



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1979

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1979

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MEDICAL REGIONALISATION ARRANGEMENTS NEED TO BE REVIEWED
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EXISTING MEDICAL REGIONALISATION ARRANGEMENTS ARE GIVING RISE TO A VICIOUS CIRCLE AND ARE RESULTING IN A STEADY DECLINE IN THE QUALITY OF OUR HOSPITAL SERVICES, DR. THE HON. HARRY FANG GAVE THIS WARNING AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE DISCLOSED THAT DURING THE SUMMER RECESS, UNOFFICIAL COUNCILLORS HAD VISITED 18 MAJOR HOSPITALS DIRECTLY ADMINISTERED OR SUBSIDISED BY THE GOVERNMENT. A FULL REPORT WITH THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNOR.

+OUR REGIONAL HOSPITALS ESPECIALLY THE GOVERNMENT-RUN QUEEN MARY AND QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITALS, ARE SEVERELY OVERCROWDED, AND MUCH OF THEIR EQUIPMENT IS WORN OUT, INEFFICIENT AND OUTDATED.

+ON THE OTHER HAND, MANY OF THE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDISED DISTRICT HOSPITALS ARE POORLY UTILISED AS WELL AS INADEQUATELY EQUIPPED, AND ALMOST HALF EMPTY IF ONE DISCOUNTS THE LARGE NUMBER OF ELDERLY PERSONS WHO SHOULD EITHER RETURN HOME OR BE LOOKED AFTER IN LESS EXPENSIVE CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES,+ HE SAID.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE VICIOUS CIRCLE STARTS WITH THE BASIC MISCONCEPTION THAT ALL SUBSIDISED OR DISTRICT HOSPITALS SHOULD NOT BE BETTER THAN OR AS WELL EQUIPPED OR STAFFED AS THE GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS. +INDEED, IN PRACTICE THEY ARE TREATED AS BEING INFERIOR.+

CONSEQUENTLY PEOPLE FLOCK TO THE GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS SO THAT THE NUMBER OF BEDS IN QUEEN MARY AND QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITALS, ORIGINALLY BUILT FOR 546 AND 1 338 PATIENTS, HAS BEEN INCREASED TO 1 164 AND 1 898 RESPECTIVELY, EXCLUDING THE CAMP BEDS OFTEN IN USE DURING BUSY PERIODS AND EMERGENCIES WHICH MAY RANGE FROM 50 TO 100.

THE INCREASE HAS NOT BEEN MATCHED BY A CORRESPONDING INCREASE IN STAFF AND FACILITIES, AND THE IMBALANCE IS THE MAIN CAUSE OF GROWING FRUSTRATION, DISSATISFACTION AND DISCONTENT AMONG STAFF AND PATIENTS.

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, DR. FANG CONTINUED, THE GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONS OR BORROWS BEDS IN SUBSIDISED OR DISTRICT HOSPITALS FOR THE TRANSFER OF CHRONIC AND POST-SURGERY PATIENTS. THESE PATIENTS ARE NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THESE HOSPITALS BUT ARE LOOKED AFTER BY DOCTORS FROM THE GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS WHO, BECAUSE THEY ARE ALREADY OVERLOADED, CAN ONLY ATTEND TO THEM TWICE OR AT MOST THREE TIMES A WEEK.

+NATURALLY THE PATIENTS THEMSELVES ARE NOT SATISFIED, ESPECIALLY WHEN COMPLICATIONS ARISE. THEY IN TURN PUT THE BLAME ON THE SUBSIDISED HOSPITALS. THE END RESULT IS THAT THE SUBSIDISED HOSPITALS GET A BAD NAME, AND PATIENTS ARE RELUCTANT TO BE ADMITTED TO THESE HOSPITALS,+ HE SAID.

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IN HIS VIEW AND HE HOPED THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES WOULD AGREE, THERE SHOULD BE NO DIFFERENCE IN THE QUALITY OF SERVICE BETWEEN THE TWO CLASSIFICATIONS OF HOSPITALS. THEY BOTH LOOK AFTER ACUTE ILLNESSES AND MAJOR SURGERIES- ONLY THE REGIONAL HOSPITALS PROVIDE A MORE COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF SERVICES, INCLUDING THOSE IN SPECIALISED MEDICAL FIELDS.

HE SUGGESTED THAT IF SUBSIDISED OR DISTRICT HOSPITALS ARE BETTER EQUIPPED AND STAFFED, THE EXISTING UNSATISFACTORY CONDITIONS HE POINTED OUT WOULD BE REMOVED.

HE HAD FURTHER COMMENTS ON HOSPITAL SERVICES. HE THOUGHT STAFF STANDARDS IN THE DISTRICT HOSPITALS WOULD BE MUCH IMPROVED IF MORE OF THE STAFF HAVE CLOSER LINKS WITH THE CLINICAL DEPARTMENTS OF THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY'S MEDICAL FACULTY, LIKE STAFF IN THE REGIONAL HOSPITALS.

THESE LINKS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHING, TRAINING AND RESEARCH, REGULAR EXCHANGES OF STAFF AND PLACEMENT OF INTERNS SO THAT THE STAFF CAN BE STIMULATED TO KEEP ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THEIR CHOSEN FIELD AND TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR CARE, HE SAID.

ON HOSPITAL EQUIPMENT, DR. FANG MADE TWO POINTS: THE CHOICE OF WHAT SHOULD BE BOUGHT, PARTICULARLY WHEN THERE IS FINANCIAL CONSTRAINT, MUST REST WITH THE PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL STAFF, AND IT MUST BE RECOGNISED THAT EVERY PIECE OF EQUIPMENT HAS A RECOMMENDED LIFE-SPAN AND CANNOT LAST FOREVER.

IT IS FALSE ECONOMY NOT TO REPLACE WORN OUT EQUIPMENT OR INSTRUMENTS PROMPTLY. +BREAKDOWNS NOT ONLY WASTE THE TIME OF TRAINED PERSONNEL BUT RESULT IN DELAYED TREATMENT FOR PATIENTS,+ HE SAID.

HE HOPED MORE USE OF VOLUNTEER WORKERS IN HOSPITALS WOULD BE ENCOURAGED. THIS SOURCE OF HELP IS EXTENSIVELY TAPPED IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND IN SOME OF OUR DISTRICT HOSPITALS, THERE IS SCOPE FOR GREATER DEVELOPMENT IN HONG KONG, PARTICULARLY IN OUTLYING AREAS. IN TIME HOSPITAL STAFF SHOULD ALSO GO OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY WITH PROGRAMMES OF HEALTH EDUCATION AND HOME CARE.

TURNING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES, WHICH IS EXPANDING AND BECOMING MORE COMPLEX IN HONG KONG, DR. FANG REPORTED THAT THE REHABILITATION DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE WHICH HE CHAIRED HAS ESTABLISHED SIX SUB-COMMITTEES IN THE AREAS OF PERSONNEL, EMPLOYMENT, ACCESS AND TRANSPORT, EDUCATION, HOUSING AND SPORT AND RECREATION. EACH OF THESE SIX HAS THREE DISABLED MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED THUS FAR BUT THERE ARE TWO AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO WHICH THE CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE WILL GIVE FURTHER ATTENTION IN THE COMING YEAR. THESE ARE THE SHORTAGE OF TRAINED MANPOWER AND THE NEED TO GATHER AND UPDATE INFORMATION ON THE NUMBERS OF DISABLED IN THE COMMUNITY AND THEIR FORMS OF DISABILITIES, THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRAL REGISTRY. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE HELP THAT WOULD BE GIVEN TO THIS BY THE 1981 CENSUS WHICH WILL INCLUDE THE DISABLED.

ANOTHER ISSUE HE RAISED WAS PUBLIC HOUSING. IN ORDER TO REDUCE OUR HEAVY PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME AND TO ENABLE POORER FAMILIES TO BENEFIT FROM SUBSIDISED ACCOMMODATION, HE SUGGESTED THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD RE-ASSESS THE INCOME OF ITS TENANTS AT FIVE YEARLY INTERVALS AND REQUIRE THOSE WHO EARN IN EXCESS OF THE LIMIT TO MOVE INTO A HOME OWNERSHIP FLAT.

HE POINTED OUT THAT BY 1982/1983 THE RATIO OF HOME OWNERSHIP FLATS TO PUBLIC HOUSING FLATS PROVIDED BY THE AUTHORITY WILL BE IN THE REGION OF 25 000 : 500 000 OR ABOUT 1:20.

SINCE THE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME HAS PROVED THAT THERE IS A GREAT DEMAND FOR PEOPLE TO OWN THEIR FLATS, HE SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REVIEW AND REDUCE THIS RATIO. HE ALSO LOOKED FORWARD TO HEARING THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS CONCERNING THE POSITION OF THOSE MIDDLE INCOME FAMILIES WHO ARE JUST ABOVE THE INCOME LIMIT FOR THESE FLATS.

+THE QUICKER THAT GOVERNMENT CAN SATISFY THE DEMAND FOR HOME OWNERSHIP, THE GREATER IS THE CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL STABILITY AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY,+ HE SAID.

