

1 HONG KONG LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL -- 16 January 1991

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OFFICIAL REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 16 January 1991

The Council met at half-past Two o'clock

PRESENT

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR (PRESIDENT)

SIR DAVID CLIVE WILSON, G.C.M.G.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY

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

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE SIR PIERS JACOBS, K.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 CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, C.B.E., J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE MARIA TAM WAI-CHU, C.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE HENRIETTA IP MAN-HING, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN YING-LUN, O.B.E., J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE PETER POON WING-CHEUNG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHENG HON-KWAN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHUNG PUI-LAM, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HO SAI-CHU, 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 POON CHI-FAI, J.P.

PROF. THE HONOURABLE POON CHUNG-KWONG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE SZETO WAH

THE HONOURABLE TAI CHIN-WAH, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS ROSANNA TAM WONG YICK-MING, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TAM YIU-CHUNG

DR THE HONOURABLE DANIEL TSE, C.B.E., J.P.

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

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

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL LEUNG MAN-KIN, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT

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

THE HONOURABLE RONALD JOSEPH ARCULLI, J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL CHENG TAK-KIN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE DAVID CHEUNG CHI-KONG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE RONALD CHOW MEI-TAK

THE HONOURABLE MRS NELLIE FONG WONG KUT-MAN, J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE DANIEL LAM WAI-KEUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS MIRIAM LAU KIN-YEE

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

DR THE HONOURABLE LEONG CHE-HUNG

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG WAI-TUNG, J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE KINGSLEY SIT HO-YIN

THE HONOURABLE MRS SO CHAU YIM-PING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TIEN PEI-CHUN, J.P.

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

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

THE HONOURABLE YEUNG KAI-YIN, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER

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

THE HONOURABLE PETER TSAO KWANG-YUNG, C.B.E., C.P.M., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS

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

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL DAVID CARTLAND, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE

ABSENT

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW WONG WANG-FAT, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE PAUL CHENG MING-FUN

IN ATTENDANCE

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.

Merchant Shipping (Prevention and Control
of Pollution) Ordinance 1990
Merchant Shipping (Prevention and Control
of Pollution) (Specification of Substances)
Order
1991..... 12/91

Merchant Shipping (Liability and Compensation
for Oil Pollution) Ordinance 1990
Merchant Shipping (Liability and
Compensation for Oil Pollution) Ordinance
1990 (Commencement) Notice 1991..... 13/91

Merchant Shipping (Prevention and Control
of Pollution) Ordinance 1990
Merchant Shipping (Prevention and Control of
Pollution) Ordinance 1990 (Commencement)
Notice
1991..... 14/91

Pension Benefits Ordinance Pension Benefits Ordinance
(Established Offices) Order 1991.....
15/91

Revised Edition of the Laws Ordinance 1965 Revised Edition of
the Laws
(Correction of Errors) Order 1991.....

Sessional Papers 1990-91

No. 39 -- Hong Kong Examination Authority Financial Statements with Programme of Activities for the year ended 31 August 1990

No. 40 -- Emergency Relief Fund Annual Report by the Trustee for the year ending on 31 March 1990

No. 41 -- Report by the Trustee of the Police Children's Education Trust Police Education and Welfare Trust for the period 1 April 1988 -- 31 March 1989

No. 42 -- Report by the Trustee of the Police Children's Education Trust Police Education and Welfare Trust for the period 1 April 1989 -- 31 March 1990

Oral answers to questions

Public sector reform

1. MR BARROW asked: Will the Government inform this Council of its current approach to public sector reform?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, our current approach has been to select priority areas of public sector reform and use pilot projects to test the wider applicability of new concepts to enable us to decide how best to extend the benefits to other parts of the Government. Four pilot projects are under way.

The first project reviews the relationship between the Education and Manpower Branch and the Education Department in the schools education programme. The object is to strengthen the role of the Policy Secretary in allocating resources within his particular area of responsibility. The review has been completed and recommended the introduction of a formal system for reviewing policies, agreeing on objectives, and evaluating performance based on the production of an annual policy statement by the Branch, and an annual operating plan and a five-year plan by the Department. The Policy Secretary and the Controlling Officer would be delegated more financial

authority to manage their budgets. These recommendations will be implemented in the Education and Manpower Branch and the Education Department on a trial basis in the 1992-93 Estimates.

The second project examines the feasibility of introducing a trading fund operation into the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department. A business review of the vehicle section of the Department has concluded that it could benefit substantially in terms of reduced costs and better service by taking a more commercial approach. We are now considering the introduction of a new accounting framework under which the vehicle section will charge full costs for services it provides to other departments and will be required to achieve specific financial and operational targets. This first step towards the creation of a trading fund will be taken in the next few months.

The third project reviews the Government's relationship with major statutory bodies. The object of this review is to strengthen the ability of the Government to monitor the performance of these bodies by formalizing the arrangements for agreeing on objectives and accountability. The review covers 13 major statutory bodies and has largely been completed. The initial finding is that the present reporting and monitoring framework is generally satisfactory, although there is room for improvement, such as the need for some bodies to define more clearly their operational objectives. This will be looked at further by Policy Secretaries concerned. It is our intention to undertake the review periodically to examine the scope for improvements.

The fourth project examines increasing delegation of authority by Civil Service Branch and Finance Branch to give departments more flexibility and responsibility for the effective use of their resources. Controlling Officers have now been delegated authority for appointments and promotions, control of recruiting expenses, control of funds for vocational training, as well as under a number of other Civil Service Regulations. This process will continue. Separately, four working groups are looking at the main areas of concern to departments. These include recruitment, the Departmental Establishment Committees, equipment procurement, and office accommodation procedures.

Sir, the programme is complemented and supported by value-for-money studies which focus on efficiency improvements to specific, individual services and activities.

MR BARROW: Sir, I am pleased to learn from the Chief Secretary's response that the initiatives proposed a year or so ago have not run out of steam. However, given that the current initiatives are described as pilot projects, could the Chief Secretary confirm that there is a total commitment at all levels to the overall reform programme, and that the benefits are fully understood at the directorate level?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, Sir.

MR PETER WONG: Sir, my question is very similar to Mr Martin BARROW's but I will ask it anyway for the assurance. Can the Chief Secretary please confirm that the Administration is still fully committed to public sector reform?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, Sir.

MR EDWARD HO: Sir, the four pilot projects are aimed at better control of resources in government departments and public bodies. Would the Secretary please inform this Council what is being done to monitor the performance of individual officers in the Civil Service to achieve maximum efficiency?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, clearly, part of any public services reform programme is education and training of the individuals concerned to ensure that they are fully aware of the aims and objectives of the programme and are well motivated. We are running a series of courses in our Training Division to ensure that people do understand the purposes behind the public sector reform, and indeed we have regular discussions of the programme at my Chief Secretary's Committee. We are also taking into account the performance of people in the management of resources in producing their annual confidential reports.

MR BARROW: Sir, could the Chief Secretary inform this Council if both corporatization and privatization form part of the long-term direction of reform, and if there are any specific plans in addition to those related to the new airport?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, yes, we are keeping the whole question of corporatization and contracting-out of services under regular review. We do not intend to pursue them for their own sake but we are examining them on an on-going basis, looking for the most efficient and effective ways of providing public services. Some of the projects currently under consideration are:

the building and operating of the Island East Refuse Transfer Station;

contracting-out of the Aberdeen Tunnel;

the privatization of vehicle examination;

the contracting-out of the management of parking-meters;

the implementation of the sewage strategy;

the reorganization of the Registrar General's Department;

the privatization of land-fill; and

the privatization of public cargo-working areas.

Clearly, Sir, as far as the port and airport development strategy project is concerned, there are a number of projects which are suitable for privatization and these are kept under review also.

Expenditure on district administration

2. MR POON CHI-FAI asked (in Cantonese): In view of the drastic reduction of expenditure on community building programmes, district board allocations and staffing costs of the City and New Territories Administration (CNTA), will Government inform this Council :

(i) of the number of public works projects and community building programmes in 1991-92 which have to be deferred as a result of budgetary controls and the total

costs of these affected programmes and projects;

(ii) of the difference in the allocation of district board funds for the following year in comparison with the amount of funds allocated this year; the difference between the original and the proposed establishment for CNTA next year; and

(iii) what criteria have been used in determining the reduction of expenses in relation to those affected programmes, district board allocations and staffing costs; what effects it will have on the livelihood of the people, the implementation of district administration, the operation of the various district boards, area committees, mutual aid committees and owners' corporations; and what specific measures are available to minimize these effects?

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS: Sir, I think it would be more helpful to Members if I were to reverse the order in responding to in fact some 11 points in Mr POON's question.

First, on 17 October last year, I issued a press release on the measures that would be introduced in 1991-92 to reduce spending and streamline the operations of the City and New Territories Administration. The district board chairmen were briefed by the respective District Officers on the same day. The aim is to achieve savings in manpower and expenses as part of the Government's austerity programme whilst at the same time maintaining standards as far as possible by making the best use of existing services. I wish to stress, Sir, that these measures have been prompted solely by the need to control Government's recurrent expenditure. Government remains fully committed to the district administration scheme in which the district boards play such an important role. If and when implemented on 1 April 1991, the new arrangements will be monitored closely and great care will be taken to ensure that services to the district boards, area committees, mutual aid committees and the general public remain unaffected.

The actual figures to be proposed for the 1991-92 Draft Estimates have not yet been finalized.

Sir, I assume that by public works projects, Mr POON is referring to what we call minor environmental improvement or MEI projects, which together with community involvement projects, are carried out each year on the advice of the respective district boards out of their annual district board fund allocations. The total

number of these projects is determined by the number of requests or funding applications received from district organizations each year. As a district board member, Mr POON would be aware that for this reason, it would not be possible to establish in advance the number of MEI projects and community programmes that will have to be deferred because of the proposed reduction in district board funds. Discussions are taking place with a number of other organizations with a view to devising a new programme which would lessen any adverse impact of diminished allocation in funds. Our aim is to restore, as far as possible and at least in part, the allocations for MEIs.

MR POON CHI-FAI (in Cantonese): Sir, according to a recent district board information paper, the number of public enquiry service centres will be reduced from 69 to 20; for example, in Kwun Tong, the existing seven centres will be reduced to one to cover a population of about 600,000. Does the Government realize that such reductions will not only cause inconvenience to residents but will also indirectly undermine the link of the Government with the public, mutual aid committees and owners' corporations? Will the Administration consider establishing some mobile enquiry service centres, or using some offices in densely-populated estates as public enquiry service centres?

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS: Sir, the number of public enquiry service centres will be reduced to 20 but we will ensure that in every locality of population concentration there will remain at least one centre within reasonably easy reach. The reduced public enquiry service will be backed up by an automated system computerized with, possibly, up-to-the-hour data on the basis of which replies to inquiries will be made through a telephone hotline.

Sir, I envisage despite the reduction of the number of centres, we in fact will improve the quality of the service.

Hong Kong's participation in the Second World Climate Conference

3. MR MARTIN LEE asked: Will Government inform this Council of the full circumstances surrounding the withdrawal of our honourable colleague, Mr Graham BARNES, from the ministerial session of the Second World Climate Conference sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in Geneva on 6 - 7 November 1990; and state

categorically:

- (a) whether there were any discussions between the Hong Kong Government and the Governments of either the United Kingdom or the People's Republic of China (PRC) in regard to the withdrawal of Mr BARNES, and if so, what was the substance of those discussions; and
- (b) what is the position of the Hong Kong Government on the future participation of Hong Kong in the WMO and other specialized agencies of the United Nations and conferences sponsored by such specialized agencies?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, Hong Kong was invited to attend the Second World Climate Conference in November last year. The Conference was divided into two parts : the first six days, for technical experts, were attended throughout by the Hong Kong delegation. At the second part, lasting two days, ministers of participating states were to endorse an action plan for dealing with the climate change. The invitation to Hong Kong to attend both parts of the Conference was issued by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme. Hong Kong is a "territorial" member of the World Meteorological Organization, as distinct from a state, governmental or United Nations member. But Hong Kong is not a member of the United Nations Environment Programme. Territorial membership of the World Meteorological Organization is designed to enable non-sovereign states who maintain their own meteorological services, such as Hong Kong, to participate in the World Meteorological Organization in a capacity distinct from sovereign states.

The Conference was sponsored by six international organizations. Hong Kong participates in the activities of only two of these : the World Meteorological Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization. Proceedings at the Second World Climate Conference were governed by the Conference's own rules of procedure. The Conference Secretariat confirmed that Hong Kong's invitation flowed from its membership of the World Meteorological Organization.

The Hong Kong delegation attended the first part of the Conference which lasted six days and found it very useful. Shortly before the second part of the Conference, that is the two-day ministerial part, the PRC questioned Hong Kong's participation on the basis that it would not be consistent with its non-sovereign status. Following consultations with the United Kingdom Government it was decided that, since the matter could not immediately be resolved, the Hong Kong delegation should be withdrawn. We

made it clear to the Chinese side that this decision in no way prejudiced Hong Kong's status in the World Meteorological Organization or our right to participate in our own name in World Meteorological Organization conferences.

With regard to the second part of the Honourable Member's question, we have agreed with the Chinese in the Joint Liaison Group that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) will continue to have its own meteorological service after 1997 and will remain a territorial member of the World Meteorological Organization. We have also agreed with the Chinese on the Hong Kong SAR's participation in a number of other United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Intergovernmental Typhoon Committee.

MR MARTIN LEE: In deciding to have the Hong Kong delegation withdrawn from the ministerial session of the said conference, did the United Kingdom and/or Hong Kong Government take the view that the objections from the PRC were valid or invalid and why was it decided not to leave the objection to be resolved by the Conference Secretariat or by the delegates attending the conference?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, we were clear and the British Government was clear that the position of the Hong Kong Government should have allowed it to remain at the conference. However, another view was expressed by the Chinese delegation to the effect that, firstly, the Second World Climate Conference was jointly sponsored by a number of United Nations agencies and Hong Kong was a member of only one, the WMO; secondly, that it would not have been appropriate for Hong Kong as a non-sovereign entity to sign the Ministerial Declaration. Clearly there is room for two points of view on Hong Kong's position at the conference although we clearly were aware of our own. We did not decide to put the matter to the vote since the outcome was uncertain and could have caused embarrassment to the Hong Kong delegation.

MR LI: Sir, would the Government inform this Council if the Government of the PRC has voiced any objections to the participation of Hong Kong in any other international organization of which Hong Kong is currently a member, and also in conferences sponsored by those organizations?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, my memory is that there have been some occasions on which such an occurrence has happened but I do not have the details at present with me.

MR ARCULLI: Sir, would the Chief Secretary be able to inform this Council when it was known to participants that Hong Kong was invited to attend the ministerial part of the conference and, secondly, whether participants in the ministerial part of the conference had a status similar to Hong Kong, that is non-sovereign status?

CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not in a position to say when people were aware of certain situations; that must have been a matter for the organizers of the conference. Nor am I in a position to comment on the position of other states taking part in the conference.

MR MCGREGOR: Sir, will the Government state whether it believes Hong Kong is allowed under the Joint Declaration to participate in ministerial sessions as well as other sessions of conferences that are not limited to states?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, if Hong Kong is a member of the sponsor of the conference, then Hong Kong does have that right under the Joint Declaration.

MR CHOW: Sir, would Government inform this Council as to whether Hong Kong has participated in other conferences sponsored by the WMO and, in particular, the First World Climate Conference and, if so, in what capacity?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, my information is that the first of these conferences was a "think tank". Hong Kong was not invited to attend and did not do so. It has attended subsequently other meetings sponsored by the WMO.

MR MARTIN LEE: Sir, in light of Annex I, Section 11 of the Joint Declaration which states: "that the Central People's Government shall take the necessary steps to ensure

that the Hong Kong SAR shall continue to retain its status in an appropriate capacity in those international organizations of which the PRC is a member and in which Hong Kong participates in one capacity or another", will the Government inform this Council whether it believes that any effort by the PRC Government to bar the participation of Hong Kong in the Second World Climate Conference constitutes a breach of at least the spirit of the Joint Declaration?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, the status of the SAR Government in the Joint Declaration is not relevant in advance of 1997 and we do not believe that in this case the Chinese Government was in breach of the Joint Declaration in this respect. Clearly, their objection on this occasion was in connection with the sponsorship of the conference in question and with the fact that there were more than one sponsors of which Hong Kong was not a member. They were making that objection as a participant in the conference.

DR LEONG: Sir, in the light of the fact that the Second World Climate Conference was sponsored by many organizations such as the WMO, the United Nations Environmental Programme, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Food and Agricultural Organization, will the Government inform this Council if it knows whether all participants in the ministerial sessions of the conference were required to be members of all these organizations or whether membership of one organization was sufficient?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, as I said in answer to a previous question, I am not in a position to comment on the position of other participants in the conference.

MR BARROW: Sir, could the Chief Secretary advise if a full list of the international memberships already agreed in the Joint Liaison Group could be made public?

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, that information is already made available in a publication on the achievements of the Joint Liaison Group. I will arrange for the Honourable Member to have a copy.

Written answer to question

Use of accident and emergency services by Vietnamese refugees and boat people

4. MR CHOW asked: Will Government inform this Council whether the usage rate of accident and emergency services and the occupancy rate of beds in regional and subvented hospitals by Vietnamese refugees and boat people have risen during the past two years, and whether their use of these services has seriously affected and caused delay to local people using the same services?

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: The monthly average of Vietnamese refugees and boat people using the accident and emergency service in regional hospitals has risen from 805 in 1989 to 992 in 1990. In the same period, the average occupancy of regional hospital beds by these people has also increased from 2.3% to 2.9%.

In subvented hospitals, they account for 0.47% of the bed occupancy. This rate has remained steady over the last two years. No record was kept of their use of the subvented accident and emergency service prior to May 1990. Based on the statistics available since then, it is observed that approximately 120 Vietnamese refugees and boat people visit the accident and emergency department in subvented hospitals each month.

Overall, the use of medical facilities by Vietnamese refugees and boat people constitutes less than 3% of the case-load and occupancy in regional hospitals and less than 0.5% in subvented hospitals. These can be absorbed within the capacity of our hospitals and thus have had little impact on service to the public. No member of the public has ever been turned away or denied prompt and adequate treatment because of the use of these facilities by Vietnamese refugees and boat people.

Motion

DRUG TRAFFICKING (RECOVERY OF PROCEEDS) ORDINANCE

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY moved the following motion:

"That the Drug Trafficking (Recovery of Proceeds) (Designated Countries and Territories) Order 1991, made by the Governor in Council on 8 January 1991 -

(1) be amended -

(a) in paragraph 2, in the definition of "appropriate authority of a designated country", by repealing " " and substituting " ";

(b) in paragraph 5(1)(b), by repealing " " and substituting " ";

(c) in paragraph 2(e) of Schedule 2 -

(i) in the new subsection (12)(a), by repealing " " and substituting " "; and

(ii) in the new subsection (13), by repealing " " and substituting " ";

(d) in Schedule 3 -

(i) in section 2(12)(a) of the modified Ordinance, by repealing " " and substituting " ";

(ii) in section 2(13) of the modified Ordinance, by repealing " " and substituting " " and substituting " ";

(iii) in section 7(9) of the modified Ordinance, by repealing " "

He said: Sir, I move the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Drug Trafficking (Recovery of Proceeds) Ordinance, enacted in July 1989, has strengthened our ability to combat the international trade in drugs by providing for the tracing, restraining and confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking. Section 28(1) of the Ordinance provides for the Governor in Council, with the approval of this Council, to designate countries and territories outside Hong Kong to enable their confiscation and other orders relating to drug trafficking to be enforced here; it also allows assistance to be provided in relation to their drug trafficking

investigations. To ensure reciprocal treatment, Hong Kong has negotiated bilateral arrangements with Canada, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom jurisdictions of England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, as well as Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man.

These arrangements will come into effect when the parties to them have notified each other that their respective requirements for entry into force have been met. In Hong Kong's case, the requirement is for the overseas jurisdictions to be designated under the Drug Trafficking (Recovery of Proceeds) Ordinance.

This motion seeks the Council's approval to the Drug Trafficking (Recovery of Proceeds) (Designated Countries and Territories) Order 1991 made by the Governor in Council on 8 January 1991, subject to the amendments listed in the draft resolution now before this Council. These amendments are solely to rectify clerical errors, and to achieve consistency with the Chinese terms used in the main Ordinance; they represent no substantive change to the Order made by the Governor in Council.

The Designation Order will apply the Ordinance with certain modifications to Confiscation Orders and related proceedings in the countries and territories with which Hong Kong has negotiated bilateral arrangements. In particular the High Court will be able to:

- (a) order the restraint in Hong Kong of property which may be required to enforce a confiscation order made in a designated country or territory; and
- (b) register and enforce a confiscation order made by a court in a designated country or territory.

The Designation Order also provides, in paragraph 7, that the value of any property recovered in a designated country or territory in response to a request by the Government of Hong Kong for assistance in the enforcement of an order is to be treated as reducing the amount payable in Hong Kong under a confiscation order made by the High Court or District Court. This mechanism is required since, under the arrangements negotiated, property recovered would normally remain where it is recovered.

The modifications to the Ordinance are set out in Schedule 2 to the Order. These modifications are mainly of a technical nature, to make the provisions applicable to the law and practice relating to confiscation orders and related provisions in

the designated jurisdictions. For the convenience of users of this legislation, both in Hong Kong and abroad, the whole Ordinance, as modified, is set out in Schedule 3 to the Order.

Sir, I beg to move.

Question on the motion proposed, put and agreed to.

First Reading of Bills

SECURITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990

PROTECTION OF INVESTORS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990

COMMODITY EXCHANGES (PROHIBITION) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990

COMMODITIES TRADING (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1990

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

Second Reading of Bills

SECURITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Securities Ordinance."

He said: Sir, I move that the Securities (Amendment) Bill 1990 be read the Second time.

This Bill seeks to extend the time limit for the commencement of proceedings for summary offences as contained in the Securities Ordinance from six months to three years after an offence has been committed or 12 months after the first discovery of the offence by the prosecutor, whichever period expires first.

Summary offences concerning the trading of securities and registration of dealers are often complex in nature, involving numerous witnesses and voluminous documentary evidence. Experience of the Securities and Futures Commission indicates that the existing six-month time limit is too restrictive because an offence may not come to light until some time after it was committed. Furthermore, in most cases considerable time is required to prepare for the prosecution. The extension of the time limit will assist in facilitating the effective enforcement of the Securities Ordinance.

Sir, I move that the debate on this motion be now adjourned.

Question on the adjournment proposed, put and agreed to.

PROTECTION OF INVESTORS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Protection of Investors Ordinance."

He said: Sir, I move that the Protection of Investors (Amendment) Bill 1990 be read the Second time.

