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LOCAL-LEVEL ELECTION BEHAVIOR IN AN URBAN AREA

On September 23, 1982, registered voters of urban Kowloon and Hong Kong Island went to the polls to select the elected members of the newly-formed District Boards[1]. This election, with a total of 277 candidates contesting for seats in the seventy-six urban constituencies[2], was itself the climax to a long and sometimes intensive period of introduction during which the Hong Kong Government sought to familiarize urban residents with the District Board Scheme. Plans to reorganize local administration in Hong Kong had been first set out in 1980, in a Green Paper entitled, "A Pattern of District Administration in Hong Kong". The Green Paper proposed the establishment of District Boards in the New Territories and the urban areas of Hong Kong, and spoke of the desirability of increasing the active participation of district inhabitants in local administration, recommending that an electoral process wider than that currently existing be designed. These preliminary proposals were amplified in the 1981 White Paper, "District Administration in Hong Kong", which explained in greater detail the purpose and design of the new District Boards and the selection and composition of their membership.

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[1] This paper concerns only the urban elections. Details of the elections for the New Territories District Boards, which were held on March 4, 1982, will not be discussed.

[2] In the New Territories elections, there were 174 candidates contesting for fifty-six elected seats.

According to the White Paper, the District Boards were to be primarily advisory, with the following terms of reference:

(a) to advise on matters affecting the well-being of people living in the district and those working there;

(b) to advise on the provision and use of public facilities and services within the district;

(c) to advise on the adequacy and priorities of Government programme for the district;

(d) to advise on the use of public funds allocated to the district for local public works and community activities;

(e) to undertake, where funds are made available for the purpose, minor environmental improvements within the district; and

(f) to undertake, where funds are made available for the purpose, the promotion of recreational and cultural activities within the district.[3]

What was interesting about the White Paper is that it further stressed the desirability of greater participation through expanded elections. The White Paper continued by explaining the nature of the proposed elected elements and the procedures by which these elements were to

[3] *District Administration in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1981, p.10.

be added to the Boards. Once the Boards had been set in place, the newly-widened electoral franchise (formalized in the Electoral Provisions Bill of 1981) would ensure that all adults over the age of twenty-one could vote in the elections, provided that they met the qualifications and had registered beforehand as electors.

A comprehensive evaluation of all these reforms, and of the District Boards themselves, will not be attempted here[4]. Rather, this paper will focus attention on the election aspect of the proposed reforms. First of all is a discussion of the election campaign for the District Board as it was conducted in one urban area. What kinds of official pre-campaign activities were conducted and what kinds of campaign strategies were employed by the candidates and their supporters? Secondly, and more important, attention will be paid to the opinions of one group of grass-roots representatives, the chairmen of Mutual Aid Committees, as these relate to the campaign. How did the chairmen themselves view the campaign activities and how did they evaluate the reactions of the residents[5]? Finally, we will

[4] Readers interested in such analysis are referred to Lau Siu-kai, "Local Administrative Reform in Hong Kong: Promises and Limitations," *Asian Survey* 22:9 (September 1982), pp.858-873.

[5] This paper concerns only the campaign activities of the candidates and the reactions of local residents and voters to these activities, as these are perceived by the chairmen. The more specific opinions of Mutual Aid Committee chairmen concerning the District Boards as administrative reform are discussed in a second paper, "Administrative Reform and Local-Level Leadership in Hong Kong: The District Boards."

investigate what part, if any, did the chairmen play in the election activities and their relationship with the candidates and the electors. Did their participation affect the outcome of the election? This paper will attempt to answer these questions, focusing on the District Board elections in one of the seventy-six voting constituencies--the Lok Fu Constituency of the Wong Tai Sin City District.

The Mutual Aid Committees

First established in June of 1973, the Mutual Aid Committees--or as they are most commonly referred to in Hong Kong, the MACs--are organizations composed of residents of a building, or more rarely, a group of buildings, and have the dual aims of promoting a sense of friendship and mutual reliance among all authorized tenants and of promoting better security, a better environment and a more effective management[6]. As Mutual Aid Committees are now such an established and well-known part of local-level administration in Hong Kong and as they have already been the primary or secondary subjects of numerous scholarly and official investigations[7], it is not necessary to review all

[6] "Model Rules for a Mutual Aid Committee in a Public Housing Estate" Hong Kong Government. *City and New Territories Administration.* Hong Kong Government, 1982, p.1.

[7] The Mutual Aid Committees have provided the background for studies on subjects as diverse as adjustments of the elderly (Charlotte Ikels, personal communication, 1983), women's participation in urban associations (Scott, Janet Lee, *Action and Meaning: Women's Participation in the Mutual Aid Committees, Kowloon.* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1980), and the relationship of...

aspects of their form and functioning here[8]. It may be helpful, however, to remember that, while there are a great many community organizations in contemporary Hong Kong, each claiming to represent segments of the population, the Mutual Aid Committees are organizations that are identified with the true "grass-roots" populations at the level of the smallest identifiable unit: the residential block and its inhabitants[9]. This unique status has been achieved through both the organizational design and the committee membership. Made up of representatives selected from each floor, the MACs are enabled, through the efforts of these representatives and the office bearers chosen from them, to ascertain what are the everyday problems and difficulties facing residents. They are also cognizant of residents' opinions on wider social issues such as education policy, community health services and their delivery, and district-wide administration. While the cooperation and participation of residents in their block's MAC is by no means complete--it is, in fact, often disappointing--this situation does not

[7] ...neighborhood associations and bureaucratic institutions (Jones, John F., K.F. Ho, B.L. Chau, M.C. Lam, and B.H. Mok: *Neighborhood Associations in a New Town: The Mutual Aid Committees in Shatin.* Social Research Centre, Occasional Paper No. 76.

[8] A discussion of the design and organization of the Mutual Aid Committees may be found in: Scott, Janet Lee, "Structure and Functions in an Urban Organization: The Mutual Aid Committees." *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 22, 1982, pp.1-30.

[9] The term "residential block", while perhaps awkward, is a standard way of describing the buildings; a possible alternate term, "residential unit", officially applies only to an individual household space.

alter the fact that the Mutual Aid Committees are the lowest-level representative organization now in existence[10]. With this in mind, if "grass-roots" opinions on a particular issue are desired, the Mutual Aid Committees are logical places to begin the inquiry. Furthermore, the chairmen, who are experienced in committee work and knowledgeable about the block and the residents, are themselves the official representatives of the committees and as representatives of the blocks take an interest in events likely to affect living conditions in these units.

