Western civilisation' to occur, segregation, as opposed to multi-racialism, was needed for the time being so that the principles of civilisation would not be dragged down through integration.⁸³² Another letter published in *The Star* more directly posed the question:

Can it be possible that after all that has happened and is happening on the African continent after the native gets self-government people can be naive enough to believe that all we need in the southerly tip of Africa is to hold a multi-racial convention? Let us not delude ourselves. The native will be content with nothing less than domination. Pacifism does nothing to stop violence and bloodshed.⁸³³

Regardless of the prevalence of the letters and articles that challenged the NP's racial policy or of those letters which ardently opposed a multi-racial convention, it is clear that

⁸³⁰ Rubin, 'White Politics', 20–37.

⁸³¹ Editorial, 'Die Aanklag Bly Staans', *Die Transvaler*, 22 May 1961, 6.

⁸³² A. Du Toit, 'Only Road Leading to Sanity in South Africa', *The Star*, 31 May 1961, 4.

⁸³³ Anon., 'Israel's Lesson for the Union', *The Star*, 31 May 1961, 4.

the general atmosphere of tension motivated these readers. These conversations regarding the multi-racial convention, as well as the associated discussions regarding racial policy, reveal important aspects that relate to the historiography of the republic. There is much talk about how the NP seemingly won over voters and managed to unite the electorate at the time. The credit for this is usually given to Verwoerd and the NP's racial policy. However, with the introduction of the UP's federation policy, it is clear to see that some members of the electorate thought that the UP was moving so far right that the differences between the parties were no longer apparent. Thus, at least to some regard, the UP also introduced a sort of blurring of lines regarding the two leading parties' racial policy.

There is also an indication of the measure of success that the NAC had in achieving their goals. Although Verwoerd would never have allowed such a convention, the NAC had managed to catch the attention of a portion of the electorate who was calling for consultation or reassessment of the racial policy. Some called for consultation based on the fundamental principles of democracy and others because they feared the possibility of a violent clash. As will be illustrated below, the call for a multi-racial convention dissipated soon after the stay-at-home had been suppressed, probably since the threat of violence had been sidestepped. The ban on unauthorised meetings was lifted on 6 June 1961 but a convention or consultation to find solutions peacefully never fully materialised. Regardless of the gradual decline in demand for a multiracial convention, the notion that the NP gained support particularly from English-speakers based on NP racial policies and protection of white supremacy is an oversimplification.⁸³⁴ Clearly people were searching for alternatives to alleviate a tense situation and were motivated by fear to both support and oppose the government. The main concern for those who supported the government's security measures was the maintenance of law and order, economic stability and the protection of the status quo.

⁸³⁴ Dubow makes reference to English-speaking support for Verwoerd in order to 'protect white supremacy' in 'Were There Political Alternatives?', 131.

4.2 Fear of a second Sharpeville

From the previous section it is evident that the electorate experienced a sense of anxiety at the establishment of the republic, and this motivated some to request a multi-racial conference. The exact nature of the protest planned by the NAC was ambiguous and left many drawing their own conclusions regarding possible violence. Initially, there were fears of violent protests to which the government responded with a show of force and only later was it reported that the demonstration was intended to be a stay-away aimed at avoiding any confrontation with the police. The NAC had initially threatened to undertake 'country-wide demonstrations on the eve of the proclamation of the Republic', but gave little more information about what they were planning.⁸³⁵ With such an ambiguous term as 'demonstrations', there was much speculation about what the intended protest would entail. It soon came to light that the protest action would take the form of a stay-at-home or a stay-away; reports still surfaced that the protest would involve some kind of disruption or violence.⁸³⁶

The NAC also attempted to assure Africans that they were not encouraging violence and in May issued a pamphlet which urged people to 'stay at home' and to be 'united and disciplined'.⁸³⁷ Similarly, shortly before the stay-away Mandela made statements which encouraged Africans to stay at home and not to participate in any forms of processions but reiterated that it was to be a 'quiet and peaceful stay-at-home demonstration'.⁸³⁸

On 24 May the police issued a statement explaining that they 'do not anticipate any unrest'.⁸³⁹ Despite all this talk of non-violence and peaceful protest, the police presence itself gave citizens cause for concern. For some, the possibility of a clash between police and protestors was a grim reminder of the Sharpeville massacre that had taken place the year before. The Sharpeville massacre had resulted in a State of Emergency

⁸³⁵ RIMA, MCH 07-126-11-17, National Action Council: General Strike, June 1961.

⁸³⁶ 'Stay-Away: A Call Is Made to Employers', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 May 1961, 1; 'African Leaders Drop Republic Protest Plan', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 May 1961, 3.

⁸³⁷ NAC pamphlet published in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 638-9.

⁸³⁸ 'Assurances given for Peaceful Monday', *The Star*, 27 May 1961, 1.

⁸³⁹ 'No Need for Fear, Say Police', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 May 1961, 1.

which sent the economy into a downward spiral. In early May there were reports of people stocking up on non-perishable food items, and in the week leading up to the republic celebrations, more reports of this nature surfaced. On 23 May *The Star* reported that 'Johannesburg's housewives are laying in unusual quantities of food'.⁸⁴⁰ There was clearly some expectation of a temporary disruption of daily life as the stay-away, police action and possible disruptions dominated the front pages of newspapers right through the preparation and celebration of the establishment of the republic

The government predictably did not give in to the NAC's requests for a multi-racial convention. Verwoerd's frustration with requests to hold such a convention was apparent during his speech to parliament on 23 May. He 'delivered a scathing attack on the growing number of prominent South Africans' who were calling for such a convention.⁸⁴¹ The week before the republic celebrations saw increased police action. This included the presence of tanks and riot squads in townships as well as nightly police raids, helicopter patrols, and the large-scale distribution of anti-strike leaflets.⁸⁴² Some news reports even revealed that police vans had been driving around broadcasting messages over loudspeakers and encouraging workers not to participate in the stay-away.⁸⁴³ The government did not only ramp up police actions to suppress the possible rioting but also tried to stop the peaceful stay-at-home efforts. To further dissuade workers from participating in the stay-at-home 'employers... under government pressure... threatened workers with dismissal if they stayed at home'.⁸⁴⁴ *The Cape Argus* reported that the Cape Town City Council had told its 'non-European' employees that they would risk dismissal if they did not come to work. They reported

⁸⁴⁰ 'Food Stocks Go up, Just in Case', *The Star*, 23 May 1961, 1; See also 'Shops Busy as Rand People Stock Up', *The Star*, 27 May 1961, 1.

⁸⁴¹ 'P.M.'s Move Ominous- Graaff', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 May 1961, 1.

⁸⁴² *Keesing's Diary of World Events 1961 -1962*, c18136; 'Police Launch New Raids', *The Star*, 24 May 1961, 1.

⁸⁴³ 'Police Vans Broadcast Reassurances in Durban', *The Cape Argus*, 25 May 1961, 1.

⁸⁴⁴ University of the Western Cape Archive (Hereafter UWCA), R.E. van der Ross collection, Box 13 (480), South African Congress of Trade Unions: Special Newsletter, 16 June 1961.

also that the Minister of Transport threatened those railway workers that participated in the stay-away with dismissal.⁸⁴⁵

The government employed extensive security measures similar to the State of Emergency declared after the Sharpeville massacre. Anti-apartheid activists described these strict measures as 'police terrorism' as well as a state of siege.⁸⁴⁶ According to some reports, thousands of Africans were arrested during the month of May under these extended security measures, with reports claiming the arrest of up to '10,000 innocent Africans'.⁸⁴⁷ Yet, the government stopped short of declaring a State of Emergency, claiming that the measures were merely precautionary. Various members of the electorate, as well as newspaper editors, weighed in on these security measures and the planned stay-away.

Several politicians and members of the electorate questioned the need for these extreme security measures. The opposition explicitly requested that these security measures be explained and discussed in parliament, but this request was denied. Instead, Verwoerd merely assured the public that there was nothing to be concerned about, and told opposition leaders not to question the measures put in place to protect the country.⁸⁴⁸ Despite Verwoerd's reassurances that there was no need to panic, Graaff blamed Verwoerd for causing anxiety amongst the electorate with these defensive actions.⁸⁴⁹

The condemnation of these measures was based on the fact that the government had not given adequate reasons for the banning of meetings and other security measures that had been put in place. The previous year's State of Emergency had been a response to the Sharpeville massacre, but these security measures were pre-emptive

⁸⁴⁵ 'Railway Strikers Will Be Dismissed', *The Cape Argus*, 24 May 1961, 1; '9000 Told They Risk Dismissal', *The Cape Argus*, 24 May 1961, 1.

⁸⁴⁶ RIMA, MCH 07-126-11-16, All-In African National Action Council: A Review of the Stay-at-Home Demonstration, 1961, 1.

⁸⁴⁷ *Keesing's Diary of World Events 1961 -1962*, c18137; RIMA, MCH 07-126-11-16, All-In African National Action Council: A Review of the Stay-at-Home Demonstration, 1961, 2.

⁸⁴⁸ 'Essence of Parliament', *The Star*, 24 May 1961, 15.

⁸⁴⁹ 'Verwoerd Fails to Allay Anxiety', *The Cape Argus*, 24 May 1961, 6; 'Turbulence Will Not Endure, Graaff Tells City Meeting', *The Cape Argus*, 25 May 1961, 8.

and therefore difficult to justify in the eyes of the opposition. Those who questioned the security measures highlighted the lack of democratic principles involved in enforcing these rules. In an editorial regarding the universal ban on meetings, the editor of *The Cape Argus* wrote that 'if they [the government] want to take such measures, then they must be willing to identify the enemy. Unless they do so, they are infringing on the rights of citizens'.⁸⁵⁰ The refusal of the debate in parliament similarly caused the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* to proclaim that while Verwoerd must maintain law and order, he could not 'treat Parliament as if it doesn't exist'.⁸⁵¹ A political analyst writing for the same publication also stated that Verwoerd had 'left no one in any doubt about how far he is prepared to go along the totalitarian road'.⁸⁵² An opinion piece in *The Cape Argus* observed that it seemed that the increase in freedom for the State meant the decrease of freedom for its citizens. In commenting on the actions taken in the weeks leading up to the establishment of the republic, this author stated that 'all in all, we have seen a great impairment of the freedom of the individual'.⁸⁵³

There were several letters that also emphasised the totalitarian nature of the government's response. One reader's letter published in *The Star* stated there had now been ample warning that 'apartheid would end in the destruction of all Western democratic standards' and that white power would be a 'short-lived dictatorship'. This reader further pointed out that the government was making a grave mistake in thinking that white supremacy could be maintained by force.⁸⁵⁴ One reader thought that the lack of democratic principles meant that Western Civilisation did not even exist in South Africa.⁸⁵⁵ For another reader, the situation presented the world with a 'picture of Hitlerism'.⁸⁵⁶ Another reader blamed the nationalists for the deteriorating state of the

⁸⁵⁰ Editorial, 'The Invisible Enemy', 10.

