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Report: Profile of 'Radical' Hong Kong Legislator Raymond Wong Yuk-man

FEA20091002951146 - OSC Feature - OSC Report 02 Oct 09

[This item was originally filed as CPP20091002786002]

Raymond Wong Yuk-man -- aka "Mad Dog" -- has been a virulent critic of both the Hong Kong Government and of more moderate voices in the opposition "pan-democratic camp" since his election to Hong Kong's Legislative Council in 2008. The Hong Kong press has voiced concerns that Wong and his allies may divide the Hong Kong opposition and set back the process of democratization.

Since his election to Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo) in September 2008 as a member of the radical pro-democracy League of Social Democrats (LSD), Raymond Wong Yuk-man's behavior and vehement criticism of the Hong Kong Government have earned him a large amount of media attention.

-- In April, while criticizing Hong Kong Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun-wah's proposed economic relief package as not generous enough, Wong called Tsang "Tai Bu Gai," meaning "you should not have done this." The term is a near-homophone for the vulgar Cantonese expression "pok kai," meaning "drop dead." Wong also began referring to Hong Kong citizens using the English phrase "poor guys" -- another pun on "pok kai" -- despite a reprimand from LegCo President Jasper Tsang Yok-sing, according to independent English-language daily *The Standard* (3 April 2009).

-- On 25 February, Wong and his fellow LSD legislators -- "Long Hair" Leung Kwok-hung and Albert Chan Wai-yip -- were ejected from Legco when the three got up from their seats to harangue the Financial Secretary while he was presenting the annual budget, as shown in footage broadcast on independent Hong Kong television station Cable TV Channel Two (25 February). Click [here](#) to view a 20-second wmv-format clip of the incident with OSC-supplied English subtitles (Hong Kong Cable TV, 25 February). See the text box below for a transcription of the subtitles.

Wong Yuk-man Criticizes the Hong Kong Government Budget

[President Jasper Tsang] Legislator Wong Yuk-man, please return to your seat!

[Wong Yuk-man] You are not concerned about people's livelihoods at all!

[Man's voice in background] Meeting suspended temporarily!

[Wong's banner reads: "Although we have financial reserves of over (HK\$) one trillion (US\$130 billion), you still overlook the survival of over one million poor people."]

[Reporter's voice-over] Legislator Wong Yuk-man suddenly stepped forward. Taking out a banner, he overturned a

rack on Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun-wah's desk and scattered some of the papers on the desk. Guards then escorted Wong back to his seat.



Wong Yuk-man throwing bananas in LegCo (Ming Pao, 16 October 2008)

-- On 15 October 2008, Wong interrupted Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen's annual policy address to LegCo by hurling bananas in his direction, and followed up by screaming and swearing at Tsang. Wong, Leung Kwok-hung -- who had launched into a tirade in front of Tsang just prior to the banana-throwing incident -- and Albert Chan were all subsequently ejected from LegCo. According to respected independent daily *Ming Pao*, Wong said that he had acted in protest against Donald Tsang's refusal to grant a small monthly stipend -- popularly known as "fruit money," hence the bananas -- to all senior citizens regardless of income (16 October 2008). Pro-Beijing Hong Kong online news service Zhongguo Pinglun Tongxun She (China Review News

Agency) reported that the incident led to a LegCo inquiry about the legality of Wong's actions. It concluded that the banana-throwing incident did not break any rules. Inflatable bananas have since become a staple at LSD rallies (www.chinareviewnews.com, 21 October 2008).

-- During a LegCo hearing on 13 October 2008, Raymond Wong blasted Joseph Yam Chi-kwong, chief executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, accusing him of being "arrogant" and unwilling to admit to failure. Wong was referring to accusations by investors who had lost large sums of money investing in "minibonds" backed by failed US investment bank Lehman Brothers. The investors blamed the government for inadequate oversight of local banks that allegedly marketed the risky derivatives-based financial products as safe investments. A video clip of Wong's tirade posted to US-based video sharing website YouTube had attracted more than 167,000 hits as of 7 September.

Media Fear That Wong, LSD Will Divide Pan-Democrats

During LegCo sessions, Wong Yuk-man and his sympathizers in the LSD have frequently found themselves at odds with their supposed allies, the other parties and legislators who make up Hong Kong's "opposition" -- popularly known as the "pan-democratic camp" in reference to its support for the speedy expansion of democracy in the Special Administrative Region (SAR).

-- Emily Lau Wai-hing, vice chairwoman of the Hong Kong Democratic Party, ejected Wong from the chamber on 24 March during a meeting of the legislature's Financial Committee, which she chaired. Wong had engaged in rowdy behavior and had used the term "pok kai" during the meeting. According to the May issue of *Tzu Ching*, a PRC-owned Hong Kong monthly magazine, Wong's actions intensified a split between the LSD and the two largest parties in the pan-democratic bloc -- the Democratic Party and the Civic Party.

