

1 HONG KONG LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL -- 20 November 1991

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OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 20 November 1991

The Council met at half-past Two o'clock

PRESENT

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT

THE HONOURABLE JOHN JOSEPH SWAINE, C.B.E., Q.C., J.P.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID ROBERT FORD, K.B.E., L.V.O., J.P.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE DAVID ALAN CHALLONER NENDICK, C.B.E., J.P.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

THE HONOURABLE JEREMY FELL MATHEWS, C.M.G., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALLEN LEE PENG-FEI, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE STEPHEN CHEONG KAM-CHUEN, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS SELINA CHOW LIANG SHUK-YEE, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS RITA FAN HSU LAI-TAI, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HUI YIN-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN LEE CHU-MING, Q.C., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE DAVID LI KWOK-PO, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE NGAI SHIU-KIT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE PANG CHUN-HOI, M.B.E.

THE HONOURABLE TAM YIU-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW WONG WANG-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WONG-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE EDWARD HO SING-TIN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE RONALD JOSEPH ARCULLI, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN GILBERT BARROW, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS PEGGY LAM, M.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS MIRIAM LAU KIN-YEE, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LEONG CHE-HUNG

THE HONOURABLE JAMES DAVID MCGREGOR, O.B.E., I.S.O., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS ELSIE TU, C.B.E.

THE HONOURABLE PETER WONG HONG-YUEN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT CHAN WAI-YIP

PROF THE HONOURABLE EDWARD CHEN KWAN-YIU

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT CHENG HOI-CHUEN

THE HONOURABLE MOSES CHENG MO-CHI

THE HONOURABLE MARVIN CHEUNG KIN-TUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG MAN-KWONG

THE HONOURABLE CHIM PUI-CHUNG

REV THE HONOURABLE FUNG CHI-WOOD

THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK FUNG KIN-KEE

THE HONOURABLE TIMOTHY HA WING-HO, M.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL HO MUN-KA

DR THE HONOURABLE HUANG CHEN-YA

THE HONOURABLE SIMON IP SIK-ON, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LAM KUI-CHUN

DR THE HONOURABLE CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING

THE HONOURABLE LAU CHIN-SHEK

THE HONOURABLE MISS EMILY LAU WAI-HING

THE HONOURABLE LEE WING-TAT

THE HONOURABLE GILBERT LEUNG KAM-HO

THE HONOURABLE ERIC LI KA-CHEUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FRED LI WAH-MING

THE HONOURABLE MAN SAI-CHEONG

THE HONOURABLE NG MING-YUM

THE HONOURABLE STEVEN POON KWOK-LIM

THE HONOURABLE TIK CHI-YUEN

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

DR THE HONOURABLE SAMUEL WONG PING-WAI, M.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PHILIP WONG YU-HONG

DR THE HONOURABLE YEUNG SUM

THE HONOURABLE HOWARD YOUNG

ABSENT

THE HONOURABLE SZETO WAH

THE HONOURABLE LAU WAH-SUM, O.B.E., J.P.

PROF THE HONOURABLE FELICE LIEH MAK, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HENRY TANG YING-YEN, J.P.

IN ATTENDANCE

MR GRAHAM BARNES, C.B.E., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS

MRS ANSON CHAN, J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES

MR YEUNG KAI-YIN, J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY

MR JOHN CHAN CHO-CHAK, L.V.O., O.B.E., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER

MR ALISTAIR PETER ASPREY, O.B.E., A.E., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR SECURITY

MRS ELIZABETH WONG CHIEN CHI-LIEN, I.S.O., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE

MR CHAU TAK-HAY, J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

THE CLERK TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
MR LAW KAM-SANG

Papers

The following papers were laid on the table pursuant to Standing Order 14(2):

Subject

Subsidiary Legislation L.N. No.

Banking Ordinance (Amendment of Third Schedule) (No. 2) Notice 1991.....	407/91
Declaration of Change of Titles (Chief Architect of Division 3 of the Architectural Office of the Public Works Department and Chief Architect of Division 3 of the Architectural Office of the Building Development Department) Notice 1991.....	408/91
Statutes of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Amendment) (No. 3) Statutes 1991.....	409/91
Electricity Ordinance 1990 (Commencement of Section 33) Notice 1991.....	

410/91

Electricity (Registration) Regulations 1990 (Commencement of Regulation 3) Notice 1991.....	411/91
Hong Kong War Memorial Pensions Ordinance 1991 (Commencement) (No. 2) Notice 1991.....	412/91
Town Planning (Amendment) (No. 2) Ordinance 1991 (Commencement) Notice 1991.....	413/91

Sessional Paper 1991-92

- No. 18 -- The Prince Philip Dental Hospital Hong Kong  
Report by the Board of Governors for the period  
1 April 1990 - 31 March 1991
- No. 19 -- Annual Report of the Director of Accounting  
Services and the Accounts of Hong Kong for the  
year ended 31 March 1991
- No. 20 -- Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of  
the Hong Kong Government for the  
year ended 31 March 1991 and the results of  
value for money audits October 1991  
Director of Audit's Report No. 17

Oral answers to questions

Water pollution

1. MR VINCENT CHENG asked: As Victoria Harbour will not be declared as a water control zone before 1993, that is, two years behind the original schedule, will Government inform this Council:

(a) what measures are being taken to prevent factories from discharging polluted waste water into the harbour;

(b) what actions are being taken to investigate and prevent the illegal connection of residential, industrial and commercial waste water outlets to stormwater drains;

(c) how many offenders have been prosecuted in the last 12 months for illegally dumping refuse into the harbour; and

(d) whether there has been deterioration in the water quality of the harbour during the past two years?

SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS: Mr Deputy President, may I take the first two questions together. A variety of measures are in hand; these measures are centred on our territory-wide programme of Sewerage Masterplans. The measures are,

(i) firstly, on the planning front, priority has been given to the territory-wide Sewerage Masterplans programme to those areas where industrial discharges are being made directly into the harbour. Measures against illegal connections to stormwater drains are included in these Masterplans, which investigate the extent, capacity and physical state of the existing sewerage system including the numbers of unauthorized connections, and propose measures to meet the existing and future demands for new sewerage. The harbour is covered by seven such Sewerage Masterplans and studies for four of these have been completed or are underway. The masterplans also identify "first aid measures" that can provide short-term improvements to some pollution blackspots.

(ii) Secondly, on the construction front, there are already several ongoing and proposed regional sewerage improvement schemes around the harbour: most of which arise from the masterplanning strategy that I have just mentioned. These are,

-- the Northwest Kowloon Sewerage Treatment and Disposal Scheme, which will be completed in 1992 at a cost of \$1.3 billion. This system will remove the three existing outfalls which presently discharge sewage and industrial effluents into the harbour and divert to a treatment facility on Stonecutters Island. In addition to this major scheme, which should create a large measure of improvement in the areas concerned, a masterplan has been developed to comprehensively upgrade local sewerage, the first phase of which will be carried out in parallel with works under the West Kowloon Reclamation;



-- the East Kowloon Scheme, which started this month, Stage I of which will be completed in 1994 at a cost of \$550 million. This system will provide trunk sewers to intercept industrial effluent presently discharging into Kowloon Bay typhoon shelter and will provide sewerage large enough to accommodate all present and future flows in the East Kowloon area. The second phase, which is planned to be completed by 1996 at a cost of some \$460 million, will provide for local resewerage and removal of expedient connections, that is, connections into stormwater drains;

-- the Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing Sewerage Scheme; this is a two year project which will commence in 1992 and it will cost about \$182 million. It is for the provision of new and upgraded sections of trunk sewers at Kwai Chung and associated local sewerage. This project will provide adequate capacity to accommodate the domestic and industrial flows generated in the area, much of which presently discharges to the stormwater drains. The second phase, at an estimated cost of \$200 million, is planned to start in 1993 and will provide improved trunk sewerage to Tsuen Wan;

-- Sham Tseng Sewerage and Sewage Treatment and Disposal Facilities. This provides, at a cost of about \$140 million, an interceptor sewer and a sewage treatment works at Sham Tseng.

(iii) As regards controls, enforcement action under the Buildings Ordinance against illegal and polluting drains is carried out by a specialized task force set up in the Buildings Ordinance Office in 1986. It maintains close liaison with the Environmental Protection Department and tackles serious cases referred to it by the Department. Significant improvement has been achieved in particular at Sha Tin, Tuen Mun and Kwai Tsing. These exercises are sometimes assisted by Industrial Building Management Co-ordinating Committees set up by the district boards. Another measure, an effective cradle-to-grave scheme for the control of chemical wastes is being formulated, and we would introduce this scheme in 1992 so it can be in action before the Chemical Waste Treatment Facility is commissioned at the end of 1992.

Referring to the third part -- about offenders -- of Mr CHENG's question, during the last 12 months from November 1990 to the end of October this year, there were 73 prosecutions under the Dumping at Sea Act for illegal dumping activities, and 80 prosecutions under the Summary Offences Ordinance for minor littering offences.

And lastly, about the water quality, the water quality has been consistently bad in the harbour in the last two years. There has not however been significant

deterioration in that period. Dissolved oxygen has been above 50% which is about the lowest tolerable level for marine life. The distribution of bacteria E Coli varies very widely, but in some places, and that is the worst places, there have been readings as high as 10 000 parts per 100 ml.

MR VINCENT CHENG: Mr Deputy President, can the Secretary inform this Council how many people are employed in the task force for enforcement action, and what the exact percentage of dissolved oxygen is; is it just about 50% for example, or is it 90%?

SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS: Mr Deputy President, I am afraid I cannot now provide Mr CHENG with the figure of how many people are employed in enforcement; they are in various departments. I will assuredly provide him with the figure and the breakdown. (Annex I) Regarding the second part of his question, as I said in my main answer, the distribution of bacteria E Coli does vary very widely in the harbour from tolerable -- for the purposes of water sports which is probably a level of around 600 parts per 100 ml -- to the very extreme figure that I quoted, most readings of which are taken in typhoon shelters.

MR PETER WONG: Mr Deputy President, the Secretary has given a very detailed answer but I would like to put a very simple question to him and that is, when will we see a reversal of the level of pollution in Victoria Harbour?

SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS: Mr Deputy President, it would be hard to give a date. It is dependent really on the progressive works in the sewage disposal strategy. Each of the works which I mentioned will provide improvement in the harbour in a local sense and different parts of the harbour will be benefited. So in a general sense one could say improvements will be starting from 1992 when the first of those works is over. But the main improvement in the harbour sewerage will be when more of the masterplans are completed, which of course depends upon the initiation of a formal sewerage strategy. And of course at the different stages of the sewerage strategy, very significant improvements are made in steps.

DR SAMUEL WONG: Mr Deputy President, could the Secretary for Planning, Environment

and Lands inform this Council whether the considerable quantity of used lubricant oil from motor vehicles currently discharged to nearby drains will be included in the workload of the chemical treatment plant he mentioned?

SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS: Mr Deputy President, to my knowledge, oil from discharge is not in fact a chemical, though there is in fact an oil disposal unit in the chemical waste treatment plant. Although this has been provided primarily, I think, with shipping in mind, it does allow for the possibility for development of the law to prevent the discharge of oil into sewers.

MISS EMILY LAU (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, can the Secretary inform this Council of the maximum penalty imposed among the 73 prosecutions for dumping refuse into the harbour during the last 12 months? Will the Administration agree that heavier penalties will have a deterrent effect?

SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS: Mr Deputy President, I understand that the fines are not nearly reaching the present level which was amended in 1989 in the Summary Offences Ordinance; the level is presently at \$50,000. But I understand that no fine has exceeded \$20,000. I would like to confirm that to Miss LAU in writing; I can confirm it as a generalization but the precise figure I would need to confirm later. (Annex II) But with that in mind, our problem has as yet not been the maximum fine having been set too low, in that we have not got really near the maximum fine in any of the cases we have taken. So although it is time to do a further review of fines which need to be kept up to date every year, I do not know that raising the level of the fine would make a significant difference to the awards that would be made at present.

MRS PEGGY LAM (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, four of the seven Sewerage Masterplans mentioned in the Secretary's reply are underway. Which parts of the harbour then will the remaining three masterplans cover? When will they start and how much will they cost?

SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS: Mr Deputy President, there are three

remaining programmes: a programme for Hong Kong North, a programme for further programmes in Kowloon, and further programmes in Tsuen Wan. The remaining masterplans are worth something like \$2.2 billion.

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, the Secretary mentioned in his reply a number of sewage disposal schemes that would cost hundreds of millions dollars. Can the Administration inform this Council whether it will make a commitment that these projects will be financed through the capital works funds?

SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS: I do not know, Mr Deputy President. I am not in a position to make that commitment. I am indeed at present looking for other means by which to finance it in view of the extreme pressures on capital works funds available for public works in Hong Kong.

Sales tax

2. MR HOWARD YOUNG asked: Will Government inform this Council whether it is aware of the public's objections to the introduction of a sales tax, on the grounds that it would not only do harm to the tourism industry and other tourism-related businesses, but also hit the man in the street at a time of high inflation, and if so, how it plans to ensure that these opinions will be taken into full account before any decisions to implement such a tax are taken?

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, the Government is fully aware of the community's sensitivity to the possible introduction of a sales tax at a time of high inflation. We have carefully monitored both public opinion and the views of financial experts on this subject.

The problem that the sales tax idea was intended to tackle is that our present tax base is too narrowly based. For example, about 8% of salaries taxpayers now contribute 56% of all salaries tax revenue. As regards profits tax, about one-third is contributed by less than 0.1% of Hong Kong's businesses. This situation leaves us uncomfortably vulnerable to the effect of any downturn in our economy. It also leaves us with insufficiently secure sources of revenue, at a time when there are

important and competing calls on the public purse.

That said, we do not believe that now -- a time of high inflation -- is the time to introduce a sales tax. I can also say that we fully accept that before making a decision on this issue at some future date, we would need to take into account the views of the public, and the need to gain the support of Members of this Council.

MR HOWARD YOUNG: Mr Deputy President, the reply just now mentioned twice that inflation was the reason for not implementing a sales tax at this point in time. However, I would like to ask whether the Government has received an opinion from the tourism industry which points out that inflation is not the only reason; the reason is that it would be particularly damaging to the tourism industry and affect the livelihood of more than 100 000 people in the industry whose income depends on half of the \$39 billion spent by tourists in Hong Kong, based on the reputation of us being a "shopper's paradise".

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, I mentioned inflation not with a view to excluding other factors or other considerations affecting the rest of the economy of which tourism is only one, albeit an important one. Yes, we will take the views of various industries and various sectors of the economy fully into account.

MR MARTIN BARROW: Mr Deputy President, is the Secretary aware of a recent study by Dr HALL of the University of Hong Kong which demonstrates that the revenue flow from a sales tax may be no more stable than from other forms of taxation, and is the Secretary going to take that point into consideration in reviewing the matter further?

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, my Branch has taken that study into account. The findings of that study are debatable; the experience of quite a few tax administrations elsewhere suggests that revenue sources based on sales, or indeed consumption, tend to fluctuate in a less volatile way than those from direct taxation which has a very close relationship with general economic performance. But that study will of course be further taken into account.

MR TIK CHI-YUEN (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, in 1989 when a consultative document on the introduction of a sales tax was prepared by the Government for limited consultation, some political organizations like the Meeting Point requested a copy but were refused. Just now the Secretary has mentioned that the public will be consulted if this issue is to be further considered. May I know what organizations and people will be consulted and whether political organizations will be consulted as well?

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, the consultative document that Mr TIK referred to was given very restricted circulation and then confined to a number of experts, and this was prepared by the Commissioner of Inland Revenue. It is not a consultative document issued by the Government because at that stage we had not decided to consult extensively. As to whether we will consult any political or accounting or business organizations should the Government decide to introduce a measure of this kind, my own guess is that we will consult extensively and there is a strong probability that if we should proceed, we will issue some form of overall consultative document.

DR CONRAD LAM (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, as a sales tax will affect the low-income people more than the well-off, can the Secretary inform us whether the Administration will consider introducing a capital gains tax and increasing profits tax before deciding to bring in a sales tax?

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, that question presupposes that if we were to introduce a sales tax we would apply a uniform rate and that therefore the poor would be affected more than the rich. That assumption has to stand the test of policy examination and may not necessarily be true. We are of course now entering into the realm of hypothesis but I would imagine that it would be difficult to replace various differential ad valorem forms of duty, for example on luxuries which affect the big spender more than the poor. That is the answer to the first part of the question.

With regard to the second part of the question, I think we need to draw a clear distinction between corporation profits tax, which is a form of direct taxation, and a sales or consumption tax, which is an indirect form of taxation. Given that we are at the moment already over-dependent on direct sources of taxation, I would imagine that to try to raise the poundage of profits tax ahead of the introduction

of a sales tax would make our revenue perhaps even more dependent on direct taxation and therefore more vulnerable to the vagaries of economic performance. So the answer to that particular part of the question is no. The Government has not, Mr Deputy President, taken a view on capital gains tax. It is a new idea altogether; we have not even begun to think about it.

MR TAM YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, would the Government consider the figures and ratios given in the second paragraph of the Secretary's reply as indicative of the extreme disparity between the rich and the poor?

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, these figures were designed to show how narrowly based our tax base is; they are not designed to indicate the distribution of wealth, for which I believe the economists have a device. I am not an expert on the subject and of course I will consult the Secretary for Economic Services for advice, but I do believe, having heard of this mechanism for calculating the distribution of wealth, that Hong Kong out-performs quite a few territories.

MR STEPHEN CHEONG: Mr Deputy President, in his answer to Dr LAM's supplementary question, the Secretary for the Treasury has said that the Government has not thought about capital gains tax. Will Government consider, in deliberating whether to introduce a capital gains tax, the macro-economic benefit to Hong Kong of not having a capital gains tax?

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, certainly.

REV FUNG CHI-WOOD (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, the Secretary's reply seems to suggest that a sales tax will have to be introduced when there is a downturn in our economy and a strong demand for public money. This is done, it appears, for the purpose of generating revenue. But in fact other than the introduction of a sales tax, there are many other alternatives to raise revenue such as increasing profits tax. So why does the Government not consider the other sources of taxation?

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, I believe I have already answered

that question. We have to distinguish between different forms of taxation -- direct taxation and indirect taxation. Profits tax belongs to direct taxation and it is a fact of life, believe it or not, that direct taxation fluctuates very much in relation to the growth performance of the economy, whereas revenue from indirect taxation is less volatile than direct taxation in this respect. That said, I mentioned a while earlier that our sources of revenue are already very heavily dependent on direct taxation, that is to say salaries tax, profits tax and so on; therefore to raise the poundage of profits tax, while feasible, may tip our dependence on direct taxation even further.

MR PETER WONG: Mr Deputy President, can the Secretary please tell us, apart from sales tax, exactly what other avenues the Administration has explored in order to stabilize our tax base?

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, I feel I need notice of that question but I am sure it must have occurred to Mr WONG that other forms of indirect taxation could be explored; rates would be an example.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Do you wish to pursue that and ask for a reply in writing, Mr WONG?

MR PETER WONG: Mr Deputy President, I would.

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr Deputy President, I shall provide an answer in writing. (Annex III)

Use of handcuffs and handcuff transport belts

3. DR CONRAD LAM asked (in Cantonese): Will the Government inform this Council:



(a) what guidelines are used by the police in considering the use of handcuffs and a handcuff transport belt on a suspect under escort; and

(b) what remedies are open to a suspect if the police have abused their power in the use of handcuffs and handcuff transport belt on him?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Mr Deputy President, the police have detailed internal orders governing the use of handcuffs and handcuff transport belts.

Officers are instructed not to use handcuffs unless necessary, for example where an arrested person is violent, or likely to become violent, or likely to attempt escape. A police officer has to make a judgement himself whether handcuffs are to be used.

The use of handcuff transport belts has to be authorized by the Duty Officer at a police station or an officer of the rank of Sergeant or above. They are used for prisoners or arrested persons who are likely to become violent or to attempt escape, or who are being moved through unsecured areas of a court.

Any complaint against the police about the misuse of handcuffs or handcuff transport belts can be made to the Complaints Against Police Office (CAPO). CAPO will investigate and make recommendations, which will be reviewed by the Police Complaints Committee.

If it can be established that police officers used excessive or unnecessary force whilst arresting him, an arrested person may be able to claim damages against the police.

DR CONRAD LAM (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, could the Secretary inform this Council if there were many cases of escape of suspects under escort in the past three years? How many of them, in percentage, were due to the police failing to use handcuffs or handcuff transport belts?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Mr Deputy President, in 1988 there were 16 escapes from police custody, in 1989, 19 escapes, and in 1990, 12 such escapes. I do not have a further breakdown of these figures and I do not think one could be made available.

MR SIMON IP: Mr Deputy President, I can understand why restraining devices should be applied when somebody is violent or somebody is attempting to escape. But I cannot quite understand why a handcuff transport belt should be applied to somebody just because he is being moved through the unsecured areas of a court. Could the Secretary for Security please explain?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Mr Deputy President, the police have a responsibility to keep in custody prisoners and arrested persons and they must take the appropriate steps to ensure that they do not escape.

MRS MIRIAM LAU: Mr Deputy President, can the Secretary inform this Council how many complaints regarding misuse of handcuffs or handcuff transport belts have been made to the Complaints Against Police Office over the last three years and how many of such cases have been found to be substantiated?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Mr Deputy President, there were 22 complaints about the use of handcuffs or handcuff transport belts in 1989, 35 in 1990, and 20 in 1991. Without a great deal of research it is not possible, I am afraid, to ascertain the number of complaints which were substantiated and the disciplinary action taken in individual cases.

MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, could the Secretary inform this Council if the internal orders of the police specify when handcuffs or handcuff transport belts should be used? If not, with the question arising from the use of handcuffs in mind, will the Administration formulate rules in clear terms and provide the interpretations so that officers on duty may have some guidelines to follow and in this way abuse of power by individual officers and even violation of human rights can be prevented?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Mr Deputy President, I believe that the police internal orders are very clear. Perhaps to give Members some examples of this, they specify that

a police officer shall not use handcuffs on a person unless this is clearly necessary; they make it very clear that the use of handcuffs constitutes a degree of force which must never be applied punitively; they lay down the circumstances in which handcuffs and handcuff transport belts are to be used; they provide that supervisory officers must carry out regular checks to ensure that there is no indiscriminate use of such handcuffs. In the final analysis, whether handcuffs or handcuff transport belts are used has to depend upon the judgment of an individual police officer. And sometimes of course people make wrong judgments.

MR RONALD ARCULLI: Mr Deputy President, in the fourth paragraph of his reply the Secretary has informed this Council that CAPO would look into complaints, if one is made. Would he perhaps inform Members of this Council whether the police would initiate an inquiry without a complaint, in circumstances where it appears that excessive use of handcuffs, or indeed a handcuff transport belt, was unnecessary? And if not, why not?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Yes, Mr Deputy President. If it came to the police's notice otherwise than by a formal complaint to CAPO that there may have been some misuse of handcuffs or handcuff transport belts, or some failure to follow the guidelines, then the police would of their own initiative institute an investigation.

MRS ELSIE TU: Mr Deputy President, again referring to the fourth paragraph of the Secretary's reply, since complaints to CAPO usually take about a year to investigate and are usually found to be unsubstantiated, what other recourse does a complainant have against abuse of police power?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Mr Deputy President, I can only refer Mrs TU to my main answer. I believe in fact that the Complaints Against Police Office procedure is very effective in investigating complaints.

MISS EMILY LAU (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, could the Secretary inform this Council if it is necessary for a police officer to inform a suspect of his rights on arresting or taking him into custody so that he is aware of his right to complain

to the authority concerned if there is abuse of police power?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Mr Deputy President, I hesitate to get into this area because I think it is a matter for lawyers. I believe that there are Judge's Rules which clearly lay down what warnings must be given to arrested persons.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Could you supply a better answer, Secretary for Security, upon mature consideration, to Miss LAU's question, in writing?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Yes, I will try to, Mr Deputy President. (Annex IV)

MR NG MING-YUM (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, referring to an earlier incident of a lawyer whose qualification was queried, it is a case where the police misuse the handcuff transport belt .....

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I am sorry, Mr NG, but Standing Orders preclude either the naming of persons or of incidents where possible proceedings may be prejudiced. Would you like to reflect on that and determine whether you wish to continue or rephrase your question?

MR NG MING-YUM (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, perhaps you will find that I am not at all biased when I have finished my question. In connection with the misuse of handcuff transport belt by the police on the person in question, I had queried the police and was given a written reply by the Commissioner of Police wherein he admitted their fault. Will the Administration inform this Council if disciplinary action was taken against the police officer at fault? If not, why not? If yes, what was the disciplinary action taken?

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I have to rule your question out of order, Mr NG, because there may be pending proceedings. We know the personality involved and Standing Orders would preclude your pressing that question.

Written answers to questions

Secondary Six Admission Procedure

4. MR NG MING-YUM asked: In view of the introduction of the new "Secondary Six Admission Procedure" by the Education Department in this school year, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) what the situation is in government and subsidized schools as at the end of October this year with regard to the types of Secondary VI classes available, the number of Secondary VI places provided, the actual number of Secondary VI students enrolled, the number of Secondary VI students who have dropped out, and the number of such dropouts who have eventually been enrolled at post-secondary school; and how these figures compare with the corresponding data in the past 10 years;

(b) what the justifications and policy objectives of implementing the new procedure are and what shortcomings have been found in the old system;

(c) whether the Government has conducted any review of the new procedure; if so, what its detailed findings are; if not, when a review will be carried out; and

(d) whether the Government would consider taking effective measures to remedy any shortcomings identified in the new procedure; if so, what are the details of these measures?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr Deputy President, the answers to subparagraph (a) of Mr NG's question are as follows:

(i) The types and numbers of Secondary VI (S6) places available in Government and aided secondary schools as at the end of October 1991 were:

Type	No. of classes	No. of places
Advanced Level (A-level)	591	17 720
Higher Level (H-level)	56	1 680
-----	-----	-----
Total	647	19 400

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(ii) The actual numbers of Secondary VI students enrolled were:

	As at early September 1991	As at end October 1991
A-level	17 891	17 337
H-level	1 680	1 579
	-----	-----
Total	19 571	18 916

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The over-enrolment in A-level classes as at early September indicates that some schools had recruited more than 30 pupils per class.

(iii) The numbers who have dropped out, as well as new recruits to S6, since early September are:

	Net reduction Dropouts	New recruits	in enrolment
A-level	682	128	554
H-level	117	16	101
	-----	-----	-----
Total	799	144	655

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Students are not obliged to give reasons for their departure from S6. No comprehensive record of the causes and whereabouts of the "dropouts" from S6 has therefore been kept, and the number of S6 "dropouts" who eventually enrolled in a post-secondary institution is not available.

(iv) Corresponding data on the provision for, and enrolment of, S6 students in public sector secondary schools as at September each year are available only for the past six years. They are:

Provision of	Enrolment
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Year	S6 places	Enrolment	ratio
1985	16 953	14 771	87.1%
1986	17 363	14 694	84.6%
1987	17 788	14 867	83.6%
1988	17 880	14 756	82.5%
1989	18 225	14 432	79.2%
1990	18 230	15 493	85.0%

As regards sub-paragraph (b) of the question, under-enrolment in public sector schools is wasteful of public sector resources and should be avoided as far as possible. The two main causes of under-enrolment at S6 level have been the highly selective admission policy adopted by many schools and the practice of many well-qualified candidates to apply successfully for admission to more than one school. These have resulted in the situation where some eligible students find themselves without an S6 place at the beginning of a school year, while vacancies exist in other schools, created by students having enrolled but not taking up the places. The new admission procedure aims to tackle these problems, with the ultimate policy objective of maximizing utilization of S6 places in the public sector and producing as many matriculants as possible. It does so by ensuring that eligible students have first priority for the S6 places in their own school. It puts an end to the practice of individual better qualified students securing S6 places in several different schools. It also minimizes the need for S5 leavers to shop around for a place. The results show that places were fully taken up as at early September 1991. Although the enrolment ratio subsequently dropped from 100% to 97.5% by the end of October 1991, it remains the highest for the past seven years.

As regards sub paragraphs (c) and (d) of the question, the Education Department is at present conducting a review of the new Sixth Form admission procedure. If any shortcomings are identified, improvements will be considered for introduction at the beginning of the next school year.

BN(O) and BDTC passports

5. MRS RITA FAN asked: Will the Government inform this Council

(a) which countries have waived entry visa requirements for holders of the

following passports:

(i) British National (Overseas) passports;

(ii) British Dependent Territories Citizen passports;

(b) what efforts have been or are being made by the Hong Kong Government to persuade more countries to waive visa requirements for BN(O) passport holders;

(c) whether it is aware that similar efforts have been or are being made by Her Majesty's Government; and

(d) what are the difficulties encountered?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Mr Deputy President, a total of 72 countries/territories allow visa-free visits to Hong Kong residents holding either Hong Kong British Dependent Territories Citizen passports or British National (Overseas) passports. A list of these countries/territories is attached. A further two countries, Austria and Mauritius, allow visa-free access to BDTC passport holders, but require visas for BN(O) passport holders.

Since the time when Austria and Mauritius imposed a visa requirement on BN(O) passport holders, Her Majesty's Government at our request has been trying to persuade Austria and Mauritius to waive visa requirements for BN(O) passport holders in the same way as for BDTC passport holders. Efforts are continuing. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office at our request is also making efforts to persuade other countries to waive their visa requirements. A visa waiver agreement with Poland, which will allow both BDTC and BN(O) passport holders to enter Poland for seven days without visas, has recently been signed. We hope to conclude more such agreements in the near future.

As regards the final part of the question, we need to convince other countries that -- whatever passports they hold -- Hong Kong residents are readily returnable to Hong Kong and will not be a significant source of illegal immigration. However, some countries require all visitors to have visas no matter where they come from. There is no realistic prospect of persuading them to make an exception for Hong Kong.

