

It is said that a set of broken bowls and plates are hanging on one of the walls in the home of an eminent older Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) member in Yilan. According to the story, during the dangwai (黨外, “outside the party”) era, many of the leaders of what would later become the DPP met in this house to discuss the movement’s direction.

During one discussion, the argument became so heated that the plates and bowls on the table were broken. However, no matter how heated the argument, when the beer came out after the meeting, everyone was happy, and they kissed and made up because they all knew it was nothing personal.

There are many versions of this story, and I have heard them more times than I can remember. Every time I hear the story, I think of it as a distant legend about the “charming DPP” that one was, and when I compare it to the present “detested DPP” — now the nation’s biggest party — and I am filled with regret.

Former premier William Lai (賴清德) recently upset the political landscape when he announced that he would take part in the DPP’s presidential primary. However, this is precisely what is so charming about party politics: There must be arguments over direction and policy, and between spokespeople.

Politicians promote their views in the battle with other politicians, and then let party members or the whole electorate decide who they prefer. This process is an important link in the development of democratic politics.

That Taiwanese politics has come this far is the result of democracy, and it is something that all voters should celebrate.

Over the next few weeks, the core ideals, values and attack routines expressed throughout the internal party debate will reveal policy planning and implementation abilities to party members and the general public.

Clean fighting key to party politics

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It is time for the DPP to set a good example by allowing the free democratic expression of wills and ideas, fighting without resorting to dirty tricks, debating instead of quarreling and reconciling after the fight.

This is a sign of political intelligence and wisdom and is how true democracy is safeguarded.

It would also be a good way to teach the KMT to put an end to palace intrigues and the pretense that it is in charge. That is a trick that does not work anymore.

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Translated by Perry Svensson

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