

S. L. M. P. 16 Jan. 1982.

Abolish the council if...

The Urban Council should be a wholly-elected body or it should be abolished "in favour of a reformed Legislative Council that has at least some elected members," said senior elected councillor Mr Brook Bernacchi.

Mr Bernacchi, who has previously said he will not run again, declared:

"But this half-appointed, half-elected council, and the elected side being put into office by a mere 4,000 to 6,000 votes out of a population of over four million is so shallow — and at the most a display window for the so-called democracy — that I for one am not having any more to do with it."

Mr Bernacchi was first elected in 1952.

"There is no reason why, just because the political situation is such that independence for Hongkong cannot be considered, the Urban Council as such should not be an entirely elected body — the electorate being all the citizens of Hongkong above 18 years of age."

At the annual debate last year, Mr Bernacchi was one of five councillors to stage a walkout at what they termed a "silenced and stagnated" council.

He then said the only platform of debate remaining was this annual one.

Yesterday he made other points:

- There are large tracks of land in the New Territories which can be sold by the Government "so that land prices are not increased by a self-induced scarcity of availability of land."

- The cutback in public housing last year played a part in the ever-increasing inflation.

- More money should be spent on public housing in the next financial year to make up for the losses the Housing Authority suffered this year.

Business and industrial premises should be subject to rent control and protection against eviction.

Saying that many small businesses and factories have closed down, he added:

"At present we are lucky to have sufficient jobs for our workers, but if the inflation is not checked, this may change overnight, and we will be faced with an enormous problem of unemployment, resulting in industrial disturbances."

The Government's medical services are good, but inadequate and queues for hospital treatment are enormous.

"There is more than a suggestion that the supply of drugs will run out before the end of the financial year with no money to buy further supplies."

"Yet I bet you that we shall end up with the usual large surplus and everyone will pat Philip Haddon-Cave on the back and say 'Good boy, he has done it again.'

"I say bad boy for not spending what is budgeted for."

Both the budget surpluses and system of taxation belong in the 19th century.

Also 19th century is the system of town officers in the New Territories.

"In my view, each town in the New Territories should have its own council.

"And the system should be a two-tier one with the Greater Hongkong Council at the top of the municipal ladder."