Consequently, people have heightened interest in business issues. And it's not just gossip about big business that they want to know, but rather issues about running a business of all levels, sizes and types. This is what the newspapers are reacting to and hoping to capture. For newspapers, business issues are ceasing to have exclusive appeal to 'elite' managers and investors, and are developing a wider appeal approaching that of the sports pages.

John Howard's political take on this was explained in a speech he gave on 11 July 2005 to the Sydney Institute. The speech received only marginal media coverage but in fact explains a great deal about the repositioning of the Howard Government. In his speech, Howard claimed that there is 'no more important economic development in Australia in the last two decades than the rise of the enterprise worker'.

Significantly, he did not restrict his comment to claims that this is occurring simply with professionals or with the emerging independent contractor community. Rather, he said that the change is a state of mind which is also prevalent within the blue-collar sector and with traditional employees. This is the same, broad cultural shift to which the newspapers are reacting.

If the newspapers and John Howard are correct, this cultural change blasts holes in the ideas and structures of labour law, labour regulation, management philosophy and the prevailing political ethos developed and seemingly set in stone over the last 150 years or so.

The change makes life difficult for the trade union movement, whose life blood is the maintenance of class consciousness and class warfare in the workplace. It also presents a conundrum for the Australian Labor Party, whose policies have historically targeted 'protection' of 'exploited employees'. Now these easy symbols of 'exploited classes' are being deconstructed by social change.

The most important question, however, is how does this change affect public policy which has long operated on the assumption that there is a controlling class of managers and a controlled class of employees?

What it suggests is that public policy cannot be constructed on the assumption that people neatly fit into classes of employers and employees or any other neat class idea. Regulation cannot assume that the legal and/or academic placing of people into classes reflects how people behave. Consequently, such classification should not determine how people should be regulated.

What it says is that, for regulation to be relevant, it must be class conscious neutral.

This is the big challenge for the Howard Government in its new workplace relations laws, because labour law is the remaining key point at which class-based regulation confronts the cultural shift away from class.

Like newspapers, politics is undergoing a marketing shift underpinned by policy repositioning.