

LEADERSHIP

**TEXT OF LECTURE
DELIVERED**

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LEADERSHIP

Mr President, Members of the Executive, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

I consider it a great honour to be invited to present a Lecture at this gathering. Your Association is one whose laudable objectives I have always identified with. At this time of global economic recession where self preservation seems to be the order of the day and might even be excused in some quarters, it is gratifying to find members of this Club still dedicated to the promotion and actualization of such values as charity and service. The need for more associations such as this whose members put service to humanity above self cannot be over-emphasised. This Club has over the years played a significant role in the actualization of many projects designed to make life better for others.

I have been afforded the privilege of choosing any topic of my choice. At a first glance, it appeared that this option would be easy as it affords me the latitude to speak on any of the numerous issues presently pervading our national life. But on closer examination I realised that a decision to pick from any of these burning issues would not come as easy as it first appeared.

Is it better to speak on Unemployment, Youth Decadence or Corruption which has permeated into virtually every institution of our Country? Why not the deplorable state of our roads, hospitals and educational institutions? How about the seeming intractable state of our political and Constitutional development? After much thought, I have decided to speak on a denominator which is constant to the above stated issues and several others. I have decided to

speak on **Leadership**.

But why leadership? I believe that no question has called for discussion in the history of our nation such as the question of leadership. Prior to and since independence, Nigerians from all walks of life have as a result of their individual and collective experiences made the issue of the Country's leadership a hot topic of debate in beer parlours, sport stadiums, buses, classrooms and board rooms. Every problem has been blamed on poor leadership. Improved Leadership has been offered as panacea to all ills of the society.

The bean cake seller by the road side who is incensed at the determination of Local Government officials to evict her from the road despite the deplorable state of her finances and thereby take away her only means of subsistence is really concerned about Leadership. The same applies to the bank executive who as a result of the global economic crisis has watched the fortunes of his bank nosedive. The quality or lack of it of the Leadership in every aspect of our lives affects and concerns us all. This has informed my decision to address you on Leadership.

MEANING OF LEADERSHIP

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary 7th Edition defines Leadership as *"state or position of being a leader;..... the ability to be a leader, or the qualities a good leader should have; a group of leader of a particular organization."*

Leadership can also be defined as a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and direct the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Leaders carry out this process by

applying their leadership attributes such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge and skills. A person's position as a manager or supervisor might give him the authority to accomplish certain task or objective in the organization. This however, does not make him a leader. It simply makes him a boss. Leadership differs in that it makes the followers want to achieve high goals rather than simply acting based on an obligation to follow the directive of the boss.

MAKING OF A LEADER

A question that has attracted much debate is whether leaders are made or born. Do great leaders inherit the traits which propel them to leadership and prominence over their peers or do they acquire such traits as a result of carefully orchestrated and implemented academic curricular? Can the qualities or the essentials of leadership be reduced into a textbook to be studied by those desirous of attaining leadership heights?

Alexander the great who in his time conquered a very large percentage of the whole world was propelled in his leadership and territorial drive by the very strong belief that he was the son of the god Zeus and therefore was destined to rule and dominate.

THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP

In this regard, sociologists have overtime conceived of certain theories in order to convince the public of their thoughts on whether leaders are born or made. As this paper is neither intended nor designed as an academic appraisal of the various theories on leadership, I will only discuss briefly the major theories of leadership. These are;

1. Trait theory
2. Situational or great event theory
3. Transformational leadership theory

(1) TRAIT THEORY

Thomas Carlyle was a precursor of the trait theory

Trait theory tries to describe the types of behavior and personality tendencies associated with effective leadership. This is probably the first academic theory of leadership. Thomas Carlyle (1841) can be considered one of the pioneers of the trait theory, using such approach to identify the talents, skills and physical characteristics of men who arose to power. Ronald Heifetz (1994) traces the trait theory approach back to the nineteenth-century tradition of associating the history of society to the history of great men.

