

KMT unresponsive to new citizens

Written by Michael Hsiao 蕭萬長

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Since the devastating defeat of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) in last year's nine-in-one local elections, the people of Taiwan have experienced a system reboot and have been reborn as Taiwanese.

These new citizens no longer allow others to decide their destiny for them, nor do they allow inept, irresponsible and incompetent administrations and politicians, or greedy and heartless consortiums to control the welfare of all or kill off the future of the nation's youth.

They have also stopped allowing the KMT to team up with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and rich and powerful families on both sides of the strait to distort Taiwan's democracy, thereby burying the nation's future.

Simply put, these new citizens want to rebuild fairness and justice in Taiwan, whereas internationally, they want to restore the nation's status and dignity.

In this new political climate, the nation has seen an increase in critical and angry citizens. For the past two months, I have seen and heard the self-reflections of citizens thinking about their long-time tolerance of exploitative administrations and politicians and their avarice for the temporary "bonus" from economic exchanges with China, which almost destroyed Taiwan's national destiny and democratic future.

Hence, I have seen a new civic awareness this year, one of increasing self-reflection and one that places the blame on others.

The first target of this new civic awareness is the KMT, the ruling party that has lost public support precisely because it is in power. The targets of citizens' queries are four political organs that are directly related to the KMT: the president and the premier, the KMT chairman, the KMT legislative caucus and the KMT councilors in local governments.

If the outcome of the nine-in-one local elections is evidence that the KMT has given up nearly

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every reform opportunity and has abused itself following its return to power in 2008, then what we should be looking into is whether the aforementioned four KMT organs over the past two months have reflected upon their mistakes and made the necessary corrections and, if they have done so, whether this would present an opportunity for reform.

Although some critics say that the KMT will reform when pigs can fly, the issue should be looked at based on facts.

First, have the incumbent president and premier displayed any intent at all to engage in reform? When Ma resigned as KMT chairman, this was not a matter of reform, but merely an apology. When Ma, during his New Year's Day address — one month after the elections — talked about reconciliation, collaboration and peace, saying that this was his request and declaration to the Taiwanese people, the words may have sounded promising.

However, it was all insincere and flat, and did not display any determination for reform. His talk about "social reconciliation" is just empty talk, his talk about "collaboration between the ruling and the opposition parties" is merely a matter of paying lip service, and his talk about "cross-strait peace" sounds even more helpless.

On the matter of the food safety crisis, Ma has not displayed any resolve to hold Ting Hsin International Group (德信集團) responsible.

On matters of collusion between government and industry in many projects in Taipei City, New Taipei City, Greater Taoyuan and Greater Taichung, the government has showed no sign of engaging in self-examination or offering any clarification, except for letting former KMT city mayors or the president's lawyer friends point the finger and say that it is all a witchhunt and an attempt at score-settling with the previous government.

When faced with serious accusations that Ma has accepted illegal political donations for years, the Presidential Office is slow to respond, which only serves to increase suspicion.

Premier Mao Chi-kuo (馬英九) was appointed following the KMT's defeat in the local elections. It

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only stands to reason that he should make a reform declaration, but he did not bother to even include a slogan in his policy report, which only shows his complete lack of interest in fighting the battle.

Judging from the actions and statements of Ma and Mao — the highest ranking officers in the government — in the past months, it is hard to imagine they would have the will to start anew through reform. One can only hope that they will not squander their last months in office, because that would be the worst-case scenario and bring harm to everyone: themselves, the people and the whole nation.

Newly elected KMT Chairman Eric Chu's (馬英九) bid to retain his post as mayor of New Taipei City only gave him a regretful marginal win, the possible reason being that the way he handles politics is full of arrogance and shrewdness, but perhaps lacking sufficient confidence and competence.

When campaigning for the party chairmanship, he tried very hard to make people believe that he was determined to seriously reform the party, by talking about returning the party assets to the state, carrying out constitutional reform and restoring the spirit of the party's founding fathers, and so on.

However, it did not take long before Chu corrected himself, saying that returning the party assets is a false argument, and that his idea of constitutional reform is actually just advocacy for a parliamentary system. As for his vision of restoring the spirit of the founding fathers, Chu accomplished that by gaily singing You Are My Brother with Tainan Council Speaker Lee Chuan-chiao (李全教), who was involved in the vote-buying scandal in the Tainan City Council.

As for Chu's intention to distance himself from Ma by shuffling the cards in the party's human resources, that is actually irrelevant to any effective reform of the party's nature and structure. Whether he will dare withdraw the KMT's lawsuit against Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) is not at all the yardstick by which to determine if the KMT can rid itself of fake democracy and its money-oriented nature.

Looking at Chu's actions over the past two months, there are no signs that he has engaged in any kind of real self-reflection as to why he almost lost the mayoral election last year. If he only

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attacked Ma to establish his authority in the party, that would probably mean that the acclaimed KMT reform is going to be just another illusion.

The actions of the KMT's legislative caucus over the past few months are hardly commendable either. The few of them who are often invited to play the role of the KMT liberal faction on TV talk shows are in fact just half-hearted turncoat reformers who do not have the courage to utter their support clearly and directly for reforming and cleaning up the legislature.

The majority of the rest of them are conservatives who try to protect their master, Ma, by proposing to fix the Criminal Code, thereby letting Ma off the hook when he steps down.

They have also voiced their dissatisfaction with the Tainan and Pingtung District Prosecutors' Offices for conducting bribery investigations and have proposed that the budget for these offices should be frozen, which is an intervention in the judiciary and also an attempt to save KMT Chairman Chu's face.

Their acts are ironic in light of their comments after the elections that they would stop being the puppets of the KMT. Judging by their acts, it is very difficult to hold any hope that they will carry through any kind of real reform.

Finally, we should also take a look at the KMT councilors in city councils around the nation. Will they feel the need for reform? All in all, the hope is frail, for the council speaker bribery cases in New Taipei City and in Tainan are still unresolved.

Worse still, the KMT council speaker involved in one of the bribery scandals has even threatened the mayor in tones more worthy of a gangster, saying that a mayor should do as he is told, or his future will look very bleak.

Even more outrageously, the whole KMT has unanimously agreed that winning the speaker elections is evidence that the KMT is getting even, following their losses in the nine-in-one local elections last year.

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What they fail to realize is that winning the council speaker elections by deploying dirty tricks only makes themselves even more worthy of contempt in the eyes of the public.

Two months after its major defeat, the KMT has not only failed to come up with any concrete reform measures, it also continues to showcase its shortcomings, from the very top down to the grassroots level, exposing its true aversion to reform.

The question is if, in so doing, the KMT is inviting the new citizens to once again spurn the party.

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Translated by Ethan Zhan

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