-- In March, Wong issued a statement denouncing the Democratic Party and the Civic Party for "stabbing us in the back" and joining the rival "pro-establishment camp" by supporting a review of LegCo procedural regulations with an eye toward possibly banning the LSD's antics (*The Standard*, 3 March 2009).

Some Hong Kong media alleged that Wong's decision to criticize another pan-democratic candidate -- Mao Meng-ching of the Civic Party -- during a televised debate on 26 August 2008 cost the Civic Party -- and the pan-democrats -- a seat.

While running for one of five LegCo seats in the "geographical constituency" of Kowloon West, Wong chastised the Civic Party for running candidates for several of the 30 "functional constituency" LegCo seats -- representing industrial and professional associations and other special interests -- for which the general public is excluded from voting (*Ming Pao*, 7 September 2008). The remaining 30 seats in LegCo are divided among five "geographical constituencies," or electoral districts, which feature universal suffrage elections. Voters choose between several slates of candidates and the winning candidates are chosen via a proportional representation system.

-- Wong Yuk-man's slate came in second in Kowloon West with 37,553 votes, earning Wong one of the five contested LegCo seats. Mao's slate came in sixth with 17,259 votes, missing out on the last seat, which went to fifth-place pro-Beijing independent candidate Priscilla Leung Mei-fun with 19,914 votes, according to the official election results as posted on the Hong Kong Government website (www.info.gov.hk, 8 September 2008).

-- *Sing Tao Jih Pao*, an independent Hong Kong daily, claimed that Wong's tirade against Mao during the debate cost Mao a seat. It quoted Civic Party legislator Ronny Tong Ka-wah as saying that Wong should have attacked the pan-democrats' "common enemy" rather criticizing Mao. The article reported that Wong's poll ratings "surged" after the debate while Mao's support rating dropped (27 August 2008).

-- According to opinion polls conducted by the University of Hong Kong prior to the debate, Mao Meng-ching had been on track to win one of the five seats (*Ming Pao*, 7 September 2008). Click [here](#) to view a one-minute YouTube clip -- with OSC-supplied subtitles -- featuring Wong criticizing Mao at the debate (28 August 2008). See the text box below for a transcript of the subtitles.

Raymond Wong Criticizes the Civic Party

Raymond Wong (in Cantonese): "I have heard again that the functional constituencies are not good and should be eliminated. The Civic Party advocates direct elections. But Ronny Tong asked [former Hong Kong Democratic Party chairman and leading pro-democracy activist] Martin Lee Chu-ming to run for a functional constituency seat. I was startled when I heard about this. This can't be! It is absurd that you ask the 'Father of Democracy,' Martin Lee, to rejoin the game like a eunuch to be castrated again. This is like a virtuous woman losing her chastity in her old age. What was the Civic Party thinking? Auntie Mao, can you explain this to me?"

The Hong Kong media have warned that the LSD's potential to undermine the cohesion of the pan-democrats -- and thus to undermine pan-democrats' ability to influence the Hong Kong Government and to counteract the rival "pro-establishment" or "pro-Beijing" camp in LegCo -- is far greater than the LSD's size suggests. The LSD currently accounts for only three of the 23 seats held by pan-democrats in the 60-seat LegCo (www.info.gov.hk, 8 September 2008).

-- PRC-owned daily *Ta Kung Pao* argued that Wong is merely a "power-grabbing man" who will weaken the pan-democrats by causing internal dissension (6, 26 August).

-- A *May Tzu Ching* article cited members of other pan-democratic parties who accused the LSD of merely trying to siphon off support from the other opposition parties rather than contending against the pro-Beijing camp. The article reasoned that the LSD's actions would alienate it from its allies.

