



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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CS: POSITIVE OVERALL REACTION TO WHITE PAPER

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OVERALL REACTION TO THE WHITE PAPER, "THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT : THE WAY FORWARD", HAS BEEN POSITIVE, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID FORD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THE BROAD JUDGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY REFLECTED THROUGH OUR MANY CONTACTS AND THE MEDIA IS THAT THE MAIN THRUST OF THE WHITE PAPER IS RIGHT, AND HAS THE SUPPORT OF MOST PEOPLE IN HONG KONG," HE SAID.

HE WAS MOVING A MOTION THAT THE COUNCIL TAKE NOTE OF THE PLANS AND INTENTIONS CONTAINED IN THE WHITE PAPER.

SIR DAVID SAID THAT WHILE MANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE CONTENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY DID NOT DRAW ATTENTION TO THEIR SATISFACTION, IT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT THOSE WHO DISAGREED WITH ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE DECISIONS IN THE WHITE PAPER SHOULD VOICE THEIR OBJECTIONS FORCEFULLY.

"THEIR VIEWS ARE GIVEN JUST AS MUCH ATTENTION BY THE GOVERNMENT," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE WHITE PAPER WAS TO CHART THE COURSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT BETWEEN NOW AND 1991.

AND THE GOAL WAS TO DEVELOP A SYSTEM WHICH MET THE WISHES AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG AND ALSO TOOK ACCOUNT OF THE NEED FOR A SMOOTH TRANSITION IN 1997.

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF ISSUES WHICH HAD BEEN THE SUBJECT OF A GREAT DEAL OF COMMENT SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE PAPER.

ONE WAS THE PACE OF DEVELOPMENT IN GENERAL AND THE TIMING OF INTRODUCING DIRECT ELECTIONS INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

SIR DAVID SAID SOME FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT MANY PEOPLE IN HONG KONG WERE WARY OF MOVING TOO FAR TOO FAST TOWARDS A FULLY-FLEDGED PARLIAMENTARY STYLE DEMOCRACY.

HOWEVER, THERE WERE MANY OTHER PEOPLE WHO SAID THAT THEY COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THERE SHOULD BE SUCH A FUSS OVER THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 1988 AND 1991 AND THAT THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE WAS THE FACT OF THE INTRODUCTION INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF DIRECTLY ELECTED MEMBERS.

"ANYONE WHO IS PREPARED TO VIEW OUR DEVELOPMENT IN TRUE PERSPECTIVE WILL AGREE THAT WE ARE MAKING A MAJOR ADVANCE TOWARDS A MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT," HE SAID.

/HE POINTED

HE POINTED OUT THAT WITH 10 DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN 1991, HONG KONG WOULD HAVE MOVED FROM A LEGISLATURE WHICH WAS ENTIRELY APPOINTED TO ONE WITH A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF DIRECTLY ELECTED MEMBERS IN A MATTER OF SIX YEARS.

SIR DAVID SAID THAT MANY OF THOSE WHO ARGUED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS WRONG IN NOT INTRODUCING DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988 SEEMED TO BE UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THAT THERE WAS A VERY REAL DIVISION OF VIEWS AS TO WHETHER DIRECT ELECTIONS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED IN 1988 OR LATER.

HE QUOTED A NUMBER OF STATISTICS TO SHOW THAT THIS DIVISION OF VIEWS WAS A FACT.

IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATE ON THE GREEN PAPER, 18 MEMBERS WERE FOR DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988 AND 18 AGAINST, WHILE THE NUMBERS IN THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND THE DISTRICT BOARDS WERE 19 FOR AND NINE AGAINST AND 121 FOR AND 123 AGAINST RESPECTIVELY.

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS TO THE SURVEY OFFICE SHOWED THAT SOME 39,000 PEOPLE WERE IN FAVOUR OF INTRODUCING DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988 AND SOME 91,000 PEOPLE WERE AGAINST.

OF THE GROUP SUBMISSIONS, 229 WERE FOR AND 352 AGAINST. THE TWO AGB MCNAIR SURVEYS SHOWED, RESPECTIVELY, 15 PER CENT FOR, 19 PER CENT AGAINST IN THE FIRST SURVEY AND 12 PER CENT FOR, 21 PER CENT AGAINST IN THE SECOND SURVEY.

OTHER TERRITORY-WIDE, RANDOM SAMPLE SURVEYS SHOWED A RANGE OF RESULTS, GENERALLY IN FAVOUR OF 1988 ON BALANCE, WHILE SIGNATURE CAMPAIGNS WERE ALMOST ALL IN FAVOUR OF 1988.

"IT IS BECAUSE, AND ONLY BECAUSE, OF THIS SHARP DIVISION OF VIEWS ON TIMING THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONCLUDED THAT IT WOULD NOT BE RIGHT TO INTRODUCE DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988," HE SAID.

AS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE REPRESENTED A MAJOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE, THE GOVERNMENT MUST THEREFORE BE SURE THAT THEIR INTRODUCTION HAD THE CLEAR SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE.

TURNING TO CRITICISM OF THE TWO OPINION SURVEYS CONDUCTED BY AGB MCNAIR HK LTD, SIR DAVID REPEATED THAT THERE WERE INEVITABLY DIFFERENT JUDGEMENTS ON HOW SURVEYS OF THIS NATURE SHOULD BE CONDUCTED.

BUT HE ALSO ADDED THAT COMMENTS ON THE SURVEYS, WHETHER CRITICAL OR OTHERWISE, HAD BEEN FULLY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN THE SURVEY RESULTS WERE CONSIDERED.

"I WISH TO EMPHASISE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT ALL VIEWS AND NOT JUST ANY PARTICULAR SURVEY OR ANY PARTICULAR FORM OF SUBMISSION," HE ADDED.

/"INDEED IT

"INDEED IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IT IS OUR CRITICS WHO HAVE TRIED TO RELY ON ONE PARTICULAR SET OF SURVEYS TO PROVE THEIR POINT AND HAVE CHOSEN TO IGNORE THE OVERALL IMPLICATIONS OF THE VIEWS RECORDED IN THE SURVEY OFFICE REPORT, WHICH WERE CLEARLY THAT THE COMMUNITY IS DIVIDED ON THE QUESTION OF TIMING OF DIRECT ELECTIONS TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL."

ON THE DECISION TO PROVIDE TWO ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY SEATS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN 1988 AFTER CONSIDERING SOME 50 REQUESTS, SIR DAVID GAVE AN ASSURANCE THAT ALL CLAIMS HAD BEEN GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION.

HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT SOME EXPLANATION ON THE POSITION OF THE HEUNG YEE KUK WAS DUE, BECAUSE IT WAS THE BODY WHICH RECEIVED THE MOST SUPPORT FOR ITS RECOGNITION AS A FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY, AND BECAUSE THE QUESTION HAD BEEN RAISED AS TO THE IMPORTANCE WHICH THE GOVERNMENT ATTACHED TO THE ROLE OF THE HEUNG YEE KUK.

IT WAS CONSIDERED INAPPROPRIATE TO FIT THE KUK INTO THE ROLE OF A FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY BECAUSE THESE CONSTITUENCIES WERE DESIGNED TO REPRESENT PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS WITH A TERRITORY-WIDE SIGNIFICANCE, HE SAID.

THE DECISION SHOULD IN NO WAY BE INTERPRETED AS PLAYING DOWN THE IMPORTANCE OF ITS ROLE, SIR DAVID SAID.

HE MENTIONED THAT IN HIS LETTER TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE KUK ON MARCH 11, HE HAD WRITTEN: 'THE GOVERNMENT FULLY RECOGNISES THE KUK'S OVERALL CONCERN IN NEW TERRITORIES AFFAIRS AND ITS IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE INTERESTS OF THE NEW TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS POPULATION. IT IS, THEREFORE, THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRM INTENTION TO ENSURE THAT THESE INTERESTS WILL BE PROPERLY REPRESENTED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.'

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF REPRESENTATIVE MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DISTRICT BOARDS TO THE URBAN COUNCIL, SIR DAVID SAID THAT PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS SHOWED A WIDE RANGE OF RESULTS, WITH THE OVERALL PICTURE BEING IN FAVOUR OF EXPANDING THE URBAN COUNCIL TO INCLUDE DISTRICT BOARD REPRESENTATIVES.

HE NOTED THAT THE CHANGE ALSO MEANT THAT THE URBAN COUNCIL, WITH FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR LARGE AREAS OF PUBLIC POLICY, WOULD HAVE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, A MAJORITY OF ELECTED MEMBERS.

THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS IN THE WHITE PAPER REPRESENTED A RATIONALISATION OF THE THREE-TIER STRUCTURE BY PROVIDING FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF DISTRICT BOARDS TO BE ELECTED TO THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, AND FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS TO BE ELECTED TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID.

THE PRESENT DISTRICT-BASED ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEATS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WOULD, IN 1991, BE REPLACED BY DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS.

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HOWEVER, THE ABOLITION OF GEOGRAPHICAL ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEATS IN NO WAY AFFECTED THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF DISTRICT BOARDS.

SIR DAVID SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT EXPECT THAT EVERYONE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER, NOR THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE, SHOULD SUPPORT EACH AND EVERY CLAUSE OF THE WHITE PAPER.

"THAT IS WHY THE MOTION WHICH I HAVE PROPOSED TODAY SEEKS MEMBERS' AGREEMENT THAT WE SHOULD TAKE NOTE OF THE PLANS AND INTENTIONS CONTAINED IN IT," HE SAID.

IN CONCLUDING, HE SAID THAT IT WAS THE DUTY OF THE GOVERNMENT, IN CONSIDERING THE WAY FORWARD FOR POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN HONG KONG, TO SEEK A CONSENSUS VIEWS THAT WOULD MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE AND SATISFY A MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE.

"I AM IN NO DOUBT WHATSOEVER THAT THE BROAD POLICIES CONTAINED IN THE WHITE PAPER ARE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, AND HAVE THEIR SUPPORT," HE SAID.

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CONFIDENCE AND UNITY VITAL FOR FUTURE

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THE SENIOR MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THE HON LYDIA DUNN, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) URGED THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG TO FACE THE FUTURE POSITIVELY AND CONFIDENTLY, AND TO WORK TOGETHER IN IMPLEMENTING THE JOINT DECLARATION.

MISS DUNN WAS SPEAKING IN THE COUNCIL IN SUPPORT OF THE PLANS AND INTENTIONS IN THE WHITE PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

"THE WHITE PAPER BRINGS US ONE STEP NEARER TO THAT GOAL," SHE SAID IN LEADING OFF THE DEBATE ON THE MOTION MOVED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY.

MISS DUNN POINTED OUT THAT ALL LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS AND EVERYONE INVOLVED IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS HERE CARRIED A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY FOR HONG KONG'S PEOPLE.

"WE OWE IT TO THEM TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE WELL-BEING OF US ALL," SHE SAID.

SHE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PEOPLE BECOMING MUCH MORE UNITED.

/"ONLY THEN

"ONLY THEN WILL WE CARRY CONVICTION WHEN WE STAND UP FOR THE RIGHTS AND WAY OF LIFE THAT HAVE BEEN PLEDGED TO US BY THE JOINT DECLARATION," SHE SAID.

WITHOUT THE JOINT DECLARATION, HONG KONG WOULD FACE THE CERTAIN REVERSION TO CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY WITH NO PROMISE OF AUTONOMY.

"IF WE DO NOT PULL OURSELVES TOGETHER WE RISK BECOMING A FRAGMENTED COMMUNITY PARALYSED BY CONFUSION, SELF-DOUBT AND SUSPICION," SHE SAID.

"IF WE CANNOT RECONCILE OUR DIFFERENCES, WHAT CHANCE HAVE WE OF BUILDING A FUTURE TOGETHER?"

SHE SAID IT WAS ALL VERY WELL FOR INDIVIDUALS TO PURSUE IDEAL SOLUTIONS, BUT WHEN ALL HAD HAD THEIR SAY, THEY MUST BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE OUTCOME ENDORSED BY THE MAJORITY.

MISS DUNN SAID THAT TWO POINTS HAD CLEARLY EMERGED FROM THE GREEN PAPER CONSULTATION EXERCISE.

FIRST, THE PEOPLE DID WANT MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, AND SECONDLY, NEARLY ALL SAW THE INTRODUCTION OF DIRECTLY ELECTED MEMBERS INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AS THE NEXT STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG'S SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT.

HOWEVER, THE OUTCOME OF THE DEBATE ON THE TIMING OF THAT NEXT STEP HAD BEEN "DIVISIVE". ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY REPORT HAD SHOWN THAT PUBLIC OPINION ON THIS ISSUE WAS "OBVIOUSLY SPLIT".

MISS DUNN EMPHASISED THAT IF THE VIEWS OF THE COMMUNITY ON THIS ISSUE HAD BEEN AS DECISIVE AS THOSE ON ALL THE OTHER KEY ISSUES IN THE GREEN PAPER, AND HAD CLEARLY SUPPORTED THE DEMANDS FOR DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WOULD HAVE ADVISED THE GOVERNOR TO INTRODUCE DIRECT ELECTIONS THIS YEAR.

"CONTROVERSIAL CHANGES NEED A BROAD CONSENSUS TO SUSTAIN THEM," SHE SAID. "NO RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT CAN MAKE, OR SHOULD ATTEMPT TO MAKE, RADICAL CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES WITHOUT CLEAR COMMUNITY SUPPORT.

"IT IS NOT A SIMPLE QUESTION OF WHETHER MORE PEOPLE WERE FOR AND LESS AGAINST, BUT WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT COULD IGNORE THE GENUINE RESERVATIONS OF SO MANY IN THE COMMUNITY WHO WERE AGAINST CHANGE IN 1988."

MISS DUNN FELT THAT PEOPLE SHOULD NOW DEVOTE MORE THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION TO THE SORT OF DIRECT ELECTIONS HONG KONG SHOULD HAVE; HOW A FULLY ELECTED LEGISLATURE WOULD OPERATE IN THE FUTURE; AND THE CONTENT OF THE BASIC LAW.

"THE BASIC LAW IS TO BE THE BLUEPRINT FOR OUR CAPITALIST SYSTEM, OUR LIFE-STYLE, OUR FREEDOMS IN THE YEARS TO COME. WE MUST HELP THE BASIC LAW DRAFTING COMMITTEE TO GET IT RIGHT.

"AND TO DO THAT EFFECTIVELY, WE NEED TO SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE ON THE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER," SHE SAID.

MISS DUNN ALSO CALLED ON BOTH THE BRITISH AND CHINESE GOVERNMENTS TO BE MORE SENSITIVE TO THE ANXIETIES AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG IN PREPARATION FOR A TRANSFER OF SOVEREIGNTY FROM A NATION WITH A LONG ESTABLISHED TRADITION OF LIBERAL AND DEMOCRATIC VALUE TO A MODERN SOCIALIST STATE.

"CHINA'S WELL PUBLICISED ATTITUDE TO DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988 AND RECENT STATEMENTS ABOUT THE RIGHT OF THIS COUNCIL TO DEBATE THE DRAFT BASIC LAW HAVE NOT HELPED.

"EQUALLY, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S TREATMENT OF SUCH ISSUES AS VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND TOUGH BARGAINING OVER DEFENCE COSTS HAVE CALLED INTO QUESTION THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF HONG KONG'S SPECIAL CONCERNS," SHE SAID.

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PRAGMATISM GAINS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT

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IN VIEW OF THE PRAGMATIC NATURE OF THE DECISIONS ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, THE WHITE PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT HAS GAINED WIDESPREAD AND STRONG SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

THIS WAS STATED BY DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI DURING THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE MARKETING DECISION RESEARCH CONDUCTED A POLL AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE PAPER AND FOUND THAT TWO-THIRDS OF THE RESPONDENTS ENDORSED DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN 1991," HE SAID.

"A SEPARATE SURVEY, CARRIED OUT BY A YOUTH AGENCY, LIKEWISE INDICATED THAT ALMOST 70 PER CENT OF THE RESPONDENTS ACCEPTED THE TIMING OF DIRECT ELECTIONS AS RECOMMENDED IN THE WHITE PAPER."

