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**Speech by the Hon Mrs Selina Chow Liang Shuk-ye, GBS,
JP**
**Motion Debate on Expectations for the Implementation of
Policies, 29 October 2003**



Selina Chow:

Madam President, no matter what reasons made half a million people take to the streets on 1 July, whether it be they were unhappy about the legislative work to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law or for other reasons, the Liberal Party thinks that there are many causes leading to the event. The march shows that there is a great gap between the administration by the Government and the popular expectations for the Government. So it can be said that in the year to come, the most important thing is that we can see Mr TUNG trying his best to narrow this gap in his policy address and that he can understand public expectations and demands of him and his government in many areas.

The Liberal Party has recently heard from many people from the middle class and the business sector comprising companies of various sizes their demands in respect of some major areas. Last week when the Liberal Party met with the Chief Executive, we tried our best to convey these views to him. We talked first on an issue of philosophy and, that is, whether or not the Hong Kong Government would still operate under the principle of "big market, small government". If it is so, then the Government would have to do a lot of things to come back to the right track in order to put this principle into practice. For we find that there have been signs that the Government is deviating from this principle of "big market, small government".

An obvious example is that different kinds of laws and regulations would be coming on stream and even before they become law, very often the Government would make all sorts of gestures, giving people an impression that more laws would be enacted. I have held discussions with the retail sector which I represent, as well as the manufacturing and import and export sectors. People from these sectors are worried, for they think that there are many consultation exercises going on and they all seem to be moving in the direction of introducing more laws and regulations.

Let me quote an example. That is on the regulation of health food and it has been a subject of heated discussions. Madam President, I do not intend to go too much into that subject, for we will be debating it in detail next week when Members present their respective views. In this example, the Government has released a consultation paper and it seems that some comprehensive regulation will be introduced. I believe

Members will be able to hear some grave concerns about that very soon.

I have also received some complaints recently and Members may think they are ridiculous. These complaints are about some volatile substances called VOC, found in gasoline, perfumes and cosmetics. These are substances that will become volatile when sprayed. Now the Government wants to conduct a consultation on these substances to ascertain if these VOC substances should be subject to regulation. Though the Government is only conducting a consultation on these substances and nothing may be done eventually, people have already been scared by the consultation exercise. It is because nothing like this has been done in the rest of the world except the State of California in the United States.

I have cited this example to show that many of the things which the Government is doing are sort of leading at the forefront of the times and of the world. It is making up something, and though it seems that it is trying to protect consumers and the public, it is just thinking up or making up something which is not practical at all and will just pose an enormous threat to market operations. Even if nothing will be implemented in the end, the move is scary enough to frighten the people.

Besides, the Government often asks this Council to enact some laws which are indeed unnecessary. It may be that its enforcement actions are not rigorous enough, or that some laws already exist, only that the enforcement actions are not effective. Or some wrong methods may have been used. But the Government is asking us to enact some harsher laws. All these may actually pose impediment to the market and even lead to an inflation in the size of the Government as more manpower will be needed for enforcement when these laws come into operation.

As we all know, 23% of the total budget goes to public expenditure. The Liberal Party is actually very worried, for even though the Financial Secretary has now decided to postpone the target date for eliminating the deficits to the year 2008-09, there might still be a need to introduce some new taxes such as the sales tax which is not welcome, as a result of the Government failing to reduce its expenditure any further. The Liberal Party is of the view that the Government should do what it should do as a small government in terms of cutting expenditure, it should also try to strengthen our edge. For example, insofar as CEPA is concerned, it should try to devise measures that will benefit all the parties in the shortest possible time, including the commercial and industrial sectors so that the economy can recover soon. Only by so doing can Hong Kong people concentrate their efforts on working for the overall interest of the territory. Thank you, Madam President.