Mainstream Figures Critical of Wong, but Some Segments of Population Supportive

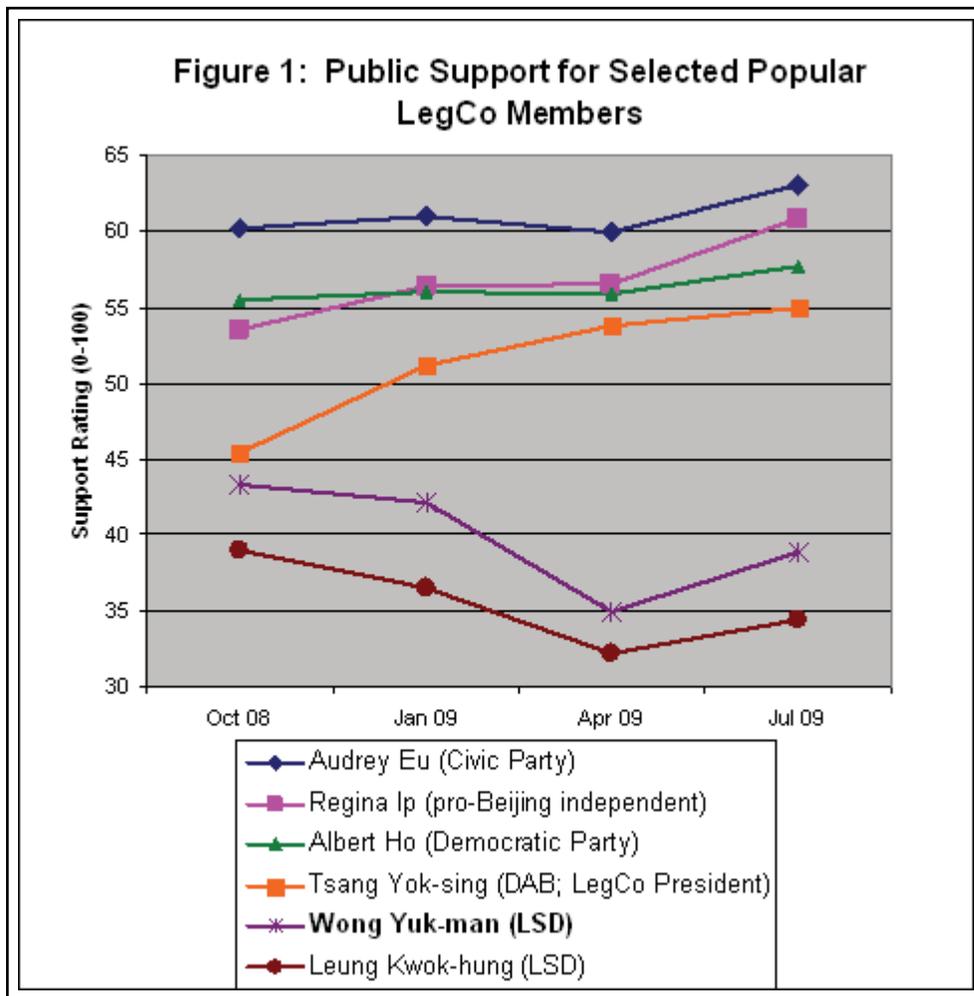
Mainstream Hong Kong political figures and media commentators have criticized the behavior of Wong Yuk-man and his colleagues, warning that the LSD's actions will impede the progress of democratization in the SAR. Public opinion polls have also indicated a slight drop in public support for Wong since he took office.

-- Anson Chan Fang On San -- a former Hong Kong Chief Secretary and briefly a pan-democratic member of LegCo -- released a statement condemning Wong's behavior, saying "sabotage is not tantamount to social justice." Chan warned that the LSD's actions would aid a "handful of people" who wish to "hinder democracy" by claiming that "people in Hong Kong are not prepared for universal suffrage" (www.chinareviewnews.com, 21 October 2008).

-- Hong Kong-based teacher and media commentator Kent Ewing, writing about Wong and his colleagues Albert Chan and Leung Kwok-hung, said that although being a "radical" is "fine," being a "loutish, obscene, banana-throwing radical is not." Ewing warned that "we are unlikely to be granted the full democracy we so clearly desire if we abuse the incomplete version we have already been given" (*The Standard*, 20 January).

-- LegCo member Lau Kong-wah of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) -- the largest pro-Beijing party -- said that the banana-throwing episode prompted 77 complaints to the LegCo Secretariat. Lau expressed disapproval of Wong's "rude behavior" and demanded that he apologize (*The Standard*, 31 October 2008).

-- According to public opinion polls conducted by Hong Kong University (HKU), Wong Yuk-man's support rating has dropped somewhat since he joined LegCo in September 2008. Support for other leading pan-democrats has remained more or less steady during the same timeframe -- with the Civic Party's Audrey Eu Yuet-mee consistently ranking as Hong Kong's most popular legislator -- while the support rating of the best-known pro-Beijing figures has improved significantly. See Figure 1 below.



However, public opinion polls and commentary from blogs and NGOs suggest that a segment of the Hong Kong populace approves of Wong Yuk-man's actions.

-- A Hong Kong blogger writing on a website devoted to news about Hong Kong's stock market said that the LSD's strategy "is cleverer than the other parties." The blogger wrote that although the LSD is a small party with few resources at its disposal, it "plays a very effective role" as the new "leader of the pan-democrats" (www.ganguba.com, 0317 GMT 14 August).

-- Over 60 percent of

Source: hkupop.hku.edu, 8 September

the 425 emails, letters,
and complaints from the
public regarding Wong's

behavior collected by the LegCo Secretariat through from 15 October 2008 to 27 November 2008 said that Wong is a "responsible" legislator who acts in accordance with voters' wishes. The majority of the comments also depicted Wong's actions as a protest against the "injustice" of Hong Kong's system of government and expressed confidence that Wong's behavior would not set a bad example for young people (*Ming Pao*, 28 November 2008).