This Bill seeks to extend the period within which proceeding for summary offences under the Ordinance may be brought. The provisions are the same as those contained in the Securities (Amendment) Bill 1990 which I have just moved. The summary offences in the Protection of Investors Ordinance are concerned primarily with the advertising of unregistered investment business.

Sir, I move that the debate on this motion be now adjourned.

Question on the adjournment proposed, put and agreed to.

COMMODITY EXCHANGES (PROHIBITION) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Commodity Exchanges (Prohibition) Ordinance."

He said: Sir, I move that the Commodity Exchanges (Prohibition) (Amendment) Bill 1990 be read the Second time.

This Bill has the same provisions as those contained in the Securities (Amendment) Bill and the Protection of Investors (Amendment) Bill which I have just moved. The summary offences in the Commodity Exchanges (Prohibition) Ordinance relate mainly to the establishment and operation of a commodity exchange.

Sir, I move that the debate on this motion be now adjourned.

Question on the adjournment proposed, put and agreed to.

COMMODITIES TRADING (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1990

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Commodities Trading Ordinance."

He said: Sir, I move that the Commodities Trading (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1990 be read the Second time.

This Bill carries the same provisions as those proposed in the three Bills which I have just moved. The summary offences in the Commodities Trading Ordinance relate mainly to trading in commodities futures contracts and the registration of dealers.

Sir, I move that the debate on this motion be now adjourned.

Question on the adjournment proposed, put and agreed to.

Member's motion

EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 4

MRS CHOW moved the following motion:

"That this Council takes note of the Education Commission Report No. 4 and urges members of the public to comment on the Report before the expiry of the consultation period on 31 January 1991."

MRS CHOW: Sir, I move the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper.

A little over 10 years ago, I had the opportunity to speak for the first time in this Council. The subject I chose was education. Armed with the first hand experience of a concerned mother and little else, I prefaced my speech with a complaint that parents' views on education were not sought, and spoke with much conviction on the need for whole day schooling, attention to the curriculum, and language in education. Since then I have repeatedly spoken, whenever I had the opportunity, on educational matters as a parent and a business person. I was therefore gratified to have been drafted into the Education Commission a year ago, where I had a modest part to play in the making of the Commission No. 4 Report before us to-day. Having been so involved in that process, my objectivity must be called to question if I were to say that it is a good report, although I wholeheartedly believe it is for its balanced good sense, clarity of vision and definition of objectives. This is not to say that I am in total agreement with every single detail of the report, but more of that later. What made this report special is the spirit behind it, so ably led and inspired by the Chairman Mrs Rita FAN and Deputy Chairman of the Commission Mr K.Y. YEUNG, which represents a rare unity of purpose and determination to improve the standard of education in our schools. The package of measures is one, and all parts are interdependent, while the approach to our deliberation was comprehensive and interlinked. The integrity of this strategic approach should be appreciated and respected.

For years I have been convinced that the attention paid to curriculum development was not only grossly inadequate but also unsatisfactorily placed. The Advisory Inspectorate of the Education Department has been widely recognized to concentrate most of their efforts on school inspections, while initiatives in curriculum development have been accorded secondary consideration. As their title suggests, inspectors are there to inspect, and this function may require very different qualities and priorities from demands arising from the creation, shaping and improvement of the curriculum and its related materials and activities. The separation of the two functions is therefore the undoubtedly logical step to take. Initially I was among those who advocated the setting up of an independent Curriculum Development Institute outside of Government. However, I am now satisfied that the present proposals with provisions for a one-line vote and the open recruitment policy on contract terms should ensure room that is necessary for the unconstrained development of the Institute. However, no effort should be spared to identify the most qualified and committed leadership with the merit and competence acknowledged

by fellow professionals to set a strong foundation for this body. Also it should be able to rely on the Education Department for support and a reconstituted Curriculum Development Council for good counsel from within and outside the Government.

Of the tasks proposed for the Curriculum Development Council and the Institute, I rate the need to promote the adoption of the activity approach as one that demands top priority. Every parent would like to see his child enjoy going to school. A curriculum that nurtures an interest in learning is one that breeds the will and initiative towards a positive attitude to receive and acquire education during the formative years of the child.

The most controversial topic in the report must be language in education. This is a difficult issue, difficult in that there is a mismatch between our aspiration and our capability.

Every parent wants the best for his child. In the Hong Kong context, the value of English has historically been recognized as an instrument to academic and commercial advancement. However, with the universalization of educational opportunities as well as the strengthening of ties with China, we are now faced with the undesirable reality of deteriorating standards in both languages. No doubt researchers and statisticians will challenge this, and I am the first one to concede that this is only an impression formed on the basis of social and commercial contacts I have had with graduates, undergraduates and school children of different levels. But it is certainly an impression widely shared by many.

The mixed use of English and Chinese for teaching could be the cause or effect or the cause and effect of the lack of a clear-cut language policy in schools. Most parents send their children to what they think are schools that use English as the medium of instruction, but the fact of the matter is mixed-code as a poor substitute is widely used in most classrooms. 70% of children, we are told, cannot learn effectively in English which is a language they seldom use in their everyday life. What we are not told is how many per cent of the teachers who are supposed to be teaching in English do not have the necessary standard to do so. The Advisory Inspectorate of the Education Department should have the answer to this crucial question, but has been rather silent on the subject. Parents however deserve to know.

Since the publication of the Education Commission Report No. 1 in 1984 when steps have been taken to encourage a wider use of Chinese in the classroom, less than half of the government, aided and caput secondary schools have adopted Chinese fully or

partly as their medium of instruction. This is simply not good enough.

The framework proposed in this report is a distinct improvement, mapping out a definite timetable while allowing free choice to both schools and parents within the time frame. Personally I felt that Government should assume more of the responsibility sooner in setting the standard which schools must meet to enable them to offer English as the medium of instruction while assessment of capabilities of the students takes place simultaneously. However, I was persuaded that time and allowance should be given to schools and parents alike between the statement of intention and the actual implementation, and the choice should be assisted by reliable information based on the present Hong Kong Attainment Test and eventually the target related assessment from 1994. What is now contained in the report is an acceptable compromise which in my view would work if the education community as a whole act in accordance with the interest of educational objectives rather than market demands. Already we hear outcry for mandatory adoption of Chinese across the board emanating from the fear that those schools opting for Chinese might lose out on good quality students to schools opting for English. This may be the easy way out, but I cannot support it for its deprivation of choice to those capable of benefitting from opting for English and for the damage it would do to undermine the status of bilingualism in Hong Kong which would in turn diminish Hong Kong's standing as an international city.

Much as I and many parents that I have come across raised this issue, we would prefer whole day schooling for all levels of primary school. I believe that the mixed-mode system proposed in the report is a step in the right direction, given the resource limitations that we face.

Last week a group of representatives from five teachers' associations came to OMELCO to present their views on this aspect of the report. They stated their support for the concept of whole day schooling, but raised objections to the mixed-mode system. They were of the opinion that such a system might not fully benefit the children being converted to whole day, might inconvenience parents, but most important of all, might cause operational problems to the teaching staff, and irreparable damage on the morale of the teaching profession as a whole. They also asked for a deferment of the deadline to the consultation period.

Having considered the various points put forward, and having balanced them against the desirability of whole day schooling for at least the top tiers of all

our primary schools, I have come to the view that there is ample time between now and 1996 for many of these operational problems to be resolved. Provided that the time frame is firmly adhered to, the Education Department should try as far as possible to assist teachers to dispel their concerns. Similarly I do not think it is necessary to extend the consultation period for this purpose. We have more than five years between now and the time whole day school for Primary V and VI becomes a reality. We have waited too long. Any further delay would be intolerable.

The package of recommendations in this report marks the beginning of a lot of hard work, and will have far-reaching effects in a number of areas. The area that demands most urgent attention is that which relates to the teaching profession, which will be the subject of the next report of the Commission, and work is already under way to tackle it. In the meantime I call upon all who are interested to put forward their views on this report, so that it can be acted upon as soon as possible.

Sir, I so move.

Question on the motion proposed.

MR CHEONG: Sir, a sound education system is the basis upon which the advancement of any territory has to be based. Hong Kong is certainly no different and it is gratifying that for the past decade or so the Government has seen fit to devote much of its resources to the advancement of our educational system. It is also gratifying to note that the Education Commission has laboriously laboured at various issues involving education culminating in this fourth report. There has been really much debate on the contents of the fourth report. I would simply focus on two aspects. The first aspect is on the question of language in education. Language in education, as Mrs CHOW just said, is a controversial and complex problem to which there is no perfect solution. Yet, the Commission, of which I am an ex-officio member, has really tried to provide a coherent framework in which language reforms may be implemented responsively and successfully.

There is a strong lobby in our community calling for Chinese to be made the medium of instruction. While I recognize the benefits of education in the mother tongue for the majority of our students, I believe it of crucial importance to Hong Kong's future that English be accorded a proper place in our education system. Let me explain why. Hong Kong, as we all know, is an international, business, financial

and trading centre. Millions of faxes, telexes and phone calls or letters are made every day in English. And as a result, millions of dollars flow into Hong Kong underpinning Hong Kong's stability and prosperity. Unless we can communicate effectively with our trading partners and clients overseas, our businesses, our banks, our trading partners will certainly suffer, and so too will Hong Kong.

We are concerned in the business community that English standards are falling. This must not be allowed to continue. I therefore support wholeheartedly the recommendations in Education Commission Report No. 4 for the improvement of English standards. These include bridging courses for Secondary I and Secondary III students, and for those Chinese-medium students pursuing tertiary education. Of more immediate relevance to the workplace, I support the proposals to give school leavers at Secondary V and Secondary VII vocational English courses which will help them gain the language requirements needed in their chosen careers. The Vocational Training Council, of which I am the chairman, of course, will provide training such as English in hotel keeping and tourism at present. But much more needs to be done and I would like to offer here today the support and participation of the Vocational Training Council in devising and running appropriate courses in co-operation with Government and the business community. No doubt, I am sure, other tertiary institutions in Hong Kong, such as the Hong Kong Polytechnic and the universities, will do the same. I believe these measures will go quite a long way in providing employers with the employees who have reached the English standards that our businesses require.

The second aspect of the Education Commission Report that I would like to raise is that of behaviour in schools among our school children. I believe the Commission is right in saying that all school children may need some counselling and guidance at some point in their school career. I would therefore in principle support measures proposed by the Commission to reinforce and to make available more school-based counselling services.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that children are at school during their formative years. Teachers are not the only ones therefore entrusted with the task of ensuring that our children become responsible members of our society. In my view, nowadays, far too many people, even in this community, wrongly advocate that everything be done by Government and everything be responsible by Government. It is time that we as parents and as citizens recognize that we have an even more important role to play. Schools, run by Government, financed by Government and with teachers

basically subvented by Government, do a great deal but they can only do so much. It is incumbent upon us, parents, citizens, to build in our own children a strong foundation of morals and a proper sense of duty. I would therefore like to urge parents to participate more actively in activities involving co-operation between teachers and parents. I would also like to urge the Education Department and school management authorities to encourage the formation of more parent teacher associations. I believe that only with parents and teachers working together can we prepare our young people to make their rightful contribution to society.

Sir, I support the motion.

MR CHAN (in Cantonese): Sir, it is our common goal to improve the quality of education. The Education Commission has conducted a very comprehensive review of the implementation of nine years of free education. Both the Wan Chai District Board which I represent and I myself support generally all the recommendations contained in its fourth report, which we think should be adopted in full in order to achieve the desired effect of improving the quality of education. I would therefore like to comment on only a few points.

The education system in Hong Kong needs to be constantly reviewed and changes have to be introduced whenever necessary, especially in the area of curriculum development. For this reason I support the establishment of a Curriculum Development Institute, which should be set up as an independent body like the Hong Kong Examinations Authority, and not as a division of the Education Department, because government departments should take no part in curriculum development.

The report suggests that examinations be replaced by target-related assessments, and describes the many merits of such a proposal. I find myself totally convinced. However, the Commission seems to lack the determination to fully implement the proposal, as it suggests that the issue should be further examined. I think such a constructive recommendation should be implemented with greater resolution. To assess the progress of students on the basis of clearly set targets at different stages of education is in fact very much in line with the purposeful and enterprising spirit prevalent in a commercial city like Hong Kong. At the moment, parents do not know the targets and requirements of the curriculum, and therefore do not know how to help their children. Very often, they are expecting too much from their children, thereby exerting unnecessary pressure on them. I earnestly hope that the Commission will

promptly examine and implement this system in full, so that all students can acquire knowledge and skills at a progress best suited to their abilities.

The report will certainly serve a positive purpose in addressing the various issues pertaining to education in Hong Kong. In particular, it will help a great deal in tackling behavioral problems and those concerning low learning ability, a fall in the standard of both the Chinese and English languages and suitability of the curriculum.

Regarding the medium of instruction, I fully support the elimination of mixed-code teaching. As for language streaming, I accept this as an interim measure to solve a difficult and long-standing problem. To say the least, it is questionable whether teachers can teach in English that is readily understood by their students. I do not favour the idea of compelling schools to switch to Chinese-medium instruction. They should be given an option as to which medium of instruction to use according to the language ability of their teachers. In this regard, schools must be frank with the parents instead of being pretentious. On the other hand, parents should also be given the freedom of choice. At present, parents do not have any choice at all.

Proficiency in English is required for admission to universities. Even clerical jobs require candidates to possess a reasonably good standard of English. So "English" is the only choice they have. Language streaming will help solve the problem of mixed-code teaching, which is a teaching problem and not one caused by the wrongdoing on the part of the parents. I would therefore like to make two further recommendations. First, to introduce a second streaming exercise at the end of Secondary II; and second, to reform and strengthen the English courses for Chinese-medium classes. I should like to elaborate on these points below.

According to the Commission's recommendation, the second streaming exercise should be launched at the end of Secondary III. I think it should take place a year earlier than that. The advantage of my proposal is that parents do not have to press their children to be streamed into English-medium classes during Primary VI, for they still have a chance to do so two years later. While remaining in Chinese-medium classes at Secondary I and II, students will have two years' time to enhance their standard of English before transferring to English-medium classes. Furthermore, if students were allowed to switch from one medium to another after Secondary II, they would still have three years, that is, one extra year compared to that recommended by the Commission, to make adjustments and prepare for the Certificate of Education

Examination. According to my proposal, students can withhold their decision as to whether to make a switch until the end of Secondary II. Consequently, this will not only help achieve the objective of students at Secondary I and II levels, but also help remove public criticism that changing the medium of instruction at the end of Primary VI would be unfair to primary school students.

A further recommendation I would like to put forward is that the English courses for Chinese-medium classes should be reformed and strengthened. Although the Report proposes the enhancement of English courses at Primary V and VI levels and the provision of a bridging course during Secondary I, no mention has been made of how the teaching of English and English courses in Chinese-medium classes can be enhanced. The additional teachers and other resources now available are certainly inadequate to maintain the standard of English in Chinese-medium classes. I therefore suggest that the English courses for these classes be innovated and reinforced so as to ensure that, among other things, no primary and secondary students on Chinese-medium classes, who use English as the second language, will be subjected to teaching methods which adopt English as the first language. At present, both the teaching methods and the curriculum are highly unsuitable. Revising a new set of English courses for Chinese-medium classes is a task which brooks no delay. Only when schools are offering better and more vigorous target-related English courses, and when Chinese-medium classes are producing the same high-standard students as their English counterparts, can the education system be finally reckoned as really giving the parents a choice. Only then can the system be said to be treating parents fairly. When the time comes, language streaming will no longer be needed.

Finally, I support the other recommendations in the report, and hope that all those concerned will strive to solve the many technical problems involved. Since all the recommendations are interlinked with one another, they should be implemented in full so as to achieve the desired objective of improving the quality of education. Unless there are strong objections against the report's principles, we should all strive for financial support from the Government in order to bring about improvements in education as planned.

With these remarks, Sir, I support the motion.

MR CHUNG (in Cantonese): Sir, the Hong Kong Government has laid down a number of targets in the development of education in Hong Kong for the 1990s which inter alia

include the continued implementation of the nine-year free and compulsory education; the provision of sufficient places at the senior secondary level and in technical institutes for 95% of Secondary III leavers; and a 150% increase in the provision of first-degree places in tertiary institutions by 1995, that is a growth in such places from the existing 7% of the appropriate age group to not less than 18%. The Government's educational strategy is backed up by adequate finances and ever increasing provisions for such purposes. Many young people and parents are looking forward to the realization of these targets as scheduled.

The Education Commission Report No. 4 has confirmed that Government's current educational targets are measures of a sound development strategy. In my view, however, the main theme of today's debate should be the methodology to improve the quality of education on the basis of this comprehensive and systematic strategy.

It appears that the report has expressed much concern about the English standard of students between Primary VI and Secondary III and submitted that the core of the problem lies in the inappropriate use of media of instruction generally. Therefore, the Commission has put forward the following recommendation: "It is necessary for students to be grouped according to which medium of instruction is most appropriate for them. Students will need to be placed in Chinese-medium classes or English-medium classes on the basis of their ability to learn effectively in that medium."

The Commission has proposed a massive and complicated framework for Hong Kong's language in education policy, which will provide assessment instruments to determine which students should receive English-medium, Chinese-medium or two-medium instruction respectively.

As outlined in the report, under the proposed streaming policy, schools in Hong Kong will be divided into three types, namely Chinese-medium schools, English-medium schools and two-medium schools. These schools will be free to choose for themselves which medium of instruction they would like to use. Parents will be free to choose any of the types of school for their children and they can also change their options subsequently.

The problem is as the report has pointed out that it is the objective of the Commission to encourage schools to adopt Chinese, the mother tongue of local students, as the medium of instruction, but all of a sudden it has also proposed to classify all schools in Hong Kong into three categories according to their media of instruction

while allowance will be made to both the school authorities and parents to choose or alter their options freely. I just do not understand the rationale behind this policy.

As mentioned above, schools will be divided into different categories with the introduction of the proposed assessment instruments. Under the existing structure and ways of operation of our community, I believe the proposed streaming policy will definitely turn English into a main-stream medium of instruction and "mother tongue teaching" will eventually stream to nowhere. The report also submitted that the use of mixed-code in many schools has obviously led to degradation in academic achievement. If this is the rationale behind the proposed "streaming policy", I would like to draw your attention to some other factual data contained in the report. As recorded in the Second Report of the Commission, a research project jointly conducted by the University of Hong Kong and the Commission has indicated that after a 20-minute lesson was given to 1 296 Secondary III students in 10 schools, tests in English and Chinese versions were administered to measure the students' understanding. The research have indicated that some 30% or so of students can perform effectively in English. Another 30% or so have severe difficulty and the remainder come somewhere between. Among the findings of the research project, the most interesting one is that only a tiny percentage of less than 3% preferred monolingual English presentation, about a half preferred monolingual Chinese oral presentation, while the remainder preferred bilingual modes of presentation. As such, how could the Commission lay the blame on "mixed-code teaching" for the degradation of academic achievement?

As a matter of fact, bilingual teaching may have the same effect as directly using one language in teaching so long as the teaching method is good and examinations are reasonably offered to the students. For example, the teaching of English may be conducted in the way of translation teaching.

The Education Commission Report No. 4 seems to have neglected whether there is a greater fall in students' standard of Chinese than that of English. Will it make us feel that our Government tends to slip back to the attitude of "regarding English as superior to Chinese"? If the report is considered to give us an impression that the Commission is gradually deviating from local culture or it lacks co-ordination with the social status of Hong Kong before and after 1997, our educational policy may turn to be a misleading guidance for millions of our young people.

In my opinion, whether English, Chinese or both languages are adopted as the media

of instruction in school, it will be acceptable so long as the media adopted are advantageous to the students as well as our social development. However, the authorities concerned should formulate a fundamental policy setting out specific standards for schools in adopting medium of instruction and provide definition to the first and second languages. If we advocate the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction on one hand and offer options of other modes to be chosen freely on the other, this may not only cause confusion to our education system, but also far-reaching impact on the future of our community.

Since both Chinese and English are official languages in Hong Kong, bilingual teaching is therefore most suitable for our education and it will not result in the problem of "smattering" standard of students in both languages. If only one language has to be chosen for teaching, measure should be available to help students from English-medium background to learn Chinese well and vice versa for those from Chinese-medium background. It does not matter whether or not the "streaming system" is implemented in schools insofar as both languages are developed in parallel.

We learn for the purpose of application. Our community must be adaptable to environmental changes and we must have an approved system for various requirements in order to enhance the standards of both Chinese and English. If the standard of Chinese is still ignored in academic entry qualifications and job requirements, there will not have any practical bearing even though bilingual education is successfully implemented.

Practicable and positive educational reforms require a lot of trained teachers. All we have to do is to raise the pay of teachers to a reasonable level, to improve their working environment and career prospects, to show esteem for their status as well as to promote social respect for the profession and to implement a training programme for increasing full-time teachers based on the needs of our educational policy.

The report has also mentioned in particular the "problem students" and the proliferation of triad-related activities to schools. Special attention should be paid to this problem. However, I am of the opinion that only a few such black spots have been detected among schools at present. They are merely individual cases and the phenomenon has not been rampant. I believe the problem lies not in the students in general but individual ones under bad influences outside schools. Provided we continue to promote civic education in a positive manner, to enhance guidance and

counselling for students in schools and to strengthen liaison between schools and parents, I am sure that good spirit can be developed in schools.

Sir, the development of education should be planned on a long-term basis. Any changes in educational policy should be carefully considered in the interest of development of Hong Kong.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR HO SAI-CHU (in Cantonese): Sir, the aim of Education Commission Report No. 4 is to seek to improve the quality of education at primary and secondary levels and relatively speaking, the report is comprehensive in its contents. Primary and secondary education is an important stage in life, just like the nursery stage of a seeding which is crucial to the future growth of a plant. Education serves the social need to train useful manpower for the community and this should form the basis for the formulation of education policy by the Government.

Regarding Education Commission Report No. 4, I have two main points to make.

First, on the issue of language in education, it is practical and essential that both Chinese and English should be used as media of instruction as Hong Kong is an international centre of finance and trade as well as a city where the majority of the population are Chinese. Although it may not be easy for students to be proficient in both languages, they should at least be able to master one of the languages and have a good knowledge about the other. The Education Commission Report No. 4 has recommended that assessments should be carried out at Primary VI to determine the ability of students to learn in Chinese or English so that parents will be in a position to select secondary schools best suited for their children. The information provided by the assessments will enable secondary schools to choose the appropriate medium of instruction or proportion of English or Chinese classes to suit the language achievements of their student intake.

