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## **Coaxing The Middling Crowd**

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BY EUGENE TAN

“It's not enough to just count on your staunch party supporters in order to win.”

With greater competition between the PAP and the opposition, those caught in two minds and forming the group of ‘fence-sitters’ could well, make a big difference in the upcoming elections.

“I expect parties to target their electioneering at the swing voters. It's not enough to just count on your staunch party supporters in order to win,” says Dr Eugene Tan.

The Assistant Professor of Law at SMU and former Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) reckons that “voters are less enamoured of political parties today and are more concerned with issues of the day that impact upon them greatly and how parties campaign”.

In a study by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) after General Elections 2011 (GE 2011), it was found that the voting patterns of those above 65 had changed significantly from GE 2006. Conservative voters favouring the status quo fell from 46.5% to 28%.

Dr Tan thinks, “the number has stabilised and may have improved with the recent policy changes and initiatives such as the Pioneer Generation Package and MediShield Life”.

However, the cost of living still weighs heavily on the minds of those aged 65 and above, he says. This worry may extend not only to their own welfare, but that of the young.

“They, too, are also concerned with the future, vicariously through their children and grandchildren. They, too, may feel that life is going to get increasingly tougher for the generations after them.”

Dr Tan says the government has handled concerns over the adequacy of Singapore's social security fund the Central Provident Fund (CPF) and the sufficiency of medical benefits well since the last elections, but it would need to take into consideration “the expectation that more can be done”.

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“Managing expectations and having a sense of inter-generational equity,” he says, “are important when it comes to the government's handling of such issues.”