

S. R. M. P.

## 960,000 holders of CIs 'face a difficult future'

Mr Hui Yin-fat urged the Government to "negotiate with the relevant authority at an early date the status, rights and alterations to issuing procedures regarding Certificates of Identity holders" during the transitional period.

"The purpose is to obtain a satisfactory reply so that Certificate of Identity holders need not have any anxiety," he told members.

He said if CI holders were unwilling after 1997 to become citizens of the People's Republic of China — for example Hongkong Chinese for political reasons — it was very possible that problems of nationality would arise after July 1997.

Mr Hui expressed deep concern about "the future plight of some 960,000 Certificate of Identity holders".

Quoting statistics from the Hongkong Immigration Department, he said there were about 160,000 Certificate of Identity holders going in and out of Hongkong every month.

Mr Hui said he himself estimated that there were more than 100,000 people who were eligible to obtain Certificates of Identity but had not yet applied for them.

This silent majority, he said, would be unable to obtain the new BNO passports unless they were willing to apply for naturalisation as British Dependent Territories

Citizens on or before July 1, 1997.

"It is doubtful, however, whether these Hongkong Certificate of Identity holders would make applications by using these means," he said.

On the BNO passport, Mr Hui said he believed what the majority of holders of BDTC passports were concerned about most was the "convenience, recognition and acceptability by third countries of the new passport when it is used during the transitional period and after July 1, 1997".

Mr Hui supported the request of Mr John Swaine that it should be clearly stated in the new passport that the holder is entitled to enter the United Kingdom without having to apply for a certificate of entry beforehand.

"It should also be made clear that holders of the passport have the right of permanent residence in Hongkong. This is the minimum moral obligation which Britain has to take up," he said.

Mr Hui said it was regretted that during the past few years the British Government had not been able, in any real, moral, or timely sense, to look after the interests of British subjects in Hongkong.

"It therefore seems that Hongkong BDTCs have no real alternative but to apply for the new passports after July 1, 1997, and this is an extreme predicament to be in," he said.