

Growing Influence: Silent Changes in Our Community

As a Hong Kong expatriate living in Australia for more than 30 years, I have witnessed the infiltration of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1979, when I migrated to Australia, the Chinese communities were very simple and almost all the immigrants were from Hong Kong and Guang Dong province. These communities had little connection with the Chinese Communist Party at the time.

Changes in Chinese community organisations

I worked in Hong Kong from 1985 to 1990. Upon my return to Australia in 1990, the democratic movement that began in China in 1989 was reaching its peak, and its influence was spreading overseas. A lot of Chinese nationals visiting Australia requested permanent residency due to this movement; all of them were against the Chinese Communist Party. This was confirmed when, in 1993, the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association conducted a survey of 2,000 Chinese students which revealed that 98% of respondents thought the Chinese Communist Party was not reliable. This as a sign of popular sentiment at the time.

However, things changed as time passed. A small number of those who had expressed anti-Chinese Communist Party sentiments and were granted permanent residency by the Australian government then tried to create disharmony within the Australian-Chinese communities.

Many well known Chinese community organisations, such as the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association, the Australian Chinese Community Association, and Chinese Youth League Australia started out as normal functioning community organisations. I was a member of the Australian Chinese Community Association in 1990. These organisations had nothing

to do with the Chinese Consulate at that time. Later, the Consulate started to invite members of the Australian Chinese Community Association for dinner. This is one of the ways the Chinese Communist Party infiltrate these Chinese community organisations. The influence the Consulate had on these communities was remarkable. Before the interference by the Chinese Communist Party, association members were all eager to help people, especially the elderly and the needy, because they felt they could contribute to the broader society this way. However, the culture has shifted significantly and current members have also been swapped to those who are agreeable to the Consulate. The influence by the Chinese Communist Party in the Chinese communities is increasing with each year that passes. For example, in attempting to rent a room for a forum to discuss Hong Kong's 10 year return to China (1997-2007), I tried to persuade the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association for two hours, without success. I was so disappointed, but I understood their hidden intentions in denying my request.

Nowadays, a lot of people no longer participate in community activities or events, especially forums for differing viewpoints, such as the 6.4 Commemoration event, which had very poor attendance. Those who did not go are among those who were previously persecuted by the Chinese government; but now many of them are willing to hold the flags of the regime to welcome Chinese Communist Party officials visiting Australia.

Influence on Australian Immigration Department

In 2006, the majority of refugees at Villawood Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) were Chinese-born; many had fled the country due to the Chinese Communist Party's crack-down on religion and Eastern spiritual traditions. Among those persecuted were

Falun Gong cultivators and those of the Catholic faith. At the time, it came to light that external Chinese people had been granted special privileges at the Detention Centre, such as having access to the refugees for questioning. When this came to light, the Immigration Department was called to account. A request was made of the Department to expound on the identity and legitimacy of this breach of its responsibility to protect the vulnerable in their care.

In time it became known that those Chinese people were officials working for the Chinese Communist Party, and they represented the Chinese government when they met with the refugees. This is still a little-known fact; yet through the court of law here in Australia, all those who had been interviewed in this way were eventually granted permanent residency based upon this breach by the Australian government. The lawyer representing these refugees reported that the Immigration Department approved a request from the Chinese Communist Party to interview every Chinese refugee at Villawood IDC. This clearly violates Australia's international human rights responsibilities, as those refugees were pleading for protection from the Chinese Communist Party in Australia. This transgression was felt by the broader community. It was exasperating and extraordinary in its contradictions – even more so because it happened right in front of us.

Influence on Australia's education system

It seems certain that the Australian government has been infiltrated by the Chinese Communist Party, and not just when it comes to refugees. The Chinese Communist Party's intentions run much deeper, and their tactics are broader and sometimes not readily identifiable. The Confucius



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Institute, for example, is a public education organisation with a strong presence in the Australian school system and an official affiliation with the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Thirteen Australian high schools have opened Confucius Institute classes, and a similar number of Australian universities have created Confucius Institutes. The Canadian Parliament has already banned Confucius Institutes altogether – and this should certainly raise some alarm and cause investigation by the Australian government.

In 2016, the Australian Department of Education and

Training advertised a position with the aim of promoting the Confucius Institute within the Department. The salary: \$150,000 p.a. It seems only reasonable to deduce that there must be a person in the Department of Education and Training whose purpose is to promote the Confucius Institute. And yet, it is uncertain as to why the remuneration would be so high. It seems that the Australian government may be accepting donations from the Chinese Communist Party to develop some of their projects. This is no different from endorsing the Chinese Communist Party's infiltration into our education system to influence Australian values.

Influence on Australian-Chinese language media

Another point of contention is the Chinese media. Some Chinese newspapers in Australia are controlled by the Chinese Communist Party, and yet many people are not aware of this. Events that do not toe the Party line are routinely denied advertising space in these newspapers, even if we were willing to pay for it. One editor I spoke to admitted that they do a lot of business with companies that have connections with Chinese Communist Party departments, hence they are not able to accommodate different viewpoints.

Why have our Chinese communities changed in this way? I believe this is an important discussion to have, and that we should voice our concerns before things change too much more.

Chun Wing Fan is a trained social worker and planner and is currently working for the Australian government as an analyst. Formerly president of the Chinese Migrants Welfare Association, 1992-1993, and a member of the Community Consultation Committee of Villawood Immigration Detention Centre, 2000-2010.