However, a mixed-code teaching within the same class should be avoided as far as possible and the medium of instruction should correspond with the language of the textbooks. Hence, it will save teachers the trouble of overcoming the difficulties in translation as well as the time in translation. The students can also be trained to develop the ability to use a single language to master the knowledge of a

specialized subject. The report also mentions the students can transfer to Chinese-medium classes or English-medium classes when necessary. This measure allows greater flexibility for students to learn through a different language medium in their academic development. I wish to emphasize that the prejudice of students and parents in "attaching great importance to English and undervaluing the use of Chinese" should be dispelled. This line of thinking has no doubt been a long-standing concept in our society as a result of our historical background. Nevertheless, as the local Chinese people are gradually assuming higher status in politics and economy, both Chinese and English are used on many formal occasions or in official document, in particular with the approach of the reversion of sovereignty to China in 1997, Chinese language has become all the more important. To the students, mastering either of the Chinese and English languages will bring them a good future all the same. To meet the demand for manpower arising from our social and economic development, the Government intends to expand the provision of first-degree places. There will be better opportunities for secondary students to pursue higher education. At present only one out of three matriculants is able to take up first-degree course at one of our tertiary education institutions, but by 1994-95 four out of five matriculants will be able to do so. This is a piece of good news to secondary students and their parents, no matter what medium of instruction they have selected.

Secondly, I would like to comment on the behavioural problems of students in schools. Parents and the public in general have expressed concern about the conduct of young people in schools. The traditional Chinese education principles lay equal emphasis on morality and intellect. I mentioned this point in my speech during the Policy Debate in the year before last. It is stated in the report that the fact that there is no evidence of penetration by triads into schools does not necessarily mean that school children are not involved in triad activities outside schools. According to statistics, the number of incidents of suspected involvement in triad activities reported in secondary schools has been in decline over the past five years. This is achieved through the concerted efforts of the school authorities, parents, relevant government departments and the community at large. Despite such success, we should in no way slacken our efforts. Crime prevention is only a passive approach. A more positive measure is to foster a sense of moral integrity in the mind of our young during their primary and secondary schooling. This aspect has scarcely been mentioned in the report. Although a sound learning system can help students concentrate on their studies, there is no substitute for moral education which is to nurture young people with a correct attitude of life and a good sense of value. The concepts of fair competition, mutual co-operation and benefits should be promoted

in our society, while selfish behaviour of benefitting oneself at the expense of others or enriching oneself by misappropriating public funds should be objected to. Good moral sense and good character is built upon a strict and impartial system of reward and punishment in schools. Well behaved students will be rewarded while rule-breaking students will be punished. Reward should of course be the key, with punishment serving as a supplement. While it is easy to consider the methods of reward, it will be difficult to decide on the appropriate kind of punishment as some people think that any form of punishment will be detrimental to the physical and mental well being of students. I do not see it that way. Over accommodating and caring will encourage wrong doings. The issue of whether the provisions in connexion with corporal punishment under the existing Education Regulations should be abolished is thus open to question. If corporal punishment is to be abolished, should students violating school regulations be punished and how should they be punished? The demerit system and the discretion to dismiss a student are of course some means of punishment, but unlike corporal punishment, they will leave bad records in their resume, causing them mental harassment. For students, corporal punishment is on the contrary a lighter alternative. Bodily pain can subside after a short period of time, yet it may give the students concerned a long lasting lesson. As long as teachers can strictly adhere to Regulations 58 and 59 of the Education Regulations and at the same time reason things out with the students in question, then light corporal punishment can help students understand and correct their mistakes. I therefore have reservation about the proposed abolition of corporal punishment.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR HUI (in Cantonese): Sir, in 1979 the Hong Kong Government introduced a system providing nine years of free and compulsory education, which was considered a remarkable achievement at that time. However, after almost 12 years of development, the compulsory system, which has never been reviewed all these years, is found to be directly or indirectly related to quite a few educational and social problems. In fact, in the light of Hong Kong's present economic success and living standard, the system of nine years of free and compulsory education is certainly out of touch with the needs of this important era because the emphasis is still on fulfilling educational objectives in terms of quantity rather than on improving quality. It is regrettable that the Education Commission has not reviewed the system in its fourth report.

As we all know, the greatest failing of our education system is that education has become a kind of tool. Under an established policy and a prescribed sense of value, the Government selects through this system an elite group of students to receive higher education. These elite students, who are motivated by the "promise of monetary gain from a good schooling", are groomed for securing prestigious and well-paid jobs in future, while those who are not so chosen can be expected to fill only second-class posts available in various trades and professions.

Under the influence of utilitarian purposes, the students are generally subjected to the "cramming" method of education. The findings of a survey conducted by the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong last year show that Primary III to VI students in Hong Kong spend on average two hours and one and a half hours respectively after school on doing homework and studying textbooks. In addition, many students have to attend remedial classes or do supplementary exercises. This illustrates that local school children lay more emphasis on textbook learning than their counterparts in other advanced countries. This mode of learning has long deprived our students of the childhood simplicity they should have.

In addition, curricula that are too academically orientated and detached from real life are regarded by students as boring. And an education policy based on the mistaken belief that English proficiency can be enhanced by adopting English as the instruction medium only adds to students' difficulty in comprehension and expression of ideas. Under the circumstances, many students abhor school life as reflected by the increasing number of cases involving deviant behaviour in primary and secondary schools and an ascending drop-out rate year after year. What is worse, the many examinations and tests under the compulsory system will only increase the chances of failure and frustration for students. This will seriously impair their self-confidence and self-esteem, to such an extent that they may be unable to shoulder greater responsibilities and solve their own problems in the future.

Sir, if the situation described above is to be changed thoroughly, departments responsible for formulating and implementing the education policy must tackle the four problem areas below at the root and adopt various improvement measures:

- (1) One of the main reasons why most students do not have a craving for knowledge and feel great anxiety and frustration is that the general curriculum is either outdated or detached from real life experience. And over-emphasis on rote memorization of facts under the pressure of public examinations adds to the burden

of students. I therefore endorse the idea of maintaining a balance between curriculum development and the public examinations system. Moreover, in devising improved curricula, the first and foremost consideration must be students' daily life. Particular attention should be paid to meeting their interests and needs on the one hand, and ensuring that adjustment problems are minimized as students progress to higher levels of education on the other. I also support the view that subjects with related areas of learning should be integrated, in order to help students avoid spending too much time on minor subjects.

On the other hand, as the Activity Approach has been found to be contributing substantially towards increasing students' interest in learning, the Administration should provide more facilities and teachers to promote this teaching method so that it will be gradually adopted by all classes up to Form III level. I also support the upgrading of the Curriculum Development Council to ensure that its membership includes professionals such as educational psychologists, social workers and teachers who know the needs and progress of students very well.

(2) Educationalists and social workers have always advocated the use of one's mother-tongue as the best medium of instruction. Regrettably, the Government, sponsoring bodies and parents have been shifting the responsibility onto one another, thus hindering the introduction of mother-tongue teaching. I think the Government must take the lead in completely eliminating the current practice of attaching more importance to English than to Chinese, such as in civil service recruitments and in our examination system. This will ensure that students graduating from both English and Chinese secondary schools will be fairly treated. Only then will mother-tongue education obtain the support of parents and schools. The Administration should also make available additional resources and teachers to assist school to use Chinese as the medium of instruction in classes below Form III. At the senior secondary level, the standard of teaching English as a second language should be enhanced to meet the needs of Hong Kong as an international city. Moreover, we should not overlook the contribution of publishers, and efforts should be made to encourage them to produce more textbooks and reference books of good quality in Chinese.

Turning now to the Education Commission's recommendations on language streaming, I am afraid I cannot give them my support. This is not only because such a proposal will procrastinate the timing for a complete switch to mother-tongue education, but also because, given an environment in which English is considered superior to Chinese, the approach will have the negative effect of forcing students

to face cruel competition prematurely.

(3) Students with deviant behaviour or those who are unmotivated will definitely need counselling. Therefore, I support the adoption of the Whole School Approach as recommended by the Education Commission. However, we must first of all improve the teacher to student ratio, increase the number of Student Guidance Officers and provide them with the assistance of other professionals such as educational psychologists and social workers. Without taking these steps, the recommended approach will be nothing but castles in the air. In secondary schools, the role and function of school social workers having been long established, steps should be taken to gradually improve the present manning ratio of one social worker for every 3 000 students to that of 1 for 2 000. We should also encourage school social workers to take more initiative in co-operating with school teachers to develop counselling programmes according to students' needs, rather than just handling cases referred to them.

(4) Undeniably, it may not be suitable for some students to receive conventional education. The Administration should therefore provide adequate pre-vocational and special skills training places for these students. In this connection, attention should be paid to the following points: (a) such courses must cater to the needs of the students, especially female students, as well as the needs of our society and the labour market; (b) based on the principle of pragmatism, emphasis should also be placed on the aspect of moral education; (c) counselling services should be adequately provided; (d) the qualifications of students who have completed these courses should be duly recognized and (e) opportunities should be accorded to students completing these courses to receive conventional education or vocational training in tertiary institutions.

Sir, no other investment in our society has ever been more valuable and meaningful than that in education. This is particularly important for Hong Kong where the only available form of natural resources is manpower. However, in face of the transfer of sovereignty and the increasingly keen competition in the international market, it would be disappointing and worrying if departments responsible for formulating and implementing education policies are still unable to take resolute steps to revamp our basic education system. As the saying goes, lofty towers are all built up from the ground. May I appeal to the Administration to provide as soon as possible the necessary resources to reform our basic education system and to prepare our younger generation for even greater challenges ahead.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR MARTIN LEE: Sir, the Education Commission Report No. 4 looks in depth at several areas of critical importance to the educational system in Hong Kong, and it presents a number of worthwhile proposals for improving that system. But, I would encourage the Education Commission to take a broader view and formulate even clearer goals for a long-term educational plan that takes into account the needs of our students and our community as a whole.

One of the most promising recommendations in the report is the new approach towards the curriculum. The willingness to adapt the curriculum to fit the different needs of students will certainly assist students in learning at a pace most suited to them. Additionally, I welcome the call to examine the secondary school curriculum, and I hope that the revised curriculum will not force students to be so narrowly stratified into an arts or sciences track at too early an age. As schools reform their curricula, I encourage them to put greater emphasis on civic education so that our students will be more ready to contribute to the civic development of Hong Kong.

Hand in hand with the new flexibility in the curriculum is a welcome willingness to test the students according to attainment targets and criterion-referencing principles. Such testing should help develop more confidence among students by showing them more clearly the progress they have made in their studies.

I also welcome the recommendation for more unisessional primary schools. Clearly, our primary schools will be able to offer a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities if they switch to a full-day schedule. As the report details, the switch to unisessions will cost taxpayers additional money, but I believe the money will be well spent. But here, I should declare my interest as the father of a nine-year-old boy studying Primary IV. Clearly, the longer he is kept at school, the more peace of mind there will be for my wife and me.

If these recommendations then are well-thought out, but we must ensure that there will be sufficient resources to implement them. Though they have been somewhat overshadowed by the debate on language education, we must not underestimate their importance and we should press for their earliest implementation.

On the most difficult question -- that of the language of instruction -- the report is correct to condemn the use of mixed-code Chinese/English teaching. Such mixed-code teaching makes it more difficult for students to learn their subjects, and it produces students who are fluent in neither Chinese nor English.

The report correctly points out the benefits to our students of learning in their mother tongue. Not only is it essential that our students be fluent in written and spoken Chinese, but learning in the Chinese language will also clearly help develop their cognitive skills and their confidence in their academic abilities. Students will be better able to participate in classroom discussions, and it should be easier for them to understand the subjects they are studying.

At the same time, we all realize the importance of a fluent English-speaking population to the economic future of Hong Kong. English is the international language of business, and if Hong Kong wishes to remain the heart of the Pacific Rim -- a truly international financial, trade, business, and communications centre -- then our people must be able to speak English. And as Hong Kong becomes increasingly an international service centre, where more and more service-oriented jobs replace manufacturing jobs, fluency in English will become even more important.

It should be stressed, moreover, that the need for English is not only for those who will pursue university and graduate degrees in Hong Kong and abroad. For, we will have an increasing need within our service economy to have persons at all levels who are able to communicate in English -- from secretaries to bank clerks and import-export staff. We are not a mighty economic power like Japan or the United States so that people from all over the world will come to us; no, we must reach out and create opportunities for ourselves; and to do so, we must speak international language of business.

Parents recognize the economic imperatives of their children learning English, and they also know that the English language ability of the children will continue to be important when they enter universities both in Hong Kong and overseas. Many parents, therefore, will continue to place a high value on English language education.

The report does not adequately address this central question: how do we best meet the educational and social needs of our students while at the same time ensure that the citizens of Hong Kong have the English language skills to maintain Hong Kong as an international economic centre?

The authors of the report may not be to blame for this shortcoming, for it seems that they were hamstrung in their study. Since they had to work within existing financial constraints, they did not have the latitude of studying other options which might entail substantial additional expense. Working within these constraints, there is little doubt that Chinese language teaching is more effective than the current mixed-code system.

Yet, Sir, if we are to deal with the extraordinarily difficult question of the language of education, we must be willing to take a step back and decide on our goals. The Education Commission should take the lead in formulating our long-term goals, which is something this report has failed to do. Then we must examine those goals and decide if we as a community are willing to spend the additional resources to attain them. Such an examination is all the more timely in view of the Government's plans to increase significantly the number of degree places in our tertiary institutions and I regret that this report has not provided satisfactory answers as to how to prepare our students adequately for all these new tertiary places.

In the absence of clear goals and in the absence of a community consensus on the level of resources we are willing to commit to education, we cannot chart our path. If we take the approach of the report -- namely that all reforms proposed must fit into existing resource constraints -- then we are severely hampering the usefulness of the entire exercise from its very outset. It is only when we have decided on our goals and our financial resources that we can decide what steps we should take in relation to teacher training, teacher salaries, the development of new teaching methods, unisessional primary schools, class size, and so forth.

Sir, there is little doubt that our community wants to educate our students to become fluent both in English and Chinese. Such a lofty goal clearly will require very substantial resources; yet we as a community must first decide whether we are willing to expend those resources.

And in reaching a decision on these all important questions, Sir, I cannot over-emphasize that education is perhaps the most worthwhile investment that we as a community can ever make for our future.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR LI: Sir, as with the three previous reports of the Education Commission, the report before us today confirms the inability of the Education Commission -- as presently organized -- to offer timely, effective and forward-looking answers to the territory's educational needs.

The concept of an Education Commission was put forward by the Llewellyn Panel in 1982. The Panel envisioned a co-ordinating body which would be able "to bring to the Governor-in-Council consolidated advice on the needs of and priorities for the education system as a whole and the most equitable and practical responses to them."

But somehow that vision has been lost. The Government has created a Commission which lacks the status, freedom and authority needed to rise above professional, departmental and sectoral politics, and to speak frankly and openly regarding what measures would be in the best interests of both Hong Kong and its students.

The Education Commission's fourth report, like the previous three, reeks of compromise and self-censorship. The focus is backward instead of forward. And difficult decisions are deferred for further study.

The net effect: status quo is preserved, and vested interests are protected. Who are the losers? The students. Who pays the price? The people of Hong Kong.

In addition to higher status and greater authority, the Education Commission needs focus. Its ambitions and goals have never been effectively defined.

The Commission has meandered from issue to issue, pondering solutions to the decade-old problems and prescribing remedies which will take several years to implement and many more years to yield any benefits.

As a result, the turn of the century will see Hong Kong still preoccupied with the problems of the early 1980s, rather than building for the future.

Over the years, the Commission has concentrated its energies on tinkering with the "means" of the education system, without a clear perception of the "ends" the system should achieve. Such an approach is most dangerous.

Hong Kong's competitors are not looking backwards. Their eyes are firmly fixed

on the needs of the 21st century, and they are willing to commit the resources to meet those needs.

Singapore devotes a larger proportion of its annual budget to education. Singapore and Taiwan have a larger proportion of students in post-secondary and tertiary education.

Both spend more money per student on computer education and, not surprisingly, both have a higher ratio of information technology graduates, a field which the Hong Kong Government itself has said is absolutely vital to the territory's future.

Thus, we see our competitors charging into the 21st century, while we dither.

Rather than addressing issues willy-nilly, the Commission should channel its energies into devising a comprehensive educational strategy which would prepare Hong Kong for the 21st century. It is within such a framework that important issues such as curriculum development, student guidance and the medium of instruction should be discussed.

The education system should not be judged by the processes it uses, but by the results it achieves.

From the views expressed to me by the members of my constituency, there is no doubt that proficiency in both English and Chinese has fallen. If this trend continues, Sir, we shall be unable to maintain our position as a major international trade and finance centre.

What does Hong Kong need from its education system?

Economic competitiveness is an issue I have raised in this Council on many occasions. I have stressed the Government's key role and responsibility in actively preserving and promoting the territory's competitiveness.

Maintaining this competitiveness should and must be a key goal of the Government. This pertains to all government policies, including education.

To introduce economic competitiveness as a key goal of the Government's education policy is not to dehumanize the student. To argue that the Government's education

policy must take into account what job skills will be needed to preserve Hong Kong's competitive edge is not to put the needs and wants of business above the needs and wants of the individual.

On the contrary, the two are both interdependent and complementary.

Business needs and wants "whole" individuals -- individuals who can think for themselves, who are motivated and well disciplined, and who have a strong sense of their civic responsibilities. These are the type of people who will guarantee Hong Kong's continued success.

The students, in turn, need to acquire the skill and knowledge necessary to become responsible, productive and self-confident citizens, to succeed and prosper, and to realize their full potential as human beings.

Without a doubt, this is what every parent wants for their children. Whether the students themselves adopt these same goals is heavily dependent on the education system.

Is our education system motivating our children towards becoming the best persons they can be, towards becoming well-rounded, productive members of the community, towards realizing their full potential?

The members of the Education Commission deserve praise for their advocacy of student-centred education. To reform our education system along this vein would be a giant step in the right direction. Such a step is desperately needed. The sooner, the better.

Regrettably, the Commission's recommendations fall short of mandating and devising a speedy, whole-scale move in this direction.

What kind of education are we giving our children? Are we fitting them to operate in tomorrow's society or to seek yesterday's merit badges?

Will any of the reforms proposed in ECR4 -- or indeed in any of the reports -- make our children better individuals, more productive members of society, better employees or entrepreneurs?

Will any of the reforms in ECR4 -- or any of the reports -- make Hong Kong more competitive internationally? Has economic competitiveness been considered at all?

For that matter, how can the Education Commission make any recommendations without a clear perception of what skills today's students will need to lead happy and productive lives in tomorrow's world?

In this report, the Education Commission admits that they do not know what Hong Kong's needs are in terms of English and Chinese "practitioners". And yet, the Commission proceeds to make recommendations which will have a direct bearing on the education system's ability to fulfil those needs.

As far as language is concerned, if economic competitiveness is the goal, Hong Kong should aim to be bilingual -- in fact, it should probably aim to be trilingual. Students should leave the school system "fluent" -- not "proficient", which is a relative target -- in Cantonese, English and Putonghua.

But this issue as well as the issue of the medium of instruction are both moot. Why? Because we do not have the human resources -- the teachers -- needed to implement successfully any significant improvements in the current system.

The teacher problem has been evident since the beginning of the Commission process -- indeed since the days of the Llewellyn Report. And, despite the major impediment this problem presents to any and all efforts of educational reform, the Commission has chosen to defer discussion of this all-important issue.

Yes, the teacher problem will be the subject of the Commission's next report. But, clearly, the cart has been put before the horse.

At this juncture, I would urge the Government to take stock of the Commission process and to evaluate if the Commission is fulfilling its purpose.

Measures which would improve the Commission process include:

- elevating the status of the Commission and expanding its authority;
- defining more clearly the Commission's goals and terms of reference; and

-- providing for more extensive, formal representation of the private sector on the Commission.

The first initiative would promote a freer exchange of views and ideas. The second would give the Commission much-needed focus, while the third would provide the Commission with the direct and constant private-sector input needed to identify the skills we should be teaching our children.

Something must also be done to expedite the Commission's work. It is obvious that a single commission cannot cope with the huge job of simultaneously monitoring all aspects of the education system.

The Commission has yet to address many of the key issues and problems which were identified over eight years ago by the Llewellyn Panel. And, in that time, new problems have arisen which neither the Commission nor anyone else has properly addressed.

Hong Kong cannot afford to lose more time. Viable goals must be set for the education system -- quickly and effectively. Decade-old issues which have not yet been addressed must be tackled. New reform measures must be debated and implemented, and the progress of the past initiatives must be reviewed and analysed.

Clearly, this burden is too much for the Commission to bear alone. A possible solution would be to establish a multiple task-force system under and co-ordinated by the Commission. These task forces would work in parallel, simultaneously moving ahead the many reforms needed to improve the education system.

To be sure, it is more tidy to settle each issue in turn. Unfortunately Hong Kong cannot freeze time.

Every day spent pondering what must be done is another day lost in motivating today's students, in teaching them properly and in giving them the skills and knowledge they will need -- that Hong Kong needs -- to survive and prosper in the 21st century.

Goals that we should pursue in our education system -- some of which are discussed in ECR4 -- include:

- teaching every student the three literacies of language, mathematics and technology;
- adopting a more student-centred approach to instruction;
- setting high standards for everyone involved and finding effective means of measuring against those standards;
- giving school staffs greater autonomy in the running of their schools and developing means of rewarding schools for success;
- placing greater emphasis on staff development, on modern teacher training and on in-service re-training for teachers whose skills are outdated; and -- wherever possible --
- utilizing technology to raise the educational productivity of both teachers and students.

These goals are achievable -- if we set our minds to it and if we channel our energies and efforts properly.

I have great respect for the chairperson and members of the Education Commission. But I harbour strong reservations about the efficacy of the Commission process with which they have been handcuffed and muzzled.

Sir, it is with these remarks that I reluctantly support the motion.

