

30 Aug. 1988

50 per cent want electoral college system to remain

SOME Legislative Council hopefuls have indicated they want to retain the controversial indirect elections through district boards which are due to be scrapped after next month's Legco poll.

An opinion poll conducted by *The Standard* revealed about half of the candidates standing for election think the electoral college system should be kept.

The staunchest supporters of electoral colleges among the 26 candidates polled are fighting to be Legco representatives of their respective district boards.

The poll also showed direct elections had the unanimous support of all respondents and functional constituency elections received qualified support from most of them.

A total of 13 respondents called for the restoration of indirect elections through district boards. Five were against it and eight said they had no opinion on the matter.

Contestants in electoral college constituencies were divided on whether or not to retain indirect elections.

In New Territories South, all four contestants favoured electoral colleges. Dr Richard Lai said although electoral college elections were not perfect, they were acceptable particularly at a time when the public was not politically aware enough to exercise its right to vote.

Another candidate, Mr David Yeung, went even further by saying he would fight to retain indirectly elected Legco seats.

Mr Lam Wai-keung said: "I think the electoral college should still be maintained in 1991 because the district boards will continue to play a very important role in raising people's awareness."

Their preference was shared by other electoral college candidates including Mr William Wan, Mr Man For-tai, Mr Fred Li, Mr Poon Chi-fai, Mr Liu Lit-for and Mr Desmond Lee.

But electoral college candidates Mr Michael Lai Kam-cheung, Mr Ng Kin-sun and Mr Tao Kwok-lu opposed indirect election through the district boards.

Mr Lai said: "Under the system the choice is made by only a handful of district board members. Platforms count little in the election."

Mr Ng and Mr Tao also said the system was liable to manipulation because of the limited franchise.

Mr Fred Li was the lone opponent of the functional constituencies. He said the election was elitist-orientated compared with direct and electoral college elections.

Most supporters of functional constituencies conceded the seats in Legco should be either kept at the current level or reduced in the future to make way for more directly elected ones.

The survey also showed half of the respondents favoured a mixed election system comprising geographically based direct, functional constituency and electoral college elections.