

Comment by Michael C H Jones

1965 was a very good year - I was arrested but not charged three times.

In New York we were protesting over the jailing of Nelson Mandela, the leader of the ANC in South Africa and future President.

In London the rally opposed the US intervention/invasion of South Vietnam and bombing of North Vietnam which did not end until about 1973.

In Sydney the demonstration was against conscription which enabled Australia's participation in the Vietnamese Civil War - conscription was ended by the first Whitlam 'two-man' government in December 1972.

1968 was another stellar year though the issues were not so clear cut.

In May I led a five week Sydney University student fact finding mission to the Northern Territory for the purpose of registering aborigines for voting rights - eventually they got them but the result in terms of living standards over the last 40 years has been controversial.

In July I persuaded Professor Charley Martin (Philosophy) and Professor Charles Birch (Biology) to lead about 70 academics onto the front lawn at Sydney University to launch the 'Don't Register for the Draft' campaign and thereby deliberately break the Conscription Act, Defence Forces Protection Act and Crimes Act - bad laws need to be changed. My precedent set by Federal Court decision in January 1971 concerning the Right to Object to a Particular War was the basis of legislation discussed in Federal Parliament during the mid 1980s and subsequently enacted from memory in 1992.

In October 1968 I was host to the second of five sponsored Papua New Guinea leaders to Australia 1967-71. I was responsible for flying the leader of the Pangu Party, Michael Somare, to Canberra and organising his parliamentary meetings and Press Conference, and our lunch with Prime Minister John Gorton and ALP Senate leader Lionel Murphy with whom I was very close in Sydney. The four of us had a very interesting conversation as the Chinese would say - at the very least Michael is a survivor.

What has this all to do with Papua New Guinea in 2012 or with Australia China Economic Relations or the more mercenary trade and investment deals?

Well the Chinese business community is everywhere in Australia's sphere of influence from patrol boats in East Timor to agricultural concessions for New Zealand under their FTA. Most of that Chinese business community at the big-ticket end is SOE which means CCP. The financing of parliament houses such as in Vanuatu have both political and business implications. Of course initially the economic penetration concerned the PRC/ROC rivalries - Taiwan has fought very hard over the years to extend and/or maintain its diplomatic

recognition by throwing bucket loads of money at local politicians including numerous scandals in Papua New Guinea, some allegations pertain to Somare's terms as Prime Minister. Over the last decade and I suggest increasingly in the future Chinese influence will become more visible throughout Australasia not only via its own diplomacy and business development but more importantly through its lobby groups in Canberra, Wellington, Port Moresby and other regional capitals. Money talks to businessmen and politicians and submarines patrol far flung and deserted beaches.

So I cannot help reflecting on that day in Canberra over forty years ago and what has come to pass with Michael Somare, Papua New Guinea and the Chinese 'onslaught'. Perhaps the man who best predicted the future was the one Michael asked me to ban from his Press Conference. When I refused he then asked me to assist him avoid that journalist which I happily did, although I told Malcolm Salmon from the Tribune why. The Tribune was the Australian Communist Party newspaper, the CPA has been dead for about four decades.

More importantly Somare's constitutional challenge to the sitting Peter O'Neill government raises the question as to which issues one takes on and stays with over a lifetime? I have stayed with China since 1962 - from a personal satisfaction perspective that was a correct decision. The issues of Conscriptio and Vietnam ended within the decade but the principles remained until legislation in the 1990s and of course arose again with the political lies/deceptions of the Iraq US intervention/invasion. Eventually Mandela was released and South Africa had democratic elections but the ANC Governments have had there ups and downs like all governments. The situation of many aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory is a blight on Australia's reputation - my friends in Europe are not being just ironic when they say Australia is the only Developed Democracy to use its armed forces to occupy its own country re the 'intervention' in the Northern Territory.

And the story of Papua New Guinea, and the brothers and sisters in West Papua, its many languages and tribes, domestic regional economies and international relations with Australia and Indonesia and China is continuing. A failed state is always a possibility - and it will not be all Michael Somare's fault.