

# Editorial: Change = No Change

A politician wins an election on a platform promising change. To judge by the reception, change is what the voters and indeed the world (for it is the USA we are talking about) wanted. Four years later there is another election, won by the same politician. Change or no change? Or is no change a change from change, so a change after all? Would a permanent revolution be no revolution, with a only a period of stasis being, in the context, really revolutionary?

Actually President Obama, or his campaign team, may have had some uneasiness about a second dose of change, which might in this new context seem to be urging the wrong sort of change; what he was promising in 2012 was 'forward', whatever that meant. If there is an air of philosophical word-play and paradox about this discussion, underlying the rhetoric there is a serious point.

It concerns the actual power of politicians in modern democracies. Clearly President Obama is not President Bush, and many supporters of the former had and have a visceral dislike of the latter (and probably vice versa). But when it comes to policies actually enacted, there may be far more continuity than the rhetoric suggests. Indeed in certain areas, such as foreign policy, some of President Obama's erstwhile supporters now complain vociferously that there has been far too little change. And it wasn't President Obama who began bailing out the US auto industry, it was President Bush.

A famously urbane British Prime Minister is once supposed to have said that what confounded the best laid plans of politicians was 'Event, dear boy, events'. Maybe *mutatis mutandis* what impedes change is reality, the sheer weight and complexity of what is, the dreadful and deadening weight of the Sartrean *en-soi*, to say nothing of the obstructions thrown up by what will appear to the planner to be the obtuseness, bloody-mindedness and vested interests of other people. It is against this background of facticity that decisions have to be made, within which they are constrained, and by which real and desirable change is so often frustrated.