

Editorial to the 30th Anniversary Issue

JOHN SYNOTT

Social Alternatives has never set out to establish publishing traditions or to compete with other journals. The goals of this journal, as Ralph Summy explains in his retrospective in this issue, have been towards contributing towards nonviolent, sustainable, egalitarian social change through informed discussion, education and presentation of alternative viewpoints than those of mainstream media. In this sense the journal has been a working tool towards a useful social outcome. Oftentimes, as Summy reflects, there have been financial, personpower and other difficulties in just getting issues of *Social Alternatives* prepared and published. Yet, in the process of doing this *Social Alternatives* has built up a valued reputation and a longevity that was never imagined by its founders back in 1977.

Many other national journals and magazines have come and gone over these three decades. Some of them were better funded and sponsored than *Social Alternatives*, some of them with recurrent Australia Council grants. *Social Alternatives* has never applied for a government grant, not that we think the government should not support the publication of writing by Australian intellectuals and artists—far from it—but the gritty independence and self-sufficiency of *Social Alternatives* have allowed us to operate without any strings attached other than trying to meet the demands of our readers to be informed, challenged and thereby empowered by the content of each issue of our journal. Freedom from powerful institutional controls is the basis for alternative ideas, social movements, lifestyles and communities.

There have been pressures and temptations to change from our small but networked team-based production style. The opportunities of government funding are one area, and another has been in the forms of offers from larger publishers to take over the printing, production process, marketing and distribution of *Social Alternatives*, but we have resisted both avenues so far in favour of our

independent process. Maybe we are crazy but our enthusiasm for the journal and perhaps, also, for the community of working together on each issue from concept and theme to the mail-out have been rewarding activities and, at this point in time, successful in terms of the journal's quality and reputation. I won't use the corporate notion of 'brand' which is used for almost every enterprise where there is a public exposure and some form of financial transaction involved. But the production of *Social Alternatives* is relatively secure for the medium-term future, which is a better situation than for many other journals in Australia.

So we wish to share with our readers in this issue our celebration of thirty years of publication of this journal. Thank you for supporting *Social Alternatives*. Our valued subscribers include libraries in universities, schools and government institutions, non-government organizations, and many individuals from around Australia and other countries. Please keep up your subscriptions and bring your colleagues, friends and communities on board, to help the journal contribute to the great conversations and debates facing Australia and the world in the decades ahead. Certainly it is the case that the future of this nation is inextricably entwined with that of the Asia-Pacific region and the broader global context. In this respect *Social Alternatives* always has been internationalist and inclusive of global factors and problems. In recent years we have published themed issues on human rights, terrorism and social impacts of new technologies, for instance.

With this current issue, the final one of 2007, we decided to reflect on the thirty years of publication by not having a particular theme but presenting articles across a range of the themes that have figured in previous issues. Thus the articles in this issue of *Social Alternatives* embrace areas that have been—and continue to be—important social issues of recent decades. Articles on progress in the struggles

for the rights of indigenous people, the character of the political system, human rights aspects of biotechnology, the process of injustice, the economic aspects of emotions and identity, industrial relations, climate change, and social relations in international context all appear in this issue. For these stimulating articles we thank the authors who themselves come from a range of university and ngo contexts in Australia and abroad.

For this 30th anniversary issue we have also indulged in some reflection on *Social Alternatives* by our sole remaining foundation member, Ralph Summy, and I encourage you to start your read of this issue with Ralph's article. It is his final instalment as a regular collective member, although I am sure he will continue to be involved. We wish Ralph (and partner Hilary) well in his retirement and look forward to him being an enthusiastic and critical reader of the journal at their rain-forest mountain lodge. For this issue we have included, also, a piece by past and present poetry editors looking at some of the issues of poetry and editing, along with a number of commentaries on various topical issues. This is, indeed, a bit of a bumper issue to commemorate the occasion.

Sadly, we lost one of our long-term, and long-retired, members, Les Hoey, during this year and Ralph has provided a moving tribute to his friend and associate in this issue.

If *Social Alternatives* is to have a successful future it has to keep moving with the times, so this issue signals some important changes to the journal which we hope will bring a wider readership and improve the quality of the journal. We introduce a new logo and layout design which will be the standard mode of presentation from now on. We have also revamped our website and soon *Social Alternatives* will be available electronically, allowing subscribers to download selected articles or even entire editions from our website. This will expand our international readership as well as provide flexible access to the journal by local subscribers.

Finally, this is a difficult time in human history and there are many problems to be overcome to ensure human survival and general well-being. Nevertheless, we face the future with belief in human creativity, capacity for co-operation and desire for peace. *Social Alternatives* will continue to be a modest vehicle for the promotion of these principles, through socio-cultural analysis and the presentation of critically-informed ideas and perspectives. All members of the *Social Alternatives* collective wish our readers well for 2008 and hope you will journey with us for another three decades.

Spaced out

Spaced out by the sub-Antarctic's
differential gravity penguins stand
like dolmens in the rookeries,
surrounded by low palisades
of pebble necklaces, philosophers
attentive to their incubating eggs.

Their offspring totter seaward
on unsteady, sometimes gaudy legs,
accents in an ice-scape
made for innocents and isolates.

Jena Woodhouse, St. Lucia Qld

Dried flowers with hourglass

These flowers are everlasting
For though their brittle petals fall
And this poor flesh itself decay
Witness time's passage through the glass's
narrow neck
Is never ended, being turned
Upon itself.
Yet as the long years pass
Time's certain toll shall scour that brittle
shell
Thus making this time timeless:
And so my love, this love endures

John Knight, Brisbane Qld

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