DR HO SAID THE WHITE PAPER WOULD USHER HONG KONG INTO AN ERA OF DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS HISTORY.

"THIS IS A FUNDAMENTAL, STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT SYSTEM, AND IS THE SPEARHEAD OF THE DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS AT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL.

/"COMPARED WITH

"COMPARED WITH THE ISSUE OF DIRECT ELECTIONS, THE NUMBER OF DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IS A CHANGE OF A MUCH LESSER SIGNIFICANCE," HE SAID.

DR HO NOTED THAT DIRECT ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WAS A MUCH PREFERRED FORM OF ELECTION TO INDIRECT ELECTION THROUGH THE DISTRICT BOARD ELECTORAL COLLEGE.

HOWEVER, AS THE DIRECTLY ELECTED ELEMENTS WERE INCREASED AS HONG KONG APPROACHED 1997, HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE A SEAT TO BE RETURNED TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FROM EACH OF THE 19 DISTRICT BOARDS.

DR HO SAID NOW THAT THE WHITE PAPER WAS PUBLISHED, WITH A FIRM GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1991, IT WOULD SERVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE TO KEEP ON CRITICISING ITS PLANS AND MOBILISE OPPOSITION TO DISCREDIT THESE PLANS.

"RATHER, IT WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF HONG KONG IF WE, REGARDLESS OF IDEOLOGIES AND BACKGROUND, PUT ASIDE OUR DIFFERENT VIEWS AND JOIN TOGETHER OUR HEART AND HEAD TO TRANSLATE THE PROMISES IN THE WHITE PAPER INTO REALITIES AND TO MAKE DIRECT ELECTIONS WORK IN 1991," HE SAID.

NOTING THAT A THREE-YEAR PERIOD WAS A SHORT SPAN OF TIME IN TERMS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, DR HO URGED: "LET US START WORKING TOGETHER NOW TO BUILD UP A TERRITORY-WIDE ATMOSPHERE CONDUCIVE TO MORE ENTHUSIASTIC PARTICIPATION AND A HIGH VOTER TURNOUT RATE.

"LET US ALSO BE VIGILANT IN MONITORING THE PROVISIONS IN THE FORTHCOMING DRAFT BASIC LAW TO SEE IF THEY ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE INTENTION AND SPIRIT OF THE JOINT DECLARATION.

"IT IS THIS UNITY OF STRENGTH AND PURPOSE OF ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY THAT WILL ENABLE HONG KONG TO STEER STEADILY AND SMOOTHLY THROUGH THE TRANSITION, WHILE MAINTAINING STABILITY AND PROSPERITY AT THIS CRUCIAL MOMENT IN OUR HISTORY."

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COMMITMENT TO DIRECT ELECTIONS A SIGNIFICANT STEP

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WHITE PAPER ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT LIES IN THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO INTRODUCE DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1991 FOR 10 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SEATS, THE HON ALLEN LEE TOLD THE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER, MR LEE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT WAS A RESULT OF PUBLIC RESPONSE.

"AFTER STUDYING THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OFFICE REPORT CAREFULLY. I CAN ONLY SAY WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE THAT OUR COMMUNITY IS SPLIT ON THE SUBJECT OF DIRECT ELECTION IN 1988," HE SAID.

AND HE FELT THAT FACED WITH THIS DIVISION OF OPINION AMONG THE PUBLIC ON THE TIMING OF DIRECT ELECTIONS, THE GOVERNMENT HAD MADE A HISTORIC DECISION TO INTRODUCE AN ELEMENT OF DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1991.

"I HAVE FOUGHT FOR A COMMITMENT TO DIRECT ELECTION SINCE 1983 AND I ADVOCATED THE INTRODUCTION IN 1988. EVEN THOUGH IT IS NOW GOING TO BE IN 1991, I MUST SAY I AM GLAD TO SEE THAT IT HAS FINALLY HAPPENED.

"IT MEANS THAT INSTEAD OF SPENDING THE NEXT THREE YEARS ARGUING AND SPECULATING OVER WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE DIRECT ELECTION OR NOT, WE CAN START WORKING CONSTRUCTIVELY TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTION AS A PART OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN 1991," MR LEE SAID.

"AND EQUALLY IMPORTANT, WE CAN CONCENTRATE ON THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL: THE PASSING OF LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE THE WAY OUR COMMUNITY WORKS."

MR LEE SAID THAT WHEN THE BASIC LAW WAS PROMULGATED IN 1990, THERE WOULD BE IMPORTANT ISSUES TO SORT OUT OTHER THAN JUST DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEGISLATURE AND THE EXECUTIVE, AND ENSURING A SMOOTH TRANSFER FROM THE PRESENT SYSTEM TO THE SYSTEM THAT WOULD COME INTO BEING IN 1997.

"IT IS VITAL THAT THE SINGLE ISSUE OF DIRECT ELECTION SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO DISPLACE ALL THE OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES THAT WE HAVE TO CONSIDER," MR LEE EMPHASISED.

WHILE EXPRESSING REGRET THAT SOME INDIVIDUALS WERE NOW USING THEIR POSITION TO DISCREDIT THE GOVERNMENT, MR LEE POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS ALWAYS EASIER TO DESTROY THAN TO BUILD.

/"I HOPE

"I HOPE THAT THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE AND TO BUILD A BETTER HONG KONG AND NOT TO LET A FEW VOCAL MINORITIES DESTROY WHAT WE ARE TRYING SO HARD TO ACHIEVE FOR THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG," HE SAID.

IN CONCLUSION, MR LEE REITERATED HIS VIEW THAT THE WHITE PAPER WAS A WELL THOUGHT OUT DOCUMENT WHICH HAD TAKEN THE INTERESTS OF HONG KONG FULLY INTO CONSIDERATION.

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REALISTIC DOCUMENT AT THIS TIME
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THE WHITE PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT COULD BE REGARDED AS A REALISTIC DOCUMENT WHICH MET THE NEEDS OF HONG KONG AT THIS STAGE, THE HON F.K. HU SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER, MR HU SAID THAT ON THE ONE HAND, THE WHITE PAPER PROVIDED FOR CHANGES TO DEMOCRATISE THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE, WHILE ON THE OTHER, THE PROPOSED STEPS WERE PRUDENT AND CAUTIOUS ENOUGH TO PRESERVE THE TERRITORY'S STABILITY, WHICH WAS IMPORTANT IN THIS PERIOD OF TRANSITION.

FURTHERMORE, THE CHANGES PROPOSED IN THE DOCUMENT WERE DISCREET ENOUGH TO AVOID IMPINGING ON THE BASIC LAW WHICH WAS STILL BEING DRAFTED, AND WOULD THUS ENSURE THAT DEVELOPMENTS AT THIS STAGE WOULD CONVERGE WITH THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE TO BE ADOPTED AFTER 1997.

MR HU SAID HE WAS PARTICULARLY GLAD THAT THE WHITE PAPER ENABLED HONG KONG TO UNTANGLE ITSELF FROM THE "DIRECT ELECTION FOR 1988" CONTROVERSY AND MOVE AHEAD, WITH CHANGES THAT WERE ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMUNITY.

HE SAID THE PLANNED INTRODUCTION OF DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BY 1991 WAS A REASONABLE SOLUTION TO BRIDGE SHARPLY DIVIDED PUBLIC OPINION OVER TIMING.

COMMENTING THAT THE WHITE PAPER HAD, HOWEVER, OVERLOOKED A NUMBER OF STEPS IN THE PROCESS BETWEEN NOW AND THE INTRODUCTION OF DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1991, MR HU SAID THAT DIRECT ELECTIONS COULD BE CARRIED OUT IN TWO STAGES.

IN THE FIRST "WARMING-UP" STAGE, NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES WOULD HAVE TO BE RECOMMENDED BY DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS TO ENSURE THAT THE QUALITY OF CANDIDATES HAD REACHED A CERTAIN STANDARD.

/"AT THE

"AT THE SECOND STAGE THERE CAN BE DIRECT NOMINATIONS FROM THE DISTRICTS TO ENSURE THAT ANYONE WHO INTENDS TO STAND FOR ELECTION WILL HAVE A FAIR CHANCE OF DOING SO," HE SAID.

MR HU SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE EXISTING ELECTORAL COLLEGE SYSTEM SHOULD BE ABOLISHED EVENTUALLY.

THE REPLACEMENT OF 10 ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEATS BY GEOGRAPHICALLY BASED DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS IN 1991 WAS ONLY THE FIRST STEP, AND IT SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY THE ABOLITION OF THE TWO SEATS ALLOCATED TO THE URBAN AND REGIONAL COUNCILS.

HE ALSO SAW A NEED IN THE FUTURE FOR THE EXISTING THREE-TIER SYSTEM TO BE MERGED INTO A TWO-TIER ONE - AT CENTRAL AND DISTRICT LEVELS -WITH CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES.

"HONG KONG IS TOO SMALL A PLACE TO ALLOW TOO COMPLICATED A SYSTEM TO OPERATE. A CUMBERSOME STRUCTURE WILL ONLY REDUCE EFFICIENCY AND RESULT IN WASTE OF RESOURCES," HE SAID.

BEFORE 1997, HOWEVER, THE EXISTING SYSTEM SHOULD BE RETAINED TO AVIOD DESTABILISING THE PRESENT SYSTEM UNNECESSARILY IN THE TRANSITION PERIOD, HE ADDED.

MR HU ALSO URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO WORK OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS FOR DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1991, SUCH AS FURTHER DEFINING FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES AND REDRAWING CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES FOR GEOGRAPHICALLY BASED DIRECT ELECTIONS.

SUPPORTING THE ARGUMENT THAT IT WAS UNDESIRABLE TO HAVE TWO PARALLEL SYSTEMS OF GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OPERATING DIRECTLY AND THROUGH DISTRICT BOARDS, MR HU SAID THAT THE CROSS MEMBERSHIP ARRANGEMENT SHOULD NOT BE APPLIED TO THE URBAN COUNCIL DISTRICT BOARD RELATIONSHIP EITHER.

HOWEVER, HE ACCEPTED THAT THE ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THE REGIONAL COUNCIL AND THE DISTRICT BOARDS SHOULD REMAIN INTACT FOR THE TIME BEING, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT EXPLORED WAYS TO STRENGTHEN THE LINKS BETWEEN THE DISTRICT BOARDS AND THE URBAN COUNCIL.

HE ADDED THAT, IN THE LONG RUN, ALL COUNCIL AND BOARD MEMBERS SHOULD BE ELECTED, BE IT THROUGH DIRECT ELECTIONS OR INDIRECT ELECTIONS.

MR HU SAID HE WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT THE WHITE PAPER HAD NOT GONE FURTHER INTO THE PROPOSED BROADLY-BASED ELECTORAL COLLEGE.

HE SAID HONG KONG NEEDED A LEGISLATURE WHICH HAD A BALANCED VIEW AND REPRESENTED THE INTERESTS OF ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY. BUT THIS COULD NOT BE ACHIEVED IF THE FUTURE LEGISLATURE ONLY COMPRISED MEMBERS DIRECTLY ELECTED OR ELECTED THROUGH THE FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES.

"THE PROPOSED BROAD-BASED ELECTORAL COLLEGE WILL BE A PRACTICAL AND EFFECTIVE VEHICLE TO ENSURE THAT WE WILL HAVE A BALANCED LEGISLATURE IN THE FUTURE," HE SAID.

HE THEREFORE ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO SCRUTINISE THE IDEA MORE CLOSELY.

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TIME FOR PEOPLE TO WORK TOGETHER

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PEOPLE SHOULD WORK TOGETHER IN A CONCERTED EFFORT TO BUILD UP A BETTER HONG KONG, THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

TO DWELL ON ONE OR TWO ISSUES WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL AND MIGHT INSTEAD LEAD TO ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES, HE SAID DURING THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

INSTEAD, PEOPLE SHOULD CO-OPERATE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN STABILITY AND PROSPERITY DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD AS WELL AS FOR THE FUTURE AND THE WELL-BEING OF THE MAJORITY OF HONG KONG PEOPLE WHO WOULD STAY BEHIND AFTER 1997.

"I LOVE HONG KONG AND HOPE THAT ALL HONG KONG PEOPLE CAN LIVE AND WORK IN HARMONY IN A STABLE ENVIRONMENT FOREVER, WITH A RISING STANDARD OF LIVING AND IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE," HE ADDED.

MR CHEONG SAID THAT LED BY THE GOVERNMENT, THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG HAD BEEN LIVING AND WORKING IN A PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS SOCIETY.

"OUR SOCIETY IS, OF COURSE, NOT WITHOUT FLAWS. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN AND IS TRYING HARD TO OVERCOME THE SHORTCOMINGS AND MAKE IMPROVEMENTS," HE SAID.

EVERYONE, EXCEPT A FEW, RECOGNISED AND ACKNOWLEDGED THE ENDEAVOURS OF THE GOVERNMENT.

IN THE LONGER TERM, PEOPLE MIGHT BE CONCERNED THAT THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT MIGHT REVERT FROM THE PRESENT OPEN POLICY TO THE PREVIOUS CLOSED DOOR POLICY. QUITE A NUMBER OF HONG KONG PEOPLE THEREFORE CHOSE TO EMIGRATE IF THEY COULD AFFORD TO DO SO.

MR CHEONG WISHED THESE PEOPLE ALL THE BEST BUT BELIEVED THAT THE MAJORITY OF HONG KONG PEOPLE COULD NOT AFFORD TO EMIGRATE.

HE ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO DECLARE THAT HE DID HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EMIGRATE BUT WOULD NEVER MAKE SUCH A CHOICE.

/"I WILL

"I WILL STAY IN HONG KONG AND DO WHAT I CAN TO SERVE MY BELOVED HOME TOWN IN THE HOPE THAT EVERYONE CAN LIVE IN PEACE AND PROSPERITY," HE SAID.

DEALING WITH THE WHITE PAPER, HE SAID HE FULLY SUPPORTED THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT DEVELOPED THE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM.

HE SAID THE PROPOSAL TO REPLACE THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEATS WITH DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS WAS LOGICAL AND PROGRESSIVE. AND YET SOME PEOPLE HARPED ON THE ARGUMENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT GIVING DISTRICT BOARDS DUE RESPECT.

HE SAID THEIR ARGUMENTS DID NOT HAVE A WELL THOUGHT OUT AND LOGICAL BASIS.

IF BOTH DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS AND ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEATS WERE PROVIDED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, IT WAS PROBABLY THAT THE BALANCE IN REPRESENTATION, WHICH WAS SO VITAL TO THE COMPOSITION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MIGHT BE UPSET.

MR CHEONG SAID THAT THE CHAPTER ON DIRECT ELECTIONS IN THE WHITE PAPER WAS WELL-PRESENTED, EXCEPT THAT IT FAILED TO GO INTO THE DETAILS RELATING TO IMPLEMENTATION.

HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO CARRY OUT PUBLIC CONSULTATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND WORK OUT THE DETAILS SO THAT A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION COULD BE BUILT.

HE ALSO SUPPORTED THE POINT WHICH HAD BEEN RAISED BY ANOTHER COUNCILLOR THAT CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ALLOWING DIFFERENT FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES TO HAVE DIFFERENT LIMITS OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE 1988 LEGCO ELECTIONS.

THE REASON WAS THAT THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS VARIED WITH DIFFERENT CONSTITUENCIES.

MR CHEONG OBSERVED THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE WERE ONLY CONCERNED WITH DIRECT ELECTIONS, AND THEREFORE THEY WERE TEMPTED TO TURN TO CHAPTER 4 OF THE WHITE PAPER FOR AN ANSWER.

BUT FOR HIS PART, HE FOUND PARAGRAPHS 2, 3 AND 4 OF THE "INTRODUCTION" IN CHAPTER 1 MOST INSPIRING AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING. IN ONLY A FEW HUNDRED WORDS, THESE PARAGRAPHS SET OUT IN PLAIN AND CONCISE LANGUAGE THE UNIQUE SITUATION OF HONG KONG.

"IT IS MY WISH THAT ALL OF US WOULD PONDER ON THE MEANING OF THESE FEW PARAGRAPHS AND THINK HARD ABOUT THE PROPER COURSE WE SHOULD TAKE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF MAINTAINING STABILITY AND PROSPERITY IN HONG KONG OVER THE NEXT 60 YEARS," HE SAID.

