

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

‘development’, the shift creates new and deeper inequalities. McMichael illustrates the issues with clarity and authority and, in this new edition of his book, layers on a host of related contemporary concerns – including the importance of ecological issues, the rise of India and China, and Latin American challenges to neoliberalism.

Ngaire Woods

The Globalizers: the IMF, the World Bank and their Borrowers

Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2006, 253 pp., \$33.95

Distributed in Australia by Footprint Books, 1/6a Prosperity Parade, Warriewood, NSW 2102.

This is a careful study of these two powerful and controversial institutions, seeking to assess how, and how well, they function. It notes that, although ‘the evidence about IMF and World Bank impact is mixed’, even their internal evaluations suggest ‘little conclusive impact of net positive effect’ (p. 5). The ways in which the two institutions operate are seen as reflecting the influence of three factors: powerful governments, particularly the USA; the influence of professional economists within the IMF and World Bank; and their relationships with borrowing governments – relationships that can be either persuasive or coercive.

The global mission of the IMF and World Bank is a central theme. In effect, the book illustrates their role in the ‘globalisation project’ that McMichael’s book emphasises. The institutional detail that Woods presents also shows some important differences between the two institutions, leading to recurrent tensions between their roles. Perhaps the central conundrum is how ‘several thousand economists [who] do their best to collect, analyse and interpret data in a professional way’ (p16) generate so little positive benefit within nations desperately needing help. The explanation lies in the dominance of particular ideologies, moulded by institutional cultures and serving powerful sectional interests. This is a familiar political economic story: here the author tells it in a low-key and thoughtful manner that it leads to reformist, rather than radical, conclusions. Case studies of Mexico, Russia and sub-Saharan Africa illustrate specific problems. The author concedes that the IMF and World Bank have become ‘institutions