#304: Quash and prosper: How free market capitalism learned to quell dissent

VOICEOVER

This is Up Close, the research talk show from the University of Melbourne, Australia.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Hi I'm Lynne Houltain, thanks for joining us. The Global Financial Crisis of 2008 and its aftermath has hit many very hard. It's pushed some countries and myriad businesses to the wall or into bailouts and millions of people lost income, savings and homes. We've seen some protest and discontent in many parts of the world but many commentators have also pointed out that it hasn't been proportionate to the impact. The US was the epicentre of the global meltdown and we know what pain has been suffered by whole cities and millions of people and yet dissent was muted and very contained. The Occupy Movement took three years to appear and even then it seems to have faded away without perceptible impact. There have been political responses like the Tea Party but not with the noise and anger of protests of the past. The UK also was hit hard but unlike her European neighbours like Greece and Portugal and Spain there was little sustained action on the streets. Some rioting in London raised a spectre of violence but it was put down pretty quickly and it didn't resurface. So what's going on here? Why hasn't there been more noise in the UK and the US and what does that mean for the contest of ideas in our societies? Our guest on Up Close today has looked closely at all these questions. Alasdair Roberts is the Jerome L. Rappaport Professor of Law and Public Policy at Suffolk University Law School in Boston and the author of The End of Protest: How Free Market Capitalism Learned to Control Dissent. He's in Melbourne as a guest of the Australian and New Zealand School of Government, Professor Roberts many thanks and welcome.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Thank you it's a pleasure to be here.
LYNNE HOULTAIN
Well you start your book with a thesis that free market capitalism as practised in the US and the UK particularly has decoupled from protest and you call that the Schumpeter's Paradox. Can you set that out for us?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well Joseph Schumpeter was writing in 1942 and at that time he was looking back at the evolution of a globalised free market economy over about a century and a half and there were a couple of things that were obvious to basically any observer of the free market economy at that time. The first was that it was prone to boom and slump, it was like a roller coaster. Sometimes it would be good and then there'd be these tremendous crashes and the other thing that was obvious was that when it was a crash it wasn't just an economic phenomenon it was also a social and political phenomenon. There was a great deal of unrest and that was almost routinised. There'd be a slump and then there would be unrest and then the question was how did you contain it?

The interesting thing is since 1980 we've reverted to a free market model and we've gone back to that project of building a globalised market economy which is also prone to boom and slump but in this last great slump, the one that followed the crash of 2008, we didn't see the sort of deep unrest, at least in countries like the United States and, perhaps, the United Kingdom that we would have expected had we been looking back at the historical record.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
You call it very evocatively the quiet crisis in your book and it does seem as you say that if you look back over recent history say in the last couple of hundred years it is an anomaly that we've had such lack of public outpouring of grievance. So looking back over that period which you time roughly equivalent with the industrial period from about 1800 up to the 1930s in the first phase of the liberal age as you call it, there were a number of responses that were trialled, as you would put it, that Governments could make responses to the sort of outpouring of discontent that they saw in their streets. They could do nothing, they could repress, they could contain or they could appease.