/TO ACHIEVE

TO ACHIEVE THAT OBJECTIVE, A STABLE AND SECURE SOCIETY WAS NEEDED TO CONVINCE INVESTORS THAT THEY COULD SAFELY CARRY ON THEIR ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN HONG KONG.

FURTHERMORE, IN ORDER TO REDUCE TO A MINIMUM POSSIBLE INTERVENTION FROM CHINA, IT WAS NECESSARY FOR HONG KONG TO CONTINUE DEVELOPING ITSELF INTO AN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR TRADING, FINANCIAL, AND TOURIST ACTIVITIES.

MR CHEONG ADDED THAT THE KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF THE ONE-COUNTRY, TWO-SYSTEMS CONCEPT WAS WHETHER THE SAR GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO MAINTAIN A GOOD UNDERSTANDING AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT.

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REALISTIC, PRACTICAL WAY FORWARD

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THERE HAS BEEN A GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE WHITE PAPER ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT AS A WORKABLE POLICY PAPER BOTH IN MOVEMENT AND IN BALANCE POINTING TO A REALISTIC AND PRACTICAL WAY FORWARD, THE HON SELINA CHOW SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THESE WERE THE FINDINGS EITHER THROUGH DIRECT CONTACT WITH PEOPLE OF VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY, OR FROM THE INDEPENDENT SURVEYS CONDUCTED BY INTERESTED AND DISINTERESTED BODIES, MRS CHOW SAID IN THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER.

"I SHARE THE VIEW THAT IN ANY DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, AMPLE OPPORTUNITY MUST BE GIVEN FOR ALL VIEWS TO BE AIRED AND DEBATED," SHE SAID.

"BUT IN THAT SAME DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, THERE MUST COME A TIME WHEN DECISIONS HAVE TO BE MADE, EVEN TO THE DISPLEASURE OF SOME, BEARING IN MIND NO DECISION CAN PLEASE EVERYONE."

MRS CHOW SAID THAT TO PROTRACT PUBLIC DEBATE BEYOND THAT POINT BY CASTING DOUBTS ON THE WISDOM AND INTEGRITY OF THOSE DECISIONS AND THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THEM COULD ONLY RESULT IN A DESTABILISING EFFECT ON THE COMMUNITY.

SHE SAID SHE BELIEVED A CAMPAIGN WAS AFOOT TO CREATE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE AN IMPRESSION, AND A FALSE ONE, THAT THE HONG KONG PEOPLE WERE BEING SHORTCHANGED BY THE DECISIONS TAKEN IN THE WHITE PAPER.

SHE REFERRED TO PEOPLE WHOM SHE HAD MET IN LONDON OVER LUNAR NEW YEAR WHO HAD BEEN GIVEN A MISLEADING IMPRESSION BY NEWSPAPER REPORTS.

/"THIS I

"THIS I AM SURE COMES AS GOOD NEWS TO THOSE WHO WORKED HARD TO ACHIEVE THE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE," SHE SAID.

"DO THEY NOT REALISE THAT IN THEIR HEADSTRONG EFFORT TO BE HEARD, THAT THEY ARE DOING A TREMENDOUS DISSERVICE TO HONG KONG BY DISTORTING THE TRUTH AND BY CREATING AN UGLY IMAGE OF INSTABILITY TOTALLY UNCHARACTERISTIC OF OUR COMMUNITY, AN IMAGE WHICH WOULD BE SO VERY HARMFUL TO INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENCE IN HONG KONG WHICH AT THIS STAGE IN OUR HISTORY WE MUST ALL WANT AND SEEK TO MAINTAIN AND BUILD?"

"DO THEY REALLY BELIEVE THEIR ACTION IS IN HONG KONG'S INTEREST? BEFORE THEY COME UP IN THEIR OWN DEFENCE THAT THEY ONLY DID IT FOR A MORE DEMOCRATIC HONG KONG, I SUGGEST THEY ASK THEMSELVES WHETHER WHAT THEY HAVE DONE, AND WHAT THEY HAVE ACHIEVED, REFLECT THE WISHES OF OUR PEOPLE, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE WELL-BEING OF OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY."

MRS CHOW SAID SOME ACTIVISTS HAD DENOUNCED THE WHITE PAPER NOT ONLY FOR NOT INTRODUCING DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988, BUT ALSO FOR PROPOSING TO REPLACE THE DISTRICT BOARD ELECTORAL COLLEGE IN 1991 BY DIRECT ELECTIONS.

"WE DO NOT NEED LONG MEMORY TO RECALL THAT ONLY IN 1985, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE FIRST ROUND OF ELECTORAL COLLEGE ELECTIONS THAT THE SAME PEOPLE CRITICISED THE EXISTING INDIRECT METHOD AS DIVISIVE AND HARMFUL TO THE HARMONIOUS CO-OPERATION WITHIN THE DISTRICT BOARDS, AND ADVOCATED THAT IT SHOULD THEREFORE GIVE WAY TO DIRECT ELECTIONS," SHE SAID.

"NOW THAT SUCH VIEWS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT AS THE BASIS FOR THE SUBSTITUTE OF INDIRECT BY DIRECT POPULIST ELECTIONS, THE ORIGINAL ADVOCATES HAVE BECOME ITS CRITICS.

"NO RATIONALE HAS BEEN GIVEN FOR THIS U-TURN. NONE EXISTS. TO REPLACE ONE WITH THE OTHER RENDERS THE METHOD AND THE SYSTEM SIMPLER, CLEANER AND THEREFORE MORE EFFECTIVE.

"IT ELIMINATES THE QUESTION OF DOUBLE LOYALTY. THE REPRESENTATIVES SO ELECTED ARE HELD DIRECTLY ACCOUNTABLE TO THE ELECTORATE."

MRS CHOW SAID THERE WAS A VIEW AT PRESENT CHAMPIONED BY ACADEMIC AND POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS THAT THE WHITE PAPER WAS THE CAUSE FOR THE LOW TURNOUT OF VOTERS IN LAST WEEK'S DISTRICT BOARD ELECTIONS.

SHE SAID SUCH AN OPINION MUST BE BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT MOST CANDIDATES WHO JOINED THE DISTRICT BOARD ELECTIONS HAD THEIR EYE ON A SEAT IN THE LEGISLATURE.

/ "I WONDER

"I WONDER HOW SUCH AN ASSUMPTION CAN BE SUBSTANTIATED, FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS I HAVE MET HAVE BEEN DEDICATED SOLELY TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THEIR OWN DISTRICTS, RATHER THAN TREATING THEIR ROLE AS THE STEPPING STONE TO LEGCO."

MRS CHOW SAID THE DISTRICT BOARDS COULD SERVE AS EXCELLENT TRAINING GROUND FOR TALENTED PEOPLE WHO HAD A POLITICAL ASPIRATION TO ACHIEVE HIGHER THINGS.

"HOWEVER, AS IT STANDS, I DO NOT THINK GOVERNMENT IS BEING PROGRESSIVE ENOUGH IN NURTURING THE RIGHT SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY BY LETTING GO THE APPROPRIATE PROPORTION OF AUTHORITY TO DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS.

"UP TO THIS POINT THERE IS STILL NO OFFICIAL CHANNEL FOR PROPER CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THE BOARDS AND THEIR PARALLEL DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES."

SHE SAID THERE WAS RESISTANCE AMONG OFFICIALS TO HAVING BOARD MEMBERS OR EVEN CHAIRMEN, PARTICIPATE, EVEN AS OBSERVERS, ON A DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE.

"THIS MUST CHANGE. IT IS ONLY BY BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIER BETWEEN THE NON-OFFICIAL ADVISERS AND THE LOCAL OFFICIALS THAT THE WORRYING TENDENCY OF THE ENERGY OF DISTRICT BOARDS BEING GRADUALLY CHANNELLED TO A PRESSURE-GROUP MENTALITY DUE TO CONTINUOUS FRUSTRATION CAN BE REVERSED."

MRS CHOW SAID SHE HOPED THE WHITE PAPER WOULD HERALD A NEW AGE OF CO-OPERATION AND GOODWILL, OF CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM AND TOLERANCE, OF TEAMWORK DEDICATED TO THE SINGLE COURSE OF MAKING A BETTER FUTURE FOR THE TERRITORY.

"TO PREPARE OURSELVES FOR THE ADVENT OF DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1991, WE MUST PROVE THAT WE CAN RESOLVE DIFFERENCES AND CONTROVERSIES IN A DEMOCRATIC AND RESPONSIBLE MANNER, ALWAYS AIMING AT SOLUTION RATHER THAN CREATION OF PROBLEMS, GOING FOR COMPROMISE RATHER THAN POLARISATION," SHE SAID.

DIVERSITY OF VIEWS HEALTHY FOR COMMUNITY

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THE DIVERSITY OF VIEWS AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH ARE HEALTHY FOR A COMMUNITY, DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DR IP SAID WHAT WAS EVEN HEALTHIER, HOWEVER, WAS THE ABILITY OF A GOVERNMENT, AT THE END OF THE DAY, TO MAKE A DECISION, STAND BY IT AND CARRY IT THROUGH, FIRMLY AND CONSCIENTIOUSLY DESPITE THE DIVERSITY OF VIEWS AND DEMANDS.

"THE RECENT TREND OF INCREASING DEMANDS HAS MADE THE GOVERNMENT'S TASK DIFFICULT," SHE OBSERVED DURING THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

"FOR THOSE WHO TREASURE A STRONG AND DECISIVE GOVERNMENT, MORE SUPPORT CAN BE GIVEN TO IT AS LONG AS ITS PROPOSALS IN THE WHITE PAPER ARE SAFE, WORKABLE AND HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION ACCORDING TO THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE," SHE SAID.

"AND IN MY OPINION IT IS," SHE SAID, ADDING THAT "THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR FURTHER CHANGES IN THE FUTURE."

DR IP SAID SHE WAS GRATEFUL THAT THE MAJORITY OF HER REQUESTS MADE IN THE GREEN PAPER DEBATE LAST YEAR WERE FULFILLED.

THESE INCLUDED THE INTRODUCTION OF ACCOUNTANTS, DENTISTS, AND PARAMEDICAL PROFESSIONALS INTO EXPANDED FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES, AND ADOPTION OF AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY WITH PREFERENTIAL VOTING IN THE FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES.

"I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A SPECIAL NOTE OF PRAISE, FOR THE INGENIOUS WAY IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS TACKLED THE DIFFICULTY IN INTRODUCING AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY METHOD IN THE FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY ELECTIONS BY USING THE PREFERENTIAL ELIMINATION SYSTEM OF VOTING," SHE SAID.

"THE BEAUTY LIES IN OBTAINING AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, YET ALLOWING COMPLETE FREEDOM FOR VOTERS TO ENTER ONE OR MORE PREFERENTIAL VOTES, AND EXPEDITING THE TASK WITHOUT THE NEED FOR RE-VOTING."

DR IP SAID SOME OF HER PROPOSALS HAD NOT YET BEEN MET, AND IT WAS A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE TOTAL NUMBER OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS AS WELL AS THE LENGTH OF THEIR TERM WOULD BE INCREASED.

ON THE WAY FORWARD, IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DECLARED POLICY TO INTRODUCE DIRECT ELECTIONS FROM THE DISTRICTS IN 1991, SHE SAID MOVES MUST BE MADE CAUTIOUSLY.

"THE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES STANDING FOR DIRECT ELECTION IN A DISTRICT MUST, IN SOME WAYS, BE LIMITED TO A REASONABLE NUMBER AND THEIR QUALITIES AND ABILITIES MUST SOMEHOW BE SCREENED," DR IP SAID.

"I CANNOT FORESEE HOW BOTH THESE REQUIREMENTS CAN BE ACHIEVED EXCEPT THROUGH NOMINATION OF SOME KIND BY THE RESPECTIVE DISTRICT BOARDS."

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COMMITMENT PUTS END TO UNCERTAINTY

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THE FIRM COMMITMENT MADE IN THE WHITE PAPER TO INTRODUCE DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1991 IS WELCOMED BY MANY PEOPLE AS IT PUTS A STOP TO SPECULATION AND UNCERTAINTY, THE HON RITA FAN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, MRS FAN SAID IT WAS NOW TIME TO START PREPARING FOR THESE DIRECT ELECTIONS TO MAKE THEM MEANINGFUL AND REPRESENTATIVE.

SHE SAID SHE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WOULD NECESSARILY AGREE WITH THE VIEW THAT THE SUCCESS OF HONG KONG WAS DEPENDENT ON THE INTRODUCTION OF DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988.

"VARIOUS SURVEY REPORTS HAVE SHOWN THAT THE MAJORITY WOULD LIKE TO SEE AN ELEMENT OF DIRECT ELECTION IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, BUT THEY DO NOT INSIST THAT THIS MUST HAPPEN IN 1988," SHE SAID.

THE EFFORTS OF SOME COUNCILLORS IN DEMANDING DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988 DID DESERVE RECOGNITION.

"THEY HAVE MOBILISED CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FOR THEIR CAUSE THROUGH SHEER PERSISTENCE AND ORGANISATIONAL POWER," SHE SAID.

"THEIR SUCCESS WILL NOT GO UNNOTICED. BUT IS IT NECESSARY TO BE SO RIGID ON THE TIMING PARTICULARLY WHEN THE COMMUNITY OF HONG KONG IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT 1991?"

MRS FAN SAID COUNCILLORS MUST REMEMBER THAT HONG KONG PEOPLE WERE REALISTIC AND PRAGMATIC.

"WE MUST RECOGNISE THAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT CAN WELL PROGRESS AFTER 1997," SHE SAID.

"UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, THE TIMING OF 1991 OR 1988 DOES NOT REALLY MAKE THAT MUCH DIFFERENCE."

/MRS FAN

MRS FAN SAID THAT IN THE GREEN PAPER DEBATE LAST JULY, SHE HAD ADVOCATED AN INCREASE IN FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY SEATS AND THE REPLACEMENT OF INDIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS BASED ON GEOGRAPHICAL ELECTORAL COLLEGES BY DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS.

"I AM PLEASED TO SEE THAT RELEVANT STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN THE WHITE PAPER."

SHE SAID THE FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY SYSTEM WAS CRITICISED BY SOME PEOPLE AS BEING UNDEMOCRATIC AND DIVISIVE.

HOWEVER, EXPERIENCE OVER THE PAST 26 MONTHS HAD PROVED THAT MEMBERS RETURNED BY FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES WERE NOT ONLY CONCERNED WITH THE INTEREST OF THEIR OWN CONSTITUENCY, BUT ALSO WITH TERRITORY-WIDE ISSUES.

"MOREOVER, VIEWS FROM DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS AND TRADES HAVE ENRICHED DISCUSSION IN THIS COUNCIL AND ENABLED LEGISLATION TO BE MORE THOROUGHLY SCRUTINISED.

"WHILE RESPECTING THE THEORETICAL AND ACADEMIC ARGUMENTS ON POSSIBLE SHORTFALLS OF THE FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY SYSTEM, I BELIEVE FURTHER EXPANSION OF SEATS IN THIS CATEGORY IS WELL SUPPORTED BY ACTUAL EXPERIENCE IN THIS COUNCIL AS A SUITABLE ELEMENT IN THE LEGISLATURE OF HONG KONG.

"IN PARTICULAR, I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE INCLUSION OF THE TOURIST INDUSTRY AS A FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY AT A FUTURE DATE, IN VIEW OF ITS SIGNIFICANT AND SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO OUR ECONOMY."

MRS FAN SAID THE PROPOSAL TO REPLACE THE 10 SEATS CURRENTLY ALLOCATED TO GEOGRAPHICAL ELECTORAL COLLEGES BY DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS WAS CRITICISED BY SOME AS A RETROGRESSIVE STEP.

"I BELIEVE THAT THIS IS A PROGRESSIVE STEP TOWARDS DEMOCRACY. IT IS REASONABLE AND NATURAL TO REPLACE INDIRECT ELECTION BY DIRECT ELECTION AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FORMER FOR A PERIOD OF TIME."

