

Taichung as the World Turns: Who will Take the Blame for Hu?

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.
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More of the did-I-miss-something scenarios are coming out of Taichung, a city that competes for Taiwan's version of Sodom and Gommorah. First Huang Chong-dian, the chief of the Urban Development Department and two other city officials tendered their resignations because of the fire at the ALA pub that killed 9 and injured 12. The hazardous pub that had miraculously passed safety code inspections had gone up like a tinder-box; it also had been consistently mis-zoned in the city. Jason Hu said he would only accept the resignations after an investigation had been concluded. Here is where the obfuscation begins.

First, Jason Hu in true the-buck-stops-somewhere-below-me fashion, got someone else to take the fall and resign. Second, he further distanced himself and his officials from guilt by saying that an investigation would have to be done first despite the word GUILT being plastered on the foreheads of all. Then Hu admitted that city officials "may have blundered." especially since the inspections always came up positive and yet the building went up quickly like a fire trap.

Let's see what the investigation should do to find that someone may have blundered. First for some reason the pub had been classified as a restaurant for years because pubs were not allowed in that residential area. A blunder? Well I guess you could call it that when they were finally caught, but being caught by a fire is not exactly a blunder.

Then as was said, the building miraculously passed safety inspections year after year and even as late as December 2010. Yet the ceiling caught fire and flames spread like wild fire. A blunder? The flammability of a building that consistently passed or evaded standards is hard to call a blunder. Would a pay-off be a better word?

Something went wrong said Huang and yes, we would agree, nine people dead and twelve injured is something that went wrong. One only wonders how many other tinder-box restaurants and pubs there are out there in Taichung that are just waiting for the right spark to set them off.

But not to worry, good old Jason Hu said he will only accept resignations after investigations of others and not himself. So the world turns in Taichung.

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