Let's just quickly perhaps go through those because I'm pretty intrigued also that at this time we see an attitude to protest change and you point to this. That the language to describe protest was once quite positive, that this was the masses making appropriate response to their circumstance and to adding to the democratic process if you like. But then that gets demonised doesn't it?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right. You know so for example if you were in the United States in the early 1800s you're only two or three decades out from the revolutionary period. The revolutionary period was all about unrest, about active protest against colonial rule, about the original Tea Party and so on. So protest and certain kinds of unrest was actually glamourised. It was the way a democracy worked and so the notion that you would try to criminalise it or constraint it seemed unnatural. And the other thing to is that in the United States a young democracy the notion was a democratic people
could rule themselves. They could control and contain themselves. So for example the notion that you would have to put Police on the street to control a protest seemed unnatural. It seemed actually vaguely European, Continental, something the French would do.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
But then that was changed and in fact it flipped to much more negative language.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well that's right. So you get into the - about the first third of the 19th Century circumstances are changing, the United States and the United Kingdom are becoming more urbanised. The costs of unrests are becoming increasingly high. And elites, political and commercial elites are less tolerant of protests than they used to be.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
So doing nothing became increasingly unlikely and impossible in a way because also at this time we see a growth in international trade and the impacts in one part of the world were being felt in others. You give the example in the book I think of trading commodities being affected by activity in the US and having an impact on pricing in the UK.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well exactly. In the early 1840s for example the United States went through a quite severe depression. Many State Governments were deeply in hock to British investors, they borrowed heavily from Britain. When the economy went south in the 1840s there was rioting in cities like Philadelphia. In fact Philadelphia was put under martial law at one point. And of course news of this gets back to London and investors are then asking well, how is Pennsylvania ever going to pay its bills if it can't even maintain order in the streets? There are echoes incidentally here of the European Crisis and the predicament in Greece and other countries.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Absolutely nothing is new is it?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
We see exactly this played out you know 150 odd years later.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right yes.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
So doing nothing became problematic so a number of other options were explored and you've already mentioned putting people on the street that became quite
acceptable.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well so one option, we'll call out the Army and you actually see it in the United States and the UK this notion that we'll call out the Army to preserve order. That strategy turns out to have downsides. The first is that if you're waiting until unrest is sufficiently severe that you're calling out the Army things are already pretty bad and it turns out the Army isn't very good at dealing with civil unrest. They use military techniques, there are fatalities, the popular backlash against that sort of suppression is very severe. But there is this phase where for about 20 or 30 years Governments are basically experimenting with military suppression of civil unrest.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Then we move into constabularies.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right. That's right. So you see in the UK for example London gets into the business of municipal policing around the 1830s. Interestingly in the United States the first police forces are set up in 1840s and 1850s and it's a direct reaction to the turbulence of that Great Depression in the 1840s. The interesting thing is today we think of police forces as crime control entities. We need a police force to deal with urban crime but in fact these police forces were being set up for public order purposes initially. That is it wasn't about individual crime it was about the suppression of mass unrest.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Which brings to mind the phrase law and order and really it was about order.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Exactly. Yes.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Intriguing, the language as we've already discussed in terms of the way protest was described gets changed around this period as well but we see it entering into legislature and the way in which laws are framed and the acceptance of this law and order approach to the world and that it is important for Governments particularly to be involved in this as a project.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right in fact in one American state, Rhode Island, there's actually a Law and Order Party which emerges at this time. Actually later in the late 19th Century when there's another economic downturn a law and order movement emerges again. So you see this reframing of unrest once celebrated as a sort of celebration of the popular will, now being regarded as a problem. It's being problematised and so then the question is how do you constrain it? One approach is policing another is legal constraints on what people are allowed to do on the street.
LYNNE HOULTAIN
Another is containment as you describe it and I thought your examples here were particularly intriguing. Because when we go to Paris we think of Haussmann's Boulevards as being these beautiful broad very attractive aesthetic spaces which is great for the health and well-being of Parisians and all who visit her but you would say they were built quite specifically in order to contain protest.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well anybody who's watched Les Miserables will know that you've got these barricaded tiny narrow streets and so if you're an urban planner who cares about the maintenance of order that's a difficulty, these narrow streets, these winding streets are very easy for protestors to blockade. So what was done with the redesign of Paris was the demolition of these vast areas and the installation of these very wide Boulevards. Parts of London were reorganised in exactly the same way and it wasn't just for aesthetic reasons it was because if you've got a wide street you can move your army and your cavalry very quickly from one part of the city to another. As one urban planner said, you get a nice clear shot with your artillery as well.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