Countries/territories which allow visa free entry



to HKBDTC/BN(O) passport holders

1. Anguilla
2. Antigua & Barbuda
3. Austria (see Note 1)
4. Bahamas
5. Barbados
6. Belgium
7. Belize
8. Bermuda
9. Bolivia
10. Botswana
11. Brazil
12. Br. Virgin Islands
13. Canada
14. Cayman Islands
15. Chile
16. Colombia
17. Cook Islands
18. Cyprus
19. Dominica
20. El Salvador
21. Falkland Islands
22. Fiji
23. Gambia
24. Gibraltar
25. Greece
26. Grenada
27. Iceland
28. Indonesia
29. Ireland
30. Israel
31. Italy
32. Jamaica
33. Kenya
34. Kiribati
35. South Korea
36. Lesotho
37. Liechtenstein
38. Luxembourg
39. Malawi
40. Malaysia
41. Maldives
42. Malta
43. Mauritius (see Note 1)
44. Montserrat
45. Morocco
46. Netherlands
47. New Caledonia
48. Pakistan
49. Philippines
50. Poland (see Note 2)
51. San Marino
52. St. Helena
53. St. Kitts-Nevis
54. St. Lucia
55. St. Vincent and the Grenadines
56. Singapore
57. Solomon Islands
58. South Africa (see Note 2)
59. Spain
60. Sri Lanka
61. Swaziland
62. Sweden
63. Switzerland
64. Thailand (see Note 2)
65. Togo
66. Tonga
67. Trinidad & Tobago
68. Turks & Caicos Islands
69. Tuvalu
70. Vanuatu
71. West Samoa
72. Yugoslavia

73. Zambia 74. Zimbabwe

Note 1: Austria and Mauritius require visas for BN(O) passport holders.

Note 2: Exchange of notes with Thailand (1975), South Africa (1990), and Poland (1991).

British nationality selection scheme

6. MISS EMILY LAU asked: Will the Government inform this Council of the progress of the first phase of the British Nationality Selection Scheme, including:

(a) the number of certificates of registration that have been issued, with a breakdown showing the number in various occupational groups prescribed by the Scheme;

(b) the number of passports actually issued;

(c) the number of applications that have been rejected and the reasons why; and

(d) the number of outstanding applications and the time required for all of them to be processed?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Mr Deputy President, as at 16 November 1991, 3 606 persons have been issued with certificates of registration under the British Nationality Scheme. This includes 1 251 applicants and their 2 355 dependants.

A breakdown by class and by occupational group is as follows:

General Occupational Class 204 (391)

Managers & administrators 38 (83)

News editors & journalists 26 (35)

Medical doctors 55 (126)

Legal professionals 51 (82)

Statistical assistants 34 (65)

Disciplined Services Class 83 (199)

Customs & Excise            35 (90)  
Operations Department, ICAC   45 (102)  
Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Force    3 (7)

Entrepreneurs Class    31 (24)

Sensitive Service Class 933 (1741)

Note:    Figures in brackets denote number of dependants.

Up to 16 November this year, 758 passports have been issued. A further 435 applications for passport are being processed.

So far, no applications have been rejected. We shall probably start to issue letters of rejection next month.

The number of outstanding applications is 37 761. The time required to process all these cases is about two years. We shall, however, try to give applicants an early indication of their chance of success. The Immigration Department will start later this month to notify all outstanding applicants of the position of their applications.

Water control zones

7. MR GILBERT LEUNG asked: In pursuance of the enactment of the Water Pollution Control (Amendment) Ordinance 1990, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) how many applications for exemption licences have been received by the Administration in respect of the six water control zones throughout the territory; how many of them have already been approved; what are the estimated number of applications and the number of licences to be granted in the original projection; and

(b) how would the Government assess the extent to which the licensing system has been accepted by those affected; is the Administration satisfied with the

implementation of the licensing system as a whole; whether the objective of improving the quality of water in these water control zones can be achieved; whether there are any contingent measures to improve the situation if the need arises?

SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS: Mr Deputy President, in answering this question I will distinguish between those Water Control Zones (WCZs) which were declared before the Water Pollution Control (Amendment) Ordinance 1990 came into effect on 1 December 1990, and those declared since that date. The reason for this is that while the Amendment Bill repealed the "exemption arrangements" which previously existed under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance, the Amendment Ordinance also provided that discharges or deposits which were previously exempt would be "deemed" to be licensed for a further two years or until a new licence was granted. No physical application for a licence by deemed licensees was therefore necessary in most cases. The four WCZs declared before 1 December 1990 were Tolo Harbour and Channel, Southern, Junk Bay and Port Shelter WCZs. In these zones the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) received 15 800 notices (or applications) of exemption, some 8 000 exemptions have been approved, 1 900 rejected and the remainder are being processed. On new discharges, that is, those discharges or deposits which came into existence after the zones were declared and which must therefore be the subject of a licence application, 922 applications have been received, 558 granted, and the rest are being processed.

As for our projections on the number of licensees in the four WCZs declared before the Amendment Ordinance came into effect EPD expected 19 000 applications for "exemptions" and received 15 800. (The remaining 3 200 discharges will be required to apply for a licence.) For the two WCZs declared since the Amendment Ordinance came into effect -- that is Deep Bay and Mirs Bay -- it is estimated that some 45 000 discharges, including industrial, commercial and domestic discharges, will need to apply for a licence. About 3 000 applications have been received so far and are being processed by EPD.

In assessing the extent to which the licensing system has been accepted I will, once again, look at the situation "before and after" the Water Pollution Control (Amendment) Ordinance 1990. In the first four WCZs that is Tolo Harbour and Channel, Southern, Port Shelter and Junk Bay, the statistics for applications for exemption are:

No. of

applications

Estimated No.	for exemption	
WCZ of discharges	for a licence	

Tolo	7,000	5,169	(73.8%)
Southern	7,200	6,496	(90.2%)
Junk Bay	1,855	1,855	(100%)
Port Shelter	3,170	3,076	(97%)

I would conclude from these figures that the licensing arrangements which existed when these four zones were declared were well accepted by those affected by the zones. In Deep Bay and Mirs Bay WCZ however -- the two zones declared since the Amendment Ordinance came into effect -- the exemption arrangements no longer apply and all discharges and deposits, except a discharge of domestic sewage into a communal sewer or unpolluted water into a public drain, must be the subject of a licence application. However, as indicated above few of the large number of domestic discharges in these two zones have been the subject of a licence application; applications received against the estimated number of discharges in the two WCZs are 5.5% (Deep Bay) and 6.7% (Mirs Bay). The reason for this low level of application seems to be because New Territories village householders do not presently accept the need for the licensing of their domestic discharges under the WPCO. Discussions are now being held with the Heung Yee Kuk to find a way forward on this issue.

Despite this particular difficulty associated with licensing the large number of domestic discharges in the New Territories, the Administration is generally satisfied with the implementation of the licensing system. This is illustrated by the figures I have already mentioned for the first four WCZ that were declared before 1 December 1990. Moreover, the Administration feels that the licensing system has contributed to the improvement of water quality in these zones, particularly where beach water quality is concerned, for example, at Repulse Bay, Middle Bay, South Bay, Silvermine Bay and Tung Wan (Cheung Chau) beaches. However, it would not be fair to say that the licensing system has achieved these improvements on its own; in most cases short-term improvements have also been achieved mainly by diverting dry weather flows away from beaches. In some areas improvements to water quality have been achieved by controls via the Livestock Waste Control Scheme under the Waste Disposal Ordinance. Apart from these measures, there are no contingent measures to improve the situation; long-term benefits will not be realized until the full benefits of the Sewage Strategy come into effect. The full degree of benefit, and the overall

aim of achieving water quality objectives, will only be achieved through implementation of all the measures in the Sewage Strategy. These measures are:

(i) legislation to control the quality of industrial wastes and connect all sewage to the proper collection system;

(ii) enforcement of controls over what enters the environment, particularly from industry, restaurants, landfill sites and livestock farms;

(iii) an increase in public awareness of ways to reduce pollution;

(iv) construction of more sewers to collect the sewage, followed by full connection of sewage discharges to them;

(v) construction of new deep tunnels to transfer sewage across the city;

(vi) construction of more sewage treatment works to remove undesirable material before discharge to the sea; and disposal of this material safely;

(vii) construction of some very long sea outfalls to dispose of the treated water;

(viii) training of more personnel in operation and maintenance of sewage facilities;

(ix) planning for the future so that industrial and residential areas are separated. New development proposals, particularly land reclamations which affect the natural treatment capacity of the sea, will have to take proper account of environmental needs.

Tourism industry representative on the airport consultative committee

8. MR MARTIN BARROW asked: Having regard to the importance of the tourism industry to Hong Kong, will the government advise this Council as to why no representative of the travel, tourism, or hotel industries has been included in the Consultative Committee on the New Airport and Related Projects and can steps be taken to add a representative forthwith?

SECRETARY FOR WORKS: Mr Deputy President, the purpose of setting up the Consultative Committee on the New Airport and Related Projects is to provide a forum for collecting public views on the new airport projects and for the Government to explain the projects to members of the public. With this objective in mind, the Government has appointed people from a wide cross-section of the community to serve on the Committee.

Whilst members are not appointed on the basis of specific representation of any particular trade or organization, there is already a fair number of members associated directly or indirectly with the travel, tourism or hotel industries serving on the Committee. As the Consultative Committee was only set up very recently and it had just had its first meeting two days ago, consideration of changing its membership appears premature at this stage.

#### First Reading of Bills

PNEUMOCONIOSIS (COMPENSATION) (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1991

DENTISTS REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1991

CONSUMER COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991

Bills read the First time and ordered to be set down for Second Reading pursuant to Standing Order 41(3).

#### Second Reading of Bills

PNEUMOCONIOSIS (COMPENSATION) (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1991

THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Pneumoconiosis (Compensation) Ordinance."

He said: Mr Deputy President, I move that the Pneumoconiosis (Compensation) (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1991 be read a Second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to raise the ceiling for advance payment of compensation by the Pneumoconiosis Compensation Fund Board to victims of pneumoconiosis or their dependants. The existing ceiling of \$20,000 has been in force since mid-1988. It should be adjusted for inflation and be revised to \$28,000 with effect from 1 January 1992.

The Bill has the support of the Labour Advisory Board.

Mr Deputy President, I move that the debate on this motion be now adjourned.

Question on the adjournment proposed, put and agreed to.

DENTISTS REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1991

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Dentists Registration Ordinance."

She said: Mr Deputy President, I move that the Dentists Registration (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1991 be read the Second time.

The Bill seeks to expand the range of disciplinary orders available to the Dental Council of Hong Kong in the event of a finding against a registered dentist.

At present, under section 18(1) of the Dentists Registration Ordinance, there are four disciplinary orders available to the Dental Council. These include removing a dentist's name from the register permanently or temporarily, reprimanding the dentist or postponing judgment on the case for two years. It is also stipulated in the Ordinance that all orders made have to be published in the Government Gazette. However, in the case of minor offences, such as traffic offences, which bear no relevance to the practice of dentistry, the present disciplinary measures may not be appropriate. The Bill therefore proposes that the range of disciplinary orders be expanded such that the Dental Council may also consider:

(a) making no order at all; or

(b) reprimanding the dentist but not publishing the reprimand in the Gazette;

or



(c) suspending the application of any order made.

In the light of the proposed power to suspend the application of any order made, the original power to postpone judgment for two years would be deleted. These amendments will provide the Dental Council with more flexibility in handling disciplinary cases in future.

Mr Deputy President, I move that the debate on this motion be now adjourned.

Question on the adjournment proposed, put and agreed to.

#### CONSUMER COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991

THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Consumer Council Ordinance."

He said: Mr Deputy President, I move that the Consumer Council (Amendment) Bill 1991 be read the Second time.

Following a review of its functions, the Consumer Council has made a number of recommendations. Legislative amendments are required in order to implement some of these recommendations. These amendments are set out in the Bill before Members.

The Bill seeks to clarify that immovable properties are within the Consumer Council's purview. This will remove any uncertainty in respect of the Council's ability to assist and advise consumers regarding property transactions and tenancy matters.

The Bill proposes to reduce the quorum requirement for Consumer Council meetings from a majority of the members, which means at least 12, to 11 members so as to give the Consumer Council some flexibility in the conduct of its business.

The Bill strengthens section 20 of the Ordinance which prohibits the exploitation of the Council's name and research findings for advertising purposes, by tightening the legal language and increasing the level of fines, from the present maximum of \$5,000 to the proposed \$100,000.

We are also taking this opportunity to update the Schedule to the Ordinance, which

contains a list of bodies outside the Consumer Council's purview. We propose to remove from the Schedule companies which are not subject to any special form of Government control or public monitoring, such as the Peak Tramways Company Limited and the Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited, so that they will be brought within the Council's purview. Several bodies which meet the criteria for exemption from the Council's purview, such as the Hospital Authority, are being added to the Schedule. Other amendments involve the removal of defunct companies and changes where companies have adopted new names.

Mr Deputy President, I move that the debate on this motion be now adjourned.

Question on the adjournment proposed, put and agreed to.

Members' motion

CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

DR LEONG CHE-HUNG moved the following motion:

"In the light of the rapid expansion of our aging population, this Council urges Government to give immediate consideration to the formulation of an overall and comprehensive policy on the care of the elderly having special regard to their health and social needs."

DR LEONG CHE-HUNG: Mr Deputy President, I rise to move the motion standing in my name as stated in the Order Paper.

Mr Deputy President, senior citizens of today were the pillars of Hong Kong of yesteryear. We owe them our respect, if not our gratitude to their commitment in the past. They need to be taken good care of. Furthermore, lack of care for them will bring the current society huge economical and social problems.

Statistics have shown that there are about three quarters of a million people (or 13% of our population) that are now over 60 years of age and the number will rise to some one million by the end of this decade. A rough estimate based on census population indicated that the increase of elderlies aged over 65 in the next 10 years will be 58% whilst those aged over 75 will be 93%. With no proper care, they represent

a time bomb ready to blow up with no preset warning.

The problem is increasingly alarming in the face of family disintegration, a lot resulting from brain drain. The outcome is: more and more elderly people ended up living in solitude in aged homes, hospitals, private and public housing apartments.

They are a habitat of sorrow and grief. There is a ubiquitous fear among them that they are being deserted or forgotten by society, a phenomenon that is a disgrace to a society like ours which has made such tremendous economic success.

Mr Deputy President, our senior citizens are living in doldrums and left high and dry. Neither would they vociferously complain nor engage in red-hot fight for their interest and state their case. Their suffering must be arrested.

Mr Deputy President, it is all too easy for Government to make use of glossy deceit of high-toned policy objectives and couch lies under loads of financial figures to justify its "sincerity" in the provision of elderly service.

But these are no bullet-proof vests. There is much catching up to do. We cannot turn a blind eye or afford to avert our eyes from the fragmented and piecemeal services that Government is providing. The elderly people are starved of adequate and decent care. The adverse effect may be imponderable.

There is, Mr Deputy President, a dire need for the formulation of an overall and comprehensive policy on the care of the elderly having special regard to their health and social needs.

Mr Deputy President, Government emphasizes in the White Paper: Social Welfare into the 1990s and Beyond that the spirit of elderly care is to keep them actively involved in the community, and I repeat, to keep them actively involved in the community. But how can we keep them active in the community unless we keep them healthy? More importantly is what proper directions are available when eventuality falls on them that they become ill?

Mr Deputy President, let me now turn to elaborate a number of services (or, should I say, disservices) that Government is providing for the elderly at this point in time:

(I) There is virtually no preventive care

If our intention is to keep elderlies active in the community, ways and means must be established to keep them healthy as long as possible.

Statistics have shown that the commonest morbidity in the old people are hypertension, heart and blood vessel diseases.

Is there any programme or advice the elderly can be aware of the surfacing of these problems? Are there enough screening facilities to have these detected so that early treatment can be instilled? More importantly, are there any education programmes for young people to assist them in the prevention of the development of these pathologies when they grow old?

(II) Fragmentation in service and a lack of co-ordination in service provision

Whilst the machinery for the provision of care for our citizens of sunset years is available, there is a blatant disruption in co-ordination.

Let me spend some time to cite two examples for exemplification:

Mr CHAN of over 65 was taken ill. He visited a nearby government clinic and, after the usual queuing-up and waiting, was seen by a doctor who gave him a routine treatment without special consideration of his geriatric status. He did not improve and was subsequently admitted into an acute hospital.

Condition improved but on discharge he was not given the proper co-ordinated aftercare so very needed by this age group. It was not surprising, therefore that Mr CHAN fell sick again, requiring again readmission.

After a few similar exercises, the idea of a day care centre dawns over Mr CHAN's son. The junior Mr CHAN was dismayed, however, by the uncivilized opening hours of 8 am to 6 pm of this centre. How can he and his wife fit in their working time of nine to five to bring the senior Mr CHAN to the centre which opens only from 8 am to 6 pm. Facing a situation of despair, the junior Mr CHAN applied for a place in a care and attention home knowing very well that he might have to wait some three to four years to get a place. In the ensuing period, the older Mr CHAN required repeated hospital readmission. His condition deteriorated, he became disabled and

was finally forced to find a place in a private old age home.

Let us now look at another scenario. Old Mr WONG has no family support and was advised by a social worker to seek assistance from the Social Welfare Department. But because of the presence of some old age chronic illness, he was advised after assessment by the Social Welfare Department that it would be more suitable for him to find a place in an infirmary under the Hospital Services Department. After consideration, the Hospital Services Department however felt that he is more suitable for care and attention homes under the Social Welfare Department.

Old Mr WONG thus faces the common phenomenon of tossing between two seemingly unco-ordinated departments and ultimately ended up in a government-sponsored place of a private old age home.

The likes and plights of Mr CHAN and Mr WONG are all too so many. They highlighted many ironies and discrepancies that are overtly daunting in front of us and I could mention a few:

(1) The lack of proper co-ordination of the different machinery set to assist the senior members is the cause of repeated hospital admissions and readmissions and must be partly responsible for overcrowding of acute or chronic hospital beds.

(2) It is difficult to apprehend the barrier and separation between care and attention homes and infirmaries, let alone they are each under the control of different departments. The care of the sick aged is a spectrum that spans from acute care through care and attention homes and infirmaries. This can best be done if these are managed under one roof.

(3) The unco-ordinating state has led to an ever-enlarging waiting list both at the care and attention homes and the infirmaries. The current waiting list of care and attention homes stands around 8 000 and infirmaries at 3 000. But how many actually get admitted in the course of time? An initial finding of a research group on residential care of the elderlies shows that out of 100 people aged between 75 to 80 who have applied for a place in an infirmary, only around two dozen were still alive when a place was finally available for them.

(III) Inadequate geriatric teams and ineffective utilization of the existing facilities

A total of seven geriatric units are now available in Hong Kong. Geriatric units are responsible for acute care and rehabilitative care of the elderly. Whilst it may not be advisable to have more geriatric units, there is a need for more geriatric medical teams to cater for the needs of all acute hospitals in Hong Kong as all of them would have a fairly high proportion of patient population over 65 years old. Only two geriatric consultants are currently available in the current government hospital services. A recent survey study in Hong Kong has shown that some 41% of medical admissions are of the age of 65 and 21% are of the age of over 75. This highlighted the need for more geriatric teams.

Furthermore, the expertise of these specialists is not being properly utilized to cater for our elderly populace. Effectively, they should serve and co-ordinate all the available old age care machinery and not limited to their own hospitals and units.

The end result is that they only function to treat the acutely sick. To quote from one of my colleagues in the geriatric field: "The medical services are chasing after complications rather than early intervention". Mr Deputy President, how depressing!

What then are the possible solutions?

I would like to venture some suggestions basing on the afore-mentioned problems and to have a sensitive discussion with the different geriatric groups and bodies:

(1) There should be a territory-wide public health campaign to promote education for early detection of common old age diseases.

(2) There should be a territory-wide public health campaign to educate the public on prevention of common old age diseases.

Many common old age diseases are preventable if precautionary measures are taken at a young age. Hypertension for example, Mr Deputy President, can be prevented to a certain extent by cutting down salt in the diet. Cardiovascular diseases likewise can be minimized by taking a low fat, low cholesterol diet. The social sentiment must be aroused with people at large ready to accept such campaigns. Government has made good timing for launching AIDS and anti-smoking campaigns.

Similar vigor and determination ought to be done for preventing common old age diseases.

(3) There should be the establishment of a co-ordinated body for the care of the elderly.

Not only is it vital for Government to revitalize a central committee on service for the elderly, but this body should also be given wider representation and professional input. It must be given the proper recognition and power to advise on the total overall policy over elderly services. In this aspect, Mr Deputy President, I call for the setting up of a Council for the Aged on the same line as those established in Singapore. Ironically, Singapore who started some six years after Hong Kong to provide service for the aged is now far ahead of us.

(4) There should be the development of a proper district-based network for the care of the elderly. This should be in the form of a multi-disciplinary care committee comprising health visitors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical social workers and primary health care doctors with a Geriatrician as the head of the team.

(5) There should be the development of a proper networking of geriatric teams in the existing acute hospitals. To this end, Mr Deputy President, more geriatric consultants must be established.

(6) There should be an urgent need for increase in residential care places.

The sorrowful state of waiting lists for care and attention homes and infirmaries calls for not only a rapid increase in these places but also a breaking down of the barriers between these two types of residential care centres. Whilst there has been a continuous call to build these centres, it should be noted that such should only be a long-term measure and they are costly. As an immediate short-term improvement, Government could look at the increasing utilization of bought place in private old age homes with their standards being controlled by the forthcoming legislation. Other areas Mr Deputy President, of course, should also be looked at and be taken into serious consideration. These include the subvention of a full range of hospital care and the considerations of providing comprehensive dental care for senior citizens.

Government will be cast in a very unfavourable light if the above-mentioned improvement package which is dear to the hearts of the people, and especially the elderly, is still put in mothball state.

Mr Deputy President, Members of this Council are very concerned with care of the aged as exemplified by the number of participants in this debate and also by the fact that an ad hoc group was formed to formulate the direction for this motion. Nobody, Mr Deputy President, also so far, I am glad, has suggested an amendment.

We realize that the scope of the care of the elderly is not exhaustive but has decided to concentrate only on the basic, that is, health and welfare, on which areas my colleagues in this Council will so address.

Mr Deputy President, many things in this world can wait, but the solution to formulate the care for our twilight citizens is an urgent matter. There is no procrastination and there should be no delay. For timing, Mr Deputy President, is never on their side!

Mr Deputy President, it would be doomsday for this bustling economic city if Hong Kong were to face the reality of the Chinese saying: " -- when everything is too late".

I do so move.

Question on the motion proposed.

MR HUI YIN-FAT (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, during the recent years, the Government has called upon all departments to reduce their expenditure for the reasons of combating inflation. In my opinion, as long as the qualities of social services provided to the public will not be affected, it will not be difficult to win the understanding and sympathy of the general public. However, the measures adopted by the Government should be appropriate and reasonable. As a matter of fact, the reduction of expenditure should be viewed as a means to test the ability of government departments in enhancing the cost effectiveness of resources, it never implies to curtail arbitrarily on Government's commitments to social services. Nevertheless, as far as the present services and welfare provided to the elderly are concerned, the attitude of the authority concerned inevitably makes us feel dismay. The main



reason being the resources provided by the Government are far from being adequate, and reductions are not done in right ways. There are plenty of specific examples, and I can easily cite three of them.

(1) The care and attention homes for the elderly run by the voluntary agencies are intended to provide institutional health care services for those elderly who suffer from poor health and senility. However, due to the lack of resources, the total number of persons registered on the central waiting list for infirmaries has now increased to over 9 000. On the other hand, those weak and feeble elderly people who ought to receive proper care in the infirmaries are bound to be stranded in the care and attention homes as "convalescent cases" due to the shortage of bed places in the infirmaries. Although the Social Welfare Department has set up a convalescent unit for every 20 convalescent cases in care and attention homes, the facilities and quality of service can never be comparable to the infirmaries provided by Hospital Authority. Making such elderly receive a second-class care would certainly be impossible to improve their health condition, let alone relieve the pressure on the service, and in view that convalescent unit has to be set up in care and attention homes, the demand on such bed places would be strained further.

Speaking from the view of the effectiveness of resources, only through improving the health condition of the elderly could we reduce the pressure of inadequate manpower and bed places in care and attention homes. However, the Government has been turning a blind eye to this situation and allowing the transfer of the shortfall of the medical fund to the already insufficient social welfare services. I hope that the Central Co-ordinating Committee on Services for the Elderly which would be re-convened shortly would address this problem and map out a comprehensive programme to solve the ever deteriorating problem of institutional care for the elderly.

(2) To develop a social atmosphere of respecting and caring for the elderly through community education will help to reduce the dependence of the elderly upon the Government. One feasible way being the designation of a Senior Citizen Day, so that during a certain period of the year the people of Hong Kong will focus all their attention onto the old people. As time goes by, an atmosphere of respecting the elderly may take place in our society, however, even though the voluntary agencies had been making this plea throughout the past 13 years, and even the Ad Hoc Committee on Community Health on Ageing under the Social Welfare Department has agreed to designate the third Sunday of every November (the day when the Hong Kong Council of

Social Service designates as the Day for the Elderly each year) as the Senior Citizen Day, the Government did not give any consideration to this suggestion. How can the authority claim to be respecting the elderly? How can we enhance the care for the elderly through community care and neighbourliness?

(3) As more expenditures have to be met by those persons aged 65 and above, the Administration provides them with a monthly Old Age Allowance of \$373 and Higher Old Age Allowance of \$425. Though being an insubstantial amount, the Government imposes many restrictions on the recipients and a lot of human resources are deployed to scrutinize such allowance. One of the unreasonable restrictions being the allowances would be frozen should the recipients be away from Hong Kong for more than three months. This will only cause more inconvenience to those elderlies with special needs, but never would it reduce the government expenditure in this respect. Instead, it would only waste the human resources and administrative expenditure.

This policy is in fact unrealistic in the sense that it does not cater for actual needs. In face of gradual disintegration of family support in providing care for the elderly, coupled with the emigration of young family members, a large number of old and infirm elderlies who need special care have to stay in Hong Kong, inducing a very heavy burden to the medical, housing and welfare services of the Government. To fully utilize the effectiveness of such allowances, and to reduce the pressure to the above three aspects, may I urge the Administration to consider removing such condition so that the recipients of Old Age Allowance need not subject to a specified residing period in Hong Kong. They may choose to live in the Mainland at their own free will and to meet their own needs, so as to be taken care of by their children or relatives in the Mainland. I believe that with the \$300 or so they receive in Hong Kong they may enjoy a better living in the Mainland than in Hong Kong. This has been proven effective in countries such as Japan where the cost of living is high. I believe that this flexible approach will surely benefit Hong Kong.

On the other hand, Mr Deputy President, provision of primary health care is the first step to prevent illness, as far as the old people are concerned, certainly the earlier their invulnerability against illness is enhanced, the better. However, I am concerned that under the existing system, old people between 60 and 64 years old are not entitled to Old Age Allowance, consequently they are also not entitled to Old Age Supplement under the Public Assistance Scheme. As far as the principle for granting the above allowances is concerned, old people in such age group is the forgotten people who live only on the limited savings. I therefore suggest that the

Government consider adopting a more generous approach in the means test thereby making available a higher special aid to such group of elderly so as to meet their ever increasing needs in various aspects. In the long run, with the improvement of primary care to the elderly, it will alleviate the pressure on the Government in the provision of medical and health care services.

Mr Deputy President, all in all we have been adopting a short-sighted approach of "curing the symptoms but not the disease" in addressing these problems, resulting in a shortage of resources, a waste of resources or failure to achieve its effectiveness. The Government should in fact try its utmost to reverse this adversity. In the light of this principle, I oppose to any measure of restricting the improvement of health services for the elderly. In my opinion, the Central Co-ordinating Committee on Services for the Elderly which will be re-convened may provide the right directions of co-ordinating all elderly services and enhance the cost effectiveness of resources. But it is most important for the Government to eradicate its long-standing negative and prevaricating attitudes towards this matter. It is a hard fact of life that Hong Kong is having an ageing population, only through the positive response of the Government and its willingness to make long-term commitments that our elderly may lead an easy life in their twilight years.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR MARTIN LEE (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, China has long been known as a "country of propriety and justice", and respect for the aged is one of the most important elements of Chinese civilization. Just as what Mencius has taught us "Care for my own aged parents and extend the same care to the aged parents of others; love my own young children and extend the same love to the children of others.", we can basically practise the second part of the saying. Which parent does not love his/her own children? Sometimes excessive love will spoil them. In our community, many kind-hearted people adopt orphans, and they even intentionally adopt physically handicapped orphans. However who is prepared to adopt an aged person who is not cared for by any one? Some people are not even prepared to take care of the aged ones in their own homes, or just leave them behind in hospitals after they have recovered from an illness, without thinking of taking them home.

Measures by the Hong Kong Government to take care of children, when compared with care measures for the elderly, are obviously much better. This gives one a feeling

of "taking care of the young but not the old". Both in education and in social recreation, the Government takes good care of the needs of our next generation. However when it comes to the elderly, the situation is completely different. The Government has indeed done too little in the provision of services for the elderly.

Improvement of services for the elderly can hardly be achieved by means of one or two short-sighted measures. Unless the Government has a set of longer-term policies of social welfare and care for the elderly, the problem of the elderly will continue to deteriorate with the increase of the elderly population and the inadequacy of social support service. In fact the crux of the matter lies in the shortage of resources for social welfare and care for the elderly and also in the long neglect of the problem by the Government. In terms of economic achievements, Hong Kong can, with pride, compare with any other place in the world, and the Hong Kong Government has always emphasized the dynamism and adaptability of the Hong Kong economy. But behind the prosperity of our society, there are always a large number of neglected old people.

