

# 'Ambassador' left in lurch

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**F**ORMER Civil Service chief Barrie Wiggham sets off today on a high-profile, one-man trade mission to the United States.

The only problem is that he doesn't have a title.

Wiggham, who stepped down as Civil Service Secretary last week, was supposed to be going as Hongkong's new trade am-

bassador to the US. The trip was intended to pave the way for his arrival in Washington in September. But a Legislative Council row over the position and a luxury home to go with it has held up the appointment.

Originally, Wiggham's post was to have been confirmed by the Finance Committee today.

Now, legislators will decide while he is half-way through his month-long trip.

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WIGGHAM: Mission to US.

# Trade 'ambassador' is left without portfolio

"That's when I find out if I have a job or not when I come back to Hongkong," Wiggham said yesterday as he prepared for the trip.

"On the original schedule I would have gone with a full and proper title, but now I am the designated person for that job. I don't know what to call myself."

He added: "The trip has been planned for a while. It was meant to give me an early start on the job, to get about, make contacts and spread the Hongkong message to trade and industry leaders and investors."

Wiggham said he would push hard for unconditional renewal of China's most-favoured-nation status during his trip.

He flies to London today and will head to Washington a few days later.

He will also visit Houston, New Orleans, Birmingham in Alabama, Boston, New York and San Francisco.

He is expected to link up with Governor Chris Patten, who is due in Washington in the first week of May. Wiggham arrives back in Hongkong on 15 May.

He will deliver the opening address at a conference on Hongkong organised by the Asia Society Houston on 22 April.

The Asia Society is a high-profile public policy group on Asian issues with corporate and academic members.

Houston's members include major US investors in Hongkong, one of which is the single biggest American investor, the Exxon Oil Corporation.

On 26 April, he will address Birmingham's Committee on Foreign Relations, a regional think-tank based in one of the major power centres of the Clinton administration.