Proponents of the trait approach usually list leadership qualities, assuming certain traits or characteristics will tend to lead to effective leadership. Shelley Kirkpatrick and Edwin A. Locke (1991) exemplify the trait theory. They argue that "key leader traits include: drive (a broad term which includes achievement, motivation, ambition, energy, tenacity, and initiative), leadership motivation (the desire to lead but not to seek power as an end in itself), honesty, integrity, self-confidence (which is associated with emotional stability), cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business. According to their research, "there is less clear evidence for traits such as charisma, creativity and flexibility"

(2) SITUATIONAL OR GREAT EVENT THEORY

Situational theory also appeared as a reaction to the trait theory of leadership. Social scientists argued that history was more than the result of intervention of great men as Carlyle suggested. Herbert Spencer (1884) said that the times produce the person and not the other way around. This theory assumes that different situations call for different characteristics; according to this group of

theories, no single optimal psychographic profile of a leader exists. According to the theory, "what an individual actually does when acting as a leader is in large part dependent upon characteristics of the situation in which he functions.

(3) TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

Under the transformational leadership theory, it is stated that people can chose to become leaders. That people can acquire leadership traits through the accumulation of knowledge available in several textbooks and manuals. This theory although very popular has attracted severe criticism. Archibald Wavell was reported to have stated in the London Times of February 17,1941 that "*No amount of study or learning would make a man a leader unless he has the natural qualities of one*".

STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

There are several leadership styles. In a study conducted by Kurt Lewin, Ronal Lipitt, and Ralph white in 1939 groups of 11 years old boys were evaluated in a performance of certain tasks conducted under different work climate. These climates were authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire.

Authoritarian climates were characterized by leaders who make decisions alone, demand strict compliance to his orders, and dictate each step taken; future steps were uncertain to a large degree. The leader is not necessarily hostile but is aloof from participation in work and commonly offers personal praise and criticism for the work done.

Democratic climates were characterized by collective decision processes, assisted by the leader. Before

accomplishing tasks, perspectives are gained from group discussion and technical advice from a leader. Members are given choices and collectively decide the division of labor. Praise and criticism in such an environment are objective, fact minded and given by a group member without necessarily having participated extensively in the actual work.

Laissez faire climates gave freedom to the group for policy determination without any participation from the leader. The leader remains uninvolved in work decisions unless asked, does not participate in the division of labor, and very infrequently gives praise.

The results confirmed that the democratic climate was preferable. The import of this on our political experience will be addressed in the course of this lecture.

THE MAKING OF A LEADER

Each of the above stated theories has its strength and weaknesses. Without a doubt, genetics does play a role in whether a person will make a good leader or not. History is replete with instances of great families that have been known to produce leaders who played important roles in the development of their countries. The Ghandhi family of India, the Bhutto family of Pakistan, the Kennedy clan of the United States of America and of late, the Bush family all readily come to mind.

It can be argued that the leaders produced by these families must have inherited some traits which easily marked them out for leadership position. Thus, the trait theory would seem to be correct. An interesting angle to it is that some of the traits could also have been picked up by the young of the families through several years of close contact with

their elder relatives who were then in leadership position. Surely, George W. Bush, Jr must have learnt one or two things about leadership from George W. Bush, Sr. This is a classic example of where the two theories of nature and nurture or traits and transformational theories can be said to have met.

The situational theory is one that is easily verifiable. The environment in which a person lives plays an important part in the acquisition of leadership skills. The highly revered Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Ghandhi and the Revd. Martin Luther King Jr were all products of the environment and times in which they lived.

Would the world have heard about Nelson Mandela without apartheid? Would Martin Luther King Jr have had a place in history without the unequal treatment meted out to African Americans and the resultant civil rights movement? Will memories of the peaceful marches led by Mahatma Ghandi linger on in the memories of millions without the British colonial rule which brought them about?

