Power in Coalition

Power in Coalition

Strategies for Strong Unions and Social Change

Amanda Tattersall

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Dedicated to my two boys,
Charles and Hartley

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Abbreviations xi

Introduction 1

1. The Elements of Coalition Unionism 17

2. The Public Education Coalition in New South Wales 32

3. Living Wages and the Grassroots Collaborative in Chicago 63

4. The Ontario Health Coalition 104

5. Power in Coalition 142

Conclusion: The Possibilities of Successful Coalitions 166

References 183

Index 203

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This work has been five years in the making, a task begun when I was a union organizer perplexed by how to build powerful coalitions. The journey took me back to university as well as to travels through Canada and the United States. Since the end of my research I have returned to organizing, to prove that those who can "teach" can also "do." We are three years into establishing the Sydney Alliance, a long-term broad-based coalition. This book, however, was not complete until after another adventure, the birth of my baby boy. Luckily, these different experiences, which could (and did) make this book a challenge, fueled my own belief in the importance of a text on the promise of coalition building.

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Abbreviations

ACORN	Association for Community Organizations for Reform Now
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations
AFSCME	American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
ALP	Australian Labor Party
BHC	Brampton Health Coalition
BPNC	Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
CAW	Canadian Auto Workers
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CC	Council of Canadians
CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (Canada)
CCH	Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
CCPPP	Canadian Council of Public-Private Partnerships
CEP	Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (Canada)
CFL	Chicago Federation of Labor
CHC	Canadian Health Coalition
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality

CTWO	Change to Win Federation (United States)
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
DET	Department of Education and Training (NSW)
FOSCO	Federation of School Community Organisations
IAF	Industrial Areas Foundation
IRC	Industrial Relations Commission
KHC	Kingston Health Coalition
MPP	Member of Provincial Parliament (Canada)
NDP	New Democratic Party (Canada)
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NHC	Niagara Health Coalition
NLRB	National Labor Relations Board (United States)
NSW	New South Wales
NSWTF	New South Wales Teachers Federation (Australia)
OCHU-CUPE	Ontario Council of Hospital Unions–Canadian Union of Public Employees (Canada)
OFL	Ontario Federation of Labour
OHC	Ontario Health Coalition
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPSEU	Ontario Public Sector Employees Union, Canada
ONA	Ontario Nurses Association
P3	Public-private partnership
P&C	Federation of Parents and Citizens (Australia)
PEA	Public Education Alliance
PICO	People Improving Communities through Organizing
PPA	Primary Principals Association (Australia)
PSPF	Public School Principals Forum (Australia)
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SEIU	Service Employees International Union
SPC	Secondary Principals Council (Australia)
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
UAW	United Auto Workers (USA)
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers (United States and Canada)

Power in Coalition

Introduction

In February 1999, the New South Wales Teachers Federation (NSWTF) was under attack. The front page of the *Daily Telegraph*—Sydney's Murdoch-owned tabloid newspaper—had just featured a cartoon of the union's president wearing a dunce's cap, with the headline reading "If the cap fits" (*Daily Telegraph* 1999). The union's political influence was at an all-time low in the midst of its most hostile wages bargaining campaign in a generation.

In the face of this crisis, a group of union organizers and stewards hatched a plan for changing the union's relationship with government. Their idea was for a major "public education campaign" that would project the union's broad vision into the public arena. It would pay heed to the union's workplace concerns while connecting its membership with a coalition of parent and school principal organizations.

By the time of the state election four years later, the resulting public education coalition across six organizations had turned the union's fortunes around. An eighteen-month, million-dollar independent public education inquiry had forced the government to support a list of reforms, including reduced class sizes and increased professional funding for teachers. The union had energized its membership and pushed the state to massively increase education spending because it had built a successful coalition.

For decades, unions around the world, like the teachers' union in Australia, have been struggling. Across advanced English-speaking economies, we have seen the rising power of capital and its increasing influence over

government. This has created a hostile environment for unions, characterized by aggressive employers, unfriendly governments, and declining union membership. Unions have been forced to reevaluate their role and objectives. Debates have considered how unions could advance the conditions of their members and whether achieving this goal also requires a more fundamental confrontation with the political and economic logic that underpins this crisis for unions (Hyman 2007).

