



## Matthew Cheung Kin-chung

Secretary for Labour and Welfare

### A heart for the grassroots and working class

Matthew Cheung Kin-chung is known for his deep empathy for the working class and grassroots. His sentimental ties with the labour sector can be illustrated by two episodes in his life.

Whilst pursuing his university education in 1971, he chose to work as a labourer in a handbag factory in Hung Hom over a far more comfortable and better paid summer job with the Government in order to taste the real life of the working class.

He was diligent and responsible. As a result, he was entrusted with a wide range of tasks from moving goods, refilling supply for production lines to quality control. He even had to buy late night snacks for other workers on overtime duty so as to boost their morale.

This four-month summer job enabled him to learn the hardship of the grassroots workers and afforded him a valuable and unforgettable experience.

In 1999, when Matthew was Commissioner for Labour, the Government made it mandatory for construction workers to attend a basic safety training course and to take an examination for a 'safety card'. The policy drew mixed reaction from the industry. He decided to ascertain their concern at first hand by joining the course himself.

Matthew walked into the Construction Industry Training Authority's classroom in casual wear and



■ Matthew (left) visits people in Kwun Tong District last year.



■ Matthew (first from left) exchanges views with youngsters taking part in the employment assistance programme.

“ Always reflect, and strive for excellence ”

attended the course along with 26 other construction workers. As he did not have sun-tanned skin, one could easily tell that he was not from the construction sector. Yet, they got along well and chatted freely over a dish of beef brisket with rice during lunch at the canteen. His “classmates” frankly told him that the course was highly practical and helped them acquire and refresh essential safety knowledge. This feedback assured him that the new policy was on the right track.

He passed the examination when the course ended and became the only Commissioner of Labour to hold a 'safety card'. The 'safety card' requirement has since been widely recognised and accepted by the industry.

Matthew always stays in close touch with the frontline. In the past few years, he often conducted district visits to personally feel the pulse of the grassroots, understand their concerns and show care for the elderly and underprivileged.

He firmly believes that one has to be pragmatic and always strives for excellence in order to be successful and that there is simply no short cut to paradise. In almost 40 years of public service, he has taken up a wide spectrum of significant and exciting posts during which he has overcome many challenges, and enjoyed every minute. He treasures much the opportunity to serve the community.

Matthew's empathy for grassroots workers and compassion for the disadvantaged has deepened throughout the years. He is pleased to be re-appointed Secretary for Labour and Welfare so that he can continue to serve the public and contribute to enhancing the well-being of the man-in-the-street.