

# PROGRAMMES

## 1. Social Concern

After a series of events including the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of Hong Kong's Reunification with China, the welcoming events of Beijing Olympic Games, and the economic revival after years of stagnation or even decline, Hong Kong society seemed to be charged with patriotism in the last year. However, the possibility of the implementation of universal suffrage by 2012 has been ruled out by NPCSC. Also, slow progress has been made on issues concerning livelihood such as minimum-wage legislation and the fight for increased Old Age Allowance. (The Policy Address of 2008-09 mentioned both issues but imposed major restrictions on the implementation of the relevant policies). On the whole, we may say that the development of civil society and its resistance to institutional power faced considerable difficulties.

Despite all sorts of difficulties, HKCI still actively participated in different social and civil coalitions, worked closely with marginal groups and did a lot of work on networking. Issues such as the situation of women in dual role and their families, people living in new towns (especially Tin Shui Wai) being discriminated by the general public, etc., have been our focuses of concern. At the same time, HKCI has also worked with different churches and non-church Christian institutions aimed at promoting Christian social concern and bearing witness to faith in our public life.



A hunger strike at Lee Tung Street 2007/12/26

## 1.1 Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF)

CHRF (HKCI is a member of CHRF) has been expressing its great concern relentlessly about different social issues since its establishment in 2002. Issues such as human rights, people's livelihood and democratic development are still the main focuses in the last year. Although there have been great changes in the relationship between CHRF member groups and the social influence of CHRF was also declining, around 40000 people joined the July 1 rally. It seems that the issues raised by CHRF can still arouse public concern.

At the end of the previous term of the Chief Executive (CE), CHRF held a press conference under the theme "Why Don't You Quit Your Job?" and delivered a "transcript" to the CE, illustrating how he had ignored the problems of human rights situations in Hong Kong. For instance, works concerning human rights had been passed from the Home Affairs Bureau to the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau without sufficient reasons. In fact, the latter has done a very poor job on the human right issues, when compared with the former. The Human Rights Forum, a platform aimed to allow NGOs to discuss human rights issues with the government, has become a superficial and useless "gathering" under the control of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau. Besides, the police abuse in demonstrations or protests, insufficient protection under racial discrimination legislation, etc., were reasons why the CE's "transcript" concerning human rights issues



Press conference on the protection of people's livelihood  
2008/2/1

had got so many failed grades. In view of the incompetence of the Equal Opportunities Commission as to human rights issues, CHRF continues to urge the government to set up a Human Rights Commission to further protect the rights of Hong Kong's people.

After the arrest of 15 people who protested at Lee Tung Street against the redevelopment, CHRF immediately set up a Police Power Concern Group. Through holding press conferences and delivering investigation reports, the Group tried to expose to the public the increase of police abuse against social activists and marginal people (such as sex workers). At the same time, CHRF gathered a group of lawyers to help those who were arrested because of political reasons and to review the unreasonable searching procedure during detention in a police station.

Apart from the July 1 rally, CHRF also organized a demonstration on 13 January to show its rejection of the incomplete implementation of universal suffrage in 2017 rather than in 2012 as proposed by a green paper on constitutional development. Over 20000 people joined this rally. Concerning people's livelihood, CHRF conducted a series of activities (February 2 and 21 and March 3) including demonstrations, assemblies and press conferences, to criticize the government's 2007-2008 budget for its neglect of the widening gap between rich and poor and its biased policies in favour of groups with vested interest.

## **1.2 Civil Alliance on Population Policy**

In view of the low birth rates, a large ageing population and new immigrants, the CE announced on July 1, 2002 to launch comprehensive population policies for the future development of Hong Kong. However, the final outcomes are a cluster of policies not only dealing with the redistribution of human resources in Hong Kong, but also carrying out a series of executive directives (which had not been passed by the Legco) which have resulted in the marginalization of the powerless and underprivileged groups, and have so created a lot of social problems today. Policies that are unfavorable to marginal groups include the introduction of Foreign Domestic Worker Levy, restrictions on new immigrants' application for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) (the new policy requires that applicants must have been Hong Kong residents for at least seven years), and higher costs to be paid by "non-local expectant mothers" (also unreasonably by immigrants-to-be, i.e., "non-local" expectant mothers whose husbands are Hong Kong

citizens). Different concern groups find that these are indeed policies of discrimination and oppression. Therefore, over 26 groups joined together and formed the Civil Alliance on Population Policy in order to combine their voices and powers to negotiate with the government on the review of those widely influential policies.

### 1.3 Christian Roundtable

With the vision of ecumenism and the pursuit of social justice, the Christian Roundtable (constituted by HKCI and other Christian groups) expresses its concern over different social and political issues (democracy, people's livelihood and police abuse) through different activities. We have organized prayer meetings to gather Christians concerning topics such as "Rebuilding Labor's Dignity", "Striving for Democracy, Witnessing Our Faith", "The 19th Anniversary of the June 4 Massacre", and "Sichuan Earthquake". Press conferences and seminars were also organized on issues such as universal suffrage, policy for retirement protection and the growing rich-poor divide, and the health care reform.

### 1.4 Other Social Issues

Besides issues addressed through coalitions or alliances, HKCI also responded to issues and actions such as the problem of child left unattended at home, the need for a comprehensive retirement scheme, supporting Tin Shui Wai residents and strengthening their social support network, striving for the rights of social workers, participation in the counter-demonstration during the Olympic Torch Relay of 2008.



"Striving for Democracy, Witnessing Our Faith":  
A prayer meeting 2008/1/13

## 1.5 Tiananmen Mothers

As a group of people, Tiananmen Mothers have been supporting the relatives of victims of the June 4 massacre in the past 19 years, and striving for their right to pay tribute to the victims openly. The group also hosted workshops in schools to discuss topics with students on Chinese democratic movement, human rights and the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, etc. Students have showed great interest in these issues and would like to get further information on the 1989 student movement to know more about democracy.



Another prayer meeting for the 19th anniversary of the June 4th Massacre 2008/5/23

## 1.6 Cultivation of Christian social concern

Besides witnessing our faith through actions and initiatives, it is also one of the missions of HKCI to cultivate a sense of social concern which is compatible with our faith. As usual, our staff members have been invited to share this vision at churches frequently. This year, we launched a cultivation program in collaboration with different churches and organizations, under the theme of “Light Our Lamp on Its Stand Rather Than Under the Bed”, in order to offer a platform for Christian youth from different denominations to put their faith in action.

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