The result has been an emergence of novel strategies that suggest new possibilities about how unions can work. One of these is coalition (or alliance) building, where unions engage in cooperative relationships with community organizations. Coalitions have the potential to be not simply a tool for advancing union goals but, more than that, a means of achieving new kinds of social change that could also contribute to the reinvention of unions.

Despite a long history of union coalition building across industrialized countries, in the last decade coalitions with community organizations have become increasingly significant. When union density was at its peak, unions exercised social and economic influence alone. Today, "the workers united" are frequently defeated. Social isolation and membership decline make it ever more necessary for unions to unite with other social forces if they are to successfully advance a broad vision of economic and social justice.

If unions are going to survive this crisis of power, they need to reinvent themselves. A key strategy for revitalization is building "positive-sum" coalitions, as opposed to transactional coalitions. Positive-sum coalitions build the power of unions and community organizations while also achieving social change. When unions recognize this and enter into strong, reciprocal, and agenda-setting coalitions, the labor movement increases its chances of building a new political climate while winning on major issues that they have been losing. More mutual and shared relationships among unions and community organizations can also help revitalize unions internally, invigorating their political vision, campaign techniques, and membership engagement.

This book is about the promise of successful coalitions. I consider why coalitions have re-surfaced as a strategy and the various ways in which coalitions can successfully achieve social change and rebuild the organizational strength of civil society. To do this, I identify three elements of coalitions using case studies based in Australia, the United States, and Canada. I draw out key principles about how to build strong coalitions and the cir-

cumstances under which coalitions succeed. I apply these lessons directly to unions, distinguishing the ways in which coalitions support union revitalization and enable unions to win on issues and build political agendas that they have struggled with on their own.

I develop three central propositions. First, coalitions are most successful when they achieve social change while operating in a way that builds organizational strength for their participating organizations. This is a broad prescription for how coalitions can be powerful. Success is not simply the realization of social-change outcomes but is reflected in how such victories are achieved. I consider how coalition power is strengthened or weakened depending on the kinds of relationships that develop among organizations, the process of negotiating and framing coalition goals, and how organization members are involved in the coalition.

Second, a coalition's ability to achieve success is shaped by the strategic choices of coalition participants, whose actions are affected by their particular political context. I analyze the constant tradeoffs coalitions are forced to make between the kind of social change that coalitions are able to achieve and the kinds of organizational strength that they can build.

Third, coalitions are a source of power for unions, not simply because they supplement a union's objectives with the resources of another organization but because they help renew unions. This kind of strength requires a sometimes challenging kind of reciprocal coalition building. Yet this slower, stronger coalition practice can help unions rebuild their internal capacity, develop new leaders, and innovate how they campaign. Coalitions can also shift unions from being agents focused on the workplace to becoming organizations that connect workplace concerns with a broad agenda that in turn can transform the broader political climate. As Flanders (1970) expressed it, coalitions allow unions to act not only in their "vested interests" but with a "sword of justice."

This book not only is a product of my intellectual interest in the labor movement but arises from the challenges I faced as a coalition organizer for a decade both inside and alongside the union movement in Australia. As a community and a union organizer, I have long sought to build coalitions between community organizations and unions as a strategy for tackling major social and economic justice issues. In 2002, I began working in the union movement because unions were the largest community organizations in Australia. From my perspective they were bigger and stronger than the student and immigration movements where I had learned to organize, and they had a proud track record of winning

changes in the name of union members as well as for society at large. Yet while I believed that unions could act for social good, they were in the midst of organizational crisis. By joining the movement I took on a responsibility to help revitalize unions, seeing coalitions as a means for reforming unions as well as achieving social change.

My experience in building coalitions between community organizations and unions, however, was at best uneven. I was involved in numerous attempts to campaign on issues like higher-education funding and refugee rights that produced only short-term alliances, where the relationships fell away soon after a key event had been organized or the issue had passed. My involvement in the 2003 Walk against the War Coalition in Sydney was a watershed moment. Despite us building a coalition of more than sixty organizations and helping to organize the largest demonstration in Sydney's history, not only did the war proceed, but the coalition unceremoniously tore itself apart. It revealed fundamental flaws in how we had sought to work together. Moreover, despite the efforts of many union organizers and delegates, the labor movement was not deeply engaged in the peace coalition.

