

# Canada-China Friendship Society® La Société d'amitié Canada-Chine

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*Former ambassador reflects on China: October 2011 meeting*

## Robert Wright: "Canada needs to understand today's China"

Canada needs a better understanding of our #2 trading partner and emerging superpower, Robert Wright, former Canadian Ambassador to China told a large CCFS audience in October.

According to Wright, who served in China from 2005 to 2009, many Canadians still imagine China as it was 20 or 30 years ago. As a result, he says those who visit China for the first time, are almost always surprised by its level of economic development. This is even true of senior level officials and politicians who are usually surprised by what they find when they first come to China.

*Read the full article by Lolan Merklinger on page 6.*



Former Canadian Ambassador to China Robert Wright feels that Canadians should do more to learn about China.

*Gender issues: June 2011 meeting*

## Chinese women losing ground in local politics, says professor

The participation of women in Chinese society has taken several sharp turns in the last 60 years, according to Professor Kimberley Manning.

In a presentation to a CCFS-Ottawa audience in July, Manning explained that from its creation, the Chinese Communist Party adopted policies to promote the equality of women. After taking power in 1949, the Party encouraged women to take on political responsibilities and be more actively involved in the construction of the "New China".

It even established "quotas" for the involvement of women in political organizations.

However, noted Manning, who is a professor at Concordia University, these quotas were not sufficient to change women's traditional roles in Chinese society. As a result, women found themselves with additional pressures – to do all the traditional roles of women PLUS new societal roles.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## China modernises its defence forces

China's estimated annual defence spending has increased steadily from \$17 billion in 1990 to \$114 billion in 2010, a retired Canadian military attaché to China told a CCFS gathering in September.

But this increase in spending is roughly in line with China's burgeoning economy. And China's military expenditure as a percentage of GDP (2%) is still far behind that of the United States which spends 4.7% of GDP on its military according to Col. David Burke (ret'd.). Burke served in China from 2000 to 2004 and is now a member of the CCFS-Ottawa executive.

According to Burke, China's military is rapidly modernising and becoming a significantly more effective military force. Much of the modernisation includes new equipment both imported and domestically made. But it also has seen a re-balancing of the military forces with particular emphasis on the navy.

The emphasis on improving the Chinese navy comes from a strategic analysis that recognises the importance of controlling the sea approaches to China. As a trading nation it needs to be able to defend its sea lines of communications. Moreover, China has claimed a very large part of the South China Sea which it can



The *Shi Lang*, China's first aircraft carrier, symbolizes China's new "blue water navy."

dominate only with improved naval capability.

The Chinese Navy is being transformed from a "brown water navy" (small ships capable of controlling piracy and smuggling) to a "blue water navy" capable of engaging any enemy hundreds of miles from the coast. It includes destroyers, cruisers, submarines and missile-equipped vessels. A significant development

has been the addition of an aircraft carrier to the Chinese navy. The first Chinese aircraft carrier *Shi Lang* (施琅), has just started sea trials.

The Chinese Army and Air Force have also received new equipment. Old Soviet-designed MiG aircraft have been replaced by new modern Chinese-built fighters. The land forces have acquired newer, better armoured fighting vehicles, tanks and artillery. The Second Artillery has grown in capability and lethality with solid fuelled mobile missiles.

"China's military has made important and measurable strides in its recent modernisation," concludes Col Burke. "It is a significant force in East Asia and how it is used by the Chinese government will continue to be watched closely."

## Movie review: *Up the Yangtze* (2007)

David Yip

*Up the Yangtze* is a 2007 documentary by Chinese Canadian director Yung Chang, a co-production between the National Film Board, the CBC, and other companies. The documentary describes the effects of the building of the Three Gorges Dam on a poor family living on the banks of the Yangtze.

The film centers mainly around Cindy Yu Shui, the daughter of a poor farming family that ekes out a living on the banks of the river. Cindy gets a job on a tourist cruise boat on the Yangtze River where she rapidly confronts the protocols of keeping a job and the ways of her more experienced and worldly coworkers. Her experiences are contrasted with those of Jerry Chen Bo Yu, an ambitious nineteen year old product of the new Chinese middle class. While we are treated to an intimate view of Cindy's family, everything we know about Jerry is conveyed indirectly by Jerry himself.