It was such a group of Mutual Aid Committee chairmen who were questioned, at the time of the elections, about their own and residents' evaluations of the campaign and its conduct. At that time, the author was conducting a series of interviews with a sample of Mutual Aid Committee chairmen as part of an extended research project designed to investigate the nature of committee membership and personal dimensions of participation. As the regular visits with the chairmen coincided with the District Board election campaign, it was decided to expand the discussions to include this unique phenomenon and seek the opinions of these chairmen on the event.

[10] From the viewpoint of local administration, the Mutual Aid Committees are the smallest organizations. However, there is one more association--the Owners' Corporation--that may be formed in a single residential block. One evaluation of MAC effectiveness is: Kuan Hsin-chi, Lau Siu-kai, and Ho Kam-fai; *Organizing Participatory Urban Services: the Mutual Aid Committees in Hong Kong*. Centre for Hong Kong Studies, Occasional Paper No.2, 1983.

The Setting for the Election

The Lok Fu Constituency is one of the twelve voting constituencies[11] established for the City District of Wong Tai Sin. At the time of the District Board elections, the voting constituencies here were, for the most part, coterminous with the District's administrative subdivisions called Areas[12]. At the time of the elections in 1982, the entire Lok Fu Area (itself divided in six subdivisions[13]) had a population of 31,000[14], including the two public housing estates of Mei Tung and Lok Fu[15], where much of the interviewing took place. Lok Fu Estate itself houses over 20,000 residents[16], accounting for nearly two-thirds of the

[11] These are: Choi Hung, Lok Fu, Lower Wong Tai Sin, San Po Kong, Tung Tau, Wang Tau Hom, Choi Wan, Ngau Tsuen, Tsz Wan Shan West, Tsz Wan Shan East, Tsz Wan Shan South, and Upper Wong Tai Sin and Fung Wong.

[12] At the time of the 1982 District Board elections, two Areas (Fung Wong and Upper Wong Tai Sin) had been combined into one voting constituency, so it is more accurate to say that the Wong Tai Sin City District contains thirteen Areas, but twelve District Board voting constituencies.

[13] These are: Kam Kwok Mansion, Luen Hop Building, Mei Tung Estate, Pui Man Tsuen Cottage Area, Pok Oi Village, and Lok Fu Estate.

[14] *Wong Tai Sin District Report*, 1982. p.271.

[15] The name, Lok Fu, is used in three different contexts: as a name for an Area, a voting constituency, and a public housing estate. When the site for the estate was chosen in 1955, it was then known as Lo Fu Ngam, or Tiger Hill. Residents, feeling that such a name was inauspicious, held a contest to select a new name. The final choice was Lok Fu, Happy and Wealthy.

[16] This is the figure given in the *Wong Tai Sin District Report* of 1982, p.271. The exact figure, given by the office of the Housing Manager of Lok Fu Estate in February of 1983, was 21,221.

Area's total population. At the time of the District Board elections, there were twenty-one Mutual Aid Committees established for Lok Fu Estate, out of a total of twenty-three for the constituency as a whole.

Qualifications and Disqualifications for Candidates

Individuals wishing to stand for election to any District Board in urban Hong Kong in 1982 were bound by the regulations governing candidacy set out in the 1981 White Paper, "District Administration in Hong Kong". Firstly, certain categories of people were disqualified from candidacy, including employees of the Crown or of the Urban Council. In addition to following the rules set out for the Urban Council elections, the Hong Kong Government added three more categories of prohibited people, including those convicted of corrupt or illegal practices[17].

In addition, all candidates must have resided two or more years in Hong Kong, although they need not have resided in the constituency whose seat they sought. No restrictions were placed on age, sex, nationality, language, or educational level. However, to ensure that frivolous candidates not run, the White Paper proposed that all candidates be nominated by ten electors, and that each candidate make a deposit of HK$1,000. This deposit was forfeited if the candidate lost

[17] Further details on qualifications and disqualifications for candidates (and voters) may be found in, "District Administration in Hong Kong". Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1981, pp.15-18.

the election or received less than one-eighth of the votes cast[18].

Official Promotion of the District Board Elections

Before the registration for voting and the election campaigning began, the Wong Tai Sin District Office, and more particularly, the Tung Tau Sub-Office, sponsored a number of events designed to introduce and explain the proposed District Board system to the residents of the Lok Fu Area[19]. A major activity conducted during this period was the household visit, carried out from February 15 to April 30 of 1982. A team of thirteen staff members from the district office, including the liaison officers, temporary community organizers and the Assistant City District Officer of the Tung Tau Sub-Office, went out into the three Wong Tai Sin District Areas of Tung Tau, Wang Tau Hom and Lok Fu. They visited each and every household in these three adjacent Areas, distributing forms and information and explaining to the residents the proposed system, its purpose, and how it was to be implemented. Residents were urged at this time to register as electors. In a number of the residential blocks, and especially where the residents and the household visit team members were unfamiliar with each other, the team was assisted by the office bearers of the block's Mutual Aid Committee. In Lok Fu Estate, the team was accompanied by officers of

[18] Ibid, p.18.

[19] The author is indebted to Ms. Winnie Yeung, Liaison Officer for the Lok Fu Area, for assistance in the following discussion.

the most active committees[20], who went with team members from unit to unit. Before these household visits began, all MAC office holders from the three Areas of Tung Tau, Wang Tau Hom and Lok Fu had been invited to attend a special evening seminar held for them at St. Patrick's Primary School on February 17, 1982. This meeting was held to explain details of the District Board system, to inform the officers of the planned household visits, and to ask for their assistance with the visits. No candidates were present at this seminar, as it was held before the registration of voters and no one had yet declared a candidacy. In addition to these household visits, the City District Office made special visits to the Lok Fu Estate estate office of the Housing Department, discussing the scheme with housing department staff.