SHE SAID THAT SOME PEOPLE PREDICTED THAT THE STATUS OF DISTRICT BOARDS WOULD BE LOWERED AS A RESULT OF THE REMOVAL OF GEOGRAPHICAL ELECTORAL COLLEGES.

"THIS RESERVATION IS UNDERSTANDABLE BUT THE PREDICTION IS NOT NECESSARILY CORRECT. IN FACT, ANY FAR-SIGHTED DISTRICT BOARD MEMBER WOULD WORK EVEN HARDER AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL SO THAT THEIR PERFORMANCE CAN HELP TO PAVE THE WAY FOR DIRECT ELECTION IN 1991."

WHILE THE NUMBER OF DIRECTLY ELECTED LEGCO SEATS WOULD BE 10 IN 1991, SHE DID NOT SEE WHY THIS NUMBER COULD NOT BE INCREASED AFTER 1991 TO COVER EACH OF THE 19 DISTRICTS.

/MRS FAN

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MRS FAN ALSO SAID SHE HAD BEEN APPROACHED BY LOBBYISTS WHOSE MAIN CONCERN WAS THAT PUBLIC OPINION HAD BEEN IGNORED, AND THAT THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT HAD BOWED TO PRESSURE FROM CHINA.

"ALTHOUGH I APPRECIATE THEIR FEELINGS AND THEIR SINCERITY, I DO NOT SHARE THE SAME VIEW," SHE SAID.

SHE SAID THAT CONTRARY TO THE LOBBYISTS' BELIEF THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD USED THE AGB MCNAIR SURVEYS TO MISLEAD THE PUBLIC, SHE BELIEVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD GENUINELY CONSIDERED THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY. THE EMPHASIS PLACED ON THE AGB MCNAIR SURVEYS BY THE LOBBYISTS WAS MISPLACED.

IN ADDITION, TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY OFFICIALS IN CHINA, WHICH DID HAVE AN EXCEPTIONALLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH HONG KONG, WAS WHAT ONE WOULD EXPECT A SENSIBLE AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT TO DO.

IN REJECTING LOBBYISTS' CLAIMS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS A LIABILITY TO THE PEOPLE, MRS FAN POINTED TO THE SOCIAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY OF THE COMMUNITY.

"HOW CAN A GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS ACHIEVED SUCH RESULTS BE A LIABILITY?" SHE ASKED.

HER CONCLUSION WAS THAT THE WHITE PAPER SHOULD BE SUPPORTED.

MRS FAN SAID THERE WERE BOUND TO BE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AMONG MEMBERS. "BUT IN THE MIDST OF HEATED DEBATE, LET US ALL TAKE NOTE THAT THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WANT A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT WORKS FOR THE INTEREST OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY," SHE ADDED.

"DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD, HONG KONG NEEDS ALL ITS TALENTS TO WORK IN CLOSE CO-OPERATION FOR A BETTER FUTURE. LIKE IT OR NOT, WE ARE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT.

"THEREFORE, SHOULD WE NOT ILLUSTRATE BY OUR DEEDS AND OUR WORDS THAT WE ARE HERE TO SERVE THE PEOPLE, TO ENHANCE THEIR INTEREST IN EVERY ASPECT, AND THAT WE CAN WORK IN HARMONY?"

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GRADUAL AND PRUDENT APPROACH TO EVOLUTIONARY CHANGES

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THE OBJECTIVES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT AS SET OUT IN THE WHITE PAPER WERE ENTIRELY AGREED BY THE HON PETER POON TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, MR POON POINTED OUT THAT HONG KONG WAS A UNIQUE PLACE.

THE ADOPTION OF ANY SINGLE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD MIGHT NOT BE SUITABLE TO HONG KONG OR IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY.

"I FIRMLY BELIEVE WE SHOULD STRIVE FOR EVOLUTIONARY CHANGES WITH A GRADUAL AND PRUDENT APPROACH," HE SAID.

HE SAID HONG KONG HAD NO NATURAL RESOURCES APART FROM ITS HARDWORKING PEOPLE AND THEREFORE SHOULD NOT VENTURE ANY CHANGES WITHOUT THE PEOPLE'S WIDE SUPPORT, AND WITHOUT RECOGNITION OF THE POLITICAL REALITIES AS WELL AS THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANY SUCH CHANGES ON THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE AND THE SMOOTH TRANSITION TO 1997 AND BEYOND.

HE ADDED THAT THERE WAS NO DOUBT THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WERE IN FAVOUR OF DIRECT ELECTIONS. THE ONLY QUESTION WAS WHEN WOULD BE THE BEST TIME FOR THEIR INTRODUCTION.

MR POON NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A STRONG LOBBY FOR DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988.

"HOWEVER, FROM MY OWN OBSERVATIONS, OPINIONS AND SURVEYS DIFFER AS TO WHETHER THERE IS AN OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR SUCH A MOVE," HE SAID.

AFTER CONSIDERING ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HE ACCEPTED THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO HAVE DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1991. HE SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO SEE THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT IN THIS REGARD.

HE SAID HONG KONG PEOPLE SHOULD NOW CONCENTRATE THEIR EFFORTS TO SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATE THE CONCEPT OF DIRECT ELECTIONS INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM.

"WE SHOULD ALSO BE DIRECTING OUR ATTENTION TO THE PROPOSALS IN THE FORTHCOMING DRAFT OF THE BASIC LAW WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY BE THE BLUEPRINT OF OUR POLITICAL STRUCTURE AFTER 1997," HE SAID.

/MR POON

MR POON ADDED THAT HE WAS PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE WHITE PAPER PROPOSED AN ENLARGED FINANCIAL CONSTITUENCY BY GRANTING ONE ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATIVE IN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WHO WOULD COME FROM THE ACCOUNTANCY PROFESSION, AND TO RENAME THE NEW CONSTITUENCY "FINANCE AND ACCOUNTANCY" CONSTITUENCY.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THERE WERE NEARLY 4,000 PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS AND 12,000 ACCOUNTANCY STUDENTS REGISTERED WITH THE HONG KONG SOCIETY OF ACCOUNTANTS. THEY WERE ENGAGED IN PUBLIC PRACTICE, AS WELL AS IN THE FINANCIAL, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, GOVERNMENT AND EDUCATION SECTORS.

ACCOUNTANTS WERE SERVING A WIDE SPECTRUM OF THE COMMUNITY AND HAD MADE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GROWTH AND PROSPERITY OF HONG KONG, HE SAID.

"AS HONG KONG IS A MAJOR FINANCIAL CENTRE, PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS OUGHT TO HAVE THEIR OWN REPRESENTATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THROUGH THE FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY SYSTEM," HE SAID.

TURNING TO OTHER ASPECTS OF THE WHITE PAPER, MR POON WELCOMED THE RETENTION OF THE THREE-TIER SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT.

HE SAID THE SUGGESTED RATIONALISATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE THREE TIERS' STRUCTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS HAD BEEN CAREFULLY CONSIDERED AND WAS REASONABLE AT THIS STAGE OF HONG KONG'S CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

THE CLARIFICATION OF THEIR RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES AND GUIDELINES TO THE ADMINISTRATION TO IMPLEMENT AS FAR AS POSSIBLE THE SUGGESTIONS OF DISTRICT BOARDS WERE TIMELY AND WOULD GREATLY ASSIST THE WORK OF DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS.

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WELL-BALANCED OBJECTIVES SHOULD BE WELCOMED

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THE WHITE PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IS WELL-BALANCED AND ITS OBJECTIVES SHOULD BE WELCOMED AND ENDORSED, THE HON YEUNG PO-KWAN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER, MR YEUNG SAID THERE WERE FOUR OBJECTIVES.

THESE WERE THAT THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONTINUE TO EVOLVE; ITS DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE PRUDENT AND GRADUAL; ANY REFORMS SHOULD HAVE WIDE SUPPORT; AND THE CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT SYSTEM SHOULD PERMIT A SMOOTH TRANSITION IN 1997.

/THE INTENTION

THE INTENTION AND CONCEPT BEHIND THESE OBJECTIVES WERE IN LINE WITH THE NEEDS AND ACTUAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG TODAY, HE NOTED.

MR YEUNG SAID THAT IN DEVELOPING HONG KONG'S POLITICAL SYSTEM, CHINA, BRITAIN AND HONG KONG SHARED A COMMON INTEREST IN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS, AND THAT A GRADUAL EVOLUTION WOULD BE WIDELY WELCOMED AS A CAUTIOUS MOVE WHICH WOULD ENHANCE PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE.

"WHAT HONG KONG NEEDS NOW IS A 'RATIONAL MAINSTREAM' TO BRING THINGS INTO CONFORMITY WITH REASON," HE SAID.

ON DIRECT ELECTIONS, MR YEUNG SAID THAT THE ADOPTION OF DIRECT ELECTIONS WAS A HISTORICAL DECISION AND THAT THE WHITE PAPER HAD CHOSEN TO IMPLEMENT DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1991 AFTER TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE ACTUAL SITUATION DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD.

"WITH DIRECT ELECTIONS BEING INTRODUCED IN 1991 AND IF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MEETS THE ASPIRATION OF THE PUBLIC AND IS WITHIN THE PROVISIONS OF THE BASIC LAW, THE ISSUE OF SMOOTH TRANSITION AND SMOOTH TRANSFER WHICH HAVE CAUSED SO MUCH PUBLIC CONCERN WILL BE EASILY RESOLVED," HE ADDED.

HOWEVER, MR YEUNG POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH THE WHITE PAPER HAD ALREADY STATED THAT DIRECT ELECTIONS WOULD BE INTRODUCED IN 1991, THE METHODS OF DIRECT ELECTIONS AND THE DETAILS OF THE ELECTION SYSTEM ITSELF HAD NOT YET BEEN CLEARLY DEFINED.

"THE ONUS LIES WITH THE GOVERNMENT. IT SHOULD PROMPTLY WORK OUT A DETAILED PROGRAMME OF DIRECT ELECTIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 1991 AND ELUCIDATE ITS METHODS OF INTRODUCTION SO AS TO ENSURE THAT DIRECTLY ELECTED CANDIDATES CAN BE RETURNED UNDER A FULLY DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM," HE SAID.

CONSIDERATION SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO INCREASING THE NUMBER OF DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS BY PHASES AFTER 1991 AND TO STRENGTHEN ITS EFFORTS IN GROOMING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES TO PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS, HE ADDED.

MR YEUNG SAID THAT FROM NOW UNTIL 1991, HONG KONG HAD THREE YEARS TO GET ITSELF ACQUAINTED WITH THE CONCEPT OF DIRECT ELECTIONS AND TO LOOK FOR THE RIGHT CANDIDATES TO FILL THE SEATS.

"ONLY IN THIS WAY CAN THE REAL MEANING OF DIRECT ELECTIONS BE BROUGHT INTO FULL PLAY," HE SAID.

LASTLY, MR YEUNG NOTED THAT HISTORY WAS ITSELF AN ONGOING PROCESS AND POLITICS WAS A MATTER OF COMPROMISE.

HE ADVISED THAT "WE MUST THEREFORE FACE THE REALITY AND TAKE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FUTURE.

"BY TAKING A PRAGMATIC AND PRACTICAL APPROACH, THE WHITE PAPER HAS DEPICTED CLEARLY THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN HONG KONG AND PRESENTED US A BROAD GUIDELINE AS TO WHAT COURSE OUR POLITICAL REFORM SHOULD FOLLOW," HE SAID.

"WHAT WE SHOULD DO NOW IS TO ACTIVELY COMMIT OURSELVES TO THE PRACTICAL WORK OF DEVELOPING A FUTURE POLITICAL SYSTEM FOR HONG KONG WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK PRESCRIBED IN THE WHITE PAPER," HE ADDED.

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SELECT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE PROPOSED

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SERIOUS CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO INTRODUCING A SELECT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE FOR THE LEGISLATURE, EVOLVING FROM THE EXISTING LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANELS, DR THE HON KIM CHAM SAID IN THE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, DR CHAM SAID THAT LOOKING AHEAD, MORE THOUGHT MUST BE GIVEN TO DEVELOPING A GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE IN CONFORMITY WITH THE ELECTED LEGISLATURE PROVIDED FOR IN THE JOINT DECLARATION.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE MUST BE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PUBLIC AND RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITY NEEDS. ABOVE ALL, WHEN ITS PERFORMANCE FELL BELOW PUBLIC EXPECTATION, SOME DISCIPLINE MUST BE IMPOSED.

EXISTING LEGCO PANELS ALREADY EXAMINED SPECIAL ISSUES IN DEPTH AND ALSO LOOKED AT LEGISLATION AFTER BILLS WERE PUBLISHED, HE NOTED.

AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS CHANGE, HE SUGGESTED THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF A SELECT COMMITTEE SHOULD INTRODUCE BILLS INTO THE COUNCIL. THIS WOULD ENSURE THAT A BILL HAD SUPPORT BEFORE ITS INTRODUCTION.

AS A SECOND STEP, THE SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN SHOULD ANSWER QUESTIONS IN THE LEGISLATURE. THIS WOULD AVOID THE PITFALL OF HAVING COUNCILLORS WHO SERVED ONLY TO CRITICISE THE GOVERNMENT.

"THIS DIRECT INVOLVEMENT WILL ENSURE THAT COUNCILLORS WILL BE MONITORED AND RESPONSIBLE FOR LEGISLATION AS WELL AS IMPLEMENTATION," HE SAID.

HE SAID HIS EXPERIENCE IN THE URBAN COUNCIL WAS THAT A SELECT COMMITTEE DID WORK WELL WHEN SUPPORTED BY A CAPABLE TEAM OF OFFICERS.

THE GROUP ACTION OF A SELECT COMMITTEE WOULD ENSURE THAT THE ENACTMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION WAS CONSIDERED AND MONITORED THOROUGHLY.

DR CHAM NOTED THAT AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL, THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED THAT IN MARCH, 1989, 10 URBAN DISTRICT BOARDS WOULD EACH ELECT A REPRESENTATIVE TO SIT ON THE URBAN COUNCIL WHILE URBAN COUNCILLORS WOULD CEASE TO BE EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DISTRICT BOARDS.

HE SAID THAT CURRENTLY THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE INPUT FROM DISTRICT BOARDS TO THE URBAN COUNCIL.

FOR INSTANCE, EACH YEAR THE URBAN COUNCIL CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME WAS PLACED BEFORE EACH DISTRICT BOARD, AND PRIORITIES WITHIN THE PROGRAMME WERE ADJUSTED TO MEET DISTRICT BOARD NEEDS.

THIS WAS DONE TO ENSURE THAT ALL MEMBERS OF DISTRICT BOARDS WERE CONSULTED ON IMPORTANT PROGRAMMES SUCH AS CAPITAL WORKS.

HE ADDED THAT AS URBAN COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEES WERE ORGANISED ON A FUNCTIONAL BASIS, THE FUNCTIONAL SELECT COMMITTEE CONCERNED ALSO MONITORED POINTS RAISED AT DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS. HENCE, CONSIDERATION ON A TWO-PRONG BASIS WAS GIVEN TO ANY MATTERS RAISED BY DISTRICT BOARDS CONCERNING THE URBAN COUNCIL.

DR CHAM SAID THAT ALL THESE POINTS MUST BE LOOKED AT IN THE LIGHT OF THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT IN THE URBAN DISTRICT, WHICH DIFFERED FROM THAT OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL.

THE NEW TOWNS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES WERE MANY MILES APART WHEREAS IN THE URBAN DISTRICTS THE PHYSICAL SEPARATION BETWEEN DISTRICTS COULD BE AS CLOSE AS THE NEXT STREET.

"IN THIS CONTEXT, DESPITE PROSPECTS OF INTRODUCING INEFFICIENCIES AND CONTROVERSIES INTO THE URBAN COUNCIL, ONE MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO TRY OUT THE IDEA OF ONE REPRESENTATIVE PER DISTRICT BOARD ON THE URBAN COUNCIL," DR CHAM SAID.

HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE SENSIBLE TO ADOPT A PHASED APPROACH FOR THE CESSATION OF URBAN COUNCILLORS' EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP ON DISTRICT BOARDS.

