

## **‘BLUER SKY, CLEARER WATER, GREENER LAND AND BETTER LIVING’ FEEDBACK ON AN INTREPID TRIP FROM HONG KONG TO SHANGHAI**

This feedback refers to the Intrepid trip which started in Hong Kong on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011 and ended in Shanghai on 6<sup>th</sup> February after bus travel to Yangshuo, then flying to Yichang, a boat tour on the Yangzi River and from there to Chongqing, Chengdu, Hangzhou and Shanghai by bus, plane and train. This was a wonderfully varied, well organized, informative and very enjoyable tour, as I have come to expect from Intrepid. Before it began I spent a few days in Hong Kong with a visit to Macau and at the end I spent an extra day in Shanghai. I understand that because of huge crowds traveling home during the Spring Festival in the Chinese Lunar Calendar, our trip conditions were repeatedly upgraded by Intrepid. We were nearly always very comfortably off as a result. (Only a better clientele puts a copy of ‘The Corrections’ in a Yangzi River Boat library.)

### **IN THE GREAT STUMBLE FORWARD, LEARN FROM SHANGHAI**

This trip feedback is provided primarily in the above context to meet Intrepid request and also to offer broader policy advice for consideration. Its key advice to Australian government is ‘Learn from Shanghai’. This is discussed primarily with reference to the direction on ‘city, citizens, environment and development’ provided at the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center which aims to display the past, present and future of Shanghai. To assist public enjoyment and understanding of the logically related urban and rural planning directions the Center showcases, it also has big books of photos of the most valued historic buildings and sculptures. On its top floor, the Center outlines its plans for ‘Bluer sky, clearer water, greener land and better living’. One would feel more confident if one had not gone through a floor of contemporary Spanish art to get there.

Planning information is supplemented by more on the Shanghai Expo 2010 and more also on the giant CCTV1 screen which offers direction to the public at the Bund. The Bund is the area stretching for two kilometers along the west bank of the Huangpu River. With the biggest riverside concentration of historic and contemporary buildings and financial institutions in China, it is apparently known as ‘the World Exposition of Architectures’ and the ‘Oriental Wall Street’. The Bund was also the birthplace of the first foreign firm, bank, customs office, foreign embassy, foreign newspaper and the first park in China. To wander along the Bund with huge crowds of Chinese families taking their holiday photos is exciting by day and especially so by night, when every major building is also lit up, with or without advertising, on both sides of the river. This is the only public, outdoors open space I ever welcomed a giant TV screen instead of cursing it as visual pollution.

A helpful cautionary note in relation to the currently planned development direction centering on construction, which is obvious to any traveller in this region, especially from the plane, is contained in an article in the Shanghai Daily (7.2.2011, Opinion A7) entitled ‘Soaring prices, crushed homes, roaring GDP’. Wan Lixin claims that according to an Internet survey, zhang (surging prices) and chai (tearing down), best sum up people’s feelings about 2010. He writes that local government officials have grown so addicted to

growth they have lost their capacity to be 'incentivized by any other targets' and argues holistic measures of community wellbeing are needed. He claims:

The enshrinement of the market has led to decade-long growth, and as the racket has died down a bit, we can spare some time for reflections. Some came to wonder if the miraculous growth in wealth is more distributive than creative. Equipped with this insight, some people have developed a healthy cynicism about 'public interests' so often cited by officials.

As an Australian and global traveler I certainly share a lot of cynicism about what powerful forces may naturally deliver then claim that people wanted. I had a strong impression our Intrepid guide was very concerned about official corruption, but not about air pollution or any related environmental problems. However, as Joni Mitchell stated:

They cut down all the trees, put some in a tree museum  
Then charge all the people a dollar and a quarter just to see them  
Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you lost when it's gone?  
They pave paradise, put up a parking lot.

One suspects this may now be the fate of most parks and valuable wilderness around the world, so the best of British luck to China Tourism Information with Paradise Sichuan. To mix with the gigantic crowds of Chinese people joyfully strolling in the small parks around the lake and on its islands at Hangzhou, or to see the common thirst for information on Chinese history, or the love of dressing little children as animals, or taking photos, is to gain a view of what many may want far more than endless shopping. For example, I wished my daughter had seen the wonderful Shanghai acrobats perform. She became an obsessive gymnast starting at age six and bonked away at it for hours almost every day throughout primary school, thanks to our great local Police Youth Club. You can't always get what you want, expect perhaps for high sugar, high fat food, clothes and TV or radio programs. It seems a sin to waste the global potential of the latter two.