At the time of the Walk against the War Coalition I was an organizer at Unions NSW (formerly the Labor Council of NSW), which represented more than 650,000 workers across Sydney and New South Wales (NSW). On February 19, three days after half a million people had walked for peace I went to the Sydney Town Hall to hand out peace flyers at a public education event. It was a major public hearing staged in the run-up to the state election. All the key politicians were there, speaking to an overflowing audience of more than a thousand teachers, parents, and school principals brought together by the Public Education Alliance (PEA). This was a very different type of coalition. It involved few organizations, but at the same time it was acting on an issue that deeply engaged the membership of these groups, including the union. Contrasting the education campaign and the peace campaign, I could see that a more successful coalition practice was possible. The experience sent me on a journey to investigate what it takes to build powerful coalitions.

This research is important because of the increasing use of coalitions as a strategy. It, however, became even more pressing while I was undertaking it. In 2004 union membership levels continued a decline that had begun in the early 1980s. In Australia in 2005, the federal conservative government attempted to dismantle the industrial relations system, which in response saw unions popularize strategies like coalitions as a tool of resistance. In 2008, the global financial crisis and subsequent downturn

heralded a period of marked economic uncertainty, magnifying the importance of effective social-change strategies. These events reinforced that the challenge of building powerful coalitions was of pivotal and immediate importance.

If my practical organizing experience was one source of my argument in this book, four years of primary and secondary research in Australia, the United States, and Canada was the second source. I studied three coalitions in depth, as an observer, not a participant. I selected my first case study, the public education coalition, from my vantage point inside the Australian labor movement. I chose the other two case studies based on recommendations and interviews with unions and community organizers in Toronto and Chicago. I selected the Toronto case study after interviews with a cross section of unionists who suggested the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) was similarly long-lasting and had genuine union and community organization participation. My U.S. research was located in Chicago, because it was a similar-sized global city like Sydney and Toronto, and unlike U.S. cities like Los Angeles, Chicago's union had been less frequently studied. I identified the key organizations in the Chicago study from the 1995–98 living wage case study by Reynolds (1999). I chose the Grassroots Collaborative from a range of different coalitions operating in Chicago at the time because, like the subjects of my two other case studies, it focused on one issue, living wages, over several years. But also, as a self-described multi-issue coalition, it offered a point of comparison with the issue-based coalitions in Australia and Canada. Although I was a relative outsider to the coalitions I studied, my interviews with coalition participants greatly benefited from my work as an organizer. I could identify with the challenges that these people faced because we had shared similar experiences. Using my research in a dissertation on coalition unionism, I completed my doctorate and returned to eighteen months of full-time union and coalition organizing before completing this book.

Hope in a Hostile Climate

The difficult decade bookended by September 11 and the global financial crisis led many union leaders to feel they needed to do "something different." Coalitions with community organizations became an increasingly common tactic for many unions.

The unfriendly union environment has been widely documented. The

United States, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Australia had all experienced significant reductions in union membership over the previous generation (Peetz 1998; Frege and Kelly 2004a). At the same time, the power of employers had become increasingly mobile and more powerful. Government deregulation of capital flows and privatization of state infrastructure had been caused by, and contributed to, a resurgence in the power of business (Streeck and Hassel 2003). Industrial relations were decentralized. Business strategies such as outsourcing and enterprise-based employment regulation reduced unions' ability to temper wage competition among workers. Labor parties distanced themselves from unions, and this further constricted unions' political power. The relationships among capital, labor, and the state had changed. The combination of these factors put pressure on unions to seek out new strategies and ways of confronting their declining political power and the ascendancy of employers.

Some unions clung to a narrow understanding of what their role was. Those that continued to practice what was variously known as "business unionism" or "arbitration unionism" largely saw their role as negotiating with employers, using collective bargaining and working through industrial commissions, such as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), to improve wages and conditions. To the extent they became involved in politics, it was mainly to address industrial issues. This was the role that had predominated when unions had higher density, which often led to a perception that unions did not need to seek broader community relationships to achieve influence. Yet this strategy produced a declining rate of return. From the 1980s on, in Australia, the United States and Canada, weakened state institutions and resurgent employer power regularly left unions in a position where their only option was to "concession bargain" —where they agreed to accept reduced conditions in order to retain their position as the bargaining agent.

