

the legal profession and the broader community. Anecdotes abound, as do personal disclosures, laced with plentiful wit. Ken writes engagingly and reflects honestly on his achievements and limitations. He quotes the assessment of his rugby skills in his old school magazine: 'He was very difficult to stop: A good tackler'. Indeed he was, in all respects. His autobiography will obviously appeal most to those who knew him. For those who did not, the book is of potential value in illustrating how Australia has evolved over the last half century, with particular emphasis on relationships between those in authority and those needing a good tackler on their side.

Geoff Boucher & Matthew Sharpe

*The Times Will Suit Them: Postmodern Conservatism in Australia*

Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2008, 256 pp, \$35

John Howard said 'The times will suit me' and they evidently did. Conditions of economic growth, coupled with concerns about terrorism on a global scale, created political conditions conducive to his style of politics. Simultaneously though, he re-shaped the times, through the use of spin-doctors, wedge politics, exploitation of the 'politics of fear' and fuelling 'the culture wars'. The last aspect – given strong emphasis in this book – was a means of making 'political correctness' appear alien to 'the Australian way' and creating an apparent division between 'the battlers' and 'latté-sipping intellectuals'.

It was the blend of neoliberal economic policies and cultural conservatism – exemplified by the 'white picket fence' imagery – that is distinctive. Whether 'postmodern conservatism' is an appropriate label for this political blend is debateable. Ultimately, of course, the strategy proved unsustainable, perhaps partly because the Coalition government overreached itself with the *WorkChoices* policies, so obviously in conflict with the interests of the working class 'battlers'. Perhaps also, as the authors note, incidents like the Chaser team's fake 'Bin Ladin' stunt during the APEC Summit in Sydney in 2007 also contributed to the government's loss of respect. The Howard government's Northern Territory 'intervention', ostensibly concerned with aboriginal child welfare, was evidently intended to be another of those 'wedge' issues

that it would use – like the *Tampa* in the 2003 election – for its own political advantage. But the tide had evidently turned.

This book reflects extensively on all these process, and more. The key remaining question is whether we are now at the end of that era of so-called postmodern conservatism, or whether there is ongoing legacy that will taint and corrupt Australian political life in the period ahead. As the authors put it (p.229): ‘the challenge postmodern conservatism in Australia poses is whether Australians are willing to trade tolerance and liberty for social cohesion, or whether we can commit ourselves to an inclusive culture and an open society’.

Philip McMichael

***Development and Social Change: a Global Perspective***

Fourth Edition, Sage Publications, Los Angeles, 2008, 347 pp.,  
Distributed in Australia by Footprint Books, 1/6a Prosperity Parade,  
Warriewood, NSW 2102

As the author notes in his preface, development is a difficult subject to teach. Students in affluent societies, notwithstanding their humanitarian concerns with understanding and redressing the problems of poorer societies, often wrongly assume a ‘development continuum’ or an ‘inevitable march of progress’ that rewards those ‘embracing modernity’. Thinking ‘reflexively about social change, development and global inequalities’ (p xvii) is necessary. Understanding history helps, as does engagement with political economic theories of development having roots in Marx, Polanyi and Wallerstein’s world systems theory. McMichael’s book seeks to survey the main issues in understanding development in this context.

Particular emphasis is put on how the ‘globalisation project’ of the last quarter century replaced the ‘development project’ on which previous attempts to improve living standards had been based. This is much more than a reorientation from policies emphasising import-substitution to policies in pursuit of export-led industrialisation. It is a paradigmatic shift, driven by a counter-mobilisation of corporate interests favouring a self-regulating market. Politically, it is a shift from social democratic ambitions to neoliberal hegemony. Far from resolving the challenge of