

# 138 sign up to fight it out in battle for Legco

By LINDA CHOY and FUNG WAI-KONG

A TOTAL of 138 candidates will do battle in elections to sit on the Legislative Council in its last two years under British administration.

More than 80 of them have backing from 17 different political and labour groups for the September 17 poll, the most democratically structured election in the territory's history.

Fifty candidates will be fighting for the 30 geographical constituencies, 70 for the 20 functional constituencies and 18 will vie for the 10 seats on offer from the Election Committee, a franchise restricted to elected district board members.

The nine new functional constituencies emerged as the most fiercely contested arena, with 34 candidates

targeting newly created seats encompassing the territory's entire working population.

The Financing, Insurance, Real Estate and Business seat alone drew six contestants. The Community, Social and Personal Services sector has five.

The Democratic Party fielded the biggest team with 15 people contesting geographical seats, seven the functional constituencies and three the Election Committee.

Its arch-rival, the pro-China Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB), put up 14 members in its maiden fight for legislature seats. The pro-China camp fielded more than 30 candidates.

Despite a heavy defeat in previous direct elections, the Liberal Party emerged as the biggest early winner this

time, pocketing five of the nine uncontested seats.

The victors were James Tien Pei-chun and Ngai Shiu-kit of the industrial constituencies; Ronald Arculli of Real Estate and Construction; Edward Ho Sing-tin of Architectural, Surveying and Planning; and Lau Wong-fat of the Rural seat.

Other early winners included Paul Cheng Ming-fun and Philip Wong Yuhong, both representing the commercial sector; David Li Kwok-po of finance and Mok Ying-fan, the new representative of the Urban Council.

In 1991, there were 12 uncontested seats.

Mr Li takes up his fourth consecutive term unopposed.

Mr Lau and Mr Arculli won their seats for the sec-

ond time without opposition.

The chairman of the Boundary and Election Commission, Mr Justice Woo Kwok-hing, said he was not troubled by the rate of uncontested seats.

"Perhaps people are satisfied with their candidate's performance: there is no point challenging the only candidate if he is good enough."

Mr Justice Woo did not agree that the limited franchise in the old functional system had discouraged new challengers.

Ninety-four candidates signed up for the 39 seats contested in 1991. This represented a ratio of 2.4 candidates for each seat. The ratio dropped to 2.3:1 this year.