⁸⁵¹ Editorial, 'In the Dark', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 May 1961, 8.

⁸⁵² Sparks, 'Premier Flaunts His New Power', 7.

⁸⁵³ Anon., 'Dr. Verwoerd's Yoke Spells Crisis after Crisis', *The Cape Argus*, 25 May 1961, 14.

⁸⁵⁴ Anon., 'It Is Impossible to Maintain White Supremacy by Force', *The Star*, 26 May 1961, 8.

⁸⁵⁵ G. Cohn, 'Helping S. Africa Back into Western Civilization', *The Star*, 22 May 1961, 8.

⁸⁵⁶ Anon., 'I Regard Tomorrow as 'Black Wednesday'', *The Cape Argus*, 30 May 1961, 9.

country and asked 'how long are we to have these periods of public fear and states of emergency or semi-emergency?'⁸⁵⁷

Other readers concentrated on the stay-away and the possibility of violence. They placed the blame on the government, by insisting that the government's intensive military-style response would increase the likeliness of a violent altercation such as Sharpeville. In the view of a few other readers, these security measures were ironic, since they believed the government created the tense situation against which they now sought to protect themselves. One reader's letter published in the *Rand Daily Mail* stated it was not acceptable that the government was asking for young men to take up arms in a situation of their own making. This reader posed the question: 'Do you think you can convince me that... the Government is not to blame for the grave crisis in which South Africa finds itself?'⁸⁵⁸ Similarly, another letter stated that the 'war preparations' were only necessary because the government was forcing the republic on 'millions who have no say in the country of their birth'.⁸⁵⁹ These references to the totalitarian nature of Verwoerd's response are comparable with similar comments made in the run-up to the referendum. During the referendum some readers responded to the proposed republic by questioning the kind of constitution that would be set up.⁸⁶⁰ However, the responses accusing Verwoerd of dictatorial tendencies for the increased security measures were much more subdued than those in the run-up to the referendum. One of the main differences between these two instances was, of course, the people who would be the victims of these dictatorial laws.

Criticism and fear regarding the constitution ahead of the referendum was based on the fact that English-speakers thought they would somehow be declared to be unequal to Afrikaners before the law. In the month leading up to Republic Day, the undemocratic treatment of 'non-Whites' was approached slightly differently. For example, ahead of the referendum the editor of *The Star* had said that the NP could not simply be trusted to adhere to their promises of a democratic republic and also blamed them for using fear

⁸⁵⁷ Anon., 'I Love My Country but I Would Get out If I Could', *The Cape Argus*, 23 May 1961, 12.

⁸⁵⁸ M. Mitchell, 'A Mother Writes to the Minister of Defence', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 May 1961, 6.

⁸⁵⁹ I. van der Merwe, 'Joyous Occasion', *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 May 1961, 4.

⁸⁶⁰ See Chapter Two, p45.

of 'the black menace' to garner support for a republic.⁸⁶¹ Although not necessarily supportive of the NP government's actions ahead of Republic Day, the editor of *The Star* now thought that this 'hasty tinkering with the law' was acceptable because it was intended to prevent a possibly violent situation.⁸⁶² There was a noticeable difference in the complaints that the electorate had about the new constitution ahead of the referendum, compared to their objections to the security measures implemented by the government. Some readers found undemocratic laws acceptable if they were not personally affected by them. Thus, the assertion made in the two previous chapters seems to become more evident in the weeks before the establishment of the republic. For at least a part of the English-speaking electorate, the government's laws were not so unacceptable when they would also be protected by them.

It is no surprise that the editors of the Afrikaans press supported the security measures implemented by the government.⁸⁶³ *Die Transvaler* portrayed the planned stay-away as a violent disturbance of the republican celebration and warranted these security measures. This editor wrote that some 'non-white elements' were planning disruptions and that the government could not 'tolerate people who do not want to obey the law and want to act violently'.⁸⁶⁴ The editor of *Die Burger* responded strongly to those who were criticising the government's actions and advocated that only the government was able to determine the size of the threat because only they had access to the relevant information. The editor defended the strict measures by saying that 'the government's responsibility is not to muffle riots, but the much more difficult task of trying to ensure that no riots start in the first place.' The reason given was that the stay-away was a 'riot' taking place at a time when 'violence is moving south towards our borders', and the editor wrote that 'it would be criminal negligence to go about as if there is no serious threat to South Africa'.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶¹ Editorial, 'A Dark Secret', *The Star*, 28 September 1960, 16; Editorial, 'Irresponsible Tactics', *The Star*, 10 September 1960, 8.

⁸⁶² Editorial, 'The Shadow Behind', 16.

⁸⁶³ Editorial, 'n Welkome Boodskap', *Die Transvaler*, 28 May 1961, 6; Editorial, 'Harnas Vir Toekoms', *Die Vaderland*, 29 May 1961, 8.

⁸⁶⁴ Editorial, 'Die Goeie Uit die Kwaai', 6.

⁸⁶⁵ Editorial, 'Noodmaatreëls', 8.

For those who opposed the measures as well as those who supported them, the main goal was to avoid a situation equivalent to the Sharpeville massacre. The editor of *Die Burger* referenced Sharpeville in his support of the security measures by insisting that 'last year's violence should be avoided at all cost'.⁸⁶⁶ The idea that South Africa might have to deal with a second Sharpeville was also the reason used by the editor of *The Star* to support the stricter security measures. This editor mentioned that the security measures were not aimed at those who simply wanted to make a point, but at those with violent tendencies that could exploit the situation by encouraging other protesters towards violent action. Regardless of whether he found the police actions to be democratic or not, this editor wrote that if 'the banning of meetings and the hasty tinkering with the law succeed in averting another Sharpeville... this action will be endorsed by all law-abiding citizens'.⁸⁶⁷ The editor of *The Cape Argus* had a different outlook on the realities that Sharpeville held for the republic. In an editorial he pointed out that it was ironic that the last moments of the Union Parliament, before the establishment of the republic, were spent debating the events at Sharpeville. He used the Sharpeville situation to urge that the NP had to 'face the lessons of Sharpeville and practice racial tolerance'.⁸⁶⁸

The editor of *The Cape Argus* also commented that the electorate would be satisfied by this type of justification for security measures were taken to maintain law and order.⁸⁶⁹ This is precisely how some readers writing to the English-language and Afrikaans newspapers responded. The intentions behind the strikes would justify whether or not the actions taken by the government were warranted. One letter to the editor of *The Cape Argus* anticipated a violent situation during the stay-away as inevitable since illegal gatherings would have to be dispersed and this usually caused 'heated tempers' to 'flare into violence'. This reader believed that the government knew that 'the only way to avoid it [violence] is not to have demonstrations or gatherings'.⁸⁷⁰ A reader's letter in *The Star* proclaimed that 'all sensible and responsible people are grateful for the

⁸⁶⁶ Editorial, 'Propaganda en Voorsorg', *Die Burger*, 24 May 1961, 10.

⁸⁶⁷ Editorial, 'The Shadow Behind', 16.

⁸⁶⁸ Editorial, 'Birth amid Gloom', 16.

⁸⁶⁹ Editorial, 'The Invisible Enemy', 10.

⁸⁷⁰ Morris, 'Any Demonstration Will Flare into Violence', 13.

security measures our government is taking in the interest of the safety of all our people'.⁸⁷¹ Similarly, a reader's letter published in *Die Burger* stated that the government was taking the necessary precautions to avoid a violent protest since they knew that violent protests usually result from peaceful demonstrations. This was because some 'hotheads' would incite this kind of behaviour causing the police to intervene.⁸⁷²

Others thought that the stay-at-home itself was undesirable. Several readers' letters published in *The Star* even urged employers to discourage these kinds of demonstrations by refusing to pay labourers who did not show up for work.⁸⁷³ Similarly, in *Die Transvaler* one reader recommended that labourers should be informed about the implications of the strike so that they would not stay away from work.⁸⁷⁴ This also related to the previously mentioned fear that the stay-at-home would result in a national stand-still and therefore citizens were stocking up on food and produce from supermarkets.⁸⁷⁵ Regardless of the different views expressed by editors and members of the electorate, it is clear that a violent confrontation on Republic Day was feared. This in itself is a stark contrast to the notion that Republic Day was a time of celebration for white South Africans and is integral to understanding how the electorate reacted to the establishment of the republic.

On the eve of the stay-away most newspapers reiterated that the planned disruption was to take the form of a stay-at-home and that no protest demonstrations were expected. The *Rand Daily Mail's* front page carried Verwoerd's claim that there was nothing to fear and that the situation was under control.⁸⁷⁶ The paper also stated that any plans by African leaders for disruptive demonstrations had been dropped earlier

⁸⁷¹ Anon., 'Grateful', *The Star*, 23 May 1961, 4.

⁸⁷² T. Boydell, 'Staan Saam, Vra Dr. Boydell', *Die Burger*, 24 May 1961, 10; W. Jackson, 'Britte Tree Baie Kwaaiër Op', *Die Burger*, 30 May 1961, 10; See also B. Vosloo, 'Suid-Afrika Verplig Om Sterk Te Staam', *Die Transvaler*, 22 May 1961, 6.

⁸⁷³ J. Liesering, 'Advice to 'Stay -at-Home' Strikers', *The Star*, 24 May 1961, 6; G. Patrick, 'Firmness Advocated', *The Star*, 23 May 1961, 4.

⁸⁷⁴ M. Lourens, 'Hulle Moet Voorligting Gegee Word', *Die Transvaler*, 24 May 1961, 6.

⁸⁷⁵ 'Food Stocks Go up, Just in Case', 1.