Perhaps it is not within our competence to make conjectures on the lives these great men would have lived without the occurrences with which they were faced and against which they triumphed. But one thing is certain: they rose to gigantic heights above the obstacles which were placed in their paths by their fellow men. It is said that a man does not make the time, the times make the man.

I will now attempt to briefly state some other factors which in my estimation play important roles in the making of leaders.

TRAINING COMPANY AND ASSOCIATION

It is common knowledge that a man is affected by the company he keeps. Thus, a person who associates with others who have leadership traits and skills is likely to pick up and exhibit these traits himself. Anybody who doubts this position should simply have a look at this gathering before me. This as stated earlier is a gathering of people who share the same commitment to service to others. Without a doubt, you have all picked up certain leadership traits from one another.

PARENTAL CONNECTION -HERITAGE

This is very much like the trait theory. The only area of divergence is that in parental connection - heritage, the leadership skills are not necessarily inherited or inborn. They are more or less acquired by close association with older relatives.

TRADITIONAL HISTORY

In recognition of the fact that training plays an important role in the making of leaders traditional history abounds with instances wherein traditional rulers sent their heirs to the throne to the courts or palaces of other monarchs to garner the required experience and skills to enable them rule successfully over their own kingdom upon their ascension to the throne. Thus it was not strange to find a Prince of Owo or Oyo living in the palace of an Oba far away from his own domain. A classical example presents itself in the case of the incumbent Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi who spent a considerable period of time in the palace of the Alake of Egbaland Oba Gbadebo learning the skills required to preside over a kingdom as vast as Oyo. Interestingly, this practice was replicated albeit in another form in Medieval Europe right up to the 20th Century by means of intermarriage between the royal families of the major countries such as Spain, Russia,

Holland, Austria and the United Kingdom.

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Another factor in the making of leader that cannot be ignored is the role played by schools and institutions of learning. An institution of learning whether at the primary, secondary or tertiary level is primarily placed to impact not only the academic growth of its students but also their moral, cultural and social upbringing which factors ultimately determine whether they will suitably fill the roles of leaders.

In our time, and I hope this is still the practice; teachers played an important role in the establishment and ultimate attainment of goals by their pupils. We were constantly prodded to embrace the challenges of life with vigour. It was not uncommon to hear teachers telling hardworking pupils that they would become successful in life at whatever endeavour they set their hands on.

Some institutions obviously excelled more than others at preparing their students for the challenges of life. In Nigeria some institutions established by the missionaries were noted for the leadership qualities of their products. The Christ School, Ado- Ekiti, CMS Grammar School Lagos, Government College Ibadan, Abeokuta Grammar School, Abeokuta all fall into this category. In the United States of America, Yale and Harvard Universities are noted for the fact that they have produced several leading figures in the history of the country with the latter producing several Presidents including the incumbent, Barrack Obama.

PROFESSIONS

Some professional callings by the nature of the instructions leading to qualifications necessarily impart certain traits on

their practitioners which in turn equip them well for leadership roles.

(a) The Law Profession

The law profession to which I belong is designed in such a way as to make lawyers deep thinkers. Lawyers are by the rules of professional conduct and etiquette required to imbibe and exhibit a very high standard of moral and professional conduct. In history, lawyers have played a significant role in the development of their countries. Several Presidents of the United States of America have been lawyers. The great Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi referred to earlier both practised as Lawyers.

(b) The Military Profession

The military is a profession that is founded on discipline. This is attained through the impartation of leadership skills through training of officers and enlisted men. The US Army in 1973 laid down 11 principles of leadership. These are;

1. **Know yourself and seek self-improvement** - In order to know yourself, you have to understand your be, know and do attributes. Seeking self-improvement means continually strengthening your attributes. This can be accomplished through self-study, formal classes, reflection, and interacting with others.
2. **Be technically proficient** - As a leader, you must know your job and have a solid familiarity with your employees' tasks.
3. **Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions** - Search for ways to guide your organization to new heights. And when things go wrong, they always do sooner or later - do not blame others. Analyse the situations, take corrective action, and move on to the next challenge.

