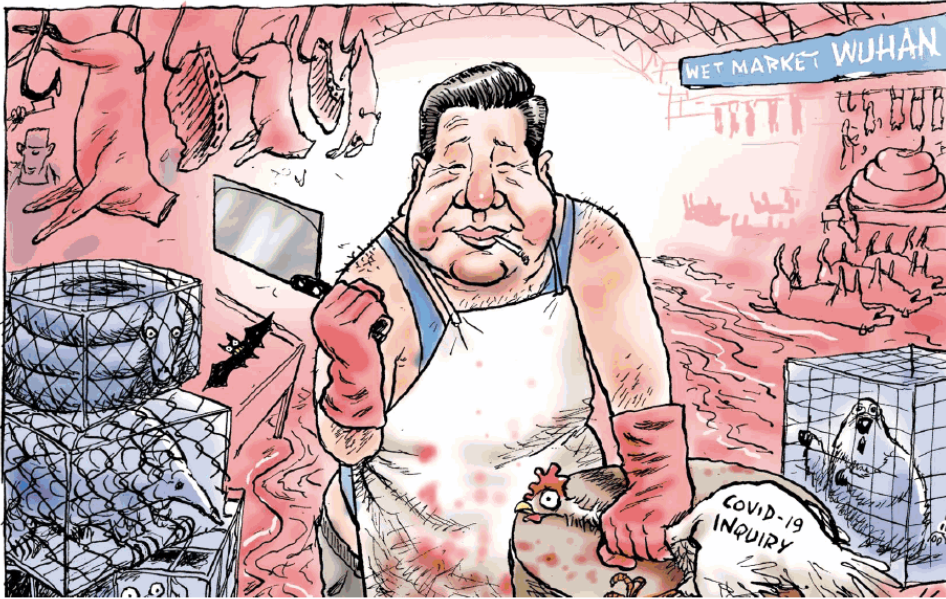


— MARK KNIGHT —



THEY SAID IT



"They've gotten into fights with every northern European country with whom they should have an interest, and they've alienated every one."

Asia expert Francois Godement on aggressive Chinese diplomats

"With a third of the entire world in some form of lockdown, we've been given a small glimpse of what a healing planet looks like."

The Project's Waleed Aly sees the pandemic's bright side

Woke to the threat

It's time to work with like-minded countries to reduce exposure to communist China

Twiggly Forrest has done a great service to the nation. He was wrong to suggest that Australia should change its stance on an independent inquiry into the Wuhan coronavirus. But the Chinese threats of retribution over such an inquiry have turned a huge spotlight on to a major problem.

Chinese officials have suggested that they may buy less from Australia unless we drop our insistence on a transparent inquiry into the virus. Business leaders are concerned about the economic costs of potential Chinese retribution. If we have an economy that is so vulnerable to one country's threatening demands, we had better work to reduce that vulnerability as soon as possible.

Over the past 20 years China has become Australia's largest trading partner. More than a third of our exports are now to China. We export \$134 billion to China and 57 per cent of that is from just two products — iron ore and coal. These are the raw materials that make steel.

China dominates the world steel market. China produces over 900 million tonnes of steel a year, more than half the global market. The next biggest producer of steel is India at just over 100 million tonnes a year.

Steel goes into making almost all modern products, from houses to cars to medical devices and even renewable energy.

It is not healthy for one country to dominate such a key global commodity.

Australia has the world's best iron ore and steelmaking coal, yet

we produce just 0.3 per cent of the world's steel. We should seek to keep more of our iron ore and coal here to make Australian steel. That would create thousands of Australian jobs, including in NSW at Port Kembla.



Perhaps we can redefine the word "woke" to mean to have woken up to the threat of a rising communist state that is flouting international trade rules, ripping off intellectual property and heavily subsidising its own industries and jobs.

It would also do our bit to reduce the dependence of the world on Chinese steel.

That task can't be achieved by Australia alone though. As a key producer of steel's raw materials we should work with other countries to

build their steelmaking capacity. We have done this before. When Japanese production rose in the 1960s, the world acted with voluntary agreements to spread steel production around the world.

It is time to consider similar co-operation among like-minded countries. The conditions are ripe to do so.

India has a plan to triple its steel production and Indian companies are already looking to partner with Australian coal mines to secure supplies.

And thank God that the India-backed Adani coal mine is under way, despite the best efforts of neo-Marxist Greens. The Adani mine can be a building block to grow Australia-India trade and reduce our dependence on trade with China.

Even pre-pandemic, the US was looking to bring more manufacturing jobs back to its country from China.

And the coronavirus pandemic has finally woken many European politicians to the risk of fragile supply chains that rely too much on Chinese production.

Perhaps we can redefine the word "woke" to mean to have woken up to the threat of a rising communist state that is flouting international trade rules, ripping off intellectual property and heavily subsidising its own industries and jobs.

Such an outcome would help everyone by spreading economic growth more evenly.

The next global economic crisis will probably not be a health one that has come from bats. But the more we spread economic activity around, the less vulnerable we will be to all disruptions, whether they be a health contagion or a financial one.

That will be better for business, including for Twigg's.

Matt Canavan is a Nationals senator for Queensland



MATT CANAVAN

Cracking the code for going back in to work

As thousands of Aussies prepare to return to the office over the coming weeks, spare a thought for those who will make the challenging transition from their comfy couches to a cubicle farm.

If you are making a move in that direction, reading this should support your re-entry and reorientation along with your new (old) routine.

Hello, you have reached my voicemail. Sorry that I can't take your call right now.

Which is code for: I am not in the office yet because I am still on my daily commute and the traffic is horrendous so I'll be late — very late.

Excuse me for not responding to your request immediately.

A colleague dropped by for a five-minute weather chat that turned into a 50-minute gossip session.

It looks like I will be delayed for a while.

I have just been summoned to a meeting. These normally go on forever and achieve very little.

I promise to call you back after my lunch break.

I have heated up my leftovers in our office microwave. Nothing fresh and healthy here.

So, as I sit in the half-empty office, I smell the pungent odour of a colleague's reheated fish curry. I try to dodge those fumes but feel faint and need to lie down.

Professor Gary Martin is a workplace expert with the Australian Institute of Management