MR POON CHI-FAI (in Cantonese): Sir, Rome was not built in a day, so is education which is a long-term investment. High quality, free and compulsory education provided to all would not only hold the key to the rise and fall of a nation as well as the prosperity and progress of a community, but it would also serve as a major instrument in the realization of social justice and equity. All along, many drawbacks have been existing in the education system of Hong Kong which had attracted much criticism. Outcries have been made by people well aware of the issue in the community urging the Government to look into these problems and find out practicable and fundamental solutions to improve our education system by strengthening its merits and eliminating its demerits. The Education Commission Report No. 4 recently

published by the authorities concerned is meant to mark a crucial step towards improving the education system in Hong Kong. As a matter of fact, the recommendations on educational reforms proposed in the report should have a significant impact on the development of our education system. As members of the community, we should examine these recommendations carefully, consider their feasibilities, analyse their positive and negative effects and express our views on them earnestly. Before rendering support to today's motion urging members of the public to comment on the report, I would like to give a brief remark to the report as follows:

Mother tongue education and streaming system

Sir, Report No. 4 has pointed out repeatedly that the majority of students will learn more effectively through their mother tongue than through English. It also stated that each student should be educated through a medium likely to lead to a maximum cognitive and academic development. In fact, the findings of a lot of research projects and studies have clearly indicated that the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction is conducive to the students in their process of learning relating to comprehension, raising questions, expression of opinions and training programmes designed to enhance their thinking, confidence and interest. Sir, for the overall interest of the community, I just really do not understand why the Administration has not demonstrated its firm determination as it did in the implementation of the nine-year compulsory education by promoting mother tongue education through some compulsory measures. If the Administration has really attached importance to the Chinese language and is prepared to achieve the objective of mother tongue education in full on a long-term basis, why it tends to adopt the streaming system which will rob certain students of their chances to identify the cultural heritage of the Chinese language? Sir, the adoption of mother tongue instruction does not necessarily bring about a degradation of students' English standards. With the full implementation of mother tongue instruction, students will find it easier to apprehend the content of their curricula and thus it helps in their learning process. As a result, they can spare more time to improve their English. Moreover, in order to raise the standard of students' English, the report proposed a series of activities which could include extended reading programmes and English activities, summer camps and summer courses, as well as general and vocational English courses for school leavers who are about to take up employment or study abroad. All these are English enhancement measures. On the contrary, given our resources in constraint, I wonder if it is really worthwhile to let our limited resources be shared by mother tongue instruction and English medium instruction at the same time while

the latter will bring more difficulties in learning and is less beneficial to the students? Sir, all along, the standing of Chinese has been slighted. In the recruitment of civil servants and enrolment of students in tertiary institutions, the scale is tipped heavily in favour of candidates with good English. Meanwhile, social standing is also judged according to one's standard of English. In these circumstances, how can we expect the parents to opt for mother tongue instruction for their children voluntarily? As such situation still exists today, if the Administration proceeds with the streaming policy, it will only compel the school authorities and parents to switch to English-medium classes all together. They will attach greater importance to the English language and try every means to enhance the standard of English of their students and children respectively. They hope these children will be allocated to the English-medium classes and eventually have a brighter future. The implementation of streaming policy will only make our schools attach more importance to the use of English as the language of instruction resulting in the formation of a trend regarding English as superior to Chinese. It will also add further weights to the pressure of students and put the Chinese-medium schools and their students in a position in which they are unable to compete with their counterparts in the English stream and thus become second class schools and students. Furthermore, the adoption of streaming system will also give rise to social differentiation and foster the emergence of elitism in our education framework. This will be running counter to the spirit of mother tongue instruction as the major mode of education advocated and encouraged by the Administration all the time. Sir, due to the positive effects brought by mother tongue instruction to the learning process of students and in order to make this mode of instruction a success, the Administration and the tertiary institutions should accordingly act together and take some appropriate measures in respect of recruitment and academic entry requirements, such as adjusting the existing over harsh requirement in the standard of English by these institutions and the Civil Service. These measures will back up the promotion of Chinese-medium instruction and generate a bright prospect for secondary school leavers in employment and further studies.

Mixed-mode operation for primary schools

Sir, the report affirmed that the ultimate target of primary education is the provision of whole-day schooling for all. It is a correct approach towards primary education. In fact, the whole-day system for primary education has all along been welcomed by various sectors of the community. However the Administration, in view

of the resource implications involved, has proposed to introduce a mixed-mode approach, whereby Primary I to Primary IV classes will remain bisessional but Primary V and Primary VI students will attend school for the whole day. Such a proposal has indeed caused a number of problems. As the report has pointed out, teachers prefer to work in half-day schools, despite the shorter hours, the salary is the same as that in whole-day schools. Under such circumstances, unless the pay for teachers working in whole-day schools or those in half-day schools is adjusted, it will be difficult to redeploy teachers to whole-day or half-day schools without causing discontent among them. To downgrade one of the existing headmasters of a bisessional school to the post as deputy will generate feelings of demotion and humiliation. In reality, how can we expect a group of teachers coerced to work overtime as well as demoted deputy heads of schools to promote primary education whole-heartedly? How can we pin high hopes on a successful mixed-mode system for primary schools without their positive involvement and impetus in promoting the reforms for primary education? Sir, the Executive Council submitted in September 1989 that sufficient sites should be reserved only for the additional primary schools required as a result of the mixed-mode policy applicable to Primary V and VI pupils. Such a recommendation has cast doubts on the sincerity of the Administration in carrying out its ultimate target of providing whole-day schooling for primary education which it has all along emphasized. As a matter of fact, if sufficient sites are not reserved for additional schools to prepare for the full implementation of the whole-day system in future, how will we be able to acquire adequate school sites to meet such an ultimate target when all of the districts have been fully developed?

Sir, I have no doubt that a number of recommendations in the report are worthy of our praise. However, the report is not an invulnerable one. Some of the recommendations are subject to modifications after detailed study and careful consideration. A lot of representations and comments have been made by various sectors of the community in recent days. The Administration should take them into consideration seriously and accept all reasonable ideas suggested in order to make the recommendations in the report to perfection.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

PROF POON: I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the issue of language in education which has been a topic of debate for many years and which is of particular concern to me as an educationist in Hong Kong for over 20 years.

Lord ROBBINS when discussing higher education defined the purpose of education as being "instruction in skills; promotion of the general powers of the mind; advancement of learning; transmission of a common culture and standards of citizenship." It is with respect to the transmission of a common culture and standards of citizenship that we must address now.

Language, I would suggest, is the primary means whereby the cultural context of a society is established and defined, it is the matrix of culture; many would even say that the language defines the culture. Language is the source and repository of the intellectual framework, of the behaviour ethics, of the philosophical context of our day-to-day work. The intellectual and cultural identity of the Hong Kong citizen is defined in terms of language in which he thinks. For the vast majority of the citizens of Hong Kong, Chinese is the mother tongue and serves as the essential social integrative factor in our society.

I therefore welcome the proposals made in Education Commission Report No. 4 for the strengthening of Chinese and for encouraging a wider use of Chinese in secondary schools. I believe these will strengthen the bonds of culture and citizenship in Hong Kong.

Whilst I am supportive of the view that students will learn more effectively through their mother tongue than through English, we should not undermine the importance of English, which for most of us, serves as an instrumental language. It is used in government and in administration, in trade with the rest of the world, within the academic world for study and in some sectors of employment. It is for most of our citizens a tool, but a necessary tool to maintain Hong Kong's international position.

Being the head of a tertiary institution, I see the importance of English as of more than economic advantage. It is the language in which the international communities of scholars, of scientists, of engineers and other professions communicate. A weakening of the knowledge of English in Hong Kong society means weakening of our links with the worlds of ideas of scholarship and the profession.

The ideal therefore is that all our school pupils should be competent in both Chinese and English; that is they should have bilingual competence and be able to benefit from a bilingual education.

The Education Commission Report No. 4 recommendation that "English medium secondary education should be open only to those who had reached the threshold" however causes much concern to myself and to my colleagues in the education sector, as it would create social differentiation and lead to elitism. Although the report recognized the need to give proper emphasis to both Chinese and English, the proposed framework, as far as I can see, does not ensure that the need for proficient users of both languages is met.

I would therefore hope to see that in introducing the grouping of students by medium of instruction, conscious effort should be made by the English medium schools to increase their emphasis on the subject of Chinese and vice versa, Chinese medium schools on the subject of English, hence giving proper emphasis to both languages.

Also as a positive step in encouraging schools to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction and to overcome parents' perception that Chinese medium education poses a potential handicap to their children's eligibility to proceed to tertiary education, it is most important that a clear, direct and open path is provided by the tertiary sector of all Secondary VII graduates, with the A level (or AS level) required, for entry to the relevant courses, making no distinction between students who have studied and taken their examinations in Chinese and those in English.

However, as a great proportion of the teaching in tertiary institutions will be in English, students are expected to have established a level of competence in English which will enable them to benefit from an education conducted largely in English. I therefore support Education Commission Report No. 4's proposal to introduce a bridging course between secondary and tertiary education and would like to see such courses being offered jointly by the tertiary institutions and the Education Department.

Finally, I would conclude my speech by assuring the Council that I welcome the Education Commission Report No. 4 in its encouragement of a wider use of Chinese, which we believe is central to our Hong Kong cultural perspective; and its attempt to ensure that students will learn secondary school subjects in as effective a manner as possible.

I, in my position, will do all I can to ensure that the tertiary system will respond positively to these recommendations.

With these remarks, Sir, I support the motion.

MR SZETO (in Cantonese): Sir, in the policy debate this year, I stated in the conclusion of my speech that "If the 'rose garden' is to be put in place, roses have to be grown in it. The people is our 'roses'".

To cultivate our people into "roses" worthy of the name, we have to rely on education. Nine-year free education is the foundation of the entire education system. It is the stage that seedlings of the roses are to be nursed. Without strong and healthy seedlings there will not be any beautiful flowers. As we have decided to speed up our development in tertiary education, we shall have to review our nine-year free education and improve its quality in order to render essential support to the cause.

Though the Education Commission Report No. 4 has been given the long title of "Curriculum and Behavioural Problems in Schools", the report itself is in fact a review of the nine-year free education. I hope that the authority concerned will give adequate, serious and careful consideration to views expressed by all sectors during the consultation period and accept them with a view to improving the quality of nine-year free education. The issue should not be taken lightly, otherwise there will be adverse results.

During discussions in the consultation period, recommendations relating to the curriculum, for instance, the concept of "attainment targets", the implementation of "target-related assessment" and the setting up of "Curriculum Development Institute" have generally been overlooked. The curriculum is not merely an isolated issue. It also involves the method of teaching, the system of examination, the objectives of education, and above all, a major reform on the philosophy of education. The "attainment target" serves like the compass in showing the direction; the "target-related assessment" provides us with the means, or the map by which we may recognize our position; and the "Curriculum Development Institute" is the set-up, or the shoes, that we are equipped with to fare forth. Though we are provided with the compass, the map and the shoes, it does not mean that we have already reached the destination. There is still a long hard journey to go. The major drawback of the recommendations in the report is that they are impressive in theory, but vague in the details of their implementation. There is no guarantee of their effectiveness and the ultimate benefit on students appears remote. Besides, if educationists on

the frontline fail to have thorough understanding of the recommendations, there will be a danger of these recommendations becoming mere formalities which cannot fulfil the objectives. The authorities concerned have to step up publicity and make greater efforts in giving effect to the relevant measures.

After the publication of the report, three issues arise as the most controversial topics for discussion, that is, the medium of instruction, mixed-mode schooling and School Guidance Officers. The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (the Union), which has a membership of more than 47 000, is the largest teachers' organization in Hong Kong. Being the representative of the education sector as well as incumbent member of the Union, I am obliged to reflect their views.

As far as the medium of instruction is concerned, there has been a polarization of views on the subject of the use of the mother tongue. Some are in favour of compulsory grouping of schools by medium of instruction, while some are more inclined towards maintaining the status quo in which schools are free to have their own way. Saddled with a historical burden passed down from more than 100 years ago, and the very strong influence of existing social practices, these problems cannot be solved by extreme methods. We are not advocating a compromise. We are simply trying to be realistic. The Union proposes that a transitional period be allowed to create a favourable environment for the use of the mother tongue in teaching thereby giving it a chance to prove to students, teachers, parents and the general public that a far better result may be achieved if the mother tongue instead of English is used as the medium of instruction and that such a mode of teaching will never hamper the enhancement of the standard of English among students. Only by so doing can the use of Chinese as the medium of instruction become a built-in force that may generate further development, resulting in full implementation of this policy in secondary schools.

Specific suggestions are as follows:

(1) Medium of instruction grouping of students by subjects should be allowed. At present, the report only recommends such grouping of students by schools or by class. The proposal to allow for such grouping by subjects has been abandoned. Medium of instruction grouping by subjects was in fact, once a proposal of the Education Department to all secondary schools. Many of them have adopted this approach and have succeeded in consolidating some experience and achievements. Should this approach be denied, it does not only betray the capriciousness of the

policy-making authorities, but also discourage many of those secondary schools which plan to adopt this approach in preparing themselves for full conversion to the use of the mother tongue in teaching. Probably they will withdraw and adopt a wait-and-see attitude, refusing to introduce grouping on a school basis. This will indeed be a blow to the use of the mother tongue in teaching and end up with the negative result of "more haste, less speed". I stress that medium of instruction grouping by subjects should be allowed in schools in order to develop gradually towards the use of mother tongue in teaching.

(2) The use of the mother tongue in teaching should be implemented gradually in three stages: (1) From 1991 to 1994, the discretionary stage during which schools are allowed to exercise their own discretion on the basis of their professional knowledge to decide on the pattern of medium of instruction grouping, whether by school, by class or by subjects; (2) from 1994 to 1997, the stage of professional guidance and supervision by the authorities concerned, during which schools which have not made an appropriate choice on the medium of instruction will be provided with clear and compelling guidelines on the basis of the results of target-related assessments and the findings of professional research, or further still, close supervision will be given if the guidelines are not followed; (3) from 1997 onwards, a stage of mandatory professional guidance by the authorities concerned, during which secondary schools which fail to follow the professional guidelines and are found to be adopting an inappropriate medium of instruction during the period of supervision, will be subject to mandatory administrative measures.

(3) Starting from next year, an assessment test on Chinese and English should be conducted for all Form I students after their admission. The assessment should be co-ordinated by the Education Department and conducted in all secondary schools after the results of secondary school places allocation are announced but before school begins. The Education Department will set the questions and the marking system. The schools will submit to the Education Department the assessment results and seek approval for the decision on the medium of instruction they propose to make on the basis of the results. In this way, schools may be encouraged to exercise their own discretion under initial guidance and do not have to wait till 1994 for the findings of the target-related assessment.

Now, I will turn to the issue of mixed-mode schooling.

Recently, The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union received a statement jointly

signed by thousands of its members in strong objection to mixed-mode schooling. The full text of the statement is as follows:

"Since the Certificated Master issue, the demand for provision of whole-day schooling for all primary students has become one of the major tasks of our fellow workers in promoting education reforms. We earnestly hope that the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union will:

(1) Make firm demands on the Government for early implementation of whole-day schooling in all primary schools and a timetable on the pace to achieve the said target.

(2) Raise strong objection against the implementation of mixed-mode schooling as proposed in the Education Commission Report No. 4 for the following reasons:

(i) Mixed-mode schooling is not a genuine form of whole-day schooling in primary schools. Piecemeal and plagued by numerous shortcomings, the proposal is not the only alternative to bridge over to whole-day schooling in primary schools.

(ii) The interests of the teachers will be jeopardized by mixed-mode schooling. Their morale and promotion prospects will be gravely affected when many of them have to leave their existing posts in the event of class reduction.

(iii) The interests of the school heads will be jeopardized by mixed-mode schooling, because many of them will have to be demoted to deputies.

(iv) Under the mixed-mode schooling system, primary schools in Hong Kong will have to adopt three administrative systems in a school for a long period of time. This will result in confusion in school administration and students cannot gain benefit from the merits of full-scale unisessionalism in primary schools.

(3) Make strong request for extension of the consultation period of the Education Commission Report No. 4.

The Union has had a number of frank and in-depth discussion with those who jointly signed the statement and a consensus has been reached on the approach to be adopted by primary schools in changing over to whole-day operation. The main points are:

(1) It should be made compulsory for primary schools with adequate accommodation to convert fully into whole-day operation.

(2) The number of schools to be built in new development areas should be in line with the number of places required for full-scale operation of unisessionalism in primary schools so as to enable these schools to operate on such a basis right from the start.

(3) Compulsory introduction of the mixed-mode system to primary schools should be condemned. The system should only be operated on a voluntary and experimental basis for assessment of its effectiveness and for the benefit of gathering experience.

(4) Additional resources should be granted at all class levels, instead of restricting to Primary V and Primary VI only, for schools fully converted to whole-day operation or implementing the mixed-mode system on an experimental basis.

These views are generally and strongly held by school heads and teachers who serve on the frontline in primary education. Such generally and strongly held views should definitely not be ignored. We have got to take the sentiment, feeling and practical experience of these people seriously. Unless we do so, the mixed-mode system, even if introduced compulsorily, will not only fail to improve the quality of primary education but will bring about adverse effect. I hope the authorities concerned will be modest enough to give adequate and careful consideration to their views and accept them. As the representative of the education sector and incumbent member of the Union, I cannot but put forth such a request.

I would like to turn to the issue of Student Guidance Officers.

The Union has had a number of frank and in-depth discussion with representatives of the Student Guidance Officers in service. They are people with great sense of vocation for their profession and they have good practical experience of their work. We are fully convinced by their views:

(1) They give whole-hearted support to the introduction of school-based remedial programmes where guidance to students is provided in joint efforts with other teachers.

(2) However, they oppose to the gradual transfer of most of the Student Guidance Officers posts presently in the Education Department to schools to enable school heads

to select one of their teachers to serve as Student Guidance teacher. They submit that Student Guidance Officers of the Education Department should be fully responsible for guidance work in schools. In the light of their professional knowledge, their sense of vocation and their practical experience, they point out that while co-ordination is required for student guidance work and school administration and teaching to complement each other, there are major differences in the orientation of these two aspects of work. If recommendations of the report are accepted, objectives in school administration and teaching will definitely interfere with that in guidance work, and achievement of the latter will definitely be restricted and hampered. If the relative independence of guidance work can be preserved by placing Student Guidance Officers directly under the Education Department and a suitable balance can be struck between guidance work on the one hand and school administration and teaching on the other hand, we shall be in a better position to provide guidance to students and look after their well-being.

(3) The existing problem with student guidance work mainly lies in manpower problem and inadequate resources. The manning ratio is highly disproportionate for each Student Guidance Officer. Their workload is heavy. Should this main problem be resolved, work will be better done. There will not be any disruption to the whole school approach or the co-operation between Student Guidance Officers and other teachers in providing guidance to students if Student Guidance Officers remain, as they are now, under the Education Department.

Sir, I have attended the meeting and spoken in my indisposition. I apologize for having to leave the meeting early if I cannot hold on to the end of it.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR TAI: Sir, I will first speak on the medium of instruction in our schools. During this transitional period, there will be three different types of schools based on the medium of instruction:

(i) Chinese secondary school;

(ii) English secondary school; and

(iii) school which offers two different sectors of instruction in Chinese and in English.

There has been an international consultative report on education which recommended, years ago, that the mother tongue is the best medium of instruction both for the teacher and for the student, bearing in mind that we are dealing with the question of medium of instruction rather than fluency in a second language. Moreover, in Hong Kong we have strong and sufficient cultural, social, political as well as psychological grounds to uphold this. Japan and Germany can furnish us with the next and most successful examples of the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Their children are mainly taught in their mother language in primary and secondary schools and some even in universities. These two countries are becoming the economic superpowers in the world of today.

As to the terms of reference of the report, they include co-ordinating and monitoring the planning and development of education at all levels. The report has little or nothing on adult education. It is noted that the Government is now running a dwindling service in adult education. Does it mean that this area of service will be discarded or neglected?

The next area I would go into is the limited or shortage of open space in our schools.

As more and more schools are being built either in the urban areas or in the rural areas of the New Territories, these new schools are handicapped in open space when compared to the older schools. In order to offer more space for school activities, more open space should be offered in the planning stage.

As to the suggestion of whole-day school, there are clear advantages arising from this suggestion; however, I personally foresee practical difficulties in its implementation.

First of all, there is no target date set for the completion of phasing in the new measures. So much so, a school may be stuck with only Primary V and VI for whole-day school while Primary I to IV for half-day sessions for a long time or indefinitely. The schools concerned will face tremendous difficulties in administration, staffing and so on by accommodating two systems in one school. Parents may face difficulties in sending their children to school if they attend morning and afternoon as well as the whole-day session.

The phasing-in approach for the whole-day school would require additional

teachers in the region of 700 to 800 new teachers. Last September there is already an overall shortage of teachers in Hong Kong in the region of above 10%. Government should take measures to stem the tide or rectify the situation of shortage of manpower in the educational sector.

The next area I would like to go into is the village schools in the rural areas of the New Territories.

With the development of new towns and decreasing birth rate in Hong Kong, more and more new primary schools are now being built in the New Territories especially in the new housing estates. The village primary schools, which are largely responsible for the primary education in New Territories during the 1950s to the 1970s are now dwindling. They are handicapped in terms of facilities, equipment and size.

There are now still in operation more than 130 primary village schools in the rural areas -- a lot of them because local and rural population demand still exists and this helps maintain an acceptable student in-take rate for these schools.

Unfortunately, their facilities are sub-standard. I would like to take this opportunity to suggest that the Administration consider offering appropriate funding to those selected village schools to improve their school facilities, thereby strengthening the confidence of parents, students and school staffs in their schools especially to alleviate the high demand for school places in new housing estates situated near to their village counterparts.

Not surprisingly, a lot of the toilets of these village type schools do not have a flushing water system. Many parents are put off by the standard of toilet facilities and this is one of the many reasons they refrain from sending their children to village schools. Most of these village schools, in comparison with their standard counterparts, lack school halls, proper toilet facilities, music room, recreation room, science room, special purpose room and seriously lack proper teaching equipment, such as photocopying machine, and so on.

Over the years and for each year, there are about 10 village schools being closed down because of insufficient student intake. The land involved was usually donated by private individuals and building costs for the super-structure which is the school were met partly by the board of directors and partly by the Government. The structure of these buildings is generally sound. However, once the school is closed down, the

building being left vacant and unattended has become the object of vandalism.

In order to remove these rural and environmental problems, I would suggest making better use of these empty school buildings, for the purpose of recreational centre, library and so on, so as to make better use of our resources; long-term arrangement can be made in respect of the school buildings being left vacant once these village primary schools have been closed.

With these remarks, Sir, I support the motion.

4.52 pm

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: There are still a number of Members who have their names down to speak. Members might like to take a short break at this point.

5.24 pm

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: Council will now resume.

MRS TAM: Sir, I observe that education is like food and cooking. It is a topic on which everyone has an opinion: everyone thinks they are an expert -- and of course they are! In the end we are all the consumers. It is no use marketing any product, however good the manufacturer believes it to be, if the customer does not want it.

Sir, in the long-running controversy on language teaching much of the blame has been laid at the door of the customers, in this case parents, for placing undue emphasis on the importance of English in the belief -- a well-founded belief -- that competence in English gives their children the best career opportunities. They believe that children have a better chance of achieving this competence if they are taught in English rather than simply learning English as a subject. This may or may not be a well-founded belief too, but neither in this report nor elsewhere have I found any evidence on which I -- or any other parent -- could base an opinion. Unless and until there is such evidence how can parents be confident that they, or the system, are doing the right thing for their children?