-- Prior to Wong Yuk-man's election to LegCo, an article on the In-Media website -- the website of a Hong Kong NGO that advocates freedom of speech and freedom of the press -- praised Wong's "persistence" in his "pursuit of 'freedom of speech' and 'democracy'" in his role as a radio commentator (www.inmediahk.net, 10 September 2005).

-- Although Wong's support rating has dropped somewhat in the past year (Figure 1), he has consistently ranked ninth among the 60 LegCo members in public support, according to quarterly polls conducted by HKU. Wong has also been named the most recognizable legislator in Hong Kong in three of HKU's last four quarterly polls (hkupop.hku.edu, 8 September).

Profile of Wong Yuk-man



Raymond Wong Yuk-man
(www.legco.gov.hk,
undated)

Wong Yuk-man was born on 1 October 1951 in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong press has widely reported that Wong, in his youth, had "underworld" connections, as his father was a relative of powerful gangster Hsiang Chien (*Ming Pao*, 24 December 2007). According to postings on a popular Hong Kong online discussion portal, Wong said that he was educated in Hong Kong and graduated from a Catholic boys' high school. In the early 1970s, his father sent him to Taiwan -- where Wong lived with Hsiang Chien's family members -- to further his studies (www.uwants.com, 7 April 2007). Wong left Taiwan after a short time without earning any additional academic qualifications, and returned to Hong Kong, where he studied at Chu Hai College, majoring in communications and journalism and earning a bachelor's degree. Wong went on to earn a master's degree in history at the same institution in 1975. He subsequently worked as a reporter for several Hong Kong newspapers and worked briefly as a high school teacher. From 1988 to 1992, Wong taught journalism at his alma mater Chu Hai College (*Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 30 October 2006).

In October 1993, Wong took a job as a co-host on the TV talk show "Dragon Gate Warfare" [Long Men Zhen] which was aired on independent Hong Kong TV station Asia Television Limited (ATV). Wong quickly became a popular political commentator known as "Mad Dog" for his virulent criticism of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Although "Dragon Gate Warfare" earned good ratings, ATV cancelled the program in December 1994. The Hong Kong independent dailies speculated that the CPC was behind the move, either by directly influencing ATV's management or indirectly, by pressuring ATV's advertisers -- for the most part Hong Kong companies with sizable business interests in mainland China -- to withdraw their sponsorship unless ATV cancelled the show (*Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 30 October 2006).

Wong went on to found the newspaper *Tien Kou Jih Pao* [*Mad Dog Daily*] in 1996, but it failed and bankrupted him. He went on to launch other publications -- *Tien Kou Chou K'an* [*Mad Dog Weekly*] in 1997 and *Cyber Jih Pao* [*Cyber Daily*] in 2000 -- but these also folded quickly. To earn a living and pay off his debts, Wong began working as the host of a number of "phone-in" programs on Commercial Radio Hong Kong, a popular independent radio station specializing in news and current affairs. Using the radio as his platform, Wong played a large role in organizing opposition to the Hong Kong Government, notably the huge 1 July 2003 rally against unpopular Beijing-backed anti-subversion legislation based on Article 23 in Hong Kong's de facto "constitution," the Basic Law. In October 2006, Wong was elected chairman of the League of Social Democrats, a radical pro-democracy political organization that he co-founded earlier that year (*Sing Tao*

Jih Pao, 30 October 2006).

Wong's outspoken views about the Hong Kong and PRC Governments have apparently provoked reprisals, however. On 16 March 2004 -- not long after a violent assault on Albert Cheng Chin-han, one of Wong's former co-hosts on "Dragon Gate Warfare" -- Wong was beaten up by six men in the street. Wong's restaurant, "Yuk-man's Beef Noodles," was vandalized afterwards. Some Hong Kong newspapers speculated that the attacks were politically motivated (*Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 7 January 2008), but other media surmised that Wong owed money to gangsters, who attacked him as a punishment for his outstanding debts (*Wen Wei Po*, 22 May 2004). Citing "political pressure," Wong tendered his resignation as a radio talk show host and left Hong Kong in May 2004 (*Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 7 January 2008).

Following a self-imposed three-month "exile" in Canada, Wong returned to Hong Kong in October 2004, where Hong Kong Commercial Radio immediately re-hired him to host a new radio talk show. However, he was fired in 2005, allegedly for offending Beijing (*Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 7 January 2008). Many Hong Kong pan-democrats attended a candlelight vigil in support of Wong following his sacking. From February 2007 until his election to LegCo, Wong hosted a new talk program on Internet radio station MyRadio (*Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 7 January 2008).

Attachments:

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