

S. C. W. P.

26 Nov. 1984

Allegiance to the Queen essential for councillors

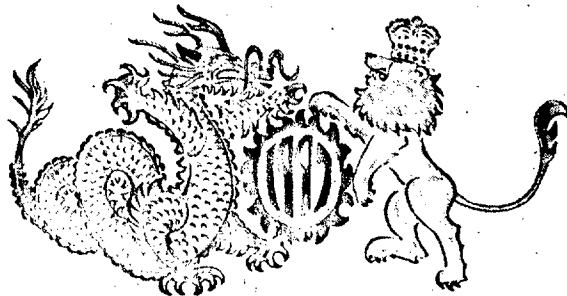
By STANLEY LEUNG

The Government has no plans to cancel the present arrangement that requires Legislative and Executive councillors to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen.

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Denis Bray, told the SCM Post yesterday the Government was considering cancelling the oath of allegiance.

He was commenting on a press report that said future Legco and Exco members would not need to make an oath of allegiance to the Queen.

He said it would be necessary for the next 13 years because the British Government was still responsible for the administration of the territory.



Mr Bray quoted the joint declaration as saying that "the Government of the United Kingdom will be responsible for the administration of Hongkong with the object of maintaining and preserving its economic prosperity and social stability."

He said that unless there is a change in the future, that arrangement will continue until 1997.

He told a television inter-

viewer on Saturday that the present system of administration will continue to 1997 and Legco members will be expected to affirm their support.

Mr Bray described the issue as "a bit of a technicality" but said it was only reasonable to expect that a person who was prepared to take a seat on Legco would pledge support for the administration it represented.

And swearing an oath of allegiance signifies a member's pledge of support for the British administration, he added.

However, he did not rule out the possibility that the issue might be reviewed in the future.

The Principal Assistant Secretary for District Administration, Mr C.M. Leung, also said the Government's position on the issue had not changed since his statement on Thursday.

He said the issue of the taking of an oath of allegiance was one of the questions that will be looked at.

He said that if necessary the two constitutional instruments, the Royal Instructions and Letters Patent, will be amended according to circumstances.

On the controversial issue, Mr Leung issued an official statement yesterday saying: "If there is a problem, we will consider it in sufficient time."

That official position could also be applied to the question of a dual role in district boards and the new regional council, he added.

Under the present election laws for district boards, members are disqualified from holding office if they serve on "any parliament, assembly or council" of a "foreign country."

Leftwing people have been pressing for the lifting of this ban, which they said would be a stumbling block to the forthcoming political reforms.

The vice-chairman of the leftwing Hongkong Federation of Trade Unions, Mr Cheng Yiu-tong, has said the oath of allegiance to the Queen would prevent members of the federation, with a total membership of 170,000, from sitting in Legco.

And a Chinese legal expert, Miss Liu Yiu-chu, also warned that if the issue was not solved, it would be difficult to provide a "continuity of participation" by political leaders.