

S.L.M.P.

6/5/1977

... and so does the Commissioner

YOUR editorial "Need to upgrade labour men" - S.C.M. Post, April 28 - has been read with great interest by members of our association.

As your editorial has pointed out rightly, the Commissioner for Labour shoulders heavy responsibilities of importance as the head of the Labour Department. In addition, he is the principal adviser to the Government on labour matters, the Chairman of the Labour Advisory Board as well as a member of the Legislative Council.

Virtually, most industrialised States facing an increasingly sophisticated labour force have rarely failed to recognise the importance of labour administrations. They always place the head of such an administration at a senior ministerial level. The appointment of the Secretary of State for Employment in UK, the Secretary of Labour in U.S. and the Minister for Labour in Canada are some of the obvious examples. In fact, Hongkong is one of the few exceptions in this respect.

Perhaps, we have a more justifiable case in Hongkong for such recognition in view of the growth of the labour force and the introduction of new labour legislation in the past decade. In December 1966, there were only 10,413 registered and recorded industrial undertakings

employing 424,155 workers but by December 1976, these figures had risen to a high level of 23,879 and 692,998 respectively. Since 1968, some 120 pieces of legislation governing safety, health and conditions of employment have been enacted.

Despite the tremendous increase in workload, the staff of the department have always endeavoured their best to execute the department's diverse functions in the fields of labour relations, employment services, conditions of employment, occupational health, industrial safety and industrial training. Indeed, we must say that our professional conviction dictates that we should labour hard in order to enable every member of the working community to attain his "fair deal at work."

As a trade union representing a major professional grade in the Labour Department, it is gratifying to note that public recognition of a "better deal" for our Commissioner has been echoed in a newspaper like yours. It is certainly not an undue statement to add that this recognition should also be extended to the department's lieutenants and rank-and file.

CHAN KWOK-KUEN

Chairman

Labour Officers Association