⁸⁷⁶ 'Nothing to Fear, Says Verwoerd', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 May 1961, 1.

that week.⁸⁷⁷ On their front page, *Die Transvaler* reported that Verwoerd told everyone to remain calm and added that 'agitators lost their appeal' since they had been driven underground.⁸⁷⁸

4.3 The stay-at-home

On 29 May, the day that the stay-at-home commenced, the majority of newspapers prematurely reported on their front pages that the stay-away had failed.⁸⁷⁹ *Die Transvaler* had reported that numerous people were on their way to work with *The Cape Argus* saying that the stay-at-home had been mostly ineffective on the first day.⁸⁸⁰ *The Star* stated plainly in their late edition on 29 May that the stay-at-home had failed. These reports differed from the reports published by anti-apartheid activists and platforms. According to members of the NAC who had organised the stay-at-home, the response and participation on 29 May had been 'magnificent' since 'hundreds of thousands of people risked their jobs and livelihoods by not going to work'.⁸⁸¹ A newsletter issued by the South Africa Congress of Trade Unions reported that on 29 May 'there was an overall response of 50- 60% in all major areas' and listed several factories that were brought to a complete standstill between 29 and 31 May 1961. In their opinion, the stay-at-home was not a failure and had brought the entire country to a standstill for the entire month of May since 'shares slumped, business hit rock bottom, capital poured out of the country'.⁸⁸² Several reviews and summaries of this nature were published in pamphlets issued by anti-apartheid organisations and activists.⁸⁸³

To account for this disparity in reports on the stay-away, anti-apartheid platforms and newsletters suggested that the press had sabotaged the stay-away. One report stated

⁸⁷⁷ 'African Leaders Drop Republic Protest Plan', 3.

⁸⁷⁸ "Premier Stel S.A. Gerus," *Die Transvaler*, May 27, 1961.

⁸⁷⁹ 'The Stay-At-Home Fails', *The Star*, 29 May 1961, 1; 'Talle Bantoes Op Pad Werk Toe', *Die Transvaler*, 29 May 1961, 1; 'Stay-at-Home Was Mostly Ineffective on First Day', *The Cape Argus*, 29 May 1961, 1.

⁸⁸⁰ 'Talle Bantoes Op Pad Werk Toe', 1; 'Stay-at-Home Was Mostly Ineffective on First Day', 1.

⁸⁸¹ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 235.

⁸⁸² UWCA, R. E. van der Ross collection, Box 13 (480), South African Congress of Trade Unions: Special newsletter, 16 June 1961.

⁸⁸³ RIMA, MCH 07-126-11-16, All-In African National Action Council: A Review of the Stay-at-Home Demonstration, 1961.

that 'on the day of the strike the *Rand Daily Mail*, echoing the SABC, told non-Whites, "Everybody's going to work!" – before they could possibly have known the truth'.⁸⁸⁴ The consensus was that by reporting a failure of the strike early on 29 May, these newspapers had convinced numerous workers that people had indeed gone to work and had caused workers to return to work on 30 May.⁸⁸⁵ A contributing factor was that labourers had to rely on these news reports since other forms of communication had been made impractical by the strict security measures.⁸⁸⁶ On the second day of the stay-away, Mandela called off the strike since participation was deemed unsatisfactory.⁸⁸⁷

Speaking to the newspapers about the success of the strike on the evening of 29 May, Mandela declared that the perceived twisting of the facts by the media had been a 'deliberate act of sabotage'.⁸⁸⁸ According to Mandela 'the English-language press had widely publicised the campaign until a few days before it was to begin', but 'on the eve of the stay-at-home, the entire English-language press crumbled and urged people to go to work'.⁸⁸⁹ In his memoir, *Rand Daily Mail* journalist Benjamin Pogrud wrote that this report on the failure of the strike had been incorrect and this erroneous reporting had been one of the causes of the strike being cancelled on 30 May.⁸⁹⁰ The newspapers themselves did not print reports highlighting this disparity and consequently the notion that the strike had failed came to be accepted as conventional wisdom.

Newspapers at the time reported that the strict policing measures taken to suppress the strike had been one of the primary reasons for its failure. The editors of the Afrikaans- and English-language press claimed that the main reasons that the strike had failed were the precautionary police and military measures taken by the government.⁸⁹¹ It is near impossible to determine what had happened to cause the newspapers to act in

⁸⁸⁴ RIMA, MCH 229-2-7-74p, Counter Attack: Bulleting of S.A. Congress of Democrats, August 1961, 6; Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 364.

⁸⁸⁵ RIMA, MCH 229-2-7-74p, Counter Attack: Bulleting of S.A. Congress of Democrats, August 1961, 6.

⁸⁸⁶ Pogrud, *War of Words*, 18; Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 235.

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁸ RIMA, MCH 07-126-11-17, National Action Council: General Strike, June 1961, 5.

⁸⁸⁹ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 235.

⁸⁹⁰ Pogrud, *War of Words*, 19.

⁸⁹¹ Editorial, 'The Strike That Failed', *The Cape Argus*, 1 June 1961, 13.

such a way, but perhaps it can be attributed to the desire for peace and stability during the establishment of the republic. By 30 May, the second day of the strike, *The Star* reported in a front-page article that the 'stay-away strike has collapsed', echoed by the *Rand Daily Mail's* front-page report that all was calm and peaceful in Johannesburg. However, the organisers of the strike reported that in some areas up to 75% of workers had stayed at home on the same day. By 31 May, the consensus was that the stay-at-home had been unsuccessful and that the celebration of South Africa's establishment as a republic on 31 May would proceed calmly and peacefully.⁸⁹²

It is difficult to determine the exact number of workers that participated in the stay-away. For example, Bunting thought that the strike had been significant, writing that it had been 'the greatest national general strike ever held in the country'.⁸⁹³ *A Survey of Race Relations* stated that initially on the morning of 29 May reports indicated that 50 to 60 per cent of Johannesburg's African labourers had participated in the stay at home. The survey also stated that 'as the day wore on it became apparent that large numbers had remained in the shelter of their homes until they were certain that police protection would be available'.⁸⁹⁴ However, news reports declaring the strike a failure had been circulating in the news media from as early as 7 A.M. that morning and could have been another factor which contributed to labourers returning to work during the course of the day. Karis and Gerhart's edited collection of documents, *From Protest to Challenge*, is one of the only historical accounts that makes mention of the disparity between news reports regarding the number of labourers that participated in the stay-away, but they do not list it as a contributing factor to the outcome of the protest action.⁸⁹⁵

It is easy to see where the disparity in the literature regarding the success of the stay-away arises. For the most part, the scale of the stay-away is reported on by other sources in a similar manner, even though they differ in their evaluation of its success. For example, Karis and Gerhart mention that the stay-at-home seems only to have been successful in certain city centres such as Johannesburg. Yet, they conclude that 'it is

⁸⁹² 'The Stay-At-Home Fails', 1.

⁸⁹³ Bunting, *Rise of the South African Reich*, 180.

⁸⁹⁴ Horrell, *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1961*, 37.

⁸⁹⁵ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 363.

extraordinary that the stay-at-home was as extensive as it was' in light of the extensive security measures and police action employed.⁸⁹⁶ Conversely, the second-hand account found in Keesing's reported that in some centres such as Johannesburg half of the African labourers had stayed at home and that a considerable number of the 'coloured and Muslim' and 'Asian' workforce in Cape Town and Durban had stayed at home. Yet, the analysis in this publication was that the stay-away was met with 'negligible response'.⁸⁹⁷ Mandela himself also made differing statements about the strike. In the circular 'General Strike' he stated that 'in light of the conditions that prevailed both before and during the three-day strike, the response from our people was magnificent indeed'.⁸⁹⁸ Later in the same circular, he stated that 'the response fell below expectation' and said that a campaign of non-cooperation with the government would ensue.⁸⁹⁹

Generally, those who argued that the strike had failed as well as those who advocated that it had been a great success used the same statistics. It does appear that the narrative of a failed strike simply suited both the nationalist camps. For Afrikaner nationalists, the narrative of a failed strike supported the notion that pro-active government action had ensured peace and order. Lacking violent disruptions, both the multi-racial convention and the stay-away were disregarded in historical accounts of the establishment of the republic. In Van Der Merwe's account of the establishment of the republic, the planned stay-away and the increased security measures are not mentioned at all, and the focus is mainly placed on the festivities of the establishment of the republic.⁹⁰⁰ Similarly, the narrative of a strike thwarted by police action also provides support for African nationalist interpretations that the time for violent resistance had come. In his account of the history of the ANC, Meli writes about the 'tactics of violence' used by the State to defeat protest action at the time and concludes that this 'massive repression' had marked the 'beginnings of an armed resistance movement'.⁹⁰¹

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 364.

⁸⁹⁷ *Keesing's Diary of World Events 1961 -1961*, c18137.

⁸⁹⁸ RIMA, MCH 07-126-11-17, National Action Council: General Strike, June 1961, 8.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁰⁰ Van Der Merwe, 'Totstandkoming van die Republiek', 220.

⁹⁰¹ Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us*, 143-4.

As the beginning of this chapter suggests, other factors need to be taken into consideration when assessing the NAC's planned stay-away. The measure of success of the strike based on the number of workers that stayed at home and other mitigating circumstances remains open to interpretation. But, the notion that the strike had failed draws attention away from the impact that it actually had. The range of opinions carried in the press reveal a lot about the effect that the stay-way had on the electorate and the extent to which the NAC had managed to rally support for a national convention. This chapter has pointed to two instances where the strike, or the fear of the strike, had a significant impact on the white electorate. First, in the weeks leading up to the planned stay-away, numerous members of the white population joined in the call for a multi-racial convention or a revision of South Africa's racial policies. The concept of a national convention had evidently captured the interest of members of the electorate. Second, the prospect of violence and the associated economic impact of such a disruption motivated members of the electorate to consider alternative racial strategies that could prevent such a confrontation. Although in reality nothing significant had actually happened, the thought of another Sharpeville massacre convinced some white voters that change might be required to preserve peace.

On Republic Day large crowds of spectators assembled, despite the rain, to witness the presidential procession heading through central Pretoria to the church on Church Square for the inauguration of the first President of the Republic of South Africa. Buildings and platforms had been decorated with the traditional NP colours of orange, white, and blue bunting for the occasion. There was, however, a noticeable police presence, with several officers having inspected the church before the inauguration commenced. After the procession left Church Square, there was a fly-by of several squadrons of military aircraft. The festive bunting was a stark contrast to the barbed wire that was put up around the Swartkops military aerodrome in anticipation of any demonstrations.⁹⁰²

⁹⁰² This portrayal of events was given on the front pages of *The Star* and *Die Burger* on 31 May 1961. See also Editorial, 'A Divided Country's Appointment with Destiny', 8.

