

## No honeymoon period for the DPP

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
Thursday, 19 May 2016 07:18

---

Amendments to the Assembly and Parade Act (集會遊行法) were reviewed and passed by the legislature's Internal Administration Committee last week.

In addition to the renaming of the act, other major proposed changes that won approval included the removal of a requirement to apply for a permit before holding a protest or the obligation to notify authorities in advance, thereby removing law enforcement authorities' power to disperse "unpermitted" demonstrations.

A Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) legislator called the committee's vote the "advent of the people's era," and he was right in two ways.

First, once the amendments formally become law, people will have the right to voice their dissent on the street without having to "ask for permission" or be subjected to the whims of law enforcement authorities. Second, the DPP, having won January's presidential and legislative elections by tapping into the public's anger, which found expression in street protests, cannot stand in the way of the deregulation of laws restricting demonstrations.

An overhaul of the act has always faced the problem of alternation of power: Whoever holds executive power tends to adopt a more conservative mindset when it comes to regulating potential protests and dissenters in the name of maintaining social order.

For example, when Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) was president, the DPP — which at that time was a minority in the legislature — stalled amendments to the act that were proposed by Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) lawmakers. Ironically, this obstruction came at the height of protests by the "red shirt army" demanding Chen's resignation. When the KMT returned to the Presidential Office in 2008, it blocked the easing of restrictions on protests. However, this time around, KMT lawmakers, who have been reduced to a minority, either did not block or supported the DPP's amendments.

DPP Legislator Cheng Li-chun (鄭麗君), the main proponent of the latest amendments, acted at the right time — deliberately calculated or not — by pressuring the committee to accelerate its review of the amendments.

## No honeymoon period for the DPP

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
Thursday, 19 May 2016 07:18

---

On the one hand, Cheng, the designated minister of culture, is to leave the Legislative Yuan after the DPP government is sworn in tomorrow. The passage of the amendments would be the fulfillment of a promise to activists with whom she has worked closely on various human rights laws since she was elected to the legislature in 2008.

On the other hand, while the DPP won both the January elections, it has yet to officially hold power in both branches of government, so the party's reformist lawmakers have enjoyed a "limbo" period in which the DPP, while dominating the legislature, has yet to be burdened by all of the political realities of a governing party.

It would nevertheless be hard to imagine that after taking over the presidency, the DPP would resist calls to overhaul the Assembly and Parade Act. This is hard to imagine not because the DPP's progressiveness is to be trusted, but because the group of people who catapulted it to the corridors of power this time did so out of their deep disappointment with the KMT.

These people have already challenged the government's policies in the form of face-to-face confrontations on the streets and therefore have the most experience with the absurdity of the restrictions.

A revision of the Assembly and Parade Act would be — as the DPP lawmaker has said, and which the party should take heed of — the "advent" of an era in which the people — particularly those honed in the power of the Internet and eight years of street protests — would continue to demand more rights from the government.

As the Chinese proverb goes: "Water can float a boat as it can capsize it." The DPP administration is right about having no honeymoon period with the people.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2016/05/19](#)