

The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) has accused Democratic Progressive Party presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) of being “empty” and “ambiguous.” However, KMT presidential candidate Eric Chu’s (朱立倫) performance in yesterday’s televised presidential debate showed that he is the empty one.

The debate started with each candidate expressing their general policy direction, but instead of presenting a concrete vision for the nation, Chu began by attacking Tsai, although he sounded self-contradictory by saying that voting for Tsai would be both choosing a road of “rash advance” and being “contained.”

How could a national leader be making both premature advances and constraining the nation at the same time?

Chu did not explain.

On the issue of judicial reform, Tsai proposed that, if elected, she would improve training for judicial personnel — especially enhancing their understanding of human rights protection — while pushing for a mechanism to eliminate incompetent judges.

To make verdicts more reliable, Tsai promised to push for a jury system, while providing more resources to assist people who might have suffered from wrongful verdicts.

Chu agreed that there should be a mechanism to help people suffering from questionable verdicts, but he said that one of the reasons people do not trust the judicial system is that verdicts might change on appeal, adding that incompetent judges who need to be eliminated include “baby judges.”

Is it not contradictory for Chu to call for a mechanism to make up for wrongful verdicts, while complaining that the result might be different after an appeal? An appeal system is designed as a mechanism to help those who think they might have suffered from wrongful judgements.

Why should “baby judges” be eliminated? Age does not necessarily relate to the professionalism and ability of a judge. Younger judges might be able to pay closer attention to detail and make better judgements because they still have a passion for what they do.

While Chu was passionate about attacking his rival, he was less enthusiastic about taking questions.

When Tsai asked what he would do to prevent election irregularities — as four KMT legislators have recently had their election revoked due to vote-buying, while KMT legislative candidate Cheng Cheng-chien (程程謙) stands accused of vote-buying for throwing a banquet for more than 10,000 non-paying guests — Chu avoided directly addressing the question, saying that no political party would allow vote-buying in a democracy, and quickly turning to accuse Tsai of “judging before a trial.”

Despite Tsai saying that it is still too early to say whether, if elected, she would allow US pork products to be imported — as it would require a substantial negotiation process — and adding that she would strive to defend public health and the interests of Taiwan’s pig farmers during any negotiations, Chu accused Tsai of intending to unconditionally allow imports of US pork products.

Less than two months ago, Chu said that Taiwan should follow the standards of other Asian nations for imports of US pork products, but seems to have adopted a total change in attitude on the issue and pretended not to hear Tsai when she asked him to explain why he has changed his stance.

While many people might consider a presidential candidate debate to be only a show, it is a worthwhile show, as it allows voters to see a candidate’s immediate response — or non-response — to a question from a rival, and, in the usual war of words during the run-up to an election, it allows voters to see who the “empty” one is.

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