The District Office arranged a number of other events to publicize the scheme. For example, a variety show was held in Morse Park on January 9, 1982. Nearly one thousand residents gathered to watch a drama presentation written to explain the upcoming household visits, a magic show, and to hear popular local singers and other entertainments designed to promote the scheme. The evening was

[20] According to the District Office, an active and successful committee is one that arouses the interest and concerns of the residents, that is devoted to community building projects, and concerned with keeping close contact with government offices and departments. A successful committee can organise functions once or twice a year for the whole block, such as a picnic. Regular meetings are held of office bearers. A successful committee can also help the tenants if there are problems--the officers can help in referring these problems to the authorities.

co-sponsored by the Wong Tai Sin District Office and the Government Information Service. Further, the two candidates for the District Board seat representing the Lok Fu Constituency were invited to a District Office-sponsored public forum at St. Patrick's School on the evening of September 13, 1982. Area residents were acquainted with the scheme by this time, and the two candidates were invited to present their platforms to the voters.

Of course, in addition to all these activities, numerous official publications and papers were available to Area residents. The original Green Paper, "A Pattern of District Administration in Hong Kong" (published in January, 1981) was in circulation, and a Chinese language booklet prepared by the Wong Tai Sin District Board (the pre-election board meeting from May, 1981 to September, 1982) was also available[21].

Individual Campaign Strategies

According to campaign regulations, residents wishing to declare their candidacy for a seat on a District Board had to register as early as two months before the election day of September 23, 1982[22].

[21] This very attractive, glossy booklet was entitled, "The District Board of Wong Tai Sin". Printed in full colour, it contained a description of the Board, its organization and functions, a list of members (pre-election), and colour photos taken of the twelve Wong Tai Sin District voting constituencies.

[22] In the urban areas, the formal period of registration extended from August 6 to August 31, 1982. A total of forty-seven candidates, including four women, submitted their nomination papers on the first day; of these, eight were hopefuls from the Wong Tai Sin District...

A candidate could officially begin campaigning from the day of registering his or her candidacy[23]. The campaign for the Wong Tai Sin District Board seat representing the Lok Fu Constituency was rather lively, with two candidates contesting[24]. Both candidates employed a number of strategies and promoted a number of activities designed to bring themselves and their platforms to the attention of the voters. These activities, and their patterns of promotion, were in part devised by the campaign managers or assistants that each candidate had employed to organize his or her over-all campaign; these managers were long-term residents or former residents of the Lok Fu Area and knew it, and the residents, well[25]. Of the two candidates, however,

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[22] ....(*South China Morning Post*, August 7, 1982, p.5). By August 19, the number of nominations had risen to 133, of which seventeen represented Wong Tai Sin (*South China Morning Post*, August 19, 1982, p.12), and by the closing date, the total nominations had reached 277, with twenty-nine candidates from Wong Tai Sin. The Wong Tai Sin City District was well represented throughout the nomination period--from beginning to end, the number of candidates from this district was exceeded only by that from the Kwun Tong City District.

[23] According to the District Office, most individuals had decided to become candidates well in advance of the registration deadline and had already been preparing their campaigns. Therefore, the fact that there was no space of time between the formal registration and the opening of the formal campaign caused no problems.

[24] For the remainder of this paper, these two candidates will be referred to as Candidate A and Candidate B.

[25] The candidates standing for election were authorized to pay their campaign managers and assistants, and the money was excluded from the $10,000 campaign spending limit imposed on all candidates. In the Lok Fu Constituency, Candidate B apparently did not pay his manager, but the situation for Candidate A is not clear. Both candidates would have had to pay managers from their own personal funds.

Candidate A was definitely the more active during the campaign period, assuming a larger share of the activities and receiving more publicity as a result of an intensive and aggressively-waged campaign.

Candidate A made use of the common local practice of advertising events by hanging up cloth banners printed with details of the event. A number of these banners, made of red cloth and painted in black letters, were hung at various locations within Lok Fu Estate that attracted the most foot traffic, and therefore would be seen by the greatest number of people. One was placed, for example, near a strategic crossing near Block #10, where it could not be missed. Other banners, prepared in a similar style, appeared at other locations within the estate and the adjacent private housing enclave. The same candidate also designed and had painted a number of attractive wooden signboards, painted with the figures of children, flowers, and other such happy things, introducing the upcoming District Board elections or the nature of the District Board and district administration in general. These were also put up at strategic locations. Two were set, for example, facing both ends of a heavily-used zebra crossing near the end of Lok Fu Estate's Block #13. However, no specific mention was made of this candidate's name or platform, but rather talked in general terms about the District Board in the name of the Mutual Aid Committee of the building. One of these signs read as follows:

> What is "local administration"? It is the need to improve the district policy, to promote more opportunities for the residents to participate in district affairs, to collect the opinions of the residents in order to ensure the government's

> understanding of the district's needs, and pursue more effective policies so as to fulfill the residents' requests. Being a resident of Lok Fu, please actively participate in the local administration, in order to have a "break through" in initiative, and to promote the spirit of Lok Fu.

While this style had to be adopted because, at the time of erecting the signboard, Candidate A had not yet declared a candidacy and so could not do any self-promotion, placing the signs up before the formal campaign period began meant that the cost of the signs did not have to be deducted from the HK$10,000 campaign spending limit imposed on each candidate. Permission to put up these wooden signboards was formally obtained from the Housing Office, but the red cloth banners could be set up without special approval, provided the Estate Management Office of Lok Fu Estate was informed and the banners did not cause any problems or obstruction. The District Office was also informed of the locations of all these banners and signboards, but had no formal control over their content or location.

Both Candidates A and B made use of posters and flyers, containing their names, pictures, and selected items of personal information such as their participation in other government and public committees. These flyers were distributed to each block of Lok Fu and Mei Tung Estates and to the private housing blocks and public spaces around the Area. Candidate A also mailed letters to various individuals within the Lok Fu Area, such as the chairmen of the Mutual Aid Committees in Lok Fu Estate, asking for their support and listing the names of other prominent local individuals who already supported her candidacy. The campaign platforms of the two candidates were published in local

newspapers. The first candidate stressed the improvement of environmental hygiene, law and order, and traffic; and the establishment of an office to help the residents. Fighting for the rights of the residents and serving the people were the declared aims of the second[26].

If all this was not sufficient, Candidate A also made household visits to families within the Area, explaining her platform and asking residents for their votes. One MAC chairman queried at the time of the campaign remarked, "The candidate and many assistants have come this block over the past few nights. They have used loudhailers to speak to the residents, introducing the candidate and the platform. In addition, I heard that this candidate plans to sponsor a tea party for all the MAC chairmen soon". The second candidate, B, did not make so many formal visits, preferring to meet informally or make quiet visits to supporters and residents within the Area.

