

# **A shaky ship heads towards a stormy sea**

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**2000.05.20 Taipei Times**

President-elect Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) has put together a Cabinet that he bills the "government for all the people" (全民政府). But a host of contradictions have emerged -- even before the new appointees have taken up their posts -- particularly the differences between KMT and DPP Cabinet members on the issues of the nuclear power and the old independence-unification split. Chen's "government for all the people" looks increasingly like a farce.

Chen is a minority president: he received less than 40 percent of the vote in March, and the DPP only holds one-third of the seats in the Legislative Yuan.

In countries that stress party politics, a minority president like Chen should delegate some of his power and cooperate with other parties, or even form a coalition government, in order to get major legislation passed and maintain political stability.

But that is not what Chen has done. He has allotted a third of the Cabinet posts to the KMT, but has refused to consider negotiating with the KMT about sharing power. Instead he keeps proclaiming that his government is a "for all the people." According to this logic, even though most of the Cabinet members are either DPP or KMT, the government is not controlled by these two parties.

Ironically, during the elections, Chen criticized James Soong (宋楚瑜) for putting forward a "non-party" concept, claiming it would lead to dictatorship. But is Chen not headed down the same path?

Political reality does not change because of verbal statements. The phrase "government for all the people" sounds good, but does nothing to change the fact that the government is run by one man: Chen.

The greatest contradiction within the government is that the president, premier and Cabinet members are from differing parties (complete with conflicting concepts of what Taiwan -- or the ROC -- is), and yet none of the parties have endorsed the way the government was put together.

Moreover, Chen and Premier-designate Tang Fei (唐飛) have both said they will not participate in the affairs of their respective parties after they take office.

So how will the "government for all the people" drum up support for its policies in the Legislative Yuan? Which party will take responsibility for the Cabinet's success or failure? Will the Cabinet try to push the KMT's or the DPP's policies? If the Cabinet's policy violates the principles of either party, how will they resolve the conflict? No one knows.

Soon after the Cabinet line-up was announced, DPP Chairman Lin Yi-hsiung (林義雄) said that all its members should toe the DPP line. But at the same time, KMT Secretary-general Lin Feng-cheng (林豐正) said that his party members in the government will be punished if they violate the KMT's charter, according to party rules.

The remarks by the two Lins seem to suggest they are hoping to employ "party politics" in the new government, not the ludicrous "government for all the people" concept.

As soon as he takes office, Tang will have to choose whether to follow the KMT's or DPP's policies, for example on the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant. Tang and other members of the new Cabinet can choose to quit their political parties to avoid this problem, but they won't be able to duck the issues since they need party support to get their policies through the legislature.

Chen's "government for all the people" in the end might turn out to be just unstable administration racked by constant internal conflict.