

## Australian Adam Smith Club (Melbourne)

President: Timothy Warner, Editor: Mannie Gross, P.O. Box 950, Hawthorn, 3122

The communist is a socialist in a violent hurry.  
G. W. Gough (*The Economic Consequences of Socialism, I, 1926*)

# Rowan Callick on The Threat from China Under the CCP

**The Adam Smith Club will host a Zoom Meeting on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> of October, 2020  
Please see below for registration.**

Rowan Callick is a public speaker, author and media writer. He is an Industry Fellow at Griffith University's Asia Institute and a member of the Advisory Boards of the National Foundation for Australia China Relations, La Trobe University's Asia Institute and its China Studies Department, and the University of Technology Sydney's Australia China Relations Institute. He is a governor of the Foundation for Development Cooperation, and a fellow of the Australian Institute of International Affairs.

He was Beijing-based China Correspondent of The Australian for two terms – returning in mid-2018 - following 20 years with The Australian Financial Review including as China Correspondent based in Hong Kong. He was also Asia-Pacific Editor for both newspapers, a senior writer with Time magazine, and a newspaper publisher in Papua New Guinea for 10 years.

He has written three books published in both English and Chinese: *Comrades & Capitalists: Hong Kong Since the Handover*, *Channar: A landmark venture in iron ore*; and *Party Time: Who Runs China and How*. He has won a Graham Perkin Award for Australian Journalist of the Year, two Walkley Awards, and was awarded an OBE in 2015 on the recommendation of the PNG government, for services to the training of PNG journalists.

Attendance is open to both members and non-members. Those desiring to attend should register no later than 4:00PM Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> of October. Attendees may join the meeting from 7:30PM for an 8:00PM start.

Please register via email at [asmith@adamsmithclub.org](mailto:asmith@adamsmithclub.org) and you will receive meeting login details via return email.

Enquiries to Hon. Secretary, mob. 0403 933 786  
email: [asmith@adamsmithclub.org](mailto:asmith@adamsmithclub.org)

## LAISSEZ FAIRE ON THE WEB

This newsletter has an address on the web: <http://www.adamsmithclub.org/laissez.htm>. The Club's web site can be found at <http://www.adamsmithclub.org/>.

## EMERGENCY POWERS OR NORMAL POWERS

The Victorian Government has had three pieces of legislation to 'manage' the COVID crisis. In April it felt that the already fabulously powerful health and emergency powers were insufficient. The first Act stopped any evictions, intervened in property disputes and rewrote the intervention orders, that regulations issued by a Minister overrule any enacted law (excepting the Constitution Act) for the period of the Emergency. It denies the right to trial by jury, allowing Local Government and Parliamentary Committees to meet by electronic means. While some of these are practical measures, others are violent attacks on private property and rights.

In September, the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension and Other Matters) Bill 2020 was moved and passed on Fiona Patten's vote. This was to extend the emergency powers for twelve months – including the right to legislate by regulation. Ms Patten and the Greens trumpeted that they restrained leviathan – by having the extension reduced to six months with the Premier having to announce each month that he was extending – no oversight and no need to refer to Parliament!

Now we have COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2020 – a real doozy. That any delegated officer can have the authority of the Chief Health Officer to declare any person a danger, based on perceived possible actions against the health and safety of the community. Your dog catcher can arrest and detain you indefinitely (without a court review), because they think you may do something which could cause the spread of COVID. In approximately the words of Monty Python – even the professions took notice. Retired High Court Justices, QCs and even the AMA noted that having any civil servant acting as a pseudo medical officer to arrest someone was a travesty of the law and medicine.

The really unfortunate fact is that Ms Patten and the Greens will likely get a tepid amendment so only Police and lower health bureaucrats can use this outrageous power – and declare themselves heroes of civil liberties. The Bill, as written, says any person can be made a delegate of the Chief Health Officer, it seems the intention is to allow police, PSO's (the transport police) and quarantine security guards(!) to be delegates – but no clear definition is included.

The reason for having a legal capacity to restrain a Typhoid Mary is certainly arguable – even defensible. To pass this authority to any and every friend of Daniel Andrews is appalling.