The old people being neglected now had been young before. In their younger days, they had struggled hard to make a living.

The extent and nature of one's contribution to society vary from person to person. Everyone works and struggles for a living, and holds steadfastly to his/her station in life. The economic miracle of Hong Kong is backed by countless quiet contribution of this nature.

The younger generation of Hong Kong is a more fortunate generation. They have not experienced the harrowing and turbulent days of war, nor have they endured the hardships during reconstruction of Hong Kong in the early part of the post-war period. On the contrary, after they were born, the young generation today could enjoy at once the fruits of Hong Kong's economic prosperity. However, without the trees planted by the previous generation, how can those who come along later cool themselves under the shade? Many elderly people, either due to the pressure of work in making a living when they were young or a lack of knowledge, failed to make arrangements to adequately provide for their living after retirement, and therefore they have to suffer the penalty of having no support in their old age. Is this fair to them? Are we going to insist on not setting up retirement protection schemes for workers and let these tragedies repeat themselves?

Some among the elderly may be more fortunate in having large numbers of children and grandchildren and well taken care of by their families; but there are others who are not so fortunate and who have no children, and after working hard during their active working life they finally have to sleep in the streets.

Even for those elderly people who have children, they may be abandoned in Hong Kong as their children emigrate abroad as 1997 draws close. Among the 60 000 emigrants each year, how many old parents or dependants have they left behind in Hong Kong without any support?

For a long time, the Government appeared to take it that the elderly are the best behaved, and quietest. Consequently there has been the least response to the demands for social security and social support services. The Government may, according to its own standard, fix the Old Age Allowance at some \$300 per month, and think that it should be enough. However in the eyes of many elderly people, this is but a kind of charity. Hence many of the elderly people are unwilling to receive this charity thrown at them even though they may have the need. Indeed, this impinges on the dignity of the elderly people.

Having laboured all their life, the elderly people no longer have the ability to work. They may also have lost their spouse or friends of many years, and they seem to have lost all. What little is left with them which they still possess is probably their personal dignity. Furthermore this dignity can only become stronger and stronger after the test of decades of hard living. This dignity will all the more be treasured by the old people, because it is all that is left to them in their old age.

The elderly people expect to be respected by others, and they want others to treat them as part of society, and not persons in the periphery of society who live a parasitic life on charity.

The present social security benefits cannot provide adequate financial protection to the elderly; at the same time, when the elderly population keeps growing and the traditional family ideals are dissipating, this problem will become even more serious.

As to respect for the aged, I believe no other civilization in the world places as much emphasis on it as the Chinese civilization does. Yet when many developed

countries have established the so-called "senior citizen" system and provide preferential treatment to them in their various daily activities (such as transport allowance), what has this international city of ours, which claims to be one of the areas with the fastest economic development, done for them?

As a matter of fact, there is much the Government can do. Apart from allocating more resources to provide more services of social support and care for the elderly, the Government may also, through the improvement of manpower and resources management, provide more needed services to take care of the elderly. For instance, the youth centres in many districts are now left empty in the mornings. The Government may arrange to open these youth centres during such hours for use by the elderly. What the elderly need is not large-scale functions or activities; what they need may be just some social get-together. If we can arrange for the old people to gather together frequently, this will give them more and fuller spiritual support, and moreover such arrangements are easy to make.

Members of this Council who are from the United Democrats of Hong Kong will give views in the present debate on matters relating to the elderly, such as transport allowance, community services, community care, medical care, cultural and recreational activities, caged apartments, hospice and elderly people problems in the new towns.

Finally, to match the subject of this debate, and to set a practical example of "respecting the aged", I hope Members of this Council henceforth will allow those advanced in years to speak first, so that they can go home earlier to take a rest. However I have to declare my interest here: if in the 1995 elections to the Legislative Council I get re-elected and climb on the "through-train", then by mid-1998 I shall be joining the ranks of elderly Members. I hope by that time I shall enjoy the most preferential treatment and go home to take a rest immediately after my speech.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR DAVID LI: Mr Deputy President, at the outset, I must declare my interest as Chairman of both the St. James Settlement Executive Committee and the Salvation Army Advisory Board. I therefore bring to this debate both knowledge of, and concern for, the issues we are discussing today.

The concept of the "Family" -- tightly-knit and self-sufficient from grandchildren to grandparents -- is a fundamental and revered element of Chinese culture.

Parents support and nurture their children through their youth and into maturity. Then, as their children start their own families, the parents are often there to look after the grandchildren. The children, in turn, later provide for and support their parents in their old age.

In Hong Kong, we want to take care of our own.

But what happens when the children cannot provide for their parents -- not because they do not wish to, but because they simply do not have the time, the space at home or the financial means?

What happens when the parents become infirm and the children work 50 to 60 hours a week, live in flats of no more than 40 sq m in area, and are struggling just to support themselves and their own children?

Who takes care of Hong Kong's parents then?

To date, the Administration has relied on "community care" to provide for the elderly, on care in the community and on the Chinese tradition of "Family".

Children are subsidized for taking care of their parents. To encourage care "at home", children are given annual tax allowances and special treatment in obtaining public housing.

However, in today's modern, urban environment -- an environment of soaring medical costs, double-digit inflation and 40-square-metre flats -- this hands-off, ad hoc approach to care for the elderly is not enough.

Yes, money -- or the lack thereof -- is an issue. But it is equally important that we spend what money we have wisely. Here, the Administration's current piecemeal approach is an obstacle.

The Administration, in co-operation with this Council, must develop an overall and comprehensive policy for caring for the elderly. It must work to provide a

"safety net" for all our senior citizens -- and their families -- who fall through the cracks of the "community care" system.

Caring for the elderly involves many services, many disciplines and many professions. There are social workers, doctors, nurses and public housing officials -- all of whom are involved in programmes designed to assist our senior citizens.

These programmes are operated and supervised by many different government departments and voluntary agencies. Yet, at present, there is no fixed structure -- no set channel -- through which the activities of these departments and agencies are co-ordinated.

To promote greater inter-departmental co-ordination and co-operation, to improve the managerial and administrative framework of the Government's programmes for the elderly, and to enhance the relationship between the Administration and the voluntary agencies, I would urge the Administration to establish an overall co-ordinating committee to oversee the planning and implementation of services for our senior citizens.

Such a body already exists for the care of Hong Kong's handicapped. The Rehabilitation Development Co-ordinating Committee has been an administrative "success story".

Why can we not repeat this successful formula in providing an appropriate managerial and administrative framework for caring for the elderly?

Better co-ordination among the various government departments and voluntary agencies which provide these services would enhance administrative efficiency and effectiveness. Ideas and experience could be shared, financial and human resources pooled, and priorities set.

Through an overall co-ordinating committee, the Government could better monitor public expenditure to achieve greater value for money.

Programme quality-control could be improved, and resources could be channelled more quickly and more efficiently to those services which are most needed -- and most effective.



At present, two areas which deserve greater government attention are medical and health screening and institutional care.

Medical and health screening is a vital component of "preventative medicine". By educating the elderly on the specific health risks they face and how they can be avoided, problems can be solved before they happen.

The Report of the Working Party on Primary Health Care, which was published in December of last year, recommended random out-patient screening for persons aged 60 and above.

However, if such "preventative" measures are to be truly effective, such screening should begin at an earlier age and must be conducted on a more regular basis.

For those persons who are beyond the reach of preventative medicine, those persons who are either too ill or lack the physical, mental or financial ability to take care of themselves, we must provide suitable facilities to ensure that they receive the care and attention they need.

At present, institutional care is provided by two very different types of facility: "Care and Attention Homes for the Elderly" and infirmaries for the elderly. The former offer basic residential services, while the latter provide intensive medical care.

There are long waiting lists for both types of facility. But beyond the "numbers" problem, there is again the problem of co-ordination.

These facilities are administered by different government departments, and it is often difficult to decide which facility is the most appropriate for an applicant. As a result, it is easy for people to fall through the cracks.

Hong Kong needs to co-ordinate its programmes of institutional care for the elderly. It may be prudent to establish a new type of facility which would offer a broader range of medical, residential and social services.

The "Nursing Home" has proved a most successful concept in many other places throughout the world. Why can we not follow this successful formula in providing suitable institutional care for our senior citizens?

Hong Kong's elderly are not asking for charity. They only ask for the dignity that is their right. For all they have done for Hong Kong -- for us -- we owe them much.

In Hong Kong, we want to take care of our own. Let us not fail in our individual and collective efforts to fulfil this tradition.

With these remarks, Mr Deputy President, I support the motion.

MR TAM YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, according to the latest Census statistics, there are over 700 000 people in Hong Kong aged 65 or above. What is the living conditions of these 700 000 people? We can try to get a full picture by looking at their different aspects of life.

If you have been to the government out-patient clinics, you will find that most of the people queuing up outside the clinics are the elderly. In order to save several tens of dollars, they have to queue up for several hours. In winter, they even have to bear the piercing cold winds. According to the information provided earlier this year by the Medical Insurance Study Group, more than one-third of the hospitalized patients are elderly people over 55, and more than 20% of them are people over 65. According to another survey on people seeking out-patient services, other than infants under four, those in the age group of 65 or above account for the highest proportion of people seeking out-patient services, standing at 20% over a two-week period.

As regards housing, there are 5 650 caged bedspaces where the living conditions can be regarded as the most abominable. Most of these bedspaces are occupied by elderly people. Despite such an adverse living environment, cage lodgers and other aged tenants living in old buildings, regarded as city slums, have to worry all the time that their homes will be demolished for redevelopment. They may then be driven onto the street and become homeless. Recently, I found that several more old women have become street-sleepers in Sheung Wan where my office is situated. I believe they are formerly tenants of the old buildings in the vicinity and have become homeless after the demolition of their buildings. On the other hand, a large batch of old people, presently living in old housing estates to be redeveloped in the near future, will be forced to move, like human footballs, to other places due to the lack of

single-person and two-person housing units.

As a Legislative Councillor representing the labour sector, I naturally focus on the question of working conditions when considering the problem of the elderly. According to the information contained in the report of the Central Committee on Services for the Elderly published in September 1988, in 1986, 54% of the aged workers earned less than \$2,000 a month, 65% of the elderly worked more than 45 hours a week, and over 20% of them worked as many as over 65 hours a week, that is, working 11 to 12 hours a day. Please take note that those having to work 11 to 12 hours a day are in their 60s and 70s. Such cases as reported to the trade union are indeed numerous. Notwithstanding the fact that old people have to work from eight in the morning to eight at night for a meagre \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month, they also have to worry about being displaced by overseas workers imported by the Government and their employers. This is the plight of the 140 000 elderly workers aged 60 or above. How can those elderly who can no longer work maintain a living? According to the Report of the Social Welfare Department 1988-89, elderly people accounts for 67.11% of all those applying for public assistance. This ratio is on the increase.

Although the above conditions do not apply to all 700 000-odd old people, we can still manage to get a clearer picture, that is, Hong Kong's elderly are facing great difficulties in terms of health, living and working conditions. Most of them are on the fringe of poverty, being the most neglected and the least able to help themselves. How do these elderly people relate to the society of Hong Kong?

Those at the age of 60s or 70s now are strong young people of 20s or 30s when the economy of Hong Kong started to develop in the 1950s. During that period when our economy and wealth were built upon the supply of cheap labour, they formed an industrious labour force that promoted the economic take-off of Hong Kong. They have, through their work, devoted their blood, sweat as well as their youth to build up this modern and international city. However, what they have got in return for their lifelong hard work is a miserable plight in their twilight years. Is this their own tragedy or is it the shame of Hong Kong?

Being a very competitive commercial society, Hong Kong advocates the philosophy of the survival of the fittest and the elimination of the weak. However, with the development of our society and the increasing intervention of the Government in the economic and social spheres, should we not consider establishing another social philosophy in treating the elderly -- the pioneers of our society? By adopting a

humanitarian spirit basing on mutual help and tolerance, we can help the weak by building up a fair and equal social system so that every member of society can share the fruits of economic success. We should be aware that in the world today, economic development is no longer the only yardstick for assessing whether a society is advanced or not. Equality, justice and humanitarianism have become loftier goals to be pursued. Hong Kong should not go against this trend.

As regards the specific proposals of this motion, such as increasing the number of single-person and two-person housing units, providing transport subsidy to the elderly, enhancing the medical care for the elderly, building more hostels for the age, increasing old age allowance and setting up a Committee on the Elderly and so on, I believe my colleagues will elaborate on these matters. I do not intend to repeat. However, I would like to raise one point. Many years ago, I put forth a proposal -- which the Honourable HUI Yin-fat also mentioned a few moments ago -- regarding the drawing of the old age allowance; but this proposal was not accepted by the Government. At present, elderly people will not be eligible for the allowance if they leave Hong Kong for more than 90 days a year. To those elderly who would like to move to China to spend their remaining years or to be united with their family members, this restriction is most unfair. Since they have toiled away the greater part of their lives for Hong Kong, we really should not hastily deprive them of the meagre monthly allowance of several hundred dollars given to them in appreciation of their contribution. Over the past few years, this restriction has deprived more and more elderly of their rights to claim old age allowance. The number of elderly affected increased from 3 710 in 1988-89 to 5 720 in 1990-91. In fact, many people return to China to escape the increasingly lonely and poor living conditions in Hong Kong. Since we cannot allow the elderly to pass their twilight years comfortably, we should not deprive them of their last right to seek for a better life. I thus again urge the Government to review the above policy and scrap such restriction.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR ANDREW WONG (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, I support the motion moved by Dr the Honourable LEONG Che-hung.

I believe that the subject for our debate is most timely. In the past our social leaders have been more concerned about some highly sensitive political issues at the expense of many social problems which merit our attention. One can only take a

resigned attitude towards this situation. As regards today's debate, Mr Deputy President, I would like to make the following points:

(1) Increased welfare funding for the elderly

Many developed societies have to face the problem of an ageing population and Hong Kong is no exception. Results of our census show that 716 901 or roughly 13.7% of our population are above 60 years of age. If we make a projection according to this figure, over 15% of our population will be above 60 years of age by 1999. However, the yearly government funding on the care for the elderly has fallen far short of the growth of our aged population and the annual inflation rate.

It is the basic responsibility of the Government to provide necessary services, including Old Age Allowance, to the elderly who have considerable contribution to the society of Hong Kong. In setting the level of allowance for the elderly, the Government should make its decision on the principle of "not only letting the elderly get a living and but also live a good life". The allowances provided to the elderly at present are too meagre -- \$373 for those aged between 65-70, \$425 for those over 70 years old and possibly an additional amount of \$1,600 as public assistance. For people without a job, these sums will be difficult for them to make both ends meet, let alone to live in comfort.

(2) Travel concessions for the elderly

With the increase in population, the people of Hong Kong do not concentrate on several densely populated urban districts like they did 10 or 20 years ago. They have to move gradually to new towns far away from urban areas. Travelling expense has become a necessary but also luxurious outlay for those old people who are already retired. For those living in Ma On Shan, a weekly visit to New Town Plaza should not be considered as a luxury; yet the travelling expenses incurred are quite considerable for people with hardly any income. All along we do not have any travel concession scheme for the elderly. In view of our demographic movement, there is a need for the Government to consider introducing such a scheme.

(3) Compulsory retirement protection scheme

The Government has agreed in principle to introduce a compulsory retirement protection scheme which has marked a good beginning of a sound security and welfare

system. I would like to take this opportunity to urge the Government to introduce as soon as possible such a retirement protection scheme though the Government might abolish the Long Service Payment Scheme upon implementation of the former. For workers who are now in their middle age or near retirement, this scheme cannot meet their immediate needs. It is because even though the retirement protection scheme is to be implemented without delay, there are only a few years left for contributions to be made to the provident fund before the workers retire; hence the sum accumulated will be small. Also, by then they are no longer covered by the Long Service Payment Scheme. I therefore suggest that the existing legislation on long service payment be continued or at least, as an interim arrangement, the Long Service Payment Scheme be continued to apply for a considerable period of time after the introduction of the retirement protection scheme.

#### (4) To encourage the elderly to re-integrate into society

In working out the areas of service for the elderly, the Government has all along placed emphasis on care and attention and living and recreation only. For the elderly who are physically fit the Government did not encourage voluntary agencies to provide service for their re-integration into society. As a matter of fact this group of old people who are still active and energetic can form an additional force for the service of the elderly and the rest of the community. Although at the moment there are diversified training programmes provided by voluntary agencies such as training for voluntary services and health care, these programmes are still inadequate. The Government should give full support to the implementation and promotion of these programmes so that elderly persons can reintegrate into society and help each other in community services.

#### (5) Social ethos

It is regrettable that the Chinese tradition of respect for the elderly has gradually been forgotten. Cases are often found of abandoned old people sleeping in the street or committing suicide. It is most unfortunate that the elderly are ill-treated not only by young people but perhaps also by adults. Our education system has now moved towards catering for the social needs. The importance of moral education to society has been overlooked. Grammar, mathematics and science are considered more important subjects than moral education in our school curricula. Mr Deputy President, we may perhaps have entered an era of absurdity. The erosion of our moral obligation to the elderly may account for our neglect of the aged. We

however cannot afford to abandon them, otherwise we will be condemned as immorally irresponsible. As children and Members of this Council, are we convinced that moral obligation can be fulfilled by giving the elderly some money in the form of allowances? Or do we believe in the gross deception that money can buy us blissful moments so that we will be spared the self-condemnation by giving away such small sums of money? Why can't we follow the advice the Honourable Martin LEE gave a while ago and care for the elderly in as well as outside our family?

Mr Deputy President, during a tour to Beijing not long ago I saw a picture of a figure depicted in Chinese apophthegms, which is entitled "the anguish of the old". I have circulated copies of it to our honourable colleagues hoping we could all bear in mind the advice contained in it. We should not feel disgusted with the elderly because we will all get old. Not everyone can have a handsome pension for living a comfortable life after retirement. I hope the Government and Honourable Members in this Council can take this into consideration when formulating policies.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks I support the motion.

MRS PEGGY LAM (in Cantonese): Incorrect name results in no justification. Mr Deputy President, there is a saying that "we must get the name correct before we can justify our arguments". Before I speak on today's motion, I would like to talk about the term "elderly".

We often use the term "elderly" and its synonym in the western world is "senior citizens". The word "senior" connotes rich experience, virtuousness and respectability. It reflects a society's respect for the aged citizens and even gratitude to them.

But the term "elderly", which is being used in Hong Kong, only refers to people of old age and is very different from the word "senior". I am not pedantic about the wording but the term "elderly" does give people an impression that the Government and our society always think lightly of the aged citizens and assume the airs of benefactors.

There are a number of ways to take care of the elderly, but I would like to concentrate on the following areas.

First, formulation of an overall and comprehensive policy to take care of the elderly

This can be said to be the blind spot of the Government's "policy towards the elderly". The White Paper on Social Welfare into the 1990s and Beyond published in March this year gives the impression of treating the services for the elderly as some sort of relief work. In fact, care for the elderly is a means to repay our senior citizens instead of a kind of relief and is a civil right rather than a social welfare to the elderly. For this debate, I will use the term "Care for the Elderly" throughout my speech.

A correct understanding is very important for the development of the "Care for the Elderly" because it will directly affect the direction and implementation of the policies, the attitude of the general public as well as the co-operation from the private corporations.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to urge the Government to set up a co-ordinating body along the line of the Central Committee on Youth so as to give proper emphasis on the senior citizens and particular consideration to their rights, and thereby formulate an overall and comprehensive policy. In fact, the Government did have a "Central Co-ordinating Committee on Services for the Elderly" in 1981, but unfortunately it was disbanded in 1985.

Once a comprehensive policy towards the elderly has been set, the manpower and resources within the concerned government departments can be prioritized accurately.

One of the important functions of this inter-departmental central body should be to promote the respect for the elderly as an important part in civic education and family education. The Government must also set an example. In fact, the Government's existing policy in certain areas involves some discrimination against the senior citizens and has to be reviewed. For instance, the dependent parent allowance is on the low side and only one child can claim the allowance. This gives people a false impression that only one of the children must support their parents' living whereas the rest can shirk their responsibilities. Is it impossible to allow all children to share the responsibility to repay the parents? In fact, the allowance is not enough at all if the parents really depend on their children's support.

It is also important that such a central co-ordinating body must adopt a



wider perspective and comprehensive policy for planning the services, otherwise, it will not be effective. One of the obstacles for the development of the services for the elderly in Hong Kong is that individual government department does things in its own way. In view of the rather limited resources, we are in financial straits. Therefore, this central body must co-ordinate the services for the elderly and pool the resources so that the care for the elderly can be more comprehensive and more effective on the basis of cost effectiveness.

Of course, in order to exercise its functions, the central co-ordinating body should be given adequate powers. If it only plays an advisory role, then its importance and co-ordinating capacity will be very limited.

Secondly, social atmosphere and family education

Maybe the society's attitude towards the senior citizens is more important. Hong Kong, as a Chinese society, used to have a profound and long-standing tradition of respecting the elderly. However, the rapid social development and the popularization of western ideas and values lead to disintegration of large families and deterioration of the relationship between the elderly members and the children. The concept of "treasuring the old members in our family" is gradually replaced by the idea that "the father takes care of the son who will then take care of his next generation". The elderly members in the families are now generally regarded as a burden. There have been cases where the family members gave false address when they sent the elderly to hospital and where the whole family migrated overseas leaving behind the elderly members.

Therefore, the Government must restore the respect for the elderly in our society. For instance, the way of living with the elderly members and the children's responsibility to support their parents should be important parts of family education to be promoted by the Government. The Education Department should also strengthen family education among students of primary and secondary schools, especially concerning the respect for the elderly.

In fact, government departments and voluntary agencies, and even mass media, may consider organizing more activities involving the participation of the younger generation as well as the elderly. This will help to promote the respect for the elderly and reduce the generation gap.

Education, of course, is important, but the crux of the matter is "the unity of knowing and doing". We cannot simply talk about respect for the elderly and the most important thing is how to implement the idea of respecting the elderly so that the elderly can be really benefited. In this regard, the large corporations which are closely linked with the people's living, especially the public utilities companies, play a very important role. Just as the same with environmental protection, if these large corporations can promote respect for the elderly and consider the needs and the welfare of the senior citizens when they formulate policies about their services, I am sure that they can play a leading and an exemplary role.

But unfortunately, many public utilities companies do not have a strong sense of respect for the elderly. They even have some sort of discriminatory policy towards the elderly, perhaps because the idea of respecting the elderly is not so trendy as environmental protection and is not a global concern. I would urge the large corporations in Hong Kong to take care of the senior citizens' welfare and needs when they think of ways to repay our society and establish a corporate image. The elderly, more than anyone else, deserve care and reciprocation by our society. Now I urge the persons-in-charge of the large corporations to take up their responsibility as corporate citizens so that people all around the world know that the large corporations in Hong Kong really care for their society instead of only following the trend.

I have proposed on several occasions at the Transport Advisory Committee and the district board to set up a concessionary fare system for senior citizens. The system is not only designed to reduce the senior citizens' travelling expenses but also to acknowledge the social status of the senior citizens. If various strata of our society respect the elderly and recognize the status of senior citizens, the public transport companies, which pay much attention to their image, will eventually implement a concessionary fare system in view of the pressure from society and public opinion. Once a company takes the lead, the other companies will follow just like the case of environmental protection, which has already become a theme to establish corporate image.

Thirdly, housing needs

Now I would like to mention especially the housing needs of senior citizens and the serious shortage of housing units for them. There are rather limited places in the private homes for the elderly in Hong Kong and there is a serious shortage

of personal space. Therefore, the senior citizens who are neither rich nor poor are the persons who are neglected most. They are able to pay the monthly rents for a private home for the elderly and wish to have more personal space, yet they cannot afford the high rent of a private flat. In fact, as regards the land policy, the Government should encourage the construction of more spacious hostels for the elderly, especially residential institutions by non-profit-making agencies so that the senior citizens of the middle class can have more personal space.

In fact, as a result of the aging population and the changes to our social structure, more and more people have to live by themselves. A lot of them are unable to take care of themselves due to poor health or other reasons, therefore, they do need residential care in care and attention homes, infirmaries, homes for the elderly or hostels for the elderly.

At present, residential care is lacking seriously and the total number of places in these institutions only amounts to 12 000, which is far from meeting the actual demand.

Of course, we understand that the Government has only got limited resources. But in order to expand residential care for the elderly, one of the cost effective ways is to encourage the development of non-profit-making homes for the elderly. The greatest encouragement is to offer favourable and concessionary terms in granting land for building residential institutions. In fact, the Government may consider renting or selling some of the land which has been resumed by the Land Development Corporation to the non-profit-making agencies or operators at a concessionary price for building and running hostels for the elderly, homes for the elderly, care and attention homes and infirmaries.

Fourthly, a sense of satisfaction at being active upon retirement

How to make the senior citizens active and lead a richer life upon retirement is also our concern. The senior citizens have much experience in our society and their work and it is, in fact, a waste of social resources to let those who are physically and mentally fit idle about. I propose that a "consultative society of senior citizens" be set up in each community so that senior citizens from all walks of life can be grouped together. On the one hand, they can offer advice on district matters and public welfare whereas on the other hand, the other senior citizens can seek assistance from this consultative society whenever necessary. This can

generate some sense of satisfaction in their participation in community affairs.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that it is the time for the Government to formulate overall and comprehensive policy for taking care of the elderly. This is not only due to the aging population in Hong Kong but also due to the fact that the clients of social welfare are getting old. We can no longer waste time indeed.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR JIMMY MCGREGOR: Mr Deputy President, I suppose I should declare an interest. I do not feel elderly, not in my twilight years, highnoon perhaps. I applaud the initiative of my friend and colleague Dr LEONG Che-hung in seeking to debate this most important matter. Despite all that has been done over many years of increasing economic growth and prosperity to provide a safety net for our aged, our handicapped and our disadvantaged, it is a fact that hundreds of thousands of old people have to depend upon an uncertain charity to keep body and soul together.

My colleagues in this Council are concentrating on an expansion and improvement of the various services which are now, or can be in future, made available to our senior citizens. I will not attempt to repeat any such proposals.

Instead, I wish to make the point, as I have done publicly, and in this Council, many times before that the greatest comfort and social security that can be provided to elderly people, and particularly those who have no family to depend upon, is an old age pension.

The Social Security Society and the Hong Kong Democratic Foundation have both produced proposals for consideration of such a pension, to replace the present rather parsimonious Old Age Allowance, and to be part and parcel of the wider study now to be carried out by the Government into the extension of private sector provident fund schemes.

I have no doubt that not only is an old age pension within our financial capability but also that it is inevitable. In most countries, such a pension is already in place and some of these countries are strong competitors to Hong Kong for world markets.

I have heard the 19th century voices of some people in Hong Kong raised against

the concept of an old age pension. These worthy people say that the Chinese, as a race, do not want to be given charity nor do they wish to have to depend upon the state for a pension, nor should they be discouraged from continuing to work long after the age of 65. Some legislators of this Council during the last 20 years or so are on record as supporting this strange philosophy that suggests elderly people should not be mollycoddled.

Mr Deputy President, I believe that it is nonsense! Hong Kong's elderly people are just the same as all other elderly people. They are entitled to the best level of social security that the economy can provide. An old age pension is certainly the central element in any modern social security system.

I understand the Government will include consideration of this proposal in its deliberations on the extension of provident fund schemes. I am very glad to hear it and I am sure that this Council and all who care about the dignity and security of the elderly will support this initiative and do their best to help the Government to reach sensible and affordable conclusions. Mr Deputy President, whether it is highnoon or twilight, I support the motion.

MRS ELSIE TU: Mr Deputy President, when I came here in 1951, Hong Kong was just entering its industrial revolution. Like all such revolutions in history, it was accompanied by all the evils of rapid industrial growth. A labourer's working day was 12 to 16 hours, seven days a week, with no holidays, sick leave, compensation for accident, or public assistance for those in need. Many people died of neglect. The overworked and underpaid of those days are the elderly people of today, and many of them are in need of care.

I wonder if Hong Kong's billionaires who boast of our economic miracle have ever realized that economic miracles do not just happen. They come from sheer hard work, sometimes exploitation, and much of Hong Kong's success is due to those who are now elderly who worked so long and so hard for so little reward. Instead of feeling self-satisfied with our achievements, we should be hanging our heads in shame that we have failed so badly to take care of those who put their life's blood into our economy.

There are many ways of taking care of the elderly, and I am sure my colleagues will cover all other aspects. But I want to concentrate on only one, the housing

of the elderly, because I believe that is one of the basic necessities of life.

In the recent policy debate, the Secretary for Health and Welfare said: "We have just started a new scheme for single elderly persons who are in need of housing, particularly street-sleepers and bedspace apartment lodgers" (which is a euphemism for the caged men). The Secretary went on to say that "Hostels will provide accommodation pending more permanent housing..... Seed money for this has been generously donated by the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club." I am not blaming the Secretary, because she is fairly new to this post, but please notice her words, that this is a new scheme and that only temporary hostel accommodation will be funded from gambling activities. Is that the best we can do for the elderly, after 40 years of economic progress?

The recent White Paper on Social Welfare begins its chapter on services for the elderly by saying: "An elderly person should be assisted to live in his own community with dignity." I could not agree more. But my mind immediately conjures up scenes on television of elderly persons being evicted from condemned tenements, sad scenes that one might expect to see after some natural disaster. No one has bothered to tell these lost and bewildered old people what to do when the premises in which they have spent their lives are to be demolished. Several times in the past few months we have seen old people being turfed out of their homes, wondering where to go for help. Where is the dignity that the White Paper promises?

