



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I must make one thing very clear to you, my dear: I am a democrat. I love the idea of being able to make decisions about who shall sleep with me, make love with me, and who shall share my roost. Bo-Bo, your Grandfather, is a democrat, also, at heart, but, at the same time, he understands his place in my home and in the scheme of things. Yes, there is nothing better than living the democratic life. Bo-Bo, sometimes, complains that he does not have much of a say in the running of my house even though I give him every opportunity to voice an opinion about my determinations – after those determinations have been translated into action, of course. The trouble with Bo-Bo, as with so many men, is that he is ignorant of so much that to field his opinion is, pretty much, a waste of time. As I always say, procrastination is the thief of time so for what reason should I waste time in discussing too any things with Bo-Bo. So, ultimately, I make the decisions in the house in a very democratic way because all of my decisions is for and on behalf of the entire household – which, of course, includes Bo-Bo ... when he behaves himself. However, I do seek his opinions, from time to time, in order to give him face and kudo. I suspect that the way that Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen () governs Hongkong is along the same lines that I run my household. Can you imagine what a waste of time it would be to try to have all of the eligible voters of Hongkong fill out ballot-papers, listing their choices for this or that and who is the popular choice to sit in the Legislative Council and/or to sleep in Upper Albert Road? For more than 150 years, Hongkong was quite happy with the system of British Government which, although it was autocratic, it was, if anything, paternalistic in essence: The father, making decisions for the family. This is, just about, the way that the Government of China governs its population of about 1.30 billion human beings. Which is not dissimilar to the method that I have adopted with regard to running my little nest. And look how happy is Bo-Bo! He could not find a better person to run my house, of that, I am certain. Today, in Hongkong, some people are complaining that there is no Universal Suffrage and little likelihood for Universal Suffrage to be introduced in the next 20 years or so. These people are, really, making a nuisance of themselves, dirtying the streets as they march down them, dropping their water bottles and chicken bones and what-have-you, blocking the traffic and causing special police patrols to walk in front and behind the marchers in order to make certain that none of them drop dead from heat exhaustion. I don't mind them, walking around Hongkong, because, among other things, walking is a very healthy exercise, but do they have to make such a mess and stop the smooth operations of the public transport system and make it difficult for my driver to take me to my manicurist and hair-dresser in Wanchai? Fair is fair: A lady has to get her hair coloured at least once per month.

The call has gone out in Hongkong that there could be civil disobedience to lawful authority without definitive and unconditional representation; and, that every eligible voter should be entitled to cast her or his ballot-paper in order to choose the head of the Hongkong Government. This reminds me of The Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773, when 342 chests of tea, belonging to the British East India Company, were thrown from ships into Boston Harbour by American Patriots, disguised as Mohawk Indians (it is lucky that there are no (red) Indians, living in Hongkong). Those American rebels were protesting both a tax on tea and the perceived monopoly of the East India Company. The call went out: 'No Taxation Without Representation!' It was really silly of those rebels of 1773 to try to make such a demand of The Crown because, in the event that Charles II of England had succumbed to the demands, it would have meant exactly nothing. In fact, it would have been an absolute giggle. Let's think this through, carefully, shall we: Charles II agrees that the American colonists should have representation in the House of Commons and 3 of the most-knowledgeable (or popular) Americans show up at Parliament and take their allotted seats in the House of Commons. Let us say that the first order of business on Day One of the installment of the 3

Americans in the House of Commons is to consider and, if thought fit, pass into law the repealing of The Townsend Acts, passed by Parliament in 1767, which imposed duties on various products, imported into the British colonies. (Actually, The Townsend Acts were repealed in 1770, but let us say, for the sake of this mental exercise, that, in 1774, the Acts had not been repealed). The argument, put forward by most other members of the House of Commons, would have been that somebody has to pay for keeping the British flag, waving in the Americas, as it was, then, known. Roads have to be built, somebody would have to finance the expansion of the school system in the American colony, somebody has to maintain an efficient, law-enforcement body, somebody has to finance military expeditions in order to safeguard the Americans from the red savages of the time, somebody has to build Churches in addition to all of the other infrastructural considerations, required in the smooth running of cities and towns. The new American members of the House of Commons, no doubt, would vote for the repealing of the Acts, but their votes would mean for naught, compared with those members of the House of Commons, loyal to the Crown, who, most likely, would vote to increase the taxation on the Americas. And that would be that: The democratic system had won the day. The new American members of the House of Commons could protest about losing the vote until the cows came home, but they had had their say: They had had representation in the determination of taxation of the American colony. Clearly, as I have just demonstrated to you, the December 1773 call for no taxation without representation was a stupid demand when considered carefully: Act in haste and repent in leisure, as I always say.

Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen, on July 1, 2007, the tenth anniversary of the assumption of sovereignty by China, stated that he pledges to create a more democratic system for Hongkong. This is a bit of a giggle, too, because Hongkong has never had a democratic government so how can the Chief Executive Designate create a 'more' democratic system of government? He said, inter alia: 'A green paper will be published this year so that we can all work together to identify the most-acceptable mode of Universal Suffrage to best serve the interests of Hongkong.' Another giggle! There is no such thing as 'the most-acceptable mode of Universal Suffrage': You either introduce it or you don't. This is akin to saying that the young girl is a little pregnant. She either is pregnant or she is not; she cannot be a little pregnant. In my lifetime, I doubt that I shall see Universal Suffrage in Hongkong because, inter alia, of the cascading effect that it would have in other parts of China. Anyway, for the majority of people in Hongkong, as long as money is here to be earned and as long as the Government of Hongkong creates and maintains the environment of peace and tranquility, coupled with the good of safety, who, really, cares about politics. As I see it, the people who put on the front about playing the political game are, mainly, those people who hope to benefit from it, monetarily, and/or, they are seeking power for the sake of being powerful. Trust me, My Dear Grandchild, adopt my form of democracy and, then, you will never have disobedience in your house.

Enough for today.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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