

Ma would never have card declined

Written by James Wang 王健

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US President Barack Obama has had some bad luck recently.

First, two former US secretaries of defense and one former secretary of state appointed by him have published their memoirs, in which they accuse him of being indecisive and lacking a clear direction.

Second, his credit card was declined when he tried to pay for a meal at a New York restaurant while attending a meeting of the UN General Assembly.

The US president's credit card was rejected — how can this be true? Occasionally, some poor or elderly, forgetful person may be rejected again and again when trying to pay with their credit cards. Now this has also happened to Obama, whose face is well-recognized all over the world.

Perhaps it is like Obama said: "It turned out I guess I don't use it enough. So they thought there was some fraud going on."

The New York restaurant simply rejected Obama's credit card according to the law and asked him for another method of payment. In the face of this great embarrassment, the master of the White House had no choice but to rely on first lady Michelle Obama, who eventually paid with her credit card.

Obama said that this was not the first time his card had been rejected, and that sometimes he had to pay cash to save time.

This would not happen in President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) Taiwan. After causing so much public anger, Ma is unlikely to dine out with first lady Chow Mei-ching (周美青) at any eatery without having first cleared it of any other visitors, for fear of being hit by shoes or books thrown by bystanders.

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Even if he were to choose to dine out, Taiwanese hospitality and the culture of government-business collusion would preclude any restaurant operator from charging him, and he would never insist on paying them. In addition, no one would ever dare reject his credit card.

The attitude of the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) politicians has always been condescending and they never pay any attention to the people at the bottom.

Nor would something like this happen in China. Chinese netizens were surprised when they saw then-US ambassador to China Gary Locke carrying his own bag when waiting in line to buy coffee.

They also used the incident as an opportunity to mock arrogant Chinese leaders and bureaucrats.

To create a friendly image, Chinese President Xi Jinping's (习近平) aides then arranged a publicity event in December last year, in which Xi ate steamed buns at a Beijing restaurant and paid for the meal himself.

Does the emperor really need to have cash in his pocket when going out? This notion seems to be removed from reality.

Former president Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) once tried to buy eggs from a farmer in the countryside to show how close he was to the common people. However, Chiang did not know the price of eggs, so he told an aide to give the farmer a few dollars.

This story, in which the "emperor" did not have any money and did not know the price of eggs, sounds much closer to reality.

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