In my very limited experience, the information and related clear direction found at the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center is very rare in Asia and thus a vital aid in keeping better development on track. This direction and related process are also democratic, especially if openly debated. Such clear statement of policy direction to the public also contrasts strongly with the market driven US view of democracy which primarily offers rich financial interests and an ignorant population the chance to buy their politicians or wipe them out, secretly or not. In this global context it is unfortunate that the Australian TV and press reporting of the Shanghai Expo in 2010 appeared so shallow.

In fairness, I should point out that nightly SBS and ABC TV news and current affairs programs are, in my opinion, the best I have seen anywhere in the world and key Australian newspapers are comparatively broadly and deeply informative as well. I'll be with George every night at 6 pm on Channel 10 and not just to see interviews with people like the beautiful Deena Hamid on the streets of Cairo. (This is a wonderful new affair.)

While I am naturally proud to be an Australian taxpayer funding SBS TV to provide the US program 'News Hour' daily, would I really be in a position to keep it running any other way? (Baby, I don't think so.) Nevertheless, firm congratulations to Margaret Warner and the gang, not least for giving us so much apparently clear and comparatively well balanced information related to the current situation in Egypt. In regard to the state of TV, as far as I've seen it across the Asian region, I think the Chinese government should start putting more trust in the intelligence of its people, who are not stupid.

A recent speech by Kevin Rudd, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of the Modern Department of Foreign Affairs. This is referred to for direction in my related submission entitled 'O Mein Papa', to an Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness, which is attached. The Law and Justice Evaluation Issues Paper (November 2010) is addressed in a related attachment which points out the aims of investment are seldom discussed by those representing financial and legal interests, as their controlling paradigm assumes the only aim of investing money is making more. However, from broader community perspectives than those of stockholders or more genuine fund controllers, and from the perspective of any family, money is ideally amassed and invested to meet many environmental and social goals better. Ideally, the role of government is to represent the collective interests of the people, which are social and environmental as well as economic and which extend to future generations. These paradigm differences must be faced or confusion about how to reduce carbon pollution and achieve sustainable development will reign and it will fail. (Ask the Chairman's advice?)

In his speech to departmental officers the Minister said:

We must never content ourselves with being the world's best describers of unfolding challenges. We are at our best when we go to the next and necessary step of determining what we must then do in anticipation of the challenges.

This is also the vital first part of any quality management process. It involves being able to understand environments so as to identify and prioritize the risks or challenges arising from them, in order to give advice to selected decision makers on the steps towards better management in the service of the people, including any of us who may be a bit special.

Before this, the Minister addressed the importance of aid effectiveness in front of the Australian Council for International Development. He pointed out the centrality of the Millennium Development Goals in the government mission and to the fact that that their focus is poverty reduction. He also said part of the government mission is 'giving voice to the voiceless'. In regard to the related topic of law and justice financing, one must first know the specified aims of such aid and what the \$300 million Australians paid out in 2008-2009 was actually spent on, if wishing to evaluate the outcome of its expenditure. This is only common sense. If those who took the money have no clear idea of what it was given for and what it was spent on, they should naturally be asked to create more open and clear accountabilities for management in future. On the other hand, I went on this Intrepid trip mainly to see pandas and bamboo but ended up on this topic instead.

Life is what happens when one is busy making other plans, as Lennon pointed out. Koalas, wombats, tigers, orang utans, gorillas and their fellows, however, cannot wait. (Send them the odd stealth bomber.)

Nevertheless, the attached submissions primarily recommend all involved in aid are familiar with principles of quality management and implement them in aid programs consistent with the direction of other government projects. This direction ideally exists in the broader context of the UN Declaration of Alma-Ata which states primary health care 'involves, in addition to the health sector, all related sectors and aspects of community development, in particular agriculture, animal husbandry, food, industry, education, housing, public works, communications and other sectors; and demands the coordinated efforts of all sectors'. This quality management approach sees all work and other activities as located in communities and related natural environments from which many risks and related challenges arise while we are busy pursuing life, trying to make it better.

