

Comment by Michael C H Jones

Here we go again - Western Australia's peculiar ideas about nationhood and its economic and political friends. Historically over the last 110 years when there has been a WA economic downturn all sorts of subsidies and handouts are demanded from the Federal Australian government as subsidised mainly by NSW and Victorian tax payers. However when the WA State Economy is booming such as currently with unbelievable resources exports to China and elsewhere Premiers ritually dump on the national government and demand to keep all the goodies for their own constituents which really means vested interests whether Liberal or Labor.

Mother England, Uncle Sam, Cousin Japan, distant Half-Brothers China and Indonesia or maybe the distant relatives scattered across the Indian Rim countries - it does not matter as these are the real economic friends of Western Australia, not those awful thieves east of Kalgoorlie or is it now Cocklebidddy?

When the sort of rhetoric used by WA Premier Colin Barnett regularly arises - as it has over my 50 years - I have always encouraged "striking closer political and business relationships" with whomever as in the national interest and hence getting their votes in various global institutions. Perhaps Barnett will be Rudd's secret weapon in having Australia elected to the UN Security Council given China's political support for Western Australia. Anyway Rudd has clearly made a hash of Australian Foreign Policy especially with China and it is time for Barnett to take over. The 350 WA business leaders at the Australian Deutsche Bank Business Leaders Forum in Perth would probably agree.

The danger as always lies in the facts/statistics re:

- * 60 per cent of Australia's exports to China are from from WA.
- * China currently invests more in Australia than in any other country, and of that investment about 80 per cent is in Western Australia.
- * Western Australia accounts for 44 per cent of Australia's exports, equal to the sum of exports from NSW, Victoria and Queensland.
- * By 2020 Western Australia will account for well over 50 per cent of Australia's exports.

I am sure the armies of China researchers, both CPC/SOE and private company/entrepreneurs are well briefed on this situation and capable of following past colonial precedents of creative tension and destabilisation.

Mr Barnett please be careful of your friends.