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1997 holds no fears for Nellie Fong

NELLIE Fong's colleagues at the accounting firm of Arthur Andersen & Co are still congratulating her on her appointment to the Legislative Council.

For the 39-year-old Hongkong native, serving in the Government has been a goal since childhood.

Only one other professional achievement has made her prouder.

That came in 1981 when she was made a partner in her Switzerland-based firm, where she has been employed as a tax accountant for 15 years.

"When I joined the firm, I had always wanted to become a partner," said Mrs Fong, the first Chinese woman to receive that honour.

Her fluency in Mandarin, Cantonese and English was an invaluable asset to the company when the firm expanded its activities there in 1979 and named her its liaison representative.

Mrs Fong said she expects to concentrate on trade and industry issues during her Legco term, especially legislation affecting China.

ANDREA PAWLYNA meets appointed Legislative Council member Mrs Nellie Fong, a strong advocate of functional constituencies and the electoral college system for Hongkong.

Considered an arch-conservative because of her opposition to direct elections, Mrs Fong prefers functional constituencies and the electoral college system because she feels it offers a broader cross-section of representatives.

If direct elections were held, she contends certain professions, such as lawyers or teachers, would dominate.

"The risk is far too great that (the council) would not be truly representative of Hongkong," she said.

Although lawyers tend to form the bulk of elected officials in other countries, such as the US, Mrs Fong said she couldn't "draw any conclusion about foreign systems".

She professes to have no worries over 1997, when Hongkong reverts to the mainland.

"Hongkong is part of

China; it has international business connections and there are people here who understand Western culture," she said.

"So Hongkong is of tremendous importance to the development of China."

With such advantages, she expressed hope that China wouldn't "interfere" with Hongkong's successful economic formula.

Along with her new Legco post, Mrs Fong is enjoying her second term on the Urban Council, an appointment she expects to retain until March when her three-year tenure expires.

Active in civic and professional organisations, she is a member of the Town Planning Board, the Hongkong Society of Accountants, the Wong Tai Sin District Board and the Hongkong Society for the Protection of Children.

Educated at Belilios Pub-

lic School, she studied accountancy at City of London College in 1968 and then worked as an apprentice accountant in England for four years before returning to Hongkong in 1973.

Her professional accreditation includes being a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and a member of the Institute of Taxation in the UK.

She is a workaholic who proudly declares she has no hobbies.

"My enjoyment comes from my work and finding satisfaction in what I do," she said.

Her respite from work comes on Saturday afternoons and Sundays when she spends time with her family.

Married to Eddy Fong Ching, 41, also an accountant, the couple has a daughter, Bonnie, 8.

The three take frequent holidays away from Hongkong, which Mrs Fong finds as an ideal way to relax.

"When we go away, I like to do nothing," she said with a smile.