

H.K. Standard

24 July 1987

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A rising star in labour movement

IF you are looking for a rising star in the labour circle, few will dispute that Mr Tam Yiu-chung is one who matches this description perfectly.

At the age of 36, Mr Tam has already climbed the top echelons of the powerful Hongkong Federation of Trade Unions (FTU), one of the Chinese strongholds on the local political scene.

As one of the six vice-chairmen of the FTU, he is seen as a young, educated, energetic and promising leader of the 170,000-strong labour body.

Though the top decision-making organ will have to meet tomorrow evening to decide on the FTU candidacy in the upcoming Legislative Council polls, well-placed sources have confirmed that Mr Tam will be hand-picked for the job.

The meeting may appear to be a matter of rubber stamping, but this has not prevented the HFTU from blocking attempts by *The Standard* to interview Mr Tam on his election platform and other aspirations.

He recently attended a short course on industrial relations at the renowned London School of Politics and Economics and only returned to Hongkong a few days ago.

Union sources said Mr Tam first joined the labour movement in the late 1960s when he started working as a salesman at local department stores.

His active involvement and contribution to the Hongkong and Kowloon Department Stores Workers Association have been widely appreciated by his colleagues and later he became the association's vice-chairman.

As his group is one of the 71 FTU affiliated unions, he came into frequent contact with the parent body and his working ability soon attracted the attention of its top leaders. They have been actively seeking younger unionists to share part of their responsibilities and to eventually take over the leadership.

In the early 1980s, Mr Tam became a FTU vice-chairman and since then he has worked full time as the director of the union's Workers' Club.

In terms of public service, he is currently an elected employee representative of the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) and a member of the Hongkong Productivity Council and the Protection of Wages on the Insolvency Fund Board.

His appointments to the last two bodies

clearly indicate that the government has looked at him as someone who can be entrusted with a wide range of public responsibilities.

His involvement in the LAB has enabled him to meet union leaders of diversified backgrounds through official functions and other social gatherings.

Another evidence of his rapidly-rising reputation is his recent appointment to the Basic Law Drafting Committee on which he sits as the sole representative of the labour sector.

He has said earlier that he hoped the rights and privileges currently enjoyed by the workforce would be incorporated in the basic law which would be instrumental in maintaining the prosperity and stability of the territory after 1997.

Name: Tam Yiu-chung

Age: 36

Marital status: Married

Children: Two sons

Nationality: Hongkong citizen

Occupation: Director, Federation of Trade Unions Workers' Club

Education and professional qualifications:

Completed secondary education in Hongkong (1965); Certificate in Trade Union Education, Centre of Continuing Education of Australian National University (1982); Certificate in Industrial Relations of Trade Union Studies, The London School of Politics and Economics (1985)

Public Service: Vice-chairman, Federation of Trade Unions; Vice-chairman, Hongkong and Kowloon Department Stores Workers Association; Employee representative, Labour Advisory Board; Member, LAB Committee on Industrial Safety and Accidents Prevention; Member, Hongkong Productivity Council; Member, Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund Board

Hobbies: Reading, swimming and travelling

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