4. Make sound and timely decisions - Use good problem solving, decision making and planning tools.
5. **Set the examples** - Be a good role model for your employees. They must not only hear what they are expected to do, but also see. We must become the change we want to see -Mahatma Ghandi.
6. **Know your people and look out for their well-being** Know human nature and the importance of sincerely caring for our workers.
7. **Keep your workers informed** - Know how to communicate with not only them, but also seniors and other key people.
8. Develop a sense of responsibility in your workers - Help to develop good character traits that will help them carry out their professional responsibilities.
9. **Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised and accomplished** - Communication is the key to this responsibility.
10. **Train as a team** - Although, many so called leaders call their organization, department, section etc a team, they are not really teams they are just a group of people doing their jobs.
11. **Use the full capabilities of your organization** - By developing a team spirit, you will be able to employ your organization, department, section etc to its fullest capabilities.

With the above principles, it is not a surprise that men such as General Dwight Eisenhower and General Collin Powel after their military careers returned to serve their country as President and Secretary of State respectively. The same applies to General George Marshall whose plan -the Marshall Plan - for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II has become a reference point or acronym of sorts for large scale and intense action designed to meet

emergencies of catastrophic proportions.

POLITICAL LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP IN POLITICS

It is the issue of political leaders and leadership in politics that has attracted the greatest amount of attention in our national life. Nigeria has since independence experienced different forms of government. Our journey began with the parliamentary system in the first republic. Between 1966 and 1999 Nigeria experienced both the military and presidential forms of government. The numerous events and upheavals which were characteristic of that period are traceable to the quality of leadership available during the said times.

However, prior to the advent of colonial rule and the present political system of government the people making up the areas now known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria were governed under traditional system by traditional rulers acting in most times through community leaders.

Whilst traditional rulers whether in the eastern, northern or southern part of the present day Nigeria ascended to the throne based on established customs governing the particular area, community leaders who as stated earlier also played a role were chosen based on certain criteria such as honesty, integrity, humility etc. The selection of these community leaders based on the stated principles was reflective of the deep cultural heritage of the African people.

Community leaders played active roles in matters affecting members of their communities. They settled minor disputes and administered several orders or rules made by traditional rulers. Thus, based on the sound policies which had influenced their selection in the first place, these

community leaders were able to impact positively on the social and economic well being of the people.

However, as will be stated shortly, the important role played by community leaders has been eroded by the advent of western political culture.

LEADERSHIP IN CAPITALISM

The late mythologist and Philosopher Joseph Campbell noted that in medieval times the approach to a city was dominated by the sight of its cathedrals and castles. However in modern times, the approach to cities is marked with towering sky scrappers signifying economic might. The city of New York with its numerous sky scrapers is a sight to behold. Indeed the World Trade Centre buildings were targeted in 2001 because they were seen as symbols of America's economic might.

In the capitalist world, people build their lives around these economic symbols. Thus people who previously found leaders in religious figures and community leaders now look to successful businessmen and entrepreneurs for leadership. This factor is present in most capitalist regions. Persons such as Bill Gates have been propelled to leadership more by their economic prowess than by any other factor.

The effect of this is that the essential qualities which should mark a person out as a leader have dissolved or are sometimes befuddled in the constantly evolving world of economic facts and figures. It has been stated that capitalism encourages an economic game of searching for strategies to capture the market without any consideration for other important factors.

In United Kingdom, the major political parties are the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. In history, the former has been nominated by the elite or aristocrat such as Lords, Barons, Baroness etc whilst the former is made up of the working class. Power has constantly shifted between these two political parties.

In the United States of America, the major parties are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. The make up of the Republican Party is very much like the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom. It is dominated by the upper class whilst Democratic Party is also similar in nature to the Labour Party.