"WHERE THE INTRODUCTION OF DISTRICT BOARD REPRESENTATIVES ON THE URBAN COUNCIL CAN BE EFFECTED IN MARCH, 1989, THE CESSATION OF EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP OF URBAN COUNCILLORS IN THE DISTRICT BOARD COULD BE REVIEWED BEFORE 1991 WHEN THE NEXT DISTRICT BOARD ELECTION IS TO BE HELD," HE SUGGESTED.

THIS PHASING-IN AND PHASING-OUT PROCESS WOULD PERMIT EVOLUTION, NOT REVOLUTION, OF THE URBAN COUNCIL SYSTEM, HE SAID.

TURNING TO DIRECT ELECTIONS, DR CHAM SAID THAT HAVING WITNESSED ELECTION CAMPAIGNS FOR THE DISTRICT BOARD ELECTIONS LAST WEEK, HE FELT THAT AMPLE TIME WAS REQUIRED FOR CANDIDATES TO ORGANISE THEMSELVES DILIGENTLY FOR THE 1991 ELECTIONS.

"THE THREE YEARS AHEAD WILL BE APPROPRIATE FOR CANDIDATES TO PREPARE THEMSELVES TO ACHIEVE A GOOD STANDARD OF ORGANISATION AS WAS EXHIBITED IN THE DISTRICT BOARD ELECTIONS LAST WEEK," HE SAID.

DR CHAM ALSO WELCOMED THE INTRODUCTION OF A SEAT FOR THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION, SAYING IT WAS MOST DESERVING MOVE.

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STEADY APPROACH ESSENTIAL DURING TRANSITION

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IN DRAFTING THE WHITE PAPER, THE GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN FULL ACCOUNT OF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PROVISIONS SET OUT IN THE JOINT DECLARATION AND THE FACT THAT ANY DEVELOPMENTS IN REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONVERGE WITH THE BASIC LAW.

THE HON CHENG HON-KWAN SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE WHITE PAPER ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

HE SAID THAT NONE OF THESE FACTORS WAS DISPENSABLE WHEN IT CAME TO MAINTAINING THE PROSPERITY AND STABILITY OF HONG KONG DURING THIS PERIOD OF TRANSITION.

"TODAY'S HONG KONG CANNOT WITHSTAND ANY SUDDEN CHANGES WITHOUT ADEQUATE PREPARATION. IT IS HIGH TIME THAT WE, PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, AFTER ALL THESE HEATED DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS ON A WIDE VARIETY OF ISSUES, SHOULD NOW PUT OUR HEADS AND HEARTS TOGETHER TO BUILD A BETTER HONG KONG.

"TO ACHIEVE THIS, A STEADY AND GRADUAL APPROACH IS ESSENTIAL FOR HONG KONG TO MAINTAIN POLITICAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AS WE HEAD TOWARDS 1997," HE SAID.

ON DIRECT ELECTIONS, MR CHENG SAID WHILE THERE WERE DIVIDED VIEWS WITHIN HIS CONSTITUENCY REGARDING THE TIMING OF THE INTRODUCTION OF DIRECT ELECTIONS, PEOPLE SHARED A COMMON VIEW - THAT DIRECT ELECTIONS SHOULD EVENTUALLY BE HELD.

HE SAID THIS WAS IN LINE WITH THE TERMS OF THE JOINT DECLARATION AND WOULD PREPARE HONG KONG FOR A SMOOTH TRANSITION IN 1997.

/MR CHENG

MR CHENG SAID THAT IN SPEAKING ON THE GREEN PAPER LAST JULY, HE HAD QUERIED THE WISDOM OF INTRODUCING SWEEPING CHANGES TO THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT WHICH HAD BEEN IN OPERATION FOR A MERE TWO YEARS.

"I THEN SAID, 'I AM ALSO OPPOSED TO MAKING MAJOR CHANGES TO A SYSTEM WHICH HAS NOT BEEN ADEQUATELY TESTED.'

"AND INDEED, AS REFLECTED IN THE WHITE PAPER, TWO YEARS IS AN ABNORMALLY SHORT TESTING TIME IN SUCH A SIGNIFICANT AREA - AN AREA WHICH WILL HAVE FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES ON THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG AND ON THE LIVELIHOOD OF ITS PEOPLE.

"I THEREFORE AGREE, WITHOUT HESITATION OR RESERVATION, THAT DIRECT ELECTIONS SHOULD NOT BE INTRODUCED THIS YEAR. AND I AM HAPPY TO SEE THAT THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE WHITE PAPER ARE SIMILAR."

MR CHENG SAID 1991 WAS THE APPROPRIATE TIME TO INTRODUCE DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BECAUSE BY THEN THE EXISTING STRUCTURE OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, INTRODUCED IN 1985, WOULD HAVE HAD SUFFICIENT TIME TO BE TESTED.

"SIX YEARS, I WOULD SAY, IS A REASONABLE DURATION TO ALLOW A NEW SYSTEM TO BE ADEQUATELY SCREENED AND IT WOULD THEREFORE BE MORE SENSIBLE TO MAKE FURTHER CHANGES TO THE SYSTEM AT THAT POINT IN TIME."

MR CHENG SAID HE ALSO THOUGHT 1991 WAS A SUITABLE TIME FOR INTRODUCING DIRECT ELECTIONS BECAUSE IT WAS HIS FIRM BELIEF THAT ANY CHANGES TO A SYSTEM AS IMPORTANT AND AS VITAL AS THE POLITICAL SYSTEM SHOULD BE EVOLUTIONARY AND GRADUAL.

"THIS WOULD NOT ONLY ELIMINATE THE POSSIBILITY OF PUTTING OUR SYSTEM AT RISK - A RISK WHICH WE CAN HARDLY AFFORD - BUT WOULD ALSO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE JOINT DECLARATION WHICH PLACES GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE CONTINUITY AND A STEP-BY-STEP EVOLUTION OF OUR STRUCTURE.

"FURTHERMORE, AS I POINTED OUT IN MY EARLIER SPEECH IN JULY, ANY ATTEMPT TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL INNOVATIONS AT THIS STAGE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE INTERPRETED AS PRE-EMPTING THE FUTURE BASIC LAW FOR HONG KONG."

MR CHENG SAID HE BELIEVED THAT LOCAL PEOPLE WOULD AGREE UNANIMOUSLY THAT IT WAS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO ACHIEVE A SMOOTH TRANSITION IN 1997 IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE PROSPERITY AND STABILITY OF THE TERRITORY.

"IN DOING SO, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE THAT DEVELOPMENTS BEFORE 1997 ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE FRAMEWORK TO BE ESTABLISHED IN THE BASIC LAW WHICH IS DUE TO BE PROMULGATED IN 1990. IT IS THEREFORE WISE NOT TO INTRODUCE MAJOR CHANGES TO THE LEGISLATURE THIS YEAR."

ON THE NUMBER OF DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN 1991, MR CHENG SAID HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED FIGURE OF 10 WHICH HE DEEMED SENSIBLE AND REASONABLE AS A BEGINNING.

"NOR DO I HAVE ANY OBJECTION TO THE BASIS ON WHICH DIRECT ELECTIONS ARE TO BE CARRIED OUT - THE SINGLE-SEAT GEOGRAPHICAL CONSTITUENCIES."

MR CHENG SAID THAT MORE EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE BETWEEN NOW AND 1991 TO INTENSIFY THE PROCESS OF CIVIC EDUCATION TO PREPARE PEOPLE FOR THE CHANGE.

ON DISTRICT BOARDS AND THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, HE SAID THE PROVISION SET OUT IN THE WHITE PAPER ALLOWED EACH OF THE URBAN DISTRICT BOARDS TO ELECT A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE URBAN COUNCIL AND THIS MOVE WAS WORTHY OF SUPPORT.

"I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IN FAVOUR OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE URBAN DISTRICT BOARDS BEING ELECTED TO THE URBAN COUNCIL TO ENHANCE CROSS-MEMBERSHIP.

"THIS, I BELIEVE, WILL ENSURE THAT THE VIEWS AND CONCERNS AT EACH LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT ARE ADEQUATELY REPRESENTED AT THE NEXT HIGHER LEVEL AND WILL, IN TURN, ENABLE OUR PRESENT THREE-TIER STRUCTURE TO OPERATE EVEN MORE EFFECTIVELY," HE SAID.

MR CHENG ALSO SAID HE AGREED THAT THE GOVERNOR SHOULD CONTINUE TO PRESIDE OVER THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND THAT THE NUMBER OF OFFICIAL MEMBERS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AND THE NUMBER OF APPOINTED MEMBERS BE FURTHER REDUCED.

HOWEVER, HE SAID HE WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT PROVIDED AN ADDITIONAL SEAT FOR ARCHITECTS, SURVEYORS AND PLANNERS WHO HE SAID WERE OUTNUMBERED BY ENGINEERS WITHIN HIS CONSTITUENCY.

"I EARNESTLY HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD STRIKE A FAIR BALANCE BETWEEN THESE PROFESSIONALS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WHEN FUTURE APPOINTMENTS ARE MADE."

HE WAS ALSO DISAPPOINTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT TAKEN NOTE OF THE SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION MADE TO HONG KONG'S ECONOMY BY MEMBERS OF THE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION AND THE BUILDING CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION.

MEMBERS OF THESE TWO BODIES SHOULD BE REPRESENTED ON THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID.

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PEOPLE URGED TO STUDY BASIC LAW

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HONG KONG PEOPLE SHOULD STUDY THE DRAFT BASIC LAW AND MAKE THEIR VIEWS KNOWN TO CHINA IF THEY WANT TO KEEP THEIR LIFE-STYLE AND PUSH FOR GREATER DEMOCRACY, STABILITY AND PROSPERITY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) DURING THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

MR CHEONG-LEEN DESCRIBED THE WHITE PAPER AS, IN FRANK TERMS, PRIMARILY A HOLDING OPERATION PENDING THE ADOPTION OF THE BASIC LAW IN 1990.

"THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WILL FROM NOW ON HAVE TO FOCUS THEIR CONCERTED ATTENTION ON STUDYING THE DRAFT BASIC LAW WHICH WILL BE PROMULGATED IN MAY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT," HE SAID.

"TO THE EXTENT THAT THE BASIC LAW INCORPORATED DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE WILL IT BE FEASIBLE FOR THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO HAVE IT FROM 1991 ONWARDS?" HE ASKED.

MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID HE THOUGHT IT FAIR TO SAY THAT THE AGB MCNAIR QUESTIONNAIRE ON DIRECT ELECTIONS TO LEGCO WAS NOT TOO EASILY UNDERSTOOD.

HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT EVEN IF THE MCNAIR REPORT HAD INDICATED THAT 50 PER CENT OR MORE OF THE POPULATION WERE IN FAVOUR OF DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1988, THE FACT REMAINED THAT CHINA DID NOT WANT DIRECT ELECTIONS UNTIL AFTER THE BASIC LAW WAS PASSED IN 1990.

"THIS IS A SITUATION OF REALPOLITIK WHICH THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG HAVE TO FACE UP TO IN A REALISTIC WAY AND WITHOUT LOSING HOPE THAT THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATISATION WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP STEADILY DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD," HE SAID.

STRESSING THAT HE PERSONALLY WOULD HAVE PREFERRED DIRECT ELECTIONS TO BE INTRODUCED IN LEGCO THIS YEAR, MR CHEONG-LEEN NOTED THAT A SIZEABLE PORTION OF THE POPULATION WAS IN FAVOUR OF 1991, ALTHOUGH TO WHAT EXTENT CHINA'S ATTITUDE DID INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION IN THIS RESPECT WAS DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY.

"IT WOULD SEEM THEREFORE THAT HAVING DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IS TODAY STILL HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL, WHILE PUTTING IT FORWARD TO 1991 WOULD BE NOT SO PROGRESSIVE BUT LESS CONTROVERSIAL AND ATTRACT LESS OBJECTION FROM CERTAIN INFLUENTIAL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY AND FROM CHINA," HE SAID.

/NEVERTHELESS, MR

NEVERTHELESS, MR CHEONG-LEEN EXPRESSED SUPRISE AT THE CONSERVATIVE PROPOSAL THAT THERE SHOULD BE ONLY 10 DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS IN 1991 TO REPLACE THE DISTRICT BOARD ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEATS.

"IN TERMS OF POPULATION, THE DISTRICT BOARD ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEATS ARE TOO DISPROPORTIONATELY DIVIDED. I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS TO START OFF WITH SHOULD BE 12 IN THE PROPORTION OF ONE ELECTED SEAT REPRESENTING ABOUT 500,000 POPULATION," HE SUGGESTED.

ON THE ABOLITION OF ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEATS IN 1991, HE WONDERED IF THIS FORESHADOWED THAT THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE SYSTEM WOULD BE REPLACED BY A GRAND ELECTORAL COLLEGE.

HE HOPED FURTHER CONSIDERATION WOULD BE GIVEN TO EXPANDING THE BASE OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE SYSTEM.

THUS WHILE DISTRICT BOARDS WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO ELECT MEMBERS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, ALTHOUGH REDUCED IN NUMBER, OTHER ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEATS WOULD BE ALLOCATED TO TERRITORY-WIDE GROUPS, INCLUDING ADVISORY GROUPS AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS.

CONCERNING FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES, MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID HE WAS SURPRISED THAT IT WAS NOT THOUGHT FIT TO EXPAND THE EDUCATION CONSTITUENCY TO INCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL SEAT FOR THE TERTIARY LEVEL.

ON THE WHITE PAPER PROPOSALS THAT URBAN DISTRICT BOARDS SHOULD IN 1989 ELECT 10 REPRESENTATIVES TO THE URBAN COUNCIL AND THAT URBAN COUNCILLORS LOSE THEIR EX-OFFICIO DISTRICT BOARD SEATS AT THE SAME TIME, HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO POSTPONE IMPLEMENTATION FROM 1989 UNTIL 1991.

SUCH POSTPONEMENT WOULD ENABLE URBCO TO REBUILD ITS EXISTING CHAMBERS IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODTE THE ADDITIONAL COUNCILLORS.

IT WOULD ALSO GIVE URBCO A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME TO ADJUST TO THIS SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION IN MEMBERSHIP, BEARING IN MIND THAT THERE WOULD BE CHANGES IN THE COUNCIL'S MEMBERSHIP IN 1989 ON BOTH THE ELECTED AND APPOINTED SIDES, HE EXPLAINED.

COMMENTING ON EMIGRATION OF TALENTED PEOPLE FROM HONG KONG, MR CHEONG-LEEN STRESSED THAT CHINA WOULD HAVE TO AIM FOR A BASIC LAW THAT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND NOT TO JUST ONE INFLUENTIAL SEGMENT.

THIS WOULD HELP ENSURE THAT AFTER THE BASIC LAW WAS ADOPTED IN 1990, HONG KONG PEOPLE WOULD BE MORE THAN EVER WILLING TO REGARD HONG KONG AS THEIR PERMANENT HOME.

MOREOVER, HE SAID BOTH CHINA AND BRITAIN WOULD HAVE TO BE SEEN TO BE GIVING FULL RECOGNITION AND RESPECT TO THE VIEWS OF ALL STRATA OF PUBLIC OPINION IN HONG KONG.

"JUDGING FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE 1987 GREEN PAPER AND THE 1988 WHITE PAPER, MANY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AND YOUNG INTELLECTUALS ARE DISILLUSIONED OVER BRITAIN'S COMMITMENT TO DEVELOP BY 1997 A SYSTEM OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT ROOTED IN THE PEOPLE AND THE COMMUNITY," HE SAID.

"UNLESS THE BRITISH AND CHINESE GOVERNMENTS SHOW GREATER SENSITIVITY TO PUBLIC OPINION, THE LEVEL OF EMIGRATION, ESPECIALLY FROM THIS IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF THE COMMUNITY, COULD REACH VERY WORRYING PROPORTIONS IN THE EARLY 1990'S, AND PUT HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EVEN CHINA'S MODERNISATION PLANS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOME JEOPARDY."