With that also we see the installation of armouries and those sorts of paramilitary facilities into the middle of cities or closer to the middle of cities particularly in the US.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right. I work in Boston and if you go to Boston you'll see there is actually an armoury, it has this kind of vaguely medieval look to it smack in the middle of the city and it's got turrets all about it. You might look at it and think well this is somebody's idea of good taste, it's a folly. But it wasn't a folly it was actually built around the 1880s. It's very carefully designed so that you can put snipers in the tower and they've got a clear shot of the exterior of the buildings so that they can shoot against anybody who might be assaulting the building. You might think well who might be assaulting the building? The answer was, well in the 1880s and 1890s there was a long depression in the United States, very severe depression and one of the responses at that time was to upgrade state militias and they needed some place to base the militias.
So they built these daunting facilities in many cities of the north eastern United States and the notion was that they had to be defensible. The interesting question is why is the Boston Armoury located exactly where it is and the answer is because that's where the trains used to come into town. So you had this heavily fortified facility right beside the train station ready to protect the vital links in case of municipal disorder.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
All these responses would seem to indicate great fear on the part of the Government and business, one would assume.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Oh that's right, that's right. So there are a couple of things going on. There's a close
affiliation between working classes and political elites that might have been felt in smaller American settings around the time of the Revolution you know when scale was much smaller, is breaking up. So there's a sharper distinction between the ruling classes and working classes and the working poor. So that degree of sympathy that might once have been felt is dissipating. The other thing is that the economy is changing. The economy is becoming more deeply interconnected, for example, in the United States railroads are critical. If there's a railroad stoppage in Chicago it's not just a Chicago problem it becomes very quickly a national problem because things ripple out. So people who are concerned about order of getting - are very concerned about their control for example of these critical nodes in the emerging national economy. There's also another parallel here today because we worry just as much about the disruption of our now globalised market economy as well.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
We do indeed and we'll take a look I suppose at the 2nd Liberal Age in just a moment but in between these you would say there was hiatus which was kicked off really with the Depression in the late '20s and early '30s in the US and that brought that first Liberal Age to an end. The introduction of what you describe as appeasement, if you like, some rewind from the harsher edges of this sort of oppression by business and Government as you would describe it I think. Tell us about that, what happened in that period that wound it back?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well so by the 1930s you had Governments that had well established municipal police forces. They had better state militias, they had better capabilities and doctrine about putting down riots. They had stronger laws at their disposal if they ever wanted to break up a riot. So they had that set of tools available but still you know the economy crashed again in the early 1930s and there was severe unrest. Many authors asked if this was the end of capitalism. Some even asked is this the end of democracy? Can a democratic system handle this kind of disorder? You know in the United States there were several States that were imposing martial law because of the severity of unrest in their States. So the question is, well do we need to go further?
And there are policy responses in the field of economic policy at this stage so you see the emergence of the welfare state, the idea of a welfare state and you see the idea of more active economic intervention in areas like fiscal and monetary policy. To some degree you see a retreat from the notion of economic globalisation. There are barriers that are imposed on transnational capital flows and to some degree on trade. The notion is that we the governments of the world have to step in and manage our economies more aggressively. We can't allow the rollercoaster to keep going because even with our panoply of laws and policing capabilities we can't manage the troughs.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
And in between times we also had a world war.
ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
The Second World War which itself counters that argument I suppose around putting up the drawbridge and remaining nationally preoccupied. It really was a global event. What sort of impact did that have do you think on this whole [unclear]?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well I think there are probably two things. The first is that in some respects it's a spectacular example of what can go awry if you don't manage your domestic economy well. You know if the German economy isn't satisfying the needs of its people who knows how it might spin out of control in terms of the domestic politics. And the second thing is that by about 1945 or 1946 policy makers in surviving economies are actually feeling pretty good about their capacity to manage the economy. I should say you know the very notion of an economy, the economy, the phrase we just bandy about routinely these days is actually an invention of this period. No one spoke about the economy before 1930 and it's part of that notion that there is an entity here that we can actually manage. You name it and then you can control it. And part of what was drawn from that war time experience was this notion that we actually can manage the economy pretty well because we did it during the war. We controlled prices, we controlled wages, we controlled production and it all seemed to go reasonably well. So if we can do it in war time why can't we do it in peace time too?

