

## The Wong Way .....

**Mr Wong is a practising solicitor in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Because he is a solicitor, he is very proud of his position in society. He wears only the latest fashionable clothes, which he purchases at a very fashionable departmental store, the same fashionable departmental store from where he purchased all of the furniture for his home. Solicitor Wong lives on The Peak, a very fashionable part of Hongkong. He lives in a house. He is married to a former teacher of the English language. He has a teenaged son who attends an international school. He is the proud owner of a white Rolls-Royce, which he purchased, second-hand, about 8 years ago.**

**The following are just some of the things that Solicitor Wong does; and, the reasoning (or lack of it) for his actions.**

Solicitor Wong always maintained that his word was law: Once he had made a determination and that determination had been broadcast to whomsoever he decided should abide by his decision, there was no turning back. Of course, he did not, always, consider all of the ramifications of his many well-considered determinations so that, from time to time, it was required that he be fleet of body and mind in order to over-rationalise any suggested questionable decision. Whenever he wrote a letter to a client, for instance, in the event that a stated fact in the letter did not, exactly, hit the mark and the client brought this to his attention, Solicitor Wong would explain, in his inimitable fashion, that one should never be too definitive in correspondence, leaving a door slightly ajar for the sake of being able to make a fast exit if needs be such. The client, more often than not, did not fully understand what this officer of the High Court of Hongkong was saying when referring to a door, being left ajar, but it sounded good and, in the legalese of such men of letters as Solicitor Wong, it was indeed rare that Solicitor Wong would be taken to task. When, for instance, Solicitor Wong used a word or phrase inappropriately and this was pointed out to him, his normal response was that what he had written was colloquial English and, as such, it was easily recognizable as such. But on one occasion, Solicitor Wong found himself unable to extricate himself from a very tricky situation.

It happened one morning when, on entering his office in the Central Business District of Hongkong at about 10.30 am, he was handed a letter, signed by all of his staff members, all 5 of them. The letter was a demand for more money. In the past, a staff member's salary had been dictated according to the perceived value to Solicitor Wong of that member. It was a purely discriminatory method of

evaluation of a person's worth and, then, upon making that evaluation, it was translated in terms of dollars and cents. The demand for more money from all of the staff meant that they had ganged up against the sole proprietor of the law firm for which they worked. The only way that that could have been achieved was by the various staff members, showing each other how much money they were being paid and comparing salaries in terms such matters as the length of time that a staff member had worked in the office, the difficulty of tasks, benefits accrued to the various staff members, or the lack of them, perquisites, afforded to certain staff members but not given to all, etc, etc, etc. As far as Solicitor Wong was concerned, he was facing a revolution in his office. He felt that he had been stabbed in the back. His *modus operandi* with regard to making determinations as to an employee's value to him in terms of the medium of exchange of the day would have to be modified. But how could that be done without making a full declaration as to the way in which a staff-member's value to the firm was to be assessed? Of course, there was, always, the possibility that Solicitor Wong could reject the demands of his staff, outright, in which case, it would be necessary to have a replacement team stand by just in case things became a little sticky.

*'I am not the type of man that can be ruled or coerced by complaint,'* he explained to Judy, his wife, that evening after Nickolas, their teenaged son, had gone to bed. *'This is the first time that I have ever been in the position that I am today. My staff has an easy life in the office. Nobody is asked to stay beyond the normal working hours and I pay their salaries in accordance with the going rate and I follow The Labour Laws, exactly. I do not quite understand the reason that, today, I am being blackmailed by the staff in whom I had placed so much trust in the past. I feel completely betrayed!'* Judy just listened, patiently, and, from time to time, simply nodded her head as though in empathy with her husband's situation. *'I know how you feel, dear,'* she said after some delay. *'You feel that you should not have to pay more money to your staff because of this demand.'* *'Exactly!'* replied the astonished solicitor, who had not expected his wife to understand him and his thinking so accurately and precisely. And, then, Judy went on to say: *'Of course, you were going to increase your staff's salary in accordance with the Hongkong inflation rate, in any event, but your staff did not know of your kind heart and, instead, wrote that demand letter just before you could explain your thoughts to them. It is a pity that you did not make known your intentions some time earlier. Actually, it is a little unfair of you to be treated in this manner. Don't you agree?'* Solicitor Wong was completely taken aback. He stood up, looked lovingly at his wife, and said: *'How did you know what I was thinking before this demand letter was put into my hands? How clever of you! I shall tell the staff just what I had intended with regard to staff salary increases, prior to them writing that horrible demand letter to me. Thank you so very much for your wise understanding of me.'*

The matter had been settled and Solicitor Wong would not have to lose face in front of his staff. He lay on his bed, thinking of a little speech that he would make to his staff, the next morning. It would start off, he decided, by stating that, in these days of uncertainty, with the price of energy, rising rapidly, and with food prices, going through the proverbial roof, it was necessary that everybody understand the importance of .... At this point, Judy interrupted his reveries, saying that there would have to be an increase in the monthly allowance, afforded to her, to run their home. *'I think that an increase of about 50 percent would be appropriate,'* she instructed her husband, and, then, quickly added: *'You have not increased my allowance for more than 2 years, you know. And Nickolas is growing up so quickly, requiring new clothes, nearly every month.'* Solicitor Wong was about to complain, but promptly stopped: He did not want another demand letter to be placed in his hands.

The moral of this tale:

Beware of wives and lovers, agreeing with you too quickly.

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