

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

Last Thursday-week, one noted the mettle of our Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen (). He is the strong, Catholic leader that Hongkong has, always, needed; and, in addition, for whom the bell tolls, loudly. The Legislative Councillors had gone entirely too far in this business about demanding that the Hongkong Government divulge, fully, how and for what reason the new political appointees were chosen from the ranks of about 7 million, Hongkong people. It is just too much! And it is just too much to expect that the Chief Executive has to spend 20 minutes of his very valuable time in addressing the Legislative Council and telling this body, in very definitive terms: 'You have gone too far! Now, stop it, you little children! Shut up about this matter! It is none of your bloody business! I run this shop, not you.' He is right, you know, even Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, agrees with me. Bo-Bo told me to read the works of his favourite poet John Donne. In his Mediation XVII – Devotions and Emergent Occasions – this brilliant man of 17th Century England, who entered Oxford University at the age of 11 years, wrote:

'No man is an Island, entire of it self; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.'

It has been suggested that the Chief Executive was afraid to stay in the Legislative Council after making his sterling address because of his indefensible position. What rubbish! Afraid of that motley bunch of men, women and adult children, some of whom have little to no education, and at least one of them, being a felon! The poor man had a full agenda, last Thursday-week, and he had had to sacrifice part of his morning nap in order to tell the members of the Legislative Council that they were wasting time with this nonsense in respect of obtaining some of the personal details about the appointment of the new undersecretaries. The Legislative Council wanted to table a Motion, seeking full disclosure in respect of the appointment of the new Government minions. 'Stuff and Nonsense!' was the way that Bo-Bo put it. I shall not repeat myself in this missive to you about my feelings in respect of this matter, specifically with regard to having to force the new Hongkong Government minions to release information about their respective remuneration packages – holiday benefits, housing benefits, medical benefits, retirement benefits, out-of-pocket expense benefits, etc, etc, etc – suffice it to say that they are among the highest-paid, Government servants, today, and ever has been, even for that 26-year old. In fact, these minions are paid more than any of the elected Legislative Councillors. (I just had a thought: The directly elected Legislative Councillors are, most likely, jealous that these people get more money than they and, furthermore, these minions did not even have to go through the horrors of standing on street corners, begging for votes from the smelly plebeian.)

Turning to the matter of the way in which the Chief Executive forced his way into the Legislative Council in order to deliver his diatribe of falling standards, it reminds me of the way in which, in his early days as the youngest Prime Minister of Italy, Benito Mussolini did simply remarkable things. At the age of 39 years,

Benito Mussolini became the youngest Prime Minister in Italian history. He swiftly obtained dictatorial powers, which he used to restore law and order and an element of economic prosperity that was welcomed by most Italians of his day. By 1926, 4 years after donning the purple gown of office, Benito Mussolini had transformed the country into a single-party, totalitarian regime. In his new 'corporative state', employers and workers were organised into party controlled groups, representing different sectors of the economy. The system preserved capitalism and expanded social services, but abolished free trade unions and the right to strike. Roads were built, the trains ran on time, the military was expanded, the Italian air force was used in support of its land troops, the first time that any country had thought of this way to kill the enemy, en masse, and the people of the country were in love with their bald-headed, fascist leader: The second Roman Empire was at hand.

*This, of course, is not to suggest that Hongkong's Chief Executive is anything like Benito Mussolini's Italy of World War II when Fascist Italy was part of the Hitler's plan to conquer the world. Far from it because Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen is a good Catholic and is not a political dictator: He takes his orders, directly from Beijing; and, he has no absolute power as did Benito Mussolini. However, one is reminded that, in the 1920s and the early 1930s, Benito Mussolini, to most Italians and even to the Government of the United States of America, was considered something of a miracle worker for Italy. And, one must not forget that, initially, Adolf Hitler of Germany was considered nothing but an upstart to most Italians. What I am suggesting, My Dear Grandchild, is that, sometimes, a firm hand is the hand that rocks the booby within a country/territory, as is Hongkong. Democracy is all well and good, but, as US President George W. Bush proved, one cannot wait forever for the wheels of democracy to turn in the right direction. Sometimes, one has to push the wheels of progress in the correct direction. When the United Nations could not make a determination about what to do with Iraq, President George W. Bush realised that the United States could wait no longer: On March 20, 2003, a coalition, organised by the United States, invaded Iraqi soil. The *raison d'être* for the invasion was that Iraq had failed to abandon its nuclear and chemical weapons' development programme in violation to Resolution Number 687 of the United Nations. The invasion of Iraq was swift and decisive and, although it could be said that the winning of the war was a success, the coalition – which is, now, somewhat depleted – has yet to win the peace. Here was a modern-day example of the world's largest democracy, taking the initiative in the interests of the entire world. No doubt, Hongkong's Chief Executive thinks along similar lines: He has to take a firm hand for the benefit of his 7 million-plus, Chinese charges. It is his sworn duty so to do. If anything, as he is driven down Hongkong's streets in one of his limousines, we should doff our hats to this Catholic leader (if we wore hats, that is), in deference to this Great Man.*

I must go now, because The Frog is being driven up the driveway in his limousine and he hates for me not to be standing at the door to welcome the old duffer back home. Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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