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UK-HK RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED -- LO

THE HON. T.S. LO'S COMMENTS ON THE ANNUAL POLICY SPEECH MADE BY THE GOVERNOR AT THE OPENING OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SESSION WERE CONFINED TO ITS REFERENCE TO HONG KONG'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UK.

SPEAKING IN THE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON, MR. LO SAID HE ACCEPTS THE CRITICISM THAT WE IN HONG KONG DO AT TIMES TEND TO TAKE THIS RELATIONSHIP FOR GRANTED.

+THE RESULT IS THAT ON THE ONE HAND TOO FEW BUSINESS DECISIONS ARE MADE CONSCIOUSLY TO BENEFIT BRITAIN, AND ON THE OTHER HAND TOO SELDOM DO WE DRAW THE ATTENTION OF THE BRITISH PUBLIC TO THE BENEFITS ARISING FROM BRITAIN'S ASSOCIATION WITH HONG KONG.+

+EXCEPTIONALLY,+ HE SAID, +I KNOW THERE ARE THOSE WISE BUSINESS LEADERS IN HONG KONG WITH FAR-SIGHTED VISION AND PERHAPS MEMORIES OF ANOTHER TIME AND ANOTHER PLACE WHO RISK CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL FORTUNES AS WELL AS EXPEND CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL ENERGY TO FAVOUR BRITAIN AND THUS THE UK-HONG KONG RELATIONSHIP.

+AT ONE TIME, AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF SIMPLISTIC COLONIAL RULE, GOVERNMENT POLICY REQUIRED PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF BRITISH GOODS. IN MODERN TIMES, IT IS OBVIOUSLY NO LONGER APPROPRIATE TO IMPOSE RULES OF THIS KIND.

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+HOWEVER, IN ITS PLACE, RESPONSIBLE MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY OUGHT SERIOUSLY TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO BUY BRITISH. IT IS OBVIOUSLY VITAL TO THE MILLIONS OF OUR PEOPLE FOR WHOM HONG KONG IS THEIR ONLY HOME THAT THE UK-HONG KONG RELATIONSHIP SHOULD CONTINUOUSLY BE BUILT UP AND STRENGTHENED.+

MR. LO SAID TAKING THIS RELATIONSHIP FOR GRANTED HAS LED US INTO ANOTHER EQUALLY SERIOUS MISTAKE.

+WE TEND TO FORGET THE EXTENT OF OUR BENEFIT AND USEFULNESS TO BRITAIN AND WE FAIL TO ASSESS IT, WE DO NOT TALK ABOUT IT WITH THE RESULT THAT TO A LARGE EXTENT THE BRITISH PUBLIC IS TOTALLY UNAWARE OF IT. ALL THAT WE DO PUBLICISE IS THE VISIBLE TRADE FIGURES WHICH SHOW A BALANCE IN HONG KONG'S FAVOUR. THEY ARE CLEARLY MISLEADING AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE TRUE POSITION.

+AMONGST OTHER THINGS THAT THESE VISIBLE TRADE FIGURES DO NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ARE THE ASTRONOMICAL VALUE OF UK'S MONOPOLY IN PROVIDING AIR SERVICE BETWEEN HONG KONG AND BRITAIN- THE SUMS REMITTED FROM HONG KONG TO THE UK ARISING FROM SALARIES, PENSIONS, SHARE DIVIDENDS, CONSULTANCY FEES AND OTHER INVESTMENT BENEFITS- THE VALUE OF HONG KONG AS THE OUTPOST OF BRITISH FIRMS THROUGH WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BUILD UP CONSIDERABLE TRADE RELATIONS IN ASIA AND THE VALUE OF HONG KONG IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS.+

+THE TIME HAS COME,+ HE SAID, +FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ASSESS THE ECONOMIC AS WELL AS THE COMMERCIAL VALUE OF HONG KONG TO BRITAIN AND WITH THE HELP OF OUR HONG KONG OFFICE IN LONDON TO PUBLICISE IT. IF IN THE ASSESSMENT WE ARE FOUND WANTING THEN WE SHOULD TAKE STEPS TO REMEDY THE POSITION.+

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GOVERNMENT TO HOLD MEETINGS WITH NURSES

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A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SEVERAL NURSING STAFF ASSOCIATIONS HAVE REQUESTED MEETINGS WITH THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR. MARTIN ROWLANDS.

TWO MEETINGS HAVE NOW BEEN ARRANGED. THE ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENT NURSING STAFF WILL MEET MR. ROWLANDS TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT 9.30 A.M.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NURSING UNITS OF THE HONG KONG CHINESE CIVIL SERVANTS ASSOCIATION AND THE UNION OF MIDWIVES WILL MEET THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE ON FRIDAY (NOVEMBER 2) AT 11 A.M.

THE SPOKESMAN ADDED THAT OFFICIALS FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE BRANCH WOULD LISTEN TO STAFF VIEWS AND EXPLAIN TO THEM THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON CIVIL SERVICE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND ITS ROLE IN THE FUTURE.

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UMELCO PLEDGES TO GIVE CAREFUL
ATTENTION TO PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

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THE SENIOR UNOFFICIAL MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THE HON. OSWALD CHEUNG ASSURED THE GOVERNOR THAT UMELCO WILL CONTINUE TO GIVE CAREFUL AND CRITICAL ATTENTION TO PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS CONCERNING BONA-FIDE GRIEVANCES.

HE WAS SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ON BEHALF OF THE UNOFFICIALS IN RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNOR'S REMARKS IN HIS ANNUAL ADDRESS STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF UMELCO AS A CHANNEL FOR THE REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.

THAT SIDE OF UMELCO WORK IS EQUALLY VALUED BY UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS, AND OFTEN PROVIDES A FURTHER DIMENSION TO THEIR DELIBERATIONS AND MATERIAL FOR QUESTIONS AND DEBATE IN THE COUNCIL, MR. CHEUNG SAID.

OF KEY IMPORTANCE IS THE CONTINUING CLOSE DAILY CO-OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT IN FULFILMENT OF THE THREE CHARTER RIGHTS OF THE UMELCO COMPLAINTS SYSTEM, AND THESE HE POINTED OUT ARE THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION, INCLUDING ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT FILES AND CORRESPONDENCE, AND PAPERS ON POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND INSTRUCTIONS- THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICERS- AND THE RIGHT TO CHALLENGE THE ACTIONS OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

+IN SUCH RESPECTS WE VENTURE TO THINK THAT THIS INSTITUTION IS UNIQUE, AND PERHAPS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN SIMILAR BUT MORE CIRCUMSCRIBED INSTITUTIONS ELSEWHERE.

+WE WILL CONTINUE TO EXERCISE THESE RIGHTS VIGOROUSLY, AND WHEN PUBLIC GRIEVANCES ARE BROUGHT TO US, WE WILL EXAMINE THEM SYMPATHETICALLY AND IF FOUND JUSTIFIED, PURSUE THE RIGHTS OF THE COMPLAINANTS,+ HE SAID.

MR. CHEUNG ALSO CONVEYED THE WARM WELCOME OF THE UNOFFICIALS TO THE GOVERNOR FOR THE EXTENSION OF HIS TERM.

+HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT HAS CHOSEN WISELY AND WELL. IT IS A CHOICE THAT HAS INSTILLED CONFIDENCE ABROAD AND THAT HAS GIVEN SATISFACTION, I RATHER THINK, TO THE GOVERNMENT IN BEIJING,+ HE SAID.

HE SUGGESTED FOR CONSIDERATION A REVISED PROCEDURE IN FUTURE FOR THE DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL ADDRESS.

HE SAID THE GOVERNOR HAD FOR SOME TIME PAST, CONFINED HIS ADDRESS TO BROAD ISSUES, LEAVING THE DETAILED EXPOSITIONS TO THE SECRETARIES AND HEADS OF DEPARTMENT.

HE THOUGHT THAT IF THESE OFFICIALS WERE TO SPEAK FOLLOWING THE GOVERNOR AND NOT THE UNOFFICIALS, THE UNOFFICIALS WOULD HAVE 'THE WHOLE BOOK' BEFORE THEM BEFORE THEY SPEAK. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO WIND UP, WITH PERHAPS THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE CHIEF SECRETARY AND SUCH OTHER OFFICIALS AS MAY BE APPROPRIATE REPLYING. THIS WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE PURPOSEFUL DEBATE, HE SAID.

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GOVERNMENT URGED TO ACT NOW ON
LAND PRODUCTION BEYOND MID-1980'S
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THE HON. LI FOOK-WO URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO ACT AND TO PLAN AHEAD NOW ON LAND PRODUCTION FOR THE PERIOD UP TO AND BEYOND THE MID-1980'S SO THAT THERE WILL BE ENOUGH OF IT AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME FOR ALL THE ESSENTIAL USES OF THE COMMUNITY.

EVEN TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE PRESSURE OF DEMAND ON DOMESTIC RESOURCES, ARGUABLY MORE COULD HAVE BEEN DONE IN OUR HOUSING PROGRAMME, AND NO MATTER WHAT CLASS IT IS IN OR WHETHER PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT OR THE PRIVATE SECTOR, HOUSING REQUIRES LAND, MR. LI SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) DURING THE ANNUAL DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS TO THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS.