Campaign activities were not supervised by the staff of the District Office, nor did the staff check the text of any of the campaign materials distributed or any of the advertising signs erected. The office did keep a collection of all such materials for reference, having requested them from the two candidates. The task of supervision fell to the Registration and Electoral Division of the Government Secretariat, who watched for campaign irregularities and made certain that the campaign spending limit of HK$10,000 was observed.

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[26] *Hong Kong Standard*, September 22, 1982, p.3.

Resident Opinion and Reaction

Having discussed both the official pre-campaign activities and the strategies of the candidates, it is time to consider the opinions of Lok Fu residents, as interpreted by the MAC chairmen. After considering these opinions, we may further assess the role of the chairmen in the election. In view of the number and variety of campaign activities conducted by the two candidates, one might expect numerous expressions of interest from the voters. The rate of voter turnout for the Lok Fu Constituency was officially declared at 35.5 per cent, in line with the official turnout for Kowloon and Hong Kong urban constituencies overall, and perhaps indicative of the "typicalness" of the level of voter interest here. One might assume, therefore, that residents were genuinely interested in the elections, but, stated this way, the assumption is neither enlightening nor acceptable and requires further substantiation. The actual situation is not always easy to determine. For example, no conclusions could be drawn from the responses given by the chairmen to the question, "Were the residents of your block generally interested in the election?", for one-half of the sample asserted that the residents of their blocks took a real interest but the other half were equally certain that the residents had no concern whatsoever. A more promising method of evaluating the form and degree of resident interest is to examine more closely their possible manifestations. One place to begin is with assistance given by residents to the two candidates during the campaign.

In an interview published in the South China Morning Post

some months after the election, the Assistant City District Officer of the Wong Tai Sin City District was quoted as saying, "They [MACs] have done much to involve residents in district administration, with many MAC representatives canvassing for candidates during the last DB [District Board] elections"[27]. However, in the Lok Fu Area at the time, the picture was not so positive. The responses to the question of assistance were divided, with half the sample of chairmen asserting that some of the residents had helped one or the other of the candidates and the other half equally firm that no one in the block had done anything at all. The level of assistance seemed to be low, however, for even in the blocks where residents were sufficiently committed to a candidate to work publicly for him or her, the number of such workers seemed to be small. "Only a few people" (perhaps ten to twenty) was the most common response.

Turning to the MAC chairmen themselves, the majority, ten of the seventeen interviewed, either made it very clear (or quietly suggested) that they had given their support to one of the candidates. Two were quite frank, telling how they had campaigned for one person and actively encouraged residents to vote for the candidate they themselves preferred. Others who said they had supported one candidate said that they did so by speaking to friends, urging them to vote for this person, or they accompanied the candidate on visits within the

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[27] *South China Morning Post*, September 16, 1983, p.14.

Area, helping to distribute campaign literature. Other chairmen, however, did not make clear just which candidate they had supported, nor did they explain in detail what actions they had taken.

Another manifestation of resident interest in the District Board is the amount of discussion generated by the elections. Were residents observed talking about the campaign, debating about the election or the merits of the candidates, or discussing anything having to do with the newly-established District Boards? As much of the discussion went on within individual family units, between family members, it is not possible to obtain all the details on the nature of these talks, short of conducting a house-to-house survey. From responses collected, however, it seems unlikely that the topic was argued very often. The majority of the chairmen said that they had either never heard any residents commenting on the election activities, or had heard only a few remarks on an irregular basis. Certainly, the matter was not formally raised in meetings held in the block (such as the regular meetings of the MAC), unless in conjunction with the visit of a candidate, or with official visits by staff of the District Office. Only a few chairmen had noticed a higher level of resident comment; one referred to the elections and the election campaign as a "hot topic" in his block during the weeks preceding the September 23 election date. A second gave a long description of the residents' interest in the election-related rumours and odd notions floating about the block. When viewed in full, however, even these positive responses suggest a low-keyed reaction from the residents.

As described in the "individual campaign strategies" section of this paper, one of the two candidates for the District Board seat representing the Lok Fu Constituency (that is, Candidate A) carried out a rather lively campaign, employing a number of strategies to capture the attention and then, hopefully, the votes of the residents. It could be asked--what did Lok Fu residents think about this rather aggressive style of campaigning, which was likely to have been a new phenomenon to many of them? The MAC chairmen were asked, first of all, about their own opinions. By far the largest number (twelve) held neutral opinions of this campaign style--it neither helped nor hindered the candidate, they thought. Of the remaining five who did give a specific opinion, one believed it was neither good nor bad, but simply unnecessary, while two did not approve and two more thought it was the right way to conduct a campaign. As one of these explained, "Yes, Candidate A was right to make such a strong campaign. This is because [a strong campaign] gave a chance for the residents to know more of what the election was about, and it gave an example for others to follow in the next election. In a word, I personally thought this was the right way to campaign. However, I am not sure of other people's views". Equally inconclusive were the opinions of the residents--as the chairmen explained it, in an overwhelming majority of blocks, the residents either expressed no opinions, did not care one way or the other, or felt it made no difference to them what campaign style was selected. Fewer than half of the sample described other responses--for example, split opinions, where half of the residents supported this style while the

other half disliked it. The residents of only two blocks had expressed disapproval, while only one block's chairman believed that the residents of his unit appreciated and admired this approach.

The preceding remarks suggest considerable unconcern on the part of Lok Fu residents regarding the campaign styles they observed during the election. If there was no particular criticism of the campaign styles employed by the candidates, did these campaign styles nevertheless influence the outcome of the election? Again, the answer seems to be "no". Only two chairmen asserted that the strong campaign tipped the scales in their block, one explaining that, "Yes, strong campaigning has an effect on the outcome of the election. It is most obviously shown when one candidate employs a lot of advertising while the other one is completely silent. Also, strong campaigning makes it likely that more people will be willing to run for these positions in the future". The second chairman, reflecting for a time before answering, explained further. "There were certain effects, especially on the day of the election. Some voters then were still not clear about their decision and so when they went to the polling place, they voted for the candidate that they thought was the friendlier, or who had said hello to them". Still another experienced chairman described the residents who were unclear about the two candidates, and would, therefore, be susceptible to persuasion by the advertisements or who would vote according to the first impression they had received of the candidate. But, the best description of the effect of the campaign on some residents was given by a young chairman, who summed up the uncertain nature of voting by

saying:

> People feel differently, and each has his own ideas. About one-half of the residents reacted positively towards the strong campaigning, but the other half did not support it. I think, however, that advertizing had a real effect on the outcome because some voters did not know the candidates. This is true for the housewives, who were not familiar with them at all. But, in the end, some residents who did not know the candidates decided because of that not to vote at all.

