OBSERVATIONS 1

On the Purpose and Objectives of the ACCCI Website Homepage

Welcome

Welcome to the re-launch of the ACCCI Observations weekly column previously appearing in both English and Chinese during 1997/98 in the then newspaper *The United Chinese Times*. Most copies are still retained by Chamber, however we have as yet not found the time to scan and place the issues in the Archives. Nevertheless the article entitled "Elder Statesman (William J. Liu OBE) Remembered" is taken from the May 1st 1997 Observations column.

The Observations column served as a Society "bridge of information and direction" during the period of the Asian Financial Crisis (post July 1997), between the China following mid 1989 and the China entering the WTO in late 2001. The ACCCI Website was launched in September 2001 as a continuation of the ACCCI Business Newsletters and Electronic Newsletters as well as Observations.

As I have said in a number of speeches over the years Chamber has evolved in personnel, strategies and thinking through several Australia-China periods – the intellectual struggles concerning China's economic relevancy of the founding years 1974/78 prior to Deng's Open Door, the optimistic years of the Hawke-Zhao Special Relationship during the 1980s ending with the events of June 1989, the roller-coaster years of trade sanctions, financial crisis, and economic integration through APEC in the 1990s and beyond culminating with the WTO admission of the PRC, and since 2002 the "glorious" business years of China's global trade "explosion" until the GFC of September/October 2008.

During this last period Chamber has gradually broadened its perspectives on China as a close reading of the ACCCI Website will show. As founding executive members have retired or passed away, and new leaders have emerged at the increasingly complex levels of ACCCI activities, whether operating as Member Companies or Friendly Organisations, the bilateral mind-frame has shifted to regional and subsequently global analysis of China in terms of its increasing trade and investment penetration of world markets and the implications for Australasia.

Intention

It is my intention to address in the first four Observations columns the new October/November 2009 format of the ACCCI Website Homepage namely:

- Announcements
- Peoples Diplomacy through Australasia-China Key Cities
- Global Economic Relations and Governance with Special Reference to the Indauspac Maritime Community
- Government Speeches and Reports

Concerning Announcements, Chamber has assisted the promotion of Conferences, Forums, Seminars and Workshops initially throughout Australia in the 1980s, then additionally PRC government related functions in all parts of China during the 1990s, and since the WTO admission those organised by Friendly Organisations based wherever if the subject focus was on any of the diverse interests of ACCCI as listed in our Policy Committees, Annual Forums and Special Projects.

Two examples have been the annual:

- International Cities and Town Centres & Communities Society Conference (ICTC), the most recent 10th being held at the Deakin University Waterfront Campus, Geelong Victoria between 27th-30th October 2009
- Pan Pacific Conferences held by the Pan-Pacific Business Association, again the most recent being its 26th held in Shenzhen China in early June 2009

As the Chamber Member Companies have spread their operations throughout Asia and the world, and the readership of this ACCCI Website has taken on global dimensions – indeed recent webstats analysis seems to show extraordinary high percentage visitations from the USA with an equally intriguing low number of hits from the PRC – so the Announcements section of the Homepage has taken on a valuable internal communications role.

Again two examples:

- The 6th January 2009 "ACCCI suspends all major on-going projects" announcement by me now filed in the Media Releases section. This was the public recognition of decisions taken in November 2008 at the height of the GFC in China when it is estimated over 25 million itinerant workers mainly on the China East Coast were retrenched to return to their villages and tens of thousands of SME went "bust" many out of Hong Kong and Taiwan.
- The most recent 22nd November 2009 announcement "ACCCI monitors developments in China's autonomous regions" and the launch of the Autonomous Regions Monitor in addition to the Key Cities Index. This cements a major policy committee upgrade originally signalled in my speech to the Yunnan Province Delegation on 11th August 2008 wherein I referred to the dangers of "fundamentalism" whether via theology or ideology and the question of China's "minority peoples"- perhaps up to 35 million across Tibet, Yunnan and Guangxi, not mention Hainan. In particular I said "Chamber has been monitoring the economic growth of China's border areas since our foundation in 1976. We have encouraged all levels of Australian government, Federal, State and Local, to support the Chinese Central Government, Provincial Governments and Municipal Governments to Open Up and develop the prosperity of this historic region. On the whole the Chinese authorities have done a wonderful job in raising the living standards of all the various nationalities". However progress and reform, as with all aspects of China, goes beyond economic matters as lifestyles improve and change.