THE AMENITIES AND INFRA-STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT LIFE IN THE AREA OF THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS DEMAND MORE LAND AND IF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE TO BE PROVIDED NEARBY, THAT WILL REQUIRE STILL MORE LAND, HE ADDED.

HE NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH AT LEAST 40 HECTARES OF GENERAL INDUSTRIAL LAND AND 80 HECTARES OF NON-INDUSTRIAL LAND WILL BE AVAILABLE BEFORE MARCH 31, 1982, THE FORECAST FOR THE MID-1980'S IS FOR A REDUCTION IN LAND PRODUCED FOR ALL PURPOSES. +THIS IS A WARNING SIGNAL WHICH WE MUST HEED.+

HE REGRETTED THE CUT-BACK ON GOVERNMENT SPENDING DURING THE RECESSIONARY YEARS OF 1974 AND 1975 WHICH CAN NOW BE SEEN TO HAVE BEEN SHORT-SIGHTED AND UNNECESSARY, AND WHICH HAS BEEN PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXISTING SHORTAGE OF LAND.

+HAD WE NOT PLAYED STOP-GO IN THOSE YEARS, WE WOULD NOT BE IN THE PRESENT SITUATION ... IF, THEREFORE, WE SHOULD REFRAIN AGAIN FROM SPENDING NOW ON THE PRODUCTION OF MORE LAND, WE SHALL BE REPEATING THE SAME MISTAKE, ALTHOUGH IN DIFFERENT ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES,+ HE SAID.

HE AGREED WITH THE GOVERNOR'S CONCERN FOR AN EARLY START ON OPENING UP NEW DEVELOPMENT AREAS AND FOR EXTENSION OF SHA TIN UP THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE COVE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF JUNK BAY, BUT POINTED OUT THAT DUE TO THE LEAD TIME REQUIRED, NO LAND IS LIKELY TO BE AVAILABLE FROM SUCH LARGE PROJECTS UNTIL WELL AFTER THE MID-1980'S UNLESS TOP PRIORITY IS GIVEN TO THE TWO AREAS.

HE SUGGESTED THAT OTHER NEW DEVELOPMENT AREAS SHOULD BE SELECTED FOR EARLY EXPLOITATION AND WORKS IN EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES SHOULD BE BROUGHT FORWARD FOR EARLIER COMPLETION.

GREATER RELIANCE COULD BE PLACED ON PRIVATE DEVELOPERS AND INDUSTRIAL CORPORATIONS, WHO HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEIR ABILITY TO PRODUCE BUILDING SITES FROM UNFORMED LAND, GENERALLY MORE QUICKLY AND AT LESS COST.

THERE WOULD BE MUCH MORE SCOPE FOR PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN AREAS OUTSIDE THE NEW TOWNS, ESPECIALLY WITH DEFINITE IMPROVEMENT IN THE WATER SUPPLY SITUATION IN THESE AREAS. A REVIEW MIGHT ALSO BE UNDERTAKEN OF FORMED LAND WHICH HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FOR INTERIM USE, SUCH AS FOR TEMPORARY HOUSING AREAS, STORAGE SITES AND REFUGEE CAMPS.

/MR. LI

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MR. LI BELIEVED THAT WITH ADEQUATE PLANNING, AN ACCELERATED PROGRAMME OF LAND PRODUCTION WOULD ONLY HAVE MINIMAL RISKS OF ERODING OUR SOCIAL PRIORITIES AND ECONOMIC PRUDENCE.

THE GROWTH RATE OF DOMESTIC DEMAND IS NOW MORE IN LINE WITH THE GROWTH RATE OF THE ECONOMY'S OUTPUT AND THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY HIMSELF GAVE A GENERALLY FAVOURABLE REPORT ON THE STATE OF OUR ECONOMY AT MID-YEAR. OUR SOUNDER FINANCIAL POSITION, TOGETHER WITH THE VERY CONSIDERABLE FISCAL RESERVES, SHOULD PERMIT SUFFICIENT FUNDS TO BE CHANNELLED TO LAND PRODUCTION WITHOUT ANY ADVERSE EFFECTS ON OUR SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMMES, HE EXPLAINED.

WITH THE FORTHCOMING CHANGE TO LUMP SUM PAYMENTS FOR NON-INDUSTRIAL LAND, AND WITH MORE LAND BECOMING AVAILABLE FOR SALE, HOPEFULLY THERE WILL BE A COOLING OFF IN THE LAND MARKET. HE HAD EVERY CONFIDENCE THAT ANY ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO BE INJECTED INTO THE PIPELINE FOR LARGER AND SPEEDIER LAND PRODUCTION WILL BE SPENT JUDICIOUSLY BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.

FURTHERMORE, THE PRESSURE ON THE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY APPEARS TO HAVE EASED TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, AND FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF THE MODIFIED INITIAL SYSTEM OF THE MTR IN FEBRUARY NEXT YEAR, INCREASED EXPENDITURE ON LAND PRODUCTION ALONE IS UNLIKELY TO OVER-EXTEND THE BUILDING INDUSTRY, HE SAID.

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HOUSING PROGRAMME SHOULD MATCH
NEEDS AND HOPES OF SOCIETY

THE HON. ROGER LOBO TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT WE HAVE PURSUED FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS THE IDEAL OF DECENT HOUSING FOR EVERY FAMILY, WITH REAL SUCCESS IN TERMS OF SHEER NUMBERS OF PEOPLE ALREADY HOUSED- BUT IN TERMS OF CONTINUING NEED, REAL SUCCESS IS AS DISCOURAGINGLY FAR AWAY AS EVER.

+OUR HOUSING PROGRAMME WILL BE JUDGED HERE IN HONG KONG NOT SIMPLY ON STATISTICS BUT ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT IS FELT TO HAVE MATCHED THE NEEDS AND HOPES OF OUR SOCIETY,+ HE SAID.

HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE DIFFICULTIES: PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION WHICH WAS ADEQUATE WHEN THE PROGRAMME BEGAN HAS BECOME SUB-STANDARD AND THE EARLY RESETTLEMENT ACCOMMODATION HAS TO BE REPLACED. A NEW PROBLEM IS THE INCREASED RATES OF IMMIGRATION.

IT IS EASY TO SAY THAT HOUSING SHOULD BE GIVEN HIGHER PRIORITY BUT PRIORITY IS A RELATIVE MEASURE, HE SAID. IT IS SIMPLISTIC TO ACCUSE THE GOVERNMENT OF INSINCERITY BECAUSE IT IS NOT ALL IMMEDIATELY COMMITTED TO THE PROGRAMME AND IT IS DANGEROUSLY IRRESPONSIBLE TO DRAW SUCH A CONCLUSION IN OUR PRESENT ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES.

FURTHERMORE, MONEY IS NOT THE ONLY RESOURCE REQUIRED. THERE IS THE CAPACITY OF OUR CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND THE AVAILABILITY OF LAND WHICH ITSELF DISTORTS THE PROGRESS OF OUR HOUSING PROGRAMME AND CREATES DISAPPOINTMENT.

+THIS YEAR APPROXIMATELY 57 000 PEOPLE WILL MOVE INTO PUBLIC HOUSING SIMPLY BECAUSE THE LAND THEY LIVE ON HAS TO BE CLEARED FOR DEVELOPMENT, MOSTLY FOR PUBLIC HOUSING.

+AS MUCH AS A THIRD OF NEW PUBLIC HOUSING IS PRESENTLY COMMITTED IN THIS WAY WITH INEVITABLE DISAPPOINTMENT FOR THOUSANDS ON THE WAITING LIST,+ HE SAID.

HE SYMPATHISED WITH THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT: +TODAY MORE THAN TWO MILLION PEOPLE, 46 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION, LIVE IN HOMES PROVIDED OR SUBSIDISED BY OUR GOVERNMENT YET IN THE LAST 11 YEARS ONLY 63 000 OF THE FAMILIES, SAY 300 000 PEOPLE, WHO HAVE MOVED INTO PUBLIC HOUSING CAME FROM THE WAITING LIST.

+DURING THOSE 11 YEARS THREE TIMES AS MANY, 191 000 FAMILIES, OR NEARLY ONE MILLION PEOPLE, WERE REJECTED WHEN THEIR NUMBERS DID COME UP, BECAUSE THEY NO LONGER MET THE INCOME OR SPACE CRITERIA.

+IT IS AN INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION THAT THIS WAS A SIMPLE RESULT OF THE LONG TIME THEY HAD WAITED ON THE LIST.+

HE HOPED THE REVIEW ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING THOSE FAMILIES WHOSE INCOME JUST EXCEEDED THE \$5 000 LIMIT SET FOR THE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME MAY LEAD TO SOME RELIEF FOR THESE PEOPLE +WHOSE CHIEF FAULT IS TO HAVE WAITED TOO LONG.+

IT CANNOT BE REGARDED AS A HEALTHY ASPECT OF OUR PROGRAMME THAT IT SOMETIMES SEEMS TO FAVOUR THE SQUATTER WHO IS LUCKY ENOUGH TO LIVE ON LAND WHICH MUST BE CLEARED AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PATIENT FAMILY ON THE WAITING LIST.

