

**POLITICAL DISCONTENT IS RIFE;
IN WHICH DIRECTION SHOULD HONGKONG PROCEED ?**

There has been, over the past few years, a great deal of talk in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) about freedom and how to protect the territory's heritage.

Quite a number of people are demanding that Beijing permit the 7.30 million, mainly Chinese population of Hongkong to select their own leader by suffrage.

The call has gone out: '*We want Universal Suffrage!*'

It is questionable as to whether those Hongkong residents, who are calling, in stentorian outbursts, for Universal Suffrage, fully understood that which the term is meant to imply as well as being fully conversant with the nuances of the term.

If they were fully aware of the implications of Universal Suffrage, they might have included other demands, also.

Suffrage is defined as being a vote that is given in deciding a controverted question or the election of a person for an office or trust.

Universal Suffrage, therefore, as far as those who are demanding it for Hongkong, means, simply put, that every eligible adult member of Hongkong should be given the right to vote with regard to the election of a person to lead the Hongkong Government for a period of time.

However, Universal Suffrage does not connote how often an incumbent government is required to consult the electorate; it is not associated with, or inseparable from, as a consequence or concomitant.

Since Hongkong was returned to the PRC on July 1, 1997, the head of the government of the territory – called the Chief Executive – has, always, been hand-picked by select Hongkong residents who have the express approval of Beijing as being among the most-suitable people to be members of a Select Committee.

When Hongkong was a British Crown Colony, there never was a suggestion, during the 115 years of British rule, that the resident population, being mainly ethnically Chinese, wanted Universal Suffrage.

The successive, Hongkong Governors were all carefully chosen by the British Government of the day and, to a very great extent, these British gentlemen, who watched over the territory and guided it when called upon so to do, were looked upon kindly and, for the most part, were well appreciated by the residents of the peaceful British Colony.

After World War II, the British Government took back control of Hongkong from the Japanese invaders, who had controlled the 416 square miles and its inhabitants from 1941 until 1945.

Thereafter, the political philosophy of successive British Governments of the territory was based on positive non-intervention.

Under this laissez-faire policy – a doctrine that opposed governmental interference in economic affairs beyond the minimum necessary for the maintenance of peace and property rights – Hongkong prospered and, when the late Milton Friedman, the noted, American economist, who was awarded a Nobel Prize for Economics in 1976, visited the territory, he labelled it as an example of what free enterprise can accomplish.

He said, among other things, that Hongkong was one of the last bastions of free enterprise.

He is quoted to have stated, with regard to the virtues of positive non-intervention by governments, that *'If you put the Federal Government in charge of the Sahara Desert, in five years, there'd be a shortage of sand.'*

Times have changed from the Hongkong of old, however, and the fatherly figure of the British, well-educated Administrator, who slept in Government House and was very much a public figure, has been replaced, since July 1, 1997, by a trio of Chief Executives, not one of whom has been held in very high regard by the majority of the right-minded people of what is now known as Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the PRC.

The chief reasons for the political discontent in Hongkong, today, have their roots in the well-advertised, abject lack of respect for the Chief Executives for, if there had been the similar reverence for the Chief Executives as was evidenced in respect of the appointed British Governors of days of yore, there might never have been the call for Universal Suffrage.

It is only when people feel exceedingly threatened that they yearn for change – and make their feelings known, widely.

The Three Blind Mice

Mr Tung Chee Hwa ()

The First Chief Executive of the HKSAR was the 60 year-old, Mr Tung Chee Hwa.

He was appointed on July 1, 1997, and held office until March 12, 2005.

He started out, as the head of the Government, by giving television *'performances'*, stating that he was a Buddhist and that he looked upon the people of Hongkong as his personal charges. His wife, Betty, was often, sitting demurely on a couch, watching the proceedings of *'The Great Man'*.

When he agreed to be interviewed, he would, always, refer to the interviewer by his (or her) given name in order to give viewers the impression that he had an intimate relationship with the interviewer: The fatherly figure explaining to the child.

