

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

When I was very young, I recall my mother, saying to me ‘Betty, what if?’ etc. What my mommy was trying to instill into my little mind was that I should always consider what could befall me, not looking at just the optimistic side of things, but, also, trying to view the worst possible scenario. Imminent events, looked at from all possible angles, permits one to plan for the future, at least to some degree. This is like marriage, isn’t it, because, when a young girl gets married, she should know that the natural outcome of sexual intercourse is conception, leading to the birth of a baby. Of course, my mother never prepared me for what happened after I married Bo-Bo, my froglike husband. Pity! After all, how could she know what it would be like to live with a former Chinese politician of the old school – and I mean the very old school. However, considering everything, I could have married somebody worse than The Frog, I suppose. One thing about him, however, is that he is manipulable so that, when I want to go shopping, he is easy meat for a few more thousand dollar bills. Getting back to mommy, however, she was correct in that one should always consider what one is going to do in the event that the unexpected happens or that the worst comes to the worst. This brings me to the matter of BP plc. This company, by sheer accident rather than by any design, has been responsible for the greatest ecocatastrophe in the history of the world. The ecocatastrophe is so large, in fact, that it threatened to undermine the good name of the entire British Empire – that is, what is left of it. It is quite likely that it will take a decade or more before the gross negligence of this giant British conglomerate’s faux pas will be relegated to the annals of history. The big question, today, of course, is whether or not the company has a sufficiency of cash to pay for the huge amount of damage that it has caused. When I talk of the damage, I am not just referring to the damage to the ecosystems in The Gulf of Mexico, but to the damage to umpteen corporate entities and little investors who purchased shares in BP plc, thinking that this company would be a safe investment over the next decade or so. I am referring, also, to pension funds and the funds of labour unions, etc. All of these people and entities invested for the long term, thinking that buying into shares in BP plc would result in a steady income by way of dividends for decades to follow because, after all, fossil fuels are unlikely, ever, to go out of style. I wonder whether or not my mother could have foreseen the damage that BP plc has done in The Gulf of Mexico, causing tens of thousands of people to become deprived of a means of making a living – as crude oil, surging out of the ocean’s bed at the rate of 100,000 barrels per day, invaded the beaches, abutting The Gulf of Mexico, killing millions of species of wildlife, the creeping muck, continuing to smother then kill all life-forms in its path.

Management of BP plc has agreed to pay some \$US20 billion into a fund, managed in the US by an objective and impartial team, appointed by the US Government, to pay for the damage that had been caused and continues to be caused by this British oil company. But what if such a catastrophe should happen again? What if the next time around, an oil company, due to the negligence of some of its workers, causes the deaths of not just 11 workers – as was the case in the matter of BP plc – but of hundreds of people, or even thousands of people, none of whom was associated with the oil company, at all, but who just happened to be unlucky enough to be in the vicinity of the accident. It seems to me that little is being done to put into place sufficient safeguards so that catastrophes, such as the one, caused by BP plc, cannot recur. There are

rules and regulations, governing air travel, sea travel and land travel – aeroplanes, ships, motor cars, trains, motorcycles, and so on – but in the matter of oil exploration and the drilling of oil wells, especially oil wells in the deep sea, there are insufficient controls over the companies, involved in this important industry. Left to their own devices, these oil companies have the potential to destroy complete ecosystems.

If one does not keep pace with his fellow, it is likely that one does so due to her or his inability to hear at least one pulsing melody of life. If that pulsing melody of life ceases for a man, his life is bereft of at least one part of the beauty of the world that he thinks that he knows whether or not he appreciates it. How many parts of the beauty of this world can one afford to lose? By listening to that pulsing melody of life, one may well find happiness and fulfillment of purpose. In death, the world becomes black and light ceases to be for eternity. Blackness is darkness: Blindness is the total destruction of light, forever. The dawn to the blind does not usher in a new bright day, but the horrors of not seeing the beauty of the day, of the bird, flying to its nest to feed its young, of the flower, opening its petals to meeting the morning sun, of the young child, yearning to be cuddled by a loving parent. I want to see the morrow and the morrow and the morrow. Do you agree, My Dear Grandchild?

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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