

J. C. M. P.

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AG: No discussion yet on homosexual law reform

The subject of homosexual law reform has not yet been discussed by the Law Reform Commission, the Attorney-General, Mr John Griffiths, said yesterday.

"Obviously this is a subject upon which the feelings and opinion of ordinary people are of great importance. The problem is how to discover accurately what they are," added Mr Griffiths, who is also chairman of the commission.

However, the recently-established commission has made a start on studying possible improvements to Hongkong's commercial arbitration laws.

And also under discussion is whether the Chinese concept of mediation can be incorporated in some laws.

Mr Griffiths was address-

ing student graduates and guests at a farewell assembly at New Asia College, Chinese University.

The inaugural meeting of the commission was held the day before.

The first item discussed was the question of Hongkong's laws on commercial arbitration.

"There is a feeling in many quarters that there is a need in Asia for an international arbitration centre and Hongkong, with its commercial and financial expertise and geographical location, might well have the necessary facilities and abilities. This subject was considered by the commission and a sub-committee formed," said Mr Griffiths.

Referring to the Chinese concept of mediation and its possible relevance to Hongkong law, Mr Griffiths said

that this too had been delegated to a sub-committee for examination.

He said that he had received a letter from the chairman of the San Tin Rural Committee in the New Territories welcoming the proposal and offering to assist the project in any way.

The chairman had written to the commission saying: "The indigenous villagers of the New Territories have a history of living here for several hundred years. All along they have had a close tie of rural friendship and are always willing to compromise if necessary in order to remain in harmony with others."

Mr Griffiths said that the commission would deal with four main areas of the law: many minor corrections and improvements to the law; examination of more funda-



Mr Griffiths

mental aspects of the law; reform of laws in relation to administrative or policy matters; and possible reforms in response to popular demand.

On the question of fundamental reforms, Mr Griffiths said that such matters would first have to be agreed by himself and the Chief Justice before the matter would be placed before the commission.

"Obviously, Sir Denys (Roberts, the Chief Justice) and I will consider together any proposals for study which are put forward by the public," said Mr Griffiths.

He added: "Already someone has suggested consideration of the translation into Chinese of all the laws of Hongkong and others have put forward other ideas."

Some projects would require considerable research and this "will be provided by one of the lawyers working in my chambers chosen for his expert knowledge of the subject in the private sector," said Mr Griffiths.

He went on to outline the working method of the commission: subjects would initially be discussed by the full commission and then a few members would form a sub-committee.

The committee would consider the matter in greater detail and would be able to invite people with special knowledge of a subject onto the committee.

After a committee had reported its findings the commission would sit and decide whether or not to adopt a report.