

## Dr CHAN Sui Kau

Citation

Economically, Hong Kong first made its mark in the world as a producing city whose hallmark is quality and efficiency. One of its pillar industries was garment making whose stellar members included Yangtzekiang Garment Ltd. Its founder was none other than Dr Chan Sui Kau.

When people speak of the garment industry in this part of the world, Dr Chan's name almost always comes to mind. His fabled career is a snapshot of the glory of Hong Kong's old economy and its modern day entrepreneurial spirit.

Hong Kong boasts more millionaires per square mile than any other city on earth. Many amassed their wealth through the property or the stock market. Dr Chan belongs to a minority who did not. He made his money the old-fashioned way—by making things and marketing them.

They say that “great things have small beginnings”. From a shoestring operation in its early days, Dr Chan's business empire has grown through years of diligence and perseverance to become a diversified conglomerate with 15,000 staff members on the payroll, stretching from Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, the Chinese Mainland and the Pacific Rim to western countries. Yet he often refers self-mockingly to himself as “a biggish fish in a small puddle”. But if this puddle stands for the garment industry, then his aquatic presence is big indeed.

The garment industry is made up of several segments – spinning, weaving, knitting, dyeing and clothing – each with its own chamber of commerce. Seeing the need for a united voice, Dr Chan and other industry leaders formed what was known as the “Wednesday Club”. After meeting regularly for several years they formed the Textile Council of

Hong Kong in 1988 and, with unanimous support, Dr Chan became its first Chairman. On issues that matter to the textile and garment industries, the Council often conveyed its views and concerns to the Government. After prolonged lobbying efforts, in which Dr Chan played a key role, the industry gained a seat in the Legislative Council under the functional constituency category.

Over the years, Dr Chan, always mindful of his larger duties, fought hard to protect the interests of the industry. His most notable victory was the determined fight in the early 1960s for an equitable share of the garment quotas for the manufacturers when the quota system was first imposed. The colonial government of the day had leaned towards giving all the quotas to the British and Indian expatriate exporters. At this critical juncture, Dr Chan joined forces with the late Mr Lam Kan Shing and representatives from major chambers of commerce to lobby for a fair quota system. The result was that the quotas were split evenly between the manufacturers and the exporters. This brought about over three decades of steady growth for Hong Kong's garment industry, making it one of the territory's pillar industries.

But he did more than just taking care of his business peers. He knew that a healthy garment industry must first take care of its workers. An employer he might be, but he was a man trusted by all parties, including labor and the government, for his even-handedness. He became the voice of reason in the industry, seeking to balance the needs of the business owners against the welfare of the workers. To ensure that long-serving employees get their well-deserved reward, Dr Chan deployed his considerable energies and negotiation skills to hammer out a reward scheme for long service.

This was hailed by the then Council members as a milestone achievement in the history of Hong Kong's labor negotiations.

His involvement with labor relations in Hong Kong was multi-faceted over multi-decades, serving many terms on various committees under the Labour Advisory Board – including the Committee on Employment Services, Committee on Labour Relations, Committee on Employees' Compensation, and Committee on Industrial Safety and Health – either as chairman or as member. In addition, he was Chairman of the Board's Sub-committee on Employment Services Fundraising. He also served on the Hong Kong Panel of Arbitrators.

Always a big picture man, he paid particular attention to the long-term development of the industry through his chairmanship of the Garment Advisory Committee of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, chairmanship of the Clothing Industry Training Authority, presidency of the Federation of Hong Kong Garment Association as well as membership of the Hong Kong Textile Advisory Board. As the garment industry became mature and robust, Dr Chan turned his energies towards the promotion of education, and became a member of Hong Kong Polytechnic's Institute of Textile and Clothing.

On the foundation of his own business success, he turned to financing schools in his native Dongguan, Shunde, Panyu and other places. His generosity to universities is legendary, and beneficiaries included Peking University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Panyu Polytechnic, Dongguan Polytechnic, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong Baptist University, City University of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He also donated to medical institutions on the Mainland. He might not be in the first league of local super-rich tycoons, but it is said that proportionately, he has given away more of his net worth than most.

Since 1999, when the China Synergy Program for Outstanding Youth was initiated by Ms Leung Kwok

Ching to give overseas Chinese university students a good understanding of modern China and their own cultural roots, Dr Chan has generously supported this annual program. Over 220 ethnic Chinese tertiary students, the majority from overseas, would visit Hong Kong and several major Mainland cities. The program is endorsed by the China Overseas Friendship Association, the Ministry of Education, the All-China Youth Federation, the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR, Hong Kong's nine universities and several top Mainland universities, and has the blessing of the State as well as domestic and overseas institutions. As one of the chairmen of the Program's organizing committee, Dr Chan has made significant contributions to its success over the years.

For his life-long professional and philanthropic services, Dr Chan was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1983, and received an OBE from Queen Elizabeth the Second of Britain in 1988, and the Gold Bauhinia Medal from the Hong Kong SAR Government in 2002. This year, the Hong Kong SAR Government bestowed on Dr Chan its highest form of honor, the Grand Bauhinia Medal. From 1993 to 2003, Dr Chan was appointed a member of the 8th and 9th People's Political Consultative Committee of the People's Republic of China. He is also an Honorable Citizen of the cities of Dongguan, Guangzhou, Foshan, and Wuxi in the Jiangsu Province.

Within the industry, there is a catchphrase, "If you need help, call Uncle Kau". Uncle Kau never turns away anybody who comes to him for help. He has done it for the industry, and he has done it for people within and without the industry.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, on behalf of the Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, I have the great honor of presenting to you Dr Chan Sui Kau, Chairman of the Yangtzekiang Garment Ltd., for the award of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*.