



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

As you well know, I never like to take sides when it comes to ordinary Hongkong people, applying to Grandpa for this and that, because I feel that that is a matter between the Government of Hongkong and the ordinary people. I try, at all times, to be impartial and objective, having never, in my entire life, tried to influence any Hongkong Government decision. As the Chief Lady of Hongkong, I feel that it is incumbent of me, due to my high rank and my privileged position, to maintain an arm's length distance in respect of matters, relating to Government. In fact, My Dear Grandchild, whenever a friend or acquaintance, approaches me, with anything even smelling, even a little bit like a favour with regard to what I think should be a determination of the Hongkong Government/Grandpa, I come straight out and say that such application should be made to the relevant authority of Government; and, that it should not go through the Good Offices of the Chief Lady of Hongkong. There are, of course, exceptions to every rule, you understand, and so, if I feel that the application from an acquaintance, or even a close friend, is within the purview of my responsibility, then, I will take the appropriate action to bring it to the attention of Grandpa for a definitive determination, as I see the situation and/or as I see fit. But, I must tell you that my responsibilities are very limited to the following:

- 1. The annual budget for the maintenance of the homes and offices of Grandpa and the Chief Lady of Hongkong;*
- 2. Determining how much money should be spent on travelling, my clothes and those of Grandpa;*
- 3. Determining the order of priorities in respect of matters, concerning the future development of Hongkong with regard to domestic issues, only;*
- 4. Scheduling holidays for Grandpa and me in addition to suggesting new public holidays for the riff-raff; and,*
- 5. Scrutinising the affairs of the Hongkong Government in order to be kept abreast of all new developments.*

So you see, I am very limited in respect of what some people might describe my powers – with the one exception of parceling out favours to Grandpa when he claims that the spirit moves him.

But, when I read that Sun Hung Kai Properties Ltd – my old friends, the Kwok Family, Raymond, Thomas and Walter – was being criticised from making direct application to the Office of Grandpa in respect of a proposed new golf course in the New Territories, I was taken aback, very considerably. As far as I am concerned, what Sun Hung Kai Properties did (assuming the reports that I have read are accurate), was correct and proper in every respect. Sun Hung Kai Properties, being owned and controlled by Chinese businessmen of the highest calibre, all of whom are very Christian, are very well heeled, and are trying very hard to comply with the tried-and-true methods of the Motherland: When you want to get things done, quickly, go to the top of the Government pile in

order not to bother the people of the rank and file. Anyway, it is the turn of the Kwoks, isn't it? There is no special sequence as to which rich Hongkong family comes first in the pecking order. It is very logical. In fact, it is surprising to me that Sun Hung Kai Properties, or one of the Kwok Family members, did not come to have tea with me and to explain what the Family wanted to do. Then, I could have made immediate application for the property company to the people whom I know in Government, thus, avoiding all of this brouhaha. In the Motherland, I know that that is what happens in the home of my dearest friend in Beijing, Mrs Wen Jia Bao. In fact, it is known that the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that holds the reins of government. It has always been so and will always be so. You may want to ask yourself this one question: Where would Grandpa be without my help? At the same time, you may note that not once have I been seen to be trying to influence any of his decisions, even when I knew that he was making mistakes. Grandpa's mistakes are his. And that is the way that it should be: How else can he learn? Naturally, I try to avoid, as much as possible, any of his mistakes, coming to the surface, because it is not very nice for the people of Hongkong to know that Grandpa, or the Government of Hongkong, has ever made a mistake. I have noted that errors of the past have come about because Grandpa has not vetted certain Hongkong Government determinations through me. It is a real pity, actually. You know, only too well, that I have yet to make a mistake in my appraisal of politics. I have, repeatedly, told Grandpa that, if any branch of Government is known to have been in error, and this error may be subject to scrutiny by the public, then, the way to tackle such a situation is to explain to my people that action has been taken to make certain that such a mistake will not take place, again. Anyway, as I know as a fact, the errors of the Hongkong Government are, in reality, the errors, which have been inherited from the British. As for the application of Sun Hung Kai Properties to build a golf course in the New Territories, I think that it is a wonderful concept because it will give enjoyment to the people – who can afford to make use of it. Also, think of the amount of money that it will produce by way of annual corporate profits, all of which will be subject to tax by the Hongkong Government. If Sun Hung Kai Properties is willing to develop a huge piece of land in the New Territories, at its own expense, by the way, there is no reason that Grandpa should object to the plan. In fact, I have told him just that. And, he said that he would listen to my counsel. Which is the way that it should be. I told him that, since the plan of Sun Hung Kai Properties has a great deal of merit, he should initial the plan and send it to the relevant office of Government to give the green light. So, about what is all this hullabaloo? It should have come to me, first, you realise, which just goes to show you that even the Kwoks can make a cock-up on occasions.

Talk to you, next week.
Love you,

The Chief Lady of Hongkong

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