

**Extract of minutes of special meeting on
House Committee held on 18 May 2001**

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Political reform

19. Ms Emily LAU said that direct election of LegCo Members and direct election of CE were major concerns to the public and Members. In this connection, LegCo had passed two motions in the last term urging the Administration to expedite action on the development of the HKSAR political structure and to conduct public consultation on the election of CE and LegCo by universal suffrage. She asked when the Administration would start work on the political reform.

20. CS agreed that political reform was an important issue, although according to public opinion surveys conducted regularly by the Administration, the public was much more concerned about other livelihood issues, such as housing, the economy and transport matters. He said that the Basic Law had already set out the blueprint for constitutional developments, and the ultimate objective of electing all LegCo Members by universal suffrage. CS said that the Administration would proceed cautiously on this important subject, having regard to the experience of the coming election of CE in 2002 and the election of LegCo in 2004. He believed that Hong Kong should develop a model which suited its conditions and which had widespread support of the community. He added that the establishment of an accountability system for principal officials would also throw light on the community's expectations and aspirations of the future political structure.

21. Ms Emily LAU expressed dissatisfaction that the Administration had not responded seriously to the motions passed by LegCo on political reform. She questioned the Government's respect for LegCo and Government's sincerity in co-operating with Members. CS responded that the Administration would need time to examine the implications of various options for constitutional development as well as to gauge public views. He added that some people had already criticised the Government for trying to tackle too many problems at once and complained that too many different reforms had been introduced in the past few years.

Action
Column

22. Mr LAU Chin-shek pointed out that the former CS had said at the Asian Society luncheon in April 2001 that Hong Kong should not delay public debate on the pace of democratic reform. Mr LAU asked whether CS agreed that there was urgency in introducing universal suffrage in the HKSAR. He further enquired about the time-table for introducing political reform and whether there would be public consultation.

23. CS responded that as compared with developed countries where their political reforms took decades or even centuries to evolve, the HKSAR had to work within a relatively short time-frame to develop a mature constitutional framework. He stressed that a prudent and step-by-step approach was required in view of the far-reaching implications and the need to listen to different views in the community. In this regard, we could not afford to make serious mistakes or to overturn changes repeatedly. Constitutional changes could only succeed with widespread public support. He said that the Administration took constitutional review as a continuous commitment in the months and years ahead, having regard to the milestone events of the election of the CE in 2002 and the election of LegCo in 2004, in the lead up to 2007. The public and LegCo views would comprise the main ingredients of this continuous review.

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