

KMT needs to change its mindset

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Thursday, 04 December 2014 07:19

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) yesterday officially resigned as chairman of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) to take responsibility for the party's crushing defeat in Saturday's elections.

The guessing game has started on who will be elected as the new party leader, with speculation rife among political observers over the reshuffle of power within the party and conjecture as to how the new lineup may affect the party's prospects in the 2016 presidential election. However, whoever KMT members decide to elect as their new leader is their business; after all, revitalizing the party's standing among Taiwanese does not depend so much on who is elected, but what mindset the new leader will bring to the helm of the party.

Following the KMT's trouncing, several party heavyweights have uttered words of humility, acknowledging that "the elections remind us that those in power should listen humbly" and that "our reforms have yet to meet the expectations of the people."

While many hope that the KMT will now engage in introspection and aspire to people's expectations, flabbergasting comments from other prominent pan-blue figures suggest that those in the KMT's top echelons still just do not get it, remaining ingrained in their old mindset and out of touch with the masses.

One example was the remarks by Greater Taichung Mayor Jason Hu (胡志強), who lost his seat on Saturday.

Attributing the KMT's loss to the younger generation, Hu said: "Young people take for granted what they are given and they think they are owed what they long for. If you give them an iPhone 5, they are still mad at you because you did not give them an iPhone 6."

Then there was talk-show host Sisy Chen (陳思璇), perceived to be close with the KMT's top brass, who launched a volley of criticism in the wake of the elections, berating the electoral result as a victory for those aligned with the Sunflower movement, "which is to mean the country is heading toward wicked democracy and beyond redemption."

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These remarks are reminiscent of former vice president Lien Chan's (連戰) when he deemed young people participating in the Sunflower movement — an expression of their concerns about jobs, anxiety over their futures being increasingly dictated by China — as people who “cause trouble” and have their moral judgements misled and distorted by de-Sinicized textbooks.

The remarks are also reminiscent of former premier Hau Pei-tsun (郝伯村), whose criticism of “Japanization” (日本化) managed only to aggravate ethnic divides and offend the majority of the population.

Comments such as those by Hu and Chen only go to show how they are still stuck in the mindset of seeing things through “colored” lenses, without grasping the fact that young people, as shown through the election results, have already transcended the blue/green and ethnic divides that have long undermined the nation's progress.

While Hu, Chen and the like may wish to talk down to young people and dismiss their actions, a new civil force is emerging in which the youngsters, no longer acting indifferently toward things taking place around them, are demanding changes be made to improve their future.

It is for this reason that Democratic Progressive Party Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) is not grinning from ear to ear, because she is fully aware that her party's election victory was not achieved on its own merits, but rode on the wave of young people's engagement in public affairs, who have shed their political apathy and are now taking a stand.

In the same light, if the KMT continues with its age-old mindset and remains detached from the social consensus that is brewing among the public, particularly the young, whoever is to take the helm of the party will have a hard time revitalizing the party's standing in the eyes of Taiwanese.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2014/12/04](#)