Meanwhile, the industrial commissions that these unions relied upon had not kept pace with corporate restructuring. For instance, in the United States, the NLRB remained focused at an enterprise level while the corporation changed radically. Corporate decision making increasingly moved to an international scale while production fragmented through multifirm corporate structures and the outsourcing of production and services. In addition, in some countries the industrial commissions themselves had been systematically weakened. In Australia, protective regulations such as compulsory conciliation and arbitration, which provided automatic union

recognition and set industry-wide wages and conditions, were diluted through employer pressure to decentralize bargaining to the scale of the enterprise and the individual.

Of course, not all unions had taken a narrow view of their role. Some had long traditions of a broader, more adventurous unionism that potentially could challenge the increased power of employers and hostility of the state. Collaboration was not an unfamiliar tactic. Most union movements developed union-to-union alliances through central labor councils, first through cities and states in the nineteenth century and then as national union bodies in the twentieth century. Furthermore, unions' political relationships sometimes stretched to issues beyond the industrial. While the labor movement in Australia had long distinguished between its "industrial" and "political" wings, formal participation of unions in the Australian Labor Party (ALP) provided unions with the capability to influence social policy. For instance, the 1983–96 Prices and Incomes Accord between the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the ALP enabled unions to win universal health insurance (Medicare) and compulsory employer contributions to retirement savings (superannuation).

Beyond formal political ties, some unions developed collaborative practices with community organizations that meant they did not act alone, even in workplace disputes. In the United States in the late 1930s and 1940s, the birth of community organizing through the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council in Chicago also led to the cultivation of powerful coalition relationships in support of workplace disputes between the Catholic Church and the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee. Later on, through the civil rights movement, unions like Local 1199 in New York and the sanitation workers of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) worked closely with religious organizations to pursue issues of racial justice.

In Australia, collaboration with community organizations was more common, partly as a result of the long-lasting activism of the Communist Party of Australia in the union movement. Australian Communists, like their U.S. and Canadian counterparts, actively cultivated union participation in a wide variety of political struggles through their support for coalition strategies such as the "united front" and "popular front." In Australia, this had the long-term effect of popularizing coalitions and campaigns for social justice. For instance, in the lead-up to World War II, waterside workers in Wollongong refused to load iron ore onto ships des-

tined for Japan. This kind of socially interested unionism continued through the 1960s and 1970s, when many unions played active roles in support of peace, women's rights, and identity-based social movements. It was exemplified by the Builders Laborers' Federation's Green Bans from 1969 to 1975, which brought together union and middle-class residential groups to protect the urban environment. While the Communist Party's ideology supported the development of coalitions in the twentieth century, Communist coalition leadership was also a limitation as it meant that coalitions were often considered the sole domain of ideologically left unions.

In Canada, the twin strategies of political activity and collaboration came together in the 1960s during the struggle for public health insurance. An alliance of unions, farmers, and urban intellectuals was the backbone of the New Democratic Party. But because of the party's minority status, unions needed to complement political party work with a community campaign for universal health care before it gained the support of the governing Liberal Party.

By the mid-1990s, unions in industrialized English-speaking countries faced declining membership, weakening political influence, and poor collective bargaining outcomes. This created sufficient difficulties that the national labor councils in Australia, the United States, and Canada initiated internal debates that considered the need for widespread revitalization strategies. These strategies sought to break with "business" or "arbitration" unionism to build a "social movement unionism" in which unions rebuilt their power. Prescriptions included changing unions' internal organizational operations, a commitment to growing union membership, using corporate and industry research to help identify organizing opportunities, and using union education to increase the organizing skills of members, as well as various experiments with such strategies as corporate campaigning and community coalitions. The focus of union revitalization strategy and scholarship was on the question of how unions could internally transform themselves, with debate canvassing the impact of new leadership, membership collapse, and the capacity of union leaders to drive reform (Moody 1997; Voss and Sherman 2000; Crosby 2005).

Many in the labor movement were open to the idea that they needed to change. Numerous unions had experimented with a broad range of strategies. One of these was building coalitions with community organizations. It was nothing new. For a few, coalitions were familiar. For others, coalitions were a technique exhumed from long, often-neglected union traditions. The reasons to work in coalition were particularly pow-

erful at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Unions were isolated and no longer strong enough on their own to confront the power of employers at work and in politics.