His background was that he was the eldest son of Mr Tung Chao Yung (), the Hongkong entrepreneur who founded Orient Overseas Container Line Ltd (), now a wholly owned subsidiary of Orient Overseas (International) Ltd ([]) (Code: 316, Main Board, The Stock Exchange of Hongkong Ltd), known more familiarly in Hongkong business circles as OOCL.

As Chairman of OOCL, following the death of the paterfamilias, Mr Tung Chee Hwa caused the company to overtrade by purchasing certain, British-based assets and, as a direct consequence, the company found itself, quite quickly, in a very difficult financial situation, sitting on the horns of insolvency.

To OOCL came the PRC Government with its coffers, overflowing with money: The company was saved, but it was estimated that it cost Mr Tung Chee Hwa, personally, about \$US100 (about \$HK780 million), that amount of money, being a personal loan to him from his Motherland.

Mr Tung Chee Hwa, therefore, had a very material, outstanding debt to the PRC Government, not just with

regard to the massive personal loan, but, also, by having saved ‘*face*’, internationally.

And so, when it was proposed to him that he should participate in the ‘*elections*’ for the First Chief Executive of the HKSAR, one can only speculate that he found it difficult to decline the earnest entreaty.

His first term of office as Chief Executive was by virtue of the voting, conducted by the 400-member, Electoral College, its entire membership, having been hand-picked by the PRC Government.

Before the votes were counted, everybody and his cat in Hongkong knew the results.

His Administration was quickly called into question and even the President of the PRC, Mr Jiang Ze Min (), openly remarked, very negatively, about some of his decisions.

When Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa determined to give to Mr Richard Li Tzar Kai (), one of the sons of Mr Li Ka Shing (), the Cyberport Project on Hongkong Island, a project, comprising a housing complex of 2,800 flats, a technology centre, shopping arcades, a hotel and a fitness centre, questions were raised as to the reason that there never had been a Hongkong Government tender for the plum project.

In the nominations for Mr Tung Chee Hwa’s second term of office, nobody opposed his ‘*election*’ to office – they knew that it would be complete waste of time and money so to do.

A very controversial episode was when Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa determined that legislation should be put in place in order that Article 23 of The Basic Law of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region – the anti-subversion bill – be implemented, but the hostility to the adoption of Article 23 drew rude response due to the suggestion that its imposition could restrict freedoms to which the resident population had, always, enjoyed.

On Sunday, July 1, 2003, in the hot afternoon, an estimated 500,000 people, representing about seven percent of the then total Hongkong population, marched through the territory, calling for the resignation of the Chief Executive.

When it was discovered that Mr Antony Leung Kam Chung (), the Financial Secretary, at this time, had purchased a luxurious, Lexus motor car for \$HK790,000 just a few weeks prior to imposing a higher, motor-car sales tax on newly purchased vehicles, it was too much for many Hongkong residents and even the prompt resignation of the Financial Secretary on July 16, 2003, could not placate them.

Mr Hu Jin Tao (), the Paramount Leader of the PRC between 2002 and 2012, humiliated Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa, publicly, and called into question his appalling governance.

On March 10, 2005, Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa resigned on the spot, alleging poor health.

Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen ()

The Second Chief Executive of the HKSAR was the 61 year-old, Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen. He took office in 2005.

Unlike the First Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen had never been a businessman. He had been a civil servant since 1967.

He had risen through the ranks of the Hongkong Civil Service under successive British Governments of the Crown Colony and, in 1995, he was appointed Financial Secretary.

His election to the purple of office of the HKSAR was unopposed, Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen, having been endorsed by Beijing, prior to the ‘*election*’ process.

The 800-member, Election Committee all voted him in on June 21, 2005.

His term of office was marked with suggestions that he had acted, most of the time, with exaggerated hubris.

He was not above accepting very special favours from friends and acquaintances, and, in particular, from Mr Bill Wong Cho Bau ().

