

Chinese Voice 12 December 1996 issue

Contributed by Lachlan
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Martin Lee in Wellington - Last flight of a HK martyr?

by Steven Young

Speaking to a meeting organised by the Wellington Chinese Association, Martin Lee, leader of the Democratic Party in Hong Kong interspersed his speech with gallows humour - acknowledging the common belief that come July 1997, this was one member of HK's Legislative Council who could end up behind bars for sedition. The unvoiced reason for his (last) grand tour of English-speaking democracies - to ensure world opinion would not allow him to rot in gaol forever.

A vociferous critic of the Chinese Government in the period leading up the transfer of HK to China, Lee has deliberately not got himself a foreign passport. Come July 1997, Lee will be entirely at the mercy of the Chinese authorities.

Ostensibly speaking on The Future of HK and How it Affects Chinese New Zealanders Lee pointed out that Britain and China in their Joint Declaration in 1984 promised the continuation of democratic institutions in HK for 50 years including the election of a Chief Executive. However, Lee said, it was now apparent that China had no intention of keeping that promise, and that true power, post July 1997 would be vested in a person or persons appointed by a group which had itself been predominantly hand-picked by Beijing and due to take office 21 December 1996.

Lee predicted that the new legislature, as one of its first acts, would strike down the right of peaceful assembly enshrined in the Bill of Rights enacted by the present Legislative Council, and replace it with a requirement that all public gatherings require a permit. Thereafter, all public meetings without the necessary permit would be illegal and subject to the full sanction of Chinese law under which sedition could be a capital offence. This mis-administration would be untrammelled by the democratic process whereby HK's chief executive could be removed at the next election - because he was appointed by Beijing.

This repudiation of a basic tenet of the Joint Declaration was effectively an abrogation of international treaties and law, and, said Lee, it is in the interests of Chinese New Zealanders to act to encourage China to observe its international obligations.

From the floor, one member of the audience thought that there were grounds for optimism for HK- that recent history in eastern Europe clearly showed capitalism triumphing over communism. Lee wryly observed that the current ideology operating in China was already socialism with Chinese characteristics - ie capitalism! Another member of the audience expressed the view that the people remaining in HK had largely accepted their fate to be subsumed into the Chinese political system and that Lee's fight was a largely futile.

Tigers in New Zealand? The Role of Asian Investors in the Economy

by Steven Young

Recent changes in immigration rules had drastically reduced the number of Asian immigrants to New Zealand particularly under the "business investor" category. Accordingly to the authors of the book, Professor Rolf Cremer and Bala Ramamsamy from Massey University, our exports to Asia could suffer if there were more barriers to Asian investment. Investment, like trade, was a two-way affair. According to Prof. Cremer, NZ invested more in Asia (\$816M) than Asian invested in NZ (\$694M) so the idea that Asians were somehow taking over the country's industrial base was fallacious. The international accounting practice KPMG is quoted as saying that out of \$100 earned in sales by foreign companies, only \$3.70 left NZ, the rest being recycled locally. The authors estimated that 0.5% of NZ firms were owned by Asian investors.

Rediscovering the Elderly - Filial Piety with Cappucino - or Chinese Tea and Sympathy?

by Deanna Wong

130 people gathered at the Faculty of Law building in downtown Wellington last Saturday to discuss Filial Piety. No, it's not a name of a new pastry, it's the term used for "giving our elders (or to be totally PC, older people) the care and attention they deserve".

The conference was organised by the Department of Psychology (Professor Sik Hung Ng) and the Health Services Research Centre at Victoria University. The topic of the conference was "Rediscovering the Elderly: Choices and Opportunities for Older and Younger Generations in an Ageing World". The main goal of the conference was to disseminate recent findings of local and overseas research on issues of ageist stereotypes, needs and welfare of older people, as well as inter-generational relationships and communication. Speakers - from all over the world and of all ages - discussed and explored ways of enhancing respect, understanding and communication between the generations.

Following the opening by the mayor Mr Mark Blumsky, Professor Pong from Canada discussed the ways of using ageing as a resource while Professor Gallois from Queensland talked of her recent survey on Filial Piety conducted around the Pacific Rim. The conference then looked closely at elderly stereotypes and intergenerational relationships among Wellington Chinese in particular.

Professor Liu, Ms All Weatherall and Mrs Cynthia Loong released the results of the recent survey the Department of Psychology had conducted which analysed the communication between generations in the Chinese community in Wellington. It showed that language may be a barrier in communication between the generations and the main expectations, and fears of the different generations of Chinese in New Zealand.

After a delicious lunch catered by Yangtze Restaurant, the conference continued with real life experience of people growing up and growing old in New Zealand. Chinese, Maori, and Pakeha experiences were shared and the differences between them were discussed.

With the aging population both within and outside New Zealand, considerable challenges will be placed on local and central government bodies. Health care resources and political power will shift towards older people. About one out of four people in the world will be over 64 years old by 2040, compared to about 12 % now. The conference addressed ways of coping with the change both socially and economically.

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