The Commission has been criticized for not coming up with a foolproof answer to this problem. But their report has attempted to grasp the language nettle firmly

and hold it up, so that we can all see how prickly it really is. The language problem is a highly complex one and it is not surprising that the report has not been able to solve it overnight. But the Commission has at least moved the debate forward by making some positive recommendations about parallel streaming in English or Chinese, which could be a useful direction in which to move. It is still a compromise but it is difficult to see what else we could have expected, given the lack of research and divisions of opinion that still bedevil the subject.

Sir, the Commission suggests that it is now time for each school to give some hard thought to their proposals, to see how best it can cater for the language needs and abilities of its pupils. Parents will need to understand the implications of any new measures and be convinced that they are going to succeed if the schools want their co-operation.

It will take a decade for the proposed strategy to work through the system completely -- from 1991-92, when the schools first make their choice between Chinese and English as their medium of instruction, until the first full cycle of attainment targets, tests and assessments is complete.

During these years we must be assured that there will be most careful monitoring and evaluation of the effects of any new system, and that the regular reviews that the report suggests will indeed be carried out, and their results made public and clearly explained. The new proposals may not, after all, provide the answer to our language problems. We must beware of a doctrinaire attitude, and be prepared to adapt the system in the light of experience. And, most importantly, the whole apparatus of language streaming, bridging courses, movement from one medium of instruction to the other, will need the commitment and vigilance of school heads and teachers.

Debates on education tend to become academic in the worst sense of the word. There is a real risk that controversy about the recommendations on language teaching -- and other topics too -- will divert attention from the fact that the real education problems in Hong Kong are not theoretical but practical. Systems and methods, even curricula, are less important than the sufficiency and quality of teaching. And we know that there are not at present enough qualified staff -- teachers of languages or any other subject -- to improve significantly the learning environment in our schools. The teaching profession, which must be the cornerstone of any education policy, is just not attractive enough to the best and brightest graduates. And until that is dealt with, implementing recommendations of the kind made in the report will not improve the quality of education.

The Commission promises to devote its fifth report to a study of the teaching profession. Only then will we be able to see if the ideals expressed in the present document stand any chance of being realized.

One important recommendation in the report is the setting up of a Curriculum Development Institute, to occupy a central place in our education system. Sir, I welcome this in principle because I think the content of the school syllabus is in need of reform. But do not let this turn out to be a top-heavy white elephant. A hundred people to form a Curriculum Development Institute and the most brilliant ideas they can produce will be completely wasted if we do not have the able, trained and motivated teachers to put these ideas into practice.

But if the Curriculum Development Institute in some form becomes a reality, there is one plea I should like to make, Sir.

Let any reshaping of the curriculum start at the primary level, for that is where reform is most urgent. I have seen in my own young children how our primary pupils are overburdened by the amount of school and homework they are expected to do. With the emphasis on traditional teaching methods and rote learning, all too often children react against school and what it stands for, and develop negative attitudes which can lead later to just those learning and behavioural difficulties for which the report seeks remedies.

Of course we can try to prevent or minimize such difficulties by making early school days absorbing and stimulating, including sufficient time and space for children to discover their own real talents and develop their individual personalities.

The primary years are the time to lay the foundations on which secondary and tertiary education will stand. At later stages, where disaffection with school has already occurred, all we can do is rely on more or less remedial measures. I am sure the secondary schools are concerned to do the best they can for their pupils, but their task is made harder if the children coming from the primary schools are already tired and drained of enthusiasm for learning.

But of course, no programme, however ideal, could prevent learning, behaviours or emotional problems arising from time to time. Often they are just a product of

growing up and will disappear if handled with understanding; in some cases they are more serious and can lead to delinquent, and sometimes criminal, behaviours.

Sir, I am glad to see that the Commission here recognizes the importance of counselling and guidance. In my work with young people I have seen the value of school social workers and youth counsellors, and I very much hope that resources will be forthcoming to strengthen these support services. A school-based team of guidance teachers and the availability of referral to educational psychologists, social welfare organizations and the relevant professional services of the Education Department -- these are recommendations I strongly support. Furthermore, I hope that the Social Welfare Department will also contribute to the effectiveness of this programme by speedily improving the ratio of school social workers to the promised one per 2 000 students. This will be a positive demonstration of Government's commitment to school counselling and school social work.

Disaffected pupils and unruly and delinquent behaviour can affect the whole school environment. Dealing sympathetically, and professionally where necessary, with children's problems is one step towards improving the atmosphere of the school.

In this context, Sir, I welcome the recommendation to eliminate corporal punishment, which is degrading and negative, no more suitable for children than it is for adults. Effort and imagination are needed to try and forestall lapses in behaviours, and to impose constructive and suitable sanctions when such lapses do occur. Good teachers will find the way to do this, and successes will be infinitely more rewarding to both teachers and pupils alike than the institutionalized bullying that corporal punishment represents, and the resentment and antagonism it perpetuates.

The report makes proposals, too, on the way to help the 1% or 2% of children who remain completely unmotivated by the usual curriculum or have really serious learning difficulties. The Commission recognizes that academic subjects are not the only route to success, and suggests giving this group of children a school environment designed to suit their needs, where their particular talents and strengths can be developed. Too often in ordinary schools the children who find it impossible to keep up with the others are written off as failures and have no chance of demonstrating what they can do well. Parents will need to be reassured that in schools specially created for them, their non-academic children need not suffer the stigma or the burden of failure. With the help of skilled and dedicated teachers, they too can be

achievers and lead successful lives.

Throughout the whole range of schools the ideal climate for education comes with co-operation between teachers, parents and pupils. Let us open up lines of communication between the home and the school, encourage the involvement of parents in school activities, develop parent teacher associations. Education, if we are to maintain our role as a successful, international community, has to take a front-stage role in Hong Kong today. And I hope parents will make sure that they are in on the act!

Sir, in this report I see signs of a new approach to the whole subject of schooling in Hong Kong. I pick up with pleasure the phrase "the whole school approach" which the Commission recommends in dealing with the various sorts of personal difficulty school children may encounter. But I do not think it should be thought of as just a strategy for solving problems. I want to see integration of activities within individual schools; good relationships between teachers and professional experts outside the school; involvement of parents in school life and improved public relations to ensure that there is community awareness and understanding of what the educators of Hong Kong are setting out to do. All these are touched on by the Commission, and when the argument and controversy over its individual topics have died down, perhaps this report's philosophy of the "whole school", whole person, whole community involvement will remain its best testimonial.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR TAM (in Cantonese): Sir, I do not work in the educational sector, nor do I have any professional knowledge of education. Nonetheless, I had my schooling in Hong Kong and my two children are receiving education here. I therefore have strong feelings for the pressure and the adverse effect of the existing education system on our students.

As we all know, the pyramid-like educational system in the past was on the one hand, attributed to limited economic resources of the community, making it impossible to provide higher let alone tertiary education for all, and on the other hand, basically geared to the economic development of the territory, in which the supply of manpower in varying number and abilities had to be attained at different stages of development of our community through different levels of examination in the

selection of the appropriate personnel. Such practice took no heed of the aim of education and deprived a certain number of people of the opportunity for further development. Regrettably, it is a price we had to pay when we had no alternative.

However, it is beyond doubt that Hong Kong has become a more affluent society in the 1990s and the provision of 11-year universal education has become a goal that is accessible. Our children should therefore no longer be subject to the pressure of examination as we were in the past. Instead, they should be able to acquire basic education in a delightful environment and develop their own potentials and personalities. This is where the essence of universal education lies and the reinstatement as well as the realization of this goal has become a matter of urgency.

To get to the root of the problem, we need to have a clear perception of our educational goal. Once we have the right perception, the objectives of reform in respect of the curriculum, the medium of instruction and the assessment system will become clear and discernible.

1. The development of a curriculum that is easily comprehensible, diversified, lively and flexible

Though the report acknowledges the importance of curriculum development in universal education and recommends to set up a Curriculum Development Institute, it fails to make a serious review on the problems arising from the current curriculum and offers piecemeal solutions only.

The existing school curriculum strictly follows that of the elitist educational system in the past. Its purpose is mainly to prepare our students for university education. The syllabuses are difficult, monotonous and boring, placing overwhelming emphasis on the teaching of academic subjects. Coupled with the language barrier and the pressure of examination the whole learning process has reduced to recitation of trivial details. Under such circumstances, students lose their interest in learning on the one hand while their potentials and intelligence are greatly suppressed on the other. The existing problem in our school curriculum is therefore a general one. In order to improve the quality of education, it is necessary to make overall changes instead of introducing reforms for certain groups of students as suggested in the report.

An ideal curriculum should not be an assembly line for passing on source knowledge

only, it should also inspire students with creativity and, more importantly, to take into account their overall developments. It is therefore more advisable to have a diversified curriculum that can be flexibly applied by our teachers and students to meet their own needs. I would like to emphasize that since teachers and students are the protagonists in the education programme, the curriculum should be so designed as to leave room for teachers and students to develop in accordance with their own needs.

2. The use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction

As I have just mentioned, if we have a clear idea of the goal of universal education, the medium of instruction will not be a problem any more. Since the goal of universal education is not only the impartation of knowledge but also the cultivation of healthy personality and development of potentials, it is only natural to adopt the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. However, it is on this issue that the Education Commission Report has taken a wavering stand. The report has, on the one hand, advocated that efforts should be made to encourage the development of personal potentials on a fuller scale, but on the other hand, recommended the grouping of students by medium of instruction indefinitely on the grounds that the industrial and commercial sectors are in need of people who are proficient in English. Such argument is obviously self-contradictory.

Comments from various sectors of the community have clearly indicated that the mother tongue should be used as the medium of instruction in universal education. Never has anyone denied the importance of English in the development of Hong Kong. However, enhancement in the standard of English and the adoption of medium of instruction are separate issues. We should not overlook the learning of English as a language. Nor should we strangle the all-round development of our students simply for the sake of promoting the learning of English.

3. Target-related assessments

The enormous pressure of examination on our students under the existing educational system has drawn strong criticism. With the introduction of universal education, it is only natural that the pressure on students will be reduced as the role of examination as a selection tool gradually subsides. However, I am afraid the target-related assessments proposed by the report will create another bondage on our students. As their performance will be put to test constantly, the students

will have to live in the anxiety that they may not be able to achieve satisfactory academic results.

Moreover, it is doubtful whether an objective and common standard can be set in regard to the development of personality and potentials after the introduction of universal education. It should be recognized that every student is unique and has different potentials and level of creativity. I therefore consider that it is more important to observe the student-oriented principle in universal education. In other words, the whole education system should aim at enhancing the personal growth of students.

Of course, these are lofty educational goals which take time to achieve. However, we need to set such goals before we can make changes in the right direction and provide a better learning environment for our younger generation. And in order to achieve these goals, it is essential to have a good teaching profession. Therefore, how to improve the quality of our teachers is also a pressing task. I hope the Government will make desirable recommendations in the fifth report.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR MICHAEL CHENG (in Cantonese): Sir, the recommendation put forth by the Education Commission in its No. 4 report on how to improve the quality of education will have far-reaching effects on the development of our basic education. Owing to time constraint, it would not be possible for me to comment on all the recommendations in the report. I shall therefore confine my remarks to the two issues which have given rise to the greatest concern and response from the public and the education sector, namely, the policy on language in education and the implementation of mixed-mode schooling in primary schools.

The policy on language in education

At present, the use of mixed code is quite common in secondary schools. A lot of the time and efforts of the teachers are being wasted on translation of English texts into Chinese in class and the result of education is far from satisfactory as students trained in such a manner are unable to express their academic knowledge effectively in either Chinese or English independently. In fact, time used in this translation process could be better spent on other educational aspects such as analysis and class discussions which would be of more value to students' mental

development. Based on my past experience and understanding, I think it would be more effective if the same language is used in teaching, textbooks and examinations. Thus, the use of mixed code should be reduced as far as possible.

So far the Education Department has not come up with any effective improvement measures to solve the problem on medium of instruction. It only concentrates its efforts on encouraging schools to switch to using Chinese as the medium of instruction in order to evade tackling the problem of students' declining standard of English. This has indirectly brought about increased use of mixed code in schools and further deterioration of the situation in language education.

In view of this, the grouping of students into Chinese-medium or English-medium schools or classes on the basis of their language abilities is, after all, a more feasible solution. In fact, English-medium education should continue to be made available to students whose English standard is relatively high so as to provide them with the greatest exposure to the English language. As for those students whose English standard is not as good, Chinese should be adopted as the medium of instruction so as to enable them to develop their academic potential. This is in line with the principle of education to fully cater for individual differences among students.

Hong Kong is the third largest financial centre in the world and has been able to maintain its status as an international trade centre. One of the most important factors contributory to this is that Hong Kong uses the most commonly and widely used international language -- English. In addition, most parents prefer to send their children to English-medium schools. As a matter of fact English medium instruction opens the gate to better tertiary education and employment opportunities. The fact that quite a number of Chinese-medium schools have changed into English-medium schools in recent years substantiates this argument.

The report recommends the adoption of a clear policy of medium of instruction by schools, that is, using either Chinese or English and proposes to give schools the choice as to which medium of instruction they use. I think this is a wise approach. Hong Kong is a free society. It is reasonable and democratic to let schools choose their own medium of instruction in accordance with the wishes of parents. Although in opting to become two-medium schools in which some classes would be taught in the medium of Chinese and some in the medium of English, schools will have to face certain difficulties in terms of administration, it nevertheless helps avoid the undesirable effects arising from the use of mixed code. It is true that this is not an ideal

solution, but this can be reckoned as a compromise and therefore acceptable.

In recent years, there has been an obvious decline in the English standard of secondary school students in Hong Kong. One of the reasons for this is that there has been a decline in English standard at primary level. Since 1981, English standards in primary schools have not yet reached the 1976 level. Thus the task of raising the English standard in primary schools should admit no delay. An international survey indicates that it will be relatively more difficult for children to start learning a second language after they are 12 years old and that learning ability decreases as age increases. In view of this, the introduction of language enhancement measures aimed at raising the English standard in Hong Kong should begin at primary level instead of secondary level, otherwise double efforts will be required for achieving the same objective. In order to raise the English standard of primary pupils, the report recommends the enhancement of English language activities at Primary V and Primary VI levels, including the introduction of extended reading programmes and the organization of fun-oriented teaching and extra-curricular activities. Apart from these measures, there should be additional periods for English lessons so as to ensure a general rise in the standard of English. The Report also recommends the introduction of English assessment at Primary VI in the hope that a more balanced focusing of attention among teachers and students on what should be achieved in the languages at primary level could be obtained. It is indeed an effective approach to improve the English standard in primary schools.

To assist Form I students to adopt themselves to the change of teaching medium from Chinese to English, the report recommends the introduction and further reinforcement of bridging courses. This recommendation is appropriate and there are compelling reasons for its immediate implementation. Another good idea put forward in the report is the organization of English courses for post-Secondary V and VI students entering employment. However, if such courses are only provided during summer holidays, they will not be adequate to meet the language needs of various trades. Extending the duration of such vocational English courses, for instance, to six months or one year, would be more practical.

The report also proposes to run bridging courses similar to the full time intensive English courses between May and August to help Chinese medium school students improve their English language skills prior to their entry into tertiary education. I doubt the effectiveness of such short courses which last only for a couple of months and consider the suggestion impractical.

If the proposed policy on language in education in this report is endorsed, the Education Department will have to devise monitoring measures and give clear instructions for their implementation. Meanwhile, the manpower and effectiveness of the inspectorate will have to be strengthened. In this connection, the Education Department will need to review the present operation of the inspectorate to see whether its internal management is sound, whether its duties are actively carried out and whether its strength of manpower is adequate. Otherwise, the recommendations put forward in the report regarding the policy on language in education would end up being merely empty talk even if they are endorsed.

Implementation of mixed-mode schooling in primary schools

I agree that the ultimate target of primary education is to improve the standard of primary education through the provision of whole-day schooling for all primary students. However, given the facts that many technical details of the arrangements proposed in the report have yet to be satisfactorily sorted out and that resources are inadequate, headlong implementation of this scheme will only undermine Hong Kong's basic education.

I have consulted the views of various teachers and educational organizations on the proposed implementation of mixed-mode schooling in primary schools. Most of them expressed strong discontent with the proposal. They think it will bring chaos to the school administration, cause disturbance among teachers and students, and ultimately lead to a decline in education standard. In fact, I feel that the conversion of bisessional schools to whole-day operation will inevitably come up against some problems during the transitional period. The preparation of a well-devised plan taking into account the positive and negative effects is therefore necessary before implementation of this programme.

The discontent and doubts expressed by various sectors towards mixed-mode schooling can be summarized in the following four points:

(1) The report recommends the adoption of a phasing-in programme for the implementation of mixed-mode schooling which is tentatively scheduled to take six years to complete. However, the implementation of whole-day schooling is only restricted to Primary V and Primary VI levels. The report provides no clear information as to when specifically this will be extended to Primary IV level and

below, leaving the full implementation of whole-day schooling to an undetermined time-frame. This shows that the Government lacks sincerity in implementing the long-term goal of introducing "full scale whole-day schooling for primary schools".

(2) With the introduction of mixed-mode schooling, the administration systems of AM and PM schools will merge into one. At present, the head of a primary school is responsible for the management of 24 classes without the need to take up any teaching duties. However, with the implementation of mixed-mode schooling, his duties and workload will be more than doubled. He will be required to manage 46 classes and teach eight periods. The report on the one hand admits that the implementation of mixed-mode schooling will result in an increase in administrative work and management problems, while on the other hand proposes to double the workload of school heads. This shows that such a recommendation is really incongruous. Though the report points out that the school head will be underpinned by two deputy heads in the management of school affairs, it is doubtful whether they will be able to perform school administrative functions in addition to their duties to teach 28 periods per week. The drastic increase in workload for school administrators will seriously affect the administration of schools, and thereby making it impossible to maintain the present quality of education.

It is also proposed in the report that one of two existing heads of the bisessional schools should step down to perform the functions of the deputy if mixed-mode schooling is to be implemented. By calculation based on the current establishment in government and aided schools, the implementation of mixed-mode operation is estimated to result in more than 200 redundant school heads. Apart from seriously affecting the morale of school administrators at primary school level and the promotion prospects of the primary school teachers, this will bring about a even higher wastage rate of the teaching staff. How then can we expect to see any achievement in upgrading the quality of the primary education under such circumstances?

(3) The proposal of mixed-mode schooling has failed to take into account the severe shortage of activity space for pupils in many existing standard school premises which can scarcely afford to accommodate the canteen facilities required by the whole-day pupils who need to take their lunch at school. Although the schools concerned will each receive a grant of about \$40,000 for the purchase of the necessary tables and benches, they will find it hard to spare any space to put their newly acquired furniture. Besides, the simultaneous operation of three sets of timetables each with

its own specified time for lessons, recesses, lunch and dismissal of school in the same premises of a school will cause confusion to the operation of the school and seriously disrupt the learning mood of the pupils. The effectiveness of teaching and pupil management will inevitably be affected.

(4) The mixed-mode system will not only improve additional workload on the teaching staff, but also lead to greater conflicts of interests between school heads and teachers. The need to re-deploy teachers to take up whole-day classes will pose a problem to the school management and may turn out to be a cause of internal conflicts and discontent. Since the Primary V and VI teachers will have a more demanding schedule of work than their counterparts at Primary I to IV levels, it is conceivable that the morale of these teachers and the quality of their teaching will, as a result of longer working hours and heavier workload, be adversely affected.

I doubt whether members of the Education Commission have acquired an in-depth understanding of the actual operation of primary schools and wonder if their recommendations were formulated in a vacuum without making reference to the practical situation. In view of the many undesirable side effects of the mixed-mode operation, which include the loss of confidence at the management level, its impact on the professional ethics of the teachers, the possible disruption to school administration, its grave influence on the morale of the education profession as well as its serious effect on the studying environment and learning mood of the pupils, the implementation of this schooling system is bound to cause a drop in the quality of the primary education. Hence, the formulation of such a policy can rightly be described as ill-conceived. It is suggestive of an absence of representatives in the Education Commission who are capable of reflecting the true situation of the primary education and providing valuable advice for reference.

Our ultimate target is to provide whole-day schooling for all primary pupils. During the transitional period, it is, however, advisable to introduce whole-day operation by phases at a measured pace. I propose that compulsory implementation of mixed-mode operation should start with underutilized schools which are currently operating on a bi-sessional basis. While whole-day schooling should take immediate effect in all new schools, bisessional schools with full enrolment should be allowed to operate under its existing system of half-day operation until it is the ripe time for them to convert to whole-day operation.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

6.00 pm

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

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

Question proposed, put and agreed to.

MR DAVID CHEUNG: Sir, education in Hong Kong has gone through a metamorphosis in the last two decades. Yet, the primary objective of education as aspired by the population is still uni-directional or, put it simply, one track -- that is to get to university. This, in my view, is the root of all the problems.

It is not a question of whether these aspirations are right or wrong; but rather whether such aspirations are matched by suitable capabilities. In the old days when only a selected few had the opportunities for education, such aspirations were very natural and indeed attainable by the selected minority.

The wheel of education has continued to turn, however, and nearly all children of the age group now receive education up to Secondary V. On the other hand, aspirations for a university education continue to grow. Unfortunately, these are not matched by an abundant supply of university places despite our efforts, and admission is restricted to those who demonstrate the appropriate capabilities as required by the universities. Students who do not get admitted see themselves as losers; so do their parents, as if the lack of a university graduate qualification is the end of the world for their children.

The problem with our society and our education system is that too much emphasis has been placed on preparing our school children for a university education which is available to only a number of them. Unless and until the entire community looks at education and education achievements sensibly and pragmatically, all the efforts to make to improve education will be in vain.

No two persons can achieve identical educational success. We must accept that. Many from the mass will not be able to reach university level especially if they have to struggle in a foreign language. Society must recognize every type of educational success be it academic or skill oriented. The community can no longer attach value only to academic success in English, for if we do, we are depriving the vast majority of our young people of a sense of achievement.

The time has come when the community cannot afford to continue to label success with English language ability. It is simply totally unrealistic. Twenty years ago or further back, we might. The price to pay is too big for too many of our youngsters. Why can academic success in Chinese not be also properly recognized given that this is a predominantly Chinese community? Can we rule out the fact that many successful politicians do not use foreign languages? Can we rule out the fact that many super successful community leaders of Hong Kong do not speak much English? If we continue to equate success with proficiency in English, we cannot say we care for our young people; we simply condemn a lot of them. Mother tongue education must be given full support and recognition alongside education in the English language. No one will ever advocate the abolition of English education; I for one will never. But education in the Chinese language must be given more or less equal status. As a community, we must make this happen. Too many of our youngsters have suffered long enough having to struggle unsuccessfully with an English language education. There is nowhere else in the world where mother tongue education is so looked down upon and enjoys such a low social status. Should we not be ashamed of this?