Mr Bill Wong Cho Bau was an investor in Digital Broadcasting Corporation Hongkong Ltd () and was a Delegate of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

The Chief Executive's close association with Mr Bill Wong Cho Bau helped, greatly, to contribute to his undoing when it was discovered that he had accepted the offer of renting a 6,500 square-foot penthouse in Shenzhen, the PRC.

The \$HK50-million penthouse was located in Donghai Garden, a luxury residential complex in the Futian District of Shenzhen, one that had been developed by East Pacific Holdings Ltd, a company, owned by his close friend: Mr Bill Wong Cho Bau.

The penthouse covered the 35th, 36th and the 37th floors of the tower block and comprised more than 12 rooms, a wine cellar and a gymnasium.

The monthly rent on this penthouse was to be the equivalent of \$HK98,000, translated from renminbi.

In addition to Mr Bill Wong Cho Bau, it was known that Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen rubbed shoulders with a number of other Hongkong tycoons, including Mr Thomas Lau Luen Hung (), the Chairman of Lifestyle International Holdings Ltd () (Code: 1212, Main Board, The Stock Exchange of Hongkong Ltd).

On one occasion, it was reported that he and his wife returned from Macau aboard Mr Thomas Lau Luen Hung's private yacht.

When confronted with this, the Chief Executive confirmed the veracity of the facts, but said that he had paid the equivalent of an economy class ticket for the ride aboard Mr Thomas Lau's luxury yacht.

Another of his close friends was Mr Charles Ho Tsu Kwok (), the Chairman of Sing Tao News Corporation Ltd () (Code: 1105, Main Board, The Stock Exchange of Hongkong Ltd).

Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen admitted that he had flown to Phuket, Thailand, and to Japan aboard a private jet, belonging to his close friend, Mr Charles Ho Tsu Kwok.

And so the suggestions and allegations about the Chief Executive continued until, eventually, he became the subject of an investigation by the **Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)**.

He was the only Chief Executive to have been investigated by the ICAC.

The people of the HKSAR are, still, awaiting the results of that investigation.

Whether or not Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen took advantage of his high office and obtained advantages to which he would not, ordinarily, have been entitled remains to be seen, but the many and varied suggestions about his activities while in office did not smell of being totally kosher.

On a number of occasions, Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen apologised, publicly, for his indiscretions, including wasting HKSAR Government money by obtaining advantages for himself and his family, both overseas and in the Macau Special Administrative Region of the PRC.

Mr Leung Chun Ying ()

The Third Chief Executive of the HKSAR since the assumption of sovereignty of the British Crown Colony

of Hongkong by the PRC was the 58 year-old, Mr Leung Chun Ying.

He assumed the office of Chief Executive on July 1, 2012, amid controversy over allegations that he had installed some illegal structures at his house at The Peak.

It was proved that that was, in fact, the case, but no legal action has ever been taken.

Not so for his adversary for the post of Chief Executive in July of 2012, however.

Mr Henry Tang Ying Yen (), the former Chief Secretary of the HKSAR, also, had illegal structures at his Kowloon Tong, luxury home and, when this was proved, his platform for success in his quest for the '*golden fleece*' of the HKSAR collapsed.

From 1995 until 1996, Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying held the post of the President of The Hongkong Institute of Surveyors and, as such, he must have known that which was a legal structure at his Peak house and that which was totally illegal.

Aside from illegal structures, reports had it that Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying was a member in good standing of The Chinese Communist Party.

But he had never admitted this as fact.

However, when he was declared the winner of the Chief Executive '*election*', obtaining 689 votes out of a total of 1,200-member, Election Committee votes, the '*People's Daily*', a newspaper mouthpiece of the PRC Government, referred to him as '*Comrade () Leung Chun Ying*'.

(The title of '*Comrade*' is reserved for members of The Chinese Communist Party, only.)

Chapter 569 of The Laws of the HKSAR, the official title of this Ordinance, being '*The Chief Executive Election Ordinance*', states, at Section 31, that a successful candidate for the post of Chief Executive must make a statutory declaration that he is not a member of any political party.

