

In one of those strange cultural matters that are hard to interpret, Shih Ming-teh, a former DPP chairman chose an unusual way to celebrate his 70th birthday on January 15. Shih unveiled a photo of him lying naked with his two naked daughters lying on top of him. The photo is titled "three layers of meat," again a strange way for a father to refer to himself and his two naked daughters. I leave that for Taiwanese to interpret Shih's mind and intentions. What I wish to focus on are two related matters.

Shih mentioned promises that Ma Ying-jeou had made to him in 2006 when Ma was chairman of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). Ma had promised that if he were elected in 2008, he would bring about all sorts of political reforms if Shih would help him in getting rid of Chen Shui-bian. Now, some two and a half years after Ma was elected, Shih stated that Ma had done nothing. In more blunt terms, it was typical Ma promise without fulfillment. For Ma watchers, it is just a little more of the tip of the iceberg being exposed. No doubt, more will develop from this if reporters have the courage to pursue it.

The other aspect is something else that Taiwanese should question further. How is it that several former political people seem to be doing well even though they have not had jobs for years. Shih Ming-teh is one of the prime men to be examined. It is more than a decade since Shih had any sort of job; yet he has run a couple of costly election campaigns and seems to be none the worse for wear.

There are others that fit the same bill. Hsu Hsin-liang has not had a job for longer than Shih; he also had campaigned for office and lost miserably. Yet he keeps popping up. Bribes, kick-backs, sell-out money? These are all areas that if examined would give a greater picture on how politics transpires in Taiwan.

Then of course there is also James Soong. He too has been out of a job for over a decade. Some hazard that the reason that he ran for Mayor of Taipei some two years ago was not so much to win, as to use the vague election contribution laws as a means to launder money. So the world turns in Taiwan, where former politicians seem to do much better than the average working-stiff Taiwanese, and they do it without a job.

Taiwan: Men without Jobs and Other Stories

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