It is a natural phenomenon all over the world that the majority of the population in any country are mono-lingual or good at mother tongue. Some have a knowledge of a second language. If young people elsewhere in the world can successfully complete a university course without a high command of a second language, why make life difficult and miserable for our young people? I am not asking universities to drop English, I am pleading with the Government and the tertiary institutions to provide clear and open channels for graduates of the Chinese stream to enter tertiary institutions. Let both the English and Chinese streams graduates have parallel opportunities for tertiary education. Students in the Chinese stream have been discriminated against for far too long. If we go to Taiwan and China to get a degree, their degrees are not recognized when they come back. Where will they go? Is it fair to them? Let us search our conscience. Unless and until graduates from schools using Chinese are, in one way or another, given more or less equal opportunities for

tertiary education, the magnitude of the problem will not be significantly reduced as the years go by, and in the meantime, sacrifice the education of too many of our children.

Education using English as the medium of instruction should continue, but education using Chinese should be given equal status to show that we also care for the majority of our youngsters. The tertiary institutions must take the lead, instead of making life more miserable for those educated in Chinese.

Sir, the Education Commission has also proposed setting up special schools for youngsters with learning difficulties. I urge the community to accept these children and accept these schools. The little joy and perhaps some sense of achievement that these students may have going to school must be energetically nurtured. We must not label them, despise them and destine these schools to the doom even before their commencement. I urge parents to be sensible caring for their children. For if parents too make life difficult for their own children, who else will care for their children? I also urge community leaders to help parents make the right decision by giving these children and these schools proper recognition.

Now to the primary sector. Judging from the reaction among the practitioners, and the reaction of some of our colleagues I gather that they are not happy about the mixed-mode operation. For so long, Sir, we have tried to get our primary schools to go whole-day. Realizing that, as a short-term goal, it is rather impossible for the entire school sector to go whole-day, the mixed-mode is designed. Yes, I agree it is not a perfect and an ideal solution. I also agree that it involves some change of status of certain existing school heads; some difficulties in administration; and some confusion too. But short of an ideal solution, this is what we consider acceptable. The Commission has agonized over the technicalities including most of the points raised by my honourable colleague, the Honourable SZETO Wah, in his speech, and has even gone to the extent of proposing a timetable. We must recognize that any change of system involves teething problems. May I, in all sincerity, implore the practitioners to hear my cry, and accept the proposal and work together to make it a success. Hopefully, before the year 2000 we can go down to Primary IV and then continue to work towards an eventual whole-school-whole-day system. It will be deeply and profoundly regrettable if we cannot start the ball rolling. As an incentive and encouragement, Government must provide additional resources to these schools already in whole-day operation.

Finally, Sir, unlike my honourable colleague, Mrs Rosanna TAM, I wish to express my profound regret in the abolition of corporal punishment. If King Solomon, whose wisdom is world renowned, is to be heeded, then we should never have abolished corporal punishment. Solomon said, "spare the rod, spoil the child." In my experience as a school master, corporal punishment properly exercised -- and I emphasize properly exercised -- serves very useful purpose. To some children, that is the only voice they will listen to. I can appreciate the possibility of abuse, but it need not be abolished; it can be strictly confined to the principal who will have the sole right to exercise such punishment. Now that it is gone, I honestly do not know how to tackle those children who are indifferent to everything except the stick.

Problems of discipline in schools and at home have gradually and steadily become more uncontrollable. More and more children are violent and extremely difficult to discipline. If we continue to adopt a more and more lenient and lax approach towards discipline, order will one day collapse bringing greater harm to society. It is often said that if we apply corporal punishment, we hurt the pride of the students. For those who do not know self-pride and self-respect, I do not know how we can hurt their pride. It is also said that many western countries have abolished corporal punishment and we therefore should follow suit. I just want to say "the moon in the west is neither rounder nor brighter than the one we see."

I would like to sound a note of caution here. If discipline collapsed in schools, we would lose even more teachers. The main reason given for teacher wastage now is that students are becoming more and more difficult to manage. I urge that serious consideration be given to re-instating corporal punishment.

With these words, Sir, I support the motion.

MRS FONG: Sir, Chinese culture involves many proud traditions and many of them are part of our heritage. One of these is a deep and lasting respect for our teachers. Respect for teachers has been the rule and it has been a good one. We should do our best to preserve it in Hong Kong today.

Teachers forgo the temptations of the private sector. They forgo the bobbles of a status conscious society. They devote themselves to the noble task of preparing our greatest natural resource -- our children.

Our teachers are burdened with the task and responsibility of instilling in our next generation the powers and freedom of knowledge and the senses of pride in the years ahead in being Chinese and in being citizens of Hong Kong. They are key in helping to shape the character and mind of our children. They are the key people in the process of building the future of Hong Kong.

Sir, I believe that Hong Kong has an obligation to teachers. It must give them the respect they need and support their honoured vocation. The Education Commission Report No. 4's recommendations on introducing a mixed-mode programme providing whole-day schooling for certain forms at the primary school level must be considered with great caution and with great attention. Consideration must be given to how it will affect our teachers.

The report notes: "Teachers prefer to work in half-day schools since, despite the shorter hours, the salary is the same as that in whole-day schools." Is this the case? Are the teachers focusing only on their own convenience and not concerned with the quality of education and effectiveness of the programme. I trust that there may be some misjudgment of our teachers' motivations and I believe we should look more deeply at their concerns.

Implementing a scheme like mixed-mode schooling will necessarily result in some operational problems. There are schools in Hong Kong which are at present operating a mixed-mode system and we can learn from them. Headmasters and teachers are also in the best position to understand the problems which may arise and we must listen to them.

The model for phasing in mixed-mode schooling offers a scenario for a 24-classroom school. However, I am doubtful whether a similar approach could be adopted for a 12-classroom school without serious disruptions.

Even in the scheme for a 24-classroom school, the idea of having two, four and six vacant classes in the first, second and third year of implementation, resulting in a total of 480 fewer students under instruction in each school, appears unnecessarily wasteful particularly with a well-run school.

I support the plan to change to a whole day schooling system. But I very sincerely hope the Administration will give more consideration to the problems of organizing and implementing the changes, including looking more deeply into the concerns raised by the teachers, before moving forward.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MRS LAM (in Cantonese): Sir, the language of instruction has all along been a perplexing problem in education in Hong Kong. In the Education Commission Report No. 4, this issue accounts for 1/4 of all its contents. In this debate on the report today, I would also like to start with the language of instruction.

Streaming in education

Hong Kong is an international city and a financial centre; thus the English language has always been playing an important role in the territory. Since those with a good standard of English have an edge over others in further studies and job opportunities, many parents would rather send their children to Anglo-Chinese schools without any regard to whether the English standard of their children can cope with the mode of teaching in which English is used as the chief medium of instruction. Experience in education over a long period of time has proved that mother tongue is the most effective medium both in teaching and learning. In recent years, the use of a mixed-code approach in schools has not only lowered the students' standard in both languages but also affected their learning ability. As Hong Kong is an international commercial city, it is only right that those students who can learn in English be given the chance to do so. Basing on the above reasons, I support the idea of "Streaming in education" as proposed in the report.

In the Education Commission Report No. 4, it is recommended that schools should be divided into three types, for example Chinese-medium, English-medium and two-medium of instruction and the proportion of classes in each medium they would like to offer; but the use of mixed-code teaching should be avoided as far as possible.

There are concrete example in the past which proved that when Anglo-Chinese secondary schools were converted to Chinese middle schools, considerable social resistance would be met. It is thus evident that the promotion of teaching in Chinese cannot rely on administrative directive alone, and that we should not expect it to be achieved overnight. Therefore, the pragmatic approach is to allow temporarily the co-existence of "Chinese-medium secondary schools", "English-medium secondary schools" and "two-medium schools", so as to testify to the merits of mother tongue education through practice.

The question is, for the merits of mother tongue teaching to be realized, there is the need for the complement of other social factors. The basic strategy is that the Government should amend the existing Civil Service Regulations and university entrance requirements, so that students in the "Chinese Stream" can compete with those in the so-called "upper stream" on an equal footing.

The report recommends that "target-related assessments" should be implemented in Primary VI and Secondary III to determine to which streams the student should go. Some members of the community worry that the assessment results would be used as enrolment criteria by secondary schools, which would in turn be divided into "elitist" Anglo-Chinese secondary schools and "ordinary" or second-class Chinese middle schools. Such worries are not groundless. Some educational bodies suggested that the assessment should be conducted within schools after the intake of Secondary I students, and the questions and assessment standard should be set by the Education Department. Such a proposal is worthy of our consideration.

According to the recommendation of the Commission, while implementing "streaming in education", the Education Department would still explore ways in which a bridging course might be provided according to the students' academic performance at the end of Secondary III, to give them opportunities to "transfer" to classes using another medium. I think such a measure will meet the actual needs of students and will be conducive to removing people's impression of polarization between the "Chinese stream and the English stream".

As the saying goes: "Long unity will end in separation and long separation will end in unity". This seems to be the law whereby our society keeps on evolving in endless cycles. Having spoken on "Language streaming", I would like to talk about "mixed-mode schooling" in primary schools.

Mixed-mode schooling in primary schools

The importance of primary education has long been acknowledged worldwide. Many people have attributed the speedy recovery and economic revival of Germany and Japan after the War to their success in promoting primary education, which is an elementary basis in education. At this time when the Administration attaches great importance to tertiary education, the need to enhance the quality of education in primary schools should indeed not be overlooked.

Unisessionalism in primary schools is beneficial to students in terms of the greater attention they will receive, the enhancement of teaching quality as well as the reduction of potential juvenile delinquency. To meet the enormous increase in the primary school population during the post-war years, the Government decided in 1954 to adopt, as a temporary measure, a system of half-day operation in primary schools. Regrettably, such "temporary measure" has been enforced "temporarily" for 36 years until today.

Sir, I was a member of the Board of Education for six years. During my term of office, I repeatedly called for the reinstatement of unisessionalism in primary schools and expressed my wish that the primary school education system be reviewed and revised. Regrettably, all these ideals could not be realized during my term of office on the Board.

Today, I am very glad to see that the Education Commission, under the leadership of our colleague, the Honourable Mrs Rita FAN, has finally put forward a concrete proposal in its No. 4 Report on unisessionalism in primary school education.

Having regard to the constraint of resources, it is suggested in the report that whole-day schooling should be applied in the first instance to Primary V and VI classes. According to the Education Commission's thinking, both aided and government schools presently practising bisessionalism should adopt mixed-mode operation. In other words, bisessionalism for Primary I to IV, will continue while unisessionalism will be enforced in Primary V and VI. In order to implement this policy, additional resources will be allocated to schools which adopt unisessionalism in Primary V and VI. These include: (1) The teacher/class ratio will be raised from the present 1.2 : 1 to 1.4 : 1; (2) the ratio of senior teachers will be improved from one Assistant Master/Mistress (AM) to every four classes in a bisessional school to one AM for every three classes in a mixed-mode school.

Sir, having regard to the constraint of resources, I consider it acceptable to implement whole-day schooling by stages, but I hope that the full implementation of unisessionalism for primary schools would be speeded up and that there should be a concrete timetable for conversion as the report has made no mention at all of a target date for the full implementation of unisessionalism.

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that there are schools which have made

painstaking efforts and surmounted many obstacles to change to whole-day schooling on a voluntary basis. These schools have not been mentioned at all in the report, to say nothing about the lack of a proposal to allocate additional resources for their operation. That explains why all the 63 primary schools with premises and facilities suitable for whole-day schooling would rather choose to retain bisessionalism. For the sake of their educational ideal and the healthy growth of the younger generation, the pioneers in education who adopted whole-day schooling worked quietly and have devoted much more time and energy on this cause than their counterparts in other schools. It is totally unreasonable to deny their schools of the recognition they deserve just because they have not changed to unisessionalism at this juncture.

In order to encourage more primary schools to adopt unisessionalism and to be fair to primary schools which are already practising this mode, I think that the Education Department should provide additional resources to all government and aided primary schools which are already implementing unisessionalism, as a gesture of encouragement and appreciation. Moreover, the additional resources should be granted to all classes in the school, from Primary I to VI and not just to Primary V and VI

Besides, since some educational bodies have expressed worries about mixed-mode schooling, the Administration should adopt a cautious attitude in solving the administrative and personnel problems arising from the implementation of mixed-mode schooling. These include "practising three systems in one school", "downgrading the heads of schools", "lunch time arrangement", and so on.

Behavioral problems and corporal punishment in schools

No doubt, there would be a lot of problems in implementing unisessionalism in primary schools. An example is how to handle skilfully the problem concerning the professional rights of teachers? This is a problem that the Administration must face. Despite all these problems, we must implement unisessionalism in primary schools. Apart from its educational value, whole-day schooling would also help to reduce juvenile delinquency since bisessional schools have problems in organizing extra-curricular activities, many students, especially those with working parents, have no one to look after them outside school. They will be easily influenced by bad elements and may even commit crimes. Statistics show that the problem of theft among primary students is becoming more serious. This is really an alarming sign.

It is proposed in the report that the police and the Education Department should

extend their efforts in combating triad activities in schools to non-triad related gang activities. I fully support this proposal. Although there was a decrease in the number of reported triad-related activities in secondary schools during the past five years, there were certainly a lot of unreported cases, particularly in densely populated areas such as public housing estates. Organized triad activities are still rampant in these areas. Therefore, regular patrol in the vicinity of schools by police detectives can to a certain extent deter triad penetration into schools.

As for the abolition of corporal punishment, I think that it is not yet the right time to adopt such a measure. Corporal punishment is still needed in order to discipline some naughty students, particularly those in the junior classes. As corporal punishment does have a deterrent effect, it should really be retained for the time being.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MISS LEUNG (in Cantonese): Sir, of the series of recommendations in the Education Commission Report No.4 I will today briefly address only the most controversial one, namely, streaming.

Sir, Cantonese and even Putonghua, that is, Mandarin, are the mother tongue of the people of Hong Kong. English is no more than a foreign language -- not our mother tongue. However, as English has long been the common language of the international business community and incidentally Hong Kong is a foremost international business centre, the importance of English to us is beyond question.

Sir, the merits of teaching in the mother tongue and the demerits of teaching in a non-mother tongue are well known to all and sundry; none will ever question them. There is therefore no need for me to dwell on this point and waste Members' time. Anyway, in the matter of language in education, promotion of full mother-tongue teaching is the main direction in which Hong Kong should proceed; at least mother-tongue teaching should be implemented during the primary and secondary stages of education. However, we understand that conditions for full mother-tongue teaching to be implemented in the near future do not yet exist. Some of the insurmountable difficulties we presently face in the introduction of full mother-tongue teaching are: how to train teachers in sufficient numbers within a short time; and how to make available high quality Chinese textbooks and reference books.

The authorities concerned should seriously study how to proceed in the direction of full mother-tongue teaching and should not waste time in studying the feasibility of streaming, which goes against the spirit of mother-tongue teaching.

In terms of practicality, the report's recommendation on streaming would not seem to be feasible. The recommendation stresses that it is for the parents and schools to choose and decide what language should be the learning medium for their children and students. In practice, the schools, in making their choice, will defer to the wishes of the parents; and the parents, in making their choice, will consider what career prospects there will be for their children. In the foreseeable future, the realities here in Hong Kong will remain such that the prospects for further study and employment and of success in either or both will undoubtedly be far better in the case of students using English as the learning medium than in the case of students learning in the mother tongue. Therefore parents will be keen to choose for their children schools or classes which adopt English as the medium of instruction. The report's recommendation as to streaming will, having regard to the realities in the foreseeable future, only prove to be futile; basically, schools will take English as the medium of instruction, not the mother tongue.

We believe that nothing short of forcible implementation of streaming by the authorities concerned and complete denial of the right of choice to parents and schools alike could ensure the effectiveness, limited though it must necessarily be, of this proposal. But forcible implementation will have a series of adverse effects. Those students who are assessed to be suitable for Chinese-medium learning -- in other words, assessed to be unqualified for English-medium learning -- will inevitably nurse a sense of inferiority and they will also be discriminated against as "second rate" students. This will have the effect of a psychological impact on the students and will threaten their chance of further study or employment. More to that, this may lead to the blind elevation of the English language to an unreasonably exalted position in our society, accompanied by a lowering of the status of the Chinese language. Therefore, basically, I am against the proposed policy of streaming.

Finally, I urge the authorities to implement, as speedily as possible, full mother-tongue teaching in primary and secondary schools. At the same time, the authorities should also make preparations to equip the students with a sound, basic knowledge of English. I hope that in due course secondary leavers will all have achieved a fair standard of English.

MR SIT (in Cantonese): Sir, as an outsider to speak on education in this Chamber today I may perhaps be likened to a blind man sizing up an elephant. Yet there are many primary and secondary schools -- and many parents as well -- in my constituency. It is therefore necessary for me to state on their behalf certain views on the Education Commission Report No. 4.

The Education Commission Report No. 4 runs to 158 pages. I must therefore express my admiration to members of the Education Commission for the efforts they made in preparing a report of this length. They have in fact spent a lot of time on it.

Yet I would like to ask the chairperson of the Education Commission, Mrs Rita FAN, whether all recommendations in the report are to be implemented. If some of them are strongly objected to or criticized, will the Administration reconsider them; or will an independent working group be set up to study the matter? If the answers are negative, then today's debate will be meaningless in that it will only be a debate for the sake of debating.

The Administration, during this transitional period, should initiate more studies on education development -- in particular studies to keep ourselves well informed of the education system in China -- which may provide reference materials for the future Special Administrative Region Government. All along, the Education Department has been criticized for being too bureaucratic. Directives are very often issued via school circulars which have kept school administrators and teachers constantly on their toes.

Many educationists and parents in my constituency have strong views about the proposal of mixed-mode schooling in primary schools in the Education Commission Report No. 4. I would like to take this opportunity to state their positions in this respect. The worries and concerns of these educationists are, in my view, reasonable. They are the front-line workers and should understand the situation better than any others including Members of this Council who are not engaged in the field of education. But will the Education Commission have the patience to listen to their dissenting voice?

The Administration has said it again and again that public opinions and public views will be respected. Since there are at present so many people against this mixed-mode system, should the Administration consider reviewing the feasibility of this proposal? Or will obstinacy prevail and the Administration cling to mixed-

mode schooling to run the risk of losing public confidence in education policy?

The Education Commission Report No. 4 openly admits that the full conversion of all primary classes to whole-day operation is impossible at the present stage due to lack of resources. But in order to achieve the aim of a handful of persons, mixed-mode system is introduced as a substitute and is recommended for implementation in 1991-92. Could the Administration inform the public why the system should be hurriedly introduced? Some educationists, the report stresses, have pointed out that whole-day schooling is beneficial to students both from educational and social points of view. Though I am not an educationist, I support whole-day schooling in primary schools. Nevertheless, guarantee should be given to ensure that sufficient new school premises will be provided to accommodate classes of both the morning and afternoon sessions. In this way, the recommendation will be reasonable and feasible.

It is mentioned in the Education Commission Report No. 4 that the mixed-mode approach will allow for greater degree of curricular flexibility and make it easier for schools to conduct remedial teaching. These two points can in no way persuade people to support the mixed-mode system. In fact, the system will only deprive students of the real advantages of whole-day schooling. It will affect students' learning environment and aggravate the difficulties parents may encounter in taking care of their children. School administration will turn chaotic; teachers will experience a much greater work pressure while promotion prospects diminish. All these will seriously undermine the morale of the teaching staff.

I have come across many educationists who all agree that mixed-mode schooling will have an adverse effect on primary education. Several systems, including bisessional and unisessional, will exist within the same school premises. Correspondingly, greater work pressure on school headmasters, senior teachers and teachers will result. Though it is recommended in the report that the teacher/class ratio be fixed at 1.4:1, practically no relief to manpower shortage will be brought about as more activity lessons will be added when whole-day schooling is introduced.

Some teachers worry that over 200 headmasters will be displaced in five years. Though there may be natural wastage, the promotion of senior teachers to headmasters and in turn teachers to senior teacher will ultimately be affected. This will no doubt dampen the morale of the teaching sector; and teachers themselves will have to face the threat, psychologically perhaps, of being displaced.

On the other hand, there are also responses from parents on mixed-mode schooling. If a person has two children, one studying in Primary II and the other in Primary IV, the introduction of mixed-mode schooling in 1991-92 will make it necessary for him to look after two children who will return home from school at different hours every day. Hence it will not be uncommon for the smaller child being left alone at home -- a situation which may lead to more home accidents. In families where both parents have to go out to work, the care of the smaller children are often entrusted to their elder brothers and sisters who are studying in higher primary classes. If these elder brothers and sisters have to attend whole-day schools and return home later, who will take care of the smaller children? How will the Education Commission help the parents solve this problem? Will the Social Welfare Department be invited to provide district-based occasional child care service to cater for the special needs arising from mixed-mode schooling?

I would like to emphasize that the Administration may go ahead with the mixed-mode system in primary schools. But the system should first be introduced, on a trial basis, in one or two government schools in each district. If the pilot scheme proves to be successful and receives support from all sectors of the community, the system -- modified perhaps on the experience gained -- can then be extended to the subsidized and aided primary schools throughout the territory.

Sir, it is recommended in the Special Educational Provision section of the Education Commission Report No. 4 that practical and vocational training schools be provided to accommodate students who are unmotivated or who have severe learning problems. As for the lower secondary school students of the "mainstream schools", it is recommended that 10% of the least competent students be provided with school-based counselling service. But what is meant by a "mainstream school"? I hope the Education Commission can enlighten me on this point.

Finally, I would like to say something on the medium of instruction. Hong Kong is an international city. Yet we must not forget that a great majority of its population are Chinese. Cantonese is their mother tongue and is also the major medium of communication in their day-to-day interaction. So if the lower secondary school students can be taught in their mother language, most of them will certainly benefit from it through better comprehension of subjects like Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. Of course, some schools can be exempted from choosing the mother tongue as their medium of instruction if the Administration considers their standard of English has reached a certain level.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR TIEN: Sir, the recommendations contained in the Education Commission Report No. 4 go far beyond the scope of education alone.

As an employer, I would like to indicate briefly my own view of this document.

Most of us have grown up in the Hong Kong system of education. We found it a system which dulled initiative. It encouraged a one-way process. The teacher spoke, the pupil listened. Students were not encouraged to think for themselves, nor discuss amongst themselves.

