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**Speech by the Hon Mrs Selina Chow Liang Shuk-ye,
GBS, JP**
**Motion Debate on Appointing least number of District
Council Members, 3 December 2003**



Selina Chow:

Madam President, in this Council today, I believe it has been a long time since we last heard such strong wordings. Comparing this debate with the past debates, we may feel that it has been a long time since we last had such a heated debate. However, I also feel rather disappointed, because some Honourable Members, whom I respect much although we hold different political views, have used arguments in support of their own viewpoints today that are actually very unfair to certain people or to those who have contributed to society. They were even called some unpleasant names, and I find this rather inappropriate.

Our difference today, basically, may be on whether the appointment system should exist or otherwise. That boils down to whether we should have the appointment system at all. In regard to the appointment system, actually many Members, including elected Members or formerly appointed Members, or Members returned by geographical constituencies or functional constituencies, have been called into service under this system. I, of course, do not necessarily refer to the DCs, but there are some who have been working on DCs. Apart from DCs, some Members have taken up various kinds of appointed seats. For example, Miss Margaret NG and Ms Audrey EU have taken up those positions, and so has Mr SIN Chung-kai, as he said just now.

Insofar as the work is concerned, although many Members were actually not elected to take up those positions, we were still dedicated to the work. Is it because we have been approached for appointment, so we definitely are coming to take some advantages, or some sort of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, or having cut some deals as remarked by other people? All this is not true. Just like Mr LAU Chin-shek and Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, I think, by occupation, they are also appointed to do such work. They are also not elected. Does it mean that they cannot faithfully serve their targets? The answer is negative.

Therefore, the nature of appointment should not be so determined with such assertiveness that the appointees will not work in the interest of the public. Similarly, elected members may not necessarily be serving the public well. Facts in the past have told us that no matter in DCs or in other public organizations, the performance of the elects may not be better than the appointees. Different persons have different performance.

Thus, I think sweeping generalization will negate the contribution actually made by many people.

As to the question of whether there should be appointed seats in the DCs, Mr LAU Wong-fat has also mentioned at earlier that it has been debated many times. Due to the different viewpoints and angles, we could not come to an agreement. In regard to DCs, it is undeniable that there are stipulations in the Basic Law, and I will not repeat them as many colleagues have mentioned them already. Nevertheless, we can talk about the real situation. As a matter of fact, insofar as DCs are concerned, I understand that members of different parties in various DCs, be they appointed or elected members, are generally working in amity with one another on district affairs. Besides, they can serve the respective districts quite well, able to greatly improve the living environment of the districts. This can be achieved only with their concerted efforts and harmonious co-operation. Furthermore, on many issues, as far as I understand it, since local affairs involve more practical than political aspects, the working atmosphere is more harmonious. It is a fact that many appointed members in DCs have rather good performance.

Should people with political party affiliation be appointed? This has just been referred to as "under-the-table deals", and so on, but I think otherwise. Every organization or political party can provide the necessary talents. But if you do not support the appointment system, then you neither give nor take. Certainly, we will respect your stance. However, if you think that there are talents in your political party, then why do you not offer their service? We reckon that the appointment system is one of the channels through which to serve the community, and thus we offer some talents to the Government for consideration, why not? Why should we be shameful? Why should that be considered "under-the-table deals"? I do not think this should be perceived as such.

Besides, as regards declaration of interest, I opine that if declaration of interest is necessary, it is probably all the more necessary for the organizations that appoint us to declare their interests. As I am appointed to the Hong Kong Tourism Board, I have not taken a single penny, but on the contrary, may even have to pay a lot. So it should declare interests to me instead.

As far as DCs are concerned, I understand that many people have actually put in a lot of efforts, even more than those elected members. I am not making a general comparison, but only remark on individual situations. Therefore, I do not think it is necessary to declare interests on the provision of service to the people, and this also depends on the level of personal contribution.

In conclusion, I think that some people have actually made a lot of insulting remarks today — there is a clear division between good and

evil. If you accept the appointment, then you are evil — If you are dissatisfied with the system, we definitely understand and respect you. However, if you insultingly make sweeping generalizations against those who have made contribution, then I consider it grossly unfair. We in the Liberal Party, of course, will oppose the motion today. Thank you, Madam President