Central labor councils from Australia, the United States, and Canada all endorsed coalitions as an important strategy for union survival. The Australian Council of Trade Unions' 2008 *Union Organising and Working for a Fairer Australia* framework called on unions to "build coalitions with community and faith groups," building on a decade of support for community outreach (ACTU 1999, 2008). Similarly, in 1996 the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO) Union Cities program included a call for coalition building, reinforced by the 2001 AFL-CIO's mission statement that appealed for a "strengthening of the ties of labor to our allies." Likewise, the 2005 Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) argued that "it is important to protect workers and their families where they live by working with like-minded community allies" (CLC 2005).

Paralleling the changing strategy of the labor movement, academic interest in coalitions emerged in the early 1990s. Scholarship was most widespread in the United States, appearing at first through a wave of edited books that described the essential characteristics of best-practice coalitions. These began with Brecher and Costello (1990), Nissen (1995), and later Reynolds (2004). A series of special edition journals also brought together coalition scholars and practitioners (Banks 1992; Sneiderman 1996; Reynolds and Ness 2004). Since 2000, coalition scholarship has expanded to focus on classifying different types of coalitions (Frege, Heery, and Turner 2004; Obach 2004; Tattersall 2005), issue-specific coalitions like living wage coalitions (Reynolds and Kern 2002; Luce 2004), unusual alliances such as those between environmentalists and unions (Rose 2000; Obach 2004), and the uneven development of coalitions across different national contexts (Frege, Heery, and Turner 2004; Turner and Cornfield 2007; Greer 2008).

While the labor movement proclaimed that coalitions were a useful strategy, two significant issues remained—why and how. In answering why they would engage in coalitions, unions often identified a narrow role for themselves and there was not a clear understanding about how to build powerful coalitions.

Most frequently, unions saw coalitions as an add-on to the pursuit of union goals. For instance, the AFL-CIO 2001 Executive Council report described coalitions as an extension of union activity—for example "ex-

pertise in coalition building" was about "identifying local groups to help during an *organizing campaign*" or "participating in a broad-based coalition to actively support a *strike*" (AFL-CIO 2001, author's emphasis). Similarly, the Australian Council of Trade Unions referred to coalitions as one part of a strategy to build a "strong *union* voice" (ACTU 1999, author's emphasis). This constrained view saw coalitions as a tool to be used *for* unions, rather than envisaging the potential power that might arise from an exchange *with* community organizations. For instance, it overlooked how coalitions can be more powerful when pursuing objectives negotiated between organizations rather than determined by a union alone. Instead of simply supplementing a union's agenda, a more reciprocal coalition can help revitalize unions and contribute to achieving social goals that shift the unfriendly political and economic climate.

Sometimes unions explicitly identified a broader political role for coalitions. In 2005, the Canadian Labour Congress emphasized the important role that coalitions played in advancing legislative reform on issues that workers faced outside the workplace (CLC 2005). Moreover, in practical terms, coalitions and community campaigns increasingly became a default union "solution" to long-term political challenges, such as health care reform in the United States, rights at work in Australia, support for migrant workers and responses to climate change.

In the aftermath of the 2008 economic downturn, there is even more reason to think coalitions are a practical strategy. During the two decades preceding the crisis, the consensus was that government intervention into the economy was wrong, particularly when it came to regulating markets and building new social infrastructure. Coalition campaigns therefore had to confront this ideology while also building sufficient political pressure to advance reforms such as public education, health care, or living wages. The financial crisis changed this. It challenged the ideology that the market can control itself, creating space for government to reregulate the behavior of corporations. At the same time, widespread consensus emerged, even among hardened market ideologues, that government must play a role in stimulating demand in the economy. This produced opportunities for political reforms, including those for spending on new social infrastructure, and political responses to social hardship caused by unemployment and housing foreclosures. Furthermore, the coincidence of climate change and financial downturn has increased the prospects of state support for jobs that would abate climate change, say, in renewable energy and building retrofits. In light of these pressures, there is an opportunity for coalition unionism. Yet these opportunities are also counterbalanced by the chal-

lenges that the economic downturn has posed for unions. Job losses have thinned union density, weakening unions' ability to negotiate wage raises and negatively impacting on union resources. Moreover, opportunities in the political system are not a guarantee of coalition success. The financial bailouts of late 2008 showed that the interests of business continued to heavily influence government intervention.

