

The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) yesterday expelled former spokesperson Yang Wei-chung (楊偉雄), a decision made by the its Evaluation and Discipline Committee on Tuesday and approved by its Central Standing Committee yesterday.

Given that Yang was expelled for “damaging the party’s reputation,” many are saying that it shows the party’s intolerance for dissenting views. However, the truth is probably that from the beginning the KMT was never structurally “porous” enough for young, new voices to stir up change.

It is not surprising that Yang got axed; it was more surprising that he joined the KMT at all. Like many activists and non-KMT politicians of his generation, his career began on the streets. He has been an outspoken advocate for labor rights and was, and probably still is, a leftist — his marriage to Chen Yi-chen (陳怡辰), the daughter of Nice Group chairman Chen Jing-yao (陳景耀), was slammed by some of his comrades from the labor movement as a “betrayal.”

Yang became a KMT member only in 2013, about two years after he got a call from the party for a position at Radio Taiwan International. In an interview in January, after he resigned as spokesman following the electoral rout, he said he had been surprised to get the call.

He said that his initial motive for joining the party was to use it as the channel to influence Beijing and believed that helping China become a more democratic and progressive nation through Taiwan’s experience could provide Taiwan with more options concerning its status.

Yang said he was asked to work with the KMT to “make the party’s spectrum more diverse.” However, that was before the 2014 Sunflower movement. If the party’s top echelons had been more open to different views, the movement and the violence at the Executive Yuan — “which has made a whole generation antagonistic toward the KMT” — would have been avoided.

Perhaps Yang did not realize that he was probably a decoration — to be removed at any time — to the party monolith that has always had a tin ear to calls for reform.

## KMT too entrenched to change

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The reformist Grassroots Alliance, which was formed by younger KMT members after January's elections to push for more participation by young people and the Taiwanization of the party, proved to be short-lived and mired in infighting.

A recent investigative report by online outlet Storm Media showed that young KMT members are still complaining about having no stage in the party and about being treated as lackeys "who are called upon only when they are needed for party events," despite the January election results and the party's losses in the 2014 nine-in-one elections.

Yang has criticized KMT Chairwoman Hung Hsiu-chu (洪秀柱) over the direction she is leading the party. His latest denunciation was against the person Hung invited to speak at yesterday's Central Standing Committee meeting about the party's assets, Wu Chi-chang (吳奇昌). Wu has championed the view that the 228 Incident was a riot by a motley mob of gangsters instigated by political speculators influenced by Japan who attacked waishengren (外省人, Mainlanders) and had to be put down.

To be fair, it is not at all "damaging the party's reputation," but castigating the party's fanaticism.

Yang's expulsion indicates the KMT is going deeper blue, but the crude fact is that the party is too big and entrenched to make progressive moves from the outset, and when it does get shaken from the outside — for example by wholesale electoral defeats and the deprivation of its ill-gotten assets — it is prone to harden its shell by becoming more "condensed."

It is probably an irreversible trend for the KMT, especially when it fantasizes about itself as firmly standing on the political middle by counting on the support of Chinese.

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