

## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I have been studying the complaints of the Filipina maids of Hongkong, who are demanding that they should get paid \$HK5,000 or more per month when the Hongkong Government decides on the minimum wage. These maids are habitual complainers, as we all know, and living with them can, often, be very difficult, but, actually, on this matter of the minimum wage, I fully support their demands. I think that they should get everything that they deserve – and they should, also, pay taxes in the same way that all employees of Hongkong have to pay that which is due to the Hongkong Government. Equal pay; equal rights; equal civic duties – that's what I think. In addition, these maids should contribute 5 percent of their monthly pay packages to the Mandarin (Mandatory) Provident Fund. The calculation of their monthly pay packets should be based on cash received from employers, plus all other perquisites, such as free food, free accommodation, travel to and from the Philippines every 2 years, and, in many cases, even the notional cost of uniforms, supplied by employers. A figure of \$HK5,000 per month, you see, seems about right when you consider everything. In addition, I have been thinking that it is unfair that the maids have to park in the open areas of Hongkong Island and Kowloon on their days off work. I see them in Statue Square, underneath the Headquarters Building of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation on Queen's Road, Central, sitting in the middle of certain roads in Central, and lining up outside public toilets to do whatever they do in those places. The collective sounds, made by these maids when they talk in en masse, resembles a flock of little birds, all happily defecating as they sit on boughs of trees. It is horrible to have to suffer! For what reason cannot these poor people have tents, supplied to them so that they do not have to be exposed to the elements? There ought to be a Filipina Maids Poor Fund, established by the Hongkong Government, with every Filipina maid, contributing between 3 percent and 5 percent of her monthly wages in order to pay for the amenities, supplied by the Filipina Maids Poor Fund. Then, these tents can be erected whenever they are required in places, such as in Queen's Road, Central, underneath the Headquarters Building of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, and anywhere else that the Filipina maids want them to be erected. There is Pacific Place One and Two and Three, all of which have oodles of common areas where these Filipina maids can squat, during their holidays, and enjoy themselves, singing and dancing, holding prayer meetings and collecting money from each other to send home for those less fortunate than themselves.*

*As you know, I go to Pacific Place, very often, and I have noted the many places that are common areas, areas that would be perfect for the poor Filipina maids of Hongkong. In the spring and autumn months, the maids could eat their chickens' feet and chicken wings under the trees. They could look up at the 3 luxury hotels ... and dream. They could camp in the common areas, overlooking that large restaurant building called, Domani, which is rarely used, these days, I have noted. Sitting on the chairs, outside Domani, they could obtain a bottle of water if they got thirsty and, if they want to, they could even ask for some pizza or some other well-known Italian dish from the restaurant. Heavens! This restaurant sorely needs the business; and, here is an excellent opportunity to earn some money for the owners of the management company of Domani, and, at the same time, take some civic responsibility for a change. It would be perfect for everybody, don't you see? And, when the rainy season is upon us, up can go the tents, supplied by the*

*Filipina Poor Maids Fund in order to shelter the poor dears from the inclement weather. With the tents, opened in the open common areas of Pacific Place, under the trees, it would be like an outdoor adventure for them. Also, they could play out some of their little fantasies in the tents, secure from the glances of passing tourists. Yes, Pacific Place, the undiscovered country of Hongkong Island, could be the preferred place to park these ladies on their holidays. The air, the trees, the ambiance, the facilities ... Wonderful! Also, there are many toilets in the 4 hotels at Pacific Place and they are all very clean. (I cannot say the same for the public conveniences in Central on the days that the maids invade the streets.) As you know, John Swire and Sons Ltd of the United Kingdom owns most of Pacific Place and on this entity's Board of Directors is Baroness Lydia Dunn (). She is very well aware of the plight of Hongkong maids and I am certain that she will support me in my attempts to help these poor Filipinas. I had luncheon with her before she married her present husband, you know, and she told me that she had a propensity to cry whenever she thought about all of the things that she had not been able to accomplish while serving Hongkong as a Legislative Councillor and, then, as an Executive Councillor. She had a meeting with the former Paramount Leader of China, Mr Deng Xiao Ping (), you know ... and she cried when thinking of her failure at that meeting. Well, now, she can do something for the unfortunates of the territory. We should all pitch in to help the downtrodden.*

*Vote for the Filipina maids of Hongkong! A vote, today, means a better life for these 200,000-plus resident ladies of Hongkong kitchens and sculleries. Today, these ladies may be holding brooms, mops and tea towels, but tomorrow, one could imagine them, helping the Chief Executive of Hongkong to write his speeches (he, certainly, needs help, you know) as well as giving him advice on what to do and say and what not to do and not to say because he does not seem to know too much, in my opinion.*

*Talk to you, next week.*

*Chief Lady*

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