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NO INDICATION HOW NEW SYSTEM WILL WORK

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THE WHITE PAPER ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IS NOT REALLY A WAY FORWARD, ONLY A STEP SIDWAYS INTO WHAT COULD BE A BLIND ALLEY, DR THE HON HELMUT SOHMEN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE DEBATE ON THE WHITE PAPER, DR SOHMEN SAID WHERE HE DID "PART COMPANY" WITH THE WHITE PAPER, IN QUESTIONING THE PRACTICABILITY OF ITS RECOMMENDATIONS, WAS ON THE OVERALL COMPOSITION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND ON THE TOTAL LACK OF ANY INDICATION OR DIRECTION AS TO HOW THE NEW SYSTEM WOULD WORK OR HOW IT WOULD PROGRESS BEYOND 1991.

HE SAID THAT IN CONFRONTING THE WHITE PAPER ON THIS POINT HE FELT LIKE ALICE IN LEWIS CARROLL'S THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: "SOMEHOW IT SEEMS TO FILL MY HEAD WITH IDEAS -- ONLY I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THEY ARE!"

HE SAID THAT OF COURSE, AS A GRADUALIST WHO HAD CONSISTENTLY ARGUED FOR A CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO PROGRESS ON THESE VERY COMPLEX AND FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES, HE WAS PLEASED THAT ANY MAJOR CHANGES TO THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE HAD BEEN DEFERRED AT LEAST UNTIL 1991.

THE DESPERATE URGENCY SUGGESTED BY SOME LEGCO MEMBERS AND OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY FOR CHANGES WITHIN THIS YEAR HAD ALWAYS BEEN A MYTH.

SO WAS THEIR CLAIM THAT A SIGNIFICANT MAJORITY OF THE HONG KONG POPULATION WAS IN FAVOUR OF THE INTRODUCTION OF DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE IN 1988.

/DR SOHMEN

DR SOHMEN SAID THAT IF PROOF WAS NEEDED THAT THE PUBLIC WAS NOT YET FULLY AWARE OR CONVINCED OF THE BENEFITS OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESSES, THE RECENT DISTRICT BOARD ELECTIONS SHOULD HAVE PROVIDED IT.

"IF, AS THE PROPONENTS OF THE EARLY INTRODUCTION OF DIRECT ELECTIONS CLAIM, THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WERE NOW SO TERRIBLY ANXIOUS TO HAVE A CHANCE TO EXPRESS THEIR POLITICAL WILL THROUGH UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, WHY DID THE VOTERS NOT MAKE USE OF THIS READY OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THIS DESIRE CONVINCINGLY ONCE AND FOR ALL?"

"THE STARK TRUTH IS THAT THE POLITICAL ACTIVISTS IN OUR MIDST DO NOT HAVE THE BROAD-BASED SUPPORT WHICH THEY CITE AS JUSTIFICATION FOR THEIR ATTACKS ON GOVERNMENT AND ON THE FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY OFFICE," HE SAID.

IF THE ACTIVISTS WISHED TO BE SEEN AS RESPONSIBLE POLITICIANS, THEY MUST LEARN TO SHOW A BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF MAJORITY SENTIMENT, HE SAID.

WHILE IN THE ORIENT THE BURNING OF PAPER MIGHT WELL BE A RITE OF PURIFICATION OR EXORCISM, THE PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS IN FRONT OF THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT AND IN THE NEW TERRITORIES IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE PAPER BROUGHT TO HIS MIND MEMORIES OF ONE OF THE MOST EVIL TOTALITARIAN SYSTEMS THE WORLD HAD EVER PRODUCED.

THESE SCENES STRENGTHENED HIS CONVICTION THAT HONG KONG STILL HAD A LONG WAY TO GO ON THE ROAD OF POLITICAL EDUCATION, AND THAT PRECIPITOUS CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES AND PROCESS WITHOUT ADEQUATE PREPARATION COULD EASILY BACKFIRE.

DR SOHMEN ALSO COMMENTED THAT THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE CONTENTS OF THE WHITE PAPER HAD GIVEN BIRTH TO THE STIGMATIC LABELS OF "DEMOCRATS" AND "ANTI-DEMOCRATS" OR "CONSERVATIVES" AND "LIBERALS".

HE SAID THESE CATEGORISATIONS WERE INAPPROPRIATE AND TENDED TO LARGELY CONFUSE THE ISSUES AND MISREPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE PROTAGONISTS, PARTICULARLY OUTSIDE HONG KONG.

THE PRACTICAL ATTRIBUTES OF WESTERN DEMOCRACY UNDOUBTEDLY EXISTED IN HONG KONG ALTHOUGH THEY WERE NOT INSTITUTIONALISED IN THE SAME FORM AS IN THE PRESENT MOTHER COUNTRY.

AND IT WAS SIMPLISTIC AND MISLEADING TO ARGUE THAT A SYSTEM OF UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE BY ITSELF WOULD READILY ENSURE "GREATER" LOCAL DEMOCRACY, BETTER REPRESENTATION, A HIGHER DEGREE OF ACCOUNTABILITY, OR GREATER AUTONOMY AFTER 1997.

THESE SUPERFICIAL GENERALISATIONS ALSO OVERLOOKED THE PRESENT LACK OF A COMPOSITE PICTURE FOR THE FUTURE FORM OF HONG KONG GOVERNMENT.

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THE CURRENT DEBATE SHOULD BE SEEN MAINLY AS ONE BETWEEN PRAGMATISTS AND IDEALISTS, AND SOME OF ITS CONFRONTATIONAL CHARACTER MIGHT BE DEFUSED IF THE OTHER LABELS WERE DROPPED, DR SOHMEN SUGGESTED.

HE SAID THAT SINCE THE MAJORITY VIEW HAD EXPRESSED ITSELF IN FAVOUR OF DIRECT ELECTIONS, HE NATURALLY ACCEPTED THIS VERDICT.

"BUT PUBLIC OPINION WAS NOT AT ALL DEFINITE ABOUT THE TIMING OF DIRECT ELECTIONS AFTER 1988, AND CLEARLY NOT FULLY CONVERSANT WITH THE POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS IN THE CREATION OF A CONFRONTATIONAL STYLE OF GOVERNMENT IN A SMALL AND SO FAR VERY COHESIVE COMMUNITY THAT HAS PROSPERED UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF CONSENSUS," HE SAID.

DR SOHMEN ALSO QUESTIONED THE LOGIC OR THE ATTRACTION OF HAVING "PARTIAL" DIRECT ELECTIONS, CREATING AN IMPOTENT MINORITY OF LEGISLATORS BUT WHO WERE PERSONALLY ACCOUNTABLE TO THE ELECTORATE AT LARGE, IF ULTIMATELY ALL LEGISLATORS HAD TO BE ELECTED ANYWAY TO SATISFY THE JOINT DECLARATION.

HE CRITICISED THE GOVERNMENT FOR NOT MAKING ANY REAL EFFORT TO ANALYSE THE PROS AND CONS AND TO PRESENT A PROGRESSIVELY EXPANDING SYSTEM OF INDIRECT ELECTIONS AS AN ADDITIONAL OPTION FOR PUBLIC CONSIDERATION.

THE EXPRESSED PUBLIC PREFERENCE FOR HAVING DIRECT ELECTIONS IN ADDITION TO, RATHER THAN INSTEAD OF, INDIRECT ELECTIONS BY THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE WAS ALSO SIMPLY IGNORED IN THE WHITE PAPER PROPOSALS.

BY JUST REACTING TO THE CONCENTRATED PRESSURE ON A SINGLE ISSUE, HE BELIEVED THE GOVERNMENT HAD LET ITSELF BE PUSHED UNNECESSARILY TOWARDS A DEADLINE COMMITMENT AND HAD MISSED AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACT MORE DELIBERATELY, CREATIVELY, AND DECISIVELY.

"AT SOME RISK TO ITS CREDIBILITY, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS FOREGONE THE CHANCE TO DESIGN A COMPREHENSIVE AND INHERENTLY CONSISTENT PLAN FOR REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT BASED ON THE CONSULTATIVE SYSTEM, AND ONE THAT WOULD BE BOTH PRACTICAL AND TRULY SUITED TO HONG KONG'S UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT, IN FAVOUR OF JUST ANOTHER SHORT-TERM AND IMPRACTICAL EXPEDIENT," DR SOHMEN SAID.

THE RESULT WAS NOT GREATER CERTAINTY AS TO WHERE HONG KONG WAS HEADING BUT ADDED CONFUSION AND CONTINUED DISSATISFACTION ACROSS THE WHOLE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SPECTRUM, HE SAID.

HE HOPED THAT THE BASIC LAW WOULD PRODUCE MORE DEFINITE PLANS AND CLEARER SIGNPOSTS FOR THE FUTURE.

/DR SOHMEN

DR SOHMEN ADDED THAT THE "IDEALISTS" COULD ASSIST IN THE DELIBERATION ON THE BASIC LAW BY NOW CONCENTRATING THEIR EFFORTS AND THEIR ENERGIES ON HELPING TO EDUCATE THE WIDER PUBLIC ON THE NEED TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE INTEREST IN THE WORKINGS AND BENEFITS OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL SYSTEM.

THEY COULD ALSO HAVE AN INTENSIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMENTARY ON THE DRAFT PROVISIONS OF THE BASIC LAW.

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HOUSING BILL PASSED
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THE HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 WAS PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) AFTER IT HAD BEEN READ A THIRD TIME.

A PRIVATE BILL - THE DEUTSCHE BANK (MERGER) BILL 1988 - WAS ALSO PASSED.

A MOTION MOVED UNDER THE PUBLIC FINANCE ORDINANCE WAS APPROVED.

THE HEUNG YEE KUK (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 WAS INTRODUCED FOR THE FIRST AND SECOND READINGS AND DEBATE ON IT WAS ADJOURNED.

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GOVT WILL REMAIN ACCOUNTABLE ON HOUSING
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THE REORGANISATION OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WILL GIVE IT GREATER FREEDOM OF OPERATION BUT THE GOVERNMENT WILL STILL BE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PUBLIC FOR THE AUTHORITY'S ACTION.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, REASSURED MEMBERS ON THIS POINT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN WINDING UP DEBATE ON THE HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988.

MR BARNES SAID THE BILL WOULD GIVE THE AUTHORITY GREATER FREEDOM TO CONDUCT ITS DAY-TO-DAY AFFAIRS WITHOUT REDUCING THE GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC OBLIGATIONS.

/IT WOULD

IT WOULD RETAIN ITS PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH LEGCO AND THE OMELCO HOUSING PANEL.

"HOUSING WILL REMAIN A MAJOR SOCIAL COMMITMENT, CONTINUING TO BE PROVIDED ON THE BASIS OF NEED AND CHARGED ON THE BASIS OF AFFORDABILITY," MR BARNES SAID.

THIS WAS DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE FUTURE AUTHORITY WOULD COMPRISE FEWER OFFICIAL MEMBERS AND THESE WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO FORM A QUORUM OR A MAJORITY.

OTHER MEMBERS WOULD REFLECT A WIDE RANGE OF INTERESTS AND EXPERTISE, INCLUDING ESTATE TENANTS, PROFESSIONALS, DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS AND LEGCO MEMBERS.

HE ADDED THAT THE BILL WAS THE END PRODUCT OF A PROCESS WHICH BEGAN WITH THE PUBLICATION OF GOVERNMENT'S LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY IN APRIL 1987 AND A DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LAST JULY.

THE REORGANISATION OF THE AUTHORITY WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE STRATEGY AND THE REASON FOR THE BILL.

MR BARNES ALSO REFERRED TO CRITICISM CONCERNING TIMING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S CHAIRMAN-DESIGNATE.

"WE ACCEPT THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO HAVE MADE THE LAW AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN THAT ORDER," HE SAID.

"I CAN ONLY SAY THAT WE WERE ANXIOUS TO MEET THE TIMETABLE OF INTRODUCING THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS ON APRIL 1, AND IN PARTICULAR TO GIVE THE CHAIRMAN-DESIGNATE, WHO WAS, INCIDENTALLY, APPOINTED UNDER EXISTING POWERS, THE OPPORTUNITY TO PREPARE HIMSELF FOR HIS NEW RESPONSIBILITIES."

CERTAINLY, NO DISRESPECT TO THE COUNCIL WAS INTENDED BUT NEVERTHELESS THE POINT MADE WAS ACCEPTED, HE ADDED.

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TIMING OF HOUSING AUTHORITY APPOINTMENT FAULTED

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THE APPOINTMENT OF SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES AS CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS BEEN SEEN AS A PRE-EMPTIVE MOVE BY THE ADMINISTRATION, THE HON SELINA CHOW SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988.

THE ADMINISTRATION HAD PRESUMED PASSAGE OF THE BILL BEFORE CONCLUSION OF DELIBERATIONS BY THE OMELCO HOUSING PANEL AND OF DEBATE IN THE COUNCIL ITSELF, SHE SAID.

MRS CHOW, CONVENOR OF THE LEGCO AD HOC GROUP FORMED TO STUDY THE BILL, SAID THE TIMING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF SIR DAVID'S APPOINTMENT AS THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S FIRST UNOFFICIAL CHAIRMAN WAS REGRETTABLE.

"WE WOULD LIKE TO ADVISE THE ADMINISTRATION THAT AS A PRINCIPLE IT IS BEST THAT STEPS ARE NOT TAKEN IN ANTICIPATION OF THE PASSAGE OF A BILL," SHE SAID.

MEMBERS OF HER GROUP TOOK THIS VIEW EVEN THOUGH THEY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO INTRODUCE THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WHEN THE STATEMENT ON THE LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY WAS PUBLISHED LAST YEAR.

IN ADDITION, THE OMELCO HOUSING PANEL HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THE BILL'S INTENDED LEGISLATIVE TIME-TABLE.

ON THE APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, MRS CHOW SAID THAT MEMBERS OF THE OMELCO HOUSING PANEL WERE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE PROVISION OF MORE FLEXIBILITY.

"THERE IS NO OBJECTION TO THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING TAKING UP THIS ROLE AT THIS POINT, BUT IT WAS AGREED THAT THERE OUGHT TO BE ENOUGH SCOPE FOR CHANGE SHOULD THE NEED ARISE WITH CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE FUTURE," SHE SAID.

SHE SAID THE PANEL ALSO AGREED THAT THERE SHOULD NOT BE ANY OBJECTION TO AN EX-CIVIL SERVANT BEING APPOINTED TO THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY.

BUT THE APPROPRIATENESS OF APPOINTING EX-CIVIL SERVANTS TO CHAIRMANSHIP OF SIMILAR AUTONOMOUS AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED INDIVIDUALLY AND SEPARATELY.

/ON A

ON A CLAUSE IN THE BILL EMPOWERING THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE ALLOCATION TO RESERVES AND THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO DIRECT THE AUTHORITY TO PAY ANY SURPLUS TO THE GOVERNMENT, MRS CHOW SAID THAT MEMBERS ACCEPTED THE FORMER AS AN OPERATIONAL NECESSITY AND FOUND THE LATTER AN ACCEPTABLE PROVISION.

IT WOULD ENSURE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE INTEREST OF THE AUTHORITY IN TERMS OF THE PUBLIC IT SERVED AND THE INTEREST OF THE WIDER PUBLIC.

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INDEPENDENT TRUST FUND ADVOCATED

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT TRUST FUND FOR CHANNELLING ACCRUED SURPLUSES OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY INTO DEVELOPING BETTER PUBLIC HOUSING AND OTHER SOCIAL SERVICE AMENITIES, THE HON HUI YIN-FAT ADVOCATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE FURTHER RECOMMENDED THAT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BE GIVEN THE AUTHORITY TO EXAMINE AND APPROVE THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE 1988-89 FINANCIAL YEAR.

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR HUI SUPPORTED THE HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 BUT EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE BILL DID NOT PROVIDE FOR SUFFICIENT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN FORMULATION OF HOUSING POLICIES.

HE COMMENTED THAT, WITH THE REORGANISATION OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, THE APPOINTMENT OF AN UNOFFICIAL TO BE THE CHAIRMAN WAS ABOUT THE ONLY MAJOR CHANGE IN THE AUTHORITY'S MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE.