WE OUGHT TO EXPLORE BETTER MEANS OF MEETING THEIR EXPECTATIONS. +IF WE DO NOT THEN ALL THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR HOUSING PROGRAMME AND ALL THE RESOURCES WE ARE ABLE TO EXPEND ON IT WILL BE UNDERVALUED,+ HE SAID.

HE FELT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOW MONITOR CLOSELY THE PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND THE STATE OF PLAY IN RESPECT OF SUPPORTING SECURITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES IN THE PIPELINE, FOR IT APPEARS TO HIM THAT SOME OF THESE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES DO NOT TIE IN PARTICULARLY WELL WITH SOME OF THE HOUSING PROJECTS IN PROGRESS, PARTICULARLY IN THE URBAN AREAS.

+ARE WE SATISFIED THAT WHERE THERE ARE MAJOR POPULATION SHIFTS OR NEW POPULATION CENTRES ESTABLISHED, THAT WE HAVE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES IN THE FORM OF POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE, CLINICS, SCHOOLS, ROAD, PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND SO ON?

+SHOULD WE NOT TAKE ANOTHER GOOD LOOK TO SEE IF THERE IS NEED FOR IMPROVED CO-ORDINATION OF URBAN AREAS' PUBLIC WORKS AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND IF WE SHOULD NOT EXTEND THE NT PROJECT MANAGER SCHEME TO URBAN AREA DISTRICTS?+ HE ASKED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT SINCE HE LAST SPOKE OF THE MIDDLE-INCOME 'SANDWICHED SOCIETY' IN THE COUNCIL, THEIR RELATIVE POSITION HAS BEEN STILL MORE SERIOUSLY ERODED.

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+IT IS EASY TO SAY THAT THEY ARE NOT IN THE GREATEST NEED AND THAT THEY ARE RELATIVELY BETTER ABLE TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES OR EVEN ACCEPT LESS THAN THEIR PREVIOUS EXPECTATIONS, BUT FOR THE GOOD OF OUR SOCIETY AS A WHOLE WE SHOULD NOT RISK THE DISILLUSIONMENT OF AN IMPORTANT GROUP.

+WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT A PRIVILEGED CLASS HERE. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THOSE WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG, WHO COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO OUR SYSTEM AND HAVE A FULL CLAIM ON OUR CONCERN,+ HE SAID.

MR. LOBO ALSO COMMENTED ON THE CONTINUING PROBLEM OF SHORTAGE OF TRAINED MANPOWER IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE FIELD.

HE NOTED THAT THE SITUATION WILL, IF ANYTHING, DETERIORATE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS, DESPITE THE WELFARE CLASS REVIEW IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND AN INCREASE IN SUPPLY FROM TRAINING INSTITUTIONS.

THIS COULD POSE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES IN ACHIEVING THE TARGETS SET OUT IN THE 1977 WHITE PAPER ON REHABILITATION AND THE 1979 WHITE PAPER ON SOCIAL WELFARE.

HE SUGGESTED THE SOLUTION, IF ONLY ON A TEMPORARY BASIS, OF RELAXING THE REQUIREMENT FOR A DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK FOR ENTRY INTO THE RANK OF ASSISTANT SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICER.

SOME MIGHT ARGUE THAT THIS WOULD DILUTE THE QUALITY OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION BUT IT IS SURELY MORE IMPORTANT THAT OUR SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMMES SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT ON SCHEDULE, HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO INTRODUCE SOME FORM OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING OR TO GRANT STUDY LEAVE FOR OFFICERS TO OBTAIN POST-GRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS IF NECESSARY, AND THAT MANY OF THE GRADUATE OFFICERS IN THE DEPARTMENT APPOINTED BEFORE 1972 DID NOT HAVE A SOCIAL WORK DEGREE AND YET HAVE SERVED THE DEPARTMENT AND THE COMMUNITY WELL OVER THE YEARS.

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GOVT URGED TO FIND SOLUTION QUICKLY TO HIGH HOUSING COSTS
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THE REV. THE HON. PATRICK MCGOVERN WARNED THE GOVERNMENT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT A SOLUTION MUST BE FOUND QUICKLY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF HOUSING COSTS.

+IF NOT, WE WILL HAVE A SITUATION WHERE THE COST OF HOUSING WILL BE SO FAR BEYOND THE POCKET OF THE ORDINARY CITIZEN, OR EVEN PERHAPS THE EXTRAORDINARY MULTI-NATIONAL CITIZEN, THAT EITHER THE NEW HOUSES WILL REMAIN UNOCCUPIED, OR WAGES OR THEIR EQUIVALENT IN HOUSING ALLOWANCES OR SUBSIDIES WILL BE INCREASED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT WE WILL BE INTO A SELF-DEFEATING SPIRAL OF INFLATION.+

FR. MCGOVERN SAID SOME FACTORS IN THE HIGH COST ARE INTERNAL AND ARE WITHIN OUR POWER TO CONTROL; +ONE OF THEM IS GREED, SOMETIMES EUPHEMISTICALLY CALLED THE PROFIT MOTIVE.+

/HE SAID

HE SAID MANY SOLUTIONS HAVE BEEN TRIED ELSEWHERE AND TO A LESSER EXTENT HERE BUT ONE THING SEEMS CLEAR: +THERE WILL HAVE TO BE, IN SOME SHAPE OR FORM, MUCH MORE GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR THAN HONG KONG HAS BEEN WILLING TO TRY UP TO NOW.

+THE HOLY COW OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND WILL HAVE TO BE SACRIFICED. THE BEAST IS ALREADY DEAD ANYHOW BECAUSE IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE UNCONTROLLED PRIVATE SECTOR, WHATEVER IT MAY CLAIM IN THE PAST, IS NOT ABLE OR WILLING TO PRODUCE WHAT WE NEED AT A PRICE WE CAN AFFORD.+

SPECULATORS CAN BUY AND SELL PROPERTY FOR LARGE PROFITS, SOMETIMES TWO OR THREE TIMES OVER, BEFORE THE BUILDING OF THE PROPERTY HAS EVEN BEGUN. THE RESULT OF THIS SPECULATION IS THAT THE END USER, WHETHER TENANT OR OWNER, PAYS MUCH MORE THAN IS NECESSARY OR REASONABLE OR JUST, FR. MCGOVERN SAID.

HE FELT THAT FRIGHTENING OFF CERTAIN TYPES OF DEVELOPERS - OR MORE ACCURATELY SPECULATORS IN SOME SORT OF RELATIONSHIP WITH DEVELOPERS - WITH GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE, WOULD BE NO LOSS TO THE INDUSTRY. IT WOULD BE A GAIN FOR BOTH THE COMMUNITY AND FOR HONEST DEVELOPERS.

HE PROPOSED +A PRIVATE SECTOR HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME+, WITH THE GOVERNMENT OFFERING LAND AT A FAIR PRICE, AS OPPOSED TO THE OVERHEATED MARKET PRICE WHICH HAS BEEN AT THE BASE OF THE HIGH-PRICE PROPERTY SPIRAL.

THIS COULD BE DONE BY AGREEMENT WITH SPECIFIED CONTRACTORS WHO IN TURN WOULD CONTRACT TO BUILD HOUSES FOR DIRECT SALE TO FIRST OWNER OCCUPIERS AT A CORRESPONDINGLY FAIR PRICE.

HONEST DEVELOPERS WOULD NOT OBJECT TO THIS PROPOSAL AS A FAIR PROFIT WOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE FAIR PRICE, FR. MCGOVERN SAID, OR WOULD THE FINANCE BRANCH +SINCE WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED THAT ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HIGH PRICE OF LAND AND THE GAIN TO REVENUE IS ENTIRELY ACCIDENTAL.+

SOME MIGHT SAY THAT NOT CHARGING THE MAXIMUM PRICE FOR LAND WOULD BE THE EQUIVALENT OF GIVING A SUBSIDY TO THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, HE SAID, BUT HE WOULD NOT LOOK ON IT THAT WAY.

IT WOULD BE FAIR, HE THOUGHT, TO DESCRIBE SUCH A POLICY AS GOVERNMENT PUTTING INTO PRACTICE THE ADVICE WHICH THE GOVERNOR GAVE TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN HIS ANNUAL POLICY SPEECH WHERE, AS A REMEDY FOR INFLATION, HE ADVOCATED MODERATION EVEN THOUGH +THIS INVOLVES FOREGOING SOME SHORT-TERM PROFIT FOR THE SAKE OF LONG-TERM STABILITY.+

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1979

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GOVT TOLD TO TAKE STOCK AS HK MOVES INTO THE '80S

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THE HON. LYDIA DUNN TOLD THE GOVERNMENT THAT IT SHOULD TAKE STOCK OF OUR SITUATION, NOW THAT WE ARE MOVING INTO THE DECADE OF THE 1980'S, AND DECIDE WITH THE UNOFFICIALS ON THE PROBLEMS AND TASKS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY ATTENTION IN THE COMING YEARS.

