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An even better bet than ombudsman

I AM extremely interested in the article "Ombudsmen a better bet than MPs." Although I agree with the authors basically, I would like to comment on a few points.

When the author suggests that the political stability in Hongkong results from the tripod of consents among three Governments, he lays emphasis on the external factors controlling the stability.

It should be noted, however, that internal factors — the people themselves and their ideology — are equally important.

Among the three tripods, the Hongkong Government currently securing the support of its people is the strongest one. The people give consent to British colonial rule by making a choice to stay and obey laws made by the colonial regime.

The Chinese refugees in 1950s chose to stay and accept the Government in exchange for a politically and socially stable place to bring up their children. The locally born youngsters chose to lead a comfortable life in Hongkong for good. All the evidence leads to the conclusion that the Government has already secured the people's consent.

Hongkong people are politically apathetic, but economically active and tend to be socially more aggressive now. Most of them do not have a political commitment. What they are concerned about are educational opportunities, employment situation, better housing conditions and a growing economy.

The political apathy can be proved by the low turnout in Urban Council election and the fact that the student leaders, young social workers and the party concerned resort to publicity campaigns, not

through the political groups and the elected Councillors.

If one argues that more people will turn out in the Urbco election once the direct electoral system is imposed, I would like to highlight the fact that the relatively well-educated young generation of Hongkong is vocal enough to have this demand publicised through the mass media in 24 hours.

Being politically apathetic does not mean that the young generation does not want social and economic reforms. Hongkong is unique in that the Government makes every effort to cater for the increasing demand on social and economic reforms without changing the political system.

This system has produced an economic miracle and the unique political system in Hongkong. It is so precious to us that we must preserve it in our own interests, for it shows to the world, especially some political thinkers, that political development can be detached from economic growth and social reforms.

The people of Hongkong and their ideologies are exactly on the same line as the concepts behind the "catering" system.

So long as it works, everybody in Hongkong would like to support the existing political system for their own sake. All of them do not expect politicians to bring out social and economic reforms.

Therefore, the MPs' presence in Hongkong and their allegations were given undue publicity. They came and served as observers, and hence are entitled to their judgment. It is unfair to our guests if we expect them to conform to our values. Neither is it fair to us if we are misled by the mass media that Hongkong is a political football being

kicked around by Labour politicians.

Hongkong is simply not so significant a source of political support in Britain as most Hongkong people suppose it would be. I am of the opinion that the general sensitiveness to the MPs' criticism of Hongkong as a whole is a result of the exaggeration of the MPs' role in the political social and economic changes of Hongkong.

I share the authors' doubt about the MPs' capability to offer meaningful help to solve our social problems. The solutions offered by the MPs are often stained with inadequate understanding of Hongkong.

Nevertheless, the MPs' criticism of Hongkong should serve as a source of reference that can be meaningfully used by the local people in their attempt to create a still better economic and social system.

Everybody should bear in mind that the Hongkong people of the 1970s are more vocal and in better position to judge and to select the best way to improve the overall situation in Hongkong.

Nobody outside Hongkong can impose values or systems upon them if they have decided to reject them. The Hongkong situation is sophisticated because of this delicacy of running the Hongkong political machinery.

The author's suggestion of establishing an ombudsman system is certainly an additional channel of redressing grievances to the one offered by Umelco. But I think that bringing up a group of competent and upright local administrators can serve the Hongkong community better. What we need most is good administrators, neither politicians nor ombudsmen.

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