To be clear, this Bill allows indefinite non re-viewable detention – at the whim of any delegated civil servant, on the basis of a perceived threat to public health. This is very dangerous stuff in any hands. But in the hands of a Government which enacts policy by assumption (see the quarantine enquiry), we cannot risk our lives and property to these measures. *TW*

## MEETING REPORT

On a very electric evening, the first virtual Adam Smith Club meeting was held with speaker Senator James Paterson. We opened 'the doors' a half hour early and it was great to see so many familiar faces after our months of lock down, the usual haunts - Adam Smith Club, Prodos Forums, IPA - all avenues of fellowship having been closed. But on this night we gathered and chatted.

Our special guest has been something of a sensation since his elevation to the Senate. Catching the eye with strong statements on Freedom of Speech, University de-platforming, People's Republic of China actions against sovereignty and civil rights. Now he has been

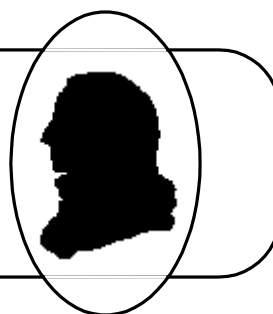
front and centre on the oversight committee of the COVID response.

The talk centred on his more recent activities and the choices involved in the COVID response (this was in June). But question time moved on to China and Freedom of Speech and the Universities being complicit in shutting down views interfering with their PRC relationships.

The first of these virtual meetings was a great success and we had to let the speaker go (babies to feed and a wife to talk to), after an hour and ten minutes of enjoyable discourse. Many Thanks to James and to the interrogators in the audience! *TW*

# Laissez Faire

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## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Many feel that we do not need local Government as a fully-fledged expensive layer of over governance. BUT if we do have it - it should be fit for purpose.

The exceedingly unlamented former Local Government Minister Mr Adem Somyurek shows how to make something unfit for purpose.

Over the last three years - since the 2016 Local Government elections the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) had been holding the sort of extended consultation much parodied and moaned about. After much discussion in November 2019 it had released new ward boundaries and a small number of changes to how mostly rural councils elected representatives. This didn't suit the factional warriors of the ALP.

Since the 1980s the Greens had been muscling in on ALP sovereign territory of the inner suburbs, and the Liberals and Nationals had been more effectively using outer suburban and regional councils to challenge policies. This will not do. First step, take responsibility for elections away from the VEC and give it to the Minister personally: done - Local Government Act 2020 (March 2020). Rewrite the ways councilors are elected - removing multi MEMBER council wards from any area where Greens may lurk: done, April/May 2020. Utilise COVID rules and regulations to stop effective campaigning over the new voting period: done!

Councilors who are 'in' and have titles and contact lists can use non-contact methods of campaigning. Outsiders must now get 50.1% of the vote. Cannot door knock, cannot travel more the 5km from home (nor can their helpers), must register all donations. Most candidates will be known by the 300 words which the council will send along with the ballot papers. The wards themselves are gerrymandering artistry - no common threads of community - only a way of balancing areas of ALP support against rivals.

Although he now sits lonesome as a cross bencher in the Upper House - Adem has done wonderful service to the ALP in protecting its (i.e. ALP) interests in what could have been a terrible season of results, where people could have held the Party and the policies to account. *TW*

## MY ENEMY'S ENEMY - MAKING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Recent events in the Middle East have shown cause for optimism not seen since the peace agreement signed by Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat in 1979. The revolt of the Egyptian "street" in the Arab Spring threatened this peace, but did not subvert it. In 1980 I traveled to both Israel and Egypt. There was a great deal of optimism but on the Egyptian side it was a cold peace. Peace between Israel and Egypt is the primary building block for any peace in the Middle East.

The recent peace treaties between Israel and Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are as momentous as the Begin-Sadat peace agreement. The Arab world, or at least the Sunni section, needs Israel as a counterweight to Iran, the Shi'a superpower. Israel rules the air, including the electromagnetic spectrum. Israel's Air Force is the most powerful in the Middle East. The Jewish State has two combat-ready squadrons of F-35 Lockheed Lightning II multi-role fighters, which outmatch any comparable fighter in the region. The F-35 has been controversial, but it will be the front-line aircraft for America's allies for many years to come.