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON, MISS DUNN SUGGESTED FOUR SUCH TOP PRIORITY PROBLEMS AND TASKS:

- * THE PURSUIT OF ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH STABILITY=
- * CONTAINMENT OF POPULATION GROWTH AND THE MAINTENANCE OF LAW, ORDER AND SECURITY=
- * CONTINUOUS ADAPTATION AND MODERNISATION OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND PRACTICES OF GOVERNMENT= AND
- * AN ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT TO SECURE OUR FUTURE.

ON THE FIRST TASK, MISS DUNN NOTED THAT THERE WERE CLEAR SIGNS AROUND THE WORLD THAT OUR LONG-ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES OF ALLOWING MAXIMUM FREEDOM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC POTENTIAL ARE BECOMING MUCH MORE FASHIONABLE.

MISS DUNN SAID: +CERTAINLY, IN THE FUTURE, AS IN THE PAST, WE MUST AVOID POLICY DECISIONS OF AN INTERVENTIONIST KIND SIMPLY BECAUSE WE PASS THROUGH DEFLATIONARY AND INFLATIONARY PERIODS FROM TIME TO TIME, OR BECAUSE WE ARE POLITICALLY RELUCTANT TO KEEP THE PUBLIC SECTOR UNDER CONTROL.+

SHE SAID HOWEVER THAT SHE WAS NOT A DOCTRINAIRE OPPONENT OF INTERVENTION, AND SHE NOTED THAT THERE WERE SOME PEOPLE AT PRESENT WHO, DISMAYED AND UNSETTLED BY INFLATIONARY PRESSURES, WOULD FAVOUR A GREATER DEGREE OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION.

FOR THIS REASON, SHE WOULD, AT THIS POINT, ASK THE GOVERNMENT FOR A DEFINITIVE STATEMENT OF ITS VIEWS ON THE PRESENT HIGHLY DANGEROUS SITUATION IN THE REAL ESTATE MARKET, AND WOULD IN PARTICULAR WANT TO BE ASSURED THAT THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST SOME FORM OF EXTENSION OF RENT CONTROL WERE REALLY COMPELLING.

TURNING TO THE SECOND PROBLEM, MISS DUNN POINTED OUT THAT OUR NATURAL POPULATION GROWTH, FOR 10 AND MORE YEARS UP TO 1977, WAS CONTAINED TO UNDER TWO PER CENT PER ANNUM, BUT IF THE RATE OF LEGAL AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM CHINA IN THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS IS TO CONTINUE, OUR POPULATION WILL BE GROWING AT ABOUT SIX PER CENT PER ANNUM, OR AN EXTRA 300 000 PEOPLE AND MORE EVERY YEAR.

IN THE SHORT TERM, THESE INFLOWS MAY ENLARGE OUR PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY THEREBY HELPING TO KEEP WAGES FROM RISING EXCESSIVELY FAST AND DAMAGING OUR EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS.

/BUT IF

BUT IF THERE IS A RECESSION, THE INEVITABLE DOWNWARD PRESSURE ON WAGE RATES WILL BE GREATER AND INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT COULD LAST LONGER. THE RESULT COULD BE SOCIAL UNREST, SHE SAID.

FURTHERMORE, TO THE EXTENT THAT WAGE LEVELS ARE DEPRESSED OR INCREASE MORE SLOWLY, INDUSTRIALISTS HAVE LESS INCENTIVE TO MOVE INTO HIGH-TECHNOLOGY, CAPITAL-INTENSIVE INDUSTRIES GENERATING HIGHER ADDED VALUE.

SHE THEREFORE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTAINING THE FLOW OF LEGAL AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA.

LINKED TO THE PROBLEM OF POPULATION GROWTH IS THE KEEPING OF LAW AND ORDER, AND SECURITY IN HONG KONG.

+OBVIOUSLY, HONG KONG IN THE 1980'S MUST HAVE A POLICE FORCE CAPABLE OF A FLEXIBLE RESPONSE. THIS MEANS IT MUST BE HIGHLY TRAINED AND PROPERLY MOTIVATED AND PROVIDED WITH MODERN TECHNOLOGY,+ SHE SAID.

THE THIRD PRIORITY TASK WHICH MISS DUNN THOUGHT SHOULD BE GIVEN ATTENTION IS THE ADAPTATION AND MODERNISATION, ON A CONTINUING BASIS, OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND PRACTICES OF GOVERNMENT, SO THAT, SHE SAID, +THEY WILL MATCH HONG KONG'S STATUS AS A MODERN INTERNATIONAL CITY THAT HAS A REPUTATION OF BEING 'A CITY THAT WORKS'.+

WHILE SHE HAD THE HIGHEST RESPECT FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, SHE FELT IT WAS ANOTHER THING TO BE SATISFIED THAT THE ORGANISATION OF GOVERNMENT'S INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION IS TAILORED TO PRESENT DAY NEEDS, AND SHE SUGGESTED THAT IT IS TIME FOR AN IN DEPTH STUDY, PERHAPS WITH THE ASSOCIATION OF THE UNOFFICIALS, OF THE GOVERNMENT'S TOP MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE.

SHE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT TAKE A HARD LOOK AT OUR NETWORK OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES.

SHE STRESSED THAT HONG KONG IN THE 1980'S WILL SEE A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO KNOW NO HOME OTHER THAN HONG KONG AND WHILST NOT INSENSITIVE TO THE GEO-POLITICAL REALITIES WHICH DETERMINE THE WAY HONG KONG IS GOVERNED, WILL WISH TO BE MEANINGFULLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE GOVERNING PROCESS.

COMMENTING ON THE FOURTH PRIORITY TASK WHICH DEMANDS OUR ATTENTION, MISS DUNN SAID THE SEEKING OF AN ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT TO OUR FUTURE IS A DELICATE SUBJECT BUT IS NOT ONE TO BE AVOIDED.

SHE FELT BOUND TO SAY THAT EMPHASIS ON THE TRIPARTITE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHINA, HONG KONG AND BRITAIN SOMETIMES TENDS TO OVERLOOK THAT IT IS THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITY WHICH IS AT STAKE.

+HONG KONG PEOPLE ARE PATIENT, AND, IN THEIR OWN WAY, POLITICALLY SENSITIVE AND SENSIBLE. BUT ANXIETY - AND I AM NOT JUST REFERRING TO THE ANXIETY OF INVESTORS - ANXIETY WILL BECOME APPARENT IF A SOLUTION TO OUR POLITICAL FUTURE IS NOT SOUGHT AND AGREED WITHIN THE NEXT FEW YEARS,+ SHE SAID.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1979

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PROBE ON BUILDING NUCLEAR POWER
PLANT SHOULD BE RE-OPENED
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THE HON. S. L. CHEN SUGGESTED TO THE GOVERNMENT THAT IT SHOULD RE-OPEN THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF BUILDING A NUCLEAR POWER STATION FOR HONG KONG.

HE WAS COMMENTING ON HONG KONG'S ENERGY SUPPLY IN RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNOR'S REVIEW OF THE ECONOMY IN HIS ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

+WHILE WE ANTICIPATE THAT FROM 1982 COAL WILL BE INCREASINGLY USED FOR THE PRODUCTION OF ELECTRICAL ENERGY, THUS PROGRESSIVELY REDUCING OUR RELIANCE ON OIL, A LONGER TERM SOLUTION TO THE VITAL QUESTION OF ENERGY HAS YET TO BE FOUND,+ HE SAID.

HE RECALLED THAT IN 1975, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TWO POWER COMPANIES, A STUDY WAS MADE ON THE POSSIBILITY OF CONSTRUCTING A NUCLEAR POWER STATION.

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY IN VIENNA, A REPORT ON THE STUDY WAS COMPLETED AND PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNMENT IN 1977 BUT THE MATTER WAS PUT IN ABEYANCE PARTLY DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATION AND PARTLY BECAUSE IT WAS CONSIDERED THAT THE ECONOMIC SIZE OF COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE REACTORS WOULD HAVE A CAPACITY IN EXCESS OF HONG KONG'S NEED.

HOWEVER, IN THE LIGHT OF THE EXCELLENT RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND HONG KONG AND CHINA'S NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES, IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO BUILD A PLANT TO SUPPLY BOTH GUANGDONG AND HONG KONG. THE COMBINED DEMAND OF THE TWO SYSTEMS WOULD BE SUCH AS TO MAKE THE SCHEME PRACTICABLE, HE SAID.

MR. CHEN BELIEVED THAT, WITH GOODWILL AND CO-OPERATION, SUCH A SCHEME IS NOT BEYOND THE REALMS OF REALITY AND WOULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUCH OF THE MONEY IN HONG KONG THAT IS AT PRESENT BEING CHANNELLED INTO FUELLING THE ALREADY OVER-HEATED +PROPERTY CASINO+.

HE POINTED OUT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION. BECAUSE WE HAVE TO RELY ALMOST ENTIRELY ON OIL FOR OUR SUPPLY OF ENERGY, THE PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE RECENT UNCERTAINTY OF OIL SUPPLY HAVE BEEN MORE ACUTE FOR US THAN FOR MOST OTHER COUNTRIES. HAD THE OIL PRICE IN 1978 BEEN AT TODAY'S PRICE, THAT IS ABOUT \$700 INSTEAD OF \$370 PER METRIC TON, OUR TRADE GAP THAT YEAR WOULD HAVE BEEN WIDER BY A +WHOPPING \$1 300 MILLION+.