The film is not overtly critical of the Three Gorges project but there is a melodramatic sentimentality expressed throughout - in the director's narration, the mournful camera work as the Yu's family home vanishes under the rising river, and the elegiac score that was selected. The other way to read the film is as an overly emotional portrait of one family, a portrait that unfairly leaves out the greater benefits of the dam, such as flood control, and electricity generation.

After only 4 years, certain parts of the film seem a little dated - especially the portions depicting the European tourists on the cruise ships as prosperous, well meaning, if slightly oblivious consumers. Given the recent economic recession in the west and the continued economic boom in China, tourists along the Yangtze are more likely to be rich Chinese than middle class Europeans or Americans. Still, the film presents an important and detailed record of an individual effect of one of the most ambitious public works projects of this century. Recommended viewing.

## China a 'de facto' federation, claims professor

Canadians should think of China as a federalist state, a Carleton university teacher told a large audience of CCFS members at a meeting on May 9<sup>th</sup>.

While most westerners think of China as "some kind of centrally-planned and micro-managed state capitalism" in which Beijing directs everything, said Professor Dr. Derek Ireland, that is only half of the story.

Ireland, who has carried out more than 40 missions as a consultant in China over the last 20 years, said that since the early 1970's, China has been in constant experimentation. Many agents of change – both political and economic – are struggling over public policy, development strategy, governance and public administration models.

The result is a kind of "de facto federalism" which has yielded a surprising diversity from one region of China to another. This diversity promotes innovation, experimentation, entrepreneurship, risk taking and regional independence, especially in the Eastern provinces and urban regions.



While legally a centralized state, China's provinces wield so much power that the country is a "de facto" federation, according to a Canadian professor who has worked in many Chinese provinces

China's different provinces intensely compete with each other for markets and resources. Overall, China's internal market is less integrated than the European Union and actually similar in some ways to Canada's highly decentralised confederation

However, despite this economic anarchy, China also has a history of national economic planning. Its 12<sup>th</sup> 5 year economic plan was just decided on by the People's National Congress earlier this year. The plan sets out ambitious economic targets (like reducing China's blistering rate of economic growth and social ones (like increasing social support mechanisms) aimed at reducing the disparities between rich and poor.

In summary, the Chinese economic and political model is an interesting mix of aggressive individualism and entrepreneurial energy on the one hand, and China's collective economic development and modernization projects at local, provincial and national levels on the other.

## Chinese beer comes to Canada

In 2002 China surpassed the United States as the world's largest beer consumer and has maintained this distinction for the seventh straight year. Along with China's economic miracle and accompanying growth of domestic income, beer consumption in China has also experienced double digit growth resulting in a consumption rate of roughly 32 liters of beer per person per year. China now consumes 20% of the world's beer.

China has been producing alcoholic beverages for 7000 years. One only has to take a walk around any major Chinese city to notice green beer bottles in every restaurant or bar patio. The popularity of beer was given a major boost by German beer companies who set-up breweries in Chinese land concessions during the early 1900s in order to provide beer for German sailors. This makes Chinese beer similar in flavour to some German style beers. Tsingtao Beer, located in Qingdao, Shandong province was one of the first such breweries to be built and probably the best known Chinese beer in Canada.

But other Chinese beers are also making serious inroads into the Ottawa beer market. One of these is Yanjing beer, which claims to reflect the "real taste of China". It can be found in many Ottawa area Beer Stores including Chinatown and many local Chinese restaurants.



A range of Chinese beers are now available in Canada

Chinese beer is now readily available for overseas Chinese longing for a taste of China or for non Chinese Canadians who want to try something new!

