



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I am crestfallen at the fact that The University of Hongkong did not telephone me, last week, in order to ask whether or not I would like to attend the second debate between Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen () and Mr Alan Leong Kah Kit (). You will recall, my dear, that Mr Alan Leong Kah Kit put on a kind of a show, last Thursday-week, pretending to be a candidate for the post of the next Chief Executive of Hongkong. Of course, I would not have agreed to attend that debate even if The University of Hongkong had telephoned me for a number of very important reasons, which included:

- (a) The debate was scheduled to be held on a Thursday night and all members of the audience were required to show up at the Tseung Kwan O studios at 6:30 pm;*
- (b) The debate was a sham, in any event, and the participants are not, and never have been, very good orators;*
- (c) One was not even offered a cup of coffee or a glass of orange juice for travelling all that way just to sit in a room in order to give the appearance of interest to the television audience; and, most importantly,*
- (d) I would not have had time to get my hair highlighted before appearing for the television cameras.*

Now, My Dear Grandchild, can you tell me the reason that the debate was held on a Thursday night? For what reason was it not held on a Saturday evening or a Sunday evening? According to Bo-Bo, my husband, who knows a little about politics, having been rubbing shoulders with the big boys in Beijing, the positive response rate from the 9,567 telephone calls, made by The University of Hongkong to prospective audience participants, amounted to about 1.43 percent – 137 people agreed to attend the debate out of the 9,567 telephone calls, having been made. Bo-Bo is, in this case, correct (for a change), and I have been racking my little brain in order to determine the reason for the lack of interest of the people of Hongkong. In the first place, we are Cantonese, for the most part, not Shanghainese or Beijingers (or should that read, Pekingese?). The people of the south of China are not very interested in politics. They are only interested in making money, buying more properties in order to increase their wealth, and making certain that one's children marry well in order to have as many grandchildren as is humanly possible. In Shanghai and Beijing, on the other hand, those northern people, who like to eat very oily foods, causing them to look more and more like frogs, like to make money, also, but they would prefer to make money and have political power, too. The reason for this way of thinking is that, in politics, there is perceived to be power. And, with power, comes even more money. For Cantonese, we maintain that such thinking is very, very dangerous because, while one may be very comfortable with the present, powers-that-be, sitting in The Great Hall of The People at Beijing, when there is a slight change in a rung of the power ladder on which one is standing, it is possible to be kicked down ... and off the ladder, completely, crashing to the ground with a horrible thud. For us, Cantonese, we have determined to let those people in the North do whatever they like, but just leave us alone to earn more money, make more investments in order to increase our wealth, and make more grandchildren in order to perpetuate our family names.

Getting back to the matter of this second Chief Executive debate, which was held last Thursday-week at 8 p.m., with prospective audience participants, being required to be at Tseung Kwan O at 6:30 p.m., I ask you, honestly: For what reason did not the organizers realise that this was a very inconvenient time on a very inconvenient day of the week? A worker does not finish his labours until 5 p.m., at the very earliest, and, after a full day's work, he or she would be very tired, you know. Do you think that the ordinary working man or woman of Hongkong would have the time, or the inclination, to rush all the way to Tseung Kwan O within 90 minutes of finishing work in order to sit, hungry and thirsty, in a studio, while some very poor actors try to put on a show? Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen wants to instill in the Hongkong workforce that work should only be for 5 days a week so for what reason did he not agree to work on a Saturday or a Sunday in order to participate in this charade? As a Hongkong Government servant, is he adopting the Government Stroke: No work on weekends and holidays? As for that other person, trying to take part in that silly debate, Mr Alan Leong Kah Kit, well, he is, after all, a barrister by training so that says a lot, doesn't it? Further, the debate required the participants to stand all the time while they tried to answer 9 prepared (and vetted) questions and to swap repartee in order to try to give the appearance to television viewers of being the more intellectually agile. This is totally unfair, of course, because Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen is used to talking only while sitting, or kneeling in Church, not standing. As for Barrister Alan Leong Kah Kit, he is used to be paid to talk so that, to talk without the jingle of guinea, so to speak, is not exactly his idea of the good life. Meanwhile, the audience participants at this debate were asked to spend their hard-earned money on transportation in order to rush over to the Tseung Kwan O studios, without any dinner and without being able to clean up, prior to being photographed, in order to show the world that there was some semblance of democracy in Hongkong, after all. It was, all, terribly unfair! Further, it was totally unfair to expect a worker, having toiled all day long, to be able to ask intelligent questions of a political nature to a duo of puppets that have had the entire day to prepare for their show.

Listen, I have to finish this letter, now, because dinner is nearly ready and Bo-Bo will be home soon. He is becoming more and more demanding, these days, you know. I suppose that it is his age. Poor dear! He would never have been able to stand for a complete hour, let alone field questions, the answers to which had been written out for him at least one week in advance.

Talk to you next week. Love you.

Chief Lady

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