There is thus in these two countries a continual clash of ideology and policies. Recently, one of the greatest attacks on the policies of President Barrack Obama in the run-up to the election was to the effect that he “*wanted to spread the wealth around*”. He was in some quarters labeled a socialist. The Republicans do not want others to break into the rank of leadership adopted a campaign directed at the upper class stating that the Democratic Party candidate was simply going to take some of their wealth away and spread it to the poor.

LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNISM

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 7th Edition defines Communism to mean *a political movement that believes in an economic system in which the state controls the means of producing everything on behalf of the people. It aims to create society in which everyone is treated equally.* The system of government by ruling communist party such as the former Soviet Union.

The world communism itself is derived from the latin “**communis**” i.e. “**common**”. It has also been defined as a

socio-economic structure and political ideology that promotes the establishment of an egalitarian, classless, stateless society based on common ownership and control of the means of production and property in general. It is characterized by the principle of “to everyman according to his needs and from everyman according to his ability”.

A feature of a communist society is that it is a one party state. Though elections take place, the truth is that the people are normally left with no option and the regimes are mostly autocratic. In Cuba, Fidel Castro was in power for about fifty (50) years. The regime of Josef Stalin in the former USSR is noted for its cruelty. Interestingly, most leaders of the communist parties are normally drawn from common class of people who are fearless and daring.

Communist leaders such as Lenin, Stalin, Chairman Mao and Nikita Khrushchev all symbolized the very essence of the communist ideology.

LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

Nigeria has since independence been plagued with numerous problems such as corruption, decay in infrastructure, unemployment, over dependence on oil based revenue, lack of adequate medical care etc. Several of these have been blamed on lack of effective leadership. Interestingly the solution to all of them and more has always been stated to be improved leadership.

Between 1960 and 1999, Nigeria experienced the parliamentary, military and presidential systems of government. Each of these systems presented its own unique features and challenges. The greatest challenge

inherited by virtue of our colonial history has been the implementation of the party system.

A feature of the leadership after independence was that it devolved essentially on persons who had received western education such as the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe etc. This was the situation until 1966 when the military incursion into politics began.

At that time, the military was seen as a vocation for persons who were either sent to the military by their parents because of disciplinary problems that they had or person who were deemed unfit for other professions. The few officers who rose to power by virtue of military coup were not necessarily the best that the military could offer. It was simply that these officers could take more risk than their colleagues.

Nigeria early leaders such as Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, gained the loyalty of Nigerians through their well-thought-out manifesto and policies. Their programmes included adequate health care and free education etc. The fortunes of a political party and its candidate depended largely on how well its manifesto and policies were received by the populace.

However, with the incursion of the military into politics, the state of Nigerian political leadership has degenerated. Those who now seek political office are not necessarily the best materials such as in the days of the

leaders earlier mentioned. Furthermore, the emphasis is no longer on service to the people. The average politician is concerned more about securing his financial future and that of his generations yet unborn than any other thing. Some of the factors responsible for this are;

- i) **State of under-development:-** In the good old days, adequate attention was given to the installation and maintenance of public infrastructures and utilities. The railways and other modes of transport operated without hitch. Electricity supply was not as bad as it is now. In the present times, most artisans who depend largely on adequate supply of electricity have been thrown out of employment. Queues are gradually returning to our petrol stations with the attendant effect on the economic fortune of not only bus and taxi drivers but indeed farmers who transport their farm produce from one area to the other.

- ii) **Unemployment:-** Though, there is hardly any adequate statistics available, I believe that 90% of the employable citizens of Nigeria are either unemployed or where employed inadequately remunerated. This affects the economic fortune of the average citizen. It is wrong to state that the per capita income is about \$1 as I believe that those who earn less than N10 per day are in the majority.

iii) **Education:-** To state that educational system in Nigeria is in a deplorable condition would be an understatement. The system has suffered from years of neglect by the military such that no Nigerian university is ranked amongst the 1st 100 in the world. Nigeria universities have been characterized by years of endless industrial actions by both academic and non-academic staffs. Added to this has been the problem of cultism and violent protest by students. The effect has been the production of half-baked graduates.