The fact that the stay-away had been called off and the republic had been established without any significant confrontations was well-received in the press and was seen as the avoidance of a possible crisis. Even though the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* had been critical of the stricter security measures ahead of the stay-away, he gave credit to the government for their handling of the situation. He wrote that despite his disapproval of the government's policies 'we readily concede that the government did everything in its power to prevent that critical situation leading to a breakdown of law and order'. He further stated that 'every possible precaution was taken and there is no doubt that the confidence which both Whites and non-Whites gained from these precautions was an important factor in preserving calm'.⁹⁰³

Various readers wrote to both English-language and Afrikaans newspapers to express their gratitude towards the police as well as the government for avoiding another Sharpeville and potentially violent disruptions. A reader's letter published in *The Cape Argus* urged that 'thanks should be given to the police for their patience, courtesy and hard work' in preparing for Republic Day.⁹⁰⁴ Similarly, a political correspondent for *The Star* credited 'the adult and restrained behaviour of both police and native leaders and the prior roundup by the police of several thousand native loafers'.⁹⁰⁵ This sense of support was also found in the Afrikaans press with the editor of *Die Transvaler* who advocated that the timely actions of the government had ensured peace and order.⁹⁰⁶ An English-speaking South African wrote to this publication to proclaim his gratitude for the maintenance of peace and to 'strongly oppose what they [the UP] did to criticise the government's attempt to prevent bloodshed'.⁹⁰⁷ For the editor of *Die Transvaler*, the failure of the strike was a sign that all racial groups knew that they should work together in the country and that it showed a sense of yearning for mutual existence in peace.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰³ Editorial, 'Breathing Space', *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 June 1961, 6.

⁹⁰⁴ F. Woolf, 'My Thanks to Police', *The Cape Argus*, 1 June 1961, 11.

⁹⁰⁵ Anon., 'In the Republic: More Austerity for All', *The Star*, 3 June 1961, 8.

⁹⁰⁶ Editorial, 'n Welkome Boodskap', *Die Transvaler*, 30 May 1961, 6.

⁹⁰⁷ C. Sinclair, 'Laat Ons Toekoms Saam en Verenig Trotseer', *Die Transvaler*, 30 May 1961, 6.

⁹⁰⁸ Editorial, 'n Mislukte Aanslag', *Die Burger*, 30 May 1961, 10.

A notable element from the English newspapers was the onus placed on the police for calm; restraint by the police was essential to maintain law and order.⁹⁰⁹ The editor of *The Star* pointed out that a lesson to be learned from the stay-away was the importance of police conducting their investigations with restraint. He wrote that 'the conclusion is that that it pays handsomely for the police to adopt a protective rather than provocative attitude' since it avoided the economic turmoil and international outrage experienced after Sharpeville.⁹¹⁰ Following the establishment of the republic, the editors of English-language newspapers commented that there were lessons to be learned from the crisis preceding Republic Day. The editor of *The Cape Argus* emphasised that people should not be misled into thinking that the failure of the strike was 'the end of the matter' because it was an opportunity for anti-apartheid groups to learn from their mistakes and plan other demonstrations.⁹¹¹ Alistair Sparks, then a political correspondent for the *Rand Daily Mail*, argued that there was still some time, but that it was still urgent that opposition groups should 'start organising a multi-racial national convention without delay'.⁹¹² Sparks' belief that there was time left for change hugely underestimated the urgency of the situation. In June 1961, days after the failure of the strike, the debate on the use of violence to overthrow apartheid resurfaced. In the months after the establishment of the republic, anti-apartheid groups decided to use armed action against the government and the first sabotage bomb was planted in December 1961.⁹¹³

⁹⁰⁹ Anon., 'In the Republic: More Austerity for All', 8; Woolf, 'My Thanks to Police', 11.

⁹¹⁰ Editorial, 'Two Vital Lessons', *The Star*, 31 May 1961, 8.

⁹¹¹ Editorial, 'Lessons of the Emergency', *The Cape Argus*, 30 May 1961, 10.

⁹¹² A. Sparks, 'National All-Race Talk Is Urgent', *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 June 1961, 7.

⁹¹³ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 647-8.

4.4 The establishment of a republic

The establishment of the republic on 31 May 1961 is often portrayed as a momentous occasion.⁹¹⁴ The day of the establishment of the republic was reported on and celebrated with great enthusiasm, particularly by Afrikaners. The English-language newspapers devoted a few pages to photographs and reports on the festivities. Each of the Afrikaans newspapers published a supplementary newspaper devoted explicitly to the celebrations and historical roots of republicanism. The government went to considerable lengths to solidify the establishment of the republic as a moment of national pride for the white electorate. Examples of this included the production of various collectable memorabilia such as teaspoons, ashtrays and badges.⁹¹⁵ Each white school pupil also received a medal to celebrate the establishment of the republic (Figure 34).⁹¹⁶



Figure 34: Republic medals

⁹¹⁴ Van der Merwe, 'Totstandkoming van die Republiek', 220; Liebenberg, 'From the Statute of Westminster to the Republic of South Africa', 400.

⁹¹⁵ National Archive Repository, Pretoria (SAB), KIM 3-R169, File on Republic celebrations and other matters, n.d.

⁹¹⁶ 'Flag Day', *The Cape Argus*, 30 May 1961, 11. Medals in the image are part of a private collection.

The establishment of the republic also meant that the insignia of the monarchy and the Union had to be replaced. In the weeks leading up to 31 May, symbols of the monarchy were removed from official spaces and buildings. One example was the removal of royal portraits from the parliamentary House of Assembly to make space for their portraits of the new figureheads of the republic.⁹¹⁷ Other similar removals, for example, the demolition of the royal coat of arms at the Port Elizabeth Custom House, caused unhappiness with those who felt that such parts of the Union's history should have been preserved.⁹¹⁸

The removal of objects and symbols associated with the monarchy and the Union was not welcomed by all. The editor of *The Star* referenced the 'frantic removal of royal symbols' by saying that some of these symbols were a legitimate part of the country's history that could never be ignored or undone.⁹¹⁹ Similarly, the editor of *The Cape Argus* wrote that the government should realise that history could not be unwritten by removing crowns and emblems that had meaning for certain sections of the population.⁹²⁰ Although there was such an emotional response from some of these editors, the response was not necessarily anti-republican and focused more on the preservation of South Africa's history.

There were elements of anti-republicanism found in letters written to the English-language newspapers where readers declared that they would not participate in the Republic Day celebrations. These reports and letters revealed a sense of dismay at the establishment of the republic and refusal to participate in the festivities.⁹²¹ In a letter to *The Cape Argus*, one reader wrote that he was not likely to celebrate in the face of the international isolation and humiliation caused by the NP since they took over the government.⁹²² Another reader writing to the editor of *The Cape Argus* also mentioned that they would not participate in the republic celebrations and one even mentioned that

⁹¹⁷ 'Assembly's Royal Portraits Taken Down', *The Cape Argus*, 29 May 1961, 2.

⁹¹⁸ "'Royalty' Reduced to Rubble', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 May 1961, 10.

⁹¹⁹ Editorial, 'Royal Symbols', *The Star*, 27 May 1961, 8.

⁹²⁰ Editorial, 'Enough Broken Symbols', *The Cape Argus*, 3 June 1961, 8; A reader made similar statements: Anon., 'Is This the Republican "Warm Esteem"?', *The Cape Argus*, 2 June 1961, 11.

⁹²¹ 'Johannesburg Will Boycott the Republic Celebrations', *The Star*, 10 March 1961, 8.

⁹²² Anon., 'I Love My Country but I Would Get out If I Could', 12.

they would instead fly the South African flag at half-mast as a symbol of mourning.⁹²³ The reasons given for this attitude were mostly the loss of Commonwealth membership or how the referendum had been conducted. According to a political commentator writing for *The Cape Argus*, those English-speaking people who did not want to celebrate the republic were upset about the loss of Commonwealth membership and the end of connections with Britain. In this article, the argument was made that those who did not want to participate in the republic celebrations should not be expected to do so.⁹²⁴ An article published in *The Star* reported that several large municipalities were avoiding celebrations because their white citizens were divided and argued that there was a division in white society that made people unenthusiastic to the Republic.⁹²⁵ Some English-speaking citizens were dismayed with the establishment of the republic and the division that had been evident in the referendum results had not yet dissipated. Again, the refusal to celebrate the republic was not mainly concerned with the republican form of government, but more with the NP's governance and the loss of Commonwealth membership.

Reports that some Whites would not celebrate the establishment of the republic caused English-language and Afrikaans newspapers to urge the electorate to be respectful of all groups on the day of celebration. In light of the emotional attachment that some still had to their British heritage, several calls went out that urged the public to avoid political outbursts and allow the celebrations to proceed calmly. The idea that the celebration might be disrupted was based on movements such as the secession movement where pro-British citizens had called for Natal's secession from the republic during the referendum campaigns.⁹²⁶ The editor of *Die Burger* advised all to avoid political attacks during the republic celebrations and to respect those who would be celebrating and those who did not share their enthusiasm alike.⁹²⁷ The republic demanded new Afrikaners as well as new English-speaking South Africans that would rise above the

⁹²³ Anon., 'In Protest', *The Cape Argus*, 30 May 1961, 9; Anon., 'I Regard Tomorrow as "Black Wednesday"', 9; Anon., 'Half-Mast', *The Cape Argus*, 30 May 1961, 9.

⁹²⁴ H. G. Lawrence, 'Understanding and Tolerance Are the New Nation's Needs', *The Cape Argus*, 29 May 1961, 10.

⁹²⁵ Editorial, 'A Divided Country's Appointment with Destiny', 8.

⁹²⁶ Thompson, *Natalians First*, 173.

⁹²⁷ Editorial, 'Einde van die Ou Orde', 12.

restrictions of past grievances and show the world an example of a nation formed of two sections.⁹²⁸ In an editorial published in the *Rand Daily Mail* the mayor of Johannesburg was quoted as having said that there was an 'appeal to all sections of the community to show tolerance to one another and refrain from saying or doing anything that can cause unnecessary pain or can inflame emotions'.⁹²⁹ After a day of peaceful celebration on 31 May 1961, the editor of *Die Burger* again gave thanks to the 'peaceful' way in which the republic had its first day and said that there had been great self-restraint by anti-republicans.⁹³⁰

As mentioned in previous chapters, Natal had expressed the strongest opposition to the republic during the referendum. Proportionately, Natal contributed fewer anti-republican votes during the referendum than the Transvaal or the Cape respectively, but its anti-republican spirit did not die down after the referendum. After the Commonwealth Conference there seemed to be a sense of acceptance that the republic would be established, yet the Natal separatist movement retained some purchase.⁹³¹ However, after efforts to oppose the new constitution in parliament had failed, the UP's Natal leader, Douglas Mitchell admitted that there was no legal ground on which Natal could secede upon the establishment of the republic. Thompson states that in the end, Natal could not escape the establishment of the republic and that 'the reality had finally killed Natal separatism'.⁹³²

In the event, there were no notable disruptions on 31 May. The outspoken opposition against the republic found during the referendum campaign, as well as fears regarding the protection of English-speaking rights, culture and language, were mostly absent from the opinions voiced in the newspapers around the establishment of the republic. Most notably, the laden term of a 'Verwoerd Republic' was no longer used in these English-language publications or by the opposition. Instead, the anti-apartheid resistance movement had appropriated this term, specifically in an attempt to motivate

⁹²⁸ Editorial, 'Lewe die Republiek', *Die Burger*, 31 May 1961, 8.