Such remarks are, of course, support for the assumption that face-to-face, or personal contact situations are significant in determining the behavior of local voters.

The majority of the chairmen sampled believed that the election results demonstrated that an aggressive campaign had little effect on voting patterns. They asserted that the campaign activities had led observers to believe that one candidate (the one with the heavier campaign--Candidate A) would definitely win, but the returns proved otherwise. Other reasons for their opinions included the beliefs that people were looking at the qualifications and experience of the two candidates, that the District Boards were too new, that people were unsure of how to vote[28], or simply that people will vote for whoever they liked, for whatever reason, and will not be influenced by

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[28] If some residents did not know how to vote, this cannot be blamed on a lack of effort on the part of the Government. As already explained, residents registered as voters had the procedure explained to them during the household visits, at the time of registration, and they could, further, receive information at the District Office or from reading the newspapers. It seems likely that this response is more an excuse for a lack of interest or energy rather than indicative of a genuine problem.

advertising. "In the beginning, it seemed likely that Candidate A was more likely to win because of the elaborate campaigning, but in the end, Candidate B won. I think that Candidate B's character and ideas were more easily understandable to the residents. But, people's attitudes towards a person cannot be changed overnight and residents would evaluate the candidate from their past activities. Even if some of the voters are not clear about the candidate's past history, they can hear from other people. I think it is impossible to change people's attitudes during the campaign since the time is not long enough".

Actual election results for the Lok Fu Constituency further substantiate such evaluations of campaign strategy. When the votes were all counted, the winning candidate, Candidate B, had polled 265 votes more than his rival, winning with a total of 1,112 votes of the 1,960 cast. While this was not the narrowest margin of victory recorded in the urban elections[29], it is close enough to suggest that the aggressive campaign did not seriously hurt the losing candidate, but neither did it attract sufficient votes to assure a victory.

If the campaign style had little effect on the actual number of votes cast, then what did affect the voting? What were the voters looking for? In an interview recorded the day after the election, the Secretary for City and New Territories Administration was quoted as

[29]The District Board member elected to represent the Yaumatei South Constituency of the Yaumatei City District was voted into office by a margin of only fourteen votes: 1,332 to 1,318. Again, it was reported that one-third of the total registered voters (10,400) actually voted. *Hong Kong Standard*, September 27, 1982, p.2.

believing that platforms presented by the candidates were nearly all the same. "One can assume all candidates know what needs to be done in Hong Kong and they all campaigned for the improvement in the same things: better buses, better transport, better roads. They would be foolish if they did not". He then added that voters would assess candidates on personality and leadership[30]. Similar comments on the nature of platforms came from the District Office. It was explained that the candidates did not, at this first public election, wish to be associated too closely with specific issues, feeling that a more general stance would be more attractive to voters. The platforms presented by the two candidates were, as has been seen, rathergeneral, but that for candidate A contained more specific details. However, it can also be said that some candidates, in other constituencies, did speak forcefully on issues they knew were troubling voters.

In the Lok Fu Constituency, probably the strongest factor that can be isolated as influencing the voters was the experience and public work record of the two candidates. Over and over, the chairmen commented on how the voters knew the records of past public performances of both candidates and had these in mind when they voted. For example, they noted the fact that both candidates were MAC chairmen, although Candidate B had held such a post for a longer period[31] and

[30]*South China Morning Post*, September 25, 1982, p.8.

[31]Candidate B had been chairman of his block's Mutual Aid Committee for seven years, beginning in 1976. Cnadidate A had taken office in 1980 and thus had been chairman for nearly two years at the time of the election.

was also well known as the chairman of the Lok Fu Area Committee, a post he had held for many years[32]. Also, both candidates had been resident in the Area for a long time and a number of people had met them personally and had had opportunities to talk with, and thus evaluate, them as candidates. Voters seemed to be impressed by long experience with the problems of the Area and by the apparent ability of the candidate to tackle these problems and to work for the good of all. However, it is also true that, while indicating their membership in other community organizations, the candidates tried to avoid over-stressing these affiliations, lest they be viewed as representing only a small minority. For the same reason, it is unclear if the two candidates presented themselves first as representing the Mutual Aid Committees. It is not likely that they did.

While it is difficult to determine exactly if the sex of the candidate was important to the voters[33], the results suggest that it was not. What seemed to be more important in voters minds were such as the experience and committee work of the candidate. Only one or two chairmen specifically mentioned hearing comments about the candidate

[32] The author has data on the Lok Fu Area Committee extending back to 1977. Candidate B has been chairman of the Lok Fu Area Committee since that time, while Candidate A was first selected for membership in 1980.

[33] Of the 277 candidates running for election, sixteen were women. Of these, three captured the seats contested, one winning when she ran unopposed. *South China Morning Post*, September 25, 1982, p.1.

"... conducting a loud campaign, just like a talkative woman"[34]. It is possible that some voters who were not familiar with this candidate and what she represented and who were, further, ambivalent about the acceptability of women running for public office might have voted for the male candidate simply out of habit. In other urban constituencies, it was suggested that voters had been less influenced by sex than by the occupation of the candidate; those holding traditionally higher status occupations were preferred over those in lower status positions[35] The two candidates in the Lok Fu Area were described as a cleansing company manager (Candidate B) and a "grassroots" person (Candidate A)[36]. Actually Candidate A was a stall owner in the Lok Fu Estate market, selling cooked meats; while she had a fixed shop, a number of chairmen referred to her as a hawker. Her occupation was brought up

[34] The accusation of being a "talkative" or "gossipy" woman is one commonly made by those who feel uneasy about women taking leading positions in voluntary committees such as the MACs. While conducting research on women's participation in Mutual Aid Committees during 1976-78, a number of women told the author that they had been criticized by being referred to in this fashion.

[35] Returning to the Yaumatei South Constituency, the losing candidate (who had, in fact, been appointed to and was serving on, the pre-election District Board for the Yaumatei District) attributed his loss partly to the fact that he was a film projectionist, an occupation carrying lower social prestige than that of the winner, who was a teacher. That the theater where he worked specialized in adult films also did not help his candidacy. *Hong Kong Standard*, September 27, 1982.