It is interesting to note that despite the decadence in the educational sector, a candidate to the House of Assembly of a State need not have passed the Secondary School Certificate Examination. All that is required by virtue of Section 318(b) of the Constitution as confirmed by the Court of Appeal in several decided cases is that such an applicant must have attended a secondary school and read up to the Secondary School Certificate level even without passing and obtaining the said certificate. Yet we all know what the level of secondary education is at the moment.

A conglomeration of the above factors has affected the political class profoundly. This is so because the political class itself is drawn from the general populace. A nation of impoverished citizens, unemployed youths, half-baked graduates can never be expected to produce leaders that

will steer it to membership of the comity of developed nations.

POLITICS AS A LUCRATIVE BUSINESS IN NIGERIA NEXT TO RELIGION

It therefore should not come as a surprise that most politicians see elective office as a forum for acquisition of wealth and not as a call to service. This informs the do-or-die attitude with which politicians go about the campaign and electioneering process. Violence has become the order of the day. Most voters who are **lured by and most often are concerned only with the pitiful stipend they will receive from the candidates rather than policies of the said candidates which ordinarily should be their utmost concern.**

Politics in Nigeria today is viewed primarily as a business and not as a means of service to the nation. Politicians seek public office not to serve but to have their share of the “national cake”. Members of the public who daily throng the abodes of these politicians for one financial assistance or the other see the assistance sought as their own share of the national cake. The effect that this has on the leadership of the country is profound.

The elected government official who hands out five hundred naira notes every Friday to several members of his community is likely to that see it as an easier means of winning the support of his people for the next election rather than the fulfilment of campaign promises such as the

provision of good roads, schools, portable water and equipped hospitals. The politician gains as his support base is sure to rise while at the same time the sums in his bank account grow.

This explains the huge allowances paid to politicians in every sphere of public life. An elected official has numerous special advisers who in turn have special assistants and administrative aides who also in addition to salary earn numerous allowances.

INDIFFERENCE IN SOME QUARTERS TO POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

As a result of the above, others who would have made a difference have developed a seeming indifference to the political fortunes of the country. Academics and some other professionals fall into this category. Nigeria is a country blessed with immense human resources. Nigeria can boast of Ph.D holders in virtually every area of academic pursuit. This vast armada of learning has unfortunately not been deployed in the battle for Nigeria's political future. Our Professors, successful lawyers, doctors, businessmen and others can hardly be blamed for their decision not to swim in the murky waters that is Nigeria's political arena as it is one in which in order to stay afloat a person must be prepared to "*pull others down*" by any means imaginable.

In order to break this circle, it is important that the state of the economy be immediately addressed. Unemployment should be given more than the passing remarks it gets

occasionally from governments officials. The educational fortune of our country requires serious injection of attention and funds in other to revamp it.

It is said that it is difficult to be patriotic to a country that continually fails to address your basic needs; in which your legitimate aspirations cannot be achieved without recourse to illegal or unlawful means; in which the instrumentality of the law is perpetually directed at subjugating your rights rather than protecting or securing them. How can one fault such reasoning? The great American President, John F. Kennedy who admonished Americans to *“ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country”* said so against the background of a democracy and country that has in the course of over two centuries recognised and upheld the principle that all governments are set up to serve the cause of the people and not the other way around.

WAY OUT

In reaction to the attendant problems of the party based political system, **there have been numerous calls and suggestions for the adoption of a zero party system in which political office holders will either be nominated and or elected directly by members of their communities.**

This alternative is attractive. It will eliminate the huge cost incurred as a result of the current multi-party system. All political parties at the present receive grants from the government. Proposed amendments to the law to restrict

the said grants to only political parties who are able to secure a required number of votes spread over the Federation in order to demonstrate their viability have been met with serious objections and condemnation by those who prefer the present order. It will be recalled that the military spent several billions of Naira constructing secretariats for the two political parties in every local government of the federation. Some of these buildings have been abandoned and taken over by destitute while some have been diverted to other uses for which they were neither intended nor designed.