If it be proved that Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying is a member, today, in good standing, of The Chinese Communist Party, then questions must be raised as to whom he owes his allegiance: To the 7.30 million, mainly Chinese residents of Hongkong; or, to Beijing, forsaking his fiduciary duty to the people of the HKSAR?

But the illegal structures at his Peak Home have dogged Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying, even to this day.

In January of 2013, the Legislative Council brought impeachment proceedings against the Chief Executive over allegations that he uttered falsehoods in respect of the illegal structures.

For about eight hours, there was a heated debate over the impeachment proceedings, but, at the end of the debate, Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying still remained as the head of the HKSAR Government.

The Chaos

When the successive Governments of the British Crown Colony of Hongkong held meetings in the Legislative Council Chamber, it was in an atmosphere of conciliation with regard to thorny issues, but regardless of the matters before the lawmakers, discussions, for the most part, followed Parliamentary Procedure.

Parliamentary Procedure is a body of rules, ethics and customs, governing meetings, in general. It is part of English Common Law.

There have, always, been Legislative Council members and Executive Council members who did not agree with the actions or intentions of the Hongkong Government, prior to July 1, 1997, but these Councillors always considered themselves as being part of the '*loyal opposition*'.

Today, in Legislative Council Meetings, things have changed, appreciably, compared with the days when Great Britain ruled the waves in the South China Sea.

Today, quite often, there are violent acts, perpetrated in the Legislative Council Chamber, with the Chief Executive, being attacked by the throwing of all manner of objects in his general direction by a number of Legislative Councillors.

Thus far, the Chief Executive has never been physically harmed (aside from his pride, perhaps?).

The latest incident took place on Thursday, July 4, 2014, when a glass of water was thrown at Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying.

The culprit, who threw the glass of water, was Legislative Councillor Raymond Wong Yuk Man ().

The Hongkong Police Force was summoned to the Legislative Council Chamber, but no arrest was made at that time.

Following this, Legislative Councillor Raymond Wong Yuk Man, accompanied by his solicitor, surrendered himself to the police and was duly arrested in suspicion of common assault. He was released on bail.

He referred to the Chief Executive as being a '*dictator*' and, as such, there is no reason to be polite to him.

The incident demonstrated, once again, the deteriorating situation between a number of Legislative Councillors and the Chief Executive.

Legislative Councillor Leung Kwok Hung (), also known as '*Long Hair*', is, without question, the most radical of the lawmakers, today, and, at the first Question-and-Answer Session of the Chief Executive in 2012, he threw a likeness of Pinocchio in the general direction of the Chief Executive.

Long Hair is boisterous and disruptive at nearly every Legislative Council Meeting that he determines to attend.

One has to ponder whether or not his actions are predicated to have him evicted from the Legislative Council Chamber.

Certainly, his actions are far from being constructive, for him or for anybody else – because his forced exit from the Chamber deprives him of knowing, first hand, what is transpiring.

Legislative Council members of the ilk of Long Hair are supposed to represent the people of the HKSAR, that is, all of the 7.30 million people, not just those who voted for him at the last election or the members of The League of Social Democrats, the political party which he chairs.

Long Hair's constituency is New Territories East and his key campaign promises included fighting for Universal Suffrage for Hongkong.

The people of Hongkong, as well as Long Hair, may well regret the manner in which they have made known some of their demands because, among other things, perhaps it has not been fully appreciated that the sovereignty of the HKSAR is vested in the Government of the People's Republic of China.

The Chief Executive of the HKSAR, in similar manner to the way in which the governors of the British Crown Colony of Hongkong owed allegiance to the Crown, has a duty of fidelity to Beijing.

It is not so much that which is being demanded by well-intentioned, educated or semi-educated people of the territory, but the manner in which the demands are being made known via people, such as Long Hair: One can catch more bees with honey than with vinegar ().

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