LYNNE HOULTAIN
I'm Lynne Houltain and you're listening to Up Close and in this episode I'm discussing the end of public dissent particularly in the US and the UK with Public Policy Analyst Professor Alasdair Roberts. Professor, coming now to what you call the 2nd Liberal Age which starts at the end of that period of appeasement as you describe it with the coming to office of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the US. What did they do that changed the game again?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well I would actually throw in Deng Xiaoping in there as the third leader of the Liberal Age as well. That tends to be underplayed but you know when you look at the way in which the global economy has changed over the last three decades he's probably just as important. But you've got these three leaders who for one reason or another are retreating from the notion of state planning and they're saying, we need to put market principles back into the economic sphere. So they're deregulating, they're privatising, they're opening up a transnational trade and capital flows and they laid the seeds. I think those three would probably be startled to see what has emerged 30 years later but it's essentially a reversion to the free market principles that were dominant in the period before the Second World War.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
They also picked up a number of particular batons if you like in terms of being very
overtly aggressive towards Labor Unions, to funding policing because it was certainly not an area that suffered any great detriment during that period in either the US or the UK. You also point to the shift of emergency powers from politicians to, as you describe them technocrats. So all those things we see come together at this time, let's have a quick look at the union busting issue because that was certainly central to both Thatcher and Reagan's project wasn't it?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right. Breaking up the power of unions and one of the things that we've seen in both the US and the UK is that the proportion of workers in the private sector who are members of unions has dropped precipitously over the last 30 years.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Then with policing do we see an increase and a greater diversity of approaches to policing and surveillance at this time?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right and one of the points I guess we're getting to is that you know this notion that the free market is sort of a natural entity that regulates itself isn't quite right. Governments have to take measures, what we might call actually big Government measures to make a market economy work and so we see in both the US and the UK not just these active measures against unions but also the up skilling of police capabilities. So actually in the UK for example the police sector was protected from the austerity measures that were imposed on other parts of Government and why is that? Because if you're going to do all of these things that impose pain on a broad sector of society you need somebody on your side to maintain order.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Would you say then that the response or lack of to 2008 is the high water mark of these elements?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well I think it's probably an illustration of what happens when you put all of the elements that we've been describing together. The eventual result of the decline of labour power is evident in the years after the Global Financial Crisis and the impact of this continual upgrading of policing capabilities is obvious as well. And then the other point we haven't talked about just the role of central bankers in this new globalised economy as well.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Well let's tease that out because you point to that as a critical factor and certainly if we see that over the last 20 odd years that's become increasingly critical, what do you mean by that?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
So I said that in the years immediately after the Second World War there was this notion that well government is going to step in and manage the economy more tightly
and by government I mean politicians. Politicians are going to manipulate and I mean this in the benign way they're going to manipulate fiscal policy to smooth out the economic troughs and crests. They're going to manipulate monetary policy for the same purpose but it's politicians who are going to pull the levers to make sure that the economy is running smoothly.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
So are you saying there that the politicians are responding at the behest of business?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well not at the behest of business. The notion is that sound economic policy consists of politicians acting on advice from their advisors. For example during downturns using stimulative fiscal policy to smooth out the economy or using stimulative monetary policy to smooth out the economy and the notion is that politicians will have the tools and can be trusted to take measures that will avoid a boom and slump of a cycle. Now by the 1970s there's dwindling faith in the capacity of the political class to use those tools effectively. The notion is that politicians tend to abuse their influence over fiscal policy or monetary policy around election time for example they'll do ill-advised things and they're not worried about the macro economic performance. They're worried mainly about getting votes in the short term. That whole notion is put aside that the notion that you can trust politicians to manage the economy using fiscal and monetary policy is kind of put aside. Then the question is, well who's going to drive the bus? The answer in the age after 1980s is increasingly central bankers. These technocrats in central banks, we'll make them in a sense the superintendents of the economy. So this is the age of the rock star central banker and I refer to what one journalist called Alan Greenspan in the United States, called him a rock star.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
It is the case that we know their names much more readily now than we ever did.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Oh that's right Paul Volcker makes the cover of Time Magazine. Alan Greenspan makes the cover of Time Magazine. Ben Bernanke becomes Time's Man of the Year. You know that's odd. That's peculiar to our age. If you'd gone back in earlier years you would not have expected to see a Chairman of the Federal Reserve enjoying such status and glamour. But we do that today because that's where the power lies.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
So let's pull that back to how this impacts on people's capacity to rise up and protest. How does the technocracy or the rise of it have a bearing on that?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
I think what I'm getting to is the notion that we've got what I've called a quiet crisis after 2008, quiet in one sense, you don't have a great deal of popular unrest on the street. You've got a relatively quiescent political class and you've got technocrats in
central banks who have the principle responsibility for dealing with the crisis and reviving the economy. It's a cold kind of politics in which technocrats are making the key decisions and there isn't a great deal of unrest on the streets.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
So Professor Roberts are you saying that protest is a natural condition of humanity? That this would be our normal response and that we've been contained and constrained by these various measures that have been introduced over time and refined to a point of great success now, is that at the bottom of your thesis?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well I think the point I would make is that we have redefined our understanding of how democratic politics works and part of the way we've redefined it is by saying that protest whether it's strikes, mass protests, even to some degree riots that at one point in our history we regarded these as legitimate forms of political expression and we don't today. We de-legitimise these various forms of political expression and that's changing the character of our democracy.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Yet in other parts of the world that is still the case. Spain, Portugal, Greece in recent times have seen great response on the streets and great anger and we in the English speaking world have looked on and thought oh that looks all a bit messy and uncomfortable and what a shame. But what's the difference between them and us?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well I think there are two differences. The first is that some of these countries are in fact going through more severe economic pain than countries like the United States in part because their leaders and their central banks don't have the discretion that's available to the Bank of England or the Federal Reserve.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Because they're tied into the European Union process and requirements.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
That's right and because of the constraints that were actually imposed on the European Central Bank as well. And part of the difficulty is those Governments don't have the policing capabilities to maintain order. But it's interesting that even in these countries the foreign perception is, can these countries control themselves, which actually goes back to the story I was telling you about the United States in the 1840s. Can this country discipline itself? Can it do what it needs to do to satisfy foreign creditors? So there's actually in a globalised economy a tension between what the market needs to see and how we might otherwise expect a democracy to work.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Is there also a tension between Governments that want to remove themselves and let the markets prevail and their insistence on maintaining that level of law and order?
ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Yes if we think that economic liberalisation is just about a retreat from governance, if we think it's just about small governance, we've got it wrong. Because there are many ways in which even if you want to follow the market model you have to have a pretty active interventionist role in certain ways. One of the ways in which you've got to do it is you've got to have policing capabilities. You've got to have a robust capability to maintain public order and deal with the kinds of dissent that a turbulent market economy naturally tends to generate.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
You're listening to Up Close, I'm Lynne Houltain. In this episode we're looking at how free market capitalism has controlled dissent with Professor in Law and Public Policy Alasdair Roberts. Professor Roberts we've seen great claims made for social media and the internet in terms of the way in which people express their grievance or their concern about the way in which they're being governed. And we saw examples like the Arab Spring and various other ways in which this has become apparent in the world and that people are finding ways to manage and to organise without the formal structures of unions like we had in the past. Why do you say that the internet and social media are not the panacea that we might thing they are?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
This is - the back story on this is that as I said we saw essentially the collapse of the Labor Movement so one result is that immediately after the Financial Crisis the number of major strikes in the United States was a fraction of what it had been in previous economic downturns, even relatively mild economic downturns. So the question was, well are there other ways in which a public might mobilise to express their discontent and one of the answers was well yes. If you look the Anti-Globalisation Movement here you've got a pretty disparate population that's using the opportunities presented by new technology to create a new form of highly decentralised leaderless resistance.
And the example of that after the Global Financial Crisis is the Occupy Movement. When Occupy first got rolling in the United States in the fall of 2011 there were great hopes about what it might accomplish. Some people saying this is going to be the most important progressive movement in half a century. And the interesting thing is that if you roll the year out, if you were in the fall of 2012 Occupy had essentially dissipated and one of the questions is, well what happened there? Why did the movement collapse?