HE SAID HE HAS REASON TO SUSPECT THAT HONG KONG IS NOT GETTING A FAIR SHARE OF THE AVAILABLE FUEL OIL AND SO HAS NO OPTION BUT TO MAKE UP THE SHORTFALL BY BUYING FROM THE SPOT MARKET AT A MUCH HIGHER PRICE.

+THE GOVERNMENT MAY WISH TO INVESTIGATE AND CONSIDER WHAT MEASURES, IF ANY, SHOULD BE TAKEN TO SAFEGUARD OUR INTERESTS,+ HE SAID.

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ON THE HONG KONG ECONOMY IN GENERAL, MR. CHEN AGREED WITH THE FISCAL AND MONETARY MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR TO COMBAT INFLATION AND TO RESTRICT THE GROWTH OF CREDIT CREATION.

HE THOUGHT THAT AFTER A CONTINUOUS THREE OR POSSIBLY FOUR YEARS OF RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH, A TEMPORARY SLOW-DOWN FOLLOWING THE TREND OF THE WORLD ECONOMY MAY NOT NECESSARILY BE A BAD THING FOR HONG KONG.

+IT WOULD GIVE OUR INDUSTRY AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSOLIDATE AND MAKE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS. SUCH ADJUSTMENTS SHOULD AIM AT UPGRADING PRODUCTION FACILITIES AND TECHNIQUES AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND SKILLS OF THE WORK FORCE SO THAT OUR INDUSTRY WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO AND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RENEWED MARKET DEMAND ONCE THE ECONOMY OF THE INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES PICKS UP AGAIN,+ HE SAID.

HE THEREFORE APPEALED AGAIN TO THE GOVERNMENT, ASKING IT TO INVEST IN DEVELOPING HONG KONG'S MANPOWER RESOURCES AND IN BUILDING AN EFFICIENT INDUSTRIAL INFRA-STRUCTURE.

+ONLY WITH GREATER COMMITMENTS ON THE PART OF BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN WE HOPE TO PRESERVE WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED AND TO STRIVE FOR GREATER PROSPERITY,+ HE SAID.

HE WAS ALSO CONCERNED THAT THE NEW TOWNS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED INTO SELF-CONTAINED COMMUNITIES.

WHILE IT IS ENCOURAGING TO SEE THAT UP TO THE END OF SEPTEMBER, NO LESS THAN 748 000 SQUARE METRES OF FACTORY SPACE HAVE BEEN BUILT IN THE NEW TOWNS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW MUCH OF THIS SPACE HAS BEEN TAKEN UP AND AT WHAT RATE IT IS BEING TAKEN UP, AND WHETHER THERE ARE SUFFICIENT INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE RAPID OCCUPATION AND FULL UTILISATION OF THIS SPACE AS A MEANS OF BRINGING ABOUT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE RESIDENTS, HE SAID.

IF THE RESIDENTS HAVE TO FIND EMPLOYMENT ELSEWHERE, THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE TO SPEND HUGE SUMS OF MONEY IN EXPANDING THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM. HE SUGGESTED THAT IT IS PRUDENT NOW TO REASSESS THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND SITUATION BEARING IN MIND THE ORIGINAL OBJECTIVE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW TOWNS, SO THAT CORRECTIVE STEPS, IF NEEDED, COULD BE TAKEN AT THIS CRUCIAL STAGE OF THE DEVELOPMENT.

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FIVE-DAY WORKING WEEK ADVOCATED

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THE HON. LEUNG TAT-SHING ADVOCATED A FIVE-DAY WORKING WEEK FOR HONG KONG AND ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY STUDY WITH A VIEW TO IMPLEMENTING IT IN DUE COURSE.

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), HE SAID A FIVE-DAY WEEK HAS LONG BEEN THE PRACTICE IN MOST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES SUCH AS THE UK AND THE USA WHERE MOST WORKERS DO 40 HOURS OR LESS A WEEK.

HONG KONG CANNOT EMULATE THEM IN WORKING FEWER HOURS AT THE PRESENT STAGE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY IN INDUSTRY WHERE THERE IS STILL WIDESPREAD SHORTAGE OF LABOUR, BUT WE CAN STILL EXPERIMENT WITH A FIVE-DAY WEEK FOR OFFICE WORKERS.

HE MAINTAINED THAT LOSS OF FOUR WORKING HOURS ON SATURDAY EACH WEEK WOULD NOT NECESSARILY LEAD TO LESS PRODUCTIVITY. MOST DEPARTMENT HEADS AND OFFICE MANAGERS ARE ONLY TOO FAMILIAR WITH THE CASUAL MOOD OF THE SATURDAY SYNDROME WHILE ON THE OTHER HAND THE EXTRA LEISURE TIME WOULD HELP BOOST STAFF MORALE, IMPROVE STAFF RELATIONSHIP AND THEREBY LEAD TO INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY.

HE SUGGESTED THAT IF MANAGEMENT IS STILL SCEPTICAL OF THE IDEA OF LOSING ONE-ELEVENTH OF ITS STAFF'S WORKING HOURS, AN EXTRA HOUR COULD BE ADDED TO EACH OF THE FIVE WEEK DAYS TO MAKE UP FOR THE LOSS, AND MANY OFFICE WORKERS WOULD NOT HESITATE TO ACCEPT THIS.

IN ANY CASE, HE SAID, A WORKER IS GEARED FOR A FULL DAY'S WORK WHEN HE GOES TO OFFICE SO AN EXTRA HOUR WOULD NOT MAKE TOO MUCH DIFFERENCE. OVERALL PRODUCTIVITY WOULD MOST PROBABLY BE INCREASED AS WORK MOMENTUM COULD BE GATHERED AND SUSTAINED MORE EASILY, THAN ON A FOUR-HOUR SATURDAY, AND STAFF WOULD HAVE LESS TENDENCY TO LEAVE WORK OVER UNTIL THE FOLLOWING WEEK.

THE ARRANGEMENT WOULD ALSO SAVE ELECTRICITY AND OTHER NORMAL OFFICE MAINTENANCE EXPENSES - AND IT SHOULD COST LESS TO LEAVE THE AIR-CONDITIONING ON FOR AN EXTRA HOUR EACH DAY THAN TO PROVIDE IT ON SATURDAYS.

+PRODUCTIVITY APART, A MAIN ARGUMENT FOR A NON-WORKING SATURDAY IS THE SAVING OF THE TIME, ENERGY AND MONEY NOW BEING SPENT BY MANY OFFICE WORKERS ON GETTING TO AND BACK FROM WORK ON SATURDAYS, + MR. LEUNG SAID.

FOR THOSE NOT LIVING CLOSE TO WORK, A TWO-WAY COMMUTING JOURNEY MAY TAKE AS MUCH AS THREE HOURS, WHICH WOULD BE A MOST INEFFICIENT USE OF TIME FOR A FOUR-HOUR WORKING SATURDAY, HE SAID.

TWO DAYS OF FULL UNINTERRUPTED HOLIDAY AT THE END OF THE WEEK WOULD ALLOW FOR MORE LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND FAMILY GATHERINGS OR EVEN TIME TO FINISH HOUSEHOLD CHORES.

THE EXTRA DAY HOLIDAY WOULD ALSO HELP TOWARDS A MORE EVEN DISTRIBUTION IN THE USE OF LEISURE AND RECREATION FACILITIES AT PRESENT OVER-CONCENTRATED ON SUNDAYS, HE SAID.

MR. LEUNG WAS AWARE THAT INEVITABLY SOME GOVERNMENT OFFICES WOULD HAVE TO REMAIN OPEN ON SATURDAYS. THESE WILL HAVE TO RETAIN THE ALTERNATE SATURDAYS OFF SYSTEM NOW ALREADY ENJOYED BY MANY GOVERNMENT OFFICES. HOWEVER FOR THOSE OFFICES WHICH HAVE NO REAL NEED TO OPEN ON SATURDAYS, THE FIVE-DAY WEEK SHOULD BE INTRODUCED. IF IT PROVES PRACTICABLE, IT WILL BE FOLLOWED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR, HE SAID.

HE BELIEVED THE SCHEME WOULD FURTHER IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN HONG KONG AND HOPED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD GIVE HIS PROPOSAL SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

PLANS TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION WELCOMED

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THE REV. THE HON. JOYCE BENNETT WELCOMED THE PLANS ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNOR TO STRENGTHEN THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF KWUN TONG, WHERE THE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SUFFERING FOR THE LAST 10 TO 15 YEARS FROM A REMOTE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY WHOSE TOP OFFICIALS SELDOM COME TO THE DISTRICT AND DO NOT KNOW THE LIVE SITUATION.

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), SHE GAVE THE EXAMPLE OF THE ROAD SYSTEM.

SHE FOUND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY UNAWARE OF THE NEW ROAD FROM CHOI HUNG ACROSS THE KOWLOON BAY RECLAMATION TO THE KWUN TONG INDUSTRIAL AREA, AND UNAWARE OF THE HEAVY TRAFFIC OF VEHICLES AND PEOPLE UP AND DOWN A ROAD THE AUTHORITY FIRST PROPOSED TO CLOSE IN OCTOBER THIS YEAR. THE AUTHORITY WAS ALSO UNAWARE OF THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE USING FOOTPATHS AND STEPS TO PASS FROM ONE PART OF THE DISTRICT TO ANOTHER.