Health is not mainly about medical and insurance practices but about good management of all work and other community activity. Work project aims, processes and quality have many impacts on investors, employers, workers and natural environments and also on consumers, taxpayers and other communities. There is a related need for better joined up governance to assist more effective data gathering for planning and communication purposes and for competition to improve the quality of life. This is now demonstrated by current events in the US, at least as shown on News Hour, by those kings of what seemed to be a reasonable idea at the time, Daryl Issa and Elijah Cumming, on the House Oversight Committee. The Committee apparently appears currently to be looking at any regulation which interferes with job creation, including in health care. The Wall Street Journal (7.2.2011, p.2) discussed Chinese bids to team up with a 'small, unprofitable' California company to try to win US defense contracts to make stealthy fighter planes. Given our history, does this new arms consensus seem a tad wasteful or weird to you? Who will we all bomb together now – our allied populations? (Gee, that would be new?) Surely this money should be spent on safer, more productive forms of better job creation.

As I understand it, there also seems to be considerable consensus that Egypt also lacks a constitutional structure and related democratic practice which can produce sensible policy direction and democratic procedures in the interests of the common people. They could start another club, or maybe have a go at the Australian way of a popular referendum to suitably change the Constitution, plus an election. I am reliably informed that Australia has held 44 referenda, and in 8 of them the people voted in favour of change. In my opinion, this seems most likely to suggest very healthy distrust of lawyers feathering their own nests even further. We say, 'Bugger the Constitution, what makes it so special?' Address the matter with church and industry groups or ignore it and pretend it went away. (Besides losing belief in our common law approach, we also lost it in the tooth fairy.)

A few dead white male ideas should not rule over our many billions and laws beyond the grave in much later, more informed times, with the benefits of hindsight. Our times also require and can technologically provide many more accurately informed and so better responses for governance in the interests of the people, who naturally include future

generations, than the past can. Why travel backwards? Ideally our direction is also much more broadly informed and democratic rather than narrowly informed and authoritarian or adversarial in action. We were told that if Egyptians physically attacked the palace, the TV and radio stations or similar institutions, the army must act. Avoid the rich and/or ignorant ruling. La lutte continue! Viva Carla Bruni and Jane Fonda with Angela, Julia and Clover coming up. 'Safe Army' Intrepid Tours are recommended to see useful army projects working safely around the world. (We do not wish to be embedded with forces.)

### **FEUDING, A FUSSING AND A FIGHTING (ON TIPPING GUIDES IN CHINA)**

One usually hates to bargain or tip or to provide charity because such situations naturally imply inequality of opportunity, ignorance and related injustices which in our ideal, perfectly clearing market, would not exist. Why should one tip the private sector bus driver in China, but not the government one? Such practices must invariably be carried out in ignorance of any surrounding and potentially related situations and sources of income or exploitation besides one's small deposit. Such practices may also provide many related opportunities for corruption which perhaps also pose as support for family or its related civic loyalties. (See the movie *Charlie Wilson's War* for a big example.)

In short, bargaining, tipping and begging drive me nuts with all their related mafia-like anxieties, so in the US I would rather stay home with the covers pulled over my head. In the market one always seeks perfect information, just like we do at home with the kids. Despite his key economic contribution on how to read a graph on the quality of things that can't be quantified on page 111 of his treatise entitled 'Eat the Rich', P.J. O'Rourke is a pretty boring, gutless prick. But hey, I guess deep down in his US dream he always knew it. (I took O'Rourke with me to China. One hesitates to comment on any of the US Nobel prizewinners in economics, except to wonder at the brilliance of the constellation.)

On the other hand, the trackers of Shen Nong Xi, which is situated in Badong County in Hubei province on a Yangzi River tributary appear fabulous in other ways but especially in pictures of them in the nude as they used to work dragging boats more comfortably up the river against the tide in all weathers, before they hauled up tourists. (Some may recall the mid 1980s pop song entitled 'Love of Boatmen' on Chinese MTV.) No doubt in admiration of the trackers' river knowledge, skill, strength and endurance, a tourist in our party organized a whip-round for a tip of 20 yuan (\$3 US) per tourist to give to the trackers who pulled us, which seemed entirely reasonable to me. Our local guide (hope888@vip.sina.com) saw this as a good opportunity to sell us a book or a disc on the trackers, their lives and loves, to support an aid program designed mainly to bring education to children in the community. The book is beautifully informative and poetic.

However, this local guide, who spoke wonderful English, was also too cheerfully hard working and openly obliging and informative in response to many tourists' ignorantly probing personal questions than was good for him, at least in my case. This lovely and clever young man, married to a member of the police force who earns more than twice as much as he does, said he loves to take his gun hunting in the national park, especially for monkey brains. I think he also said he has no fear of doing so as his wife works for the

police. Whatever this demonstrates, I can only guess that it is not a clear understanding of the Party line, which one supposes ought to be provided, at least to Western tourists.