[36] *South China Morning Post*, September 16, 1982. The *Hong Kong Standard* of Wednesday, September 22, 1982, clearly identified one candidate as the "the owner of a 'siu mei' shop" (p.3).

more often, in that it was remarked that residents wondered about her abilities and education, because she did this kind of work. While the occupation alone, as with the sex of the candidate, was not the deciding factor, it was possible that it, combined with evaluations of past experience, influenced a number of voters.

Discussion

Reviewing the preceding discussion of the District Board election in the Lok Fu Constituency, an observer may conclude that the resident response was quite muted and low-keyed, despite the numerous campaign activities. This moderate response can be observed not only in the reactions of the residents, but also in the cautious responses of the Mutual Aid Committee chairmen. Considering the time and effort that was expended, both officially and by the two candidates, to arouse the interest of the residents in the elections, such a mild response requires further consideration. Let us review two of the original foci of this paper--the reactions of the residents and the participation of the chairmen in the election--in light of this data.

Resident Reaction

It has been described how the Hong Kong Government, acting through the City District Offices, adopted a wide variety of publicity strategies--from publications, to household visits, to special meetings, to public performances--to publicize the elections, to attract the attention of potential voters and to educate the public in the substance and significance of the District Boards. Such activities were standard,

traditional methods of disseminating information in a Chinese context and for that reason it was expected that, as the medium was familiar, the message would be understood and accepted by the population. These efforts were further supported by the publicity given to the scheme through the utilization of more modern media techniques such as television broadcasts, radio programs, and newspaper articles. Beyond these, the campaign activities of the two candidates added a second set of reinforcements and repetitions of the messages. However, despite this enormous expenditure of effort, it seems that residents were impervious to exhortations from both officials and candidates.

One area in which this indifference is most noticable is the voting statistics. In an Area of approximately 30,000 residents, only 18% (5,500) were sufficiently motivated to register as electors. Further, while the official voting statistics (a 35.5% turnout for the Lok Fu Constituency) present a rosy view of participation, they are misleading, for they are based on registration, not population, totals. If the total population of the Lok Fu Constituency is used as a base, then the voting rate drops to 6.5%. Even if this population total is reduced by half (to 16,000) to allow for those underaged or otherwise not qualified to vote, the voting rate rises to only 12.5%. By any standard, this is a discouraging turnout, indicating little enthusiasm.

One of the most important factors affecting voter reaction to the election was uncertainty about the District Boards themselves. For, despite all the publicity, residents did not know what the Boards were and what they were trying to accomplish. Why not? It may be helpful

to recall the time frame for the Boards. When the September 23 date for the urban elections arrived, it is true that both the eight fully-formed New Territories District Boards and the ten still "pre-election" urban Boards had already been in existence for six months. However, these six months were insufficient to allow the residents to become fully familiar with the Boards, even though all of them could have served as models for urban residents to observe. Why was this so?

Reinforcing the time frame was the problem of the Board's unclear statement of goals. The officially-stated aim of the District Board was: "... to improve district administration to provide greater opportunities for public consultation and participation in administration at the district level"[37], an aim which has been described as "... deliberately vague, general, and brief ..."[38]. What were the residents of Lok Fu to make of such an aim? The residents of this constituency are no different from residents of any other urban area in Hong Kong. Being practical people, they look for concrete results, not vague statements of intangible values, and the fact that the Board had been operating for six months did not offset this uncertainty, for this was insufficient time for the Boards to set themselves on a clear course of action that residents could see. For example, during the first four months of its existence, the Wong Tai Sin District Board

[37] "District Administration in Hong Kong", Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1981, p.4.

[38] Lau Siu-kai, "Local Administrative Reform in Hong Kong: Promises and Limitations," *Asian Survey* 22:9 (September, 1982), p.861.

undertook a number of community building projects, environmental improvement projects, traffic improvement projects, and improvements to conditions in squatter areas. Specific projects included: the removal of abandoned vehicles and repairs to roads, studies of bus services, the designing of a logo for the Board, sponsoring of a youth camp, and increasing the supply of electricity to squatters[39]. While all these activities were reasonable attempts to work on real problems of concern to District (and Area) residents, the fact remains that they were neither attention-getting nor indicative of any consistent policy or long-range objective, and the residents were left to wonder.

It is also possible that voters were unclear about the idea of the election itself, feeling of unease being engendered by the "first-time" nature of the elections. While it is not true to assert that residents had had no previous experience with elections or election procedures[40], it is clear that the District Board election was wider in scope than what had been experienced previously. Furthermore, this was the first time that campaigning had been held on such a wide

[39] *Wong Tai Sin District Report*, 1982, pp.11-16.

[40] By the time of the District Board election, residents had had ample experience in electing floor representatives and office holders for their residential unit's Mutual Aid Committee. Even if some residents did not actively participate in these elections, they nevertheless knew how they were conducted and had a clear understanding of what an election was. A paper discussing these MAC elections is now in progress.

scale--indeed, had been done at all[41]. It is likely that both candidates and voters alike were learning about the conduct of a complicated campaign for a large-scale election as it unfolded and were, therefore, uncertain of how to proceed and what to expect. Such uncertainty was likely to result in a muted response.

Finally, and an issue related to the above, it seems that the voters were uncertain of what to look for in a candidate. At the time of the election, it was suggested that voters would be influenced, not by the platform of the candidate (which would be general anyway), but by his personal appeal or his individual attributes[42]. Certainly, in Lok Fu, the platforms of both candidates left some margin for uncertainty, even though one candidate proposed a somewhat more specific list of priorities. The voters were, therefore, left to their personal reaction to the personality of the candidate and also to their understanding of the candidate's past experience in the area--both points made by the chairmen in their discussions. Also, when reviewing other characteristics, it would seem that the sex of the candidate was secondary to occupation, a fact that has been referred to in other assessments of the election[43]. However, it is impossible to determine if the voters overall had a coherent view, a clear idea of the characteristics a candidate should possess.

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[41] There is no true campaigning for office bearing positions on Mutual Aid Committees, nor is there for such positions on the Area Committees (as all members are appointed).

[42] *South China Morning Post*, September 25, 1982, p.8.

[43] Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, "The District Board Elections in Hong Kong." Centre for Hong Kong Studies, Occasional Paper No.3, 1983.