⁹²⁹ Editorial, 'Time for Calm', *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 May 1961, 10.

⁹³⁰ Editorial, 'Danksegging', *Die Burger*, 1 June 1961, 10.

⁹³¹ Thompson, *Natalians First*, 172.

⁹³² *Ibid.*, 174.

African workers to participate in the stay-away.⁹³³ Lawrence Gandar, the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*, wrote an opinion article in which he attempted to explain why the acceptance of the republic was 'inevitable'. He conceded the general end of monarchism in the international arena, as well as younger generations of South Africans who did not have attachments to the British crown, contributed to this reality. He did mention that the expression of British sentimentality had been inhibited but identified that one of the primary reasons for the dwindling sense of Britishness was a change in the character of the British connection. He wrote that:

for some time now English-speaking people in this country...have been growing uneasily aware that they are no longer in tune with their own British traditions with its core of humanistic liberalism. Most have clung to the outward symbols of the British connection and tried to close their minds to the content.⁹³⁴

On 31 May the first state President C. R. Swart gave a speech in celebration of the establishment of the republic. The newly established republic, he said, was an opportunity for a 'new beginning' and called for all of South Africa's inhabitants regardless of their race to play a part in the republic through undivided loyalty and friendship.⁹³⁵ He also said that all South Africans 'must make a success of the Republic' and as much as this was a call for 'non-Whites' to play their part in the republic, he was also requesting that the white electorate should unite to give adequate leadership in an African country.⁹³⁶

Considering the heated debates regarding white unity and cooperation during the referendum campaign, newspaper editors specifically reflected on this element of the president's speech. Editors of the English-language newspapers thought that calls for unity would remain empty until the government proved that it desired unity and equality

⁹³³ Pamphlet issued by the ANC to promote the Stay-At-Home published in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 638-9; The term 'Broederbond Republic' is used in leftist publication *Fighting Talk*, 15(4), May 1961.

⁹³⁴ L. Gandar, 'The Republic- and Its Challenge to Us All', *Rand Daily Mail*, 31 May 1961, 10; The suppression he referred to was explained as anyone being labelled as a 'jingoist' for expressing attachment to the British Monarchy.

⁹³⁵ 'The "New Beginning"', *The Star*, 31 May 1961, 3.

⁹³⁶ 'Now We Must Make a Success of the Republic', *The Cape Argus*, 31 May 1961, 19.

for the white electorate. The editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* pointed out that the statements made in favour of white unity in the President's speech had been made on previous occasions and that 'much that proved damaging to the country has been done in the name of cooperation and unity'. He wrote that this did not undermine the call for a good future, but the editor argued that 'it is now for the government to show that it means what the President says'.⁹³⁷ Similarly, an editorial published in *The Cape Argus* stated that the speech was unexceptionable and that the government's talk of goodwill and cooperation had always remained talk and resulted in nothing more.⁹³⁸ He wrote that 'the country is now waiting for action that will be proof of the Government's act of goodwill' and urged that the government would be held accountable to their promises of unifying the electorate.⁹³⁹

The expectation that the government had the responsibility of bringing the President's desire for white unity to fruition was also found in *Die Burger*. The editor of *Die Burger* wrote that for the public there was a feeling that the government should make South Africa better and greater than it was before and that the government should not squander the enthusiasm of the electorate.⁹⁴⁰ Similarly, a letter published in the same newspaper stated that the call made by the president had been received positively and that if the government waited too long to act on their promises, then the enthusiasm of the white public would wane.⁹⁴¹

Although white unity had not been achieved on Republic Day, it remained a desired objective for most of the editors and readers writing in these publications. The notion of white unity was rather differently approached than it had been during the referendum, though. During the referendum campaign, English-language newspaper editors and readers had commented that unity was a chimera designed to convince people to vote for the republic. Instead of continuing with anti-republican arguments, some members of the electorate now argued that the republic had to be accepted and respected. Even the

⁹³⁷ Editorial, 'Words of Promise', *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 June 1961, 9.

⁹³⁸ Editorial, 'That Delicate Plant', *The Cape Argus*, 1 June 1961, 12.

⁹³⁹ Editorial, 'For Better or Worse', *The Cape Argus*, 31 May 1961, 8.

⁹⁴⁰ Editorial, 'Die Republikeinse Sittig', *Die Burger*, 5 June 1961, 8.

⁹⁴¹ H. Constant, 'President Se Uitdaging Aan Suid-Afrika', *Die Burger*, 5 June 1961, 8.

Rand Daily Mail, which had argued against the republic, now portrayed unity and acceptance of the republic as a priority. In an opinion article, the editor urged that English-speaking South Africans should seek to play a role in the republic and wrote that the republic first had to be accepted since 'it could be a new beginning, an adventure in the rediscovery of half-forgotten ideals. If we treat it as such, we shall regain our place in the South African Sun'.⁹⁴² He further stated that there was nothing to be gained by an attitude of rejection of the republic, which he saw as being inherently self-defeating.⁹⁴³ A reader's letter similarly stated that even though the republic had not been wanted, people should be thinking about what the day meant for the republicans. This reader declared that 'if friendship and tolerance [between English-speakers and Afrikaners] replace old hatreds we may be sure that the Republic of South Africa will go forward to a great and happy future'.⁹⁴⁴

Readers also supported the sentiment that the establishment of the republic was a *fait accompli* and that there was no sense in fighting it. A letter published in *The Cape Argus* said that both the republic and its departure from the Commonwealth would not be changed just because a few people were unwilling to accept it. This reader stated that since the republic was an unavoidable reality, the best course of action was to 'cooperate with the inevitable like truly responsible citizens and give the Republic of South Africa a send-off befit of a remarkable Nation'.⁹⁴⁵ A similar letter published in the *Rand Daily Mail* argued that while some English-speakers were emotional and 'bitterly opposed' to the republic, the establishment of the republic was no less an emotional event for Afrikaners. The reader asked 'if we English-speaking South Africans are sad today, what of the feelings of the people of the Republics when their land and independence were taken from them?' This reader urged people to accept the republic and said that 'the Republic of South Africa will go forward to a great and happy future' if friendship and tolerance replaced old hatreds'.⁹⁴⁶ These sentiments stand in sharp

⁹⁴² Gandar, 'The Republic- and Its Challenge to Us All', 10.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁴ Anon., 'Replace Old Hatreds in the Republic', *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 June 1961, 4.

⁹⁴⁵ L. Van der Merwe, 'Let's Have a Political Truce', *The Cape Argus*, 29 May 1961, 9; See also Anon., 'My Politics Are Rusty but Let's Get down to Earth', *The Cape Argus*, 29 May 1961, 9.

⁹⁴⁶ Anon., 'Replace Old Hatreds in the Republic', 4."

contrast with the 'Reject this Republic' slogan and the notion of a dictatorial 'Verwoerd Republic' expressed mere months before during the referendum campaigns. This again supports the notion that it was not necessarily the republic itself that had been unacceptable to anti-republicans, but rather the economic consequences and instability that could have been brought about by such a constitutional change.

During the referendum campaign, many readers had accused the NP of encouraging people to conform to their political views when they were calling for white unity. The calls for unity during the republican celebrations were unique since the focus was placed on mutual respect rather than political conformity. This sentiment was also evident in a letter published in *Die Transvaler* which urged that the republic should be above party politics and that citizens should instead focus on unity. English-speakers and Afrikaners 'must realise that we owe it to ourselves, our neighbours and our children to seriously consider our new future and to be willing to participate individually by listening to each other's ideas, to respect and understand them'.⁹⁴⁷ A columnist writing for *The Cape Argus* similarly imagined that most would be looking to a future in which they want a happy, united South Africa. He wrote that 'in the long run, even the most ardent monarchist will put aside his ideals and sacrifice his traditions to help free South Africa of fear, hatred and distrust'.⁹⁴⁸ For the editor of *The Cape Argus*, this was already realised on Republic Day. He wrote that on the day of the celebration of the republic, the marvel was that:

there is so little accent on differentness. There is a feeling of oneness, perhaps in spite of, rather than because of, day-to-day politics. There is a feeling of common heritage and common challenge, and South Africa's main problem today and tomorrow, and in the days to come, is how to harness all the legacies of this common heritage to meet the challenge of the future.⁹⁴⁹

⁹⁴⁷ D. H. Hermann, 'Dink Na Oor Viering', *Die Transvaler*, 24 May 1961, 6.

⁹⁴⁸ Anon., 'Remember Them Today', *The Cape Argus*, 25 May 1961, 8.

⁹⁴⁹ Editorial, 'Built by Many Hands', *The Cape Argus*, 30 May 1961, 10.

The editor of *Die Transvaler* also concurred:

The nation was probably never before more united than at the moment that the president was sworn in. At that moment there were no political differences in the heart of the nation. These events in Pretoria can be taken as a good sign for the future. As the Republic progresses, so too the state president will increasingly become a symbol of unity.⁹⁵⁰

The same newspaper published two cartoons portraying these sentiments of unification (Figure 35 & 36). The cartoons show the opening and closing of a curtain to indicate the ability of the republic to unite the two sections. On 30 May the published cartoon depicted a couple representative of the electorate as unhappy and plagued by divided loyalty and implied that the figurative curtain was closing on this sense of disunity. On 31 May the published cartoon showed the curtain opening on this same couple depicted as being happily married and devoted.⁹⁵¹ A cartoon (Figure 37) published by the *Rand Daily Mail* similarly depicted English-speaking and Afrikaans South Africans shaking hands and hoping for a prosperous future for the republic.⁹⁵² Most notable is that neither of these cartoons necessarily implied that unity was the same as cultural amalgamation or political conformity. Specifically, in the cartoon published in the *Rand Daily Mail*, the English-speaking South Africans and the Afrikaners are depicted as being different in their dress and cultural attire and were wishing each other well.

