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Interference with Academic Activities in Australian Universities

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We often hear about the Chinese Communist Party's overseas infiltration. In Australia, the Chinese Communist Party's activities are not limited to infiltration; the red tide of the Chinese Communist Party has also had a serious impact on our lives and social activities. Their actions aren't limited to quiet manipulations behind the scenes. Rather, we feel that our lives here are being seriously affected and blatantly disturbed.

During the early 2000s, I studied and worked at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). During my time there, I would often organize various forms of activities through the university. There are many examples of the Chinese Communist Party directly interfering with our academic activities on campus. I will give two examples here.

Example 1:

In 2003, the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China (ACPPRC) organised a relatively large event in Sydney. From what I heard, they spent 300,000 Australian dollars to invite former US President Bill Clinton to make a speech. Our democratic-movement organization also invited Wei Jingsheng from the United States. I applied through UTS to book a room to host Wei's speech and my colleague Peter helped with this application. Peter was a Cambridge University graduate and an associate professor at UTS.

One day after the event, Peter sought me out. He seemed anxious. He asked me what the hired room was used for. Although I tried to remain low-key, he still knew my involvement in the pro-democratic movement and was willing to help. But he was nervous. He said, "It is likely that I may lose my job." I asked him, "What is the matter?" He said, "Someone called me this morning from the Dean's office, enquiring about the details of the activities which took place in that hired room." I immediately gave him detailed information about our activities since the university was investigating into the matter.

We later heard that following our activity, the Chinese consulate had made a phone call to the university protesting the activity and Wei Jingsheng's attendance. The university was quite nervous as the following day the engineering college was to meet a six-person delegation from Beijing to discuss an Olympic Games-related project. The Chinese Communist Party wanted to introduce the technology from the Sydney Olympic Park solar energy facilities in anticipation of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the university feared that our seminar would jeopardise their business deal with the Chinese government.

From this example, it became obvious that the Chinese Communist Party was directly interfering with Australia's free society through its business opportunities, even extending

to hiring rooms for a small scale seminar within universities.

Example 2:

In 2007, when dissident Chen Ziming made his first trip to Australia, our friends from the democratic movement invited him to conduct an open seminar in the name of our university. Having learned from my previous experience, I did not book a room free of charge through internal channels at the university, rather I hired a room in the name of an outside organisation.

As we were to advertise the seminar, I knew that once news of the seminar were to become public, the Chinese Consulate would try to intervene through the university. As a safeguard, I asked for a written contract and ensured payment for the room hire. I was afraid that once the Chinese Consulate began to pressure the university, the university would yield. Once I had signed a formal leasing contract, I advertised the seminar in a newspaper. I was now certain that no problems would arise.

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However, I never expected the UTS Facilities Hire to call me to cancel my lease due to 'other activities' in the room on the same day. I immediately went to see them, and asked them what kind of activities were being held in that room. The man did not answer my question. I asked him if the Chinese Consulate had called, he said that he couldn't comment.

It became quite obvious that after the advertisement of our activity, the news of Chen Ziming and Wang Juntao's intended visit to the university became widespread. The Chinese Consulate immediately tried to intervene. I showed the Facilities Hire the signed contract, telling them that the advertisement was placed, people were informed, and they were thus not able to compensate my loss. Due to my resolute attitude, the seminar was able to proceed as planned.

However, the university was still uneasy. The staff member who had leased the room to us seemed anxious. He attended on the day of the seminar to ensure that our activity proceeded smoothly.

The above are two examples of how the Chinese Communist Party is openly interfering with academic activities in our universities.

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