If coalitions can help unions confront the difficulties they face, the challenge is how to make coalitions powerful. Time and again coalitions have been just another media stunt, an opportunity to list a large number of organizations on a letterhead in support of, or against, an issue—so-called letterhead coalitions. The perceived strength of these coalitions was frequently and incorrectly equated to the number of organizations assembled. These relationships came together and fell away based on the issues at hand, and the coalitions had no greater purpose than to generate publicity for an issue. There was often tension between the organizations, but strategies were rarely developed to overcome these differences. These coalitions were merely an alignment of organizational leaders. They did not engage, let alone politicize or enhance the campaigning skills of union or community organization members. Unsurprisingly, this kind of coalition rarely supported sustained campaigns on an issue. Sometimes letterhead coalitions delivered a veneer of success, but it was not enough to change unions' political and economic environment.

Some unions, however, engaged in a different kind of coalition practice, of which the case studies in this book are a good cross section. Each involved campaigns underpinned by a long-term commitment to build relationships, managing distinct interests and creating common concern. They engaged their leaders and their rank and file, building enduring strategies that won on issues and promoted their own social agenda.

In order to explore what it takes to build a successful coalition strategy, I identify three coalition elements—common concern, organizational relationships, and scale. *Common concern* refers to the goals of the coalition. *Organizational relationships* refers to how the coalition supports and structures the interaction between its participating organizations. *Scale* refers to the geographic location of the coalition and how it is strategically organized across a single area (e.g., the state) or across multiple scales (e.g., local and state). The case studies consider how these elements vary over time and between different places, and how choices and context impact on coalition success.

I believe that if the labor movement is to survive and emerge stronger, its leaders need to understand how to build real, positive-sum coalitions,

and so I have devoted this book to that purpose. I challenge the conventional wisdom that implies that coalitions are just a tactic for furthering a union's goals, and argue that coalitions present tremendous opportunities for achieving social-change outcomes and renewing the potency of civil society organizations. Yet they are not a panacea. Coalition building is a multifaceted strategy that can be deployed in distinct ways depending on the pressures imposed by the political context and the strategic objectives of the coalition actors.

The Case Studies

The centerpiece of this book is three case studies of long-term coalitions. I explore these coalitions with the aim of analyzing their strengths as well as their "internal obstacles, struggles and difficulties" (Lopez 2004, 12). My aim is to explain why the coalitions experienced success and faced challenges based on how they organized and sought to achieve social change.

Taken together, the coalitions cover vitally important substantive issues, made even more dramatic by the global economic downturn. Public education, national health care, and living wages are staples of social equality, and their advancement speaks to the development of a more active state, so vital in times of economic insecurity. The case studies document novel strategies where coalitions have defended and extended these institutions in different political contexts (see table I.1).

Chapter 2 explores Sydney's public education coalition from 2001 to 2004 and the coalition element of common concern. I show how this coalition established a prophetic agenda for public education by building a successful independent inquiry that translated into specific policy victories around reduced class sizes and investment in professional development for teachers. Fueled by issues that simultaneously engaged the interests of parents, teachers, and the general public, the coalition fundamentally improved the ability of the teachers' union to politically advance its interests with the state government. I identify how the coalition's strong agenda was supported by its scale, where the state-scaled coalition worked with local public education lobbies of rank-and-file teachers, school principals, and parents that brought the campaign to local communities. Yet the coalition struggled with its organizational relationships, as it was consistently dominated by the teachers' union.

TABLE I.1
Variations between the case studies

	Australia	Canada	United States
Issue	Public education	Health care	Living wage
Length	4 years 2001–4	5 years 2001–6	4 years 2003–7
Number of organizations	6	16*	10
Who initiated?	Union	Union	Community organization
Strongest element	Common concern	Scale	Organizational relationships and structure

* There were sixteen organizations on the administrative committee, plus thirty-five local health care coalitions.

Chapter 3 investigates the living wage campaign engineered by Chicago's Grassroots Collaborative between 2003 and 2006 and the coalition element of organizational relationships. I describe how the hub of this coalition was a strong set of personal relationships between ten organizational leaders who made long-term commitments to build political power in the city of Chicago. This crucible was a space for campaign reflection and planning, eventually translating a problematic campaign against Wal-Mart into a push for living wages for workers in big-box stores. These respectful coalition relationships created an environment where organizations were willing to share resources, which in turn assisted the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) in its attempt to stymie Wal-Mart. The campaign struggled to secure a policy victory, as the mayor vetoed its living wage ordinance, but the coalition's work had an enduring impact on the city's political climate by changing the face of the city council. I note that a weak point for this coalition was its scale. The coalition's relationships focused only on organizational staff, missing out on opportunities for membership development and political influence on a local scale.

