

The KMT's 'milking' of the nation

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"We should tell military personnel, public servants and teachers to stand with us and goof around as much as possible, and milk their jobs for all they are worth," Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Evaluation and Discipline Committee director-general Chen Keng-chin (陳景欽) said in a speech lambasting the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government's planned reform of the pension system for public-sector workers.

Chen's proclamation appalled many people, leading former vice president and KMT chair hopeful Wu Den-yih (吳敦義) to downplay the comment by suggesting that Chen had made the remark with humorous intentions.

However, Chen's statement may have unwittingly echoed what the KMT did in the old days of its authoritarian rule — milked the nation for all it was worth.

As far as public perception is concerned, the KMT manifested exactly what Chen's statement described in its five-decade rule over Taiwan after retreating from China following its defeat in the Chinese Civil War in 1949.

After accepting Japanese forces' surrender, the then-KMT regime took over properties belonging to the formal colonial government and made them part of its own assets when they should have been placed into the Republic of China government's coffers, not to mention many private properties that were also claimed by the KMT via illegitimate means.

This was suggested in the case of Yeh Sung-jen (葉盛仁), who has claimed that the KMT in 1962 forced his father to sign a contract at gunpoint whereby it appropriated his father's four plots of land by paying only one-tenth of the market value. A majority of the KMT's local branch offices also occupy buildings that were originally government buildings during the Japanese colonial period.

The KMT was able to quickly amass wealth during its authoritarian rule by running business monopolies as party-run enterprises, not to mention a variety of organizations with special privileges, at the expense of the general public and national coffers, as in the case of the National Women's League, which received huge amounts of money garnered from the

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so-called Military Benefit Tax, a tariff levied on the US dollar value of all imported goods from 1955 to 1989. The league now boasts a total asset valuation of NT\$38.1 billion (US\$1.24 billion).

It is utterly regrettable that as the nation has transformed from an authoritarian state into a democracy, there are still people like Chen who have failed to progress with the times and changing values.

Chen's remarks, which attempted to instigate indolence — if not corruption — among civil servants, exposed his sanctimoniousness. They ought to be regarded as an insult to public-sector employees who treat their jobs as more than just the source of a monthly salary, but work with honor and devotion.

In light of Chen's remarks, the DPP government needs to be firmer in its pursuit of reforms by proposing and amending laws that address ludicrous phenomena seen only in Taiwan, such as retired government officials being able to count their years of KMT membership toward their pension in addition to public service, and retired military officials engaging in inappropriate events in China. Only then can it win public approval and support for its reforms from grassroots public-sector workers.

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