LYNNE HOULTAIN
And what do you think?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well I think a problem that's sort of intrinsic in the model of mobilisation, this notion of highly decentralised leaderless mobilisation and that model of mobilisation has some advantages but it has real disadvantages. Very tough for it to set an agenda, to articulate coherent goals, to move that agenda forward, to deal with militant elements on the fringes that tend to alienate public opinion, tough for it to build alliances with
other friendly groups. So the movement, it flares up but it doesn’t know how to organise itself to maintain continuity and build strength.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
We'll wait and see I suppose what happens from here? But just to take your thesis to a conclusion, you use Simon Johnson a quote from him, formerly of the IMF, describing the US as the world’s largest oligarchy which I suppose many of us would recognise as being our experience that we really are in the hands of global interests that are preoccupied with securing the interplay and interflow of capital and finance around the world and commodities and the like. So where does this go from here? Is there a next stage that you envisage happening that there will be a break in that scenario or are we so inured now after 200 odd years or more than that of playing by these sorts of rules that we'll just live with it?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
I'm not sure I have a neat answer to that but I think I can sort of summarise what I think the predicament is at the moment. In the United States and some other developed countries we’re coming slowly out of the aftermath of the Financial Crisis, the economy is recovering but in many respects things are still not good. You've got persistent long term unemployment, you’ve got evidence of rising inequality, you've got a sense among the middle class that the economic opportunity that was once there isn't there anymore. And there are signs that there is a kind of deep percolating discontent. If you look at public opinion polling there hasn't been a point in the last 10 years in which a majority of Americans thought that the country was heading in the right direction and that actually pre-dates the Financial Crisis. There’s this sense that something is wrong and the difficulty is that democratic societies have to have some kind of mechanism for allowing the articulation of that discontent and of resolving it directly.