Chapter 4 analyzes Toronto's Ontario Health Coalition between 2001 and 2005 and the coalition element of scale. By examining a variety of health care campaigns, I show how this coalition built a remarkable multiscaled capacity through forming thirty-five local health care coalitions.

The coalition's organizational relationships coordinated by a full-time staff person brought together a table of dozens of provincially scaled groups, including unions, seniors' organizations, and representatives of its local coalitions. I argue that the OHC's locally scaled health care coalitions provided a space for key unions like the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) to develop the campaign skills and coalition-building capacity of key local activists. Moreover, this multiscaled movement provided an impetus for CUPE to experiment with new campaign tactics, like plebiscites, provincial tours, and a provincewide canvass. Yet I suggest that the coalition's weak point was how it framed the issues it worked on, what I call the coalition's common concern. While abounding in furious activity, the coalition struggled to formulate demands that set an agenda for health care in Ontario.

Chapter 5 brings the case studies together. In addition to outlining general principles of strong coalitions and canvassing the impact of national context on coalition strategy, I explore the implications of coalition success for union power and union renewal. The concluding chapter considers the consequences of these findings. I canvass dozens of examples of other coalitions to draw out the contributions that coalitions can make to social change, campaign strategy, and coalition practice. I consider the implications of powerful coalitions for unions and industrial relations, identifying the importance of collaboration, scale, and member participation for union recovery and revitalization.

Understanding Coalitions across Borders

To demonstrate the possibilities and limitations of coalitions as a strategy, I undertake a coalition-to-coalition international comparison, identifying the similar and different ways that coalitions work in Australia, the United States, and Canada. This departs from the traditional approach to internationally comparative research in industrial relations, which is based on state-to-state comparisons. In those studies, the state is the primary level of analysis, and differences in union or coalition strategies are attributed to the effects of national context. This approach gives the nation-state prominence, thereby potentially obscuring the determining influence of other factors on coalition differences.

Yet there is a growing recognition that the processes of economic change associated with neoliberalism have unsettled many of the "old ge-

ographic certainties of industrial relations" (Herod, Peck, and Wills 2003, 184). In particular, the state itself has been affected in several ways, including how it regulates collective bargaining, how it provides social welfare, and how its social democratic political parties relate to unions. For instance, decentralization of collective bargaining and hostility to unionism are similar across many national contexts. While countries have different resources for resisting these changes, such as different union densities and different kinds of community organizations (Sellers 2007), the patterns of union retreat and resistance are highly uneven, not only between countries but also within them. Strategies such as coalitions are affected not only by national differences but also by variations in local social and political institutions (Turner 2007). The state continues to play an important role but as one of a collection of factors that help explain political behavior and outcomes in light of this heightened geographic complexity.

I selected Australia, the United States, and Canada as the setting for the three case studies because they have relatively similar national contexts despite emerging local differences produced by globalization. All three countries are liberal market economies, which can be contrasted to continental Europe's more coordinated market economies (Esping-Andersen 1990; Hall and Soskice 2001; Frege and Kelly 2004b). While Australia's and Canada's political histories had significantly stronger labor parties and post–World War II welfare states than the United States, these political traditions have been significantly eroded by neoliberal reforms, revealing similarities to the hostile antiunion political and economic context that has had more continuity in the United States. Additionally, I chose case studies located in similar cities. In 2007, Sydney, Chicago, and Toronto had comparable populations of between four and five million people. They are also the centers of key regional economies—Sydney and Toronto are the economic capitals of their countries, and Chicago is the capital of the midwestern economy of the United States. They are also frequently grouped together as "global cities"—command centers for the global economy—because they are where the decision makers in the largest firms are based. Global cities are similar because they share significant levels of finance capital, corporate headquarters, and producer service firms (e.g., marketing, accounting, and legal firms) (Sassen 2001).

Across Australia, the United States, and Canada, declining union density and the political isolation of unions have intensified interest in coalitions. Yet the three coalitions I investigated were significantly dif-