"ONE WOULD HAVE HOPED THAT AN OVERALL RESTRUCTURING OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WOULD BRING ABOUT SOME ELECTED MEMBERS AS WELL AS APPOINTED MEMBERS REPRESENTING A WIDER SPECTRUM OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING POPULATION," HE SAID.

MR HUI ALSO SAID THAT THE WHOLE ISSUE HAD BROUGHT UP THE QUESTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY AND PROCEDURES, AND HE CRITICISED THE ADMINISTRATION FOR NOT KEEPING A PROMISE TO CONSULT THE OMELCO HOUSING PANEL ON THE REORGANISATION OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY BEFORE LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS.

"MOREOVER, THE APPOINTMENT OF AN EX-CIVIL SERVANT TO BE THE HOUSING AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN PRIOR TO THE PASSING OF THE AMENDMENT BILL BY THIS COUNCIL NOT ONLY TENDS TO REINFORCE THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S SUSCEPTIBILITY TO TOE THE GOVERNMENT LINE, BUT ALSO CREATES A LOOPHOLE IN OUR LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES," HE SAID.

/MR HUI

MR HUI NOTED THAT WITH THE REMOVAL OF THE SECRETARY FOR HOUSING WHO WAS PREVIOUSLY ANSWERABLE TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THE MONITORING FUNCTION OF THE OMELCO HOUSING PANEL HAD ALSO BEEN UNDERMINED.

HE SAID IT WOULD SEEM NECESSARY FOR A NEW CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION TO BE ESTABLISHED FOR LEGCO MEMBERS TO MAKE ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S ACTIVITIES AND TO CONDUCT OPEN HEARINGS WHEREVER NECESSARY.

"IDEALLY, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD EVENTUALLY BE ACCOUNTABLE TO THIS COUNCIL WHICH SHOULD ASSUME GREATER RESPONSIBILITY WHICH IS NOW CONFINED TO ENDORSING THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S ANNUAL REPORTS," HE SAID.

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COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC HOUSING UNCHANGED

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THE HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL 1988 IS AIMED AT INCREASING THE FLEXIBILITY OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO FULFIL ITS FUNCTIONS AND TO ACCOMPLISH THE LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY, THE HON EDWARD HO SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE BILL INTRODUCED AMENDMENTS TO THE HOUSING ORDINANCE IN RESPECT OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S ESTABLISHMENT AND CONSTITUTION AND OTHER MATTERS, HE NOTED WHEN SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE MEASURE.

THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS DID NOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY MUST ABIDE BY THE POLICIES IN HOUSING THAT HAD BEEN APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THIS WAS NO DIFFERENT UNDER THE HOUSING ORDINANCE AS AT PRESENT.

MR HO REFERRED TO SUGGESTIONS BY SOME MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC THAT THE REORGANISATION OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WAS AN INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DIMINISH ITS COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC HOUSING.

HE STRESSED THAT THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE BILL OR IN THE PROPOSED REORGANISATION OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO SUGGEST THAT THAT WOULD BE THE CASE.

"ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS ENCOURAGING TO NOTE THAT THE LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY WILL ENHANCE THE SCOPE OF OUR HOUSING PROGRAMME," MR HO SAID.

/THE MAIN

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY WERE TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE HOUSING AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE OR RENT WAS AVAILABLE FOR ALL HOUSEHOLDS, AND TO PROMOTE AND SATISFY THE GROWING DEMAND OF HOME PURCHASERS BY THE YEAR 2001.

THE STRATEGY WOULD MAKE THE MOST EFFECTIVE USE OF THE RESOURCES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN ADDITION TO THOSE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN HOUSING PRODUCTION.

"IN SO DOING, IT WILL REQUIRE A HIGH DEGREE OF SENSITIVITY IN GAUGING THE CHANGING NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY IN HOUSING AS WELL AS THE CONSTANT EVALUATION OF THE CAPABILITIES IN HOUSING PRODUCTION OF BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS TO MEET THESE DEMANDS.

"IT IS BECAUSE OF THIS THAT CERTAIN CHANGES HAVE TO BE MADE TO THE ORGANISATION OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, ESPECIALLY IN ITS FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS, SO THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY CAN HAVE THE DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY AND FINANCIAL AUTONOMY TO IMPLEMENT THE LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY," HE EXPLAINED.

NOTING THAT PUBLIC HOUSING IN HONG KONG AS A SOCIAL SERVICE WAS A VITAL ELEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY, MR HO SAID LEGCO MEMBERS WOULD MONITOR AND ENSURE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE ITS COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC HOUSING THROUGH THE HOUSING AUTHORITY.

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MERIT IN HOUSING AUTHORITY REORGANISATION

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THE HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, WHICH WAS DESIGNED TO ENABLE THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO MORE EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THE GOVERNMENT'S LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY, WAS WORTH SUPPORTING, THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN SAID TODAY.

SPEAKING DURING THE DEBATE ON THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID THAT UNDER THE BILL, THE REORGANISED HOUSING AUTHORITY -- WITH ITS WIDER RESPONSIBILITIES AND CHAIRED BY A NON-OFFICIAL -- SHOULD PROVIDE MORE AND BETTER QUALITY PUBLIC HOUSING UP TO THE END OF THE CENTURY.

NOTING THAT THERE WAS A STRONG DEMAND FOR HOME OWNERSHIP AS A RESULT OF RISING INCOMES AND ASPIRATIONS, MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID THE HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD NOT SOLELY GIVE PRIORITY TO THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC RENTAL HOUSING ON THE BASIS OF NEED.

/"THE GOVERNMENT

"THE GOVERNMENT MUST REMAIN TOTALLY COMMITTED IN ITS POLICY TO ENCOURAGE MORE HOME OWNERSHIP SO THAT BY THE END OF THE CENTURY, 80 PER CENT OF OUR CITIZENS WOULD BE LIVING IN THEIR OWN HOMES," HE SAID.

"IN THIS CONNECTION, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE CONTINUOUS EFFORTS TO KEEP MORTGAGE RATES ON HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEMES FOR OUR MIDDLE AND LOWER INCOME GROUPS AS STEADY AND AFFORDABLE AS POSSIBLE."

MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID THAT ANOTHER AREA OF PRIORITY FOR THE HOUSING AUTHORITY CONCERNED THE REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR THE OLDER PUBLIC RENTAL ESTATES WHERE 125,000 FAMILIES NOW RESIDED.

NOTING THAT THIS REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME WAS LIKELY TO CONTINUE INTO THE NEXT CENTURY, HE URGED THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO SPEED UP THE TASK AND TO SEEK THE SUPPORT AND CO-OPERATION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN DOING THIS.

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MOTION ON FUNDING APPROVED

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A MOTION MOVED BY THE ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON DAVID NENDICK, SEEKING \$17,427,373,000 ON ACCOUNT TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO CARRY ON EXISTING SERVICES BETWEEN THE START OF THE NEW FINANCIAL YEAR ON APRIL 1 AND THE ENACTMENT OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL, WAS APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

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HEUNG YEE KUK SEEKS WIDER MEMBERSHIP

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THE HEUNG YEE KUK (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, WHICH SEEKS TO ENHANCE THE HEUNG YEE KUK'S EFFICIENCY AND CAPABILITY, WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR LIAO SAID THE BILL WAS THE RESULT OF EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE HEUNG YEE KUK ON THE KUK'S PROPOSAL TO NAME SOME EX-MEMBERS AS NON-VOTING PERMANENT ADVISERS AND TO EXPAND THE MEMBERSHIP OF ITS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BY ADDITIONAL CO-OPTED COUNCILLORS.

/HE NOTED

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HE NOTED THAT IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THE KUK'S INTENTION TO WIDEN ITS REPRESENTATION AND TO RECRUIT MORE MEMBERS SO AS TO ENHANCE THEIR CAPABILITY AND EFFICIENCY.

MR LIAO SAID THE KUK HAD THEREFORE SUGGESTED TO THE ADMINISTRATION THAT ITS CONSTITUTION BE AMENDED TO ALLOW FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF 15 MORE MEMBERS WHO NEED NOT BE SELECTED FROM AMONGST THE INDIGENOUS NEW TERRITORIES POPULATION.

"HOWEVER, THE KUK WOULD TAKE CARE IN IDENTIFYING PERSONALITIES WHO HAVE LONG STANDING CONNECTIONS WITH THE NEW TERRITORIES AND ARE THUS CAPABLE OF CONTRIBUTING TO THE WELL-BEING OF NEW TERRITORIES RESIDENTS," HE ADDED.

"THE SELECTION OF CO-OPTED COUNCILLORS WILL BE CLOSELY SCRUTINISED. THE CANDIDATES FOR SELECTION WILL HAVE TO BE NOMINATED BY FIVE MEMBERS OF THE KUK'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, ONE OF WHOM BEING THE CHAIRMAN OR A VICE-CHAIRMAN.

"THE NOMINATIONS WILL THEN BE VETTED AND APPROVED BY MYSELF BEFORE THEY ARE FINALLY PUT TO THE FULL COUNCIL OF THE KUK FOR CONFIRMATION," MR LIAO EXPLAINED.

TO GIVE RECOGNITION TO LONG SERVING MEMBERS AND IN ORDER THAT EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE COULD BE RETAINED, MR LIAO SAID IT WAS ALSO PROPOSED THAT MEMBERS OF THE KUK'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WHO HAD SERVED FOR TWO CONSECUTIVE TERMS AND ALL PAST CHAIRMEN SHOULD BE MADE PERMANENT ADVISERS OF THE KUK.

HE POINTED OUT THAT BESIDES THE EXPANSION IN MEMBERSHIP AND INTRODUCTION OF PERMANENT ADVISERS, THE BILL ALSO INTRODUCED SOME TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS TO FACILITATE THE ORDERLY CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS AND SMOOTH OPERATION OF THE KUK.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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REGULATIONS MAY HELP EASE WORKER SHORTAGE
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THE WOMEN AND YOUNG PERSONS (INDUSTRY) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1988, WHICH HE HOPED MIGHT RELIEVE THE TEMPORARY ACUTE SHORTAGE OF WORKERS IN INDUSTRY, WAS SUPPORTED IN PRINCIPLE BY THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR CHAN, CONVENOR OF THE LEGCO AD HOC GROUP FORMED TO STUDY THE REGULATIONS, WAS NEVERTHELESS CONCERNED WITH THE SAFETY OF FEMALE WORKERS RETURNING HOME LATE AT NIGHT.

HE SUGGESTED THAT FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE WORKERS, AND PATROLLING POLICE IF REQUESTED, SHOULD ACCOMPANY THEM UP LIFTES AND STAIRWAYS TO ENSURE THEY REACHED HOME SAFELY.

MR CHAN ALSO URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO CARRY OUT AN ANNUAL REVIEW ON THE EFFECTS OF THESE REGULATIONS AND IMPROVE ON THEM WHERE NECESSARY.

"IN THE MEANTIME, INTENSIVE PUBLICITY WILL HELP TO CLEAR UP THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF WORKERS," HE ADDED.

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YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR BAPTIST COLLEGE
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THE HONG KONG BAPTIST COLLEGE HAD MADE A NUMBER OF ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE YEAR 1986-87, THE HON WONG PO-YAN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR WONG WAS TABLING THE ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS OF THE COLLEGE FOR THE YEAR.

HE SAID DURING 1986-87, THE COLLEGE ADMITTED STUDENTS INTO THE FIRST GROUP OF TWO BACHELOR DEGREE COURSES EVER INTRODUCED IN ITS HISTORY OF OVER THREE DECADES. THESE DEGREE COURSES WERE IN COMBINED SCIENCES AND SOCIAL WORK.

/HE ALSO

HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE YEAR'S ENROLMENT INCREASED BY ABOUT NINE PER CENT TO REACH A TOTAL OF AROUND 2,350.

THE NUMBER OF QUALIFIED APPLICANTS TO ALL COURSES ROSE BY 30 PER CENT OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR, AND THOSE APPLYING TO THE DEGREE COURSES INCREASED BY 80 PER CENT.

FURTHERMORE, TWO OTHER NEW DEGREE COURSES WERE SUCCESSFULLY ACCREDITED BY THE UK COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL ACADEMIC AWARDS DURING THE SAME YEAR, HE SAID.

MR WONG STATED THAT THE YEAR'S TOTAL BUDGET OF RESOURCES FOR RECURRENT ITEMS, INCLUDING PUBLIC FUNDING AND TUITION INCOME, WAS \$99.9 MILLION - AN INCREASE OF 19.5 PER CENT.

HE ADDED THAT THE INCREASE IN PUBLIC FUNDING WAS MATCHED BY AN ENCOURAGING INCREASE IN THE SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

MR WONG POINTED OUT THAT DURING 1986-87, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AGREED THAT THE LIMIT FOR THE PROPORTION OF THE COLLEGE'S STUDENTS ON DEGREE COURSES SHOULD BE LIFTED TO 75 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL ENROLMENT, AND AT THE SAME TIME GAVE THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE THE DISCRETION TO LIFT THAT LIMIT FURTHER.

"THIS BLESSING OF THE GOVERNMENT WILL INDEED GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS PROMPTING THE COLLEGE TO WORK EVEN HARDER TO CONTRIBUTE ITS PART FOR BUILDING A BETTER TOMORROW FOR HONG KONG THROUGH THE PROVISION OF QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION TO OUR ASPIRING AND DESERVING YOUTH," HE SAID.

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JUSTICE BARKER RESIGNS

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MR JUSTICE BARKER HAS RESIGNED HIS OFFICE WITH EFFECT FROM JANUARY 1, 1989. THE GOVERNOR HAS ACCEPTED HIS RESIGNATION.

IT IS INTENDED THAT THE JUDGE'S TERMINAL LEAVE WILL BE TAKEN BEFORE THIS DATE.

"UNTIL THE JUDGE PROCEEDS ON SUCH TERMINAL LEAVE, IT IS EXPECTED THAT HE WILL PERFORM "NON-JUDICIAL DUTIES".

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CROWN ORDERED TO PAY \$36M IN COSTS

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THE CROWN WAS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ORDERED TO PAY ABOUT \$36 MILLION IN COSTS TO MR DAVID BEGG AND MR ANTHONY LO WHO WERE ACQUITTED BY MR JUSTICE BARKER IN THE CARRIAN TRIAL.

SOLICITORS FOR THE PAIR HAD ORIGINALLY SOUGHT ALMOST \$51 MILLION IN COSTS BUT THE CROWN HAS CONTESTED THE SIZE OF THE CLAIM.

IN ACQUITTING THE TWO IN SEPTEMBER, MR JUSTICE BARKER ORDERED THAT THE COSTS BE TAXED BY A MASTER OF THE SUPREME COURT IF THE PARTIES DID NOT AGREE ON THEM AND DEPUTY REGISTRAR, MASTER COLIN PERRIOR, HAS BEEN HEARING ARGUMENTS FROM BOTH PARTIES SINCE MARCH 7.

THE TAXATION ENDED TODAY WITH MASTER PERRIOR ORDERING THAT THE CLAIM AGAINST THE CROWN SHOULD BE REDUCED BY ABOUT \$15 MILLION.

MR PERRIOR REFUSED TO ALLOW SOLICITORS FOR MR BEGG AND MR LO THEIR COSTS OF PREPARING THE BILL OR THEIR APPEARANCE AT THE TAXATION BECAUSE OF THE LARGE AMOUNT OF COSTS DISALLOWED.

THIS IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GENERAL PRACTICE THAT A BILL OF COSTS WHICH IS REDUCED BY ONE-SIXTH OR MORE AFTER TAXATION RESULTS IN THE SOLICITORS NOT GETTING THE COSTS OF THE TAXATION PROCEEDINGS THEMSELVES.

MR BEGG AND MR LO WERE ACQUITTED ON ONE COUNT OF CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD CREDITORS AND SHAREHOLDERS OF CARRIAN INVESTMENTS LTD THROUGH PUBLISHING MISLEADING STATEMENTS IN THE COMPANY'S 1981 ACCOUNTS.

LEGAL DEPARTMENT CONSULTANT, MR CLIVE GROSSMAN, APPEARED WITH SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL, MR PATRICK HAMLIN, FOR THE CROWN.