The Chairmen and the Elections

Turning to our final question, the place of the MAC chairmen in the elections and their relationships with candidates and electors, it would seem that they had, at best, modest influence on the events. There are a number of areas that support this evaluation. First of all, it seems from their responses that they did not actively present the District Board or the campaign to the residents/electors. For example, there was no mention, except hypothetically, of holding special meetings in the block to discuss the election. While it is true that some of the chairmen assisted the staff of the District Office during the household visits, not all of them did and there is no suggestion that those who did then followed with a regular schedule of "reminder" meetings. Thus, one opportunity for contact with electors was not taken. It should be noted, too, that the chairmen themselves did not know the number of residents in their blocks who had registered as electors.

The activities of election day present additional information. The District Office continued its drive to get the voters out right through the day of the election. Within Lok Fu Estate, the MAC chairmen were part of this drive, albeit informally, and a full three-quarters of those questioned said that on the day of the election they had made attempts to encourage the residents to go out to vote. Most of these attempts consisted of the chairmen going about the block talking to residents and reminding them of the importance of voting. "On the day of the election, I went out in the name of the MAC to encourage all residents to go out and vote. I did not myself urge them to vote for

any one candidate, but just said that they should choose the one who would do the most for Lok Fu". Similarly, "On the day of the election I did go out and encourage people to vote, but didn't ask them to vote for any particular candidate--I just told them to get out and vote and to choose the candidate they most liked". Others said that they did no visiting, but had made themselves available for questions by the residents, or had only visited the units on their own floor, talking to people they knew. Only one chairman actually went out with a microphone on election evening (as did the community organizers) to call the residents out. In all, while many strategies were employed, all were predominately low-keyed and modest; many chairmen made the point that they did not proceed with any degree of "force", but proceeded quietly, hoping to persuade as many residents as possible to act on this opportunity to vote. While it is likely that these efforts did result in some voting by people who would otherwise not have gone out, the generally low-keyed activities described by most of the chairmen were unlikely to result in a dramatic increase in the numbers.

It is difficult, however, to assess more precisely the effects of the chairman's activities, as it is not possible to determine how much work they had done in the block before election day--although it is not likely that any of them had done much, if anything. It is possible that the chairmen of the committees recognized as "most active" might have had a greater effect on voting rates in their blocks; all of the chairmen of these committees said that they had made efforts to encourage residents on election day. Unfortunately a review of the voting statistics

compiled for the Lok Fu Area does little to settle the issue.

The related question, whether a Mutual Aid Committee chairman can influence the direction of the voting, is more difficult to answer, as the chairmen themselves had no clear opinion, and, further, it was not possible to observe the day to day interactions between chairmen and residents. One half of those queried declared without hesitation which of the two candidates for the Lok Fu Constituency seat they supported and furthermore, accompanied their declarations with explanations in defense of their choice. As there was no doubt of their preference, it might be assumed that residents of the block also knew of their opinions and were influenced by it, but this is difficult to assess. What was clear from the responses was that half of those responding felt that the MAC chairmen could have an effect on resident opinions. Of this one-half, some believed that such influence was possible even if they themselves did not do anything during the campaign. "I believe that the MAC chairmen should be able to influence the residents to vote for a particular candidate. For instance, the chairman could hold a meeting with the residents and discuss the qualities of the candidates. But, I myself was too tired and busy to hold such a meeting". One chairman did do this. "As an MAC chairman, I introduced the two candidates to the residents, and in some detail, so that they could really understand what each one had done for the residents". Another explained, "I think it is more effective to gain the support of the residents through the help of the chairman since the chairman knows the residents well. It is easier for the chairmen to

persuade the residents in the block to vote [for a particular candidate]". Others actively tried to persuade residents to vote for one of the candidates, and still another group conducted themselves during the campaign in such a way that there was no mistaking their preference, even if they tried not to be overt. "While I did not go to each room and ask the residents to vote--I thought that this would appear too forceful--I did tell all the people I knew that they should support Candidate B as I did". Or, "When people asked me for my opinion, I told them that Candidate A was the most qualified. In fact, I sent posters to other blocks stating that A was the most capable person to take on the job of District Board representative".

However, the remaining one-half were not so certain that residents could be persuaded by anyone, least of all by the chairmen. Most of these were frankly skeptical of their success rate, were they to attempt to solicit votes on behalf of any candidate. Two of these were extremely strong on this point, and one quite emphatic that not only could the MAC chairmen not influence anyone, it was also outside of the duties of the chairman to try. "I never tried to suggest anything or give advice to the people on whom to vote for. It is not fair. Such a thing might have happened in other blocks, but I think it would be rare. Even if there was such an occurrence, the influence of the officer would not be great--people would only choose who they thought had a good past performance". There is some support for such skepticism in the fact that the District Office was visited, before the election, by a number of MAC chairmen seeking advice on how to vote

and asking which of the two candidates was truly the better choice. Certainly, such behavior does not present a picture of the chairmen as being able to forcefully decide for others.

The relationship of the MAC chairman with the candidates is somewhat more positive, although even here, responses suggest some ambivalence. The fact that both of the candidates for the Lok Fu Constituency seat were MAC chairmen meant that they were both well known to the other chairmen, even though not all chairmen knew the two personally. Further, slightly over half the sample stated that they did support one of the candidates during the election. However, only two of these declared that they were truly active supporters, while the replies of those remaining indicated a more quiet form of assistance. That is, while residents of the block might have known of the chairman's preference, he did little to actively disseminate it through the block.

Despite their assurances of active public support for one or the other of the candidates--assurances that might lead observers to conclude true participation on their part--the reality seems to be that the majority of chairmen avoided being too publicly identified with either candidate. While some avoided such identification out of a desire for privacy, it is likely that others either wished to remain independent or were sufficiently uncertain about the two candidates so that they could not decide which to support. The visits to the District Office by chairmen seeking advice on voting is an indication of this. There is a further possibility, that some chairmen were concerned

about becoming involved in a potentially embarrassing situation. What was this?

The Lok Fu Area is rather small, and many residents (for example, the residents of Lok Fu Estate) have been living there for over twenty years. These residents know the Area, and each other, very well. Furthermore, the two candidates contesting the District Board seat were themselves long-term residents and were further known to many people through their years of participation in Area organizations. One result of this familiarity was a certain embarrassment on the part of some of the chairmen, as they knew both of the candidates quite well, and therefore, felt they could not openly assist in the campaign of one without risking insult to the second. As one explained, laughing, "This was a problem in our family, as my wife and I knew both candidates very well and didn't want to embarrass either one. We decided not to work for either one and even divided our two votes so as not to show favoritism". Another remarked, "In the end, it is better that there are several candidates, as this would reduce the embarrassment between the supporters on both sides. To have only two candidates usually results in an extreme situation; if you support one candidate, then you automatically oppose the other side".

