

OBSERVATIONS 7

A FRAMEWORK FOR THINKING: MONITORING GOVERNANCE AND THE ACCCI WEBSITE

The ACCCI Website over more than a decade has been both reflective of, and a vehicle for, thinking about change.

The pace of change and the Chamber's thinking has accelerated since the Australian Government, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, two Reports on Australia China Relations at the end of 2005 and beginning of 2006. A process has begun of evaluating the quality of Federal Government Reports over a longer perspective. For example the June 2011 launched "Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam" -

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jfadt/hrdialoguechinavietnam/index.htm

The forthcoming Ken Henry Report on 'Australia in the Asian Century' will hopefully assist ACCCI thinking, and provide a clearer perspective for a national framework of critical thinking on Australia in Asia. Unfortunately the Inquiry did not start too well by considering Old World definitions of West Asia as the Middle East and therefore out of Asia. Similarly Russia can no longer be dissociated as an integral part of Asia given its membership of most Regional Groupings re SCO, EAS and APEC not to mention the BRICS and G20. Finally, in the short term of 50 years at least, the future thinking of various US Administrations cannot be ignored in any consideration of events in Asia and their impacts on Australia.

But our thinking should never be marooned whether static, hard-soil, short-term or concrete programmes. As essential as these viewpoints are, there remains the great and time honoured philosophical questions centered on Governance and how to approach the issues arising.

More and more the ACCCI Website is focusing on the methodologies to approach and grapple seriously with the impacts of emerging Global Governance and how it relates to the more traditional and understood geographically based forms such as:

- 1) Local re Council in Australia and District in China. For example a change to the traffic flow on a key commercial street at one end requires proper consideration of the implications for traffic flow at the other end which is controlled by another Council. Moreover often their structures re committees for deciding these issues are different. On the other hand at the higher global level dozens of Australian Councils made investments over decades which brought serious financial losses for ratepayers during the GFC and thereafter.
- 2) Cities whether Municipalities in China or State controlled in Australia determine land uses

that have surrounding regional rural consequences for households and businesses with at best irregular if not unworkable governance on relevant issues. Global Cities have emerged as economic drivers of trade and investment and economic relations worldwide.

3) Provinces, or whatever they are called, are redefining their historic "constitutional" rights with national governments. On the one hand renegotiating powers through bodies such as COAG in Australia, on the other assuming diplomatic functions via international trade and investment offices in overseas key cities re economic centers.

4) National or Central governments and their bureaucracies face arguably insurmountable challenges concerning their 'sovereignty' across all areas of international dealings whether financial, trade, security etc. New global norms such as the "Responsibility/Obligation to Protect" citizens of countries facing domestic crimes against humanity raise all sorts of philosophical questions. As does the issue of 'state sanctioned' assassinations of arbitrarily designated foreign citizens as 'terrorists' including the use of drones killing civilian women and children.

5) Regional Groupings and the new Great Game of Global Economic Relations wherein the USA and the PRC specifically, but including other rising Great Powers such as Russia, India, Brazil, Australia etc not to mention the EU and ASEAN, initiate and direct economic "alliances" such as the Trans Pacific Partnership and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and negotiate fiercely in other regional and global groupings such as the East Asia Summit or G20.

6) Global Institutions in the post Second World War period such as the UN Security Council and other agencies like the ILO, or the World Bank and IMF not to mention the GATT/WTO have been or are being recast in membership, structure and reach. But also they are being challenged by relatively new institutions such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and even evolving older bodies like CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Movement) and NATO.

This relates to the disparities in modern society based more and more on knowledge and experience within the context of an enormously varied media and information sources which cater for different levels of thinking or indeed non-thinking amongst the peoples of the world.

Protests and rock throwing in the streets during the Vietnam war of the 1960s was conducted by a completely different strata of society reflecting the less than 4% of the population that attended universities or gained the benefits of post high school education in those years. It was the era when many 15 year olds, or younger, were recruited into Australia's Armed Forces and left to their own devices.

That has all changed over the last decade and so in 2012 there are both much higher standards for general populace behaviour as well as social controls/authoritarianism by bureaucrats at all levels. For example at the most mundane level, namely various arms of

the police force. When a State government arbitrarily "jacks-up" speeding fines for revenue purposes to overcome gaping revenue deficits, it places officers of the traffic police in the totally untenable position of being revenue collectors for government with all the resulting anguish and hostility for ordinary citizens - it becomes a very counter-productive policy for social harmony in the context of real crime.

If the driving force behind the emergence of "global governance" is the politics/diplomacy of 21st century Global Economic Relations, then the philosophical debate revolves around at least three fundamental issues:

- A) Monitory Institutions or the mechanisms for maintaining the forms of Democracy
- B) Peoples Livelihood or how Human Rights are maintained in a private "corporatist" world
- C) Equal Opportunity for a fair share of Global Commons or Property Relations

What chance/opportunity does the ordinary citizen of any Community or Country really have to participate in the affairs which impact him and his family at any level? Put starkly - nil. For starters his knowledge and experience are limited and therefore he must rely on "whomever". The "whomever" is what ACCCI has begun to focus upon. China as a repository of over 20% of mankind is beginning to produce a great many whomevers in all regions of the world.