+CLEARLY THIS LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOCAL SITUATION BY THE ADMINISTRATORS AT THE TOP BREEDS FRUSTRATION AND ILL-WILL AMONG THE CITIZENS IN OUTLYING URBAN AREAS,+ SHE STRESSED.

SHE WAS HOPEFUL THAT GREATER UNDERSTANDING WOULD NOW REACH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES. IT SEEMED TO HER THAT THE HOME AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT, WHERE SHE OBTAINED READY HELP IN FINDING ABOUT THE NEW ADMINISTRATIVE SCHEME, WAS AWARE OF THE NEED TO TREAT OUR URBAN AREAS AS INDIVIDUAL ENTITIES AND SO DEVELOP IN EACH OF THEM A REAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

A CITY OF FIVE MILLION CANNOT BE RULED OR ADMINISTERED IN THE SAME WAY AS A TERRITORY WITH A POPULATION OF LESS THAN TWO MILLION SUCH AS WAS HONG KONG WHEN SHE FIRST ARRIVED IN 1949.

IT IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL THAT THE EXPERIMENT IN KWUN TONG RECEIVES THE FULL SUPPORT NOT ONLY OF THE HOME AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT, BUT ALSO OF ALL THE OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND THE STATUTORY BODIES, SUCH AS THE HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE URBAN COUNCIL, SHE SAID.

MISS BENNETT POINTED OUT SOME OF THE DEFICIENCIES IN THE DISTRICT. OUT OF A POPULATION OF ABOUT 670 000, ABOUT 500 000 RESIDENTS LIVE IN LARGE HOUSING ESTATES. THE PEOPLE HAVE TO CROWD CLOSELY TOGETHER WITH VERY LITTLE OPEN SPACE BECAUSE THERE ARE NO PARKS, ONLY PLAYGROUNDS AND REST GARDENS.

FURTHERMORE, ALTHOUGH NEW TOWNS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES ARE EACH QUALIFIED FOR A TOWN HALL, THE PEOPLE OF KWUN TONG ARE STILL WITHOUT SUCH AND HAVE TO RELY ON SCHOOL HALLS FOR FUNCTIONS BECAUSE THE HALL OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE IS ONLY A MISERABLE ROOM. THE PEOPLE ARE, BESIDES, A LONG WAY FROM THE FUTURE CULTURAL COMPLEX IN TSIM SHA TSUI AND THE CITY HALL.

MISS BENNETT HOPED THAT IN ENSURING QUICKER +REGIONAL COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES, WORKS AND ADMINISTRATION+, MEMBERS OF THE HOME AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT WILL HAVE GREATER CONSULTATION WITH KWUN TONG PEOPLE AND NOT ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE BUSINESS INTEREST THERE.

+HONG KONG HAS A SPLENDID OPPORTUNITY THROUGH THIS PROPOSED MACHINERY TO ENCOURAGE GREATER REAL PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

+I HOPE THE NEW MACHINERY WILL NOT BE JUST ANOTHER TALKING-SHOP WITH NO TEETH IN IT, MERELY FRUSTRATING ITS MEMBERS, BUT WILL BE A REAL PART OF OUR DEMOCRATIC MACHINERY,+ SHE SAID.

TURNING TO EDUCATION, MISS BENNETT SAID SHE WAS PLEASED THAT ALL CAPUT SCHOOLS WILL BE GIVEN FULL AID IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS AND NO MORE SUCH SCHOOLS WILL BE STARTED.

SHE ALSO SUPPORTED THE INTRODUCTION OF PART-TIME UNIVERSITY DEGREE COURSES FOR, WITH SUCH COURSES, THE PRINCIPALS OF THE CAPUT SCHOOLS WITH NON-HONG KONG, BRITISH OR COMMONWEALTH DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS WILL BE ENABLED TO GAIN RECOGNITION.

IN FACT SHE THOUGHT THE FACILITIES PROVIDED TO TEST AND RECOGNISE UNREGISTERABLE MEDICAL DOCTORS SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO MEMBERS OF OTHER PROFESSIONS.

SHE FURTHER ASKED WHAT THOUGHT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ADAPTING THE OPEN UNIVERSITY IN HONG KONG. SHE SAID MUSIC AND ART AND DESIGN SHOULD BE AMONG THE FIRST SUBJECTS TO BE OFFERED UNDER THE PART-TIME/OPEN UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME BECAUSE THERE IS A GREAT DEARTH OF SUCH GRADUATE TEACHERS AND THE MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE TOO WOULD BENEFIT. THE OFFICE'S TEACHING PROGRAMME IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF ITS WORK, SO SHE WAS SOMEWHAT ALARMED TO SEE IT REMOVED FROM THE AUSPICES OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

IN THE AREA OF PRIMARY AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION, MISS BENNETT EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN AT THE SLOW PROGRESS BEING MADE. SHE UNDERSTOOD AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL WORKING PARTY WAS SET UP IN OCTOBER 1976 BETWEEN THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO STUDY THE NEEDS OF THE PRE-PRIMARY CHILD AND SHE SUSPECTED THAT THE SLOW PROGRESS WAS PARTLY CAUSED BY THE PROBLEMS OF TWO DEPARTMENTS WORKING TOGETHER.

SHE SAID SHE WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED AS, DESPITE THE GOVERNOR'S MENTION THAT THE WORK WAS NEARING COMPLETION, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR HER TO OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT FROM THE RELEVANT SECRETARIAT BRANCH.

+THIS RELUCTANCE TO DISCLOSE INFORMATION CAN BUT ALARM ME -- WHAT IS SO SECRET IN THE CARE OF THE PRE-PRIMARY CHILD?+ SHE ASKED. SHE HOPED THE GOVERNMENT WILL PROHIBIT CHILDREN FROM ENTERING KINDERGARTENS UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE AND INSIST THAT THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS ATTEND PLAY CENTRES OR NURSERIES.

+WE MUST GRASP THIS NETTLE FIRMLY AND PREVENT CONTINUED EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS,+ SHE SAID.

SHE WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT SCHOOLING IN OUR CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR JUVENILE DELINQUENTS IS STILL NOT YET UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THAT THE INSTITUTIONS DO NOT YET HAVE TEACHERS WHO RECEIVED THEIR TRAINING FULL-TIME.

+THIS IS AMAZING IN VIEW OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND THE NUMBER OF REDUNDANT TEACHERS, THOUGH PERHAPS IT IS AGAIN EXPLAINED BY THE DIFFICULTY OF TWO GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WORKING TOGETHER,+ SHE SAID.

SHE ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER THE QUESTION OF MAKING THE PRINCIPALS OF AIDED SCHOOLS ALSO THE SUPERVISORS.

THE EXISTING SYSTEM WHEREBY +THE PRINCIPAL TAKES THE SALARY BUT THE SUPERVISOR THE KNOCKS+ DISCOURAGES RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY, SHE SAID.

SHE ALSO URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO HELP EDUCATION SPONSORING BODIES, WHICH ARE STRETCHED TO THE LIMIT OF THEIR CAPABILITIES, TO PAY THE SALARY OF THEIR ADMINISTRATOR OF SCHOOLS.

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INDUSTRIALISTS TOLD TO LOOK FOR
CHEAPER SOURCES OF RAW MATERIALS
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THE HON. FRANCIS TIEN SUGGESTED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT MANUFACTURERS IN HONG KONG COULD BUY THEIR RAW MATERIALS, SEMI-MANUFACTURES AND EQUIPMENT FROM MORE COMPETITIVELY PRICED SOURCES.

HE FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SHOULD DO WHAT THEY CAN TO ASSIST THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN IDENTIFYING THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES WHICH ARE AVAILABLE.

+I DO BELIEVE THAT SUCH FACTORS AS CHANGES IN PARITIES AND COSTS OF RAW MATERIALS HAVE CAUSED RECENT CHANGES IN COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE. AS A RESULT, SOURCES THAT WERE ONCE PRICED OUT OF OUR MARKET NOW HAVE A COMPETITIVE EDGE.

+I BELIEVE THAT WE COULD INCREASE OUR PURCHASES FROM SOME OF THESE SOURCES AND THEREBY HELP TO DULL THE EDGE OF PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES+, HE SAID.

EARLIER, MR. TIEN HAD SAID HE WAS PROMPTED TO MAKE THE SUGGESTION BECAUSE OF THE +GROWING SHADOW OF PROTECTIONISM OVER OUR TRADE+ AND BECAUSE OUR EXPORTS OF TEXTILES AND CLOTHING ARE NOW RUNNING VERY CLOSE TO SOME OF THE LIMITS IMPOSED BY QUANTITATIVE RESTRICTIONS, AS WAS MENTIONED BY THE GOVERNOR.

+WE ARE, OF COURSE, ALWAYS GOING TO BE DEPENDENT UPON IMPORTED RAW MATERIALS AND SEMI-MANUFACTURES WITH WHICH TO PRODUCE THE FINISHED GOODS FOR EXPORT.