There is additional support for this in the form of reaction to one campaign strategy. One candidate mailed letters to prominent individuals within the Area, explaining the candidacy for the District Board seat and listing the names of other individuals who supported it. However, when the MAC chairmen whose names appeared in this letter

were asked about it, all said that they had never been asked for permission to use their names and indeed, had no idea that such a letter had been planned until they received it. While some of them laughed it off as just another campaign trick, others, who felt themselves publicly embarrassed by having their names recorded, were quite angry. Some of these planned to support, or already were supporting the other candidate and now found their sincerity being questioned.

It would seem that many of the chairmen were trying to avoid such face-endangering situations. They knew that the small size of the Area would magnify the potential for unavoidable, and embarrassing, face-to-face encounters with both candidates.

Finally, it should be said that the chairmen were like the voters in that they shared the same doubts over the idea of campaigning and how to conduct a campaign. The special efforts directed to them by the District Office apparently did not offset their uncertainties. In addition, it is unrealistic to assume that many chairmen, already heavily burdened with family obligations and full-time jobs, would have the time to devote to this first election.

While the preceding evaluation may be sobering, there may be room for considerable improvement in this picture of participation. The element of time, which worked against the first District Board election, may turn to benefit when the second is held in 1985. For, in the space of time since the data for this paper was collected, the District Boards have devoted much energy to the solution of recurring district problems

and have become more active on issues that affect Hong Kong and its future. All these activities, and the publicity they generate for the Boards, may well convince more residents that the Boards are truly worthwhile. That, in its turn, would increase their willingness both to vote and to become candidates. In addition, the space of time since the first election has allowed residents to reconsider the nature and conduct of an election. Surely, in 1985, residents will not be so unsure about campaigning and active participation, nor will they be so uncertain about what they want in a candidate.

All of these points apply as well to the Mutual Aid Committee chairmen, who have also benefited by the experience. As the MACs seemed to be reasonably represented during the first election, it will be interesting to see if they become even more prominent, and more clearly so, during the second. However, as the Lok Fu Area is small and as the time and effort demanded of a candidate is more than most can afford, it is not likely that there will be a large increase in the number of candidates there. Yet, it is not unreasonable to hope for increased participation by the chairmen in events connected to the election process and an increased visibility of the committees themselves. If this happens, the Mutual Aid Committees may be able to take an even more active part in this, the grassroots level, of local government.

香港市區的地方選舉行爲

（中文摘要）

自香港政府於一九八〇年推行地方行政改革以來，區議會選舉日漸受到各界人士的關注。爲了進一步了解本港市區的選舉行爲，本研究將深入分析一九八二年九龍樂富區在黃大仙區議會選舉中之情況。資料主要取自對樂富區各互助委員會主席的訪問。

本研究的重點有三：

（一）在助選開始前，政府安排了哪些有關選舉的活動？候選人及其支持者如何步署競選的策略？

（二）代表著一部份草根階層的互助委員會主席對區議會選舉有甚麼意見？如何評價居民的反應？

（三）互助委員會主席在選舉活動中扮演了怎樣的角色？能否影響選舉的結果？他（她）們和候選人的關係又如何？

樂富是黃大仙區十二個投票選區之一。在一九八二年選舉時，樂富地區人口共31,000人，樂富邨居民佔其中三分之二。全區互委會共23個，其中樂富邨佔21個。

政府和候選人的選舉活動：爲了宣傳首次的區議會選舉，黃大仙政務處在選舉前安排了表演，座談會和家訪，並派發地方行政綠皮書和選民登記表格。

樂富區只有兩名候選人（代稱爲甲和乙）。兩名候選人都在區內張貼宣傳海報和派發單張，以吸引居民的注意。除了在樂富邨當眼處掛起橫額外，候選人甲更把區內支持者之名單附於宣傳信內發給有關人士，並親自家訪，解釋政綱和拉票。總的來說，候選人甲的助選工作較候選人乙的活躍，而政務處亦無干涉助選活動。

居民的意見和反應：樂富區的投票率爲35.5%，與港九其他地區的平均相近。據各互委會主席的意見，居民在選舉活動中的參與並不積極。雖然大部份被訪之互委會主席都認爲候選人甲的助選功夫十分落力，但這對選舉結果影響不大。事實上，候選人乙在1,965票中贏得1,112票而獲選。

究竟甚麼原因影響了選舉結果呢？各互委會主席認爲候選人的工作經驗和社會參與最重要，而性別的影響較爲次要。兩位候選人的職業曾多次被各互委員主席提及。甲是樂富邨街市一熟肉檔之女性東主，而乙卻是一清潔公司之經理，所以甲的辦事能力受到懷疑。因此，職業加上性別的影響極可能左右了一部份選民的決定。

樂富區居民對選舉的反應似乎不受政府和候選人的宣傳所影響。雖然該區的投票率達35.5%，但這是以登記選民之數目作爲基數。事實上，投票者只佔區內人口之 6.5%。另一個影響投票的原因是居民未明瞭區議會的目的和作用。因爲

該區議會選舉乃第一次舉行，居民既無投票之經驗，更不清楚候選人應具備甚麼資格，所以最後還是要從候選人的性格和在區內的工作經驗來決定。

互委會主席和選舉：互委會主席對選舉的影響並不顯著。互委會主席對選民的影響實難於確定，因爲無法觀察他（她）們與居民的日常接觸。此外，只有半數的互委會主席清楚表明支持那一方，其餘的一半則認爲選民不應受任何人影響，而身爲互委會主席者更不應引導居民投某候選人的票。

不過，互委會主席和候選人的關係則較爲密切。今次兩位候選人均爲互委會主席，所以與其他主席認識。雖然達半數的互委會主席支持其中一方，但爲了避免和候選人的關係過份密切，實際上的支持並不多。因爲樂富區面積少，各互委會主席不希望支持其中一方而得罪另一方。再者，互委會主席和選民對競選的認識亦同樣不足。

當然，在一九八五年區議會再次選舉時，選民對區議會和選舉的了解應較爲深入，並可能知道候選人應具備的資格。各互委會主席在下次選舉中亦可能參與更多，影響更大。