⁹⁵⁰ Editorial, 'Die Simbool van Eenheid', *Die Transvaler*, 1 June 1961, 8.

⁹⁵¹ Etam, 'Die Gordyn Gaan Op- 31 Mei 1961', *Die Transvaler*, 31 May 1961, 2. English translation of cartoon title: 'The Curtain Goes Up- 31 May 1961'

⁹⁵² 'Best Wishes', *Rand Daily Mail*, 31 May 1961, 8.

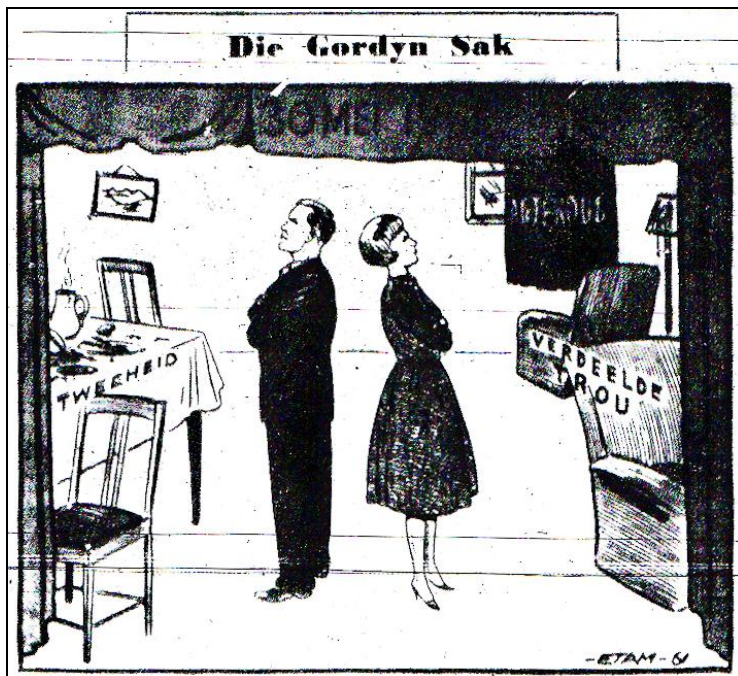


Figure 35: Die gordyn sak- Die Transvaler, 30 May 1961

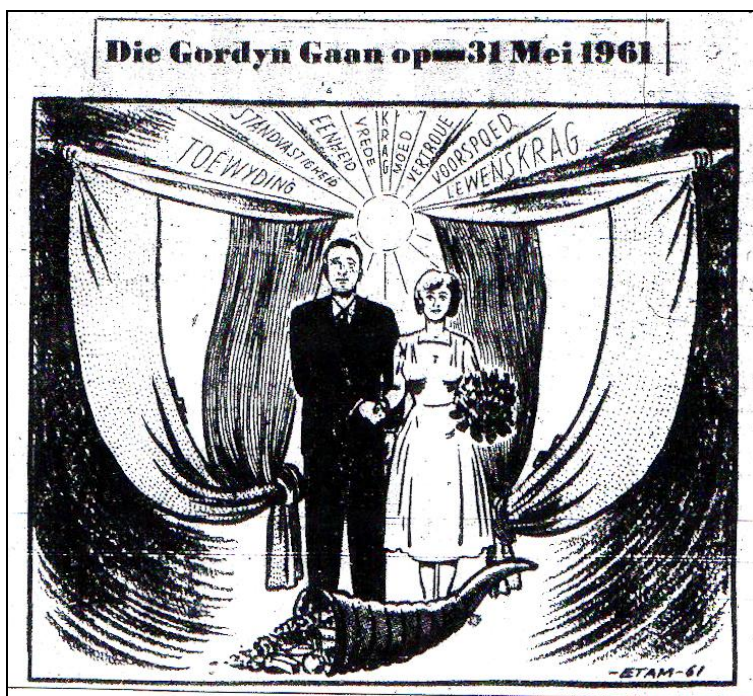


Figure 36: Die gordyn gaan op- Die Transvaler, 31 May 1961

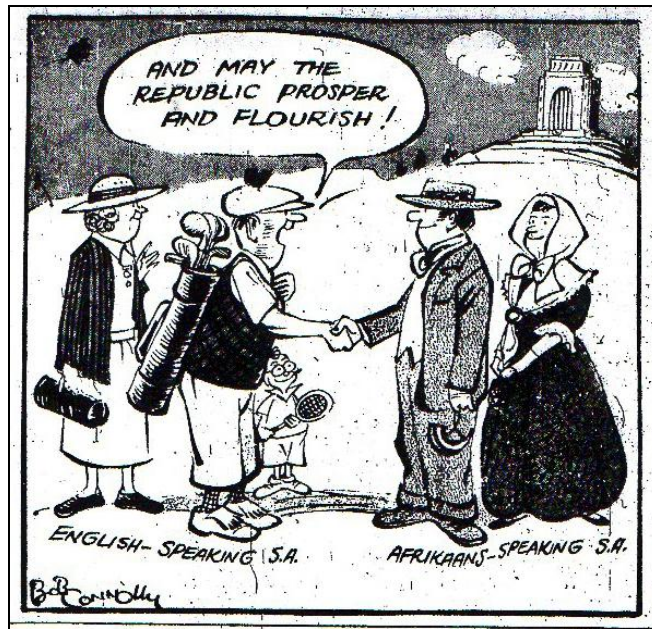


Figure 37: Best wishes- *Rand Daily Mail*, 31 May 1961

The referendum and the republic are often interpreted as having brought about white unity and it is clear from the analysis above that there is some validity to this interpretation. Yet, it is important to identify the precise nature of this unity since it was on occasion associated with an increase in support for the NP and apartheid.⁹⁵³ The portrayal and opinions found in these newspapers hint that the sense of white unity was not necessarily political or cultural unity, but rather a measure of patriotic unity. The focus and portrayal in the Afrikaans press presented this unity as a devotion to South Africa and in the cartoon mentioned previously (Figure 36) words such as 'devotion' were used to indicate what the content of white unity would be. The portrayal found in the English-language press is that the acceptance of the republic and sense of white unity was a process of respecting the establishment of the republic and choosing to play a part in its future.

Once fears regarding the constitution and the consequences of leaving the Commonwealth had dissipated, this sense of commitment to white unity was again

⁹⁵³ Stultz and Butler, 'The South African General Election of 1961', 86–110; Rubin, 'White Politics', 20–37.

evident with the establishment of the republic. Examples of unity found in these newspapers can best be described as a sense of 'new South Africanism' which had been evident during the referendum campaign.⁹⁵⁴ 'Unity' was revealed as a sense of commitment to the shared South African space, and most importantly it was a commitment to 'solving the racial crisis' in the wake of the call for a multi-racial convention. These characteristics of the role of an exemplary white South African citizen were found in readers' letters and editorials from both the English-language as well as the Afrikaans newspapers.

While there was a sense of white unity present during the establishment of the republic, *The Star* drew attention to a crucial aspect of the acceptance of the republic. The editor wrote in an editorial that the acceptance of the republic should not be misconstrued as acceptance of the government. He wrote that 'the government will be making a great mistake if they suppose that the acceptance of the Republic is to be identified with acceptance of their policies, particularly their race policies'.⁹⁵⁵

Much attention was given to the fact that the republic did not have a clean slate and that pressing racial issues would still need attention. Even though the establishment of the republic had not turned violent, as some had feared, there was awareness that this was only a temporary respite. A cartoon (Figure 38) published in *The Cape Argus* depicted Verwoerd cooking a meal, which represented the republic, on an open fire. The fire, which represents racial hatred, had not been doused simply by establishing the republic. It is insinuated that the racial hatred, which had been ignited, would burn down the forest, in which an antelope, representative of South Africa, is standing.⁹⁵⁶ This cartoonist was providing commentary that the tense racial crisis could not be forgotten now that a republic had been achieved, since ignoring the fire of racial distress could have detrimental effects for South Africa.

⁹⁵⁴ See Chapter Two, pp60&80.

⁹⁵⁵ Editorial, 'Accepting the Republic', *The Star*, 1 June 1961, 16.

⁹⁵⁶ Jackson, 'Racial Hatred Fire', *The Cape Argus*, 2 June 1961, 2.



Figure 38: Douse the fire- *The Cape Argus*, 2 June 1961

The notion that the new republic had to face ‘troubles’ was not confined to the English-language press. On more than one occasion, the editor of *Die Burger* adopted a realistic approach when discussing the future of the republic and what it would entail. Even though the editor of *Die Burger* did see the republic as having a ‘good’ future, he urged that such a future would require hard work and focus on the possibly crippling racial and international challenges facing South Africa. In an editorial, he wrote that Afrikaners now had to do introspection since they held the political power in the republic and therefore the future of South Africans of other races and languages were in their hands.⁹⁵⁷ *Die Burger* published a cartoon (Figure 39) in which the new era of the republic was represented as a duckling hatching from an egg while surrounded by a storm and rain, which represented the perceived challenges that South Africa was facing. The cartoonist wrote that the duckling would have to learn how to swim promptly to avoid these troubles.⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁷ Editorial, 'Ons Moet Dit Waardig Wees', 10.

⁹⁵⁸ Honiball, 'Nuwe Bedeling', *Die Burger*, 27 May 1961, 6. English translation of cartoon title: 'New Dispensation'.