# Ottawa member celebrates 30th anniversary of Beijing People's Friendship Association

Gary Levy

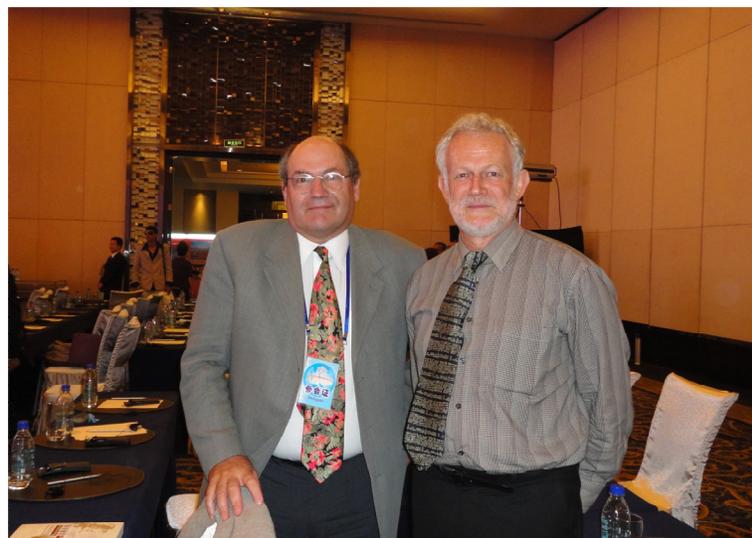
CCFS-O delegate to Beijing Friendship Forum

In September I joined 100 foreign delegates from 20 countries in Beijing to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

The workshops were the most interesting part of the conference. Some focused on what their associations were doing. For example the New Zealand Friendship Society has taken up the work of Rewi Alley, who established co-operatives in western China during the 1930s and continues to support these by providing money (with help from the NZ government) and expertise. The Society also recognizes Kathleen Hall who worked with Dr. Bethune with a \$1500 scholarship that allows girls from rural areas to become public health nurses.

Politics was mostly absent from the conference although one Chinese keynote speaker suggested the world was on a path toward peace, friendly development and co-operation with China at the forefront, contrasting it with the United States emphasis on military solutions. A few American delegates felt this mild rebuke was uncalled for, but discussions with individual delegates left no doubt the Chinese approach to international affairs had more support among delegates than the more ideological American one.

Not all workshop speakers represented friendship associations. Americans put considerable emphasis on academic exchanges and not just at the university level. The Greek delegate described



Gary Levy (left) with Dave Bromwich, Vice President of the China-New Zealand Friendship Society compare notes at Beijing Conference.

a project bringing together Greek and Chinese philosophers to produce a book on Socrates and Confucius. The Belgian delegate explained his philosophy of international goodwill through walking. The Norwegian delegate spoke about Taichi which she had been teaching for 28 years.

At first I thought these interventions rather off topic but by the end I understood how flexible the Chinese are in attracting people sympathetic to China. The real lesson of the conference was that the potential for future projects is limitless.

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## Book review: “Why the West Rules—For Now” by Ian Morris

Peter Larson

McLelland & Stewart, 2010, 726 pp.

The Chinese invented many things, including gunpowder, the compass and printing, yet when Western civilization clashed with the Chinese civilization in the mid 1800's, China was weak and backward and the West quickly dominated.

Why was China so far behind the West when the colonial powers arrived there? Was China always behind? Will China move ahead in the future?

Stanford professor of Classics and History Ian Morris has set out to study why the West is on top – today – and how long it might stay that way.

His book is a monster. It is encyclopedic and radical. He argues that the archaeological evidence indicates that since the last ice age, all human civilizations have follow more or less the same developmental trajectory. But, because of favourable geographic

and climatic conditions, Western civilization arose in southern Turkey 2000 years before similar human development evolved in China.

Morris argues that the West kept this developmental lead until the fall of the Roman Empire (around 500 A.D.), at which time Europe fell backward and while China's standard of living and organization moved ahead of most of Europe. But Europe's mastery of coal and steam in the 18<sup>th</sup> century allowed Europe to leapfrog ahead and impose its will on the middle kingdom.

According to Morris, the West's lead is neither inevitable nor insurmountable. On the contrary, he cites lots of evidence to indicate that China is about to break back into the lead and outstrip western civilization.

Morris book is not an easy read. It is 750 pages of archaeology, history and economics. However, for those interested in what the 21<sup>st</sup> century will look like, his book is very rewarding.

35th anniversary of CCFS-Ottawa celebrated

## Ambassador Zhang thanks Ottawa members



Ambassador Zhang, CCFS-Ottawa executive and staff of the embassy's cultural section. *Photo by Ulle Baum*



Some of the founding members of CCFS-Ottawa are still around 35 years later! Joining Ambassador Zhang are Peter Larson, Jacqueline Major, Jean Small, Lorraine Farkas and Luna Yap.

