

number of civil servants has been reduced to 160 000. I have one worry. As I frequently point out, the election is controlled entirely by the business sector, so it will watch out for any increase in the size of the Civil Service. There are currently 160 000 civil servants and 15 000 non-civil service contract employees. If there is going to be no increase in the civil service establishment, if the constraint imposed by the figure of 160 000 is not removed, how can the latter become civil servants?

I believe that Secretary Denise YUE is a good person. She says that there will be a serious review. I do believe that she is a good person and she will certainly conduct a serious review, but I must say that at the end of the day, she will still be constrained by the figure of 160 000 — in the very much same way as hairy crabs are bound by straws, in the words of Director of Housing Thomas CHAN. If she cannot remove the constraint, any review will turn out to be farcical in the end. I therefore very much hope that the Secretary for the Civil Service can deliver to us the message that there is no longer any quota of 160 000 civil servants. That way, we will have confidence in the review. If such a constraint no longer exists, the necessity of each and every post will be examined very closely and seriously in the review. That way, these people will not have to remain "temporary" staff again and again. But I do understand that at this time of election, the Secretary is not supposed to say anything like this because she will certainly offend some people. As I pointed out just now, it is essential to be "submissive and crafty". Therefore, this issue must also be evaded. Let us see how the Secretary is going to evade the issue. Thank you, President.

MRS SELINA CHOW (in Cantonese): President, as at 30 September this year, I had been a Legislative Council Member for 25 years. Although I am not the oldest, I am certainly the most senior Member. As far as I can recall, this policy address is probably the shortest one in the past quarter century. This is actually not surprising because only eight months are left in Chief Executive Donald TSANG's term of office, and it is very hard to for him to put forward any visionary and ambitious plans. We can easily imagine that if he puts forward large numbers of long-term plans, he will easily be criticized by many for making an unfair start to prepare for running in the next Chief Executive Election. That being the case, I simply wonder why the Civic Party is not grateful. The reason is that if Mr Alan LEONG really decides to run in the election and finds that the Chief Executive has already started his preparation now, he should be the first one to lodge a complaint. Therefore, the prudence

of the Chief Executive is understandable. I think his approach is appropriate, and it has the support of the Liberal Party.

The Liberal Party has always been regarded as a friend of the Government. But over the past one year, there would be news every now and then that our relationship with the Government was very tense. In some cases, the news was just "rumours". (*Laughter*) But in other cases, such news was true in some measure. But I have always believed that our party and the Government are natural "soul mate". Emily, I would translate "soul mate" as "靈魂伴侶". (*Laughter*) When compared with other political parties, we are closer to the Government in terms of conviction and values. And, as a matter of fact, due to long years of co-operation, we have built up a very solid understanding of the establishment. Therefore, basically, and I mean basically, there are not any major differences in opinions between the Government and us. The Liberal Party, for example, attaches very great importance to the economy and we agree to the principle of "big market, small government". We support democracy, but at the same time, we also understand that since Hong Kong is part of China, our discussions on constitutional development must be conducted within the framework of the Basic Law.

A more recent example is the policy address. We share the views of the Government in practically every policy area, and we are more than happy to render our support. Although we may not agree entirely with the Government when it comes to some specific minor details, we still think that they can be accepted after slight improvement. And, overall, we do not have any strong objection. We therefore support the original motion without any reservations.

President, three challenges are discussed in the conclusion of the policy address. We agree to the point on boosting investment desire. Actually, we can observe clearly that, thanks to Chief Executive Donald TSANG's efforts, the Government has become much more decisive in making public investments. And, I suppose the steadfast support and continuous persuasion of the Liberal party must also have played a catalytic role. But I must also raise the point that the Government has time and again shown a lack of understanding of the situation of small and medium enterprises, and it seems that the Government is not sensitive to their needs either. And, these small businesses are often neglected as their voices are weak and they are not tightly organized. But these enterprises constitute a very big group in society and they are also a pillar of society. The Government must therefore intensify its efforts in this respect.

That way, it can ensure the integrated and balanced development of the economy and disprove the general perception that it is biased towards the needs of some large consortia.

President, in the last paragraph of the conclusion of the policy address, the Chief Executive outlines his vision of building a harmonious society. Like him, I have the same dream and I believe this is also the aspiration of Hong Kong people. Unfortunately, pragmatic as I am — I believe some Members may not like this word too much — I must admit that it will be very difficult to make this dream come true. I can remember that when I first became a Legislative Council Member, the British Hong Kong Government was very successful indeed in its advocacy of consensus politics. What we had at that time was a colonial administration and the whole Legislative Council was appointed. In spite of this, Hong Kong people were still able to lead a free life. However, ever since the introduction of elected membership, it has become increasingly difficult to seek any consensus. Because Members, as representatives of the people, are obligated to make the voices of their constituents heard. Honestly, I must say that this is only natural in a pluralistic society like Hong Kong, because in our society, there are divergent views, many different opinions and even many different proposals on solving our problems. But is the forging of consensus a necessary condition for building a harmonious society? Is that really the case? If the pan-democratic camp can stop questioning the trustworthiness of the Government on the ground that it is not directly elected, and if the Government can likewise stop resisting the people's participation in the name of strong governance, I think the tension will certainly soften a bit and will not become as confrontational as we fear it may.

Actually, most of the people I have come across do not question the legitimacy of the Chief Executive and the Government. They also trust and support them to a certain extent. But they also have expectations for them and their demands are quite tall as well.

President, the Chief Executive pledges to adopt a "people-based" approach. If both the Government and the people can respect each other more, if they can make fewer criticisms, if all can join hands to pursue the common goal of striking a right balance in Hong Kong — I must emphasize that we must strike a balance because the past success of Hong Kong owed itself to a balance instead of any confrontation. I can observe that very often, politics will lead to confrontation in society in many cases. Why is it impossible for employers and

employees to join hands? Why must they always oppose one another? Why must people say that all employers are unscrupulous? Mr LEE Cheuk-yan has just left the Chamber. According to him, Hong Kong people are very lovable. I think Hong Kong people are capable of accommodating differences while seeking common grounds. All of us want to have the freedom of expressing different opinions. We also want opportunities of participating in and contributing to society. And, our Government also hopes to create a sound platform with a cordial atmosphere. If all of us can do so, even if there is no consensus, I believe that we will still be able to build a harmonious society. Thank you, President.