Of course we do have a policy for displaced tenants. They can have temporary housing in the New Territories. But the White Paper recommends and I quote that "Care of the elderly should be provided in the same neighbourhood so as to avoid the trauma of moving residents to unfamiliar surroundings." These are fine words. But television pictures show a very different story. The elderly people go through a traumatic experience before anyone bothers to step in to help. Is it not possible that when demolitions for any reason are to take place, some investigation may be made into whether there are elderly people involved? Can they not be properly rehoused as of right, in familiar neighbourhoods?

I now turn to the subject of priority housing for the elderly on the waiting list. I find that is an empty promise when the applicant is an elderly singleton. After waiting for years, applicants are told to share with one or two elderly persons, or continue to wait. They are also told that the only housing available is in the New Territories, usually Tuen Mun. This unreasonable policy of sharing is justified in

the Report of the Central Committee on Services for the Elderly, 1988, which claims that elderly people live together harmoniously and provide mutual care, and that only 14% of them have disputes when living in shared accommodation. Fourteen per cent means quite a lot of people, but even that does not tell the whole story. Many elderly refuse to accept housing when they are told to share; others accept, but when they find their co-tenants incompatible, they go back to the streets and passageways, or move from friend to friend with no fixed abode. Could that be construed as living with dignity?

The recommendation in the White Paper that the elderly should be provided for in their own neighbourhood is totally ignored not only by the Housing Department but also by some social workers, who have rationalized sending old people to the New Territories from the urban areas by suggesting that it is better for their health. I do not think elderly people will want to find fresh air by hill-climbing. I am sure they would prefer to shop in familiar places, exercise in familiar parks, and be near their friends and relatives or the churches and temples where they worship. As a person who studies sociology from people rather than from books or policies, I am amazed at the jesuitry of government departments in rationalizing anything that happens to suit their opportunistic policies.

Not only so, but in the Government, the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. While the White Paper of March this year states clearly and I quote "the number of elderly living alone is anticipated to increase", the Governor in his policy address in October informed us that there will be a shortfall of singleton housing. So in planning flats, the anticipated increase in the number of singleton elderly living alone has been totally disregarded.

Coming to care and attention homes, I find that the situation is equally deplorable. I have been asking through various channels for the past two decades what is being done for those who cannot take care of themselves. In the early 1980s I was told by the Social Welfare Department that this problem would be solved by 1985. Now, six years on, we are told this problem will be settled in ten years' time. I hope I may be forgiven if I say that I will believe that when I see it happen. What comfort can an 80-year-old get from being told not to worry, his problem will be settled in ten years' time. Ten years' time is too late for an old person. I am aware that voluntary agencies have tried to make up for the Government's shortcomings, and that private homes can get certain assistance if they meet a standard that few of them can reach. But the waiting queue for care and attention homes is still years

long. I can find no excuse for this neglect on the Government's part.

In case I am told that all this neglect is a matter of priorities, I would like to seek the Government's advice on what it calls "priorities". The Government's list is very different from mine. Let me give a few examples to show how the Government squanders our money on non-priorities. Is it necessary to spend about \$200 million on an escalator uphill from Central? Some people consider it a nuisance. Was it necessary to spend probably more than a billion dollars on the Housing Authority's extravagant new headquarters when the original building was reasonably new and already considered to be well above standard? Even more obscene, or even unprincipled, is the provision at public expense of a luxury cruise for the not so elderly and not so needy civil servants on retirement necessary? In case I am told that this luxury was some obsolete condition of service left in contracts since the days of sailing ships, let me ask if it is also in their contracts that on retirement they may return to Britain first-class by air, then return to Hong Kong to join the luxury cruise? If these people feel nostalgic for the days of sailing boats, why not find them berths in freighters, or even in the Royal Navy? But why a luxury tour, why a luxury ship at about \$60,000 a berth? Millions of dollars of taxpayers' money are being spent, not on the sick and the needy but on the rich and the greedy. Is housing for the elderly not on the Government's list of priorities? It should be.

The fact of the matter is that the urgent needs of the really needy, that is, the elderly, are being sacrificed to provide luxuries for the grab-all. We must rid ourselves of this shame and get on with the job of providing for those to whom our economy owes so much. Just for once, can we get our priorities right? Mr Deputy President, I support the motion.

PROF EDWARD CHEN (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, before I speak, I have to declare my interest. I am the chairman of the Hong Kong Society for the Aged.

The aging of the population is a known fact, but the Hong Kong Government should have had a set of programmes in place much earlier. In 1972, a working group was set up to study the direction of the development policy for the elderly. Recently a White Paper Social Welfare Into the 1990s and Beyond was published, which contains detailed policy proposals and would probably be supported. However, the White Paper only emphasizes the quantitative increase in services for the elderly. Of course I was pleased to see there are some so-called "planning ratios" in the White Paper



up to a fairly reasonable level. For instance, now there is a fraternity centre for the elderly for every 3 000 old people, a day care centre for the elderly or a community service centre for the elderly for every 25 000 old people. At the same time, the number of beds in care and attention homes for the elderly has increased from eight to 11 for every 1 000 old people. This basically strikes a balance between institutional care and home care. Regrettably, two problems still remain. The first is how to actually implement the policy concerning the elderly in the White Paper. Many voluntary agencies are now extremely concerned with this problem. They doubt whether with the present fiscal constraint introduced by the Hong Kong Government the proposals in the White Paper can be carried out. We know that of the problems of the elderly, taking care of them is only a moral obligation. However, it is also very important from the point of view of social interest, because the stability of society depends on our taking good care of the elderly. I therefore support what the Honourable Mrs Elsie TU said that the Government should review its priorities and should understand the importance of taking care of the elderly to society as a whole. Thus more resources should be allocated to services for the elderly. At the same time, the policy raised in the White Paper is also not comprehensive enough, mainly because the proposals concentrate only on what the Social Welfare Department can do. Of course, this is not because the working group did not work hard enough, but mainly because the terms of reference of the White Paper are confined to this respect. Services for the elderly are very complicated, which involve policy branches and government departments. Apart from the Social Welfare Department, retirement education involves the Education and Manpower Branch; how to make use of the working abilities of the elderly and so on are questions of community development of the Home Affairs Branch; the transport allowance involves the Transport Branch; of course the most important are questions involving the Hospital Services Department and the Department of Health. In these circumstances, I agree with what has been said by other Members, in particular Dr LEONG Che-hung and Mr David LI, that there should be an inter-departmental standing co-ordinating/working group to co-ordinate overall services for the elderly. Of course, to formulate an overall and comprehensive policy would have to take into consideration many aspects of services for the elderly. I shall speak on only one today. I would concentrate on one aspect, which some other Members have already touched upon, that is, how to strengthen the services for the elderly and enhance the use of resources through the "prevention is better than cure" approach. With regard to the enhanced use of resources in the services for the elderly, sometimes it is not a question of inadequate resources, but of how the resources are allocated to achieve maximum effective utilization. If many of the problems of the elderly can be prevented, thus saving

much care for the elderly eventually, the use of resources will be much more satisfactory.

In respect of services for the elderly, both social services and medical services are closely related to the health conditions of old people. With developed medical science today, though many diseases are no longer fatal, many chronic diseases continue to exist. Since life span is longer now, many old people suffer these chronic diseases longer, and thus social expenditure incurred in caring for old people suffering from chronic diseases would rise. Therefore basically the question of usage of resources must be solved. How to improve the basic health of the elderly so that medical expenses on them can be reduced, and thus more resources can be released for other aspects of services for the elderly? The present health conditions of the elderly may be said to be extremely poor, compared with the level of economic development of Hong Kong. According to government statistics in 1986, 40% of hospital beds were occupied by patients over 60, which demanded a high proportion of resources. A survey on the elderly by the University of Hong Kong also revealed that amongst 1 000 old people interviewed, over two thirds of them said their health was very ordinary/not good/very bad, and 80% of them said they were plagued by chronic diseases. Consequently, how to improve the health of the elderly is a most basic factor in improving the use of resources for services for the elderly. To improve the health of the elderly, I believe this has to start from primary health care. Many Members have already spoken on this question, but I shall raise two specific proposals. My two proposals are:

First, in respect of primary health care: to establish a government-funded Health Centre for the Elderly. At present many centres for the aged offer physical examination services, but only a very limited range of services at that. If the Government can use some resources to establish a Health Centre for the Elderly, it would be amply rewarded, because the Government would save much expenditure incurred when the old people fall ill subsequently. The Health Centre for the Elderly should carry out regular physical checks on the old people, and provide consultancy on their health. The Centre should promote elderly health education in various aspects, for example, old people should have good living habits, and should be taught to quit smoking, drinking and so on.

Secondly, to encourage a diverse range of activities in the life of the elderly. To maintain good health and to reduce the incidence of illness, it is most important to be happy and open; then good health will follow. The life of the elderly is now

very monotonous. According to results of a study conducted by the University of Hong Kong, when 1 000 old people were asked what they usually did and how they usually passed their time, 50% gave watching television as the first and second choices, which meant watching television was the most common way of passing time; 30% gave morning tea and eating breakfast as the first and second choices. So these are already the best choices to pass time! This shows that the range of activities of the elderly at present is very restricted indeed.

Furthermore, it should also be understood that the needs of the elderly are quite different. Nowadays the life span is longer, medical technologies are developed, the standard of education has been raised and technology in general has been innovated; the elderly fall into many different types. If a correct term is to be adopted, the elderly population is now heterogeneous. In this situation, what shall we do? I have two proposals:

First, to step up the diversification in services for the elderly. Services offered by homes for the aged and care and attention homes should be diversified to meet different demands of different types of old people.

Secondly, in order to make the life of the elderly colourful, the vigour of the elderly has to be enhanced. Here, just like many of my colleagues, I advocate strongly that the Government should introduce a transport allowance. As with foreign countries, old people over 60 should be issued with a kind of pass which entitles them to enjoy half fare in public transport. This is very important. The reason of my proposal is not that this would simply raise the status of the elderly, but it is in fact an economic investment. Economic investors say that if the vigour of the elderly is enhanced, they can move around which will benefit their mental and physical health. Their reliance on medical services will be reduced and hence expenditures. To the Government, it is a worthwhile investment.

To sum up, Mr Deputy President, I feel that services for the elderly are multifarious and inter-departmental. Therefore it is necessary to formulate an overall and comprehensive policy. I support the motion.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, the age profile of Hong Kong's population will change during the 10 years to come, which means that the overall tendency is towards an aging population. The proportion of old people over 60 in

the population of Hong Kong will increase from 13% in 1990, that is 748 700, to 15.4% in 2000, that is 974 500. Hong Kong has never practised social security and has no compulsory retirement fund or provident fund to safeguard the old people in their twilight years. Now faced with the aging of the population and the big hefty increase in the percentage proportion of the elderly, I feel it is time that Hong Kong should allocate resources and pay for the cost to remedy the situation, so as to protect the basic living of the elderly. Of course, the satisfaction of material living alone does not enable the elderly to live happily in their later life. The respect and care of the family are also extremely important. If these social policies are implemented, they would enable the old people to develop their mind and body normally, and also would ease social problems as a whole. According to information available, over 70% or 80% of the elderly still live with their families, which means the traditional Chinese family concept is still alive, and has not yet disintegrated completely. It is therefore an important subject how to make the family play its full role. I think the Government should set up as soon as possible a Central Co-ordinating Committee on Services for the Elderly, to formulate detailed policies for the elderly and to co-ordinate the implementation of various services. Furthermore, at the right time, it should promote the concept of "Senior Citizens" which is emphasized by western countries now. The so-called "Senior Citizens" is another name for the elderly. As they have contributed to society, made their achievements, garnered varied experience, and accumulated wisdom, they really deserve the respect of society. This is because if they are respected and highly regarded, all sectors of the community will also give them preference in material and service terms, thus bringing benefits to them. Consequently I feel that the senior citizens policy should be implemented. This does not only promote the general practice of respect for the aged, but is also the expression of the lofty idea of "care for our parents, and love our children", which has the practical meaning of improving the material life of the elderly in order to achieve mental and physical health. I have seven proposals:

First, on the question of extra tax allowance for senior citizens. Many countries grant such allowance to the elderly, in particular those over 50. They still go out to work, but in fact they have to incur higher expenses than others, particularly those who have to receive medical treatment. I feel that they should have more money left with them. I have a feasible proposal to the Inland Revenue Department. At present the allowance for a single person is \$41,000, and \$82,000 for a married couple without children. Can we raise the personal allowance for a person of 55 years of age who still goes out to work by \$20,000, in other words, up

to \$61,000? When a person reaches 56 to 60, then add another \$20,000, up to \$81,000. For a person of 61 or above, add another \$20,000 up to \$101,000.

The second proposal relates to dependent parent allowance. To encourage filial piety and the responsibility to support parents, the Government should give these people substantive support. I therefore feel that the Government could well raise the dependent parent allowance in order to encourage people to support their parents and also to enable such people to save up more resources for family expenses.

The third proposal relates to transport allowance. Senior citizens are mostly retired with limited financial resources. The fares charged by public transport companies at present are not cheap, which are generally a heavy burden and enough to affect the social life of the elderly. I propose that for a citizen over 60, he/she should be entitled to be issued with a kind of half-fare concession pass, so that he/she can travel at half fare on MTR, KCR, trams, public buses and ferries. The above measure needs the support of all public transport companies. Consequently I hope that the Government can formulate a definite policy to incorporate the preferential treatment of senior citizens mentioned above as one of the conditions of granting franchises, thus compelling public transport companies to do so when the policy is implemented. We estimate that usually the elderly are more active during non-peak hours, and this would not substantially affect public transport companies, in particular their profits.

The fourth proposal relates to housing allowance. I had presented my views on many occasions in respect of accommodating single-person and two-person families in public housing, which is a problem directly affecting the elderly. I consider that the Government should provide more rooms for single-person and two-person families, which should not be delayed any more. At the same time, to those elderly without support, a special policy should be drawn up to deal with them as a matter of priority. As a fairly large number of senior citizens with no or just a meagre income, now live in private housing, I therefore feel that to those over 60 and retired, the Government should, apart from old age allowance, pay them some living allowance, which should include rents and house maintenance.

The fifth proposal relates to the question of special access facilities for the elderly. I believe that it was due to the efforts of many organizations and voluntary agencies that the Government enacted an Ordinance in December 1983 which provides that buildings should have special access facilities for the handicapped; in other

words, within buildings, some special passages such as ramps and so on should be provided. Although some overhead footbridges are now fitted with ramps, I find that some others have not been so fitted, due to unsuitable locality or cost perhaps, to the inconvenience of the elderly and the handicapped. I propose that when the Government considers designing overhead footbridges or similar structures, elevators should be installed.

The sixth proposal concerns medical treatment and health care for the elderly. We all know that the elderly are in particular need of health care and have a great demand for hospital and clinic services at present. In 1989 the University of Hong Kong conducted a survey of general out-patient services and found that although people aged 65 and over accounted for 8.6% of the total population, they made up 21.5% of the total number of general out-patients in government clinics; and in hospital services, patients aged 65 and over made up 33.7% of the total number of in-patients. The Comprehensive Household Survey of January 1989 showed that medical consultations by those aged 60 and over far exceeds that of other age groups. At present, in spite of the half-price concessions granted to the elderly, yet in the Report of the Working Group on Primary Health Care recently published by the Government, it was proposed that random samples of out-patients aged 65 and over who had attended government clinics should be taken for physical checks. I think it is the right direction for the Government to take, but I do not agree with random sampling. Since elderly people over 60 are showing obvious signs of physical deterioration, the Government should conduct basic physical checks regularly for them in different groups, for example, once a year, so that any disease can be detected early. Such a preventive measure can relieve the pressure of clinics and hospitals in having to deal with emergencies frequently.

On the other hand, the electronic media should produce some programmes for the elderly. The present licensing conditions for television stations in Hong Kong provide that some information programmes, such as news, special reports on current affairs and so on must be produced, and there are also provisions for minimum broadcasting times and ratios. Television stations also produce some items especially for children, women and young people, for example, "Women Time" for women, but seldom for the elderly. I think when the Government issues or renews licences, there will be no harm in requesting the electronic media to produce some television or radio programmes exclusively for the elderly, to be broadcast or telecast in appropriate hours in the morning and the afternoon. I believe that as these programmes are not necessarily broadcast or telecast during prime time, it will not

affect the advertising revenue of the media; but to the elderly, those hours are their "golden hours".

To sum up, I feel that the policies for senior citizens proposed above are only part of the proposals to meet present urgent needs. In fact, confronted with the inexorable aging of Hong Kong's population, I believe that we must prepare in advance, instead of considering it when the problem becomes really acute. I hope that what I have just said will form only some principles and directions of long-term services for the aged, and it will actually rely on the collective thinking of the general public to provide more response. I am also appealing to the public not to treat care for the elderly as a concept, but it must be carried out in practice to show respect for the elderly, and to requite them for their contributions to the Hong Kong community during their young days. Based on the foregoing, I support the motion. Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

5.00 pm

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: We will take a break for 20 minutes.

5.23 pm

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Council will resume.

DR SAMUEL WONG: Mr Deputy President,

An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless....  
Soul clap its hands and sing.

The motion advocates formulation of a policy on the care of the elderly.

"Care" comes in many forms. It may be no more than a routine provision of physical needs. It may include a genuine concern. It may go as far as compassion. But for our elderly to clap hands and sing it must include overall well-being -- physical, psychological, social, financial and spiritual. Care for the whole being.

Too often it stops at routine provision of physical needs. There was the case of TANG Kwok-wah who, at 77 years, was terminally ill. The Government has little provision for the terminally ill. Social Welfare gave him sponsorship to a private old people's home. They provided for his physical needs. He was placed on a bunk bed on a roof. He had a table and chair. Plastic corrugate kept the rain off. The occupant of the other bunk died. After eight months so did TANG. That lonely roof was his final home.

The White Paper: Social Welfare into the 1990s and Beyond, states that the broad objective of services to the elderly is to promote their well-being in all aspects of life. So the Government does aim that they all clap hands and sing. Its intentions are right. What then has gone wrong? What is the reason for the 600 annual suicides among our old people -- those that are so far from clapping hands and singing they would rather lay down and die. And many of those, sadly, have been forced into suicide by their own families.

Let us look at some of the weaknesses of the services for the elderly and see where they stop at routine provision of physical needs. It is perhaps significant that of the four pages in the White Paper on Services to the Elderly, one whole page is devoted to statistic.

I will start with "encouraging the care of the elderly by family members" since that is the only part currently awarded the title of policy. It is based on the precept of the majority honouring and respecting the elderly and accepting the family's responsibility to look after them. This is in the face of a report by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, dated December 1989, which categorically stated that, because of various socio-economic changes since the second world war, the family is no longer regarded as the most suitable and legitimate institution to take care of the elderly. But even disregarding this dichotomy, the White Paper makes no provision for the minority who give a space to their elderly and ill-treat them.

The extent of abuse of the elderly in Hong Kong is contained in the report of a joint project by the Hong Kong Polytechnic and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. It analysed abuses under 24 indicators ranging from being frequently assaulted, being burned on purpose, not being allowed to eat or drink, being forbidden to sleep, being forced to commit suicide and so on. The report found that about 5% of households having elderly also had potential abusers. From this one can deduce that some 40 000 elderly in families in Hong Kong today are at risk of being abused.



A comprehensive policy must, before assuming that the majority of households respect their elderly, make provision for ensuring that such elderly are not subject to abuse or abandon. Like the well publicized case of Mrs LEE HO Min-ching, who was taken to Macau by her son and daughter-in-law and deliberately abandoned there. She was found starving on the hydrofoil wharf. This sickening case is not isolated. Nearly 100 old people per month are abandoned in hospitals alone and there is evidence to suggest that cases of deserting the old are escalating.

The so-called brain drain results in widespread abandonment often because foreign immigration laws prohibit the accompaniment of their elderly relatives. So we hear of cases like the catholic priest, who returned one night to see some newspapers and sacks on his doorstep. He kicked them aside to find the bundle was an old man - - dumped. It later transpired the ones who dumped him were his own family.

Now let us consider those with no family. There are considerable numbers of old people who fled alone to Hong Kong more than 40 years ago and have lost contact with their families. Now in their old age they are found in poverty, poor health and loneliness. The 1986 bi-census reported about 11.5% of the elderly live by themselves without family and are socially isolated and vulnerable. The survey report for the Street Sleepers Project stated that out of the 1 000 existing cases 88% of street sleepers were migrants and over 50% came to Hong Kong before 1949. Yet those very people who have to resort to the Street Sleepers Association for shelter are required to leave the premises and wander the streets from early morning to dusk even if they are ill. Strictly routine provision of physical needs only.

A rung of a ladder was never meant to rest upon, but only to hold a foot while the other foot goes up to a higher rung. In the last decade we have climbed several rungs, but we still have many more to go before our elderly clap hands and sing.

In 1978, 100 single old men were found living in Tsuen Wan in a decaying tenement block due for demolition. It was overcrowded, unhealthy, dangerous and disgusting. They were living in two foot by six foot cages. At the time official figures showed that there were 17 000 in similar conditions. Today we have what Government euphemistically calls 5 000 bedspace apartment dwellers. Changing the name does not alter their plight and in my book 5 000 or 500 is too many. A sound policy would have got rid of them years ago. Just recently a fire broke out in one of these caged dwellings and claimed five lives. I am surprised we do not lose more, since cooking is done with kerosene on stairwells piled with old newspapers,

mattresses and rags. Even if the stairs were not blocked, how many old people are fit enough to get down in case of fire? The fire hazards in these bedspace dwellings are terrifying.

The 100 old men of Tsuen Wan were lucky. Their dwelling was due for demolition. The media drew attention to their plight and from a shocked public some compassionate members formed a committee, which later became the now well-known charity, Helping Hand, and with the unprecedented help of some dedicated members of the Housing Department, they had the demolition delayed for a month and rehoused all the men in agreeable ground floor accommodation in a temporary housing estate. The next day the building came down.

The moral behind that story is significant. Up to 1978 the situation had been going on for years within the knowledge of the Administration, who had the statistics when asked, but it took the compassion of members of the public to start to put things right and to initiate the concept of partnership with Government, which many people seem to think was created only last month. It has proved a most excellent policy.

Charities provide compassion in many ways. The probability of kidney disease increases with old age. Yet the general policy in Government is that dialysis, the rather expensive treatment for kidney disease, is not to be made available to the elderly. The government criteria do not include the senior citizens. They are picked out to die.

Now dialysis is just as effective in the elderly as in the young. So charities have been set up to serve kidney patients who come outside the government criteria. And that is where the compassion comes in. One day, when demand and technology pull down the price of dialysis, no doubt the government criteria will be broadened and more cases will be taken on. But when is "one day" and how many cases is "more"? These need to be defined. We need a quantified policy.

An important part of the care of the elderly is their financial support. Criticism of their meagre allowances is so widespread I do not propose to dwell on that aspect. I would, however, like to make one point of principle -- or should I say policy? Allowances can be paid to the elderly at 65. Some, after a means test, qualify for the special needs allowance and can draw up to \$2,100 per month. Big deal!

Suppose they take a job -- in the words of the White Paper to keep their dignity

and to continue to participate in society, both socially and economically, for as long as possible. They find they cannot make more than \$100 per month. The rule is that so far as they are drawing an allowance their total income cannot exceed \$2,200. In other words, after the first \$100, the rest of their earning up to \$2,200 are in effect taken by the Administration.

Now this is not only debilitating, it is unnecessary, it is treating the elderly as a statistic. Why not let them earn up to a reasonable figure, say \$2,200, before the restriction is applied? Then they would have motivation to participate in society economically, to the benefit of everyone. Their souls would be given a chance to clap their hands and sing. The cost, surely, would be negligible. It might even help the labour shortage.

I have talked about living as a senior citizen in Hong Kong; I would like to finish by talking about dying. Death of an elderly, who is shifted off in any direction as long as it is out of the way, is a paltry thing. Yet, in a hospital bed he may linger for months while 500 others could occupy the space; come in, have treatment and be discharged. Far more satisfying for the medical profession. I sympathize with the doctors in their dilemma. On the one hand they can heal many, on the other hand they can make little impact on just one. Yet they are committed to face it impartially.

I related the story of TANG Kwok-wah whose boarding was paid for, yet he was left languishing on the roof, isolated, to die alone. How many other TANGs are there? A spoonful of sugar to make the medicine go down is more important in dying than at any other time in living. I applaud another charity, the Keswick Foundation Hospice Care, which will begin next year. People will be properly trained to deal sensitively with those close to the end. Let us form a sound policy and sound partnerships to provide comfort for the living and the dying so that no one shall quote W B YEATS and say of Hong Kong "that is no country for old men" but rather a place where the souls of the elderly clap their hands and sing.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR MICHAEL HO (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, today I am going to concentrate on the discussion of preventive health services for the elderly. This concept is not new but so far, the Government and the public have not been able to keep pace

with preventive health services nor do they realize that these services are closely linked with the health of the public. The ageing of the population and longer life expectancy is becoming a sustained trend. Medical expenses on the elderly will go up. Whenever the health of the elderly is discussed, the "illness" approach is taken invariably. This approach has led us into thinking and planning our services along the line of arranging medical consultation, treatment and provision of medicine to the old. My colleagues have just mentioned that the salt content in food should be reduced in order to avoid high blood pressure and that less cholesterol-rich food should be taken to avoid heart diseases. This is a typical approach aimed at avoiding illness. Such an approach has not been able to go beyond the confines of avoiding illness. This "illness" approach also demonstrates that we regard "health" as equivalent to "without illness". In fact the definition of "health" covers wider ground than without illness or avoiding illness. Preventive health services should be extended and not just be limited to the curing of diseases. We should look into those unhealthy lifestyles, such as eating habits, rest, environmental and mental health. From a "health" point of view, we should not just take into account the treatment of diseases, but rather we should take steps to ensure physical and mental health. This should include improving the life-styles of the elderly, for example, to ensure they have balanced diet, enough rest, and to eliminate their worries and confidence crises arising from the deterioration of their physical mechanisms, which may further lead to their avoiding contacts with others and becoming withdrawn and morose. Other social factors such as their financial difficulties may also be a cause of psychological pressure on them. Judging from the infant mortality rate and the average life expectancy of the population, Hong Kong's health indicators are rather good. The advance in technology has led to the lowering of the mortality rate and to the prolongation of life for many. These of course include our elderly. But this does not mean that they are healthy. Hence, apart from the mortality rate, the real health indicators we should look for should be "morbidity".

In actual fact, the health of the Hong Kong elderly people are not satisfactory. According to the findings of a study by two local academics on the elderly -- incidentally, I am going to use the same study findings just cited by Prof CHEN but fortunately I am going to cite some different details. Whenever the elderly people are asked of their health, most of them do not consider themselves as healthy. Many of them have to stay in hospital frequently or have to get medical treatment. As for their hearing, their eye-sight and their teeth, these are always ignored and their health state is even more unsatisfactory. More than half of the interviewees consider their hearing ability as average or tend to be bad. 75% of them consider

their eye-sight average or tend to be bad. Chronic diseases are also common. More than half of the interviewees have rheumatism. High blood pressure and spine problem also worry many elderly people. The study shows that their knowledge of mental health is inadequate. Some of them have unhealthy habits such as smoking, drinking and not having breakfast every day. Apart from physical health, their mental health should also be a matter of some concern. The studies disclosed that many of the interviewees spent most of their time, as has earlier been pointed out by Prof CHEN, in watching television and more than half of them felt miserable. Over 40% of them felt lonely. This is an indication of their mental health. What I have just mentioned is not a kind of sickness but obviously, these elderly people are not healthy.

To improve the health condition of the elderly, we must deal with several major issues, for example, health education and co-ordination of resources. On health education, many elderly people are stubborn and subjective. Some of the current "piecemeal" health education measures are basically not of any apparent help to them. We should have some tailor-made health education plans for the old people. We should through the mass media and other channels let elderly people and their families know how to improve their health and where to find and use available resources. On the co-ordination of resources, there should be a comprehensive review so that the present medical consultation, community health care, outreach service and other ancillary medical services, such as that of the clinical psychologist and dietician, can complement each other. It is hoped that following such review, there will be more comprehensive, convenient and expedient health services. It is hoped that as what my colleagues have just suggested, an inter-departmental working party can be set up to provide more comprehensive health services for the elderly. This would meet government expectation in the promotion of welfare services for the elderly through community care. In this way, not only the physical needs of the elderly will be cared for but also the various psychological or emotional problems caused by illness will be addressed.

With these remarks, I support the motion.

DR HUANG CHEN-YA (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, Mr WONG has just now spoken on the preventive medical services for the elderly, now I would like to concentrate my speech on other medical problems that our elderly are facing in Hong Kong. First of all, I would like to make it clear that old age is in fact a stage in our journey of life, but it does not necessarily mean an inevitable approach of illness and

disability. Therefore, a range of well-established medical services for the elderly should not be just confined to preventive care or treatment of old-age diseases, it should also include the promotion and maintenance of physical and mental health of the elderly because both medical and social services are actually inseparable for the elderly.

In considering whether subsidy should be made to social centres for the elderly or concessionary transport fares be provided to the aged people, we have to understand that the implementation of such policies will actually reduce the depression, anxiety or even paranoia suffered by many elderly people because of loneliness and isolation from the society. Viewing from a certain angle, the limited provision of recreational services by these social centres and the provision of concessionary transport fares apparently may not have any economic value. However, these services and measures will help us save a lot of resources and bring considerable benefits to the society as a whole.

In considering whether retirement benefits should be provided, we should also understand that a difficult and poor living environment would usually increase the opportunity of being infected with diseases or succumbed to those diseases which they should not have. This would not only increase the suffering of those concerned but it also means a bigger price to be paid by the whole society. In considering the provision of medical services to the elderly, we must also bear in mind that such expenditure will reduce much unnecessary disability among the elderly, and that in turn it will reduce the subsidy from Government for welfare purpose and in providing more hospital beds.

