

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

Something I don't understand: What is the logical rationale for Hongkong to help to rebuild the entire infrastructure of Sichuan? I asked my froglike husband about my concerns and he only croaked: 'Where's your heart? Those poor people!' Where's your heart?' I was not too happy with this attack on my heart, I can tell you. What has rebuilding almost the entire infrastructure, erecting bridges and rebuilding roads and big blocks of flats in Sichuan to do with us, in Hongkong? For what reason are we, in Hongkong, shouldering this financial burden? If it were to feed and/or to cloth the poor people of this territory, or the sending of medicines and medical equipment to the earthquake-ravished part of China, I am all in favour of it, but, tell me, My Dear Grandchild, where does Hongkong's financial obligation cease toward Sichuan and Beijing's financial obligation, as the seat of Government of China, begin? Emergency help of people, ravaged by natural disasters of one kind or another is one thing, but helping to rebuild the entire infrastructure of Sichuan? It seems ridiculous that Hongkong has to donate \$HK9 billion to the rebuilding of Sichuan! I donate money to 'Care for Children' in order to give assistance to the children of China, not because of the recent earthquake – because I donated the money long before that tragic event – but because I wanted to help the helpless children of China, children with dire needs. My heart bleeds when I hear that a child is in need for this or that. I help, where-ever and whenever I can.

Let me tell you something that I observed only recently. I was seated in the coffee shop of a 5-star hotel and noted that a little boy, aged about 5 years, had a medical problem, one that, clearly, is chronic and one where the cure for what ails this little child has yet to be discovered by medical science. The boy looked as though, at some stage of his short development, he suffered from a disease, something along the lines of hydrocephalus (I did not ask anybody about that which I saw and just made the judgment call due to my training as a nurse when I was a little younger). Hydrocephalus is, simply put, an abnormal increase of cerebrospinal fluid around the brain, resulting in infants in an enlargement of the head because the bones of the skull are still unfused. The fluid can be drained into the abdominal cavity of the child, but the telltale marks of the hydrocephalus, usually, remain – sadly – giving the child a strange appearance. In extreme cases ... well, I don't think I need go into that, do I? Anyway, to continue with my narrative, the child was under the care of a very loving father, a balding Chinese man of about 50 years. I marveled at the way that this man heaped so much love on his son, feeding him with his favourites foods, hugging him, making him laugh, and running around the buffet table with him as though this were the young boy's exclusive playground. What a wonderful father that man is! The young boy was having a wonderful time of it, but, in a few more years, he will start to suffer as his peers point out his enlarged and misshapen head and his, obvious, mental deficiencies, both of which came about through an accident of nature.

I thought to myself: If I had all of the money in the world, I would donate it all to helping the poor, helpless children, not just of China, but of the entire world. What could be more rewarding than helping the innocence of youth? And, then, my attention was drawn to Hongkong, donating \$HK9 billion to the rebuilding of the infrastructure of Sichuan – to the detriment of rebuilding the lives of the many thousands of children of this same area of China, children who have lost their parents due to nobody's fault other than

the event of a natural disaster. Ms Rita Fan Hsu Lai Tai (), the President of the Hongkong Legislative Council, on a recent inspection trip to Sichuan, was quoted as saying that she would make sure that Sichuan received \$HK9 billion in financial aid over a period of 5 years in order to rebuild the devastated region. She made this statement while still in Sichuan, mind you! What right had she to spend our money without, first, obtaining express permission from the members of The Legislative Council? Aside from that fact, what right had the Legislative Council to use our money for the rebuilding the infrastructure of China, in the first instance? Is that not a matter for the Central Government at Beijing to consider? By earmarking \$HK9 billion for the rebuilding of the infrastructure of Sichuan, it means those other worthy charities, which may be even equally (or more) worthy, suffer as a direct result. What about assisting the starving children of parts of the African Continent? Here is a situation which is even much more critical than that of Sichuan – because children are dying in this part of the world, daily, of malnutrition. There is a dire shortage of free food to feed tens of thousands of people, many of whom have no way of making a living to feed their starving families. Sudan is a typical example of that situation and, yet, I have heard nothing from the Hongkong Legislative Council that it should be Hongkong's obligation to do all that it can to assist the helpless people of the African Continent, people who do not even have one nourishing meal per day. How many loaves of bread do you think \$HK9 billion can buy in Africa? I am certain that if somebody in the Hongkong Legislative Council brought up the matter of donating money to the starving children of the African Continent, there would be an uproar, with the members, saying something along the lines: 'What has this situation got to do with Hongkong?' This is a fair question. So I ask: For what reason does Hongkong have to rebuild a goodly part of the infrastructure of Sichuan? What has this situation got to do with Hongkong?

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

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