There are likely to be some major Announcements for Chamber in 2010.

Motivation

I was first elected President of Chamber at the AGM of November 1989 and subsequently confirmed as President by the State Council (ACCCI Board) on 4th December. This was the official end of the era of the Founding President, D C Carter OAM, although he remained as Chairman of the ACCCI Life Governors until the June 1996 AGM and subsequently addressed Chamber's 20th anniversary celebration at the QVB in Sydney during September together with PRC Ambassador to Australia, Hua Junduo.

As the Jones era reaches its twilight years, the question remains why do men and women serve for decades not only voluntarily but often at considerable personal financial cost a non-profit bilateral trade organisation with historic ambivalence to governments at whatever levels?

One reason was ethnic. Chinese Australians such as William J Liu and family had a burning ambition to assist China's modernisation from before the 1911 Revolution and through the long years of rival Kuomintang and Communist governments.

Another was trade. Men such as banker Darcy Carter foresaw clearly the potential of China's opening up from the early meetings to form Chamber in the mid 1970s. It was a commercial motivation that dismissed the ideological correctness of the Menzies 1960s.

A third was global perspectives resulting from either or both experience of the World Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War of the early 1940s. There was a realisation that the division of the world into Power-Blocs was dangerous, and the lingering of Colonialism especially with regard to Asia and particularly China was unsustainable.

A younger generation through education and the Vietnam War gravitated to international business during the 1970s and so had practical experience of Japan and the Little Tigers of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore which laid the trade foundation of China's economic rise during the 1980s and 90s.

During the years of China's isolation from 1949 to 1973 in Australia's case and to 1979 in that of the USA, the concept and practice of "Peoples' Diplomacy" was developed by the PRC's famous Premier and Foreign Minister, Zhou Enlai. In a sense, and almost a case of reverse engineering, the Chamber continued that tradition throughout the 1980s. This approach was re-enforced by the Western Trade Sanctions post 1989 and during the Asian Financial Crisis of the late 1990s. The question of why it continues post WTO 2002 will be discussed in the next Observations column.

Methods

This brings me to the question of Methods – Personal and Organisational. Currently on the ACCCI Homepage we have three items that illustrate Chamber's approaches in their various forms.

Firstly, there has been our support for individual members in the range of trade, investment and economic groups, and related groups, and issues domestically. An example is the work of Tony Pun and Dominic Cheng with colleagues in the Chinese Australian Forum and last Friday 20th November public forum on the question: Does Australia Need a Bill of Rights? The exchange of views and discussion has relevance for the Greater Chinese Community outside Australia and their Society challenges in general.

Secondly, the ACCCI Submission to the Australian Productivity Commission Public Inquiry as an example of Chamber's contribution to Government and non-government Reports on economic relations and related issues. The title of our paper 7 anticipates the future re "Global Norms: A Context and Framework for Anti-Dumping Legislation" It is well worth reading carefully, particularly section 5 on "Globalisation and International Law", which has become a fundamental perspective for our study of and participation in Australia China Economic Relations over at least the next 20 years.

Thirdly, our support for the work of Barry Pearton and Florence Chong over 26 years in the ATI (Asia Today International) which is arguably the best informed monthly business publication in Australia. Few Asia business journalists have the background and on-the-ground contacts as is evident by their perspectives "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow". Chamber is about helping to get information out to the various international business communities and dispersing its analysis for action by non-government organisations.

Most of the ACCCI work is behind the scenes and in-confidence, whether commercial or otherwise.

Purpose and Direction

In Rugby, players search for a gap in the opposition line of defence through which they attempt to run to score. However it is the manoeuvring by forwards and backs working together and separately to create those gaps which is the secret to success and winning or losing the match.

The organisational and personal connections developed by Chamber over the last 35 years have had the purpose of achieving our policy objectives as they evolved with changing circumstances in Australia China Relations. Usually we have searched for those 'gaps' not identified by Government or other NGO.

Observations will provide a commentary or explanation of the ideas, and records of action, appearing elsewhere in the ACCCI Website, whether original or by others.

But in addition Observations will seek to identify trends and possible outcomes.

Perhaps more importantly Observations will attempt to monitor the future histories of these ideas, trends and outcomes, and Chamber's participation in them.

I trust you will visit our site from time to time.

Michael C H Jones 23rd November 2009