
Editorial A timely alternative vision

AS MANY readers will know, *Pacific Journalism Review* was published for nine years in the Pacific – initially at the University of Papua New Guinea from November 1994, and then most recently at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. This issue marks the relocation of the journal from Suva to the School of Communication Studies, Auckland University of Technology. The issue following this one, with the theme of ‘Media ownership and democracy’, will mark a decade of publication. Throughout this time the journal has been at the forefront of critical reflections on the role of the media and journalism practices in the Pacific region; a role it will continue to serve in its new location.

If the fates recognise an obligation to attend a rebirth as much as a birth, then the publication of this issue is auspicious. Coming on the heels of the recent Pacific Islands Forum in Auckland, *PJR* can draw on a context in which issues of neo-colonialism, Trans-Tasman hegemony, racism and ethnicity, most often agonised over in the confines of academia, have become the stuff of popular journalism and demagoguery. If Garth George, who never less than thunders, can grandiloquently pronounce on the Pacific Way of politics as piffle (*New Zealand Herald*, 21 August 2003), then this journal’s mission to address key political and cultural Pacific region issues is unexpectedly fashionable. This is both an opportunity and challenge. The journal’s contribution to an emerging debate on the geopolitical future of the region will be to maintain an analytic momentum that surpasses what is fashionable, critically engaging with the political agendas that strive for the accolade of the leading idea, the transparent truth and the received wisdom. As Oscar Wilde once observed, being fashionable is the shortest route to becoming out of date.

The mix of articles and reviews in this inaugural issue demonstrate this unfashionable engagement. Thematically they range over an examination of the ethical obligations of journalists and educators in the age of the tabloid press and media concentration through to an expose of the recent geopolitical theatre of

war and neo-colonialism, American-style, in Iraq. Another significant theme which touches on many of the concerns underlying the Pacific Islands Forum is the role of the Western or Westernised media in purveying consumerism and sustaining Westernised cultural hegemony over island traditions and practices.

The vision of a United States of the Pacific, assuredly a species of what Benedict Anderson termed an imaginary community, provides a subtext for many of the analyses and discussions contained herein and in issues that will follow. The political and cultural question for the media as engines of the imaginary is: who will do the imagining and in whose interests?

Once again, the Pacific Islands Forum was instructive. On the one hand, the imaginary of a United States of the Pacific as advanced by Australia proposes a 'pooled sovereignty' with a common currency and a common labour market. Such a dramatic change in 'Australian thinking about the region' is a re-imagining driven by a realpolitik of Australian dominance, legitimated by racist claims of the inevitability of political corruption and lawlessness if Pacific peoples are left to their own devices. The recent intervention in the Solomon Islands under the Biketawa Declaration provided an apparent, handy, exemplar.

On the other hand, there is the ongoing issue of the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination and the role of the West in undermining rather than nurturing the Pacific way of politics. As the New Zealand Foreign Minister, Phil Goff, put it:

Colonial power put in place institutions which ultimately failed because they did not forge links with local cultures and traditions that would have allowed them to take root and to build the capacity of local people to make them succeed (*New Zealand Herald*, 31 July 2003).

Garth's Wrath notwithstanding, these issues remain open and *Pacific Journalism Review* looks forward to making its distinctive contribution to them.

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