Therefore, in considering care for the elderly, we should not just concentrate on the cost effectiveness of any individual measure. Instead, we should take a more comprehensive and objective view in making proper assessment on their cost effectiveness.

At the present moment, the average life expectancy of the Hong Kong people is among the top ones in the world. It is 75 for men and 80 for female. People sometimes would quote these figures to indicate that Hong Kong people are more healthy than those in other areas. But they have neglected the serious medical problems behind these figures.

Factors like the lengthening of our average life expectancy, decrease in birth

rate and the brain drain of our younger population are all contributing to making the problem of aging population more serious. In 1991 we have 480 000 people over the age of 65 in which over 160 000 people are above 75 years of age. It is projected that the former will be increased by 50% and the latter even be increased by over 90% to reach some 300 000 by the end of the century. We understand that the demand for medical services in a certain area, in particular the demand for hospital beds, is in direct proportion to the number of residents over the age of 75. This means that in the coming decade, we will have to provide medical services to cater for the needs of twice the existing population of the old people. This is a serious problem and it is also an important obligation of the whole community to take care of our senior citizens.

Furthermore, the average life expectancy alone will not tell us the actual health condition of these elderly people. Chronic diseases among the elderly are very common and they are also often coupled with complications. If they are not provided with adequate medical treatment and care, their basic survival ability will be affected. The vast demand for care and attention homes has indirectly reflected the health problem of our elderly people. We now have over 8 000 people waiting for places in care and attention homes and this figure does not include those on the waiting list of homes for the aged.

In view of the seriousness of this problem, we cannot simply be satisfied with any superficial and glossy answers such as the number of hospitals scheduled to be completed. We have to raise further questions as follows. What problems do exist in our medical services for the elderly? What improvement measures are required? According to my understanding, there are at least the following problems in the provision of medical services for our elderly:

(1) Inadequate beds: Insufficient beds in care and attention homes as well as sanatoria has become a public concern. On the other hand, attention should also be paid to the inadequate provision of beds in the geriatric wards. In reviewing the medical services for the elderly in 1986, the Medical Development Advisory Committee projected that we would need 2 500 beds in the geriatric wards. But up to the present moment, we only have less than 750 beds and some hospitals are even not provided with such wards.

The Government has been informing us time and again that no elderly people will be rejected because of a shortage of hospital beds. This statement seems to

be true. But we have to raise a question, that is, is it really appropriate to rush elderly people in and out of general wards when they are suffering from both acute and chronic diseases which could only be cured slowly? Will these elderly people be classified as "second class patients" in the general wards? Recently, we have received complaints from some elderly people alleging that they had been turned down for renal dialysis service. Does it reflect indirectly that our medical services for the elderly have not been placed on the top priority list?

(2) Lack of full co-operation among various disciplines of medical services: In curing old people, we cannot just rely on high-tech acute treatment. The things required are a comprehensive diagnosis and an assessment on their ability, rehabilitation service of geriatric unit in day hospital, transport service to and from hospitals, community care service and residential institution service. All these services have to be well co-ordinated. At present we find different institutions providing their own services. The senile patients have to visit different places for diagnosis and treatment and they are really tired to death. There is a lack of communication among various community services, institution services and hospital services. Due to the inadequacy of the ambulance service, some elderly people are deprived of certain services (such as services provided by geriatric unit in day hospital). All these services must be properly co-ordinated by those professionals who have devoted to medical care for the elderly. It is only then that our resources can be effectively utilized.

As far as medical care for the elderly is concerned, it may be more cost effective to allow admission of elderly patients to geriatric rather than general wards. The former arrangement may have the advantage of lowering the frequency of admission and shortening the period of hospitalization. In other words, resources will be saved and expenses minimized. The Administration should not hesitate to adopt this approach which is more in line with the principle of cost effectiveness.

(3) In the past decade, I have noticed the commencement of our preliminary development on geriatric specialist service. I am pleased to learn that some geriatrists have started to liaise with the Social Welfare Department and consider ways to improve the health assessment on the elderly before they are admitted to the institutions. These contacts will have positive effects on medical care for the elderly. In the past decade, it appeared that the Government has been wavering in the development of geriatric service, just like advancing two steps forward and pause for a while. Until now we only have geriatric wards in three government hospitals



and four subsidized hospitals. The progress of development is as slow as a snail.

(4) Inadequate support from other specialist disciplines: The development of neurology, psychiatric and dental services cannot catch up to meet the needs of our aging population. Half of our senior citizens are suffering from neurological diseases and 90% of serious disability are caused by brain diseases. The most common ones are strokes and Parkinson's disease.

As for psychiatric diseases, almost 6% of the elderly people are suffering from depression and they need specialist treatment, while 4% are suffering from paranoia. For people over the age of 65, 5% are suffering from senile dementia. As for those over the age of 80, 20% are suffering from senile dementia and they often need to be under hospital care. In addition, many elderly people are suffering from emotional problems either because they are lonely, deserted or have lost their kin.

As far as oral hygiene is concerned, although much improvement have been made in oral hygiene of the general public in recent years, dental problems however are still common among the elderly people. 30% of our old people find it difficult to chew food. And we do not have adequate training to dental nursing staff especially provided for the elderly, and in fact the Government has not provided dental service to our senior citizens. Since old people generally have limited financial capability, and so they have to suffer from the inconvenience resulting from dental problems. Or they may turn to unlicensed dentists instead. All these will affect the health condition of the elderly people.

(5) Insufficient education to medical staff: At present, we only have one geriatric lecturer in the two universities. Medical students and nursing staff have little contact with the subject of geriatrics and know little about the special needs of the elderly. The dental problems of the old people are even more complicated. At present, there is an acute shortage of manpower resource in oral therapy. In order to cater for the existing and future demand, the Government should pay more attention to the needs of medical staff who are looking after the elderly.

In view of the above, I would like to urge the Government:

(a) to conduct a comprehensive and thorough review on the needs and direction of medical services for the elderly;

(b) to consider the views of the professionals working in the front line during the review;

(c) to enhance geriatric specialist service which should be used as a focal point to establish a network for a complete development of medical and rehabilitation services for the elderly;

(d) to increase the number of beds in geriatric wards by reaching the target of not less than four beds per 1 000 elderly population within 10 years (that is, about 2 900 beds);

(e) to develop mental health service for the elderly: that is, a concerted effort among various professions including the psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists and occupation therapists so as to promote their work in the community and to set up hospital beds for elderly suffering from mental illness.

(f) to establish a stroke rehabilitation centre in which neurologists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and occupation therapists should be working there, so that we can pool resources together and provide comprehensive services to the patients; this will help the patients save a lot of long trips to and from the treatment units and it will also lighten the burden of the families concerned to look after their ill members; the resources thus saved will be reimbursed to the society.

(g) to expedite training for medical staff so as to meet the needs of elderly services: such as education resources for neurologists, dental therapists, nursing staff and community nursing staff.

All in all, we have already established a preliminary foundation of medical services for our senior citizens in the past decade. However, the pace of development has been very slow and there has been inadequate co-ordination in organization work and distribution of resources. In the face of an ageing population, we should conduct a comprehensive review and have an overall planning so that we can make better use of resources of the community in a cost effective and proper manner. So long as we provide a range of good community services ensuring the mental and physical health of the elderly, our burden on medical services will be reduced. So long as we provide a range of good and proper medical services, we can save expenditure on rehabilitation and welfare subsidy arising from unnecessary disability. It will also reduce the anxiety and burden of the family concerned in taking care of their sick elderly members.

In the end, it is the Hong Kong community which will benefit from it. I really do not want to see our senior citizens spend the twilight of their years in poverty and illness as a result of inadequate care from the community.

Mr Deputy President, I sincerely hope that our senior citizens can live in happiness and that their counterparts from other parts of the world will look at them with envy and admiration. With these remarks, I support the motion.

DR LAM KUI-CHUN: I need to first declare my interest as Chairman of the Adult Health Promotion Centre in St James Settlement which caters specifically to health for the elderly. Having declared that, Mr Deputy President, I believe the current strategy of the Government for care of the elderly is generally sound. Much that is being said today in this Council is already known and accepted by the Government. The Government has difficulty with implementation because of the inadequate finance, inadequate manpower and lack of land. Provision of these is beyond the power of this debate. However, I believe constructive suggestions in the following areas can be made:

#### Preventive care

Preventive care is much cheaper than corrective care and in a restrictive budget, preventive care must be the new direction. Government should take in the future care of the elderly. Medicine in the second half of the 20th century separates chronological age from physiological age. This means that a person can be 65 years old but if properly maintained his systems may function like a 45-year-old. To maintain elderly people functioning like a relatively young is the cheapest, most economically sound and most rewarding aspect of care for the elderly. Sir George PICKERING, a prominent British heart specialist, concluded from his life-long experience that "A man is as old as his arteries". In keeping a person's arteries young lies the key to maintaining health and youth.

There are known diseases that cause aging (or hardening) of arteries. For Hong Kong, we already have actual experience to draw on. In 1 560 non-selected, apparently healthy subjects undergoing medical check-up in St. James' Settlement in Wan Chai, diseases causing aging of arteries were discovered for the first time in no less than 24% of subjects. All those diseases were treatable, and treatment was cheap. Follow-up re-assessment showed that in 85% of them, the patho-physiological

disturbances were adequately corrected. If these diseases were allowed to run their natural courses, the typical results would be stroke, heart attacks, dementia, blindness, and kidney failure. These are among the commonest diseases causing long-term incapacity in the elderly and are expensive to treat. All of them have been causing severe demand on our bedspace in acute hospitals, infirmaries, and care and attention homes.

I realize that Government is about to start health screening for those aged 65 years and above. I am afraid that this timing that causes our elder to miss both is too late. Heart attacks in Hong Kong, for example, has its peak incidence of 55 to 65 years of age. Bone loss in women starts before the age of 40 and accelerates after the age of 50. Screening after the age of 65 is to cook the chicken coop after the fox has entered. To produce symptomatic complications, these diseases that produce aging of blood vessels generally have been progressing for at least 20 years. And so screening has to start at the age of 45, not 65.

I have a second message on health screening for the Government. In our experience in St. James' Settlement, previously undiagnosed diseases are discovered on mass screening in no less than 51% of cases, and that does not include the 10% hepatitis B carrier state. In the treatise on primary health care, the group called by the Government considers non-selective mass screening to be wasteful. Perhaps, we should not be screening for all diseases in all subjects -- certainly we get no yield looking for gynaecological diseases in the male. But data on common diseases that can be found on mass screening are becoming available. With a total yield of 51%, some directional screening for the common chronic diseases must be very fruitful.

Apart from mass screening, I wish to mention one pleasant aspect that is left out altogether from the recent discussion between government officials and Members of this Council in the preparation of this debate. There is one inexpensive way to reduce the development of heart diseases, blood vessel diseases, infection and even cancer. Scientific data are now available to prove this benefit.

Pursuing this line ought to be more pleasant and productive than lamenting over the lack of land for infirmaries. This line of activity is aerobic exercise. Such exercise can take multiple forms, all of which consist of more than strolling in the park. Execution requires planning, but is cheap and effective. It also enables the chronologically old to stay functionally young. Scientific studies have shown that such exercises cut down major diseases by at least one-fifth. I do urge the

Government to consider initiating some programmes soon for the benefit of our elderly population.

## Curative care

I think the community agrees with the Government that the main bulk of the work in this aspect consists of providing a continuum of care for a deteriorating population. Shifting of care from institutions (where care is expensive) to community (where care is cheaper) is economically sound. I note a gross mismatch between the growing demand by an enlarging population and the restricted supply by the Government. Here, tapping of new resources is needed. I attempt a few suggestions:

(1) In community nursing, the government nurses are working at 40% above full capacity, 140% capacity. Yet each nurse is attending to no more than an average of 5.6 cases per day. And much time must have been wasted on travelling. Therefore priority extension of this service, I think, to denser populations (that is, housing estates) would save travelling time and increase service efficiency.

Manpower in non-medical home help can be augmented by enlisting the help of the younger elderlies to aid the convalescing. Experience in other countries has shown that the younger and active elderlies are the most enthusiastic in volunteering help to fellow elderlies. I stress convalescing as different from incurable. In helping convalescing subjects, improvement of the patients is visible and provides mental reward to keep the volunteers happy. It should draw plenty of volunteers because attending to the sick is a traditional Chinese virtue. As different from the figures quoted by Prof Edward CHEN and Mr Michael HO a while ago, we have ongoing survey data collected in conjunction also with the University of Hong Kong to show that 92% of our elderly population consider themselves healthy or relatively healthy and 90% of them consider themselves having good working capacity. These figures are updated to last week. With an appropriate combination of community nursing and volunteers, many more patients can be discharged home from our acute hospitals and infirmaries. For the Government, the role is to organize.

(2) In day care centres, giving appropriate additional training to paramedics (such as ambulance brigades and Civil Aid Corps) can be explored. Practical difficulties must exist, I am sure, but I believe that those who avail themselves of the training can help the nurses in simple tasks. It may take the trainees some

time to learn, but it would not be beyond them to prove themselves useful within two or three months.

(3) Communication by elderly outpatient between residence and care institutions currently requires at least one accompanying person to one patient. Some patients request ambulances. This arrangement is wasteful. As a solution, the Government can consider adapting the rehabus concept to serve the elderly. It augments efficiency from one ambulance and one attendant for one patient to one bus and one trained attendant for a large group. This saves money and manpower, and has been successfully deployed for the physically handicapped.

(4) Elderly patients receive low priorities in multiple health services such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Priorities are generally given to young patients of the productive age group. Sometimes, the elderly patient has to wait so long that their meals fall out of synchrony with their diabetes medicine, resulting in complications from low blood sugar levels. This simply can be solved by a strict appointment system at the services, co-ordinated with the rehabus scheme.

(5) I really need to point out that at present there is no provision in Government at all for cases of dementia. This aspect must be addressed.

#### Central Committee on Services for the Elderly

I wish to make a point on the choice of members for this Committee which I believe the Government has already resolved to reconvene. It is now three years since the publication of the Report of the Central Committee on Services for the Elderly. Of the nine recommendations in the Medical and Health Section, the policies implemented to date number only one, and the projects piloted total again just one. With such inertia, the Government cannot blame the public for being impatient. I wish to ask the Government to consider two points when reforming the Central Committee on elderly services.

(1) The Chairman must be a high government official with plenty of administrative power. This is now plainly indispensable in order to get things moving.

(2) The members of the Committee must be resourceful people full of vision and drive. They must be able to formulate new concepts from new input, so as to generate different adaptations to different situations for the best results. This would be

more than merely balancing the composition of the Committee.

Mr Deputy President, I do not think we need to call for a division of votes on the motion this time.

DR CONRAD LAM (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, many people have hardly any idea of what exactly "hospice service" means. The concept of hospice service is to offer terminal patients better nursing care with a view to lessening their feeling of loneliness, pain, uneasiness and fear that may come along with their incurable diseases; assist the families concerned in taking care of the patients at home; make such patients capable of living and looking after themselves at home as independently as they practicably can; enable them to go through the last part of their lives in peace and with dignity; and, if necessary, render assistance to the relatives of the deceased while they are in bereavement. The provision of hospice services is made possible through the teamwork of a small group comprising doctors, nurses, social workers, church counsellors and voluntary workers. Hospice services of various levels are now available at five subvented hospitals in Hong Kong. They are mainly funded by charity organizations such as the Community Chest and the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club. Despite the Medical Development Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Government should agree in principle to develop hospice services, the proposed introduction of such services was, however, dismissed by the Central Committee on Services for the Elderly in its 1988's report as an "insufficiently justified" case. As this committee is chaired by the Deputy Secretary for Health and Welfare with seven out of its 11 members being government officials, I have good reasons to believe that the recommendations made in that report chiefly represent the views of the Government. After having read the report time and again in search of its so-claimed "strong arguments" against the idea of introducing hospice services, I found only three points. They are all presumptive arguments of which two contain the words "may not be" while one begins with the word "if". The first two are: (1) the idea of providing domestic nursing care to patients "may not be practicable", and (2) the idea of hospice services "may not be" acceptable to the general public. The last one is: "if" hospice services are to be introduced, the Administration will have to re-allocate part of its limited resources which may otherwise be spent on the more urgently needed medical facilities.

We do accept the fact that it is absolutely impossible to satisfy various demands from all quarters with our limited resources. We are aware of the need that someone must decide on how such resources are to be allocated. We also understand that no

governments or individuals can completely avoid making mistakes. But I do hope that the Government, in setting priorities for the use of resources, should first of all free its mind of the influence of subjectivism and disallow itself to behave like a conformist who tends to move in a rut and make as little change as possible. By taking advantage of all useful opinions and proper consultations, the Government may find itself more competent to make fair and reasonable decisions. Here I would like to point out that the birth rate fell from 75 000 babies in 1988 to 67 000 babies in 1990 for the third year in a row whereas the number of deaths rose from 27 000 in 1988 to 29 000 in 1990. These figures indicate that the number of persons under the shadow of death is on the rise. Has the Administration reacted on time to flexibly reallocating our resources so as to cater for the changing needs of the community?

Whether there is a need to introduce hospice services is a matter of opinions depending on how the matter is viewed. If we try to consider it from the viewpoint of an old and poor patient who is awaiting his doom rather than that of a Legislative Councillor or high ranking official who is free to make casual remarks in this Chamber, we may perhaps be able to appreciate more the meaning and the need of hospice care. Being an inevitable end of life, death itself is nothing to be feared. I have heard of no few cases in which the patients, who were sick of their sufferings, expressed their wish to die earlier. Although in reality some people are willing to reduce themselves into tail-wagging dogs or betray their own dignity in front of power and money, I have full conviction that it is everyone's wish to be able to leave this world with dignity at his last hour. That is where the Chinese saying comes in which reminds people to be mindful of the last few years of their lives.

Owing to our different attitudes towards various age groups, the normal course of an average life may be described as a process which "begins magnificently and finishes badly" or a story of "how the bully young becomes the bullied old." A baby receives good prenatal care when it is still in its mother's womb and continues to be taken good care of by paediatricians and maternal and child health centres after birth. Free education is also provided when it grows up. On the contrary, the services provided for the elderly are grossly insufficient. The number of hospital beds and specialists in the geriatric wards are fewer than those in the paediatric wards. Parents are always willing to do anything their children want when they sulk and cry. But in the case where old people utter a few words more, people will regard them as long-winded or being out of their mind. Surely the money spent by the Government on the first 20 years of the life of a citizen is much more than the amount spent on his last 20 years. What then should be considered as proper allocation of



resources is, however, a subject that requires to be determined by studies and reviews. The Governor, soon after taking up his post, has repeatedly stressed his wish to improve the general quality of life and allocate a proper and fair share of resources for upgrading the quality of life of the elderly so that they could live a happy life in their twilight years. The Honourable Martin LEE made some personal remarks in his speech a while ago. I sincerely hope that Mr LEE will not only be given due privilege when he gets old but will also enjoy the first class hospice service at the suitable time when his life is due. Good will be rewarded with good. I do hope that the Hong Kong Government will try its best in carrying out its "caretaker" duty so that Hong Kong, as a colony, will have a happy ending in 1997.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks, I hope the Government will play an active role in promoting hospice services and wish all my fellow Members as well as the Hong Kong Government all the best in their twilight years. (Laughter)

MR LAU CHIN-SHEK (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, many of my honourable colleagues have already given their views on the different aspects of elderly services. I shall now focus my speech on old people's housing problems.

Housing means a great deal to the elderly. A house not only provides a shelter but also helps satisfy physical, psychological and social needs. Clothing, food, accommodation, transport, social life and self-realization are the basic needs and rights of every man. But more is needed for the old people. These include a sense of security, respect, independence, stable income, sound health and a decent place to live. Now, let us see how the Government is doing in the provision of accommodation for the elderly.

As a result of the development towards nuclear families, the number of old people living singly and two-member families has increased significantly. Let us take a look first at the Housing Authority's policy on "small families". There was not any policy concerning the allocation of public housing for one or two-member families before 1984. It was only after there were statistics forecasting a drastic increase in the number of one to two-member families between 1983 and 1993 that the Housing Department, prompted by the imminence of the problem, introduced in July 1984 a separate waiting list for one or two-member families. In the same year, the Housing Authority endorsed the policy to build new housing units for one or two-member families but only at 7% of the total production. The Housing Authority also proposed

that Marks III and IV blocks and the small units of former low-cost housing blocks should be converted to accommodate one and two-member families.

The aging of the population and urban renewal projects in recent years have exacerbated the problem of housing the elderly. Statistics revealed that from 1988-89 to 1990-91, the total demand for single-person and two-person rental flats was 23 700 units. However, the number of completed new units in that period was only 9 600. There is a shortfall of 14 000 units. Of all the single-person or two-person households, 58% or 1 667 households are old people. As for the old people affected by redevelopment programmes, they require a total of 5 240 new flats in the urban area, but the supply is only 1 667 units. There is a shortfall of 3 583 units.

In July this year, the Housing Authority published a paper on "The supply and demand of small public housing units for the next six years", and suggested five possible ways to solve the problem:

1. alter the combination of flats of harmony blocks by increasing the proportion of small self-contained flats;
2. convert harmony flats and casually vacated flat;
3. provide one-person flats in non-residential blocks such as purpose-built carpark or welfare office blocks;
4. renovate and re-use flats in redevelopment areas not to be cleared within five years;
5. identify possible ways to increase the number of vacancies made available by home purchasing or voluntary termination of the lease by occupants, and relax the allocation standard from a minimum of 19 sq m to 20-24 sq m

While these suggestions may have been made in good faith, they are in many respects unfair and inhumane to the old people. I would try to look at them from four different angles:

1. Rehousing far away from the neighbourhood: Old people are less mobile than young people. Most of them have lived in the old districts for more than 20

years. They know the place well and have developed a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood. They have established a stable social circle and a support network. They will find it very difficult to adapt to a new environment when rehoused to another district or new towns. I am therefore opposed to the suggestions in the "Report of the Central Committee on Services for the Elderly" that old people should be persuaded to move to new towns.

2. Rehousing to old districts: Due to the inadequacy of new units, elderly single persons or couples are usually rehoused to old districts, and are thus denied their rights to an improved living environment. However, old districts are not a good place to live for the elderly because the facilities there are usually either time-worn or inadequate. Worse still, some better-off old people do spend quite some money on refurbishing their flats, but are required to move out again in a few years time to make way for renewal programmes. The Administration is kicking these old people around like "human balls". This is extremely inhumane because moving house is a heavy burden for the old people, both financially and physically. Cases in which old people were required to move house three to four times bring psychological pressure.

3. Shared-accommodation: In order to save resources, the Housing Department has been encouraging single old persons to share accommodation. However, these old people are basically strangers to each other. Different living habits and personality clashes have often resulted in strained relationship or even quarrels and fights. In fact, the idea of shared accommodation violates personal privacy and is unwelcomed by most elderly people. It can be seen that the Housing Department's wishful thinking has caused a great deal of inconvenience, frustration, and discontent among these old people.

4. Sheltered housing for the elderly: To ease the shortage of public housing units, the Housing Department has in recent years introduced "non-standard blocks" and "sheltered housing for the elderly" to accommodate elderly single persons and couples. However, according to surveys conducted by the Society for Community Organization, the introduction of "sheltered housing for the elderly" can neither solve the problem of shared accommodation, nor achieve the objective of promoting "mutual care" or "community care". When old people live together, they are confined to a limited social circle. We can imagine how great the psychological pressure will be when they keep on witnessing fellow tenants falling ill or dying one after another. I learn that the Housing Authority has proposed to convert the 22 blocks of Tung Tau Estate originally planned to be demolished for redevelopment in three years' time

into this kind of sheltered housing. Such a proposal should no doubt be strongly rejected.

Apart from public housing, the situation in private buildings is even worse. Many people in the lower income group are not eligible for public housing, neither can they afford the high rent of private buildings. These people are living in fibre-board-partitioned cubicles, cages or bedspace apartments which are usually over-crowded, lacking in facilities and poor in hygiene conditions.

It is estimated that over 1 million people in Hong Kong are now living in sub-standard accommodation, and at least 50 000 of them are elderly people. While adhering to its policy of non-interventionism, the Government has long neglected the housing needs of these people.

According to the Housing Department's statistics, there were a total of 20 383 singleton applicants on the waiting list as at 31 January 1989. And since the income limit is very severe while the waiting period is too long, it is estimated that the real demand far exceeds this figure.

The problem is becoming more acute in recent years as the Government, the Land Development Corporation and private developers have been acquiring and demolishing private buildings to make way for urban renewal. The Government should no longer be allowed to turn a blind eye to the demands of the displaced tenants, the elderly in particular, for public housing.

Here, I would like to show Honourable Members two photographs depicting the living condition of old people in bed-space apartments, and appeal to honourable colleagues to face the matter squarely.

These people are caged lodgers. The cages are where they sleep, read, work and keep their belongings. In fact, the cage is their home. Here we see that caged men live in cages of only 2.2 sq m, including corridors and kitchens. (With respect, they are hardly kitchens or corridors; they look more like aisles where caged men move about and perform the function of cooking.)

All in all, the crux of the problem lies in the fact that the Housing Authority's housing policy for one to two-person households is full of injustices. It has failed to address the huge demand for single-person and two-person flats and

make allocation accordingly. Furthermore, the cost-benefit led housing policy has greatly limited the production of small units, which are of low market value. Given the annual production target of single-person and two-person units being only 7% of the total production, how can we possibly satisfy the housing needs of the old people? The Housing Authority has devised various means to help ease demand, such as moving old people into old blocks, or out of urban districts, and introducing shared-accommodation and sheltered housing for the elderly. However, they have overlooked the practical problems experienced by the old people. We should bear in mind that it is far more difficult for old people to adapt to strange environment and establish new personal relationship. The above arrangements will take elderly people away from their friends and relatives with no one to look after them. They are left disorientated. They clash with room-mates and are under psychological stress. It is therefore imperative that the Housing Authority should review its policy on the building and allocation of single-person and two-person flats and increase production to meet demand.

Lastly, I would like to talk briefly about the co-ordination of services for the elderly. I was greatly frustrated by the report of the Central Committee on Services for the Elderly. I found from the report that our services for the elderly are provided by different government departments, each according to their own policies. The services provided are thus piecemeal, without any co-ordination whatsoever. The old people are required to approach different departments should they need different services. For instance, public assistance and public housing are dealt with by two separate departments. How then can we expect these old people who are usually of a low education level (or even illiterate) and with poor adaptability to make use of these services effectively?

The more serious problem is that as individual government departments only deal with one aspect of elderly services, they can use this as the excuse for not addressing the problem comprehensively. May I quote an example. During discussions on the White Paper on Social Welfare into the 1990's and Beyond, Government officials had declined to examine the issue of retirement benefits under the pretext that the issue fell outside their jurisdiction. The Long Term Housing Policy of the Housing Authority proposed a change from welfare accommodation to home ownership. This has obviously overlooked the housing need of elderly people and aggravated the problem. (I will comment on the overall housing policy in next Wednesday's debate on "Sale of Public Housing Flats".)

I think we have to put ourselves in the position of these deserted elderly people when examining the problem.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks, I support the motion, and express my strong dissatisfaction about the way the Government and the Housing Authority have dealt with the issue of housing for elderly.

MISS EMILY LAU (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, 15 years ago the Government indicated that it would formulate a policy for the care of the elderly to be known in English as "Care in the Community" and in Chinese as . If one is to describe it in somewhat glowing terms, one would say the policy is meant to enable elderly people, through the grant of a small measure of government subsidy, to live with their family members or live on their own in public housing units without having to enter homes for the aged or care and attention homes. But from what I have learnt from social workers who are in close contact with elderly people (and indeed from colleagues who spoke before me this afternoon), there is a feeling among them that this "care in the community" concept imports a substantial irony. They feel that it should have been translated as (To fend for oneself). It is because notwithstanding care services provided by the Government such services are grossly insufficient in most areas. Speakers before me have spoken on areas of medical, welfare and housing facilities for the elderly and I will not repeat them. I very much agree with what Mrs Elsie TU has said in her speech. Mrs TU came to Hong Kong in 1951 when I was not yet born. Now I feel honoured to be working with her together in this Council in the service of the people of Hong Kong. Mrs TU has, during the tens of years she has been here, done a lot for the good of the elderly and young people of Hong Kong.

Mr Deputy President, the point that I would like to make today is how the Government should go about formulating and co-ordinating a new policy to solve the problem relating to elderly people. As many of my colleagues here have observed, the ageing of the population is a fact of life; by the end of the present century there will be close to one million people over the age of 60 in the territory. Therefore we must face and tackle this problem. The Hong Kong Government might have to draw inspiration from Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev before it could arrive at a new thinking or view as regards the problem of elderly people. Many Hong Kong people -- not just the Government -- are apt to feel, upon the very mention of elderly people, that they are a burden needing medical attention, welfare services and housing.

But we can look at it from a positive angle. Some of my colleagues have said that many elderly and retired people still possess working ability. In this regard I wonder if the Secretary for Education and Manpower can tell us whether the Education Department, as the authority for the provision of education, also provides education for elderly people. There is continuing education provided for adults but could this be beefed up to teach elderly people to continue to work? In this connexion the Labour Department will have an even more important role to play because it helps in job placement and counselling. Has the Labour Department ever considered helping find jobs for retired people? As a matter of fact the present situation highlights a supreme irony. Hong Kong is now suffering from a labour shortage; yet there are many retired people over 50 or 60 among us who are idling away their time. Do we have a policy to help them rejoin the work force? By and large, I welcome the Government's move to reorganize the Central Committee on Services for the Elderly but I hope that there will be more participation from various other departments -- not only those departments which look after welfare, medical services and housing -- such as the Education Department and the Labour Department I mentioned a moment ago and perhaps the Police Force as well. Why have I mentioned the Police Force? It is because when elderly people get into trouble the first to come to them will be the police. When elderly people are deserted, abused or are loitering in the streets, how will the police deal with them? Many social workers have told me that the police are apt to consider this more of a domestic matter; they will escort the elderly person home; it has never occurred to the police that other departments or individuals might be in a position to help.

