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# Briefing report was off target

YOUR political staff reported in Sunday Briefing (SCM Post, November 27):

"And we learn that Sir Peter Blaker, Chairman of the Anglo-Hongkong Group of MPs, wanted to organise a joint meeting with Mr Adley and his colleagues in the Anglo-Chinese Group.

"But Sir Peter called the whole thing off after Mr Adley insisted on going ahead with his Hongkong debate."

Mr Adley, in a recent letter to me says of this report:

"... it is in fact the precise opposite of the truth. It was the British-Chinese Group who suggested the joint meeting to the Anglo-Hong Group, not the reverse as stated. Peter Blaker rejected the proposal.

"His reasons were that it might be misunderstood in Hongkong! You can see the letter from me to him suggesting the meeting, if you will."

Mr Adley asked me to pass this information on to you.

In doing so I must make it clear that I hold no particular brief for Mr Adley, except in the general sense that I feel concern for him, or indeed for anyone acting in good faith, who may be assessed as a subversive, as a result of voicing views the Hongkong Government does not agree with.

Although as a British Colony, the right of free speech in Hongkong is generally upheld by the Government, it has ways of dealing with those, whose divergent views appear to it to be a potential threat to established order.

In 1967 there was a genuine threat to law and order in Hongkong.

Threat, as we know now, was not due to genuine communists, like those who are now promising that Hongkong people can run Hongkong after 1997.

No, it was caused by dissi-



Mr Adley

dent agents of the notorious Gang of Four.

Most people who were here to see just how these people behaved, would agree that the Hongkong Government was justified in using their psychological operations against them. However, the continued use of such methods beyond the emergency and into the 70s, and it now seems, into the 80s too, was as unfortunate as their use against local critics and pressure groups was improper.

Unfortunate, because its effect was to retard the natural growth of political leadership.

Improper because its aim was to stifle the articulation of community concern, except through officially approved and devised channels.

It is ironical that your leader column today praised the Hongkong Observers, an organisation, that in the siege mentality of the late 70s, was officially assessed as a dangerous subversive group.

They were bent, so it was said, on ridding the Civil

Service of all expatriate officers and pressing for full self-government.

In fact their crime consisted of vigorously criticising government policies, in particular the delays in implementing the localisation policy, and in suggesting that the Complaints Against the Police Office was not very effective.

Their punishment was to be ostracised by most government departments, and to be subjected to an undercover attack on the unity of their leadership by character assassination, using the Soviet connection technique.

Later they were subjected to heavy wooing by means of social invitations to Government House.

It took almost two years for this group of well-connected, middle-class professionals to shake off this jaundiced and inaccurate bureaucratic view of their activities.

It can well be imagined what sort of action was meted-out to pressure groups whose make-up was more plebeian, and whose objectives were more egalitarian.

In Hongkong, a British expatriate-run authoritarian government has somehow been able to justify to itself the misuse of its authority to suppress or counter opposition.

Is it any wonder that so many thinking people in Hongkong are apprehensive as to what might happen to those who do not toe the party line after 1997, if another authoritarian government, less restrained by concepts of free speech and civil rights takes over?

Authoritarian rule by civil servants, whether of the left, right, or centre suffers from the same defects the world over.

The very least the British can do for Hongkong is to provide the institutional safeguards that are the only check on the arbitrary exercise of power.

Let us hope they get on with it.

JOHN WALDEN