

### YOU AND THE SNIFFLES: BE NOT APOLOGETIC

So, you've got the sniffles, have you?

Don't apologise, it happens to us, all, from time to time.

We, all, have to appreciate and to acknowledge that there is no known cure for the common cold, today – doctors give it the snooty nomenclature of an upper respiratory infection or state that it is, simply put (!), the mucous membrane of the nose and throat, having become inflamed.

You must be aware that the introduction, leading to the maturity of your common cold, will just have to run its course and, with luck, it will not graduate into chronic bronchitis – which is the second-largest killer of elderly people.

Thus, the chances are that you will not die due to the onset of that minor infection that will continuously invade your body, throughout your entire life.

The many and varied experiences in one's life are somewhat similar, analytically, to the onset of the sniffles: You learn to live with the vagaries of life because, with the passage of time, they will, via osmosis, tend to become acceptable to you by the process of gradual or unconscious assimilation, and so, by that time, as with the sniffles, life's vagaries will come to be so commonplace that you will give little thought to them.

### Lifes' Changes Are Inevitable, Regardless Of The Sniffles

Prior to July 1, 1997, not long before the British Crown Colony of Hongkong was returned to the People's Republic of China, many people were pondering how their lives would be changed after the handover.

Listening to conversations among menial workers in a dim sum restaurant in Wanchai, it was quite common to hear conversations that went along these lines:

*'Ah Yung, I am a lorry driver and you are a bus driver (a knowing nod of assent from Ah Yung who smiled in agreement). When the People's Republic (of China) takes over from the British, my country will still want me to be a lorry driver and, you, my friend (another knowing nod of assent), will still be driving a bus.'*

*'Don't worry, yourself! Who are we? Just menial workers! They need us. And we may even get more money after the People's Republic takes complete control of the territory! (A smile of appreciation spreads over the face of Ah Yung who, after taking another sip of tea, remarked: "Thank you, Motherland!")'*

*'Somebody must drive a bus; and, goods must be taken from here to there by road. Nothing to worry.'*

Since July 1, 1997, the 416 square miles that constitute what is now called the Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, nothing has changed, at least, not outwardly and not very materially.

The dim sum restaurants of Wanchai still operate as they did before the handover; and, lorry drivers and bus drivers continue to prognosticate about their future, how much more money they will be able to earn in the coming year, and, perhaps, which horse is likely to win in a certain race in the coming Wednesday at Happy Valley.

However, it is noticeable that the prices of most dim sum dishes have risen since the handover – as has the minimum wage for workers.

Certainly, the politics of the territory remains basically unchanged, Hongkong, being ruled, as it always has been, by one person who makes a point of kowtowing to the leaders of big businesses, operating in the territory.

Some of the material and very important differences, between then and now, include that the title of the head of the government, previously ‘*governor*’, has been replaced with the new title, ‘*Chief Executive*’, and, of course, the person who rules the roost does not have to travel further than to Beijing, the Capital City of the People’s Republic of China, to report to the Chief Executive’s immediate superior or his delegated governmental official.

(When Great Britain was responsible for the installation of gweilo Governors to head the Government of the British Crown Colony of Hongkong, all the Governors had to suffer a 15-hour flight back to Blighty in order to make a written report to the Prime Minister, explaining the situation that existed in Hongkong.)

The trams continue to rumble down the road, from east to west and west to east on Hongkong Island – although the tram company has been sold to a French entity, RATP Dev Transdev; and, The Star Ferry continues to take passengers from Hongkong Island to Kowloon, across a relatively small stretch of Victoria Harbour.

(Actually, come to think of it, one should not be shocked when the name, ‘*Victoria Harbour*’, is changed to a more appropriate name in order to reflect, more closely, the present situation. What about, ‘*The People’s Liberation Ferry*?’ or, perhaps, ‘*The Mao Mover*?’ or, even, ‘*The Water Diviner*?’.)

One might be tempted to ask: ‘*What’s in a name?*’

The answer: A great deal, actually!

To the powers that be in Beijing, a name of something that is considered a utility, designed to be used, especially by the plebeian, must be carefully selected in order to ring in the patriotic fervour of the people who will, from time to time, refer to the name, lovingly.

Far too long have the people of Hongkong been lumbered with names, such as Victoria Park, Victoria Peak, Victoria City, Queen’s Road, King’s College, Des Voeux Road (named after the tenth Governor of British Crown Colony of Hongkong, Sir William Des Voeux), The Wilson Trail and The MacLehose Trail (named after two former Governors of British Crown Colonial Hongkong, they, having been appointed by Queen Elizabeth II), Princess Margaret Hospital (named after Princess Margaret, the sister of Queen Elizabeth II), and Queen Mary Hospital (named after Queen Mary who died in March of 1953, having been the wife of King-Emperor George V of The United Kingdom).