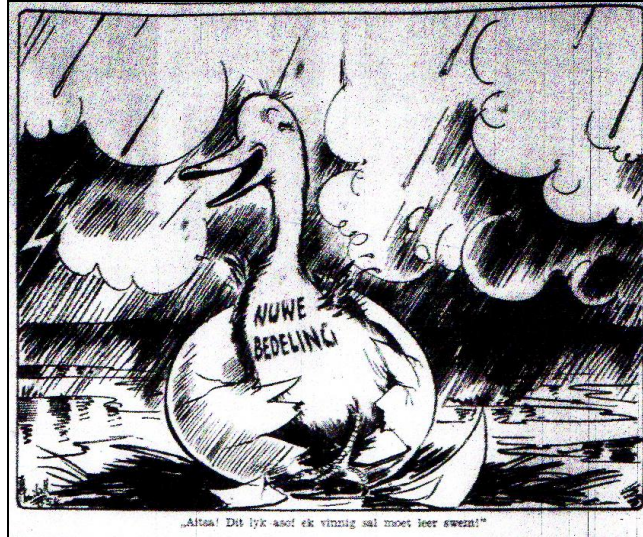


Figure 39: Nuwe bedeling- *Die Burger*, 27 May 1961

The day after the establishment of the republic, the editor of *The Star* drew attention to the fact that, now that the republic had been established, there were pressing matters that required the government's attention. The editor wrote that 'the Republic of South Africa has been launched for better or for worse on the sea of international uncertainty' and that the public therefore had the 'right to expect that the government will relax its gaze on the ideological heavens and tackle those bread and butter issues which demand attention and resolution'.⁹⁵⁹ Here it becomes evident that this sense of unity also included a sense of commitment to solving the racial crisis. During the referendum campaigns, both sides of the republican debate had argued that disunity had been a major obstacle to finding solutions to address the racial crisis.⁹⁶⁰

An editorial in *Die Burger* insisted that the republic demanded new kinds of Afrikaners as well as new English-speaking South Africans who would show the world an example of a nation formed of two sections. He wrote that 'this formation of a single nation is also owed to non-white groups' since South Africa could not continue on its course for much longer and should work towards solving its racial problems.⁹⁶¹ For the editor of *Die*

⁹⁵⁹ Editorial, 'Back to Bread and Butter', *The Cape Argus*, 1 June 1961, 12.

⁹⁶⁰ See Chapter Two, p85.

⁹⁶¹ Editorial, 'Lewe die Republiek', 8.

Burger, the success of the republic relied on how the racial question would be solved.⁹⁶² This was also a concern for Afrikaans members of the electorate. A reader's letter published in *Die Transvaler* noted that the protection of other races was an important element and that 'we must also make sure that those non-Whites who are not politically inclined do not become victims of non-white politicians'.⁹⁶³ A letter published in *Die Burger* urged that to solve the racial problem 'urban Bantus' should be seen as urban citizens and should be allowed to reside inside of the cities permanently. This reader stated that 'If these are the steps taken then we will be able to be worthy of the opportunity presented to us... to establish new trust and alleviate racial tension'.⁹⁶⁴ Not all of these editors or letters agreed on the best course of action, but even those proclaiming support for the government's racial policy referred to a 'racial issue' that needed to be solved or that a solution to the 'racial problem' should be found.⁹⁶⁵ Even in the Afrikaans press, readers were advocating that there were racial challenges that still needed to be resolved.

The editor of *The Star* also hoped for some changes on this front due to diminishing cultural boundaries between Whites. He wrote that although some English-speaking white South Africans would possibly now support the NP's race policies that 'there will also be republicans who now that they have achieved their goal, will feel free to oppose the government on racial issues'. The establishment of the republic would now leave people open to make the choices regarding racial policy that they really wanted to make.⁹⁶⁶ Another commentator for the *Rand Daily Mail* concluded that white and 'non-white' race relations would 'determine whether the Republic is to have a great future or no future at all.'⁹⁶⁷

The connection between white unity and racial policy was underlined by a commentator writing for the *Rand Daily Mail*. Whites were so busy discussing different racial policies

⁹⁶² Editorial, 'n Mislukte Aanslag', 10.

⁹⁶³ Hermann, 'Dink Na Oor Viering', 6.

⁹⁶⁴ Constant, 'President Se Uitdaging Aan Suid-Afrika', 8.

⁹⁶⁵ W. Strauss, 'Vreemde Bantoes in die Boland', *Die Burger*, 23 May 1961, 10; Anon., 'Groot Besproeiingskemas Is Noodsaaklik', *Die Transvaler*, 1 June 1961, 6; Editorial, 'Die Konvensie-Vyblad', 6.

⁹⁶⁶ Editorial, 'Accepting the Republic', 16.

⁹⁶⁷ Sparks, 'National All-Race Talk Is Urgent', 7.

that they did not appreciate that the vital problem facing the electorate was 'the problem of creating an atmosphere in which the Afrikaners and the English can become one people', because only a united people would be able to successfully educate and give the franchise to the 'Bantu' people in South Africa. He urged unification for this purpose and wrote:

Come now, Afrikaners and 'English' South Africans. Let us lose our exclusive English and Afrikaans racial consciousness by becoming a single white people who speak two languages... in the long run, our children and maybe our children's children will settle the question of multi-racialism or separate development.⁹⁶⁸

The need for white unity was not necessarily an indication of support for the government's racial policies. For some, white unity was seen as a necessary element in finding alternatives to the government's apartheid policies. As pointed out in Chapter Two, this sense of unity was also not a default response to the government's call for unity. Instead, the notion of unity had been a pre-existing desire for numerous members of the electorate that was not associated with the NP or their interpretations of white nationalism. The idea, however, that apartheid could be tackled now that the republic had been established divested attention from the momentum of the call for a multi-racial convention. The successful suppression of the strike removed the need for immediate action and the sense of fear experienced by the electorate before the stay-away. This significantly reduced the number of Whites who were calling for a national convention consultation. In the August 1961 newsletter of the white anti-apartheid group, Congress of Democrats, the editor wrote:

No issue has made such an impact on the South Africa political scene in the past year as the demand for a National Convention. Why then have some leading

⁹⁶⁸ G. Boucher, 'Sacrifice White Domination', *Rand Daily Mail*, 30 May 1961, 8. The commentator here insinuates that it might take years to find an adequate way in which to deal with the challenges of a multi-racial society. In his opinion, however, more attention should be given to white unity, since no solution to racial challenges would be found if the white electorate remained divided.

white organisations and individuals, who originally supported the idea, now retreated to a watered-down policy of multi-racial talks?⁹⁶⁹

4.5 Conclusion

The analysis of the days leading up to the establishment of the republic and the immediate response to the event brings to light several elements which had an impact on the white electorate.

The republic, far from being a moment of pure celebration, was a moment of anxiety for the white electorate in light of the declarations made by the All-In African convention. The call for alternatives and solutions to alleviate the tense situation is a very important notion, especially as it relates to the concept of fear. While a common interpretation is that white anxieties precipitated by the Sharpeville massacre and the 'Congo crisis' forced white voters to support the NP, this chapter has shown that this was not necessarily the case. For a significant part of the electorate, especially English-speakers, anxiety about the future caused it to call for alternative policies and join support demands for a national convention.

While the establishment of the republic may have contributed to a greater sense of unity between Whites, the impact of the stay-away and the call for a national convention point to an electorate that was divided over racial policy. Fears regarding violence and inevitable 'bloodshed', often credited as uniting the white electorate, also had the opposite effect of aggravating divisions, since they divided the electorate over the future of racial policy. The 1961 election results rather point to a divided white electorate regarding apartheid.⁹⁷⁰ The sense of unity that can be associated with the republic is a testament to how anti-republicans had mostly come to accept the establishment of the republic and its departure from the Commonwealth. This acceptance of the republic and a shared desire for peace and prosperity underpinned much of 'white unity' witnessed at the time of the establishment of the republic.

⁹⁶⁹ RIMA, MCH 229-2-7-74p, Counter Attack: Bulleting of S.A. Congress of Democrats, August 1961, 6.

⁹⁷⁰ See Chapter Two, pp126-7.

The stay-away was successful in as much as it brought racial policy and consultation to the fore and focussed the electorate's attention on the re-evaluation of racial policy, more so than had been the case during the referendum. The mere suggestion of a demonstration that could result in violence attracted a great deal of attention from voters and should at least be seen as having enjoyed a measure of success in garnering support for a national convention.

A political correspondent writing for *The Star* saw the events at the time as being evidence of 'the divided mind and unsure steps with which South Africans are marching towards the Republic'.⁹⁷¹ The events that occurred from the referendum to the establishment of the republic are often represented as a swift nationalist victory. It is, however, important to remember that the establishment of the republic was accompanied by intensified resistance as well as promises for change. The elements of division and uncertainty that were present for the white electorate bring the establishment of the republic into a different light. It exposes the differences amongst members of the electorate that are often forgotten in the narratives that focus on politicians as nationalist victors.

⁹⁷¹ Anon., 'A Divided Country's Appointment with Destiny', 8.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

We are also burdened by an electorate that is shifting steadily, albeit reluctantly, to the right. Blinded by the fantastic fears of Black violence conjured up by the Nationalists and swayed by petty self-interest, the bulk of White South Africa is burning all the boats that remain as a last communication between themselves and the Non-white peoples.
Anon, October 1961⁹⁷²

The conclusions at the end of each chapter note the historical contributions of each chapter while the overall conclusion to the thesis steps back from the literature and instead provides an overview of the main arguments of this thesis. This thesis has explored the related topics of the referendum, South Africa's Commonwealth membership and the establishment of a republic by examining mainstream media. This analysis has investigated the interpretations of white identity and race policies within that context. Although it is difficult to determine the exact percentage of voters that held a particular view on these topics, this thesis has nonetheless challenged many interpretations found in the literature. This thesis has shown that there is space in the existing literature for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of these events.

The use of newspapers and published letters in this thesis has provided valuable methodological insight. In the introductory chapter, Marxist perspectives on the media were briefly discussed and its limitations highlighted.⁹⁷³ This thesis has argued that it is not useful to approach the media purely as a state apparatus; although the media was always tainted and biased, it provided a forum for the multitude of opinions held by the public. Of course, it can be argued that all white citizens formed part of the top-structure of society and therefore the white media represents mainly white interests, but as was seen in this thesis, the English-language press consistently offered a variety of opinions and also occasionally published letters and articles from black readers. Furthermore, this thesis has indicated that readers' letters can also be used as a measure of public

⁹⁷² RIMA, MCH 229-2-7-74p, Counter Attack: Bulleting of S.A. Congress of Democrats, October 1961, 1.

⁹⁷³ See Chapter One, p27.

opinion. The methodological considerations mentioned in the introduction remain important when undertaking this type of research. This thesis has shown that popular publications published a variety of letters, some of which were in conflict with the view of the editor. As discussed in Chapter Three, a majority of letters that were published were in conflict with the viewpoint that the same publication's editor held regarding the Commonwealth Conference.⁹⁷⁴ Newspapers as primary sources have their limitations, but readers' letters can be used as a tool to re-examine the generally accepted interpretations of popular opinion in historical narratives.