+PART OF HONG KONG'S STRENGTH HAS ALWAYS BEEN THAT OUR INDUSTRY OPERATES IN A FREE PORT. THIS MEANS, ON THE ONE HAND, THAT IT HAS NO ARTIFICIAL PROTECTION AND MUST THEREFORE BE COMPETITIVE BY WORLD STANDARDS SIMPLY TO SURVIVE. IT ALSO MEANS THAT OUR MANUFACTURERS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FREE TO BUY THEIR RAW MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT WHEREVER IT BEST SUITS THEM,+ HE SAID.

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ONE RESULT OF THIS HAS BEEN THAT OUR BILATERAL TRADE WITH OUR MAIN TRADING PARTNERS HAS RARELY BEEN ANYWHERE NEAR IN BALANCE, AND WHILE WE MAY BE QUITE RELAXED ABOUT THIS LACK OF BALANCE, THE SAME VIEW IS NOT ALWAYS TAKEN ABROAD.

HE SAID HE WOULD NOT DREAM OF SUGGESTING THAT WE SHOULD DEVIATE FROM OUR FREE TRADE PHILOSOPHY OR TRY TO CONTROL THE SOURCE OF OUR PURCHASES.

+I DO, HOWEVER, THINK THAT THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT THEIR PRESENT BUYING PATTERN TO SEE WHETHER THEY ARE IN FACT STILL BUYING FROM THE MOST COMPETITIVE SOURCES,+ HE STRESSED.

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FIRE PREVENTION CHECK IN YUEN LONG

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FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU OFFICERS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) MADE A SURPRISE CHECK ON 16 BUILDINGS CHOSEN AT RANDOM IN THE RESIDENTIAL AREA OF YUEN LONG IN AN EFFORT TO REMOVE POTENTIAL FIRE HAZARDS.

DURING THE THREE-HOUR INSPECTION THE PARTY LED BY DIVISIONAL OFFICER, MR. KWAN SAI YIU, DISCOVERED 37 UNREGISTERED GARAGES OPERATING IN THE AREA, A FIRE SERVICES SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY.

HE NOTED THAT THE GARAGES HAD BREACHED THE LEASE CONDITIONS BY OPERATING IN SHOP PREMISES AND THE CASES WOULD BE REFERRED TO THE NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION AND LABOUR DEPARTMENT FOR ACTION.

THE OFFICERS ALSO FOUND MANY CASES OF ILLEGAL PARKING AND PAVEMENT OBSTRUCTIONS IN MA MIU ROAD AND MA WANG ROAD WHICH WOULD CAUSE A SEVERE OBSTRUCTION TO FIRE APPLIANCES IF A FIRE BROKE OUT. THE SITUATION WOULD BE REFERRED TO THE POLICE AND THE NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION FOR ACTION.

ILLEGAL ADDITIONS OR EXTENSIONS IN BUILDINGS WERE ALSO DISCOVERED. THESE INCLUDED 10 ROOFTOP STRUCTURES, 22 SWING-TYPE METAL GATES AND TWO METAL CAGES. FURTHERMORE, EIGHT SMOKE LOBBY DOORS WERE FOUND MISSING.

+SINCE THE BUILDINGS WERE BUILT AFTER AUGUST 1, 1975 THE CASES WOULD BE REFERRED TO THE BUILDING ENFORCEMENT UNIT OF BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE FOR ACTION,+ SAID THE SPOKESMAN.

THE SPOKESMAN ADVISED MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC THAT FUTURE COMPLAINTS IN RESPECT OF ALTERATIONS IN BUILDINGS OCCUPIED ON OR AFTER AUGUST 1, 1975 SHOULD BE REFERRED TO BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE FOR ACTION.

HE SAID THAT FIVE FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT NOTICES HAVE BEEN ISSUED, FOUR OF WHICH CONCERN MINOR OBSTRUCTIONS TO MEANS OF ESCAPE. THE OTHER NOTICE WAS ISSUED AGAINST THE OPERATOR OF A RUBBER TYRE SHOP FOR STORING IN EXCESS OF THE PERMITTED QUANTITY OF 50 TYRES.

THE TEAM ALSO INSPECTED FOUR DANGEROUS GOODS SHOPS, NINE FACTORIES IN DOMESTIC BUILDINGS, AND ONE TIMBER STORE.

MR. KWAN SAID AFTER THE INSPECTION THE GENERAL FIRE PREVENTION SITUATION IN THE AREA WAS QUITE SATISFACTORY.

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1979

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NEW SYSTEM OF ALLOCATING
VEHICLE REGISTRATION NUMBERS TO BE INTRODUCED
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A NEW SYSTEM OF ALLOCATING NON-SCHEDULED VEHICLE REGISTRATION NUMBERS WILL BE INTRODUCED BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT EARLY NEXT MONTH.

UNDER THE NEW SYSTEM, THE REGISTRATION BOOKS RELATING TO NON-SCHEDULED NUMBERS WILL BE MIXED EVERY DAY BEFORE BEING DISTRIBUTED AT RANDOM TO THE VARIOUS LICENSING COUNTERS FOR ISSUE TO APPLICANTS.

A TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THIS SYSTEM WOULD REMOVE ANY ELEMENT OF PREDICTABILITY IN THE ALLOCATION OF NON-SCHEDULED REGISTRATION NUMBERS AND WOULD ENSURE FAIRNESS AND IMPARTIALITY TO ALL APPLICANTS FOR REGISTRATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES.

AT PRESENT NON-SCHEDULED NUMBERS ARE ALLOCATED IN NUMERICAL SEQUENCE ON A FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS. CERTAIN NON-SCHEDULED NUMBERS WHICH DENOTE LUCK OR PROSPERITY CAN BE RESERVED ON PAYMENT OF \$1 000 TO BE BID FOR AT REGULAR AUCTIONS HELD BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT. HOWEVER, IF NO ONE RESERVES THESE NUMBERS, THEY WILL BE ISSUED AT COUNTERS.

SCHEDULED NUMBERS, SUCH AS ALL THE SEVENS AND ALL THE EIGHTS, OR 3388 OR 6688, LISTED IN THE SIXTH SCHEDULE TO THE ROAD TRAFFIC (REGISTRATION AND LICENSING OF VEHICLES) REGULATIONS, WILL CONTINUE TO BE WITHHELD BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT FOR SALE BY AUCTION. THE PROCEEDS OF THE AUCTION WILL BE FOR SOCIAL WELFARE PURPOSES.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

FIRE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN NEWS CONFERENCE
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THIS YEAR'S FIRE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN WILL BE LAUNCHED AT A NEWS CONFERENCE TO BE HELD AT 3 P.M. ON FRIDAY (NOVEMBER 2) IN THE GIS THEATRE, FIFTH FLOOR, BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, CENTRAL.

THE MAIN SPEAKER AT THE CONFERENCE WILL BE DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, MR. LAM LOK-BUN. OTHER SPEAKERS WILL INCLUDE DIVISIONAL FIRE OFFICER, MR. TAM HON-CHEUNG- SENIOR COUNTRY PARKS OFFICER, MR. J.W. WHOLEY- COUNTRY PARKS PROTECTION OFFICER, MR. S.L. CHONG- ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF FACTORY INSPECTOR, MR. CHAN TAT-KING- AND SUPERINTENDENT OF FACTORY INSPECTORS, MR. HERMAN HO.

YOU ARE INVITED TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO COVER THE CONFERENCE.

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1979

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SHORT-TERM TENANCY OF CROWN LAND

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THE CROWN LANDS AND SURVEY OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT IS INVITING TENDERS BY WAY OF ANNUAL RENTAL FOR A SHORT-TERM TENANCY OF A PIECE OF CROWN LAND AT LEI YUE MUN ROAD, KWUN TONG.

THE SITE, MEASURING ABOUT 800 SQUARE METRES, IS FOR STORAGE, INCLUDING VEHICLES.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE CROWN LANDS AND SURVEY OFFICE SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE TENANCY WAS FOR AN INITIAL PERIOD OF ONE YEAR AND THEREAFTER QUARTERLY.

TENDER FORMS, NOTICE AND CONDITIONS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE CROWN LANDS AND SURVEY OFFICE IN MURRAY BUILDING, 19TH FLOOR, GARDEN ROAD AND IN THE KOWLOON GOVERNMENT OFFICES, 405 NATHAN ROAD, 10TH FLOOR.

THE TENDER PLAN MAY ALSO BE INSPECTED AT THE TWO OFFICES.

CLOSING DATE FOR ACCEPTANCE OF TENDER IS NOON ON NOVEMBER 16, 1979.

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WATER CUT IN WAN CHAI

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FRESH WATER SUPPLY TO A NUMBER OF PREMISES IN WAN CHAI WILL BE SUSPENDED FOR SEVEN HOURS FROM 11 P.M. ON FRIDAY (NOVEMBER 2) TO 6 A.M. THE FOLLOWING DAY TO FACILITATE LEAKAGE TESTS.

THE AREA TO BE AFFECTED IS BOUNDED BY ARSENAL STREET, HENNESSY ROAD, JOHNSTON ROAD, LUARD ROAD AND GLOUCESTER ROAD.

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