Hong Kong prospered, I believe, in spite of and not because of these methods. Most forward-thinking individuals are aware of the restrictive effects on generations of young people caused by our unimaginative classroom techniques. What was wrong with the teacher-pupil relationship was simply that it was a one-way traffic.

Modern approaches in education should mirror modern life. In business, for example, people argue, debate, persuade others. The real world involves negotiation, the exchange of ideas and information. Hong Kong can only sell itself if its people are sharp-witted enough to sell, internationally. Hong Kong needs skilled negotiator, not timid characters. Our schools therefore should always be seen as places which stimulate, not stifle. Let us encourage the virtues of keen, open-minded and enquiring education. As an end-user of the products of our educational system, I am well aware of, and fully support, the points about this, made on page 101 of the report.

Sir, most of the comments made about this report have been about our unceasing debate regarding the role of language as a medium of instruction.

The question goes much deeper than this however. Our aim should be to establish a bilingual society. While Chinese/Cantonese is the mother tongue for most of us, and must be carefully nurtured, it remains a fact that we need English to survive and prosper as an international city under the concept of "one country, two systems".

Regretfully however, I must confess that some of the recommendations in the report appear misconceived. Because schools will be categorized as English or Chinese

medium, we may be in danger of classifying our society into two levels. Those who aspire to the professions, business and information will clearly need to have English skills. All six tertiary institutions funded by University and Polytechnic Grants Committee require a high degree of competence in English before admittance. Those who cannot achieve in English could well become artisans and manual labourers. Is this what we want?

I am distressed at the implication of putting children after Primary VI into almost permanent categories. People should have a ladder of opportunity. A rigid system of two societies, one affluent, English-speaking, the other less affluent, Chinese-speaking, is a deplorable future. Let me remind Councillors what is actually said in the report (page 120): "the grouping of students in the terms of their ability to learn in Chinese or English will be determined through objective assessments in Primary VI. The framework also provides for schools to choose, in 1991-92, whether they would like to be Chinese-medium, English-medium or two-medium schools. With the information provided by the assessments, parents will be in a position to select schools best suited for their children's educational development."

Now, by any tests, this proposition is quite startling. It says that schools choose the language, parents choose the school, and this is the method "best suited for their children's educational development".

In my view. This is a recipe that will create a polarized society.

Sir, let me however now return to the question of language. I wonder, however, whether we have really solved the problem of language.

Regretfully, I must say that, in all too many cases, both English and Chinese language ability is not up to the standard needed to keep Hong Kong's reputation at the level required in our highly competitive world. In this however, I want to make special reference to the indispensable role which English must continue to play.

Let us remind ourselves that the leaders in China look to Hong Kong as a window on the world. This window is kept open in no small measure through the benefit of good communications. Our value to China, both now and after 1997, will in part depend upon the fact that we could speak to the world on their behalf in English.

English is the international language of business, law, science, entertainment, and accounts for 70% of published international research papers.

To summarize therefore, I submit that we should, as proposed in the report, ensure that all of our students attain a satisfactory and tested level of English. This includes students entering Chinese-medium schools as well as others in English-medium schools. The curriculum must obviously reflect these developments. Therefore I fully support the establishment of a Curriculum Development Committee, to oversee our language needs.

Sir, in all these developments, our teachers are the key element. At primary, and at secondary level, a sound proficiency in languages is essential. Teachers must be proficient in both languages. Regrettably, at present most teachers are proficient in neither. I note that further proposals will be made, no doubt in Education Commission Report No. 5, on the actual implementation of these matters.

But, we cannot wait. We must begin now.

We must develop both the professional competence of teachers, as well as improving their morale. Teachers who are frustrated and ill-appreciated will simply leave the profession or drag on waiting for retirement.

We can approach this deeper question of morale by utilizing a number of more practical measures. For example, pay and conditions must be adequate, as should be opportunities for promotion. Moreover, given that we need both quality and quantity, teachers should not be too overloaded with classes and administrative burden.

They should of course earn these extra benefits as a result of extra effort. Consequently, we should expect our teachers to work to acquire further qualifications and training (perhaps through refresher courses) wherever possible. Those who, say, obtain extra qualifications, should expect extra benefits. I am prepared to support extra pay for extra effort.

Sir, I fully endorse that education is an investment, a necessary investment, in any society. While I have always advocated restraint in public expenditure, I believe that responsibly costed investment in education is an essential element in a healthy economy.

A successful economy can only be achieved by an educated economy. Sir, with these comments, I support the motion.

MRS TU: One point I am glad to note in this report is the proposal to provide practical schools, though I object to saying that these schools will be for the "academically unmotivated". Nothing is more likely to raise parental opposition than to use negative terms that suggest that the students of these schools are inferior in intellect. The ability to study books well is by no means a sure sign of intelligence, and the ability to perform practical skills is certainly no sign of inferior intelligence. In fact, the reverse could be true. I therefore propose that, to make this project more acceptable, a more positive approach should be used to show that these schools will benefit the "practically motivated". I would also like to urge that incentives be offered so that students who do well in certain trades be given a further education in their chosen fields, because their skills are just as necessary in our community as the qualifications obtained from book-learning. I hope that this proposal will be implemented quickly so that we can guide these children into something better than illegal street-hawking, and deter others who find their fulfilment through crime or triad activity.

I am deeply disappointed to note that the report glosses over the triad problem in schools. It even casts doubts on what I am sure every teacher must know, that triad activity is on the increase even from primary school level, and along with this increase is the fear of reporting it. Unless the Government will face this problem squarely and attempt to trace the social problems leading to this phenomenon and provide special kinds of educational institutions for potential criminals or children at risk, the problem of recruiting teachers will worsen, educational standards will be affected, and triad crimes will increase because schools make an actual recruitment ground for triads. The next point I want to raise is a prickly one of language-streaming. Theoretically it sounds fine and I agree with it. I believe every child should be allowed to study from kindergarten up to university in the language he can best manage. But is it practical to change mid-stream as suggested in this report? I believe not.

In order to change stream at Forms III, V, or VII, what kind of bridge would be required? How long would it take a student to catch up on language problems in all subjects which he has studied for years in a different language? The report gives no idea of the difficulty faced or how the gap would be bridged.

As far as school administration is concerned, imagine the problems of regrouping

classes, switching textbooks, rearranging timetables and reallocating teachers at every bridge along the way! It seems that these problems have not been addressed.

However, most worrying of all is the fact that students of the Chinese language stream would become handicapped on reaching tertiary education. The report itself admits this handicap: "It is unrealistic to expect Chinese-medium students to attain the same level of English in Secondary VI and VII as English-medium students, since the former will have had much less exposure to English than the latter." Most students of Forms VI and VII aim at tertiary education, yet they know that most tertiary courses are conducted in English. If they started out in Form I with a lower standard of English and had to study up to Form VII in Chinese, how could they be expected not only to improve their English language ability along the way, but also at the end of it catch up on those who have for seven years been exposed to English in all subjects? Would any parents hoping to send a child to university agree to allowing the child to study in the Chinese language and face this handicap at Form VII?

The report does not deal with tertiary education, but merely suggests a bridge from Form VII. To cross this gap would require more than a bridge because the student would be facing a huge mountain that would block his way to university. In fact, the report leads us to the conclusion that tertiary education will be the privilege of those who are best at English, and the test of a person's intelligence will be how he copes with the English language. And this, of course, amounts to language-discrimination.

The Government must face up to the fact that the secondary education proposed in this report does not match up with the English-bias of tertiary education, and this is where the problem lies as our colleague, Mr David CHEUNG, has so eloquently explained. If there are to be Chinese and English streams in secondary schools there must likewise be two-stream universities based on language choice, and their qualifications at the end of the day must be equal. It is essential that whether a student studies in Chinese or English, he must have equal opportunity to advance to tertiary education, and equal career prospects.

Sir, I support the motion.

MRS FAN (in Cantonese): Sir, as chairman of the Education Commission (EC), I fully identify with the proposals of Report No. 4. This, however, does not mean that I

will react with resistance to proposals that are even more suitable and even more feasible. On the contrary, I will be very receptive to such proposals. This, I believe, will also be true of the members of the EC. Therefore, with regard to the Honourable Kingsley SIT's question "Must the proposals be implemented?", the fact of the matter is that he clearly knows the answer but still asks. I have never presumed to underestimate the Honourable Kingsley SIT's intelligence, ability or erudition. This is why, for my part, I am not prepared to respond to a question from someone who clearly knows the answer but still asks.

I am joining this debate because, firstly, I hope to be able to make some responses to, and explanations regarding the views that I have heard. Secondly, I want to speak my own views. The truth is that the central theme of the report is very clearly set forth in paragraph 137 of Chapter One. It is primarily this: "Because the school system embraces the entire relevant age group, it should provide the education best able to meet the varying abilities and interests of the children within it. The standards should be raised over time by promoting improvements in learning and teaching and in the monitoring and assessment of outcomes." "The school system embraces the entire relevant age group"; so nine-year free education is to be continued. "It should provide the education best able to meet the varying abilities and interests of the children"; so there is a need to improve the curriculum to meet the varying needs of the students, to raise the status of the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and to involve parents and employers in the CDC so that people from outside the education profession may have a chance to participate in curriculum development. This is precisely why a Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) is to be established towards the above end.

The proposal concerning the medium of instruction has received lots of criticism, also lots of support. Streaming serves the purpose of "providing the education best able to meet the varying abilities and interests of the children." As for the special schools, they serve the same purpose even more. We believe that a student will not be receptive if the curriculum or the method of instruction to which he is subject is totally unsuitable. This so-called equality is a failure of the educator's responsibility and a defeat of the purpose of education. So we insist on "providing the education best able to meet the varying abilities and interests of the children." This is positively giving the students a chance really to acquire knowledge through learning. In ordinary schools (of course not in all schools but in a minority of them), it happens that although the teacher teaches, the student does not learn. This is because the method of instruction is unsuitable, as is also the medium of

instruction.

In regard to improvements in learning and teaching, the need is to have a better curriculum that meets the abilities of the students and stimulates their interests in learning. This is why there must be a CDI with new blood, as well as some experienced teachers, infused into it. Members of the education profession who have aspirations will use this mode of school-based counseling and guidance to enable all the teachers of a school to participate in helping the school children in problem-solving, to increase co-operation among the teachers and to increase the teachers' sense of belonging with respect to their school. It will also cause relations to be improved between teachers and students. The report also mentions school-based strengthening of guidance and teaching and letting a few schools have a flexible guidance plan that meets the special needs of their students. This is because only effective counseling and guidance can heighten students' interests in learning and make learning beneficial to them.

As for the standard-referenced and target-related structure of assessments, the hope is to be able to help students, as well as their parents, in knowing their progress in learning and, additionally, help teachers in knowing clearly the strong points and weaknesses of each student so that they may employ a more suitable method of instruction that is acceptable to the student.

Finally, to monitor and assess the improvements in learning and teaching, a target-related assessment structure is to be instituted. We must have clear targets before we can have a direction, and a direction before we can have a policy, which may then be promoted. But promotion is not enough. We must use an objective method to monitor and assess the promotion effort. The report, too, posits the idea of providing as much resources as possible to the schools so that they may make their own plans for the activities, affairs and methods of instruction within them. We respect the schools' right to choose. We respect the educational workers' professionalism. We believe that they are conscientious as far as education is concerned. So we give them the right to choose and do not use coercive means. We believe, too, that parents care about their children and that because they care, they will not just worry about the children's prospects but will give consideration to whether or not the children are learning anything at all. At present, we do not have a method of monitoring and assessment to enable parents to know whether or not their children are learning anything. In future, when we have this target-related monitoring and assessment structure, parents will be able to know.

Sir, I would like now to talk about several topics which are of great concern to all and which are also very controversial. The first is the medium of instruction -- streaming. In fact, we have also heard today two views which may be described as the two extremes. One is that, basically speaking, the use of the mixed code in learning and teaching is not disadvantageous and should be kept unchanged and that alternative means should be used to improve learning and teaching. The other view is that coercive methods should be used to make everybody receive his education conducted in his mother tongue. The final proposal adopted by the EC is somewhere in between. We feel that although letting students learn through education conducted in their mother tongue will definitely be helpful to their thinking and studying in most cases by far, we cannot destroy the opportunity for those students who are capable of studying in English. We should not take away this option. So we should not coerce. On the other hand, nor should we tolerate learning and teaching in which English appears to be used but what is really used is something that is neither Chinese nor English, with the result that students' standards of both Chinese and English are poor. This kind of deception and self-deception is not what our society should accept, nor what the education profession should accept. An even more important point is that while students must use English in examinations, they use Chinese and English together in the classroom. The result is to encourage them to cram their memories and not to analyse things, to study for the sake of examination and not to digest what they read in the books. This is why, for the sake of the students, we feel that either Chinese or English should be used in learning and teaching and that the language used in learning and teaching should be unified. One proposal is streaming by subject, with some subjects taught in English and some in Chinese. This proposal had been discussed many times in the EC until the last meeting, when I suggested that members of the EC should reconsider its acceptability. As a result, it was unanimously held that it would only further confuse the students and would not be good for them. For my part, I understand that a few members of the EC were under pressure from many quarters after the publication of the report or were embarrassed by the positions of the groups which they represent. To these few members, I extend my infinite sympathy. I also understand their difficult situation. I myself believe that if we have the time and determination to plan streaming, we will see the benefits to the students very soon after a suitable medium of instruction comes into use. I hope that we all will give this opportunity to the students of Hong Kong. Just now, a colleague said that our EC is indecisive. I should like to tell him (he is not here now) that we have done what we have done precisely because we are determined. As for the targets of studies and target-related monitoring and assessment, the truth

is that such monitoring and assessment will not put additional pressure on the students, and I say so because:

(1) The system of allocation of Secondary I school places will be kept unchanged. Target-related monitoring and assessment in Primary VI will not substitute the allocation of Secondary I school places. This is why I believe that when everybody or when the teachers of the schools know more about the role of such monitoring and assessment, they will not put the students to special drilling.

(2) It is hoped that it will be possible to substitute such monitoring and assessment for school tests. So it will not add to the pressure of examinations. The whole idea is to let students make self-comparisons and, over time, through such monitoring and assessment, know the extent of their own progress.

Let us ponder on this. At present, our students often do not have to compare themselves with their classmates. Those of a lower calibre will always be inferior to others. Imagine their anguish. Imagine: will they not become less and less confident? Is it to be assumed that our education system is designed to hurt people's confidence? Of course not. Our education system is to increase students' confidence in themselves, make them know what they have accomplished and let them become interested in their studies. Students will become interested in their studies only if they see the progress they are making. This is why the monitoring and assessment plan is very important. Just now, an honourable colleague said that the proposals of the report make very few changes. The truth is that the target-related monitoring and assessment structure has a huge impact on the entire education system and on the entire perception of the value of education. Apart from this, it also has a huge impact on curriculum development. We are not backward-looking, as that honourable colleague said. We are forward-looking. If we were backward-looking, we would have seen many administrative difficulties and operational difficulties as well as the difficulty, that is, the shortage of teachers. However, all these were in the past (or are in the present). We must look ahead into the future. When we are able to make students interested in their studies and to stop society from further influencing education with meaningless arguments over the competitive merits of English and Chinese, those past difficulties can be resolved one by one. This is why we are not backward-looking but forward-looking. Perhaps some will say, why does one not resolve all the difficulties first and then look ahead? There definitely will be difficulties. But if our targets are clear, I do not believe that those difficulties cannot be resolved. Often, the difficulties we hear today are technical

difficulties, the isolated occupational difficulties of some people. Of course, we need to give help, but we must not be immobilized by the difficulties.

As for mixed-mode schooling in primary schools, the truth is that whole-day schooling in primary schools is the long-term objective, as decided upon by the Executive Council in 1989. However, that long-term objective cannot be accomplished in one step. It must be accomplished by stages. This is why mixed-mode schooling is the first step in realizing the Government's sincere wish for whole-day schooling. After the first step, there will be the second step. After the second step, there will be the third step. If the population growth forecasts are not wrong, then in the year 2000, just as the Honourable Mrs Peggy LAM said, it should be possible to extend whole-day schooling to Primary IV. If resources, manpower and space all proceed according to the 10-year plan, then whole-day schooling in primary schools may quite possibly be realized in 20 more years. Why did the report on education not mention this? The reason is that Hong Kong's situation is changing all the time. This is why waiting until later before mentioning it does not mean a lack of sincerity or commitment.

Concerning the method of promoting mixed-mode schooling, the truth is that a working group has been set up within the Education Commission to make an in-depth study, and most of the members of the group have profound knowledge and experience where primary education is concerned. To be sure, we have underestimated certain sentiments. For instance, although some headmaster's pay has not changed, they have become deputy headmasters. We will further study this point to see if there is any way to make them feel that they have not lost their status.

Concerning guidance and counseling, the Honourable HUI Yin-fat mentioned additional manpower support. This in fact is precisely what the report proposes. The Honourable Mrs Rosanna TAM mentioned that primary school students have too much homework. I feel the same way. The solution contained in the report of the Education Commission may be called a two-pronged approach. One solution is to integrate as much as possible the subjects taught in primary schools and, through a comprehensive curriculum, to simplify the subjects studied by primary school students. The other is to use flexible methods of learning and teaching. But the practical work is not for the EC to do; it should be left to the CDI. The report has made it very clear that the CDI will do the work in this connection. However, before the CDI proceeds to do it, I want to make an appeal to some primary school headmasters and teachers. The present curriculum does not require students to do so much homework. However,

I understand that headmasters and teachers probably hope that students will not be lazy, so they give their students more homework. However, I hope that they will consider the children's interest in learning, which is probably directly proportional to the amount of homework that need to be done. This is why consideration may be given to assigning less homework to students but without compromising their capacity to learn.

The Honourable Kingsley SIT asked, what are mainstream schools? Very simple. With the exception of special schools, all are mainstream schools.

The Honourable David LI, for his part, mentioned that the report of the Education Commission failed to take care of the needs of individual students. Although we mentioned student-centred education, he said that we did not do what we had recommended. The truth is that Chapter Three and Chapter Four in their entirety are written to address the needs of individual students. The Honourable David LI also said that he felt that members of the Education Commission seemed to be hampered in all kinds of ways and some of them dared not speak up publicly. I should think, Sir, you have heard today what we, EC members, think of such a view. It should be clear that there is nothing that we have not dared say publicly. Although at the time all agreed that corporal punishment should be abolished, yet today some colleagues still think that it should not.

The Honourable SZETO Wah, for his part, mentioned that Guidance Officers may keep their tenure in the Education Department and then be despatched to the schools. The EC gave consideration to this point and made an in-depth study of it. What he said was that Guidance Officers who are now in the Education Department as public officials may be promoted from their original positions to assistant teachers. Members of the EC cannot see how doing so can enhance the quality of counseling and guidance as it is now. Because guidance teachers should have a sense of belonging to their schools, it is not advisable for the Education Department to despatch officials to fill the positions; rather, the schools should appoint guidance teachers from their own staff. Of course, I dare not say whether this view will change in the future, after consultation. I merely want to explain that the proposal has been discussed by the EC. I believe that the Honourable SZETO Wah, as a representative of the teaching profession, surely will do his best to explain this matter to members of his profession.

Finally, there is the question of improving the quality of teachers. The truth

is that members of the EC are fully aware of its importance. This is why Chapter One makes it clear that the next report will discuss the question of teachers' professionalism. Talking about nine-year free education first and then talking about the question of teachers' professionalism is not putting things in the reverse order. On the contrary, it is as it should be. Because the general direction for secondary and primary education must be set before there can be targets for teacher training. I believe that what is being done now is sensible.

Sir, allow me to express some personal views. I hope that the report of the EC this time will be able to change the public's ideas of education. I feel that successful education lies in making students think, stimulating their interest in learning and building up their confidence in themselves. Students must acquire knowledge through learning and acquire a positive outlook on life before education can succeed. The success of education is not success in terms of examination results. I hope that parents and members of the educational profession will, for the sake of the future of their children and students, choose the education that is beneficial to them, that is, the medium of instruction, the special school and so forth. A successful school is not one that turns out top scholars. A successful school is one that makes every one of its students feel a sense of belonging and feel that learning is something pleasant and enables the student, irrespective of low calibre, to make progress in the course of learning. That is a good school.

Sir, as an ancient saying goes, "Shortage is not a problem, but unevenness is." Today, I would like to change it a little bit to make it read, "Shortage of the elite is not a problem, but unevenness of learning is."

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Sir, the chairman of the Education Commission has been such an effective full-back that it has left the Secretary for Education and Manpower, as goal keeper, with practically no fast balls to catch. Nevertheless, I welcome this debate for two reasons. First, it represents an important step in the consultation process. Many Members have been constructive and outspoken in their comments this afternoon, and I am grateful for their contribution. Secondly, this debate gives me the opportunity to answer some of the criticisms made of the Commission's proposals.

Before I speak on the major issues in the report, I would like to emphasize that the recommendations made in it are not yet government policy. We have still two weeks

left of the consultation period. Only when this is over, and we have had time to digest all the comments made, can we formulate policy proposals for submission to the Executive Council. It follows that what I say today may have a bearing on, but does not represent, government policy.

Curriculum development

Curriculum development is one of the major issues tackled in the report. The Commission has recommended the creation of a Curriculum Development Institute (CDI), within the Education Department, to ensure that the process of curriculum development becomes more effective and innovative. Public comment reflects strong support for this proposal, and I am glad that this is echoed by many Members this afternoon.

Mr CHAN Ying-lun considers that the CDI would probably fail to produce results should it become a division of the Education Department rather than as a free-standing body like the Examination Authority. He has not explained why. As Mrs CHOW quite rightly points out, the Commission has thought long and hard about whether the CDI should be independent of the Education Department, but decided against this. It is vital that the CDI should have a close relationship with the Education Department, which in turn ensures its link with many aspects of education including our schools. Without this link, the curriculum development organization could be in danger of developing curricula which do not meet the needs of schools. It could also receive less direct feedback on the success or otherwise of the curricula it has designed. If the CDI is seen to be not working, therefore, my first approach to the problem would be to find out why it is not working and to make it work better, rather than to sever it automatically from the Education Department.

At least two Members have argued persuasively that the CDI should deal with the curricula problems and needs of the primary sector of our schools as its foremost priority. I have taken note of their suggestions and would like to assure them that they would be carefully considered.

Special educational provision

In respect of special educational provision, the Commission believes that supportive services in schools should become more school-based. Accordingly, it recommended that the "whole school approach" be adopted. It is gratifying to note that this proposal has received support from many Honourable Members this afternoon, for which I am grateful. Several Members, however, have reflected the concern of the

Education Department's School Guidance Officers (SGOs) that they could be short-changed as a result of the proposals in the Education Commission Report No. 4. I agree with Mr SZETO Wah that SGOs are professionals and that their concerns must be considered seriously. I am sure that the Director of Education would discuss this with his staff with a view to devising a satisfactory and workable set of solutions.