The Zero party system will also eliminate a feature of the party system which essentially is the imposition of candidates by the parties on the electorate. The parties at present are responsible for presenting candidates from their membership for the various public positions. The public have no role to play in the determination of whose name gets on the ballot paper. The parties decide for them and since political parties themselves have not been known to be the strongest adherents of democratic principles, the field of candidates from which the voter on Election Day is expected to make a choice is often less than impressive. A voter might in the real sense of the word not be presented with a choice at all as there might be nothing to choose whatsoever between the candidates presented by the various political parties.

The zero party system will return the initiative to the man on the street; it will return power to his thumbprint on the ballot. It will ensure that he has a direct say in the election

or selection of persons whose direction of the affairs of the government will have an impact on not only his fortunes but that of his generations yet unborn.

Furthermore, the politician himself is bound to benefit as the system will kindle a sense of belonging and service in him due primarily to the fact that prior to his selection or election, he would have shared several factors in common with the people entrusting him with public office including their immediate needs and concern.

The local government, state and national assemblies have too many members. If we cannot return to our old regional government, then we should do something about our present structure. We do not need the large number of legislators at different levels.

A chairman of a local government now earns as much as a Professor. Yet, the local government is the closest tier of government to the people. In the seventies, we were only entitled to sitting allowance which most of us including my humble self never collected.

The position of Local government councillors should be reserved for retired and much experienced people like teachers, professors, other professionals and clergymen. The way we have made it a salaried position in Nigeria is inappropriate. In fact, some councillors are advocating that it be pensionable.

Today, too much power is concentrated in the Government at the centre. Too much of the revenue of the federation is allotted to the government at the centre.

The 1963 Constitution made revenue allocation derivation based. Section 140(1) and (2) of that constitution provides:

“40(1) There shall be paid by the Federation to each Region a sum equal to fifty per cent of-

(a) The proceeds of any royalty received by the federation in respect of any minerals, extracted in that region; and

(b) any mining rents derived by the federation from within that region;

(2) The Federation shall credit to the Distributable Pool Account a sum equal to thirty per cent of-

(a) the proceeds of any royalty received by the Federation in respect of minerals extracted in any region; and

(b) any mining rents derived by the federation from within any region”

As a necessary consequence of these provisions, each region substantially owned the proceeds from its territory. The people in each state or region were very productive and we all acknowledged money earned from our labour. Now

the focus is essentially on Oil based revenue. The oil boom has become oil doom.

The military adventurers came and distorted all that we had to propel us to development. They imposed their will on us as our constitution and things have not remained the same again since then.

The 1979 Constitution and 1999 Constitution established Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission.

It provides in section 32 of 1999 Constitution:

“The commission shall have power to:

- (a) monitor the accruals to and disbursement of revenue from the Federation Account;*
- (b) review, from time to time, the revenue allocation formulae and principles in operation to ensure conformity with changing realities”.*

The above provisions altered completely the provisions of Section 140(1) and (2) of the 1963 Constitution earlier referred to. As a result, the revenue from mineral belong to the Federal Government. Fortunately or unfortunately the money is so much that all other section of the economy have been neglected. Everybody left the farm and each state now looks unto the federal government as the big father and most are no more there. Worse still, the bulk of the money now goes to political office holders at different levels.

In the military adventure period, the West had cocoa which the people cultivated with diligence. There was also coffee. In the North there were cotton and groundnut and the East cultivated palm trees, rubber etc. All these have been abandoned. Most of the economic trees are dead. The farm is deserted. In the process of exploitation, the Niger/ Delta suffers serious ecological problem.

