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Honesty is the Best Policy

ONE OF THE FIRST LESSONS I learned from my senior students in Hong Kong was the saying “Money Speaks”. Sadly I had to agree that it was true then, fifty years ago, when an application for anything, from a hawker licence to a building permit, even to an application form to apply for entry to some schools, had a price. People had to pay the price or suffer the consequences. Thankfully, things are a great deal better since the ICAC was established in 1974.

Look anywhere in the world today and you will still see how many citizens suffer from the consequences of corrupt systems. Many politicians believe that democracy, by which they mean “one-person-one-vote”, will solve all our problems, including corruption. The fact is that democracy often leads to corruption, because those who enter politics seek votes from the electorate, and some are prepared to win votes by dishonest means.

I saw some of this myself when I was in the political field. Some candidates joined the elections because they wanted to serve the people. Others joined because they wanted to make themselves famous. Some were professionals, and they reckoned that by becoming councillors they would advertise their names in their profession. This happens everywhere, but by making strict rules about elections, it is possible to prevent the worst corrupt

practices. If strict rules are not applied, democracy becomes hypocrisy.

At the time of writing this article, I read of a famous politician who was recently promoted to a high international organisation based in a western country. This politician always spoke out against corruption. Now he is being accused of one of the worst types of corruption: giving a high salary and quick promotion to his girl-friend. When accused, he just said, “I’m sorry.” Do you think that apology is sufficient to excuse this man for doing what he was accusing others of doing? I would say, “No, he deserves heavier punishment than others, because he misled the people by being a dishonest hypocrite”.

When a person enters politics, he must be absolutely honest; otherwise he is not fit to serve his fellowmen. This principle applies to all people in all walks of life. A dishonest person may manage to hide his dishonesty for a long time, but eventually he will be found out, as scriptures say, “Be sure your sin will find you out.”

Honesty makes friends; dishonesty eventually makes enemies.