

Idiom by Lon Yan

物有所值

wu4 you3 suo3 zhi2

Queen Elizabeth II is getting a “pay rise” of about £2.8 million (HK\$28 million). Last year, she received £42.8 million (HK\$426 million) in “sovereign grant”. This year, she is expected to get £45.6 million (HK\$463 million) – a 6.5 percent boost, and she doesn’t even have to pay tax.

The official Keeper of the Privy Purse, Sir Alan Reid, said the £42.8 million state grant worked out to just 65 pence (HK\$6.5) per head in the UK, adding, “When you consider that against what the Queen does and represents for this country, I believe it represents excellent value for money.”

The related expression is “物有所值” (wu4 you3 suo3 zhi2). “物” (wu4) is “thing,” “object,” “matter,” “substance,” “content,” “有” (you3) “to have,” “to exist,” “there is,” “所” (suo3) “that which,” “a place,” “a location,” “a building,” “an

office” and “值” (zhi2) “value,” “price,” “worth.”

Literally, “物有所值” (wu4 you3 suo3 zhi2) is “the thing has its value.” It means “good value for money.” This is something people usually say about things that are not cheap, but are worthy as they are of good quality.

In the case of the Queen, it might even be “物超所值” (wu4 chao1 suo3 zhi2) – the value exceeds the price – as Sir Alan described her as “excellent value for money.”

One would wonder whether he would go so far as calling the Queen “價廉物美” (jia4 lian2 wu4 mei3) which means, literally, “the price is cheap but the product is beautiful” and, figuratively, “a bargain buy.”

But talking about Queen as if she were a commodity is definitely inappropriate, to say the least.

Terms containing the character “物” (wu4) include:

動物 (dong4 wu4) – an animal; a creature

植物 (zhi2 wu4) – a plant; vegetation

物價 (wu4 jia4) – prices of commodities

物業 (wu4 yei4) – property; real estate