

Australia: Opponents of War with China Labelled “Rats, Flies, Mosquitoes and Sparrows”

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The whipping up of a scandal last week against Labor Senator Sam Dastyari for accepting \$1,670 from a Chinese company is escalating into a general witchhunt against any politician, business figure or organisation that questions a militarist policy toward Beijing. Dastyari has been branded a “Manchurian candidate.” Across the media, allegations are being made that Australia is under threat from a fifth column who have either been bought off by Chinese “soft power” or who, because of their Chinese background, have allegiance to a “foreign power.”

The campaign was launched by the state-owned Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), which on August 29 accused China of being responsible for the hacking of a defence research institution and the trade and investment corporation, Austrade. The offensive was joined by the leading business journal, the *Australian Financial Review*. After exposing Dastyari’s acceptance of Chinese payments, it published 11 separate articles on September 2 that in varying ways attacked China as a danger to Australian interests.

The most remarkable article alleged that the Australian intelligence agencies, which work in daily collaboration with their US partners, do not trust Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull due to his past business relations in, and statements on, China.

The Murdoch-owned *Australian* followed with an editorial yesterday on the need to root out the “Chinese soft power push in Australia.” It editorialised today that Labor Party leader Bill Shorten must demand answers from Dastyari on the relationship between Chinese payments and questions Dastyari asked in the Senate last year, which concerned whether Australia would join a war in the South China Sea. The obvious implication by the *Australian* is that Dastyari was attempting to gain information for the Chinese state.

A column in today’s *Australian* by Paul Dibb, a leading strategic analyst and author of the 1986 Defence White Paper, sinisterly notes that there are now one million Australian residents of Chinese background, one third of whom were born in China, along with some 140,000 Chinese students in Australia.

Dibb asserts:

“The fact is, there are a considerable number of Chinese residents and students here who feel nostalgic about the People’s Republic and its ruling party. If that is so, we have a dangerous case on our hands with a group of people who are not integrating and who owe allegiance to a foreign power.”

The most vicious contribution to the anti-China campaign was published today by the international editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Peter Hartcher.

Hartcher declared that Australian “sovereignty” is at risk because of pro-Beijing layers in politics, business and within the Chinese Australian community. Australia, he asserts, “has been pretty naïve in the way it sees China.”

Hartcher’s column, and the language with which it was written, warrants extensive review. It provides an ominous warning of what is set to engulf Australian politics.

Hartcher writes: “Chairman Mao famously launched a hygiene campaign in 1958 called the ‘Four Pests Campaign.’ Citizens were urged to eradicate rats, flies, mosquitoes and sparrows. Australia needs to wage a campaign of vigilance against foreign manipulation of its democracy. In terms that Mao would have understood, perhaps a ‘Four Pests Campaign’ of our own is required to defend against agents of foreign influence.”

Hartcher labels as the “rats” in Australia, “politicians compromised by China’s embrace.” Dastyari, he asserts, is just one. “There will be many more.”

The “flies” are “unwitting paid-mouthpieces for the interests of the Chinese regime.” Hartcher names Bob Carr, former New South Wales premier and Labor government foreign minister, as one such fly, because Carr established the Australia-China Relations Institute at the University of Technology in Sydney with a \$1.8 million donation from a Chinese corporation.

The “mosquitoes” are Australian business people “so captivated by their financial interests that they demand Australia assume a kowtow position.” Hartcher names media and mining billionaire Kerry Stokes—chairman of television station Channel 7—as a mosquito because in 2011 he opposed the basing of US marines in the northern city of Darwin. Casino billionaire James Packer is also named as a mosquito.

Most ominously, Chinese Australian organisations and Chinese student associations on the universities are identified by Hartcher as the “sparrows” that allegedly exist “specifically to spread Beijing’s influence.” He names the Australian Council for the Promotion of the Peaceful Reunification of China as the “central” sparrow.

Hartcher concludes: “Pests. Who needs them?”

This is the language of political purges, police raids, mass arrests and internment camps for “traitors” and “enemy aliens” in the event of a war with China. Such actions accompanied Australia’s involvement in World War I, with the round-up of thousands of German Australians and the suppression of the most militant anti-war organisations, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). World War II saw the internment of as many as 12,000 people of German, Italian and Japanese background and the illegalisation of the Australian section of the Fourth International. Trotskyists were imprisoned for opposing the war.

The context of the media campaign is the steady escalation of tensions between the United States and China, particularly over US challenges to Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea. The Obama administration and the Pentagon have left no doubt that they expect Australian warships and aircraft to conduct “freedom of navigation” incursions within territorial limits around Chinese-held islets in order to demonstrate the US is not acting

alone. Through Chinese state-owned media, the Beijing regime has warned that any Australian warship that does so could be attacked by the Chinese military.

The prevailing sentiment within the overwhelming majority of the Australian working class is anti-war. The dominant factions of the ruling class, however, intend to follow Washington in defiance of the population. The foul sewer of anti-Chinese chauvinism and hysteria pouring out from the media is a desperate attempt to justify ruthless attacks on democratic rights and involvement in a US-led confrontation with nuclear-armed China.

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