The referendum as analysed in Chapter Two sheds light on the political issues that underpinned the referendum and the final push for the establishment of a republic. A striking conclusion from Chapter Two was that the referendum was not a 'gamble', as is often suggested in the literature. When the referendum was announced in the beginning of 1960, before the Sharpeville massacre, the NP's own estimates suggested that the referendum was easily winnable, especially as the voting age having been lowered to 18 years. The significance of the referendum results thus becomes less about why people voted for a republic, as is often the focus in the literature, and more about why a greater number of people did not vote in favour of the republic. In this regard, readers' letters as well as editorials and opinion articles all provided insight into public opinion and the major arguments against a republic. As discussed in Chapter Two, stability and the maintenance of the status quo were the most important considerations. It is generally accepted in the literature that fears and uncertainty caused the electorate to vote for a republic. By contrast, Chapter Two showed that, during the referendum, it was change to a republic and the uncertainty and instability it represented that caused voters to oppose a republic.⁹⁷⁵ It was only after the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference of 1961 that the establishment of a republic was increasingly seen as the option holding the least amount of change to the status quo.⁹⁷⁶ Even though the referendum is often seen as either a cultural or party-political phenomenon, Chapter Two provided evidence suggesting that concerns about the economy and the future

⁹⁷⁴ See Chapter Three, p178.

⁹⁷⁵ See Chapter Two, pp123-4.

⁹⁷⁶ See Chapter Three, p183.

stability of the country played a more decisive role in the outcome of the referendum than previously acknowledged. Had Verwoerd been able to assure voters of South Africa's continued Commonwealth membership, the referendum would very probably have been won with a greater majority.

Chapter Two demonstrated that the referendum and its associated campaigns were very much concerned with the idea of white unity. While some authors have suggested that the referendum result was a sign of voters responding to the government's call for white unity, this thesis has shown that the concept of unity during the 1960 referendum had more than one dimension.⁹⁷⁷ There is of course evidence of voters, especially in the English-language press, expressing their willingness to vote for a republic for the sake of unity. Far more prevalent, however, was the notion that unity was so important that a republic would first have to guarantee such unity before it could be accepted.⁹⁷⁸ Also important to note is that there was an almost universal desire for unity expressed in the press particularly in English-language newspapers. Chapter Two suggested that this desire for unity was not in response to the government's call for unity in the run-up to the referendum, but seems to have been a prior discussion point, and not necessarily 'giving in' to the government's pressure for unity.⁹⁷⁹

Discussions of unity link with notions of identity, a topic discussed in the literature review. Existing studies contain stark and often conflicting interpretations regarding Afrikaans and English-speaking identity.⁹⁸⁰ The Afrikaans press offered a very monolithic view of Afrikaners, and little in terms of different opinions in published letters. Occasionally, a difference of opinion was published in the Afrikaans press, but mainly for the purpose of being ridiculed by the editor's commentary. These instances serve as a reminder, however, of the fact that not all Afrikaners ascribed to nationalist views and that some were increasingly concerned by the NP's racial policy.⁹⁸¹ Regarding English-speaking identity, Chapter Two highlighted that the rejection of a republic was not only

⁹⁷⁷ Stultz and Butler, 'The South African General Election of 1961', 107.

⁹⁷⁸ See Chapter Two, pp64-5.

⁹⁷⁹ See Chapter Two, pp60-1.

⁹⁸⁰ See Chapter One, p22.

⁹⁸¹ See Chapter Four, pp219-20.

culturally driven. Lambert's argument that they were 'rallying for the monarchy' during the referendum is debatable, to say the least.⁹⁸² The major reason why voters objected to a republic was uncertainty about the type and style of a republic. Others rejected a republic because it might be seen as support for apartheid.⁹⁸³

The subject's literature tends to posit either a strong British connection, or see English-speakers as a group of people unsure of their identity.⁹⁸⁴ As the evidence in support of these interpretations is limited, it may be more useful to consider the concept of South Africanism as an important dimension of English-speaking identity. Although some Afrikaners shared these views, this interpretation of unity and identity was mainly found in the English-press and voiced by English speakers. South Africanism is said to have subsided during the late 1940s, yet the concept continued to influence discussion of unity in the newspapers, almost presenting itself as a new South Africanism.⁹⁸⁵ Unity was desired as long as it did not entail cultural amalgamation or universal acceptance of NP policies. This desired unity would see the distinct characteristics of Afrikaners and English-speakers maintained, but with a renewed devotion to South Africa. The Afrikaans press, on the other hand, implied that Afrikaner nationalists saw unity as meaning conformity. Anyone who did not conform would be labelled unpatriotic. There was a strong sense from the opposition and anti-republican voters that this sort of unity and this kind of conformity were unacceptable, even though unity was desired.⁹⁸⁶ English-speakers were neither uncertain about their identity, nor willing to accept the role that was being offered to them.

Acceptance of the status quo, the view of the status quo, and the rejection of a republic likely to have an uncertain future during the referendum were important considerations informing the significance of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference discussed in Chapter Three. Although the conference proceedings have been the focus of studies which have claimed that there was a 'lack of outrage' regarding the withdrawal from the

⁹⁸² Lambert, 'An Unknown People', 609.

⁹⁸³ See Chapter Two, pp89-90.

⁹⁸⁴ See Chapter One, p22.

⁹⁸⁵ See Chapter Two, pp60&80.

⁹⁸⁶ See Chapter Two, pp64-5.

Commonwealth especially from the English-speaking population, in fact there has been little research done on how people reacted and voiced their opinions.⁹⁸⁷ Chapter Three detailed the reactions by voters, particularly English-speakers, to the withdrawal from the Commonwealth. Chapter Three highlighted the marked shift in opinion from the electorate regarding a republic as well as the withdrawal from the Commonwealth in the aftermath of the conference. One of the main factors for this shift of opinion was access to information that had not been available prior to the referendum. By the time of the Commonwealth Conference it had become clear what the republican constitution would look like, as well as the limited economic impact that the loss of Commonwealth membership would have. Additionally Chapter Three demonstrated the evolution of what the concept of status quo meant for some voters. Before the referendum the best way to maintain the status quo, according to some anti-republican readers and editors, was to 'keep the Union as it is'.⁹⁸⁸ However, after the Commonwealth Conference, it was clear that the Commonwealth intended to force South Africa to make changes to their racial policy. At this point, some readers realised that maintaining Commonwealth membership would involve more changes to the status quo and more uncertainty than would be the case if South Africa withdrew from the Commonwealth. This resulted in anti-republicans declaring that the conference proceedings had convinced them that Commonwealth membership was undesirable.⁹⁸⁹

An important point highlighted in Chapter Three was the contextualisation of this reaction to the Commonwealth Conference. Existing studies have suggested that the confluence of circumstances led to increased support for Verwoerd, the NP and their racial policies.⁹⁹⁰ But Chapter Three argued that while there was a shift in opinions regarding a republic and Commonwealth membership, this was not necessarily evidence for a rise in support for the ruling party. In Chapter Two the 1961 election results were discussed and it was highlighted that the nature of the 1961 election meant that an increased number of seats in parliament was not necessarily indicative of an

⁹⁸⁷ See Chapter One, p24.

⁹⁸⁸ See Chapter Two, pp119-20.

⁹⁸⁹ See Chapter Three, p183.

⁹⁹⁰ See Chapter One, p26.

increased number of votes.⁹⁹¹ This interpretation, that voters changed their mind about some of the government's decisions but did not necessarily support the ruling party, is also supported by a discussion on racial policy in Chapter Three and Four. In both these chapters a marked increase in the demand for alternative racial policies or the creation of alternative political parties was evident.⁹⁹²

Nowhere was racial policy more intertwined with the referendum and republicanism than in the events examined in Chapter Four. The stay-away set to coincide with the establishment of a republic precipitated a discussion of racial policy in the press. From the analysis in Chapter Four it was revealed that the establishment of a republic did bring about a greater sense of unity amongst white South Africans. The unity that was expressed in the newspapers examined revealed a sense of co-operative unity rather than political unity. This conclusion found support in the reflections on racial policy discussed during the stay-away. While some studies insist that Sharpeville and the events of the 'Congo crisis' pushed people towards the granite policy of the NP, published reflections in the days leading up to Republic Day offered a different perspective. Fearing another clash between police and protesters, many voters called for a national convention to be held rather than more oppressive measures against protestors.⁹⁹³ This sentiment was expressed in letters published in both the English-language press and in the Afrikaans newspapers.⁹⁹⁴ Although the urgency and need for a convention died down shortly after the Republic Day passed peacefully, this discussion indicates that the NP's policy of apartheid was not acceptable to all. Neither the Sharpeville massacre nor the Congo crisis necessarily pushed Whites towards the government, as is suggested by some scholars.⁹⁹⁵

Chapter Four also manages to incorporate historical narratives that are usually approached separately. By examining the stay-away as an anti-apartheid action and incorporating the perspectives of the white electorate Chapter Four manages to

⁹⁹¹ See Chapter Two, pp126-7.

⁹⁹² See Chapter Four, p211.

⁹⁹³ See Chapter Four, p209.

⁹⁹⁴ See Chapter Four, pp220-1.

⁹⁹⁵ L.I. Rubin, 'White Politics', 20.

integrate these historical narratives. The chapter incorporates the narratives of African nationalism and Afrikaner nationalism into a combined narrative that offers a distinctly multi-dimensional interpretation of these events.

The narrative that emerges over the course of this thesis shows that support for particular policies, support for constitutional change, and support for a specific political party are distinguishable from each other. Although the 1961 election was not examined in detail in this thesis, the election results as well as the interpretation of popular opinion found in this thesis emphasises that the electorate was complex. While some interpretations offered a narrow view of the electorate as white citizens persuaded by racial fear to increase the NP's hold over parliament, closer inspection gives a different impression. At a very tense moment, a significant portion of the electorate urged consultation and called for alternatives to apartheid. While there was very little interest in anything that would hasten an integrated society, the 1961 election nonetheless saw marked support for new political parties and independent candidates.⁹⁹⁶

The existing literature has largely focussed on the opinions of politicians while relying mainly on election figures to draw conclusions about the electorate. By examining sources of public opinion and the words of the electorate themselves, this thesis has offered alternative interpretations of the events covered above. While the weight of these opinions is difficult to determine this thesis has shown that these opinions and alternative approaches to these events raise a question mark over oversimplified claims made by certain scholars.

The establishment of a republic was marred by instability and fear. Immediately after the establishment of the republic, many voters were still uncertain about where the apartheid policy was leading, especially in the face of threats of violence made by the ANC. The establishment of the republic and the 1961 election were the last major political events to take place before the turn to armed resistance against apartheid.

⁹⁹⁶ See Chapter Three, p189.

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