

Beyond the Neo-Con Men – a Series of Dialogues

At the end of 2007 one of Australia's most successful conservative governments was defeated at the polls. The defeat of the John Howard was followed by the demise of his ally in the United States, George W Bush, seemingly signalling the end of an era.

Two years later, with the benefit of hindsight, this issue of the *Journal of Cosmopolitan Civil Societies* rethinks the political landscape, and assesses forces and possibilities for social and political change in Australia. Neo-conservatism may be in the history books, but what replaced it? What next for political and social movements: how can they build their power; how do they produce allies, organisations, legitimacy, inspiration, vision?

The issue is organized as a series of four dialogues. Each dialogue is focused on a key issue in the process of social and political change, namely, issues of organization, collaboration, rights and visions. The co-editors argue that each of these are centrally important for political and social movements, and especially so in the current era. Each dialogue is introduced by a co-editor, and engages four or five contributors.

The first dialogue debates the issue of organization. Four authors, Goodman, Rhiannon, Maddison and Fiedler, each with a distinct track record on investigating and participating in social change organizations, debate the merits and demerits of particular organizational vehicles in the current era. How do political and social movements organize for power? Organization enables but also limits possibilities: movements need vehicles and infrastructures - but what kind?

The second dialogue discusses the issue of collaboration, focusing on how people work across cultures for social change. Four authors, Ho, Povey, Wadiwel and Arvanitakis, debate contrasting experiences, cultural clashes and the foundations for solidarity and anti-racism. In the context of Islamophobia and the 'war on terror', where multiculturalism is positioned as a threat to national security, authors explore the politics, challenges and possibilities of cross-cultural collaboration to resist racism and war.

The third dialogue addresses the key issue of rights framing, with a focus on indigenous rights. Agendas for social and political change are often framed in terms of rights, and perhaps none more so than in the case of indigenous movements. Formaini, Burrige, Nettheim and Norman debate the role that rights-framing plays in indigenous contexts, asking how indigenous movements position themselves to claim rights, and what issues of autonomy, sovereignty and legitimacy this raises.

The fourth dialogue centres on visions for social and political change. Four authors, Humphrys, McManus, Tattersall and Whyte, debate how new visions and agendas emerge. How do movements pursue transformative agendas while engaging and challenging existing frameworks? What are the possibilities and limits of resistance, what is the role of positive visions and programs?

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