

## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*As the international recession worsens, it seems to me that one country that will get it in the neck, so to speak, will be The Philippines. Thus far, little has been written about the economy of this country, probably, because its economy is of little consequence to anybody, other than the 96 million people who live on the 7,107 islands that comprise the Philippine archipelago. I suppose you know, My Dear Grandchild, that The Philippines is loaded to the gills with housecleaners, nannies, drivers and complainers. In Hongkong, we, all, know about Filipinas and Filipinos and how, at the slightest provocation, they complain about this and that. None of them pay any Hongkong taxes, but they, all, receive the benefits for which we, the taxpayers, shell out, annually. With jobs hard to find and with costs rising, many families in Hongkong are quite likely to decide not to renew employment contracts with their Filipina/Filipino workers on their expiration dates. Of course, this will not affect those Filipina prostitutes of Wanchai, Tsimshatsui, Mongkok, etc – most of whom are in the territory illegally, anyway – because they are self-employed and they earn their money only in the horizon position, which is a little different from their ‘sisters’ and ‘brothers’ who earn their money in the vertical position. The economy of The Philippines grew at its fastest pace in 3 decades in 2007 with the real Gross Domestic Product growth, exceeding 7 percent. But growth slowed to 4.50 percent in 2008 as a result of the world financial crisis. High government spending, a relatively small trade sector, a resilient service sector, and large remittances from between 4 million and 5 million, Filipinos/Filipinas, who work abroad as nannies, housecleaners, maids and what-have-you, have helped cushion the economy from the current, international financial crisis. It is required of every Filipina/Filipino, exported to another country, that she/he remits part of her/his monthly income to the Government of The Philippines. At say, a minimum of \$HK10,000 per annum from 4.50 million exported citizens of The Philippines, it means that the Government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroya obtains not less than \$HK45 billion, annually. In addition, all contracts of employment in respect of exported labour must go through a Philippine-Government agency which collects \$HK20,000 per contract. That is expected to boost the coffers of the country by about \$HK90 billion, annually. Then, there is the cost of a physical examination which, I am sure you can guess, My Dear Grandchild, is conducted by a doctor in the employ of The Philippine Government, either directly or indirectly. That costs another \$HK500 per person and results in about \$HK2.25 billion, enriching the coffers of the country. Now, some people might be tempted to suggest that that which the Government of The Philippines is doing is milking the cows dry. But they would be wrong: The Government of The Philippines is only milking their estimated 4.50 million, exported domestic helpers half dry.*

*The Government of The Philippines is clever, actually, since it has targeted part of its education system so as to create a servant class of citizen, mainly among the semi-literate females of the country. As a result, by the time that these females reach the age of about 18 years, they have a working knowledge of washing dishes, changing nappies on babies, cooking simple food, polishing floors and motor cars, and washing and ironing clothes. Because most of these exported females have a low Intelligent Quotient, they love the hand that feeds them – even though, for the first year of their employment, effective January 1, 2009, a large proportion of their income has, already, been spent on costs, incurred in obtaining the necessary documentation, required prior to being permitted to leave The Philippines in order to begin their new*

*careers as domestics of foreign lands. Even renewal of all contracts of employment with Hongkong employers, today, must go through agents of the Government of The Philippines so that more money may be added to the swelling coffers of that Government by the Filipina domestics, paying even more fees to their Government. Prior to January 1, 2009, such fees could be circumvented by the Filipina domestics, negotiating, directly, with perspective new employers in Hongkong. That has, all, ended now. There is no advantage that the Filipinas obtain by this new system other than enjoying more indirect taxation by the Government of Gloria Macapagal-Arroya: They are milked more of their hard-earned wages.*

*But who will be washing the dishes, ironing the clothes, changing the baby's soiled nappies, etc, when the contracts of the Filipinas are not renewed at their expiry date, this year and next? The answer: Probably domestics from other Southeast Asian countries or, even from China. The days of the Filipinas/Filipinos may well be drawing to a close in Hongkong because, among other things:*

- (a) They are too expensive to keep when one factors into the equation, the monthly salary of a minimum of \$HK3,580;*
- (b) The cost of a return airfare to The Philippines;*
- (c) The cost of feeding a Filipina;*
- (d) The cost of supplying medical and health benefits, either directly or by obtaining an insurance company to cover such a contingency; and,*
- (e) Obtaining insurance coverage just in case the Filipina/Filipino that one employs turns out to be a crook who steals from her/his employer.*

*I spoke to Bo-Bo about this situation and he said that it was lucky that the Filipinas and Filipinos are not very clever otherwise they might well realise that, in truth, they are little more than legal slaves of their government. Ironically, it appears, also, that they enjoy their role. I feel some sympathy for these legal slaves, actually, because they are not all bad people. Some of them are very nice and I employ them to clean the house and the motor car, although I do not permit a Filipina to cook for us because I am concerned about the cleanliness of them. The one facet about them that I do not relish is that, whenever there is a disagreement, it is the man of the house, in most cases, who is sought out to be the person with the casting vote as to who is, always, deemed to be in the right. I may be the 'queen' of all that I survey within the confines of my home, but it is the 'king' of the home, who, ultimately, is the arbiter of any and all disagreements, concerning a Filipina or Filipino. So what is the use of being a queen? Life is trying, don't you think?*

*Now, you may find this letter to be a little discriminatory. In fact, in some aspects, it is just that. I do not mind that you show this letter to any Filipina or Filipino because, perhaps, by reading this letter, he or she may understand how their government is treating them and how they are being programmed for their future as legal slaves of the Government of The Philippines. Something should be done about this situation, in my opinion.*

*Talk to you, next week.*

*Chief Lady*

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