Another point I would like to make relates to transport. (But unfortunately the Secretary for Transport is at the present moment not in this Chamber.) Some of my colleagues have made a similar point a while ago. We are not looking at this from a non-constructive angle. Of course, I am in favour of subsidizing them. But have we considered whether public conveyances are ever designed with the service of the elderly in mind? The Mass Transit Railway is a case in point. Some elderly people, not to mention disabled people, have told me that they are scared of the fast escalators. As regards omnibuses, the steps of the access door are too steep and how often will bus drivers ever wait until elderly passengers are safely seated before driving off? We hope that the Government will take the lead in addressing the problem of elderly people, and positively into the bargain! This will bring about a change in policy concepts and the Central Committee on Services for the Elderly will then set about formulating new policies. I hope also that there will be adequate co-ordination among the six or seven departments that I earlier mentioned so that each

will know which department to do what and do it well. Therefore I disagree with Dr LAM Kui-chun who has argued that the Government's strategy is correct; I find the strategy to be wrong. I hope that there will be a more positive attitude in dealing with the matter. Today I am happy to hear the many speakers in this Chamber, including those from the business and other sectors, supporting the move by the Government to improve services for the elderly. As a matter of fact, it is all too easy to speak in high-sounding terms, which I believe my colleagues are not doing. I believe they are sincerely and earnestly hoping that the Government will set about improving services for the elderly as soon as possible. I further hope that when the Government comes before this Council for support of its policies and its requests for funds Members of this Council will likewise be courageous enough to give their utmost support.

With these remarks, I support the motion.

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, my speech is going to be quite short because many of my colleagues have already said what I want to say. This is the disadvantage of being placed low down in the order of speaking.

Many speakers before me have already mentioned the aspects of "clothing, food, housing and travelling". I am going to focus on "housing". I do not know why my observations in this regard are similar to what Mr LAU Chin-shek has said. I am a directly elected Councillor from Kwun Tong District. I originally wanted to dwell at length on the subject of public housing for single person, two persons and old people but since Mr LAU has already discussed this topic, I am not going to repeat it here.

On transport, some Councillors have suggested striving for a transport concessionary fare scheme for the elderly. Many organizations have conducted surveys and signature campaigns on this. I also have received many letters on this subject and have also reflected this to OMELCO urging for preferential treatment to be accorded to elderly people by public transport companies. I believe that the Legislative Council already discussed this. I would like to pose a question. The present student travelling allowances are subsidized by the Government; that is to say, directly borne by the Government. Concessionary fares are also accorded to children using public transport. These are not borne by the Government but rather are shared and borne by other passengers. Nobody asks whether other passengers are



willing or not. Have the public transport companies ever consulted us? Why are these concessionary fares not accorded to the elderly? Public transport companies have given a reply to the Government and the Legislative Council to the effect that they would not want other passengers to share such expenses because it would be unfair. I do not understand why for all these years, children's fares can be shared by other passengers but not the elderly people's. We are not asking for government funding nor are we asking the public transport companies to run up a loss by subsidizing the elderly. I do not know whether the Secretary for Transport and the Secretary for Health and Welfare have studied the matter, that is, why should equal treatment not be given to the elderly people when such concessionary fares are available to children?

Now I would like to turn to another subject, namely, community care. Many social welfare professionals on old people and rehabilitative services have stated that community care has been implemented in the United Kingdom for several decades. The Government's policy is to keep the elderly people within the community. The White Paper on Social Welfare has clearly indicated that the old people should be kept within the community where they can develop their potentials and can find it easier to adapt. Hence, the new towns are not welcome to the elderly people. This has led to anxieties and difficulties whenever elderly people are resettled from old housing estates and old districts. By providing support service, community care has enabled the old people to live independently in their own homes or within their original community. We do not want every elderly person to live in a home for the aged or a care and attention home. Once in a hospital or in a home for the aged, an elderly person becomes more frail and more "disabled" because institutionalization will make them less independent. Like other countries, the main responsibility of taking care of the old is not with the Hong Kong Government but rather with their relatives, friends or neighbours. But for those who are devoid of any support from their relatives and friends, the Government should look after them. Although many old people have their own "support network", the Government should not ignore them but should help consolidate such "support network" and not just engage in empty talk of "community care". The Government should provide training and assist the family members to take care of their old.

Concurrently, community services provided by non-government organizations should be strengthened. I would cite one example. There are about several hundred home helpers and personal care workers in Hong Kong. Their work is quite meaningful but can be said to be of a rather "obnoxious" nature. They have to take care of the

daily living of the old, accompany them to visit the doctor and to bathe them. Recently, they have presented a petition to the Government because though the Government has promised them a uniform salary scale, the promise however has not as yet been fulfilled because of financial stringency. They are most dissatisfied and many leave their jobs and their morale is low. These workers help the old stay in their own homes and reduce their further reliance on government and community resources. From the economic point of view, this is good. I do not want to dwell on economics but one can all see the gravity of the matter. If the Government delays action, more home helpers would leave their jobs and the waiting list of elderly people awaiting such services would become longer. This would not be of any benefit to anybody. What the home helpers have demanded is that they should have one extra salary point, which is very reasonable. Some Councillors have wondered why their demands are so conservative? It is most unfortunate that even such conservative demands have not been met by the Government. I would like to take this opportunity to vehemently urge the Government to quickly solve this salary issue of the home helpers and the personal care workers. The money involved is not much and the Government should try to retain these helpers. The United Kingdom Government has just published a White Paper on Community Care in the 1990s, which is the one I now have before me. It illustrates the function of community care and how the United Kingdom Government would increase expenditure in this area. I would like the Government and the Secretary for Health and Welfare to consider this Paper in detail and make a full review. We should not just discuss community care in empty words but should set up a committee to review the needs of the old. We should make proposals as to how to improve community care for the elderly and what specific services should be provided. I feel that this should not be delayed any longer and I hereby make the above proposals.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks I support the motion moved by Dr LEONG Che-hung.

MR MAN SAI-CHEONG (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, all these years the Hong Kong Government has never had a comprehensive and co-ordinated policy on the elderly. Care for the elderly is only one of the many services provided by the Social Welfare Department. Its priority is very low and the provisions minimal. The overall spectrum of services for the elderly has little to commend itself. A Central Committee on the Elderly was established a few years ago, but it only discussed broad issues relating to the elderly; it never implemented any of the substantive proposals

put forward which have since fallen into oblivion.

In actual fact, the services for the elderly have always been "piecemeal". There is no authoritative committee to co-ordinate the work of different policy branches in formulating a comprehensive policy for the elderly. Nor is there any committee to co-ordinate efforts by different departments in the provision of medical, housing, transport, educational and recreational services for the aged people. But in other places such as Australia the government there has established a high level policy committee to formulate policies and set orientations to be co-ordinated and implemented by the relevant functional department. Many developed countries are also facing the problem of an ageing population. They have accordingly formulated a comprehensive policy on the elderly and established a central policy committee to meet objective needs.

At present, there are about 483 000 elderly people aged 65 or above. In 10 years' time, the elderly population will have increased to over 700 000. If the Government is to ignore this social phenomenon, it will be a great misfortune to the whole community because social problems caused by the ageing of the population will be aggravated. The medical and social commitments by the Government will surge drastically. Currently the Government has left the policy for the elderly in the hands of the Social Welfare Department. The department has little resources and it has to take care of a wide range of services. I totally agree with what my colleagues have suggested today that we should learn from experience overseas, namely, that a central committee on policies for the elderly should be set up forthwith. A committee consisting of social workers, medical professionals and other experts from various disciplines together with representatives from the relevant policy branches should be formed to study future policies for the elderly. Consideration should be given to allocating more resources to tackle the problem of an ageing population.

We have now a Commissioner for Rehabilitation. When are we going to have a Commissioner for the Elderly? This Commissioner for the Elderly can head an inter-departmental and inter-branch central committee. We have talked about this for too long. It is high time for action and a power organ should be established.

According to information, some have argued that Hong Kong is not a welfare state. In a free capitalist society, wealth is to be obtained by competition and personal ability. But we should not forget that these old people have made their contribution to society and have provided labour for our economic development. Now they can only

get very little by way of requital in their old age. Their old age allowance is only \$393 per month. They can hardly survive on this. They had no retirement benefits and even though they have now lost their working ability, they still have to work for their living. In fact, elderly people aged 65 or above are the poorest within the community. 70% of those who apply for public assistance are old people. They are often at loggerheads with their families due to financial problem. This has indirectly led to the increase in expenditure on services for old people. We cannot say that by reducing assistance to the elderly, government expenditure will be reduced. Expenditure on social services will be increased because of financial difficulties of the old people. Although the Executive Council has endorsed a compulsory retirement protection scheme in principle, a contributory retirement protection scheme cannot fully help those who are now aged 65 or above. Hence, in considering retirement protection schemes, we should also pay heed to the question of the old age allowance.

I would now like to turn to the recreational needs of the aged. This is particularly serious with the old residents in Eastern District. Generally speaking, the Government has only shown concern in the services for the elderly such as old age allowance and home for the aged. The Government has had little regard for the elderly's recreational needs. There are over 30 000 old people living in Wan Chai but there are only three homes for the aged. Activities for the elderly people are scarce and can never meet demand. Old people are also human beings. Recreational activities would not only make them happier but would also make their living more meaningful. Those who are not too old can enjoy happier lives by participating in recreational and educational activities. At the same time, they can contribute to society. It is unfortunate that the ratio of homes for the aged as against the number of old people is too low and that many old people do not have even a place to sit down and chat with one another. If more spaces can be provided, it is believed that the recreational activities for the elderly will be further developed. Their interpersonal relationship will be improved and they will have fewer illnesses. Medical expenses and the pressure on hospitals will be reduced. In fact, for some recreational activities, there is no need for huge outlays or for them to be organized by social workers.

For those who are not too senile, they can still demonstrate their usefulness and contribute to society if they can participate in activities. I urge the Government to allocate some places from those youth centres with low utility rate during the day for organization of activities for the elderly. This can reduce

expenditure and fully utilize resources. But the transport expenses for these activities cannot be avoided. If the Government cannot subsidize the transport expenses of the elderly because of lack of funds, some public transport companies such as the Mass Transit Railway, Kowloon-Canton Railway should give concessions to old people and let them pay half fare so as to encourage them to move about to participate in more recreational and community activities. Perhaps the two companies might even earn more because the travelling times of old people are flexible and they would always travel during non-busy hours. In recreational activities, the Urban Council has made some efforts and there is always half fare for old people for some cultural activities. But we need more from different sectors and circles to respond and complement one another's efforts so that old people can have a richer and more meaningful living.

Lastly, I would like to bring up the matter of the old residents in the Eastern District. In places like Chai Wan, Shau Kei Wan and Wan Chai, the ageing of the population is getting more serious day by day. The redevelopment of Wan Chai has led to many problems. Who is going to assist those aged people in moving out of their present accommodation? Who can help those aged people to demand for reasonable compensation? There are not enough outreach social workers in Wan Chai to help those aged people who are being affected by the redevelopment. Redevelopment schemes invariably affect old people. Some old people might not know enough about their own rights and hence they have always been exploited. Hence, outreach social services such as assistance provided by community development workers are most urgently needed. There are many problems in those districts with an ageing population. Outreach services such as home care are particularly in short supply. This is most serious in Wan Chai. There are many private domestic premises and the scope of outreach social services provided is not wide enough. In order to solve this problem, apart from increasing the number of social workers, the Government should give some simple training and a sufficient amount of allowance to those who are not too old so that they can look after those elderly people in their neighbourhood who cannot take care of themselves. Many people who have reached their retirement age are still very healthy and they are willing to contribute to society. The Government should let them develop their potentials and let them have some training so that they can lead more meaningful lives and earn some allowances. At present, the Environmental Protection Department and those who are concerned with the environment are very active in protecting the environment. There is now a "green power". The old can organize themselves into a "grey power" or "grey hair power", like the "grey panther" in foreign countries. They can promote the spirit of respect for the old in their community

and arouse the concern of society in the aged. They should urge others in recognizing that they are entitled to be requited by the community. The Government should not ignore the power of the grey-haired.

With these remarks, I support the motion.

MR NG MING-YUM (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, before I come to the motion proper, I would like to pay tribute to our senior, the Honourable Mrs Elsie TU. Mrs TU has been my idol for many years, and her speech just now touched me deeply.

Today's topic relates to elderly folks of new towns who are neglected on two fronts. Many of my colleagues pointed out just now how elderly people in our community were neglected by the Government. Indeed this is a fact known to everyone. However, not all are aware that the number of elderly people neglected on two fronts is as large as tens of thousands. These people are the ones who have moved from the urban area to new towns or rural areas, in particular Tuen Mun and Yuen Long in the western part of the New Territories.

Most of the elderly people at present living in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long moved in during the past 10 years or so. In addition to problems faced by old people in old urban areas, they are confronted with other difficulties. First comes the question of adaptability. Old people of new towns find it very difficult to adapt to the new environment. Hindered by their age and relatively limited mobility, they cannot adapt to the use of facilities provided in various public housing estates of new towns as easily as the younger generation. To give a simple example, one of the public housing blocks I serve is recessed from the main estate and its link with the outside used to be a pedestrian footbridge. Old people with difficulty in moving about were as a result virtually stranded in or around that block. The problem was only solved when some of the old people organized themselves and strove for the addition of a zebra crossing near the footbridge. This happened when Mr Ricky FUNG was the District Officer of Tuen Mun. I think he may still have some recollection of that episode. This simple example reflects how pretty designs done behind closed doors can be miles apart from real needs. Many old people from new towns and rural districts have complained that they are unable to adapt to the public transport facilities within their districts. Most old people are from the lower classes and many of them rely on public assistance for their living. They find it difficult to go and visit friends in nearby estates whenever they feel like doing. Ever since the light rail transit

system began its franchised operation in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, the Government has deprived them of the chance of riding in buses that they were accustomed to. Old people do not know how to use the light rail. "Zoning", "open fare" systems and the like are of course beyond the comprehension of illiterate old people; even those who can read have no confidence in using them. There is no one from the light rail transit system to guide people in buying tickets; yet those who have bought wrong tickets or taken trains in a wrong direction run the risk of being fined hundreds of dollars or even ending up before the court. How then would old people dare to ride on light rail trains? Frankly, even Members of this Council and high officials blessed with great wisdom have to take some time to learn the complicated ticket system, journey length calculation and special zoning arrangements if they are asked to ride light rail trains in Tuen Mun or Yuen Long. It is indeed a pitiable lot for old folks to try to do so! The Government would not let them take buses; they do not know how to utilize light rail trains and, to them, taking taxis is far too expensive a travelling mode. As a result, old people have to economize and save up enough before venturing outside to other estates for chats with friends. Another problem is that they are dissociated from their friends and relatives in old urban areas. Old people get to feel lonely more easily than young ones. To most old people, moving to new towns after being around friends and relatives for tens of years is like segregation. One elderly person has told me that moving to Tuen Mun "cuts him off from all his relatives". It may be an exaggeration, but it fully reflects how the aged feel. Each time they go to another district to visit friends, it is like making a trip. They have to be prepared to pay lofty transport fares, to pack up the night before, to start early in the morning, and to fit in visits to several friends and relatives. It will be evening when they arrive back at home in the new town.

Mr Deputy President, old people of new towns need special care. In reality, there is no reason for the Government not to know of it. Maybe the Government is turning a blind eye and a deaf ear too. Centres for old people, hostels and related services provided by the Government in new towns are not even up to the standards set by the Government itself, let alone providing special care. Let me give another example. The Yuen Long Estate of the new town in Yuen Long is a tip-top housing estate and over one-fifth of its population is old people. These old people have repeatedly called for a centre that meets standards, but so far, not one mini old people centre that conforms to standards has been completed.

Mr Deputy President, I am not an expert on old people's problems. I have learned of the problems facing old people in new towns through personal observation,

interviews with many experienced workers engaged in services for the aged, especially contacts with the Society for the Promotion of Old People's Rights and its chairman the Honourable WONG Wai-yin. I would like here to extend my thanks to the Society and Mr WONG for having supplied so much useful information.

Mr Deputy President, as we pride ourselves on the economic success and material affluence of Hong Kong, I intensely hope that we can at the same time build a caring, loving society, in particular towards the old people of the new towns and rural areas. They are in grave need of positive, phased treatment by the Government as well as special care. What they need is more than an increase in facilities as highlighted. More importantly, they need services tailored to cater for their special needs, to assist them to adapt to the surroundings of new towns, to rebuild their community network in new towns and to enable them to make better use of community facilities and resources and so on.

With these remarks, Mr Deputy President, I support the motion.

MR JAMES TO (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, an idea comes to mind all of a sudden and it is to compile the speech by the Honourable LEONG Che-hung in moving his motion and the speeches of other colleagues who spoke to his motion into a volume for publication. I am sure it will constitute a Green Paper or a White Paper on policies on the elderly.

Many of my colleagues have already discussed a diverse range of matters; so I propose to concentrate on preferential services for the aged including transport services, medical services, cultural and recreational activities and so on.

7.07 pm

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I am sorry, Mr TO. I think my attention has been called to the fact that a quorum is not present. Under Standing Orders, I am to direct that Members return to the Chamber to provide a quorum. The Council is accordingly suspended for the time being.

7.11 pm



DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Council will now resume.

MR JAMES TO (in Cantonese): To provide preferential services or even free services for the aged is not because old people in general have little means or that they need community care; it is a token of thanks and a form of requital for their past years of contribution to building Hong Kong; it adds a human touch to the present-day society of Hong Kong. In fact, it is a kind of civic education to teach the public the importance of respect for the elderly. On transport, I hope the Government will implement a full-scale preferential scheme for old people so that they may enjoy certain public facilities on half fare or for free. The cost of implementation of such a scheme will not necessarily have to be borne by the Government; public transport companies can uphold the ethic or respect for the elderly and shoulder part of the cost. In fact, some public transport companies or operators such as the KCR, Citibus and some maxicabs are offering preferential services for the elderly on their own initiative. The Government can include the provision of preferential services for the elderly as a condition for renewal of franchise or grant of new routes to large public transport companies. As for encouraging old people to use public transport during non-busy hours, as pointed out by the Honourable LAU Chin-shek, it will bring in good income as well as improve the utilization of resources. In fact, implementation of the preferential scheme is not entirely a one-way street for such companies. To say the least, it helps build a good public image. I am sure various large public transport companies spend handsomely on publicity and improvement of their public image. From the TV ads we have seen, these companies are keen to project an image of commitment together with a positive attitude to serve. Implementation of the preferential scheme for the elderly can in fact be seen as a publicity tactic. Perhaps it can be said that this excels other publicity tactics in that it goes right to the heart of the general public and brings home the message of long-term social commitment. We need not fear any abuse of such scheme either. The mobility of old people is in fact not high. They go out mostly to satisfy their basic needs such as visiting friends. Moreover, even if more old people should use the transport services after implementation of the preferential scheme, it would not necessarily be an abuse. We should be happy to know that old people are willing to enter society and participate in activities.

With regard to medical services, old people form one of the target groups. At present, old people enjoy very limited preferential medical services, and what little

they enjoy have been offered voluntarily at the invitation of district boards. At least, I can say there is no scheme for remission of charges for old people at government out-patient clinics and hospitals. With the Hospital Authority coming into operation, charges for medical services will in future be pegged to costs. I do not agree with such a charging method. To implement such a system on old people will not work. The Government must first of all implement fee remission or a preferential discount arrangement and thereafter encourage community organizations, district boards and so forth to call upon clinics in their respective districts to respond to and participate in this scheme.

Apart from general medical services, there should be remission of charges for dental health care and therapy too. The Government can assist non-profit-making dental clinics to provide services by reimbursing such clinics. Prevention is better than cure. It is imperative for the Government to provide dental therapeutic services to old people just as those enjoyed by school children and to teach old people about oral health. While dental therapeutic service is a preventive service, the average old people need remedial dental service too. Since the technical cost of such a service is not high, the Government should not begrudge the old people such service for just a small expenditure. Old people with healthy teeth should be given this extra service. In a Legislative Council adjournment debate in 1986, the then Secretary for Health and Welfare said that such services would involve a scheme of huge expenditure. Thereafter, the idea has sunk into oblivion. I hope the Government will reconsider proposals in this regard.

Lastly, we should be concerned about the mental health of old people. According to them an opportunity to take part in cultural and recreational activities is a good way of caring for their mental health. Offering old people half-price tickets for cultural and recreational activities will certainly attract and encourage more participation. Most of the activities organized by the Urban Council at present are offered to old people at concessionary prices. The Government can also encourage other groups to participate in the preferential scheme by, for example, granting rental discounts in the leasing of sites or venues from the Urban Council or other organizations.

As regards shopping by old people, the Government can take reference from the student discount scheme run by the Federation of Students. Since students are able to have shopping discounts, the Government can encourage commercial organizations to offer the same to old people. At present, some banks and companies are offering

similar preferential discounts to attract customers. Old people have been living in Hong Kong for many years. They deserve some preferential treatment.

As regards housing, I support the Honourable LAU Chin-shek's views on the provision of accommodation for single-person and two-person families. In districts of West Kowloon such as Sham Shui Po, the ratio of old people in the population is particularly high. In districts of Yau Ma Tei and Tsim Sha Tsui and Mong Kok, some of the old people I contacted thought that if they do not apply for public housing, they can continue to live in old tenement buildings. In fact, many old buildings will be pulled down, rebuilt or taken over by the Land Development Corporation. When that happens, these old people's dreams will be broken and they will find themselves in dire straits. Housing for old people is therefore a problem that calls for urgent resolution.

With these remarks, I support the motion. Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

DR YEUNG SUM (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, may I first thank you for inviting Members who are taking a break to return to this Chamber to listen to the speech of the last speaker of today's debate. My speech will mainly focus on the care for the elderly. It is indisputable that our population is ageing. According to the 1991 Census, among our total population of 5.52 million there are 482 000 plus people aged 65 and above, representing a proportion of 8.7%. This figure was 6.6% 10 years ago and 7.6% five years ago. The life expectancy of our male population is expected to increase from 67.8 in 1971 to 76.7 in 2001 and that of our female population within the same period from 75.3 to 82.4.

On the other hand, our birth rate has gradually decreased and the size of the family has also diminished from 4.5 persons per household in 1971 to 3.4 persons last year. It is predicted that by the year 2000 this figure will further decrease to three persons. It can be seen from the above statistics that with increased life expectancy, ageing of the population and the decrease in size of the household, the people that can take care of the elderly in a family will decrease as well.

This trend manifests itself in the care of the elderly. Since the seventies, the Government has gradually become concerned about the welfare of the elderly. A "community care" policy was introduced in which a variety of local community services are made available to the old people in a district so that the old people can receive proper care within the district. However, on the basis of my study of the care for

the elderly, "community care" exists in form only and it is in fact grossly inadequate. For instance in 1989-90 the shortfall in care and attention homes for the elderly reached 60% while the shortfall of day care centres for the elderly stood at 58.3%. As there is a lack of retirement protection for the elderly, many retired old people have to work until the day they die.

"Community care" is good in principle as a policy on the service of the elderly but it cannot be fully implemented because of the backward state of our welfare system. Community care for the elderly is largely the responsibility of the family. The majority of the families in Hong Kong attach great importance to the tradition of care for the elderly. Generally speaking the idea of "filial piety" still prevails. Chinese families in Hong Kong are playing an important role in the care for the elderly. On the whole our families have attended to the emotional, financial, social and physical needs of our old people.

It is not easy to provide care in a family. As mentioned above, with the increase in life expectancy, reduction in size of the family and increased employment rate of women, there is a problem of caring for the elderly by other family members. There will soon be a day when the head of a household has to support several old people, namely his parents or in-laws. As there is no contributory retirement protection scheme in Hong Kong, most of the retired people have to face financial problem. Quite often this is the source of friction between the elderly and his family and is also the main reason why so many old people are abused by their families.

Families in Hong Kong are subject to immense pressure in caring for the elderly. Findings of a study indicate that the pressure comes mainly from four sources:

(1) psychological

Under the influence of our social mores, many people will like to take care of their elderly family members. But limited means prevent them from fulfilling this obligation despite the good will. This is mainly because provision of social welfare service is inadequate. As a result, these people are under great pressure psychologically.

(2) financial

Many people have to give up their jobs or do part-time work in order to take

care of the elderly members of the family.

(3) physical

For the infirm who have been suffering from chronic disease, every aspect of their lives has to be taken care of by the family members which is in fact quite a heavy burden to them physically.

(4) leisure

Many people basically have no time to take part in leisure activities because they have to look after their elderly family members who are suffering from chronic illness.

On the other hand, the study shows that home help may also be a form of service for the elderly. It may alleviate the pressure other members of the family are experiencing in taking care of the old. Family members may also entrust the custody of their elderly members to care and attention homes on a temporary basis so that they can take a break before taking them back. This can on the one hand alleviate the pressure experienced by the family and on the other be good evidence that, with the provision of services for the elderly, elderly people may not need to be sent to the homes of the aged at too early a time.

Mr Deputy President, I wish to point out that to further strengthen the service for the elderly will not lessen the care for the elderly in a family. It will only serve to alleviate the pressure of the family in caring for them and to encourage family members to play a role in it. To maintain the care for the elderly in a family, the Government should further develop -- and I stress "further develop" not the other way round -- welfare services for the elderly and compel the family to take up the responsibility of caring for the old. I have done a study of the relationship between family care, social services and sense of satisfaction in life in respect of the old people and found that old people derive more satisfaction in a caring family than service for the elderly. I also wish to point out that a further development of service for the elderly can enhance the ability of the family to care for the elderly on the one hand and heighten the old people's sense of satisfaction in life as well as their quality of life on the other.

I would like to highlight another fact that community service for the elderly

is essentially family care which to a large extent is provided by women. Traditionally women take up the role of caring for the family and this is also true today. However I must stress that we should be more concerned about the opportunities that women have in a society and should not expect them to take up solely most of the responsibility of caring for the old.

Finally, Mr Deputy President, as United Democrats spokesman on welfare services, I wish to urge the Government to set up a high-powered co-ordinating committee on services for the elderly and all relevant departments in Government should put into practice any policy decision made by this committee. This co-ordinating committee is not the same as the Central Co-ordinating Committee on Services for the Elderly which other Members mentioned in this debate. Apart from being an inter-departmental body directly responsible to the Governor, this is a central and authoritative committee responsible for the overall co-ordination of the service for the elderly in Hong Kong. The needs of the elderly are varied including emotional, social, financial, health, housing and so on. The existing services for the elderly are incoherent and fail to meet all the needs of the elderly. At present our welfare department is not able to provide a comprehensive service for the elderly. I suggest that care for the elderly should not be taken up entirely by the Social Welfare Department. If the Government is determined to deal with the problem of an ageing population and the difficulties that the elderly are facing, the existing services and policy-making mechanism for the elderly should be improved.

The elderly are part of our community and they should enjoy their civic rights. The Government has the duty to respect their civic rights and provide a viable and comprehensive service for them. A high-powered co-ordinating committee is therefore a necessity. Mr Deputy President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR HOWARD YOUNG: Mr Deputy President, I speak not from script, but like Miss LAU, from my heart. First of all I would like to declare that I am and have been for the last 10 years the director of the Hong Kong Society for the Aged, and the chairman is here with us today. I would also like to mention that I am a member of the Commission on Youth, and the chairman is sitting in front of me. Some may think it ironic that I should stand up and not speak on behalf of the youth, especially with a name like YOUNG, but I think the law of nature dictates that young will ultimately become old one day and not the other way round. However, like always, when presented with a wish-list of what to do, we must make choices and we must come up with priorities.

Although my patch in social service has been mainly centred on recreation and services for the youth, I must say in fact, with deference to my chairman in front of me, that when it comes to choosing and making hard choices between where priority lies, between the services for the young and the services for the elderly, I must say that I am for putting priority on services for the elderly. This is not just because of the demographic features of Hong Kong which means that our population is aging, but also the recent type of emigration from Hong Kong which has in fact left many elderly people stranded.

I wish to make two points. First of all is the suggestion already made by some Members today on finding some way so that the old age allowance that we provide for the elderly can be made use of by those elderly people who have gone back to China to live with their relatives. Of course ways must be found to see whether this can be done so that abuse is avoided.

The second point I wish to make is on the subject of ivory towers. Approximately 10 years ago I was a member of a Social Welfare Department's working group on determining the unit price subvention for the elderly and had a chance of visiting many homes for the elderly and care and attention centres. Perhaps in those more idealistic days, I took part with other people in drawing up plans on what height the railings ought to be in corridors in homes for the aged, how many staff we would need, and what the kitchen should be like and so on. Nowadays, 10 years later, I think of the remarks and reports in those days and I myself need to ask: were we living in ivory towers in those days as well? In particular, last month I had the opportunity, with a friend of mine, to visit his father in a so-called care and attention home in the New Territories. It was quite different from what we in the working party had in mind and saw in those days, and I am sure, if one took the standards that we set in those days, this establishment might not be one of those that could be recognized.

However, it did strike me that if the cost charged by this institution, which I think was an unofficial institution, was to rise because of standards that were set too high, then many people in Hong Kong could simply not afford to put their parents into these care and attention homes. I also guessed that the staff working in that particular institution may not be exactly qualified if one wanted them to produce their certificates in nursing or other care and attention qualifications.

So I think we have to face reality. And I think when Government does come up

with rules to license these premises as well, it must try not to make the standards excessively high so that it will put them out of the market and make it unaffordable for many people.

