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A mock democracy?

DEMOCRACY has to be the most highly touted and contested ideal in politics. Democracy is something everyone is for, but cannot exactly spell out.

Recently Dr Joseph Cheng of the Chinese University offered his interpretation of our district board elections as a gradual evolutionary process towards a democratic society.

But if democracy was just the right to vote, then it would be rather simple. We could have elections every other week and wager on their outcome the way the punters bet on horses.

Of course democracy is not so easily attainable.

Elections are futile unless the elected few are genuine representatives of the masses, and are empowered to wield this public consensus to achieve goals for the common good.

Hongkong's brand of democracy has thus far been a parody of the real thing, because the chosen few have little clout and not many of the leaders are ordinary folk, as Dr Cheng observed.

Since the elected men and women tend to come from the business class, their interests lie with the merchants and the white collar professions.

Ideally, the leaders of any community should be wise and learned people who reflect the characteristics and champion the aspirations of the electors.

In Hongkong ideals do not always jibe with reality. Hongkong may indeed be moving closer to plutocracy than democracy because our society is moulded by the pursuit and adulation of money.

Letting elected leaders serve on the Legislative Council, in which some power is vested, is spurious without moderating the cash-and-carry philosophy that spurs the public on.

True democracy will be ours when the rule by the majority for the majority is guided by a conscience, and the leaders who represent us serve us with proper power, control and dignity.

Since Hongkong is a society without that type of government, it will remain a city with a mock rather than a genuine democratic leadership.