Language in education

Of all the issues in the Education Commission Report No. 4, language in education has aroused the greatest controversy. The debate continues in the media, in educational organizations and here today, where no fewer than 24 Members -- that is to say, all Members who spoke in this motion -- have addressed that question in their speeches.

Central to the Commission's judgement of this issue is its strong belief that the use of mixed code in schools makes for proficiency in neither Chinese nor English, and that mixed code should therefore be reduced in favour of the clear and consistent use of Chinese or English in respect of teaching, textbooks and examinations. By "clear and consistent use", the Commission meant that the choice of Chinese as a medium of instruction would result in all subjects other than English being taught and examined in Chinese, while the choice of English as a medium of instruction would result in all subjects other than Chinese being taught in English.

It is on the basis of this strong belief that the Commission has recommended that children be grouped in terms of their ability to learn effectively either in Chinese or in English. In proposing that children be tested objectively in respect of their ability to learn in one language or another while they are in primary schools, the Commission is saying that parents would be given the means to make a rational choice as to the medium in which their children should be placed as they move into secondary education. Equally, the Commission is saying that secondary schools should be given the means of making a rational decision as to which medium of instruction they should adopt. They will be given a choice in 1991, 1994 and ultimately in 1998, having regard to the evidence of their student intake as well as the language ability of their teachers.

The criticisms made by members of the public and by certain Honourable Members in this Chamber suggest that these rational choices will not be made, and that the Commission is being naive in placing their confidence in parents' sense of

responsibility and in the integrity of the teaching profession. Our critics argue that most parents will continue to choose schools offering English as the medium of instruction for their children, regardless of their language ability. In the face of this, heads of schools would be reluctant to choose Chinese as the medium of instruction for their schools, whatever their educational convictions may be, because they fear that such a decision would lead to lower band students being allocated to them.

Sir, these fears are genuine but they reflect a degree of myopia. In contrast, the Commission believes quite strongly that Chinese is becoming an increasingly important language. Mastering it now is essential if one wants to get into politics, into trade with or investment in China, and indeed into the senior general grades of the Civil Service. The Commission believes that, as these sectors of our community become localized and as the awareness of a Chinese identity becomes progressively enhanced, parental views will change.

Now it seems to me that Mr David CHEUNG is right. What will clinch it is the conviction that the choice of a secondary education in the medium of Chinese will not place Secondary VII students at a disadvantage, in terms of their access to tertiary education, and therefore to better prospects for future employment. In this connection, the Director of Education, the Chairman of the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC) and I have started a dialogue with the heads of the UPGC-funded institutions. A consensus is beginning to emerge that competence in both Chinese and English is necessary for students to benefit fully from a degree education. As regards Chinese, the tertiary institutions are now actively considering whether or not they will require a pass in Chinese as a compulsory entrance requirement. As regards English language entrance requirements, the Director of Education and I are concerned with helping those Chinese medium school children who have taken the simpler Syllabus A in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination to pass their Use of English at the end of Secondary VII. In the long term, the additional teachers and resources that we have been investing in Chinese medium schools since 1988 should enable them to switch to the more difficult Syllabus B at Secondary V by 1992-93. The result is that by 1995 their Secondary VII students should be able to take their Use of English on the same footing as English medium students. Thus the problem really arises in the years leading up to 1995, during which a fair number of Chinese medium students will enter sixth form armed only with a Syllabus A result. For them we must make special interim arrangements to help take their Use of English with more confidence. I believe that, before the year is out, we will have devised a package

of measures which should convince most responsible parents and heads of schools that to choose Chinese as the medium of instruction would not jeopardize their children's access to tertiary education.

Mr SZETO Wah has argued that an effective way of facilitating the growth of education in the mother tongue would be to leave it to the schools to decide for themselves which subject should be taught in Chinese and which in English. As he pointed out this was the approach taken in 1984 by the Education Commission in the context of its first report. But, as Mrs FAN has so effectively pointed out, it was because this approach has proved less successful than hoped that the Commission has found it necessary to recommend a consistent use of either one or the other language as being the only practical way of developing higher levels of language proficiency and more effective learning. For schools to choose different media of instruction for different subjects may make things easier for schools in the short term, but it would not match the capability of schools with the language ability of their students in the longer term. Unless we achieve this objective, we shall not be able to achieve the aims of the reforms contained in the report.

Sir, for several years now there has been growing dissatisfaction with declining standards of English. The business community in particular believes that unless this is remedied quickly, Hong Kong's position as an international trading and financial centre could be jeopardized.

What evidence there is available to the Education Department indicates that there has been a steady improvement in standards of English in schools throughout the 1980s, rather than to any decline, at a time when our education system was undergoing very rapid expansion. Incidentally, Sir, the same can be said of standards in Chinese and Mathematics. The perception that our standards of English are falling stems from the fact that demand for employees with effective skills in English has outstripped the supply, due mainly to the growth of those service industries which do their business to a greater or lesser extent in English.

The problem, therefore, is one of matching supply with demand. In the longer term the Commission expects to increase the supply of good English users in three ways, namely, by reinforcing English language activities at the primary level, by grouping students at secondary level and helping them with bridging courses, and by setting targets and related assessments. These measures, taken together with the Expatriate English Language Teacher Scheme and in-service training for teachers at the Institute of Language in Education, should help to narrow the gap. The Commission

also recognizes that the business community needs a larger supply of good English users as soon as possible, not five years down the road. Accordingly, the Commission has recommended the provision of vocational English courses for Secondary V and VII school leavers. I have started a dialogue with representatives of various business organizations to explore the idea of setting up a Working Party on Vocational English. This working party would identify industry-specific requirements, translate these into training activities, and identify the organizations most qualified to provide these services. I would like to thank Mr Stephen CHEONG for offering the support and participation of the Vocational Training Council in this exercise.

Implementation of mixed-mode schooling in primary schools

In September 1989, the Government approved the introduction of mixed-mode schooling in principle. In general, the community supports mixed-mode schooling -- they see the educational benefits to be gained. Indeed, many have called for implementation to be speeded up and some have gone further in asking for whole-day schooling from Primary I to Primary IV to be brought in.

It is, in fact, the Government's long-term aim to achieve unisessional primary education. But the Commission recognizes that resource constraints prevent us both from pursuing unisessional schooling at present and from speeding up the implementation of mixed-mode. The proposed schedule for implementation already involves very heavy outlays, estimated at over \$740 million for recurrent expenditure and \$1,016 million for capital expenditure up to the end of this decade. I should like to take this opportunity to sound a note of caution: the Government may find it difficult to provide the funds needed to implement mixed-mode schooling at the pace recommended by the Commission. It may be necessary to proceed more slowly. Nevertheless, the Government has taken steps to secure some sites for the additional schools that need to be built ahead of the allocation of other forms of resource.

Several practical concerns have been expressed relating to the implementation of the Commission's recommendations on mixed-mode. For example, there have been calls for the teacher : class ratio to be further improved. The new ratio recommended by the Commission, 1.4 : 1, means that the difference in teachers' workload per week will be negligible. We do not think, therefore, that we can justify a further improvement in the ratio at this time. In answer to Mrs Peggy LAM's and Mr SZETO Wah's calls for this improved ratio to be applied to schools which have, on their own initiative, already implemented whole-day schooling from Primary I to Primary

VI, I can confirm that starting in 1992 the improved ratio will be applied in relation to Primary V and Primary VI classes. As far as Primary I to Primary IV whole-day schooling is concerned, we will need to consider the resource implications most carefully. I fear they could be very substantial indeed.

Triad-related activities and corporal punishment in schools

Turning now to triad-related activities affecting schools, Mrs Elsie TU has expressed disappointment that the problem is glossed over in the report. She claims that triad activities are increasing, and calls for the Government to face the problem squarely. Here we have a problem of conflicting evidence. The best evidence available to the Commission suggests that the number of incidents of suspected involvement in triad activities in secondary schools has declined over the past five years. The Commission has also noted the Fight Crime Committee's conclusion that there was no evidence of systematic penetration of schools by triads. Nonetheless, the Commission recognizes that the community perceives this problem as a growing one. It hopes, therefore, that its recommendation for the efforts made by the police and the Education Department to combat all gang activities in schools, whether triad-related or not, will go some way towards improving this situation. Let me assure Honourable Members that the Government is neither complacent nor passive in its attitude towards gang activities in or outside schools. The Education Department is actually encouraging schools to step up civic education activities. The school support services and the newly-proposed school-based student guidance teachers are two other positive measures which should create an environment in schools that would effectively counteract the influence of gang elements.

As we have heard today, the subject of corporal punishment continues to arouse heated debate. Although the majority of members of the Commission recommended its abolition, it has to be said that the Commission was not unanimous in its view. Commentators who are opposed to its abolition have made gloomy predictions that behaviour in schools will decline as a result. I should point out, however, that corporal punishment is only used as a last resort, and then only on boys. It seems to me, therefore, that behaviour in schools will not change materially if corporal punishment is abolished, unless educators would have us believe that girls do not misbehave. What will continue, however, are the harmful effects that corporal punishment would have on children if it is not abolished. That said, the Commission's recommendation that it be abolished is just that, a recommendation. Should we find, at the end of the consultation period, that there is overwhelming opposition to our

recommendation, we may reconsider our position.

Extension of period for consultation

Finally, Sir, there have been several calls for extending the period of public consultation beyond the end of January. I do not believe this to be desirable. Having kept a close watch on the amount and quality of public comment on the report, the conclusion I have drawn is that its recommendations are by and large accepted as a very positive package of reforms. The concerns and criticisms that have been expressed have focused largely on practicalities, rather than on points of principle, and I am confident that we will find ways to meet these practicalities. That said, a great deal of time is now required by the Administration to study the comments received during the consultation period, to convert the Commission's recommendations into policy proposals as well as programmes of activity and expenditure, and to take these forward to the Executive Council for advice. On present indications it will take the Education and Manpower Branch well up to the summer to complete these processes, and if we should fail to complete them on time we shall miss the boat for resource allocation. In the circumstances, Sir, I cannot support an extension of the consultation period.

Sir, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MRS CHOW (in Cantonese): Sir, I should like to thank my colleagues -- over 20 of them -- for responding to the appeal that I made in moving this motion. As has been expected, a number of controversial points have emerged and I would like to respond briefly to a couple of the points raised.

I find that a less canvassed point in the debate is the ultimate education goal that we are striving for, and that is: to enable our next generation to effectively learn the necessary academic subjects in the school and to develop their language ability to express their thoughts. Such being the goal, I feel that an important question appears to have been overlooked and that relates to mixed-code teaching in some schools because the language proficiency of some teachers is in doubt. In this respect, I believe the Curriculum Development Institute or the Curriculum Development Council may need to make efforts to promote the mother tongue as the medium of instruction to enable teachers to improve their teaching.

The Education Commission has discussed the proposal of streaming by subjects before. Personally, I have very strong views about the proposal because I am entirely against it. Given that the English proficiency of some teachers leaves much to be desired, if they are asked to teach in two languages, problems will emerge. For the benefit of both learning and teaching, I believe one language should be used. Streaming by subjects will not only give no benefit to both teachers and students, but will also have adverse effects.

Given that our objective of attaining certain goals has been hampered by physical constraints, I feel that mixed-mode primary schooling is a probable compromise proposal. At the same time, some organized and negative responses, which only consider the demerits of the system, have been made against the proposal. I am sure we will agree that from the stand-point of parents, the benefits children can gain from learning is the first and foremost factor to be considered. Therefore, views like parents' worries, family sacrifices and so on have emerged. I believe parents will unreservedly make all these sacrifices. But unfortunately, parents lack organization and therefore much of their call for consultation cannot be heard. We all agree that unisessionalism is the best method. Even though not all primary school students can be benefitted, at least one-third of them will. It is better than nothing. I do not quite understand the proposal just raised by Mr Kingsley SIT. He has said that it will be too hasty if this system is adopted between 1991 and 1995. In fact, as far as I understand, the first batch of students who will benefit from the system are those who will be studying in Primary V and Primary VI by 1996, that is, the time when unisessionalism starts.

As a matter of fact, to most parents, this is too much of a delay, and to me, it is almost beyond tolerance. Mrs LAM has just pointed out that some primary schools without any increased resources have already started unisessionalism but some adequately resourced ones have failed to do so. I would like to urge those adequately resourced primary schools to play the role of educational pioneers so as to allay the fears of educationists, and persuade them to make some small sacrifices so that unisessionalism can be implemented in phase as soon as possible.

Sir, teachers are under constant pressure and restraints. They are first-line workers on the educational front and we rely on them in implementing many education policies. The community should therefore give full support to them. As such, I will pin high hopes on the Education Commission Report No. 5 and anticipate that the professional standards of both educationists and non-educationists will be improved,

and the ability and confidence of those people who have been striving to improve our educational environment and standards will be strengthened. Thank you.

Question on the motion put and agreed to.

Private Member's Bill

First Reading of Bill

ELECTORAL PROVISIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991

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

Second Reading of Bill

ELECTORAL PROVISIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991

MR MARTIN LEE moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Electoral Provisions Ordinance."

MR MARTIN LEE: Sir, I move that the Electoral Provisions (Amendment) Bill 1991 be read the Second time.

The object of this Bill is to enact legislative criteria that must be followed in the demarcation of electoral constituencies. The Bill aims to prevent the gerrymandering of electoral constituencies or a suspicion of gerrymandering, to establish a legal framework that will minimize political abuses and unfairness and to bring the electoral laws of Hong Kong into line with those of Great Britain and other democracies.

Sir, since this is the first time, according to my knowledge, that a non-Government Member has drafted and submitted a Bill to this Council on a matter of public policy, I think it is important for Members to understand the reason behind it.

During the discussions between the Ad Hoc Group on the Electoral Provisions (Amendment) Bill 1990 and the Administration, certain Members raised the necessity

of enacting legislative criteria to control the constituency demarcation process. The Administration voiced no opinion on the matter but said that it wished to defer consideration of such a proposal until after the 1991 elections.

In essence, the Administration said that the issue of criteria for the demarcation of electoral constituencies was not a high priority and should wait until later. But the fact that the Administration does not feel strongly enough about a particular issue cannot in any way bar individual Members of this Council from taking action on it. Indeed, under the Standing Orders, non-Government Members are explicitly permitted to introduce a Bill on any issue, provided that it does not have any financial implications. As I believe the issue to be important, I have submitted this Bill in strict accordance with the Standing Orders.

Some Members may question the desirability of non-Government Members submitting Bills. Yet, it is important to realize that virtually every democratic country allows individual legislators to draft and submit Bills, for such Bills can offer worthwhile proposals that the Government for whatever reason has not put forward. It is then entirely up to members of the legislature to decide if the proposals merit their support. The right to submit private Member's Bills can therefore, if used properly, lessen the burden on the Government, while allowing legislators a welcome degree of freedom in proposing legislation on matters particularly close to their hearts.

Such Bills should not therefore be seen as "anti-Government", for the Government itself has provided in the Standing Orders for their introduction. To vote against a Bill merely because it is submitted by a non-Government Member is tantamount to voting against the provision in the Standing Orders which allows non-Government Members to introduce Bills.

Sir, the main reason why I was not content with the decision of the Administration to defer legislation on important electoral provisions until after 1991 is that we have only two Legislative Council elections before 1997. We cannot wait until 1995 before we examine any reform, for it is essential for Hong Kong to have a system of fair, impartial electoral laws in place and working smoothly well before 1997. If we encounter any problems in 1991, then we will still have time to make the necessary changes before the 1995 elections. If this Bill is good for 1995, then it is even better for 1991. Further, the early establishment of such a fair electoral system will do much to promote much-needed confidence in our political system during the

difficult period of transition.

As for the timing of this Bill, my intention is that the criteria in the Bill should apply only to the Legislative Council elections in 1991. After 1991, the provisions of the Bill will also apply to the demarcation of constituencies for the municipal council and district board elections. There is still plenty of time to alter the constituency demarcation plan proposed by the Government for the Legislative Council elections, for that plan was only submitted to this Council last week in the form of subsidiary legislation.

Sir, I would like now to say a few words about the background of the Bill.

Because the manner in which constituencies are drawn can have a significant -- and sometimes determinative -- effect on the outcome of an election, the demarcation of electoral constituencies is often a controversial and politically charged process. There are many historical examples in the United Kingdom and the United States of constituencies that have been gerrymandered in order to enhance the chances of success of candidates belonging to a certain party, race, or religion.

In order to minimize the potential for political abuse and unfairness, many politically advanced countries such as Great Britain, Canada, and Australia have enacted legislative criteria that must be followed during the demarcation of electoral constituencies. These three countries have all mandated that constituencies shall have an equal number of electors or equal population as far as possible.

British law states that "the electorate of any constituency shall be as near the electoral quota as is practicable." Canadian law states that "the population of each electoral district shall as close as reasonably possible correspond to the electoral quota." And, Australian law states that "the quota of electors shall be the basis for the distribution."

Though no similar statutory provisions exist in the United States, the United States Supreme Court has interpreted the United States Constitution to mean that constituencies must be "apportioned on a population basis." The Court stated in *Reynolds v. Sims* 377 United States 533 (1964): "The weight of a citizen's vote cannot be made to depend on where he lives. Population is, of necessity, the starting point for consideration and the controlling criterion for judgment in legislative

apportionment controversies."

Under the current law in Hong Kong, the Governor in Council has absolute discretion to declare any area of any size to be a constituency for elections to the Legislative Council, municipal councils, or district boards. There are no legislative criteria that need be followed, nor is there any requirement that constituencies must bear any relation to population.

According to the constituency demarcation plan prepared by the Administration for the 1991 Legislative Council elections and tabled as subsidiary legislation on 9 January this year, the nine constituencies vary greatly in size, with the largest (that is, Hong Kong East) having over twice the population of the smallest (that is, New Territories North). In the New Territories, the populations of NT East, NT South, and NT West are all over 65% larger than that of NT North.

Sir, I now turn to the contents of this Bill. The key feature of the Bill is the requirement that electoral constituencies be "as near as practicable to the electoral quota," which is defined as the average constituency size for any given election. Equality of population is necessary if Hong Kong is to respect, in a meaningful way, the principle of one-person one-vote and avoid gross differences in the number of voters in different electoral districts.

If electoral districts are unequal in population, then the ballots of voters who live in districts with a large population will be less important than those of voters in districts with a smaller population. For example, if one constituency has 50 000 persons and a neighbouring constituency has only 10 000, then a vote in the 10 000-person constituency is five times more influential than a vote in the 50 000-person constituency.

Hence, the Bill allows neighbouring constituencies to differ in population by no more than 10%. This is the standard mandated by law in Australia and the United States and generally considered to be the maximum permissible in the United Kingdom. Because of the very small size of Hong Kong and the ease with which constituency boundaries can be adjusted (as previously acknowledged by the Administration), a maximum difference of 10% should not pose any practical problem.

The Bill also states that no constituency shall differ by more than 10% from the relevant electoral quota, which is calculated as follows. If the total population

of Hong Kong is 5.8 million and there are nine electoral constituencies for the Legislative Council elections later this year, then the electoral quota for that election would be 5.8 million divided by nine or 644 000. 10% of 644 000 is 64 400. Hence, no constituency shall be smaller than 644 000 minus 64 400, or 579 600, nor larger than 644 000 plus 64 400, or 708 400. I believe my arithmetic is right.

In addition to requiring that the population of constituencies be roughly equal, the Bill also requires that due consideration be given to three factors. The first is that existing communities 墟 such as housing estates or villages -- and existing constituencies be respected. The Government should therefore try to avoid dividing existing constituencies during the demarcation process.

Second, the Government must consider the physical features of the constituency such as mountains, rivers, residential areas, and so on.

The third factor -- the geographical integrity and contiguity of the constituency -- aims to prevent the demarcation of districts into awkward and illogical shapes.

A strong point of the Bill, Sir, is that it establishes a permanent framework for future constituency demarcations. While most democratic countries only re-draw constituencies once every 10 or 15 years, Hong Kong may well have to re-draw constituencies for the Legislative Council in 1995, 1999, 2003 and possibly again in the year 2007 because the number of democratically elected seats will change in each of those years. Hence, it is important that a fair and efficient system be set up now so that the public can have full confidence in the several constituency demarcations that will take place in the next two decades.

In addition, the Bill will both reduce potential conflict between the legislature and the executive and also minimize the political pressures on civil servants responsible for making demarcation decisions. Under the Joint Declaration, there will be a separation of powers between the executive and legislature. Yet, the current scheme violates such a separation of powers by allowing the executive unlimited discretion to draw the constituencies of members of the legislature, thus being able to influence the composition of the legislature.

Similarly, the current lack of such criteria places civil servants in the very difficult position of having to make highly political decisions on constituency

boundaries without any legal guidelines. The clearer the guidelines, the less the likelihood of there being any suspicion or accusation of political motivation in constituency demarcation decisions made by civil servants.

Because of these problems, many countries including the United Kingdom have established independent boundary commissions which are required to follow clear-cut legislative criteria in making demarcation decisions. It has been suggested that a boundary commission, or even better an independent electoral commission, should also be set up in Hong Kong. Yet, pending the establishment of a boundary or electoral commission in Hong Kong, the criteria contained in this Bill are clearly needed to guide the civil servants currently responsible for constituency demarcation.

Sir, given the widely differing populations of the 19 districts in Hong Kong, one possible effect of the Bill is that certain districts may well have to be divided for the purpose of Legislative Council constituencies. Such division of districts will be inevitable if the number of directly elected seats in the Legislative Council will grow over the next two decades, for it would virtually be impossible not to divide at least some districts in future elections for 24 or 30 Legislative Council seats. Likewise, if we progress to the point where we have single-seat constituencies for Legislative Council elections, districts would have to be further divided. Since the overlapping of constituencies is a common feature in democratic countries with several levels of elections, like ours, there is no reason why one part of a district should not lie in one Legislative Council constituency and the other part lying in another.

For these reasons, Sir, I believe this Bill offers an important reform that will help provide fairness and certainty to the electoral system of Hong Kong. I hope Members including Government Members -- most of whom are still present -- will in due course give their support to this Bill.

Sir, I move that the debate on this motion be adjourned.

Question on the adjournment proposed, put and agreed to.

Adjournment and next sitting

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: Those Members of the Council who are still here clearly had long practice sitting on hard school benches. In accordance with Standing Orders I now adjourn the Council until 2.30 pm on Wednesday, 23 January 1991.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Eight o'clock.

Note: The short titles of the Bills/motions listed in the Hansard, with the exception of the Drug Trafficking (Recovery of Proceeds) Ordinance, have been translated into Chinese for information and guidance only; they do not have authoritative effect in Chinese.