The above names – and many more – were foisted upon the people of Hongkong without there ever having been a plebiscite (Etymology: Latin plebiscitum, from plebeian, pleb- ‘*the common people*’ + scitum ‘*decree*’ (from sciscere ‘*vote for*’).

It is high time that there should be very important changes, introduced to the now, mostly Chinese population of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China.

**Enter The Dragon**

Late last month, the people of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region were told that about one quarter of the five-storey, West Kowloon Terminus of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hongkong Express Rail would be leased to an entity of the Government of the People's Republic of China.

Details of the lease agreement and the amount of money that the Government of the People's Republic of China would have to pay to the Government of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region for the right to occupy the property of Hongkong have yet to be announced.

But one may be assured that the Chinese residents of Hongkong will, in due course, be told that the lease conditions for the property had been negotiated on very reasonable terms and determined on an arms-length basis; and, that the amount of rent to be charged, being in the tens of millions of Hongkong dollars, per annum.

That which shall be considered very good and rewarding is that The Hongkong Immigration Department, to mention just two of Governmental departments of territory, shall be released from the onerous responsibilities, associated with administering and policing this West-Kowloon Complex in respect of about one quarter of the interior area, that area, to be ceded to Beijing until June 30, 2047.

On June 30, 2047, the 50-year, marriage of convenience will end and the Government of the People's Republic of China will, formally, announce that The Basic Law of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China is replaced by the introduction of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China<sup>1</sup>.

**Article One of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China States**

*'The People's Republic of China is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants.'*

*'The socialist system is the basic system of the People's Republic of China. Disruption of the socialist system by any organization or individual is prohibited.'*

<sup>1</sup>Amended March 14, 2004

Instead of the Hongkong Government, having to concern itself with regard to the administration and security of a large part of this important complex in West Kowloon, the Government of the People's Republic of China has, already, agreed, in principal, to station officials to carry out immigration, customs, security and quarantine duties, in accordance with the laws of China – those laws, being slightly different and draconian to Hongkong laws.

It stands to reason that, naturally, platoons of the **People's Liberation Army (PLA)** will be on kept on standby just in case they are called upon to assist in any emergency that may arise at the West-Kowloon Complex.

This is a given and no elaboration is required in respect of the duties of these crack, heavily armed militia that are, presently, stationed in the Central Business District of Hongkong Island.

When all the matters, concerning the final draft of the lease have been completed to the satisfaction of Beijing, some Hongkong residents are bound to make utterances that might be considered dissenting on the

grounds, inter alia, that this agreement is tantamount to a foreign government, establishing a legal base of operations in Hongkong.

Pooh-pooh!

Just like the sniffles, one is certain to become well accustomed to the witnessing of heavily armed militia members of the People's Liberation Army, going about their duties in West Kowloon.

Anyway, West Kowloon is West Kowloon while life in other parts of Hongkong will continue, unabated.

Still on this subject, it must be heart-warming to note that the new Chief Executive of Hongkong, Ms Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-Ngor (), has welcomed and has endorsed the introduction of this proposed lease agreement that encompasses the concept that full Chinese laws shall apply within the leased area.

She is absolutely correct to adopt this stance, of course.

She must be correct because, after all, among other things, she was nominated by Beijing to have the top job in the Government of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region.

Having been officially nominated, obliquely, and having obtained tacit approval and support from the members of The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, the appointment of Ms Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-Ngor, as Chief Executive of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region, is proof positive that China's national legislature has selected the proper person to be entrusted to safeguard the 416 square-mile 'jewel', located at one of the southern-most parts of the Middle Kingdom.

Without question, eventually, the members of Hongkong's Legislative Council shall vote, approvingly, on the terms and conditions of China's generous proposal to lease part of a West Kowloon commercial complex; and, to be permitted to install its uniformed people to administer its property as it sees fit.

Having put a toe of the waters of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region, one might like to ponder what other parts of the territory might be leased to Beijing, or, to put it another way: Which part of Hongkong would Beijing like to obtain absolute control?

As with the sniffles, preparations for the inevitable would be considered a wise move.

A not-too-well known pedant once wrote:

*'Each epoch has its particular daring: The boldest, weary of philosophy that seems more and more to delve into the realm of the academic, venture, casting caution to the wind, in order to explore those frontiers, formally forbidden.'*

The person, who organises and presides over human affairs, can logically consider himself/herself as a part of that all-governing mind, watching over of us, all, flying high in the stratosphere.

Humanity, rightly or wrongly, has almost always conceived of its godlike creators and creations in terms of Providence; Providence, or nature, as providing protective care.

Amen.

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