I am afraid that when, as I said, faced with a wish-list, sometimes one has to make hard choices between quantity and quality. In an idealistic world we should have both, but when faced with constrained resources I would prefer to go for quantity and not to go over board on quality in order to serve the needs of the elderly in Hong Kong and to show that we are a community that does care.

With these remarks, Mr Deputy President, I support the motion.

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr Deputy President, the motion before us today urges the Government to give immediate consideration to the formulation of an overall and comprehensive policy on the care of the elderly. As has been observed by several speakers, an important element of such a policy is to encourage and foster self-reliance among the senior members of our community. In the light of demographic projections and of the aspirations of the community, the Government recognizes and accepts that there is now a greater need for community-wide retirement schemes. An inter-departmental working group under my chairmanship has already started to examine how this need should best be met. As I have said previously in this Chamber, we would welcome advice and proposals from all sources. We also intend to consult widely once we have identified some feasible options.

Retirement protection is, of course, only one aspect of the wider issue of care and attention for the elderly. By its very nature, retirement protection would, conceptually at least, provide only for those who have been in paid employment prior to retirement. There will always be some senior members of the community who will not be covered by any retirement schemes. And there may well be others who, notwithstanding the protection afforded by retirement schemes, find themselves in need of care and other services beyond what their retirement schemes could provide. I shall defer to my colleague, the Secretary for Health and Welfare, to comment on the wider issue. Meanwhile, she and I will ensure that the work which we are doing in our respective policy areas, and which are designed to contribute to the provision of improved care and other services to the elderly, is properly co-ordinated.

Finally, Mr Deputy President, since Miss Emily LAU has addressed some questions



specifically to me, I would wish to attempt to respond. The Government has no specific policy regarding the provision of education or employment opportunities for senior citizens although equally there are no specific policies debarring them from such opportunities as are available to the community at large, except as regards employment in the Civil Service beyond the stipulated age of retirement. I shall wish to reflect on what more could or should be done in the field of education and employment for the elderly, for I fully subscribe to the philosophy that we should treat our senior citizens as an asset and a resource rather than a liability to the community. But I would feel more encouraged if the fact of senior citizens remaining in employment is not so frequently held up as an example of Government's failure to provide adequate care for the elderly.

Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Perhaps it is timely for me to point out that under Standing Order 27 observations are to be addressed to the President. I make the point very gently for future guidance.

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr Deputy President, in preparing to attend this debate I have called upon my colleagues to come to this Chamber to lend their ears, to keep me company and give me courage. And jointly we thank all the Members for their views, their advice and their many valuable suggestions which we will take on board. Honourable Members may also be aware or may be interested to know that in the Hansard report of a similar debate in this Council in 1971, almost exactly 20 years ago, -- it's not that long ago either -- the concerns of Members then were the problems posed by Hong Kong's young population.

Just as 20 years ago the Government anticipated and met the challenge of a young population then, so today it is right that we are anticipating and formulating responses to the challenge posed by an aging population. It is better to anticipate future problems now, than to evade the inevitable issue.

I would like to start by reinforcing some statistics referred to by Members. I would like to mention these statistics from another perspective: they are the two sides of the same coin and the same coin must be looked at from different angles.

## The demographic challenge

Let me start by referring to some facts and figures from the summary results of the recently completed 1991 Hong Kong Population Census. The median age rose from 22 in 1971, to 26 in 1981 to 32 today. This is, in part, because elderly people are living longer. And, do you know ten years ago, theoretically at least, each senior member of our society could rely on 11 people for support; currently this 11 has been reduced to only eight. It will be further reduced to six in 20 years' time. What does this mean? It means that from the working person's point of view, all things being equal, he will be shouldering 66% more responsibility than 10 years ago and, to put it in another way, the same person will have to work that much harder and be that much more productive just to maintain the standard of today. (Some of the Honourable Members have already reminded us, I think, that some of us here will contribute to the statistics and be part of this "responsibility", although we might still think ourselves to be young at heart.) So, there will be more elderly people supported by fewer working people. This is a sobering thought! This is the reality we have to face! And I am so glad that the Honourable Howard YOUNG is here.

At present, the thrust of our general policy towards elderly people is to encourage them to remain in the community for as long as possible in the care of the family. And, as suggested by many Members here, to provide support service to enable them to do so. To that end, the services include home help, day care centre, social centre, sheltered housing, multi-service centre. However, for a small proportion of about 4% of those over 60, there is no alternative but to provide residential care. This we do too in various forms from hostel accommodation, old age homes to meal places, care and attention homes, infirmaries and hospice care and so on.

## Central Committee on Services for the Elderly

I entirely agree with Honourable Members that our policies need to be looked at again to see if they are indeed appropriate to meet the changing needs of a changing demographic pattern. To review the old is to rediscover the new. I shall indeed convene and revamp the Central Co-ordinating Multi-disciplinary Committee on Services for the Elderly. And I am of course tempted to put myself as its chairperson purely because I am old enough, I think, to chair this very important committee. Now contrary to some of the Members' misconception, the former committee did not meet

for some time because it did not want to conflict with the deliberations of the Working Party on Social Welfare which was constituted two years ago to look at the overall policy. But the committee, as I said, will be reconvened and Members' views will be taken on board. I will also further welcome the opportunity for working closely with the respective OMELCO panels on this because, as Members have quite rightly said, "You've got to get it right."

### Specific points

I would like to turn to a number of specific points mentioned. Let me start by dispelling the impression created by a reference to the new hostel in the urban area for "caged" men. Urban hostels for the elderly were not started yesterday, nor were they started off with the so-called gambling money. Contrary to the impression, the purchase of urban hostel for the aged people -- single family, single person -- started a number of years ago. They include sheltered housing for able-bodied elderly persons. Indeed gold coin funds were used -- quite a large sum was used -- not to mention sheltered housing built by the Housing Authority. Furthermore, back in 1988, a working group made a number of recommendations specifically targetted at the needs of elderly people. This report was the crystallization of the views of experts in the field, concerned with the welfare of elderly people. The speedy implementation of the recommendations therein by the Housing Authority is eagerly awaited.

The Honourable NG Ming-yum has drawn attention to the lack of residential facilities for the elderly in Yuen Long. You will be pleased to know, Mr Deputy President, that a home providing for 152 elderly people was opened only this morning in Long Ping Estate, Yuen Long, by none other than the Director of Social Welfare sitting next to me. It is the third such home that he has opened in this month alone in different parts of Hong Kong. Although we still have, I think, a lot to achieve and although we have come a long way, we are nowhere near our goal -- yet we are making steady progress.

### Residential care

As regards provision of residential facilities started many years, I can just rattle along: for example, there are

919 infirmary beds,

3 657 places in care and attention homes,

7 489 places in home for the aged,

2 026 places in hostel places,

3 131 places in sheltered housing -- established, as I said, many years ago but we are building on every year,

17 multi service centres,

10 day care centres,

and 161 social centres dotted all over Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories. I can add and count ad nauseum but it is still not enough; there will never be enough; there will still be shortage; so we are building more. And we will be building more. For example, on the hospital and infirmary side because it takes a long lead time, we got the Ruttonjee Sanatorium redevelopment which will include 152 additional infirmary places. The Wong Chuk Hang Complex for the Elderly will be completed two years from now to provide a continuum of care, thus sparing elderly persons the trauma of being moved from place to place because the facilities will include an infirmary, a care and attention home and a long-stay care home, each with a capacity of some 200 places. There is the Shatin Infirmary and Convalescent Hospital with 700 beds aimed to provide care for the elderly and infirm as well as rehabilitation rehabilitating them back into society. The first phase, consisting of 50 beds, is due to come into operation next month this year. Other new modes of service like hospice care will be launched. And these are devised, I must admit, by various people: (not the Government) by voluntary agencies and non-governmental organizations. This is very encouraging indeed and deserves community support.

I would like to mention also that the care and attention infirmary waiting lists have been co-ordinated and reduced. Priority on one carries the same priority on the other and the final decision as to which type of institution an elderly person goes to is made by a doctor after medical assessment. This recent improvement has gone a long way to removing the possibility of elderly people falling between the two stools. Assessment teams involving both medical and welfare staff are being established on a district basis -- the first being in Sha Tin -- to further refine

the system. Average waiting time for care and attention admission is 20 months -  
- it is much better than before but perhaps still not good enough.

### Old Age Allowance

Now turning to Members' concern over old age allowance, it is true that the Old Age Allowance individually is very small but collectively it means government expenditure of some \$2,000 million a year based on the current take-up rate of eligible elderly people; this means 89% of those over the age of 70 are eligible for the higher disability allowance which is not means tested as against 55% of those on means tested lower old age allowance.

It has also been suggested that the existing residence criteria governing payment of Old Age Allowance should be relaxed to allow our senior citizens to get it while living abroad. There may be some merits in considering that but given the nature of the current allowance which is not a pension and which is non-contributory and non-means tested, I do not know if we can really justify payment of these allowances outside Hong Kong in its present form. However, I am sure the Review Committee, to which I have just referred, will be looking at the overall scheme of things, taking into account Honourable Members' sentiments and the many suggestions made on this. Indeed, as some of our Honourable Members have already mentioned, there may be better alternatives and viable options. We must look at the problem from the long-term perspective.

### Health care

As regards health care, at present, some 9% of the total population of people aged 65 and above account for 21.5% of all general out-patient attendances and 40% of all in-patients in the public hospitals. We estimate that on a per capita basis, the elderly consume three times more resources for health care.

To enhance the quality of life of the elderly and reduce their dependence on hospital services, we believe the elderly people should be one of the most important target groups for receiving primary health care. We aim to introduce, on a pilot basis, screening services for those who attended general out-patient clinics. A health centre for the elderly would also be established in Kwun Tong. Our health education programmes would also emphasize more on common elderly health problems including diabetes and cardiac problems and so on. If the elderly know more about self care

and diet control, they can certainly participate in maintaining their own health. As regards the need for reform, I am guided by the aspirations of the community. Reform we must. We are in the middle of a major reform and great debate. I am very grateful for many of the Honourable Members' support for this. We have started with the Hospital Authority. We are revamping primary health care. We are looking at medical insurance options. Change must be properly and carefully managed. I am very grateful for many of the Members' free medical advice which will enable me to devise a better system to better the health of the community. (I think today I certainly understand more about blood vessels and blood pressure.)

#### Shortage of nurses

Some Members have expressed concern over the lack of nursing manpower, especially for elderly services in care and attention homes and community nurses. Shortage of nurses is no simple problem. In the past two years, a whole range of measures has been taken to tackle the problem. We will continue to do our best in search of further measures to tackle the problem. Again I must say that I am very grateful for some of the very important, valuable and practical solutions. In recent months, indeed, I have received personal letters, a spate of interesting suggestions from members of the public. I would like to take today's opportunity to thank them one and all for their wise counsel. It shows society as a whole wants to resolve a problem which concerns us.

#### Filial piety

I echo Honourable Members' call to respect our elderly citizens. As mentioned by many Members, I think it is a regrettable reflection of our community that more and more elderly people appear to be rejected by their family and dumped onto the lap of public care or no care at all. A society is looked at from the way we treat our handicapped people, our elderly and those who are less fortunate than we are. Let us respect them not only with words but with individual action.

#### Ex-prisoners of war

Next month marks the 50th anniversary of the defence of Hong Kong during the Pacific War. I would like to illustrate by action what we can do. The gallant men and women, who fought for us while they were young, are now old. I am pleased to say that, in their old age, Government is able to honour them by granting them, as

from next month, a pension as of right. Lest we forget, the toil, blood, sweat and tears of the young of yesteryear make Hong Kong what it is today.

### Concessionary fares for the elderly

Many of the Honourable Members mentioned the question of concessionary fares for senior citizens. I think some Honourable Members will recall that it was debated as one of the items in May in this Council this year. My colleagues and I have pursued the proposal with great energy, I might add, with major public transport companies. I am sad to say that the response has been dismal. Some welcome concessionary fares only if Government pays for it. Others do not want to know. Still others would prefer to keep elderly people out of their system because, they say, elderly people are prone to accidents. Such is the variety of views. Whilst I regrettably do not have a pot of gold from which to pay concessionary fares, it is appropriate, I think, to echo Members' views expressed in this Council that all of us in society must exercise our collective community conscience. We must put our thinking caps on, think of ways and means and devise imaginative ways of granting concessions to senior citizens of our society -- not only in terms of public transport but, other things also, for example, recreation, culture, banking facilities and so on. Society must work together as a whole. It is not something that money alone can buy; the spirit must come from within.

### Hope for the future

In this contemporary debate about Hong Kong's capacity to accommodate elderly population, I am reminded of the 18th century Malthusian theory that population would one day exhaust the means of support. This prediction is pessimistic and fortunately has not come true here. Fortunately, also, there are many of the Honourable Members here who believe optimistically that new challenge stimulates innovation and new energy will be found in a new order. I share their optimism.

As an ardent optimist myself, I have faith too in human endeavour and ingenuity. I believe, like many of our Honourable Members, in the elderly people and their latent potential. I believe in "grey" power. We have to learn from them. Together we will find an answer to meet this demographic challenge.

Hong Kong is remarkable for its capacity to progress. The "live for today" syndrome should not blind us. Fine words should not lull us into a false sense of security. A responsible government must not only provide for society's current needs.

It must also be farsighted enough to plan ahead to meet future challenges.

It is said that the mood of the times is reflected in some of the lyrics of pop songs -- the top of the pops. I shall close with the words of a famous song from the Beatles which said,

"Will you still need me?  
Will you still feed me  
when I am 64?"

Hong Kong's senior citizens may well ask a similar question. Judging from the tenor of today's debate, I think the answer will be a resounding "yes". We will look after our elderly people; we will plan ahead.

Mr Deputy President, I am grateful for Honourable Members' concern over this important issue. I think the motion ought to be supported, and supported not only with fine words but practical action. I look forward to joint co-operation. Thank you very much.

8.00 pm

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It is now 8 o'clock and under Standing Order 8(2) the Council should adjourn.

CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr Deputy President, with your consent, I move that Standing Order 8(2) should be suspended so as to allow this Council's business this afternoon to be concluded.

Question proposed, put and agreed to.

DR LEONG CHE-HUNG: Mr Deputy President, after all the "political upheaval" in the last few weeks in this Chamber, it is a welcoming sign to see colleagues actually sitting down, joining hands, to push the Administration a way forward for the betterment of a social and society service for Hong Kong. Let us hope that this will be the way ahead for all of us in this Council, to improve Hong Kong in total. The



only upheaval that I could hear today is that at one time I thought my honourable friend, Dr Conrad LAM, might have become a turncoat when he actually cursed the chairman of his own foundation.

Joking aside, Mr Deputy President, I make no apology for taking the opportunity to call on our friends in the media to give this Council all their help to portray the picture of the elderly's problem in the right perspective; to convey civic education and medical commonsense to the public, and also to put pressure, from the public angle, on Government to do the job properly.

The debate today may not be as colourful or as sensational as those of previous weeks, but let me assure them -- our friends of the media -- that what we could achieve today are the practical issues that Hong Kong people need. These are the issues that will sustain Hong Kong people's confidence in our future.

Mr Deputy President, if some of my words about twilight and sunset years have annoyed my honourable friend, Mr McGREGOR, and others, I do apologize. Having said that, I am most grateful to Honourable Members for speaking so supportively on this motion. Many colleagues have spoken extensively on the amount of old age allowance, the provision of subsidized housing, the provision for housing care, the provision for health and welfare. All these, of course, are extremely important, but more so is the need for a proper co-ordinating body with teeth. I repeat my call, Mr Deputy President, for the establishment of a Council for the Aged with proper representation from all concerned, and a specialist concern. Perhaps such a body, Mr Deputy President, may help to reshuffle the priorities so emotively put forth by the good old Mrs Elsie TU.

Some may wonder why my motion has not taken into consideration retirement funds and old age pensions. As I mentioned at the start, problems of elderly care are far from exhaustive. I venture only to arouse interest in the very basics of elderly care this time, and that is health and welfare. But having said that, I am very glad to support my colleague Mr Jimmy McGREGOR's call for an old age pension scheme; this must, in future, form the foundation for all care in support of our senior citizens. I understand that this matter will be discussed in detail and debated in this Council in the months ahead. I will do my very best to support this concept in bringing about the reality.

As regards the reply from the Administration, I take it, Mr Deputy President,

with mixed feelings. I am encouraged by the future co-operation between the Health and Welfare Branch and the Education and Manpower Branch. I am also encouraged by the setting-up of an inter-departmental working group to study the needs for a retirement protection scheme. I welcome the realization by the Secretary for Health and Welfare that the burden towards the elderly will increase in the years to come, and her commitment to revamp the Central Co-ordinating Committee. But let this Committee wear different terms of reference; give it more representatives, give it more power, and really make it work. On the other hand, Mr Deputy President, let us see action not words.

I am somewhat disappointed at the lack of quality and quantity in the replies given by the two Policy Secretaries. Most recommendations made by Members of this Council have not been taken on board, or perhaps have they actually fallen on deaf ears? Even the revamped Central Committee, as suggested, is perhaps not along the same lines as most Members of this Council would like to see. Should it be headed by a senior civil servant for example? I wonder. I applaud the Secretary for Health and Welfare's efforts to try to get concessionary fares for senior citizens; and I was told that it was a fiasco. Citybus, however, does provide concessionary fares for the elderly; but not others -- including the MTR and the LRT. I wonder what the reason is? Is this due to a lack of political will? Perhaps time does not allow them to dwell on issues -- issue by issue in detail -- but let me sound a word of warning: their flowery promises and suitable statistical figures will in no way sustain the onslaught of the problem of the enlarging population in the years to come.

There are obviously many issues that honourable colleagues raise to which the Administration cannot respond immediately, but I do hope that dialogue will continue between the administrative branches and the respective OMELCO panels, or possibly the future Legislative Council's standing committees, to ensure the best effort for the aged.

Mr Deputy President, I make no apologies for my colleagues, and myself in particular, for the mounting criticisms we have made on the Administration in relation to the policy and the implementation of policy on old age care. Let me assure them that these criticisms are constructive ones and reflect the eager concern of all of us to offer our very best to co-operate with the Administration to make Hong Kong a model paradise for its senior members.

Mr Deputy President, I doubt if I need ask Members to support this motion; yet

I still would like to ask them to do so. For in supporting this motion they are not only paying respect to those who have made Hong Kong what it is today, but are also demonstrating to Hong Kong and the world that we are a society and a government that care.

Mr Deputy President, I beg to move.

Question on the motion put and agreed to.

#### INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES ORDINANCE

MISS EMILY LAU moved the following motion:

"That in relation to the Hospital Authority Bylaws published as Legal Notice No. 384 of 1991 and laid on the table of the Legislative Council on 23 October 1991, the period referred to in section 34(2) of the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance for amending subsidiary legislation be extended under section 34(4) of that Ordinance until 11 December 1991."

MISS EMILY LAU: Mr Deputy President, I move the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper. The Hospital Authority Bylaws, which are the subject of this motion, regulate the conduct of persons within public hospitals and other areas managed and controlled by the Hospital Authority. They also provide for the control of trading and advertising, the regulation of the use of roads in hospitals, the regulation of entry by visitors, the preservation of good order and prevention of nuisances, and the eviction of persons in specified circumstances. The purpose of the motion is to extend the period for amending the bylaws so that the ad hoc group formed to study them can have time to consider carefully a number of questions relating to the need for, as well as the form of, control of activities in hospitals and the appropriate level of penalties for offenders.

Mr Deputy President, I beg to move.

Question on the motion proposed, put and agreed to.

Adjournment

CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr Deputy President, I move that this Council do now adjourn.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr Albert CHAN has given notice to raise a matter for reply from the Government. I would remind Members that in an adjournment debate there are 45 minutes for Members to speak; at that point I will call upon the public officers to reply.

Construction of Container Terminal No. 9

8.06 pm

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, I rise to move this adjournment debate on the proposed construction of Container Terminal No. 9 in Tsing Yi by the Government. The main objective is to convince the Government that the decision is incompatible with the present needs and it is hoped that the construction of Container Terminal No. 9 in Tsing Yi will be shelved.

Because of time constraint, I shall base my arguments on the development, needs and financial issues of the container industry whereas Messrs NG Ming-yum and LEE Wing-tat will discuss other arguments in relation to transport and environment.

The development of the container industry

First, I would like to speak on the growth of the container industry. The growth in real terms of Hong Kong container industry in the first half of this year has increased by 21% compared with the previous year. This is higher than the 14% as expected by the Government. The Government thus considers that there is an urgent need to complete the construction of Container Terminal No. 9 in 1995. But data has shown that the annual growth rate of the shipping industry in Hong Kong varies considerably. The growth rate in 1989, for instance, is only 10.5% compared with 15.5% in 1990. The development of the container industry in Hong Kong is affected not only by political and economic factors in Hong Kong and the Mainland, but also by the development of the container industry in the Pearl Delta and the southeast

Asia.

The container industry of Singapore is developing and its growth rate has far exceeded Hong Kong. Meanwhile, there is a tendency that the western Europe and the United States markets are gradually shifting from Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan to Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia.

On the other hand, the coastal areas of southern China have been undergoing continuous developments. For instance, the present container handling volume of Huangpu container port is only half of its capacity. With improvements to its transport network, its competitiveness will definitely be strengthened.

It is therefore extremely doubtful whether the growth rate of Hong Kong container industry can continue to stand high. We cannot be over optimistic.

Another subject worthy of studying is the handling capacity of container terminals. At present, the Government has used 400 000 Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) per terminal as its base of calculation. If there is any error in such calculation, the overall demand for container terminals may vary greatly. According to members of the industry, the handling capacity of some existing terminals can be as high as 500 000 TEUs per year. Some representatives are even of the view that the maximum capacity is 700 000 TEUs. In view of the great discrepancy between the calculation of members of the industry and the Government, it is worth taking a further look at whether the Government has been too conservative or members of the industry have been over optimistic. As a matter of fact, with the advance of technology, the throughput of container terminals 1 to 8 can be enhanced and this helps defer the completion of Container Terminal No. 9 for use.

Besides, the Government should not underestimate the potentials of mid-stream operation. With proper arrangements and co-ordination, small terminals can be extended to help defer the use of Container Terminal No. 9. According to data, the number of containers handled by mid-stream operation amounts to about 20% of the market. The potentials of the operation cannot be neglected.

#### Financial consideration

The second major issue lies on financial consideration. Existing projects related to the Airport Core Programme have already exerted much pressure on public

work programmes. Probably because of financial consideration, the sewage treatment strategy has been deferred indefinitely.

The construction cost of Container Terminal No. 9 stands as \$5 billion or \$10 billion if compensation is included. According to a study by the consultancy commissioned by members of the industry, the Government can save \$14 billion by building Container Terminal No. 9 in the northern part of Lantau. In addition, if Container Terminal No. 9 is completed before 1997 in Lantau, it can tie in with the construction of the Tsing Ma Bridge and generate considerable revenue for the Tsing Ma Bridge. This will have positive effect on the overall financial operation and arrangements of the Government.

## Conclusion

For the above two reasons, I believe that to shelve the construction of Container Terminal No. 9 in Tsing Yi is not only beneficial to residents of Tsing Yi, Kwai Chung and Tsuen Wan, but is also helpful to the development of Hong Kong as a whole. At this stage, I firmly believe that it is not advisable for the Government to force through the project and embark on the construction of Container Terminal No. 9 in Tsing Yi in 1993.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, I oppose the construction of Container Terminal No 9 in Tsing Yi in 1995 because the authorities have not been able to prove it to be the best choice in timing and in site location. I also think there is no need to start work on the project in 1995. If midstream operations can be allowed to continue to develop, the pressure on container terminals will be eased and the point of saturated capacity will be delayed. If that is the case, there will be more and better choices in the search for a new site, for example, to choose the northeast part of Lantau to tie in with the development of the new airport. On the other hand, if construction of the container terminal in Tsing Yi goes ahead in 1995 as planned, there will be irreversible adverse effects on the transport and environment aspects of West Kowloon. Moreover, there are still a number of private enterprises located on Tsing Yi Island. In order to build the new container terminal there, the Government will have to resume their land. It will involve a lot of additional expenses and put a strain on our finances.

### (1) Timing

I believe there is no need to build a container terminal in 1995. According to a government estimate, usage of our present container terminal facilities will have reached saturation point by 1996 and it is therefore imperative that a new one be built in 1995 to handle cargoes to and from mainland China. In fact, handling of such cargoes is mostly done midstream on barges. This mode represents one-quarter of our cargo handling activities. However, the Government has made no plans to continue to develop this important role of cargo-handling by barges. Quoting statistics, the Port Development Board has stated that midstream operation as a mode of cargo transportation will gradually decline and is unlikely to continue much longer. With the present rate of cargo throughput and the Government's reclamation plan for West Kowloon which will make it necessary to cancel loading and unloading points provided for barges along the Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter, an available option would be to disperse cargo handling operations from a few concentrated points to the entire stretch of the shoreline. But an opposite option is likely to prevail and very soon all cargo handling operations will be concentrated in the container terminals. I am of the view that the Government should reconsider the potentials of midstream operations and arrange for suitable facilities in newly reclaimed areas so as to ease the pressure on container terminals and delay their saturation point. There should be no need to rush into the construction of Container Terminal No. 9 in 1995.

(2) Tsing Yi site not adequately serviced with transport facilities

At present, container trucks are causing perpetual traffic congestion between Kwai Chung and West Kowloon. The massive traffic congestion on 16 August this year should be an unforgettable lesson. Even the occurrence of a minor traffic accident as the one involving a container truck outside Container Terminal No. 4 on a day in November 1991 led to a serious traffic jam all the way from Kwai Chung to West Kowloon. This served to illustrate the heavy pressure of container transportation on vehicular traffic between Kwai Chung and West Kowloon.

To build Container Terminal No. 9 in Tsing Yi before the completion of the Kwai Chung to West Kowloon section of Route 3, the Government will not only be neglecting the already "fragile and wounded" traffic system but will actually be rubbing salt into the wounds.

As I understand it, the transport study in relation to the new terminal only addresses Tsing Yi internally. I would like to ask the authorities whether a detailed

assessment has been made in regard to the traffic flow of West Kowloon.

When the future airport is completed, traffic flow between West Kowloon and Kwai Chung and to and from Lantau will increase very substantially. Our future housing strategy is meant to absorb more people into the New Territories. The population in the southern part of the New Territories such as Tsing Yi and the western part such as Tuen Mun and Tin Shui Wai of Yuen Long is expected to increase. However, there is no government plan for intensive development of industrial and commercial districts in either the southern or western part of the New Territories. In other words, there are unlikely to be enough employment opportunities and residents there will have to go to work in the urban areas. The traffic system of West Kowloon will therefore be heavily burdened. By sea there will be container transport, by air there will be passenger and cargo flights from the new airport, by land there will be the working population plying daily between their work place and home. Sea, land and air traffic will simultaneously get rolling. I wish the authorities could inform this Council how the residents of West Kowloon could be expected to cope with such a grand transport scene that will present itself.

### (3) Environmental protection

The current reclamation work in West Kowloon has brought adverse effects on the environment (including marine pollution and ecological degradation) in the vicinity of Mei Foo. With an additional container terminal to be built in Kwai Tsing, the noise and air pollution generated by heavy vehicles will only aggravate. It will be most unfair to the residents of West Kowloon, in particular Mei Foo.

### (4) Cost implications in the choice of site

I have mentioned that allowing midstream operations to continue will relieve the pressure on the container terminals. It is a measure that will achieve maximum cost effectiveness. If Container Terminal No 9 can be built in the northeast part of Lantau together with Terminals Nos 10 to 14, it will, as my colleague Mr Albert CHAN just pointed out, be in line with the development of the new airport as well as meeting the economic criterion of cost effectiveness. On the contrary, if it is to be built in Tsing Yi, there will be a need to resume land from many private enterprises now operating on site and the amount of compensation for land resumption will add to the cost. I hope the Government will provide this Council with more data on the cost estimates of land resumption. The compensation for Mobile Gas's removal two years



ago was \$6 billion. What about Hong Kong Oil and other companies? My rough estimate is at least \$10 billion. If the Government is to pay such a large sum of public money to private companies in the current climate of financial constraint, how can we convince the public that it is an appropriate choice?

In short, I feel that from the points of view of economics, the quality of life of the affected residents and site location, it will not be suitable to build Container Terminal No 9 in Tsing Yi in 1995. Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

MRS SELINA CHOW: Mr Deputy President, all of us in this Council have been approached by disturbed residents on Tsing Yi concerning the possible location of Container Terminal No. 9 on the island. I am sympathetic with such concerns and believe them to be well justified. Over the last few years our attention has been drawn to a number of grievances voiced by the residents of Tsing Yi, many due to planning decisions which were piecemeal and far from ideal. One more such decision would only add to the frustration of these unfortunate people whose daily life, in terms of transport, environment and peace of mind, may be affected. I cannot be convinced that having a huge container terminal operation as one's neighbour will not present nuisance problems. The fact that these terminals operate on a 24-hour shift would mean sleepless nights for those who live nearby.

I understand there is a split in opinion among members of the Port Development Board which advises the Administration on this very issue. Some support the original proposal and argue that, as the project can be completed in 1995, Hong Kong's growth will not be unnecessarily hindered. But this argument assumes the successful completion of the project by 1995. From the very strong and vocal objection recently voiced by the Tsing Yi residents, which is unlikely to be abated, it is highly likely that the commencement and the completion of the project may be delayed which would bring the opening of the facilities much closer to 1997.

I believe there is a school of thought which is advocating for Container Terminal No. 9 to be located on Lantau where all future container terminals will be built. The advantages are many; Lantau will be a properly planned port with all the back-up facilities and infrastructural support. As such, it will not present any threat to residential population. If the decision is made to proceed with this option within the next few months, there is every likelihood that Container Terminal No. 9 will be completed in the early part of 1997. Another attraction of this proposal is that

from the financial point of view such a move will generate income for the Lantau Fixed Crossing as soon as it is built. This option appears even more favourable in the light of the Honourable Samuel WONG's suggestion contained in his paper on the siting of Container Terminal No. 9 that the existing facilities in Kwai Chung can be further expanded to cope with increasing demand up to mid-1997, and I support any move to take this proposal further, together with a fresh look at the siting of Container Terminal No. 9 on north Lantau.

