

self  
~~Civil Service~~  
Civil Service  
Transition  
Passports

# 1997 spurs civil service exodus

By LOUIS NG

MORE than one-third of senior civil servants will resign because of the change to Chinese sovereignty, according to a survey released yesterday.

It also disclosed that up to 77 per cent held foreign passports, increasing fears that an exodus of top officials is likely near the change-over.

The survey, conducted by Professor Joseph Cheng Yu-shek and Dr Jane Lee of the City Polytechnic, showed strong pessimism among the cream of the 190,000-strong civil service.

As many as 35 per cent of the top-ranking officials said they would not remain in the civil service after 1997.

And another 29 per cent said they were undecided whether they would contin-

ue to serve after that date.

The survey was conducted between March and November and targeted about 1,000 most senior level staff.

It contained interviews and was followed by a mailed survey with a response rate of 57 per cent.

"In the study, it is observed that the bureaucrats generally exhibit a strong sense of uncertainty and pessimism concerning their future career as well as their political role," the academics said in their paper.

"Early retirement and resignation from the civil service may be the ways by which the bureaucrats express their negative feelings towards the future political system."

The survey showed that up to 37 per cent of respondents were pessimistic about their career. Among these,

13 per cent said they were "very worried", while the remaining 24 per cent were "worried".

The senior officials were also disturbed by the increasing interference by China in the run-up towards 1997.

Twenty-one per cent said they were "very worried" about the involvement of Beijing government officials in Hong Kong's major policy decisions.

And nearly half (46.9 per cent) of the respondents said they were "fairly worried" about China's involvement, compared with the 25.5 per cent who were "fairly unworried".

Also, more than half (50.9 per cent) disagreed that the decisions of the Chinese Government should override those of the Hong Kong Government.

More than 65 per cent of the respondents said they were holding full British passports, with another 11 per cent holding other foreign passports.

The survey found that a majority of the respondents agreed that the Government should be held accountable to the Legislative Council, compared with the 17.1 per cent who said the Government should be held accountable to the Chinese Government.

This was despite the fact that many of those interviewed felt that politicians were "incompetent, senseless and inimical to the general interests".

"The study finds that the bureaucrats are in the process of adjustment towards a more open and responsive government," the researchers said.