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Bid to give elections greater democracy

By ANDY HO, JOHN TANG and LAI PUI-YEE

TWO district board members have introduced a bold plan in an attempt to give the Legislative Council elections a greater degree of democracy.

They have paid for a survey to canvass the views of a wide range of people in a backdoor move to allow them to express an opinion which they would otherwise be denied.

It is hoped that other district board members will follow suit and draw more people into the voting process

long before the official district-based direct elections are introduced to return 10 legislators by 1991.

The survey will gauge the views of 1,500 residents on who should be elected to the council on September 22 and the two members have vowed to vote according to the findings.

Elected Central and Western District Board members, Mr Hung Wing-tat and Mr Chan Choi-hi, have commissioned Hongkong Polling Services Limited to poll residents in the Sai Ying Pun West and Kennedy Town East district board constituencies.

Under the present electoral college system, district board members are entitled to choose their representatives to the legislature.

Residents in general, however, are not eligible to vote.

The respondents, chosen on a random basis, are all over the age of 21 and have lived in Hongkong for more than seven years.

The week-long telephone survey has been completed and the findings will be announced on Monday.

The residents were asked whom they would pick from among the Island West electoral college candidates — Mr Liu Lit-for, Mr Joseph Chan Yuek-sut and Mrs So Chau Yim-ping.

They were also given a choice to abstain.

The electoral college, comprising the Central/Western and Southern district boards, will be considerably embarrassed if its collective choice is different from that of the residents.

General manager of the polling service, Mr Hung Ching-tin, said the poll could have far-reaching implications on future electoral systems.

“Similar polls can help check horse-trading and under-the-table deals with the



Hung Wing-tat

electoral colleges which only have about 30 electors each,” he said.

Mr Hung said they had conducted the poll in accordance with Census and Statistics Department standards.

A lecturer in statistics at the Chinese University, Dr Hui Yee-van, has acted as the project's technical consultant.

Observers say such polls, if done on a larger scale, could become a powerful alternative to the 600-member grand electoral college system proposed by the conservative businessmen and professionals lobby to elect the post-1997 legislature.

However, Mr Miu Wah-chang, the campaign manager for Mr Joseph Chan, dismissed the polls as a device by some district board members to allow them to vote for their man in the name of the residents so as to avoid embarrassing the other candidates.

Mr Miu said Mr Chan's campaign team would not waste its efforts lobbying residents because they had no right to vote.

Others, however, observed that the candidates had stepped up their electioneering recently.