

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I was surprised that the MTR Corporation Ltd () (Code: 66, Main Board, The Stock Exchange of Hongkong Ltd) found itself, holding onto the short end of the stick with its announcement in respect of reserving its right to withdraw any and all advertising from any medium of Hongkong, a medium that, presumably, in the opinion of Management of MTR Corporation Ltd, had violated the company's Code of Conduct with regard to the affairs of the Corporation or any member thereof. It has been suggested that the letter, sent to members of the Fourth Estate of Hongkong by the Corporation, or sent at the behest of the Corporation via a third party, was aimed at suppressing Press freedoms. I, for one, do not agree with this conclusion. It is well known that, in China, being separate and distinct from the Hongkong Special Administrative Region which is, of course, part of China, the Press is forced to follow a certain line when it comes to publishing stories and/or reports about the politics of the country or any high-ranking member of the PRC Government. In China, one is likely to end up in prison for writing, and/or even articulating anything about the Government or any high-ranking member of the Chinese Politbureau. Therefore, Hongkong is much more liberal than China because the Government of Hongkong does not jail people – at least, not yet – for saying nasty things about Chief Executive Donald-the-Duck, also known as Donald Tsang Yam Kuen (), and/or criticising the actions of the Hongkong Government (and only the Good Lord knows how much criticism could be levelled against a large number of senior Hongkong Government officials), and even throwing bananas at senior Hongkong Government officials. Any organisation or individual has the inalienable right to advertise in any medium it determines would be beneficial to its cause, whatever that cause may be. Alternatively, if a medium is seen not to be beneficial to a prospective advertiser, then, that advertiser can just refuse to advertise any more in that medium. It is like wanting to eat in, say, Restaurant Petrus, the 5-star food outlet at Island Shangri-La Hotel, or even at a hamburger joint, such as McDonald's: If the food does not suit one's taste or if the service is considered inadequate, then, one does not have to patronise such eateries. On the other hand, if a restaurant's Management does not like the way in which a prospective customer dresses, he or she smells offensively, or he or she is not groomed, according to the implied code of Management, or even due to some inborn prejudice of Management, which is not made known to prospective customers, that prospective customer can be refused service. There is no law that states that a restaurant has to accept any prospective customer and, therefore, a restaurant has the right to refuse service to anybody at any time.

Which brings us back to the matter of the MTR Corporation Ltd, doesn't it? The MTR Corporation Ltd did not have to send out those nasty letters to select members of the Hongkong media, at all! All it had to do was to monitor that which was written about Corporation and/or its officers and, then, take the action that it determined was correct and proper. After all, money talks, doesn't it? MTR Corporation Ltd wants the general public to use its services, whether or not they are good, so it does the Corporation a disservice to spend money on a medium that criticises it or any member of its Management, who may have been involved in a scandal of one kind or another, such as sleeping with the wrong lady at the wrong time in the wrong place and being caught so doing. It wants only good and positive Press reports, not reports that state that the company's data about its customers is not secure and may be sold for cash to another company, giving

details of MTR customers, such as names, addresses, telephone numbers, etc.

Then, there is the matter of the MTR carriages, often being filthy dirty, people spitting on the floors of the carriages, travellers, eating their meals in passenger compartments, sometimes, leaving food and drink on the seats, large packages, often blocking the aisles, travellers from across the China border, entering the trains, carrying huge suitcases or lugging big cardboard boxes that make it nearly impossible for other travellers to sit down, and dirty pick-pockets, frequenting the trains as do paedophiles and sexy old men, looking to touch up comely young males and/or females, travelling in the trains. Of course, as we, all, understand, there are, from time to time, horrible people that take the MTR trains and there is no way to prevent them from so doing. Therefore, if one is desirous of taking the MTR in order to cross from Hongkong Island to Kowloon, let us say, then, one has to suffer certain little inconveniences, during the crossing. If one is travelling with youngsters, it would be wise to keep the youngsters close at hand while keeping one hand, tightly grasping one's purse. Also, it is not always wise to wear expensive jewellery on MTR trains because one never knows who is that person, standing next to you. (Come to think of it, nobody has ever tried to touch me up in a train: Why not I wonder. I am never lucky, it seems.)

Personally, I feel sorry for MTR Corporation Ltd because, by and large, its Management is doing a creditable job. This is in contrast to many other, senior Hongkong Government servants who, quite often, display their glaring inadequacies quite openly. I wonder whether or not I qualify for that \$HK6,000 Government handout that has been promised, but which the Hongkong Government is having trouble in determining who will be qualified and how the cash will be distributed.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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