

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I was shocked to learn that Baroness Lydia Dunn () has determined to vacate her seat in The House of Lords. I fully understand the reason that she has made this dramatic decision: She does not want to be forced to pay tax on her worldwide income. It is quite understandable, actually. I would feel the same if I were in a similar position to Baroness Lydia Dunn. According to Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, the British tax authorities are among the cruelest and greediest in the world and, if they can squeeze another penny out of anybody, they go for it. The Frog compared the British tax authority, known as HM Revenue and Customs, to China's counterpart, known as The State Administration of Taxation. The Frog said that, in the United Kingdom, it is cut and dry when it comes to the collection of taxes. Evasion of taxation is a criminal offence and so nobody wants to be found guilty of such a crime. In China, on the other hand, The State Administration of Taxation is much more understanding than HM Revenue and Customs so that, if somebody is having trouble in paying that which is due to the State, consideration is given to suggesting an accommodation to the delinquent taxpayer. This accommodation could well be periodic payments over an extended period of time, the attachment of one's income until the State has been paid that which is its due, or, if it is proved that the delinquent taxpayer is playing ducks and drakes with The State Administration of Taxation, it could lead to incarceration for a period of time. The British taxman should take a leaf out of China's method of operation in the collection of taxes.

What I cannot understand, completely, of course, is the ultimate reason behind Baroness Lydia Dunn's reluctance to pay that which is due to HM Revenue and Customs. After all: 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' Baroness Lydia Dunn is a Christian, is she not?

While I fully understand how she feels about digging into her purse in order to pay tax on a worldwide basis, at the same time, as a member of The House of Lords, one of 707 members of this illustrious body of the Upper House of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom's national legislature, she should set an example to everybody in the United Kingdom by paying that which is due to HM Revenue and Customs. Furthermore, being of Chinese descent, it would mean a great deal to everybody in the United Kingdom to learn that an 'adopted' daughter of the realm is happy to support the faltering economy of the Kingdom. How many other adopted 'daughters' of the United Kingdom have been honoured as has this 70 year-old lady? I suppose you know that she was ennobled by the Queen, herself. What an honour! Her running away from her duties in The House of Lords could be construed as a slap in the face for Her Majesty. And it is said that one never may obtain a second bite of this cherry. I suppose you know, also, that she is an Executive Director of John Swire and Sons Ltd, the parent company of The Swire Group of Hongkong – Swire Pacific Ltd, et al. It is well known that she is a very rich lady and so there is no question that she can well afford to pay out about one third of her annual income to the British taxman. Baroness Lydia Dunn is married to Mr Michael David Thomas (), who used to be a well-known barrister in Hongkong. I am not certain if Mr Michael David Thomas is still a practicing barrister. Prior to her marriage to Mr Michael David Thomas, they used to meet in a little restaurant in Causeway Bay, called, Landau's. It was really lovely to watch them, holding hands, surreptitiously, just prior to letting it be known, publicly, that they would seal their love forever with a marriage vow.

The Right Honorable Baroness Dunn will, always, be the moniker of this extraordinary lady of Hongkong, whose name used to be Ms Lydia Selina Dunn, daughter of Mr Yen Cheun Yeh Dunn and Ms Bessie Dunn, also known as Ms Chu Chen Yin. It is such a pity, from my way of looking at things, that she could not retain her seat in The House of Lords. All that it would have taken was a little money. How many people, I wonder, would be quite willing to pay to take a seat, rubbing shoulders with the 706 of the noblest of the noble of the United Kingdom.

What is that noun phrase, again: Noblesse oblige?

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady (but not an ennobled one, yet)

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