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Anti-union workers may attract investors

The Assistant Director of Commerce and Industry, Mr Roy Porter, has said in Britain that Hongkong's industrial workforce was simply not interested in unionism.

He made this remark in an interview for a radio programme produced by the British Information Services. A tape recording of this interview reached Business News yesterday.

The most prominent among the problems facing British industrialists is probably that of industrial relations. Mr Porter was asked: "Can Hongkong be certain that it is not going to have similar problems in the years to come?"

His answer was positive. "Our workers want to be allowed to work and to earn a good wage and to attain an increasing standard of living. They do not see the trade union system as of any assistance to them.

"In fact, the Government in Hongkong has tried to encourage the development of healthy unionism," he said.

Mr Porter estimated that only about 10 per cent of industrial workers belonged to unions.

He was also confident that wage increases for the Colony's labour force would rise in a stable fashion.



Mr PORTER . . . "the Government has tried to encourage the development of healthy unionism"

"With our type of economy - something in the region of about 80 per cent of our manufactured products are for export - we cannot rely upon a protective home market.

"In this type of economy," he said, "you cannot get to a point where your wage rate is no longer competitive."

This system has worked in Hongkong, he said.

Mr Porter is currently in Britain taking part in seminars in London and Birmingham to tell British industrialists about

investment opportunities in Hongkong.

More than 500 leading industrialists were invited to the seminars organised by the Confederation of British Industries at which investment opportunities in Singapore and Malaysia were also discussed.

Besides the seminar, Mr Porter and his team are visiting factories all over Britain to stress the advantages of setting up overseas manufacturing bases in Hongkong.

"We want to give them the full picture of Hongkong - warts and all," he said.

He said Hongkong's industry had the enormous potential of producing fine engineering products at a highly competitive prices. "People are having their toolings made in Hongkong rather than say the United States," he said.

This fact, he regretted, has been overlooked by many British industrialists. "They do not accept that we have the skills and the capability to make high technological products."

He looked forward to the opportunity of discussing with British manufacturers the type of premises or land they wanted and the type of skilled workers they needed. He would also advise them of the difficulties they might meet when investing in Hongkong.