

Our functional constituencies need refreshing and reforming

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I refer to Markus Shaw's Observer piece ("Wanted: a truly, modern Liberal Party", September 13).

His article gives the impression that the functional constituencies consist mainly of "big business". Business representatives are far outnumbered by labour, social welfare, education, industry and so forth, upwards of 20 to represent our multi-faceted society. These representatives began to be introduced during Sir Edward Youde's time [as governor] because he, looking around Asia at that time, thought the results of one man one vote sometimes produces unexpected results and even turmoil.

Let us face reality. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress decided that in 2012 "the half and half ratio" returned through functional constituencies and through direct elections shall remain unchanged. Thus we will continue to have a "semi-bicameral" system. As the Civic Exchange's book on functional constituencies says, "a bi-cameral system is to introduce broader vision, to restrain the lower house in case it takes important decisions that are too narrowly or parochially focused". I would agree, too, with Hilton Cheong-Leen's letter ("Get talking with democrats on move to universal suffrage", September 16) that the functional constituencies need refreshing and reforming. These 30 constituencies are meant to represent the whole of society.

Let us look at whether the registered members of a functional constituency association really represent that function. Let us also reform the corporate vote system of the commercial sector.

Maybe there are small circles or a selfish clique of members. We must broaden the base and beef up registration to make each functional constituency truly representative. If there is an opportunity to bring in constituencies which have been left out, then let us include them. We must discourage the "returned unopposed" situation. The end result will be that the functional constituencies include the whole electorate and represent the whole community and that every registered elector has two votes. We will, moreover, have complied with the Standing Committee's decision.