In spite of his duet with his beautiful cousin in our competing boats and with little consideration of his worth comparative to that of trackers, who must also read the river, its stones and any related cultural sensitivities, but purely on the basis of the gun and monkey brains, I did not tip him and felt guilty afterwards. No wonder swearing is the preferred manner of speech for the boatmen of Three Strait. In the Faculty of Health Sciences at Sydney University this would never happen as all teachers and students know that all personal questions are very rude as well. (Is this why they are so smart, or is it perhaps because they have studied psychology as their science? Baby, you be the judge.)

Our Chinese Intrepid trip guide, Owen, who had studied business, was a very broadly knowledgeable and excellent English speaker who organized and led our trip very well. One night at dinner we debated, as one does across the table, the post-war record of government in Singapore. If I understood it correctly, Owen's view was that this government had been bad because it had been insufficiently attentive to the protection of Chinese and China's national interest. I put the view that the government of Singapore followed good policies which produced very good results in the light of its historical, geographic and related political and religious circumstances. (Women looked nervous and asked for new subjects). The youngest Lithuanian came round to confide that her mother, sitting beside her, wanted to tell me Owen was only toeing the Party line and that in her own youth as a tour guide, she had been expected to say three nice things about Brezhnev in every speech. I responded that if the Chinese Communist leadership had ever taken Owen's advice, millions more would have died in regional ethnic violence and nuclear war. I then had to apologize profusely to one of the Scots, in whose view I had accused all young men of being horrible, including him. (They most certainly are not!)

What we got here is failure to communicate, (as was famously said of Paul Newman). As a fellow sufferer, I naturally feel sympathetic to Owen's problem, which I regard as being the strong desire to speak as honestly as possible about things that matter. In my experience people like us are comparatively less likely to be authoritarian and Owen specifically noted the principle idea I presented, which is that our action in any situation should ideally be based more on broad intellectual analysis and less on our emotional identifications and loyalties. We apologized to each other. For the record, I gave him a final tip of \$200 yuan, thoughtfully put in a Singapore Airlines sachet. I reassured him that I bore him no grudge and my Intrepid feedback should in no way undermine the potential Intrepid bonus he was seeking. I said I wished all my students at Sydney University had possessed such knowledge, independent thought and honest willingness to express it as he demonstrated. I interpreted his look as meaning this was a remark he might have expected from a stupid, old, condescending, Western woman but this may say much more about me than him. God knows what Owen thought. He kept his mouth shut.

Before some final words about translation, I would like to point out that the Intrepid Trip Notes appear wrong if trying to suggest the best way to Pudong airport for most Intrepid travelers is to take the Maglev train - the magnetic levitation train which is the fastest in

the world. The Nanjing Hotel's most excellent features, in my opinion, are that it lies half-way between the Bund and the People's Square both of which are within very straightforward walking distance, while the train to Pudong airport is also just around the corner. A ticket to the faraway airport costs 7 yuan. If you are an old woman finding your glasses, money, the metro map and English ticket machine instructions, a nice young man may come and sort it out for you much faster. Mine then showed an English sign stating he is deaf and dumb. I gave him 3 yuan change. Was this a perfect market?

Owen said he did not want to be a translator for politicians as the job was too stressful. He said he once had to translate for the Premier of Western Australia and his party and realized too late the premier had said 'today' and not 'to die'. We surmised the relevant premier had been Geoff Gallop. (Among other things, we asked Owen if he looked depressed.) I can source my translation problem to 1976 when I was in China. Our guides had launched into a spirited discussion of what I understood to be 'burro rides', and also asked us what we thought of these, which drew a blank. I could only think of donkey riding on the sands at Margate during my English childhood or of the donkey riders in Nigeria, where I had more recently worked as an English and history teacher. We could not understand what our guides had such strong feelings about or why. Only later did we realize that they were referring to 'bourgeois rights'. Today, after many years, I feel I have more of a handle on these matters, which are now also addressed on my website [www.Carolodonnell.com.au](http://www.Carolodonnell.com.au) as well as in the attached. (Eat the lawyers.)

In conclusion, thank you for another great Intrepid trip and for the related opportunity to provide this quality information – much more satisfying than ticking off silly old boxes.

Yours truly, Carol O'Donnell, St James Court, 10/11 Rosebank St., Glebe, Sydney 2037.