Israel's formal or informal allies in the region include Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, the UAE and Egypt, plus smaller non-state actors. Israel cannot be beaten in a conventional war. As for the Arab states, it is a case of "my enemy's enemy is my friend." They need the Israelis to combat Iran. Egypt is the most populous nation in the Middle East, with almost 100 million inhabitants; Iran, the Sunni superpower, has a population of 81 million, exceeded only by Egypt. No-one denies that Iran has a nuclear program, but how far it has progressed is a matter of conjecture. Israel is suspected to be behind numerous "accidents" that have afflicted Iran's nuclear program.

If Israel is not at immediate threat of destruction in a conventional war, is it safe? The answer is that the Middle East is inherently unsafe because of liminal warfare. Liminal warfare is war “at the margins.” Liminal warfare is war in the border regions, a form of unconventional warfare that is predominant in unstable regions. In the case of Israel, there are regions from which numerous threats can arise. Lebanon harbours Hezbollah, a Shi’a militia, but it also houses the Christian Arabs and the Druze, an Arab sect which fights for Israel. The Druze from time to time take casualties. The West Bank is a hotbed of rebellion. Gaza has been, as Ariel Sharon predicted, a disaster for Israel. Hamas, who control Gaza, are funded by Iran. Gaza is a prime example of liminal warfare. Both Hezbollah and Hamas receive funding from a variety of sources but are effectively controlled by Iran. Iran’s leadership is both irrational and unpredictable. The regime relies on the Revolutionary Guards to retain its hold on power.

David Kilcullen describes liminal warfare in his recent book “The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West.” (Scribe, 2020) Israel and its allies have taken a big step forward towards permanent peace in the Middle East. The Dragons: Russia, China and a half-dragon, Iran are still threatening, but it is Iran, a Dragon that acts like a Snake, that poses the biggest threat. *JRB*

## I AM RIGHT. YOU ARE WRONG.

I have been skeptical of anthropogenic global warming (AGW) theory for decades. I have given talks and publicly debated proponents of the theory. Yet I suspect I convinced nobody to change their mind as a result of those talks or as a result of numerous personal conversations I have had with people. Several years ago, a scientist who supports the theory told me privately that as a general principle he wonders how, when you know you are right, do you convince someone who disagrees with you to change their mind and agree with you. I don’t think there is an answer to this question. Although humans are supposed to be the rational animal, they often do not think rationally. Indeed, Daniel Kahneman’s *Thinking, Fast And Slow* would indicate that there is subconscious irrational thinking going on all the time in our minds.

About a year ago an intelligent person I knew approached me and asked me to explain why I am a so called “climate skeptic”. I started with an explanation of the scientific method and that scientific theories can never be proven, only disproven. She said she understood this very well. I then went on to explain that the theory had been refuted in the published peer reviewed literature. She then asked me, if what I said was true, why do all scientists continue to claim the theory is true? I responded that although I could speculate that self-interest was involved, she would have to ask those scientists herself. She stated that she could not believe that the overwhelming consensus of scientists would continue to propagate a false theory and walked off in a huff. How is it that obviously intelligent people still don’t understand?

A few days ago, I heard someone laud Ruth Bader Ginsberg after her death with the comment, “A minority of one may still be right”. (I presume this was supposed to indicate that even RBG’s dissenting views will eventually triumph.) Of course, the corollary to this statement is, “A unanimous majority may be wrong”.

This got me thinking again about how to convince someone of the falsehood of the AGW theory. I think I have been going about this the wrong way. If intelligent people claim to understand the scientific method, that theories cannot be proven, only disproven, then the question to ask them is “What evidence would disprove the theory?” If they answer, “No evidence can disprove the theory,” then we are not dealing with science but with faith or witch doctory and there is no point pursuing the matter further. If they answer that they don’t know, then tell them to come back to you discuss the matter further when they have worked out an answer. For without knowing what evidence will refute the theory, they have no justification for accepting the theory as even tentatively true.

There is no way to convince someone who does not wish to be convinced. There is no point arguing with a closed mind. An intellectually honest person will take up the challenge and try to determine what evidence would convince them AGW theory is wrong. The rest will follow. *MG*