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CROSS-BORDER COACH TRAFFIC TO INCREASE FURTHER

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PASSENGERS CARRIED BY COACHES ACROSS THE BORDER HAVE INCREASED 30 TIMES IN THE LAST SEVEN YEARS, THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT, MR JAMES SO, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"LAST YEAR, CROSS-BORDER COACHES CARRIED OVER ONE MILLION PASSENGERS AS COMPARED TO ONLY 33,000 IN 1981," HE SAID.

MR SO WAS OFFICIATING AT A CEREMONY TO LAUNCH CITYBUS'S LATEST MODEL OF DELUXE DOUBLE-DECK COACHES WHICH HAS FULL AIR-CONDITIONING AND TOILET FACILITIES. THE NEW BUS WILL BE USED ON THE COMPANY'S CROSS-BORDER SERVICES.

WITH THE OPENING OF THE THIRD CROSS-BORDER CONTROL POINT AT LOK MA CHAU SOMETIME NEXT YEAR, MR SO ANTICIPATED THAT COACH TRAFFIC ACROSS THE BORDER WOULD INCREASE FURTHER.

"WITH THE MANY ROAD PROJECTS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION OR BEING PLANNED IN GUANGDONG, TRAVELLING BY ROAD BETWEEN HONG KONG AND CHINA WILL BE EASIER AND WILL BECOME MORE ATTRACTIVE.

"THERE IS THUS A CLEAR NEED TO PROVIDE A MORE COMFORTABLE AND LUXURIOUS COACH SERVICE TO CATER FOR THE MORE UP-MARKET TRAVELLERS WISHING TO TRAVEL LONGER DISTANCE BY COACH, AND THE NEW LUXURY DOUBLE-DECK COACH LAUNCHED TODAY IS JUST WHAT IS NEEDED," HE ADDED.

MR SO NOTED THAT CROSS-BORDER COACH SERVICES HAD GREATLY EXPANDED SINCE ITS INTRODUCTION IN MID-1981.

IN 1981, THERE WAS ONLY ONE OPERATOR WITH A FLEET OF 30 BUSES PROVIDING 26 CROSSINGS DAILY THROUGH MAN KAM TO CONTROL POINT.

BY THE TIME THE CONTROL POINT AT SHA TAU KOK WAS OPENED IN MARCH 1985, THE NUMBER OF OPERATORS HAD INCREASED TO 16, DEPLOYING A TOTAL OF 99 BUSES TO PROVIDE OVER 70 DAILY CROSSINGS.

TODAY, A TOTAL OF 147 COACHES CROSS THE BORDER CARRYING, ON AVERAGE, SOME 3,000 PASSENGERS A DAY.

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CIVIC EDUCATION THROUGH EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TAKES ITS RESPONSIBILITY OF PROMOTING CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS VERY SERIOUSLY IN THE HOPE THAT ALL OF THE 1.25 MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE NOW IN SCHOOL WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME USEFUL AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS, THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, MR Y.T. LI, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE ROTARY CLUB OF HONG KONG ISLAND EAST LUNCHEON MEETING, MR LI SAID: "IN PERFORMING OUR TASK, WE HAVE BEEN VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY WHICH IS BOTH EDUCATIONALLY SOUND AND OPERATIONALLY FEASIBLE.

"AFTER A GREAT DEAL OF THOUGHT AND CONSULTATION, WE FINALLY CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE BEST WAY OF PROMOTING CIVIC EDUCATION IS NOT TO TEACH IT FORMALLY AS A SEPARATE SUBJECT BUT TO ADOPT A MUCH BROADER APPROACH AND FOSTER CIVIC EDUCATION THROUGH THE MANY OTHER RELEVANT SUBJECTS NOW TAUGHT IN THE SCHOOLS AND THROUGH EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

"THIS IS WHAT WE CALL THE 'WHOLE-SCHOOL' APPROACH WHICH HAS ALREADY PROVED TO BE VERY SUCCESSFUL IN THE PROMOTION OF MORAL EDUCATION AND SEX EDUCATION," HE SAID.

CITING AN EXAMPLE, MR LI SAID THE VERY POPULAR EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY WHICH WAS VERY CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIC EDUCATION AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN WAS THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUB (CYC) SCHEME.

THE CYC SCHEME INAUGURATED IN 1973 WAS SCHOOL-BASED, MR LI SAID, ADDING THAT THERE WERE CURRENTLY MORE THAN 234,000 MEMBERS IN ABOUT 930 PARTICIPATING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

"THE CYC AIMS AT ORGANISING YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE WELL-BEING OF THE COMMUNITY - BY PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS, CO-OPERATING WITH OTHER CIVIC GROUPS IN SERVING THE COMMUNITY, PROMOTING CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG FELLOW CITIZENS AND SETTING GOOD EXAMPLES BY THEIR OWN ACTIONS," MR LI SAID.

ON THE CYC'S WIDE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES, MR LI SAID THE MAJOR EVENTS LAST YEAR INCLUDED AN EDUCATIONAL VISIT BY 24 OUTSTANDING MEMBERS TO SINGAPORE, A FOUR-DAY CAMP AT WU KAI SHA FOR 700 MEMBERS, A GRAND PARADE WITH MORE THAN 10,000 PARTICIPANTS, A FUN DAY FOR 900 ELDERLY PEOPLE AND A SERIES OF 13 TELEVISION PROGRAMMES LASTING 15 MINUTES EACH.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THE MOST UNUSUAL EVENT WAS THE PAINTING AND ASSEMBLING OF A GIANT POSTER MEASURING 2,582 SQUARE METRES WHICH WAS RECOGNISED BY THE GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS AS THE LARGEST POSTER IN THE WORLD.

"THE POSTER WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CUT INTO 60,000 PIECES AND SOLD AS COMMEMORATIVE CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR A TOTAL OF \$270,000. THE PROCEEDS WERE DISTRIBUTED TO 18 CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS," MR LI ADDED.

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GOVERNMENT HOUSE GARDENS OPEN TO PUBLIC
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THE GARDENS OF GOVERNMENT HOUSE WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC ON SUNDAY (MARCH 20) FROM 10 AM TO 5 PM TO ENABLE RESIDENTS TO SEE THE AZALEAS IN BLOOM.

THE OPEN DAY HAS BEEN AN ANNUAL EVENT SINCE 1968.

PEOPLE WISHING TO VISIT THE GARDENS OF GOVERNMENT HOUSE ARE REQUESTED TO ENTER BY THE MAIN GATE AND LEAVE BY THE SIDE GATES SO THAT ALL CAN ENJOY THE FLOWERS WITHOUT CAUSING INCONVENIENCE TO OTHERS.

THEY ARE ALSO REMINDED THAT ONLY THE GARDENS WILL BE OPEN AND THEY SHOULD NOT ENTER THE HOUSE ITSELF.

SCOUTS AND POLICEMEN WILL BE PRESENT AND VISITORS ARE ASKED TO CO-OPERATE WITH THEM TO AVOID OVERCROWDING.

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ILLEGAL STRUCTURES IN MONG KOK CLEARED
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ABOUT 40 ILLEGAL STRUCTURES IN THE REAR LANES IN MONG KOK WERE DEMOLISHED IN A CLEARANCE OPERATION TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THESE STRUCTURES, LOCATED IN THE REAR LANES OF TAI KOK TSUI ROAD AND SYCAMORE STREET, WERE USED FOR DOMESTIC, STORAGE AND COOKED FOOD STALL PURPOSES.

/NINETEEN FAMILIES

NINETEEN FAMILIES COMPRISING 27 PERSONS WERE AFFECTED. OF THESE, FOUR FAMILIES WERE RESETTLED IN PERMANENT HOUSING AND EIGHT IN TEMPORARY HOUSING. THE OPERATOR OF A COOKED FOOD STALL WAS OFFERED EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCES.

THIS WAS THE LAST OF A SERIES OF SIX REAR LANE CLEARANCE OPERATIONS CO-ORDINATED BY THE MONG KOK DISTRICT OFFICE IN THIS FINANCIAL YEAR. THE CLEARANCES WERE JOINTLY CARRIED OUT BY THE POLICE AND THE HOUSING AND BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENTS.

A TOTAL OF 100 STRUCTURES HAD BEEN CLEARED DURING FIVE EARLIER OPERATIONS IN THE REAR LANES OF SAI YEUNG CHOI STREET, FA YUEN STREET, ANCHOR STREET, OAK STREET AND SHANGHAI STREET.

FOR THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR, A NUMBER OF REAR LANES WILL BE IDENTIFIED TO CLEAR THE ILLEGAL STRUCTURES THERE.

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NORTH DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME, ANTI-NARCOTICS VARIETY SHOW

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THE NORTH DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE WILL HOLD A GRAND VARIETY SHOW ON SATURDAY (MARCH 19) EVENING TO MARK THE CLOSING OF THE 1987-88 FIGHT CRIME AND ANTI-DRUG ADDICTION PROGRAMMES.

"THE SHOW AT FANLING RECREATION GROUND WILL BE PRODUCED AND BROADCAST LIVE BY ASIA TELEVISION LIMITED TO ENSURE THAT ITS MESSAGE WILL REACH THE WIDEST AUDIENCE," SAID THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NORTH DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE, MR TAO MAN-KWONG.

THE SHOW WOULD BE FUNDED BY THE NORTH DISTRICT BOARD, THE ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST NARCOTICS ALONG WITH DONATIONS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS, MR TAO ADDED.

THE PROGRAMME WILL INCLUDE PERFORMANCES BY POPULAR SINGERS, MOTOR-CYCLING AND GYMNASTIC DEMONSTRATIONS, AND A SKIT. TELEVISION ARTISTES WILL PERFORM ACROBATIC ACTS.

THERE WILL ALSO BE APPEAL MESSAGES BY MEMBERS OF THE NORTH DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE AND PROMINENT LOCAL PERSONALITIES.

ABOUT 15,000 SPECTATORS ARE EXPECTED TO WILL ATTEND THE SHOW. FREE ADMISSION TICKETS ARE NOW OBTAINABLE FROM THE NORTH DISTRICT OFFICE AT JOCKEY CLUB ROAD, FANLING; ITS COMMUNITY AFFAIRS BRANCH OFFICE IN CHOI YUEN ESTATE, SHEUNG SHUI; ITS PUBLIC ENQUIRY SERVICE CENTRES AT SAN FUNG AVENUE, SHEUNG SHUI, AND IN CHEUNG WAH ESTATE, FANLING; AND FROM THE FOUR RURAL COMMITTEES IN THE DISTRICT.

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PRIOR TO THE SHOW, PRIZES WILL BE PRESENTED TO RECIPIENTS OF THE "NORTH DISTRICT HELP THE POLICE SCHEME : GOOD CITIZEN AWARD", AND WINNERS OF AN INTER-SCHOOL ESSAY COMPETITION ON THE FIGHT CRIME THEME.

THE SHOW WILL BE BROADCAST LIVE ON ATV-GOLD FROM 8.05 PM TO 9.25 PM ON SATURDAY.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE PRIZE PRESENTATION CEREMONY AND THE NORTH DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME AND ANTI-NARCOTICS VARIETY SHOW ON SATURDAY (MARCH 19) AT THE FANLING RECREATION GROUND. PRIZE PRESENTATION WILL START AT 7 PM, FOLLOWED BY THE VARIETY SHOW.

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FINANCIAL EXHIBITION FOR TUEN MUN RESIDENTS

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THE COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE OF THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT BOARD WILL DISCUSS THE HOLDING OF AN EXHIBITION AND A SEMINAR ON CONSUMER FINANCIAL SERVICES IN MID-APRIL AT ITS MEETING TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

THE EXHIBITION WILL COVER SUCH AREAS AS RETAIL BANKING, INSURANCE, INVESTMENT BANKING, STOCK EXCHANGE AND REAL ESTATE WHILE THE SEMINAR WILL FOCUS ON MODERN RETAIL BANKING SERVICES, INSURANCE FOR BUSINESS AND HOME-OWNERS, LIFE INSURANCE SCHEMES AND UNIT TRUSTS.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE WILL ALSO BE BRIEFED ON A REPORT ON THE SALE AND OCCUPANCY OF FLATTED FACTORY UNITS IN TUEN MUN.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING OF THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT BOARD'S COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE TOMORROW (THURSDAY) IN THE DISTRICT BOARD CONFERENCE ROOM ON THE THIRD FLOOR, TUEN MUN GOVERNMENT OFFICES, 1 TUEN HI ROAD. IT WILL START AT 2.30 PM.

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SPRING RECEPTION FOR ELDERLY AT TAI O
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MORE THAN 400 SENIOR RESIDENTS OF TAI O ON LANTAU WILL ATTEND A SPRING RECEPTION TO BE HELD AT THE PO LIN MONASTERY TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

THE SPRING RECEPTION IS JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE TAI O RURAL COMMITTEE AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS TO HONOUR THE ELDERLY. SIMILAR ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN HELD EARLIER IN OTHER RURAL AREAS OF THE ISLANDS DISTRICT.

THE ISLANDS DISTRICT OFFICER, MR JONATHAN NG, WILL OFFICIATE AT THE SPRING RECEPTION WHICH WILL START AT NOON.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE TAI O SPRING RECEPTION FOR THE ELDERLY TO BE HELD AT NOON TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT THE PO LIN MONASTERY ON LANTAU.

THE PRESS LAUNCH "CLEMENTI" WILL LEAVE THE MARINE DEPARTMENT PIER, CENTRAL, AT 10 AM. INFORMATION OFFICER, MR RAYMOND TAM, WILL BE ON HAND TO ASSIST.

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TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS ON HONG KONG ISLAND
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TWO SECTIONS OF QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL WILL BE DESIGNATED URBAN CLEARWAYS 24 HOURS DAILY FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 19). THE TWO ROAD SECTIONS ARE:

- * THE NORTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL FROM A POINT ABOUT 40 METRES WEST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH ICE HOUSE STREET TO A POINT ABOUT 120 METRES WEST OF THE SAME JUNCTION; AND
- * THE SOUTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL FROM A POINT ABOUT 60 METRES WEST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH DUDELL STREET TO A POINT ABOUT 100 METRES WEST OF THE SAME JUNCTION.

/AT THE

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AT THE SAME TIME, THE WESTBOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF KING'S ROAD FROM A POINT ABOUT 41 METRES EAST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH OIL STREET TO A POINT ABOUT 61 METRES WEST OF THAT JUNCTION WILL BE DESIGNATED URBAN CLEARWAY 24 HOURS DAILY.

THE RESTRICTION WILL BE IN FORCE FOR A PERIOD OF ABOUT ONE YEAR TO FACILITATE SLOPE WORKS.

DURING THE SAME PERIOD, THE EXISTING URBAN CLEARWAY IMPLEMENTED FROM 7 AM TO 10 AM AND FROM 4 PM TO 7 PM DAILY ON THE SAME ROAD SECTION WILL BE RESCINDED.

WITHIN THE ABOVE URBAN CLEARWAYS, NO VEHICLES, EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES, WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR GOODS OR PASSENGERS.

IN ANOTHER CHANGE, O'BRIEN ROAD BETWEEN GLOUCESTER ROAD AND LOCKHART ROAD WILL BE TEMPORARILY DESIGNATED A PROHIBITED ZONE TO ALL VEHICLES OR COMBINATIONS OF VEHICLES OVER 10 METRES LONG FOR ABOUT THREE WEEKS. THE RESTRICTION WILL FACILITATE DRAINAGE WORK.

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SHAU KEI WAN RESTRICTIONS LIFTED

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TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS ON TWO ZONES IN HOI AN STREET IN SHAU KEI WAN WILL BE LIFTED FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 19).

THEY ARE:

THE PEAK HOUR (7 - 10 AM AND 4 - 7 PM) DAILY RESTRICTED ZONE IN HOI AN STREET FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH SHAU KEI WAN ROAD TO A POINT ABOUT 24 METRES NORTH OF THAT JUNCTION; AND

THE 7 AM TO MIDNIGHT DAILY PUBLIC LIGHT BUS RESTRICTED ZONE IN HOI AN STREET BETWEEN SHAU KEI WAN ROAD AND HING MAN STREET.

THE RESTRICTIONS WILL BE LIFTED FOR ABOUT TWO MONTHS FOR ROAD WORKS.

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