

Blame-storming in MCA
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 31, 2008
Stanley Koh

analysis In 1986, a position paper was tabled at a meeting of top MCA leaders, who were holding a brainstorming session into the disappointing performance at the general election held that year.

The party had won only 17 of 31 parliamentary and 43 of 69 state seats of a 32 and 69 seats contested.

Michael Yeoh, the chief administrative director at party headquarters, wrote in his submission: "However, for an open discussion, we need to be bold and imaginative to consider all possibilities before narrowing down to the most appropriate and considered course of action.

"The MCA needs new thinking if it is not to remain a provincial party with the changing political environment... It is no use to rely on the old argument (that) only when Umno goes multi-racial, will MCA go multi-racial."

Five strategic options were offered to the central leadership:

1. Do nothing, work quietly and adopt low-profile approach

The rationale was that if the Chinese do not support MCA, they should not expect MCA to do too much. Conceptually, this passive approach presupposes that five years later the Chinese will become disillusioned with the opposition and once again support MCA.

2. Be more assertive and strident and push for more within the BN framework

This would require MCA to be more visible, assertive and vocal in representing the interests of the community, and bold and imaginative in pushing for reform, even threatening to withdraw from BN if necessary.

3. Pull out of BN

This option was if the party felt that its role in BN was not appreciated either by Umno or the Chinese community, but MCA must be prepared to face all possible consequences.

4. MCA to undergo structural change and evolve into a multi-racial party within BN

This policy was to be carefully considered with possible merger with other non-Malay parties within BN.

5. Merger with DAP

This was seen as a drastic, but innovative option. In 1971, a similar move had been attempted.

At that brainstorming meeting, the case for MCA to go multi-racial was explored, battered and positively reconstructed. The outcome was that "the party should envelope Chinese

demands into national demands since every racial minority wanted the same things and their wants were not unique to the Chinese community alone”.

ong ka ting and mcaJust as in 1986, the party led by Ong Ka Ting today will have to face its moment of truth. He has to resolve it by making a final choice between his conscience and his political conflict of interests.

His leadership acumen and capabilities have been called into question. The fundamental rule of ‘warfare’ in an election battlefield is not to fight a campaign on the basis of strategies employed in previous wars, however successful they might have been.

“This is because the enemy is likely to have thought up new counter-strategies intended precisely to defeat those employed by its opponent in the last campaign,” Derek da Cunha wrote in the 1997 Singapore general election publication.

mca banners in ipoh 260208 02For various reasons and weaknesses, MCA suffered its worst electoral losses of 25 parliamentary seats (out of 40 contested) and winning only 31 of 90 state seats contested in the 12th general election concluded on March 8.

The party ignored the ‘might’ of the Internet, choosing instead the print media, particularly that it owns, for its messages. There was over-confidence and arrogance, while campaign messages were off the mark and the mood of the electorate was not properly monitored.

Questionable claim

Recently, Ka Ting held a closed-door brainstorming session with 40 central committee members, and announced that a recovery plan had been formulated.

He was quoted as saying: “It is pointless for the party to make a big statement without first delivering the results...without touching on the contents or revealing all the details, all I can say is that we had a fruitful and frank discussion among the party leaders.”

Political observers view the situation otherwise.

Questioning the so-called independent evaluation committee headed by veterans Wong See Wah and Dr Sak Cheng Lum, a party insider described this as a “misnomer”. Both are known to be loyal to Ka Ting, while Wong had been appointed Operations Chief during the general election.

Researcher TS Hew, who is with a think-tank, remarked: “How could a discussion be described as brainstorming when not all truth and realities contributing to the party’s loss were raised and discussed?”

“In fact, the president should not chair the discussion so as not to give rise to a conflicting role, as he is being held responsible for the big electoral losses. His presence and chairmanship could inhibit frankness and feedback from the central committee members.”

A reliable source confirmed this: “Nobody dared to bring up the whole and complete truth on numerous factors contributing to the party’s massive electoral losses. Instead of examining the leadership weaknesses, the major portion of blame was directed at a dominant political party.

port klang free zone 070607 signboard“Nobody brought up related contributing factors like the Port Klang Free Trade Zone scandal or the backlash from voters when veteran candidates were unexpectedly dropped in favour of unknown young candidates with no proven track-record, as blatantly illustrated in the case of the Damansara Utama state seat.”

The source pointed out that hardworking and dedicated party workers who had contributed immensely over the years were either ignored or dropped at the last minute.

Said a Perak leader: “A number of incumbent MPs complained that they were not even informed that they were dropped until they saw (the list of candidates in) the newspapers. The least the party, especially the president, could have done was to have given them a phone call as a gesture of appreciation.”

yap pian honFormer Serdang MP Yap Pian Hon, who was among those dropped from the Selangor list echoed this: “I was shocked to read in the newspapers that we had been informed and consulted on the change of candidates when in truth there was no such discussion.”

ting chew pehFormer Gopeng MP Dr Ting Chew Peh read newspaper reports that party secretary-general Ong Ka Chuan had held a “frank and friendly discussion” with him over the candidate for the parliamentary seat.

“But all along he had a hidden agenda,” Ting quipped.

Ipoh Timur MCA division vice chairman Yap Yit Thong pointed out that, in the case of Perak, Ka Chuan should share the blame for loss of state seats.

“Despite this, Ka Ting submitted Ka Chuan’s name for appointment as minister of housing and local government,” Yap said.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news//80627>