For example currently each year over 500,000 Chinese tourists visit Australia - these numbers will soon be in the millions. Somewhere depending on your statistics between 120-170,000 Chinese students attend our universities and high schools. Tens of thousands and perhaps hundreds of thousands of Chinese business people visit Australia's shores annually. The situation is arguably proportionally worse/better in New Zealand.

Over the last decade or more the numbers of Chinese elected to inner city councils has multiplied dramatically. This as yet has not moved on to State and Federal representation but it soon will. For the purpose of governance what are the backgrounds and connections of these Chinese - Australian born, long-term citizens and residents, recent arrivals, property developers, China based company business people, members of the Communist Party of China (CPC)? Future paranoia and xenophobia in Australia can be avoided, or at least curtailed, if the right questions are asked now and libertarian policies of governance progressed. Otherwise there will be serious social problems.

Similarly at the international level of governance where Regional Groupings have multiplied as the Great Powers manoeuvre for economic advantage, and increasingly strategic military positioning, issues of Democracy and Human Rights have become bargaining chips at the negotiating tables of global forums with all actors government and non-government struggling to have heard their individual public relations and media spiels. However there is

little or no debate about the role of "corporatism" in Human Rights. With most governments, for cash flow purposes, selling off public assets and thereby eroding economic controls, private enterprise certainly at the multi-national corporate level encompass areas of governance for peoples livelihood such as jobs no longer on the agenda of public debate. If you read the progressive movement's literature you find very little discussion of international labour relations.

It is only at the Global Governance level that questions of Property Relations can be determined. The Commons belongs to all humanity beyond nationalities or private enterprise. If private corporatism is outside public debate, wherein the resources beyond country borders are owned and/or controlled by relatively untouchable private shareholding interests, then the philosophical debates of the modern western world over the last 300 years have been irrelevant.

Perhaps the Chinese Governance is better? Select or elect 9 CPC Politburo Standing Committee members, and have them top-down announce policy for about 85 million party members, in a country with a 1.3 billion population and spreading to a global citizenry of some 6/7 billions. They would certainly solve those traffic flow problems in the streets of competing Sydney Councils, and what a revenue collecting police traffic force they could organise and manage for NSW !!

Michael C H Jones
17th June 2012

POSTSCRIPT: Vale Frank Walker

Whilst I am feeling all apple and spice a few words for my friends, the paper clips in the media, and particular some of those writings on the late Frank Walker. I would think less of myself if I did not at least try to correct some of the planted information written by journalists much too young to remember or know first hand about events of the decades through the 1960s, 70s, 80s and into the 1990s. I was there from 1962 and know some of those events because I contributed to writing many of the scripts.

I never liked Frank from the days I observed him with Keating, Brereton, Richardson and Carr at the NSW ALP Youth Council - under 28 years from memory. But he was the true intellectual whereas Paul did not care for it, and it wasn't Brereton and Richardson's "bag". Bob Carr always aspired and his current ThoughtLines was and is a continuation of that aspiration - it is a matter of opinion as to whether or not he has succeeded. But Walker was the real deal and for some years, until he was duchesed, Wran's conscience. Indeed Walker's election to the NSW State Parliament in September 1970 was an 'electric'

achievement for the progressive side of politics during the 22 years of Federal Liberal Party domination and Askin's State rule - well before Wran's ascendancy. Similarly his single handed touring of Australia for law reform as the 'Boy' Attorney General between 1976-83 contributed to much of the foundation thinking for legislation by the Hawke Federal Labor Government post 1983. Moreover as the first NSW State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 1981-83 much of his work came to fruition a decade later - Walker has never been given the credit due him for the Federal Mabo legislation in the years 1993-96 - he was the man that made Paul Keating historically Great. On a lesser note it was Walker's staff that provided the backbone for Bob Carr during his record ten years as NSW Premier 1995-2005.

And to his children. I knew Michael very well - many hours of discussions on life and pain. He participated in an ACCCI Trade Mission to China in mid 1995 visiting Beijing, Xi'an and Shanghai. One memorable cameo was his public debate with the Governor of Shaanxi Province over the merits of coffee and tea. He was of great assistance in the logistics of the mission re airports, transport and accommodation for delegates. I howled for two hours in his room at his mother's Paddington home after his suicide in November 1997 - what a waste of such a brave and articulate young man. Similarly with Sean who was a top class skier in Europe and a very capable sailor on the Pittwater and Hawkesbury. I drank with him in many pubs, my son spent a short period living with him and spoke as I did at his funeral in December 2003. He was the dynamic and practical member of the family as witnessed by his renovations of his father's house in Umina and subsequently his mother's homestead in Katoomba. There is no way I can combat the garbage written about these two gentlemen except to say loudly and clearly the stories are written by disgraceful journalists pushing political barrows by lesser politicians and human beings, past and present, then Frank Walker.

A little over 18 months ago I had the pleasure to sit with Frank at the funeral of a mutual friend. You do not have to like someone to respect them and their achievements.

However, there is always a "however" with leaders like Frank Walker, the person who deserves the gold medal and accolades is the mother, Marilyn Loraine Walker, who fought like a tigress for nine years to give her son Michael a life from 1988 to 1997, tragically losing her marriage partner of 31 years in the process. Again from about 1995 and Sean's marriage to Fran she struggled to support her younger son in a downward spiral of self harm and betrayal by a basically ignorant society. Congratulations to Frank who in the last decade of his life campaigned to overcome that ignorance about mental illness with recently acknowledged success.

Michael C H Jones
17th June 2012