We would have said at one point, well there are two channels in which you can do it and one is legislative politics, electoral politics, the ballot box and the other is - at one point in our history would have said the politics of the street. Nobody likes riots but strike action, protest action was one way for people to ventilate their frustration and to send signals to their political leaders. And the question is, well what happens in a world in which for one reason or another the legislative branch of government is ineffectual and that politics of the street is unavailable and we have a sort of politics that tends to be typified by a certain technocratic class developing short term fixes to keep the boat afloat. And I don't know how that works out but that seems to me to be somewhat of the predicament that we’re in today.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Then we have Thomas Piketty for example coming out with his book Capital in the Twenty-First Century and he’s saying Government needs to intervene. There needs to be intervention in order to address the inequalities and to reframe our approach to 21st Century capitalism. What do you make of that position?

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
Well it's very interesting, that intervention is very interesting. This probably ties into
what I was saying about it's too soon to tell how it's all going to shake out. If I could give you a historical analogy the Great Depression is really - the start of it is benchmarked as the crash of 1929 right and we go through a period in which we're sorting out what to do. Roosevelt who's the architect of the New Deal isn't actually in office until the crisis is about four years old. That period in which we got to the notion of the welfare state and active state planning in the economy doesn't really come along until about 1945, 1946. So when you think about it that's what a 17 year window. Now there was another great shift in our thinking about the role of Government and its relation to the economy and that was between basically about 1968 when there were these first signals that the post-war economy is not quite right and let's say 1984 where Reagan is re-elected, Thatcher is firmly in power and we have electoral upsets down in New Zealand and Australia as well. But that's also about what a 15 or 16 year window.

So the lesson I would take from that is that these transitional periods can be very long. If the crisis happened in 2008 it might be another decade before we sort out where we're going to go and maybe books like this book on inequality and maybe the Occupy movement itself are just part of the secretion of things that will eventually move us in a new way of thinking about the role of government.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Your book has brought a lot of that thinking together and we appreciate very much your time today.

ALASDAIR ROBERTS
No my pleasure thank you very much for the opportunity to talk with you.

LYNNE HOULTAIN
Alasdair Roberts is the Jerome L. Rappaport Professor of Law and Public Policy at Suffolk University Law School in Boston and author of The End of Protest: How Free Market Capitalism Learned to Control Dissent from Cornell University Press. You'll find more details of his publications on the Up Close website together with a full transcript of this and all our other programs. Up Close is a production of the University of Melbourne, Australia created by Eric van Bemmel and Kelvin Param. This episode was recorded on 21 May 2014, produced by Kelvin Param and Eric van Bemmel with audio engineering by Gavin Nebauer. I'm Lynne Houltain, thanks for listening. I hope you can join us again soon.

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