Over 100 members and guests of the CCFS-Ottawa were the happy participants at a reception and banquet offered by the Chinese Embassy to mark the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canada China Friendship Society (Ottawa).

In his prepared remarks, Ambassador Zhang told society members "In the past 35 years, you brought together Canadians from different walks of life. You built a bridge between the Canadian and Chinese people. (...) You travelled across China from west to east. Your ... (presentation of) ...China's past and present is changing China's image in the eyes of many Canadians."

The Ambassador then reviewed some of the current challenges facing China.

"At the heart of our challenges is that our social productivity falls behind people's needs. Our growth needs more balance, coordination and sustainability."

According to the Ambassador some of China's most pressing problems are the rising disparity in incomes, the increasing gap between the rural areas and cities, inland and coastal regions; and the growing problem of pollution.

The Ambassador then went on to review for the audience how China is hoping to address all of these problems in its most recent 5 year plan.

In her remarks, CCFS -Ottawa President Lorraine Farkas reminded the audience of the contributions many people made over the years to growing the society, including long standing members like Jacquelyn Major, Jean Small, Luna Yap, Lolan Merklinger and Peter Larson.

After the official comments, there were door prizes for all, including a FREE TRIP to China, and a wonderful Chinese meal – of course.



Pauline Rubarth (R) was the lucky winner of the main door prize: A trip for two to China!



Those who stayed to eat were not disappointed by the wonderful Chinese buffet

Former ambassador reflects on China: October 2011 meeting

## Lessons from my time in China



The Canadian Embassy in Beijing—*panoramio.com*

### Lolan Merklinger

The Chinese have an enormous reserve of goodwill towards Canada as a fair-minded middle power with no imperialist past. Addressing a capacity CCFS audience, Robert Wright shared his “ten lessons learned from my time in China” while serving as Canada’s ambassador there from 2005 to 2009.

In Wright’s view, most Canadians lack knowledge about China and still have outdated images from the 1970s in their heads. Canadians should read more about China and travel more to see the country first hand. They will be surprised at what they find.

Top among his observations was a stark contrast between the Chinese people’s self-confidence and openness, and the apparent insecurity of its government which is fearful of social instability.

Wright also argued that contrary to widespread impressions here, Chinese are very interested in issues like human rights and environmental protection. But today most Chinese believe stability and continued economic growth must be China’s foremost priority. While their government is autocratic, it is respected for its efficient handling of major crises and complex problems; in contrast, the Chinese are unimpressed by the West’s handling of recent economic crises.



When Prime Minister Jean Chretien cycled through Beijing in 1992, the city didn’t have a subway system and cycling was still the main form of transportation for millions.

The Chinese want to regain the undisputed glory that China enjoyed in the early 19th century, noted the former ambassador, but are not interested in becoming a world superpower.

The former ambassador reminded Canadians that the Chinese are very aware of the last century of foreign invasions, and patriotism remains very high. Any perceived criticism of China from



In the last twenty years China has been transformed. Today there are modern subways in Beijing and ten other Chinese cities. Another dozen are in the planning stage.

the West is liable to provoke a strong reaction, as evidenced by strong popular reaction in China to the 2008 Olympic torch bearing incidents in France. He did note, however, that in private it was possible to have frank conversations with Chinese officials.

Despite China’s problems including massive corruption and increasing disparity between rich and poor, Wright remains optimistic and hopeful of increased Chinese government flexibility that will be strengthened by an upcoming younger leadership.

Wright was strongly supportive of Prime Minister Harper’s current personal involvement in the Canada-China bilateral relationship. In his view, Canada needs to develop a national strategy for China. That strategy should include more Mandarin-speaking Canadians, more Canadians doing business in China far beyond the major centres and a well-resourced Canadian public service able to give sound advice on China to the government.

## Travel to China

# Ottawa students enjoy Shanghai Youth Camp

Three lucky Ottawa students had the time of their lives at 7<sup>th</sup> Shanghai International Youth Friendship Camp this summer.

The Youth Camp, which took place from July 18<sup>th</sup> to July 27, was organized by the Shanghai Youth Federation. Foreign students from as far away as Russia, France, Thailand and the USA (and, of course, Canada) were billeted with Chinese students.

