

N THE HIGH COURT OF KIRIBATI)
CRIMINAL JURISDICTION)
HELD AT BETIO)
REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI)

CRIMINAL CASE No. 34 OF 2000

THE REPUBLIC
V.
KAM CHUNG WONG

FOR THE REPUBLIC:
FOR THE ACCUSED:

MR TION NABAU
MR NEIL ALLEN

SENTENCE

You have pleaded guilty to four crimes – attempted false pretences, possession of forged documents and two counts of personation. The Republic did not proceed with three other charges against you. Three of the crimes which you have admitted have maximum penalties of 2 years' imprisonment – the other, possession of forged documents has a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment.

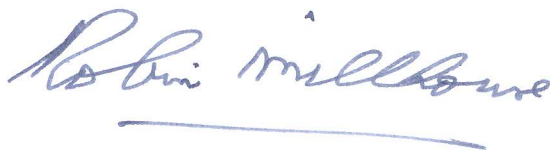
The facts are that you came to Kiribati in possession of 2 passports, a passport shewing you to be a British Overseas National and a Singaporean passport. The Singaporean passport is not genuine. You went to the Bank of Kiribati in Bairiki on a Friday and changed some travellers cheques but the suspicions of the Bank officers were aroused. On the following Monday you went to the Betio branch of the Bank and tried to cash some other cheques for a much greater amount. These were recognized as forgeries. You left the Bank before the police arrived but were later arrested at Bonriki Airport about to leave the country. The total amount of cheques you tried to cash was well over US\$3,000, in our currency, on my calculations, about \$6,500. You came here as a visitor and abused the hospitality of the country.

Mr Allen has made a plea for you, pointing out that all this was naïve. If you had been shrewder you should have realized on the Friday that you were under suspicion and left the country then. Instead you went to the Bank again on the Monday and the suspicions were confirmed.

Mr Allen said you are 43 years old and come from Hong Kong. You married 3 years ago and have a son of 3 ½ . You fell on hard times and were desperate for money. A friend put you in touch with another person who supplied you with some genuine travellers cheques but probably unlawfully obtained, other dud cheques and the passports. You came overseas to cash the travellers cheques – you came to Kiribati from Fiji – with the intention of going home to Hong Kong to split up and share the proceeds.

It was an elaborate scheme of dishonesty I must regard what you did as most serious. Even though the prosecution has no record of any previous offences and you have pleaded guilty you must go to gaol.

For the most serious offence, possession of forged documents you are sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment. For each of the other 3 offences you are sentenced to 9 months' imprisonment, all sentences to be served concurrently and to run from 24th November since when you have been in custody.



THE HON ROBIN MILLHOUSE QC
CHIEF JUSTICE
(18/12/00)