

Idiom by Lon Yan

不成體統

bu4 cheng2 ti3 tong3

"I'm not afraid of you! Put down your weapon!" A line like this conjures up the image of a brave young mother protecting her young child from a gun-toting home intruder.

Except that in this case, the words were uttered by lawmaker Priscilla Leung Mei-fun as she stood up against fellow lawmaker, the formidable Leung Kwok-hung, and the "weapon" involved was a piece of luncheon meat that the latter was holding threateningly.

Lawmakers of opposing camps just had a big fight throwing luncheon meat at each other over a walkout by pro-establishment councillors to stop two localist novices from retaking their oath of office. This scene in Hong Kong's corridors of power was probably more comical than Stephen Chow (周星馳) could have managed.

But it was actually not funny when people who are supposed to be community leaders and role models behave like a bunch of

unruly kids, which was really "不成體統" (*bu4 cheng2 ti3 tong3*).

"不" is "no," "not," "成" "to become," "to form," "to succeed," "體統" is "social form and behavior," "decorum," "orderly appearance." Literally, "不成體統" (*bu4 cheng2 ti3 tong3*) is "not forming social form and behavior," "not according with decorum," "unorthodox," "disgraceful appearance."

"不成體統" (*bu4 cheng2 ti3 tong3*) means "to behave very badly," "to behave wildly," "most improper," "scandalous," "bad form."

A variation of the idiom that is more commonly used locally is "成何體統" (*cheng2 he2 ti3 tong3*), literally "what kind of decorum is that."

"成何體統" (*cheng2 he2 ti3 tong3*) means "What a scandal!"

Terms containing the character "統" (*tong3*) include:

統計 (*tong3 ji4*) – to gather statistics

統籌 (*tong3 chou2*) – overall planning

統治 (*tong3 zhi4*) – to rule

總統 (*zong3 tong3*) – a president