The three students, Alex DeGagne, Karoly Szalay and Josiah Grant, who were sponsored by CCFS-Ottawa, had a packed agenda. Together with Chinese students, they visited various sites in Shanghai and the surrounding area.

The youth delegates were kept busy from 9 in the morning until 9 at night. Alex's main concern - that there would be a lot of formality - was quickly dispelled. Everyone was very informal and down to earth.

"I connected with youth from many countries including San Marino, Italy, Germany, France and Australia," said Alex. While some Mandarin was acquired, so was Italian, Dutch and German. His attitude - jump in and try everything. From the food to the activities - and he did.

Alex was billeted at the home of a Chinese student who attends an international school and whose family lives about an hour outside of Shanghai. This was an opportunity to exchange life experiences. He learnt that there is little free time for the young people in China. Studying and perhaps studying music occupies the majority of their time. The Chinese family was most gra-



A student from Australia tries on the traditional hat of one of China's national minorities at a Youth Camp

acious and generous in opening up their home to the foreign students.

Then of course there was the shopping and learning to bargain at the underground markets in Shanghai and Nanjing - a new learned skill.

A special reflection was the trust that Alex saw between the Chinese people. He experienced the Chinese curiosity about foreigners - and felt like a rock star when asked to have his picture taken in various public venues.

Executive member Janice Zaharko was responsible for ensuring that everything went smoothly from the Ottawa end. Congratulations Janice.

## Women in politics (From cover)

(Continued from page 1)

Over the past three decades, and particularly since the introduction of village-level elections in the late 1980s, the number of women active in leadership roles at the village level has dramatically declined. Currently only about 1% of elected village heads are women.

In Professor Manning's view, since China returned to a market economy in 1978, the priority on promoting women has faded, and today Chinese women face many of the same challenges facing women in other developing countries. However, she did point to some encouraging signs. In particular, she discussed how a small group of women activists recently forged an innovative partnership with a provincial women's federation to successfully reverse this trend in the province of Shaanxi.

## Pew Global Attitudes

The recent democratic uprisings in have led to speculation in the Western media that a wave of pro-democracy movements could spread as far as China. But a 2010 survey by James Bell, Director of International Survey Research at the respected US Pew research institute gives another perspective.

### Chinese More Satisfied With Their Country's Direction

	% Satisfied			
	2007	2008	2009	2010
China	83	86	87	87
Egypt	47	40	31	28

PEW RESEARCH CENTER.

Source:

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1945/chinese-may-not-be-ready-for-revolution>

## ABOUT THE CANADA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY OF OTTAWA

The Canada-China Friendship Society of Ottawa was founded in February 1976.

According to the constitution the objectives of the Society are:

- To build active and lasting friendship and develop mutual understanding between the Canadian and the Chinese people;
- To promote an understanding in Canada of society in the People's Republic of China; and
- To promote cultural, scientific, educational, athletic and other exchanges between the Canadian and Chinese people.

CCFS-Ottawa is a member of the Federation of Canada China Friendship Associations.

## BECOME A MEMBER!

CCFS-Ottawa currently has about 190 members from all walks of life. We welcome new members who are interested in and want to learn more about China. Membership is open to anyone who supports the aims and objectives of the society and pays an annual membership fee.

The fee for regular members is \$20 for individuals, and \$30 for a family.

Student membership (for full-time registered students) is \$12 for individuals, and \$17 for a family.

*To join the CCFS-Ottawa, go to our website at:*

<http://www.fccfa.ca/Ottawa/index.htm>



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Details of these events will be mailed to members and posted on our website, [www.fccfa.ca/Ottawa](http://www.fccfa.ca/Ottawa).

Our monthly events are free to CCFS-Ottawa members and \$5 admission to non-members.

- December 15, 2011: Looking for safe food in China, Professor Josephine Smart, Anthropology, University of Calgary, Library and Archives, Room A, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, 7:30 p.m.
- January 2012: Environmental issues in China, Dr. Art Hanson, China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development. To be confirmed.
- February 12, 2012: Annual Chinese New Year's Banquet, Mandarin Ogilvie Restaurant, 1137 Ogilvie Road, Ottawa, 6:00 p.m. Make your reservations early.

## COMMENTS? FEEDBACK? QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS?

Please send your ideas to [editor.cafs.ottawa@gmail.com](mailto:editor.cafs.ottawa@gmail.com)