

7 Sept. 1988

# Council crusader fights power shift

DESPITE his three years as a legislator, Dr Conrad Lam Kiu-shing is unlikely to score points from his experience in the forthcoming elections.

Seen as a liberal crusader in the council, Dr Lam's criticism of government officials and rival political groups has earned the disapproval of many of his colleagues.

He caused a major stir when he labelled the late Governor, Sir Edward Youde, a "shoe-shine boy" two years ago in the Legco debate on the Daya Bay nuclear power plant.

Dr Lam told *The Standard* his outspoken style had apparently angered some senior members of Legco. He suggested they had lobbied a number of Wong Tai Sin District Board members to vote against him.

He would not let up in his campaign, despite suggestions by some board members that he was too egocentric in his Legco work and not accountable enough to the board which had elected him, Dr Lam said.

His power base shrank when several liberal allies on the Wong Tai Sin board lost to candidates supported by his old-time election rival, former board chairman Mr Michael Cheng Tak-kin, in the March district board elections.

The shift of power on the board after the election eliminated any margin Dr Lam might have held over Mr Cheng.

Indeed, political observers believe Mr Cheng now has a slight lead over his rival. The school principal should be able to command the support of most conservatives and pro-China members on the board.

The contest for the Wong Tai Sin seat is being portrayed as a showdown between the two major camps backing the candidates.

About half the members of the 31-vote constituency are not closely associated with either camp, however, and it is their support which is likely to be the deciding factor in the contest.

Among the uncommitted are most of the appointed members, plus former councillor Mrs Ng Chow Mei-lin and her supporters.

Mrs Ng said yesterday she



Outspoken Legco candidate Dr Conrad Lam is facing tough opposition from his sole rival to the Wong Tai Sin seat, Mr Michael Cheng Tak-kin — who has profited from Dr Lam's criticisms of the Government. Today **JOHNSON SZE** talks to Dr Lam, who says his challenger has lobbied DB members against him in the polls campaign.

had not chosen who to vote for.

Neither had she decided whether to run in next year's Urban Council election. There have been suggestions Mrs Ng might swap votes with Mr Cheng in return for his support for an attempt to unseat Miss Fok Pui-ye.

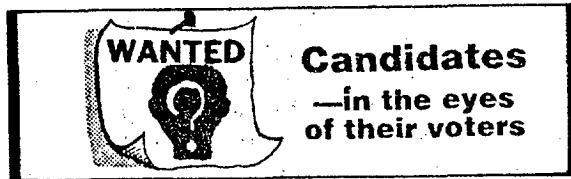
Insiders said it was difficult to judge the intentions of several old-style kaifong board members as both Dr Lam and Mr Cheng had deep roots in the district through their work.

The two men hold diametrically opposing views on the

pace of political change in the territory.

Mr Cheng insists a cautious and gradual approach should be pursued rather than risk frightening away investors through the turbulence caused by rapid political change.

Dr Lam is known for his liberal approach to political development. Although he has not joined political bodies urging a directly-elected government, he is considered a close ally of Mr Martin Lee, a leader of Hongkong's democratic movement.



## What the voters want in a leader

■ **VOTER A:** "Our representative in the Legislative Council must give first priority to reflecting the views of the district board. His own opinions and the views of other bodies with which he is affiliated should come second."

■ **Voter B:** "The person must not be self-centred or forget he is responsible for conveying the

district board's views to Legco."

■ **Voter C:** "I hope that the law-maker we elect will be accountable to the electorate."

■ **Voter D:** "I will look over the candidates' past records to see whether they really reflect the views of the district and if the candidates are courageous enough to speak for the majority of Hongkong people."

## Q & A

**Q:** The Group of 85 and the Group of 190 have put forward different political models for post-1997 Hongkong. Are you a supporter of either?

■ **Mr Michael Cheng:**

"Economic prosperity should take precedence over anything else. Political changes should not erode the confidence of investors. That's the most important principle in charting Hongkong's political future."

"I favour the proposal of businessmen and professionals that the post-1997 legislature should consist of a mixture of legislators elected through functional constituencies, general elections and a grand electoral college.

"And a grand electoral college would be an acceptable method of electing the chief executive of the post-1997 Hongkong Government."

"Universal franchise for electing the chief executive should wait until people become more mature politically."

■ **Dr Conrad Lam:**

"I personally feel the one-man one-vote system has proved to have the least problems in electing public officials."

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## The candidates:



**Conrad Lam Kui-shing:**

- Age: 53
- Principal occupation: General Practitioner.
- Education and professional qualifications: MBBS, University of Hongkong.
- Organisational involvement: Former legislative councillor, incumbent Wong Tai Sin District Board member, Transport Advisory Committee member, School Medical Service Board.
- Passport: British National (Overseas).



**Michael Cheng Tak-kin:**

- Age: 50
- Principal occupation: Secondary school principal.
- Education and professional qualifications: Grantham College of Education, Bachelor's degree in political science and history from the University of Hongkong and Master's degree in education from the Chinese University of Hongkong.
- Organisational involvement: Immediate past chairman of Wong Tai Sin District Board, member of Action Committee Narcotics, Education Appeal Board, Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation Board and Secondary School Places Allocation Advisory Committee.
- Passport: British Dependent Territory Citizenship.

"However, I will accept a compromise with other political factions to end the current stalemate over the debate on the post-1997 government.

"The compromise, nevertheless, should allow for not less than one-half of legislators to be elected through direct elections.

"My principle is that all adult members of the public should be allowed to cast their votes because they are the section of the population who are doomed to go on living in Hongkong no matter what happens after 1997.

"I have doubts over the proposal of businessmen and professionals. Giving them greater political power than others is dangerous because they may use it to pursue their own interests. Moreover, they are the people able to flee from Hongkong overnight."

**Q: Do you support a ministerial type of government after 1997? What are your views on party politics?**

**■ Dr Conrad Lam:**

"I am behind the formation of political parties. And I think a ministerial type of government is one of (the more) feasible

models of government. Such a system would hold top officials responsible for their policies."

**■ Mr Michael Cheng:**

"Party politics will inevitably bring confrontation which will threaten (the territory's) stability and prosperity. Hongkong has traditionally been a harmonious and peaceful society."

"I prefer not to comment on the ministerial type of government because I do not have much information about it."

**Q: What do you think are the big issues facing Hongkong in the run-up to the changeover of sovereignty?**

**■ Mr Michael Cheng:**

"Brain drain caused by a possible exodus of professionals, civil education and continuous economic development."

**■ Dr Conrad Lam:**

"Emigration of professionals, the uncertainty hanging over the future of senior civil servants and an anticipated decline in the authority and legitimacy of Legco, municipal councils and district boards as 1997 draws near."