The neglect of the Niger Delta has brought about another problem of security of its own. There is a proliferation of militant groups all professing to be fighting the cause of the neglected people of the Niger/ Delta. Kidnappings and destructions of oil facilities have become the order of the day. Recently, a Retired General who had served the country diligently was abducted from his home in Benin in the presence of his family and was only released upon the payment of a ransom. In an interview granted the PUNCH Newspaper and published on page 17 of the 9th May, 2009 edition of the said paper, the General stated that his kidnappers blamed their actions on the failed leadership of the country.

The military thought that our forefathers who had agreed on the derivation principle in Lancaster House were unreasonable. One who believes that his father is a fool would sooner than later regret his foolishness. There is urgent need for a new and realistic constitution.

There is need for total devolution of power to enable each state or geo-political zones in place of former region to effectively administer its resources and social/ political

needs. The Federal Government should only be concerned with the management of common national affairs like currency, foreign affairs etc. There will be less crisis and quarrels or inordinate ambition to become President, Federal ministers and Federal legislator. The late Saruana found the regional premiership more prestigious than being the Federal Prime Minister.

So in the end, this is probably the best way to solve the Niger/ Delta problem. In my own state, we are not oil-rich but we know that with devolution of powers, we can make it. All states can make it. Reasonable shares of revenue generated in the states can still be made to go to the federal government in form of taxes imposed on the states on minerals derived therefrom.

The American presidential constitution that we borrowed has been bastardized in that the military only copied areas that suited it. In America, the states are still very largely masters of their socio-economic matter.

The effect of this on the economy is better left to the imagination. It was reported recently that a huge percentage of the government allocation is used to pay the salary and allowances of political office holders. This informed the directive of President Umar Musa Yar'Adua directing a cut in the salary and allowances of political office holders.

CONCLUSION

The solution to several of the problems plaguing Nigeria is said to lie in an amendment to the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999. This has been reflected in several calls by numerous individuals and organizations on the federal government to fast-track the process of amending the constitution begun long ago.

However, there is a general misconception by the public on the issue of amendment. It is felt in several quarters that the National Assembly acting alone can amend the constitution. This is not so. Section 9 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 which governs the mode of altering provisions of the constitution provides as follows:

- “9(1) *The National Assembly may, subject to the provisions of this section, alter any of the provisions of this Constitution.*
- (2) *An Act of the National Assembly for the alteration of this Constitution, not being an Act to which section 8 of this Constitution applies, shall not be passed in either House of the National Assembly unless the proposal is supported by the votes of not less than two-thirds majority of all the members of that House and approved by resolution of the Houses of Assembly of not less than two-thirds of all the States.*

- (3) *An Act of the National Assembly for the purpose of altering the provisions of this section, section 8 or Chapter IV of this Constitution shall not be passed by either House of the National Assembly unless the proposal is approved by the votes of not less than four-fifths majority of all the members of each House, and also approved by resolution of the Houses of Assembly of not less than two-thirds of all the states.*
- (4) *For the purposes of section 8 of this Constitution and of subsections (2) and (3) of this section, the number of members of each House of the National Assembly shall, notwithstanding any vacancy, be deemed to be the number of members specified in sections 48 and 49 of this Constitution.*

From the above, there cannot be a valid amendment to the constitution without the concurrence of the Houses of Assembly of not less than two-third of all the states of the Federation.

CONSTITUTENT ASSEMBLY

The solution to the quagmire in my view is the convocation of the constituent assembly with representation from every area of the country to address the burning issues affecting us all. These people would be empowered with the task of drawing up a constitution that will reflect the aims and aspirations of every ethnic group making up present day

Nigeria. Everybody must be allowed to take a case of his people. This is the only way to ensure a sense of belonging in all Nigerians.

I thank you once again for the opportunity given to me and for your time.

**CHIEF AFE BABALOLA,
OFR, CON, SAN, LL.D FNIALS**