

## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I, always, thought that only women were fickle, but it seems that I have been incorrect all of my days. It is obvious that men, especially men, working for a government, are much more prone to be fickle than women and, as far as I am concerned, men can be more fickle than I ever imagined they could be. According to Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, petty government officials are prone to fickleness because of their innate propensity of the fear of making mistakes, mistakes that, in due course, could reflect poorly on them when they are exposed for ordinary citizens to view and to analyse. Now, The Frog explained that in private enterprise, an employee, who makes a mistake of any magnitude, is quite likely to be sacked, but, in a government, it is not quite as easy to sack somebody as in private enterprise because the sacking of a government employee may reflect poorly on the idiot's superior, who proposed his or her appointment in the first place. The Frog explained: 'In such a case as I have just pointed out, when a petty official makes a faux pas of any magnitude, he has a choice of actions: He can recant; he can modify a former determination, claiming that it was due to an unexpected change of circumstances, if that is possible; and/or, he can feign sickness and resign from his post due to ill health.' The Frog knows his onions because, in the past, he had served in a very high post in Beijing. He resigned from that post due to failing health – I mean, really, ill health.*

*In Hongkong, on March 2, 2011, Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun Wah () announced that every permanent resident of the territory would receive \$HK6,000 in cash from the Hongkong Government. This determination came after it became very evident that he had become the laughing stock of the 7 million residents of Hongkong. Due to an about-face on his original Budget proposals, announced about a week earlier, the Financial Secretary was forced to increase his \$HK16-billion Budget to about \$HK40 billion. The first Budget proposal was to inject into every Mandatory Provident Fund, held by 4 million employees of the territory, \$HK6,000. This would have bypassed many of the employees, classified as the middle class of Hongkong, and so, after an outright threat had been made that there would be trouble from the rank and file of a number of uniformed services of the Hongkong Government, including the Police Force, culminating in protests on the streets of the territory, the Financial Secretary caved in and proposed that the \$HK6,000 cash handouts would be given to about 6 million, permanent residents, including housewives, retirees, and even overseas emigrants. The Financial Secretary never apologised for his about-face because such an action would have caused embarrassment to the Chief Executive of Hongkong, Beijing appointee Donald Tsang Yam Kuen (). As The Frog, laughingly put it: 'Hongkong became, once again, a government, ruled by fear and/or complaint.'*

*On June 29, 2011, there was another about-face by a member of the Hongkong Government, but, this time, the petty official at the centre of the controversy had been appointed, not by Beijing, but by Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Yuen, himself. In this case, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Stephen Lam Sui Lung (), was forced into modifying, very materially, his original plan to ban by-elections. Without going into details of the modification of Mr Stephen Lam Sui Lung's determination to ban by-elections, his about-face was the result of Beijing, being forced to intercede, with the Beijing Liaison Office,*

*suggesting (which, in political language, is equivalent to a command, according to The Frog) that the Hongkong Government's original plan to ban by-elections should be reconsidered in great detail (the term, 'reconsidered', The Frog explained, means, in the political language of Beijing, that a comprehensive evaluation should be considered. This is suggestive that the Hongkong Government had been remiss in its first consideration with regard to this matter.). Then, just last Monday, July 4, 2011, following the July 1 walkabout in the territory when more than 200,000 people took the streets in a peaceful protest of the Government's plan to scrap by-elections of the Legislative Council, it was decided that the Chief Secretary, Mr Henry Tang Ying Yen (), should try to soothe the ruffled feathers of the proletariat. The original timetable for the tabling the controversial Bill was July 13, 2011, but the Chief Secretary announced that the Bill would be shelved until September, allowing public consultation. And so, as I have, already, written, the Hongkong Government was, once again, ruled by fear and/or complaint.*

*In a period of just 3 months, the Hongkong Government had been forced to admit to having egg all over its proverbial face. Now, in Beijing, such about-faces by the government of the day have never happened because Beijing does not make such mistakes. While Beijing may be considered a little dictatorial, it is, also, true that careful consideration is given to each and every determination, proposed by the government. Clearly, this is not the case in respect of the Hongkong Government, at least, with regard to the faux pas of the Financial Secretary in late February and by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs in late June. But there was that time in 2008 when the Chief Executive, known in some circles as Donald-the-Duck, proposed, officially, to increase pension allowances for the elderly residents of Hongkong. However, the proposal of Donald-the-Duck included a means test for all potential recipients, applying under the new, proposed pension scheme. The means test would determine that the person, applying for the newly revamped, old-age pension, had no other visible means of support, little to no savings, and that he or she was at least 65 years old. The means test, also, was meant for people, over the age of 70 years, even though, under the present legislation, anybody over the age of 70 years is entitled to an old-age pension come what may.*

*The Frog again: 'Hongkong is supposed to be ruled by law, not by complaint or threats of complaint. Hongkong Government officials are supposed to be intelligent people and experts in their assigned fields. Their actions, over the past few months, have indicated that their performances are sadly lacking in perspicacity and nous. It would be very nice of them if they agreed to resign for the sake of the Government of Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen, which is, already, under pressure from Beijing due to the many petty Governmental underling's proven lack of expertise. Of course, it is the Chief Executive's fault that the faux pas ever took place because it was his responsibility to study any and all Budget proposals of the Financial Secretary and to have considered the proposals of the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs in great detail, prior to that incompetent, opening his silly mouth with his nonsensical ideas about banning by-elections and what-have-you. Beijing, today, must view the Hongkong Government as being a very poor "relation". It is a very sad state of affairs! I mark the manner of the heads of the Government of Hongkong and its many departments and I, for one, can only speculate as to what will be the next major embarrassing mistake. Because it has to come. It is just a matter of time.'*

*It is said that one may choose one's friends, but one cannot choose one's relatives. I am not quite sure what this means, but I am certain that somebody will come forward with a definition. Ah, well, talk to you next week ... or is it to be the week after next ... or next month ... or ... ?*

*Talk to you, next week.*

*Chief Lady*

***While TARGET makes every attempt to ensure accuracy of all data published,  
TARGET cannot be held responsible for any errors and/or omissions.***

*If readers feel that they would like to voice their opinions about that which  
they have read in **TARGET**, please feel free to e-mail your views to  
[editor@targetnewspapers.com](mailto:editor@targetnewspapers.com). **TARGET** does not guarantee to publish  
readers' views, but reserves the right so to do subject to the laws of libel.*