

Comment by Michael C H Jones

Most Australians are totally confused by what is taking place in the Australian Labor Party generally and with the federal ALP Government particularly. In that context try explaining events to foreign governments/officials, businessmen, academics and the reasonably educated man in the street especially in China. Principles - 'a fair go', Policies - 'social democracy', Process - Caucus decision, will not enlighten anyone about the leadership contest between Gillard and Rudd. The procedures for the election of the new Chinese Communist Party leadership in October this year are far more clear cut.

It obviously but disconcertingly comes back to the culture of the ALP and what it stands for in 2012. In the American system where often the winner takes all - Florida, you can reinvent yourself every 2/3 years and in different states of the country or with different audiences. This is possible in a population of 300 million but certainly not with 22 million.

People, foolishly perhaps, actually believe in promises and that they should be kept - all the best and brightest minds of the ALP cannot change that. Julia Gillard does not keep her promises therefore to Australians she is a political 'dog', even to more than 50% of Labor members and voters. For the ideologically committed, members, there is something very distasteful in someone who votes one way for 20/30 years in factional meetings re questions of uranium sales and marriage entitlements, and then arbitrarily changes to save her own career prospects. For ordinary voters if you promise 'no carbon tax' that is what it means and not a deal with another party - the Greens - to save your job.

Honour, Integrity and Standing are important, indeed vital in any political system - even Nikita Khrushchev in the old Soviet Union was overthrown in 1964 because he lost them. More importantly Disloyalty, Treachery and Malevolence should never be rewarded. Irrespective of the characters of Gillard and Rudd the ALP must 'right the wrong' in the eyes of the Australian people - what happens after that is in the hands of the electorate.

Indeed I would argue that if the ALP tries to move on to another leader - a supposed compromise candidate like Smith or Crean - the stain and stench will stay with the Labor Party for generations. It has only a short time to save itself. Gillard will lose the next federal election by an avalanche, Rudd may also lose by a respectable margin. If the latter occurs the federal ALP can hold its head high with a new leader - provided Bill Shorten and his machine union buddies quietly disappear from the parliament and into a disreputable history.

Rudd has proved himself on the international stage - with the leaders of the G20 he matches their bastardy with the usual smiles and handshakes. I don't have to like my leader but I have to be confident he can handle the heat. And questions of Honour, Integrity and Standing are paramount - that is why US President Richard Nixon and PRC Chairman Mao Tse-tung could do a deal.