MR JIMMY MCGREGOR: Mr Deputy President, Container Terminal No. 9 is a project which has been extensively researched by expert consultants in various connected fields and which has formed an integral part of government planning for the past two years in the further development of our essential port facilities.

To that degree, I would say there is nothing piecemeal about the price proposals and I would contest that view. I see no reason to doubt the assessment that the container facilities which Container Terminal No. 9 will represent will be required by 1995. In fact the industry strongly suggests so and I see no reason for the industry to be wrong in this respect. Also the Tsing Yi location is the best available siting in terms of port efficiency in the future. The cost of providing Container Terminal No. 9 is also less than would be the case at any other site.

The arguments against the Tsing Yi site are not persuasive except in regard to environmental factors, especially noise, dust and traffic disruption at the time of construction of the site. I believe that the Government can set conditions of development which will reduce environmental nuisance and damage to a minimum.

Mr Deputy President, I would point out that we have always underestimated the requirement for facilities in Hong Kong. All through the many years that I have been here, airport facilities at Kai Tak were badly estimated in earlier years, road infrastructure, and port facilities themselves in the earlier days of development of the container facilities, and housing also -- we have consistently underestimated the housing requirement. Growth in Hong Kong has almost always been faster than any estimate the Government has provided.

The new airport is essential to our economic future. The port facilities are even more so since our external trade and its growth are hugely dependent upon efficient port services and timely expansion of these. I do not think that our rapid

rate of economic expansion will slow down markedly over a period of time. It has never been the case in the past and is not, I am sure, the case now. In fact, if anything, it is likely to speed up over a period of some years, given the likelihood of further economic growth in China which will relate directly to the facilities available in Hong Kong.

Mr Deputy President, I do sympathize with the concern expressed by Tsing Yi residents and by my colleague, Mr CHAN Wai-yip, but I must urge the Government to continue with the development of Container Terminal No. 9 as presently sited. Thank you.

MR VINCENT CHENG: Mr Deputy President, because of time constraints I will only address some of the economic aspects of this issue. There are many reasons for Hong Kong's economic success, one of which is the territory's ability to anticipate future demand and build the infrastructure to meet it. The development of container facilities is a prime example of this success. Over the last five years, Hong Kong's total trade increased from \$552 billion in 1986 to \$1,282 billion in 1990, or by 232%. Part of this trade is handled through Kai Tak, some of it by rail, the bulk of it however is handled by container cargo-ships. Not included in these trade figures are trans-shipments through Hong Kong which have also risen substantially because of Hong Kong's role as a regional trans-shipment centre. Growth in container throughput has been sustained at an average rate of 17% per annum. In the first nine months the rate was a staggering 21%. The throughput at Kwai Chung is no less impressive; according to government statistics the average rate in 1989 and 1990 was 15% per annum. In the first nine months the increase was 18%.

If Hong Kong is to maintain its trend rate of trade growth our container facilities must be expanded at at least similar rates. Based on these trends, there is no doubt that by 1995 demand for containers will outstrip our planned capacity, even if we accept the Government's conservative estimate of only 8.7% increase per annum in overall flight movements, and 6.5% per annum from 1996-2001 in tonnage terms. The need to expand Hong Kong's container-handling capacity is therefore obvious.

Today there are two questions which we need to address:

(a) Do we need to increase our capacity to handle container cargoes by 1995?

(b) Where should we build this facility?

The simple answer to the first question is therefore, yes. Although the volatilities of the trade figures and container throughput numbers are a constraint on the accuracy of forecasts, the need for extra capacity is established, even if we accept the conservative estimates. Chances are that we may well find more congestion in 1994-1995, given some of the economic projections for Hong Kong. I have seen forecasts of about 5% growth in 1992 and 6% growth in 1993, and I have not seen a forecast of a dramatic slowdown in our trade.

This brings us to the second question: Where should we provide such facilities -- Tsing Yi, Lantau, or other areas? I have great doubts about using Lantau to meet the demand which will come in 1995, although Lantau may well be developed to meet demand after 1997. The main reason is that there is no road-link between Lantau and Kowloon; the only link planned for the future is the Lantau Fixed Crossing which will not be available before June 1997. If we wait until the link is built there will be a big gap, that is, where could we meet the demand in the period 1995-1997? Now we are not talking about a minor hold-up but a shortage of supply of the order of about 2.5 million 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) by 1997, which is nearly 50% of our present container throughput. Now it will be a major capacity constraint on our economy. The consequences will be:

(a) Container and shipping congestion of a degree which is intolerable.

(b) Much higher prices, either in dollars or in delay.

(c) Major shipping lines will avoid the port.

(d) Regional trans-shipment cargoes will avoid Hong Kong, and given the operational patterns of the shipping lines, a permanent loss of shipping business and the associated economic activities to other shipping centres in this region.

(e) Mid-stream operations, which indeed is a less efficient form of handling cargo, will clog up the water passageways.

Given the rapid economic growth in southern China and Hong Kong, there is no point in wishing that our rate of economic and trade growth would decelerate so that we will not need to build Container Terminal No. 9.

The decision is therefore where to build the new facility, rather than whether to build it. I have heard arguments that we could enlarge the present facilities at Kwai Chung; now this is a very complex issue and I must admit that I am not qualified to make any educated comment. We should certainly explore that possibility. But if Tsing Yi is really the only viable site, as suggested by the real experts, the Administration should take all necessary steps to ease the fears of the residents which are genuine -- traffic congestion, noise and the inconvenience they may face. Further discussions should perhaps be held with the relevant district boards and the concerned parties, to address their fears. The trade-off between economic growth and the preservation of the environment is always a fine balance and subjective; nonetheless I think we have to ensure that those affected are not worse off.

Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

MR LEE WING-TAT (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, the crux of the current controversy over the question as to whether the construction of Container Terminal No. 9 should start in 1993 lies in the absence of an objective assessment among the Government, container terminal operators and the public on certain controversial aspects. As many members of the present Port Development Board are involved in the interest of relevant trades, the objectiveness of their views is open to question. Even the three container terminal operators have different views on the need of a Container Terminal No. 9 in 1995. In my opinion, the statistics on the growth of the container trade and the container handling capacity of the terminal berths provided by the Honourable CHAN Wai-yip in his speech are more precise.

Regarding traffic arrangements, the departments concerned have anticipated that the road capacity will be able to accommodate the road traffic upon completion of the upgrading works to the existing road network and the construction of the new bridge. Yet in actual fact, the existing network in Kwai Chung is already unable to cope with the present traffic flow. The Tsing Yi North Bridge was open to traffic in 1987, but only two years later serious traffic congestions have begun to emerge. Moreover, a lot of sites covered by short term tenancies in Tsing Yi and Kwai Chung are used for container vehicle parking. Indeed, the accuracy of the estimate on the traffic demand is not without doubt. To further add to the problem, the unavailability of Route 3 before 1997 and the large number of container trucks expected to use the roads will definitely lead to serious jams on Tuen Mun Highway, Kwai Chung Road and Castle Peak Road.

As to the construction of another Tsing Yi Bridge, officials from the Port Development Board once told the residents that without the Container Terminal No. 9 in Tsing Yi, the bridge would not be given a go-ahead. I hope that the officials concerned can clarify this point.

As regards planning, locating a number of container terminals in the same region has the merits of easy management and resource mobilization. But in terms of investment, the risk of bringing all terminals together is tantamount to putting all eggs in the same basket. All terminals will be simultaneously affected when there occurs a traffic accident or any incident similar to the serious traffic congestion on 8 October.

In the environmental aspect, there is no effective means so far to deal with the impact of intense lighting, noise nuisance and air pollution created by the container terminals and trucks. At present, complaints about the nuisances caused by the existing container terminals continue to come from Kwai Chung South, while residents in Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi have to stand the noises generated by the container trucks passing by day and night.

As far as financial situation is concerned, the Government has already spent \$2 billion on resiting the Mobil oil depots on Tsing Yi Island. Other facilities requiring resiting include depots of Hong Kong Oil Company and some factories, and the spending is expected to amount to billions of dollars. If Container Terminal No. 9 is to be built in northeast Lantau, the expenditure will definitely be less. Moreover, building the terminal in northeast Lantau could also enhance the utilization rate of the Tsing Ma Bridge scheduled for completion in 1997, hence adding considerable revenue to the public coffer when the Government grants the franchise of operating the Bridge before 1997.

To the south of the lot on Tsing Yi Island provisionally earmarked for the proposed container terminal are a number of oil depots. Their presence is hazardous to the lives of those workers who are to work at the terminal. But the Administration has yet to discuss with the oil company the removal of oil depots and the residents are still waiting for clarifications from the Administration as to whether the potential hazard to the workers will be brought to a minimum upon removal of oil depots in Kwai Chung South.

The Government received a total revenue of \$4.4 billion in granting Container Terminal No. 7 to the terminal operator through tendering, whereas the revenue obtained from leasing Container Terminal No. 8 through private treaty grant was only \$2 billion. So far, the Government has not explained to the public in detail about the change of practice in leasing the terminals. Was it because of the worries that some companies might monopolize the market, or was the policy changed to provide direct or indirect subsidy to terminal operators and the container transportation trade? Could I ask the Government to provide a public answer to this question?

Bearing in mind the reasons just mentioned, I object to building Container Terminal No. 9 on Tsing Yi Island and urge the Government to study various arrangements for building Container Terminal No. 9 on Lantau as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

MR NG MING-YUM (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, I would like to look at the construction of Container Terminal No. 9 (CT9) in Tsing Yi from the perspective of its possible impact, in terms of environment and planning, on the residents of the western New Territories. Since its commissioning in 1970s, the Kwai Chung Container Port has undergone continuous expansion to meet the growing demand for cargo handling facilities. Container Terminal No. 6 opened in May 1985, followed by Container Terminal No. 7 which started operation in December 1990. Since then the volume of cargo handled through the Kwai Chung Container Port has risen to a maximum level of 5 million container units. Container Terminal No. 8 was therefore put up for tender and to be sited at Stonecutters Island. In 1989 the blueprint for the so-called rose garden was released indicating a westward shift in port development in the future. One of the main reasons for the shift, as far as I know, is that there is no room for large-scale expansion of Container Terminal Nos. 1 to 8. According to the statistics released not long ago by the Transport Department, the present traffic flow during morning peak hours is 1 700 vehicles for Tsing Yi North Bridge and 1 400 vehicles for Tsing Yi South Bridge. With the completion of the road improvement projects in 1994, traffic flow for Tsing Yi North Bridge during morning peak hours will reach a level of 3 500 vehicles while in the case of Tsing Yi South Bridge the corresponding figure will be 1 600. It is estimated that upon completion of the whole CT9 project in 1996 a further increase in traffic flow of 1 300 vehicles will be expected in Tsing Yi District. Yet the South Sector of Route 3, that is the section from Western Harbour Crossing northward to Tsing Yi, will not open until 1996. On the other hand the first berthing facilities of CT9 will, according to schedule,

be completed and ready for use in 1995. In other words, the provision of transport facilities, in terms of access roads, for CT9 will very much depend on the already extremely congested Kwai Chung Road. Despite the ongoing Kwai Chung Road improvement and widening project which, on completion, will greatly enhance the traffic capacity of Kwai Chung Road, government officials have admitted that consideration had not been given to the additional road transport demand to be generated by CT9 when the project was designed. So it would not be difficult to imagine the pressure of traffic Kwai Chung Road would experience upon the commissioning of CT9. The traffic congestion of 16 August 1991, the extent of which reached disastrous proportions, might repeatedly occur. Kwai Chung Road would then not only be a bottleneck, but a virtual deadend. Should this happen, it would not only be the residents of Kwai Tsing and Tsuen Wan who would be affected but also those living in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long. The present congestion has already very often brought disruptions to the public bus schedule; travelling time per journey has also been lengthened particularly during morning and afternoon peak periods. This is indeed quite a great drain on resources, manpower or otherwise, and a waste of time. On the other hand the nuisance to the 170 000 or so residents of Tsing Yi, particularly noise, sub-standard air quality and night time site illumination during the construction of CT9, will have to be addressed. Although as usual the Administration has engaged in bureaucratic pep talk, stressing that the impact will be mitigated to an acceptable level, yet what level is acceptable level? The Administration has the unfettered discretion to interpret whichever way it likes. So in the end no matter how serious the impact might be it would still be considered acceptable to the residents. No wonder some resident representatives -- a number of them are now in the public galleries -- after having been given the guarantee by government officials said to me (What a way of saying it!)

Mr Deputy President, you may not fully comprehend the meaning these words in Cantonese convey. They in fact give expression to the feelings of discontent and helplessness of the residents concerned. As a matter of fact, the Administration failed to take the initiative to openly consult the residents when the assessment on the possible environmental impact of the CT9 project got underway. It is even more regrettable that due attention has not been given to the improvement measures suggested by the residents regarding the problem of environmental degradation.

Mr Deputy President, with these remarks, I support the Honourable Albert CHAN's stand which is to shelve the CT9 project in Tsing Yi before any overall review on the anticipated growth in container traffic and the utilization of the existing



container facilities is conducted. Thank you.

DR SAMUEL WONG (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, the discussion on whether the Government should make an immediate decision to build Container Terminal No. 9 on Tsing Yi Island cannot be concluded in just a few words or five minutes of time. For this adjournment debate, the think tank of my office of the engineering electoral division has completed a preliminary study report and circulated it to Members for reference. Here, I should like to thank Mrs Selina CHOW for mentioning it. The think tank completed this report after it had fully studied and analysed the government and consultancy reports and the views of the container industry and Tsing Yi residents from the perspective of engineering-effectiveness. I would like to reiterate briefly my proposal and that is that such limited land as is still available within the Kwai Chung Container Port or has recently been reclaimed from the sea can be allocated temporarily or permanently for the use of the existing terminals. On the one hand the terminals will concentrate on handling most of the containers obviating the need to have them placed throughout the New Territories; on the other hand, there will be sufficient parking space for container trucks which will not have to line up inside or outside the container port to load and unload their containers. Such being the case, the duration of occupying road space as well as the area of road space so occupied will correspondingly be reduced and traffic congestion eased.

This morning, I learnt from the newspaper that the Port Development Board believes the expansion of the Kwai Chung Container Port will seriously affect the traffic and environment in the neighbourhood of Mei Foo Sun Chuen. Mr Deputy President, I fail to see how the building of a new container terminal on Tsing Yi will do no harm to the local environment and traffic. The existing Kwai Chung Container Port has no more room for expanding its logistical base and traffic congestion frequently occurs at Kwai Chung. Is it that traffic congestion will be eased if the present container port is not to be expanded? Besides, with Container Terminal No. 9 built on Tsing Yi, Kwai Chung will still be where container trucks must pass through. How could traffic congestion be then avoided?

I agree that if the cargo handling capacity of Hong Kong's container terminals fails to meet the present or future demand, Hong Kong's economy will be seriously affected. Sufficient land must be made available for the expansion of the existing container port. I propose that the Government spend 12 months on the study of its feasibility. If my proposal is accepted, the existing terminals will, by mid-1997,

still be able to cope with the anticipated demand and the development of Container Terminal No. 9 can therefore be delayed for two years. As to whether Container Terminal No. 9 should be built on Tsing Yi Island or Lantau Island, a decision on this can wait until the study report on the development of Lantau Port Peninsula is completed. I suggest that the Government study my proposal and invite organizations from various sectors to give their views so that an appropriate location and schedule could be chosen on behalf of the Government and in the interests of Hong Kong people.

Mr Deputy President, I have great reservation about the plan of building Container Terminal No. 9 on Tsing Yi Island.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr Howard YOUNG, as the last speaker, you will have to try to finish by 8.52 pm which gives ample time.

MR HOWARD YOUNG: Mr Deputy President, I will try to finish before 8.52 pm because I know Mr Martin BARROW might want to speak as well.

MR HOWARD YOUNG (in Cantonese): Mr Deputy President, when it comes to talking about container shipping and terminals, I believe that within the current Legislative Council Members present, I can at least claim to be able to talk from personal experience -- as I have been in the trade for 12 years -- in addition to researched data.

I must first declare that I am a director of a major shipping agency, although this directorship is without remuneration. This company also happens to be the representative in Hong Kong of a few major international shipping lines, as different from container terminals which we are discussing today. The difference here is that whilst container terminal operators invest huge amounts of money to build a terminal in order to attract business from shipping companies and shippers, shipping lines decide whether to call a certain port terminal or not depending on, firstly, whether there is cargo available and, secondly, whether the terminal can cater for the trade in efficiency and price.

I personally was on the wharf as a junior executive 19 years ago to meet the very first container ship to call at the then new Kwai Chung Container Terminal No. 1 which

docked in autumn 1972. Only two years before that, I had been sent to the United Kingdom for two weeks to see what containers looked like and to observe how container terminals operated. In the early years, many people argued against containerization, saying that it was not needed in Hong Kong because we had a very efficient operation working off barges in the stream, that it only benefitted the traders at the other end of our export markets, and that it would bring about unemployment of stevedores.

Looking back almost 20 years, how wrong they were. Hong Kong has very quickly become the largest container port in the world. The container shipping related industry in Hong Kong employs tens of thousands of workers. The 700 000 or so people in the manufacturing industry also have jobs that rely on Hong Kong being an efficient port. Many more so in Guangdong as well.

When we talk about building Container Terminal No. 9, we are talking about how to attract major shipping companies to continue to use Hong Kong and how to serve our export trade and the export trade of Guangdong.

All great container ports worldwide serve large hinterlands: Rotterdam in Holland and Hamburg in Germany for instance. Hong Kong's greatest natural asset is its deep water port. Coupled with a very efficient container handling capability and infrastructure, shipping lines still find it worthwhile to call Hong Kong even if a lot of our cargo is transhipped here after being made in China. So if we are unable to provide adequate capacity shipping companies may well by pass Hong Kong and Hong Kong port's customers will be forced away from the territory.

Starting from zero in the beginning of the Seventies to more than 2 million Twenty Foot Equivalent Units (TEU) of container throughput by 1986, the growth rate has been at a steady rate of 14% or more over the last five years. Projecting this forward, throughput will reach 6.5 million TEU's by the year 1995, beyond the capacity of Container Terminal No. 8. If we do not have Container Terminal No. 9 ready by then, there will be great incentive to divert cargo and shipping lines away from Hong Kong. Once business is lost to competitors, it will not come back again easily. In the end, the losers will be all those employed in the shipping and manufacturing and exporting industries.

I think most people will agree that Hong Kong needs Container Terminal No. 9, but not everyone will like the idea of having it on Tsing Yi. The only alternative is Lantau, but it is impossible to have it built on Lantau together with the road

infrastructure before 1997, let alone 1995. Some people have asked whether the forecasts are accurate. I can only point out that in the past record of forecasting cargo growth throughput, Hong Kong has tended to err on the low side, not high side. In fact one of the reasons that we have had bouts of congestion on the roads leading to Kwai Chung container port is because under-forecasting, or higher than expected growth, has left us stranded with insufficient capacity. If the capacity of terminals is deficient, traffic spills over on to the roads and everyone in the community especially those living in the vicinity suffer from the congestion. So, in my view, the Government should consider carefully and continue with the construction of Container Terminal No. 9 in Tsing Yi.

Having said that, I do agree that we do need to take into account local concerns when building and operating container terminals. One such suggestion is that in zoning for land use, industrial, warehousing and commercial buildings be planned between the terminal and residential housing. Another is the successful use of noise barriers on connecting roads, as witnessed by the new roads in Kowloon leading from the Eastern Harbour Tunnel. Thank you.

8.47 pm

SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES: Mr Deputy President, I should like to respond to some of the points made by Honourable Members. My colleague, Mr Graham BARNES, the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, will cover planning, environmental and traffic considerations.

First, I should like to outline the background of the need for additional port facilities.

An effective port is the key to our continued economic growth and the continued economic growth of our natural hinterland within China. Both Hong Kong and southern China would be adversely affected if we fail to meet the demands of our combined trade.

Our policy is to attempt to match supply and demand for port facilities. In this way, the private sector can be encouraged to pay for, construct and operate costly new infrastructure which otherwise would need to be funded from the public purse. This policy has succeeded very well and has established Hong Kong as a world leader in port services and as a principal hub port for world trade and cargo services.

Demands from trade will continue to grow. Our container growth this year is extremely high. It is expected to remain strong well into next year. In planning terms this means we need to provide additional container handling capacity in the port. At present trend levels of growth we will need the next container terminal, that is, No. 8, in less than two years, and the next following -- No. 9 -- two years later, during 1995. Further development will take place on Lantau.

The right to develop Container Terminal No. 8 has been granted and we shall need to grant the rights for Container Terminal No. 9 in early 1993. In order to retain our competitive edge and, indeed, to meet the legitimate expectations of our industries, our objective has always been to bring on new port facilities as demand requires. This policy has withstood the test of time and has enabled the port to meet Hong Kong's needs. If we were to take a conscious decision not to meet demand, we would drive business away from Hong Kong.

The question really is two-fold -- have we got our timings right and what alternative sites are available? I shall speak later on our growth forecasts and associated timings. However, I am satisfied that the first berth of Container Terminal No. 9 will be required by mid-1995 -- some two years before the Lantau Fixed Crossing is expected to open. Put another way, if we are to continue to meet demand, then alternative deep water sites must be put to use before the Lantau Fixed Crossing opens. PADS conducted a territory-wide site search and confirmed that the only two viable sites likely to be available before the Lantau Fixed Crossing opened in 1997 were Stonecutters Island and southeast Tsing Yi. The Governor in his annual policy address advised this Council on 11 October 1989 of the intention to locate Container Terminal No. 8 on Stonecutters Island and Container Terminal No. 9 on reclaimed land off southeast Tsing Yi.

According to our best estimates, we anticipate a demand of some 2.8 million TEU's over and above the capacity of Kwai Chung, even with Container Terminal No. 8 fully operational, but before the Lantau Fixed Crossing can be commissioned. The question is: can any significant number be handled at sites other than at Tsing Yi. Let me now speak in more detail on operational constraints and siting issues.

Container terminals are constrained by a number of key factors. The most important of these is water depth to accommodate presentday container vessels. We need a minimum water depth of 15 m in the approaches to a terminal and alongside its

berths.

Such depths can only be realistically provided in the Kwai Chung/Tsing Yi area, in several locations around Lantau, and in Tolo Harbour. Tseung Kwan O is not suitable for large container vessels -- and, in any event, has totally inadequate infrastructural support.

Tolo Harbour is not a practical alternative -- again, it does not have the infrastructural support and could not become available when required.

For all practical purposes this leaves us, until 1997, with only the Kwai Chung/Tsing Yi area. Given its deep water, this area has significant strategic potential for port development.

The PADS study in 1988 first identified southeast Tsing Yi as a suitable site for container port development. This has been confirmed by a detailed feasibility study recently concluded.

The question as to whether Kwai Chung itself could be expanded will be covered by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands.

#### Forecasts of growth

In determining the siting for Container Terminal No. 9, much depends on the accuracy of our forecasts of demand. For planning purposes, we have assumed a 14% annual growth rate in container throughput at the terminals. This estimate is based on well tested and proven methodology, taking into account Hong Kong's annual performance over the preceding 60 months and from this projecting future growth and hence, terminal requirements. This system has been in place since 1982 and has had a good, if somewhat conservative, track record. Let me stress the word "conservative" -- for whilst we are planning for 14% growth, total container throughput this year, at over 20%, is substantially higher.

#### Competition from other ports

It has been suggested that rather than provide new facilities in Hong Kong before Lantau becomes available, cargoes over and above our port capacity might be better handled at nearby alternative ports. There are two problems with this -- first we

have the liner services in Hong Kong which guarantee an exporter rapid, regular and efficient transit to his markets. If we force him to use nearby ports his goods may lose their competitive edge. But that edge will not be slow to be sharpened. Those 2 million TEU's that I referred to earlier will be more than enough to stimulate the diversion of shipping and support services from Hong Kong. Once gone, that trade and those services are highly unlikely to return. This brings me to the second problem. Handling that cargo brings very considerable economic benefit to the community. Losing it will give us long-term and very painful losses. We have estimated that loss of trans-shipment traffic alone would cost us some \$30 billion between 1997 and 2006.

Another suggestion has been that we should improve the efficiency of our terminals thereby delaying the need for more facilities until it is possible to develop on Lantau. It is in all of our interests that productivity is as high as possible. Unfortunately one cannot directly compare the productivity of one port -- or one terminal within a port -- with another. Each has its different characteristics. But, given the cost of developing terminals in Hong Kong and the fact that they are operated by commercial interests, I would be extremely surprised if market forces do not ensure the highest levels of productivity.

Mr Deputy President, our intention to construct container terminal facilities at Tsing Yi has been public knowledge for several years. Since it is obviously right that we should be entirely sure that no possible alternative exists before committing ourselves, we are reviewing yet again both the timing and siting for Container Terminal No. 9. We expect to make a decision very shortly.

Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS: Mr Deputy President, I am going to use most of my allotted time to try to describe what we will do in Tsing Yi, if, as seems most probable at this moment, we proceed to develop Container Terminal No. 9 (CT9) in the southeast corner of Tsing Yi. But before I do that I want to make a couple of general points which have been made but are worth emphasizing. First, there are extremely few sites in Hong Kong which have the depth, the access to sea shipping routes, and by road to the origins and destinations of the containers and their contents. Second, in the time that we need to bring CT9 into operation, that is, before the fixed crossing to Lantau will be completed, southeast Tsing Yi is and indeed

always has been the only place where we could do it. So, locating CT9 there has always been an integral part of the port development strategy.

It is a little hard to describe what we will be doing in southeast Tsing Yi without a plan to show it, but I will try. As Members all know, the stretch of the eastern coastline southwards from the Southern Tsing Yi Bridge down to the southeast corner is occupied more or less up to the foothills by oil terminals and industry built on reclamations served by a single road behind the lots. There have always been some conflicting features in the planning between the southern-most sector of Cheung Ching Public Housing Estate and Mayfair Gardens and some of these uses, and, independently of the plans for container use at southeast Tsing Yi, Government is seeking to remove all of the potentially hazardous installations in this area. The reclamation and development of the seabed for container uses will involve a complete change in the road pattern of south Tsing Yi to take container and existing industrial traffic away from the residential development. Firstly, the terminal will necessitate the construction of four extra lanes of traffic on a new bridge to Kwai Chung. These will lead directly into a new road under reclamation between the new container terminals and the land presently occupied by the oil terminals. This land -- that is the land where the oil terminals are now sited -- will be developed with industrial buildings of varying heights so as to provide a buffer between the two residential estates and the container terminals and their traffic. The diversion of other industrial traffic to this road will result in noise levels, which, although greater than ideal, will be a considerable improvement over the present situation, even to those most nearly affected in Mayfair Gardens and Cheung Ching Estate. The glare of the floodlights will be prevented by louvred lighting. The area will be extensively landscaped to help tone down the atmosphere of bustle and activity which generally prevails around container terminals. The overall flow through Rambler Channel will not be significantly reduced.

What then of Kwai Chung? Various improvements are being made to the Kwai Chung road system now, but by 1997 we look forward to a Kwai Chung which will have a completely new north/south link by the Route 3/West Kowloon Expressway and the new pattern of passenger traffic following the opening of the MTR line from Tsing Yi to Hong Kong Island. My colleague, the Secretary for Transport, has assured me that he has studied the road capacity carefully and it should then be sufficient, although until these facilities are completed there may be some places of congestion.

The point which I am trying to emphasize is that on the basis of careful and



systematic studies, the Administration does not think that CT9, if sited at Tsing Yi, could produce the environmental conditions feared by some of the unofficial Members who have spoken, even those that will exist at the time of construction. It would however be quite another matter if the additional container capacity necessary for meeting the forecast container growth were to be provided by enlarging the existing Kwai Chung Container Port. The main problems would be that the overall transport and environmental planning for the area is simply not geared towards meeting the requirements of such an expansion. Although the Administration aims to maximize the land utilization in the existing Kwai Chung Container Port, the geographical and physical limitations of the area suggest that the scope for so doing is extremely limited. First, while we are confident that the existing and planned road network in the Kwai Chung Container Port is sufficient to meet the demand generated by Container Terminal No. 8, which is being developed on Stonecutters Island, any further major increase in the throughput of the Kwai Chung Port would certainly overload the system. The traffic conditions of the Kwai Chung area would become considerably worse. Moreover, any practicable expansion of the existing Kwai Chung Container Port would require a huge area of container back-up land (which, as Members are well aware, has always been in drastically short supply) to be converted for terminal use. The alignment of the Container Port Road will also have to be modified, resulting in both container terminal operations and that road having to be moved closer to Mei Foo Sun Chuen. So that solution does not look promising. However because it has been raised, the transport and environmental impacts of a scheme on these lines are being looked at carefully, and before a final decision is made to proceed. We hope to complete our assessment by the end of this month. But I think it is unlikely that the findings of the assessment would warrant a major deviation from the current port development strategy.

So I hope we will be able to persuade Members, as it is difficult to persuade in such a short session as this -- and perhaps more important those who live in Tsing Yi and Kwai Chung that the proposal is not the problem which they presently perceive it; we will certainly try to do so.

Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

Question on the adjournment proposed, put and agreed to.

Next Sitting

DEPUTY PRESIDENT: In accordance with Standing Orders I now adjourn the Council until 2.30 pm on Wednesday, 27 November.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past Nine o'clock.

Note: The short titles of the Bills/motions listed in the Hansard have been translated into Chinese for information and guidance only; they do not have authoritative effect in Chinese.