

Remove trade pact from agenda

Written by Huang Tien-lin 黃天麟

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After more than a week, the secrets about the “September strife” ambush launched by President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) against Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) have started to surface. It has become apparent that Ma wanted to get rid of Wang so he could push the cross-strait service trade agreement through the legislature to appease Beijing.

Is the cross-strait service trade agreement all that important? Yes, it is important for Taiwan, for Ma and China. For the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the agreement represents the last part of Beijing’s plans to use economic means to bring about unification. In the past, China managed to absorb Taiwan’s capital and technology; now it wants to move into Taiwan at its most vulnerable and control it from the foundations of society.

“Service trade” is a necessary part of an agreement for China to buy Taiwan out. For Ma, the agreement will play an integral part in his legacy: It will establish the conditions for a meeting between himself and Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) and for the signing of a “peace agreement for eventual unification.” For Ma and the CCP, the passage of the trade agreement is of paramount importance.

However, for Taiwan, the pact is a matter of life or death. The negative effects that the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) has had on Taiwan’s laborers over the past three years is plain to see. With the cross-strait service trade agreement being an extension of the ECFA, it will be especially bad for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The Ma camp often uses talk of “unlimited business opportunities” in China to entice Taiwanese. It cannot be denied that the cross-strait service trade agreement will give business opportunities to some Taiwanese businesspeople in China. However, these remain the minority. Ninety-nine percent of the population will become victims of the agreement. Not only, as some economic officials recently have said, will Chinese people become business leaders in Taiwan, but salary levels in Taiwan will be suppressed even further and freedom and democracy will be sacrificed. The economic and political miracles that Taiwan was so proud to witness will also disappear.

The legislature should be a bastion of democracy and freedom. It is the natural duty of opposition parties to monitor the government and protect the democratic values we have worked so hard to obtain. When they discover the government is protecting the interests of a

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small group of businesses, and making policies and engaging in behavior that damage the economy and quality of life here, then legislators from the opposition parties have an indisputable responsibility to stop the agreement being pushed through the legislature.

Perhaps because of Ma's attacks on Wang, over the past few days pro-China media outlets have been using words like "internal tension" and "running in circles and stalling" to criticize the way the opposition parties tried to boycott the agreement in the legislature. They are trying to blame the nation's problems on the opposition parties. This is truly shocking. It is not "internal tension," but rather the opposition parties doing all they can to stop the ruling party from acting in an arbitrary manner, protecting Taiwan and preventing the government from selling out.

Taiwanese must not be deceived by Ma. The opposition parties must fulfill their responsibilities and let Taiwanese know through the legislature, newspapers and the Internet that, given the present circumstances, stalling is probably the best bet. However, if the pernicious Ma administration succeeds in speeding things up as it would like to, unemployment among young people will worsen and the economy will collapse.

All of the opposition legislators should demand that the Ma administration remove the trade agreement motion from the legislative agenda, so that the legislature can stop running round in circles.

Huang Tien-lin is former president and chairman of First Commercial Bank.

Translated by Drew Cameron

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