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STATE OF THE STRUGGLE

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BEYOND SURVIVAL...

NIGERIAN WORKERS DESERVE BETTER



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From the President's Desk

*Dare to Struggle...
Dare to Win*

The beginning of every year comes with a lot of expectations and hopes. This is especially so in 2021 given the turbulence, trials and tumults of 2020. The year 2020 was a year like no other. The outbreak of the novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) significantly altered the way we live, work and play. Currently, the virus has caused more than two million deaths and infected about 100 million persons all over the world.

The impact of COVID-19 in the world of work has been no less devastating. Given the large scale shut down of the global economy during the first wave of the virus in the earlier parts of 2020, there were very significant disruptions and dislocations in the world of work. The phenomenon of teleworking gained ascendancy as most workers were forced to work from home. Yet, given the impracticality of undertaking every kind of work from home, many businesses and work places were permanently shut down during the pandemic. The result was large scale economic shock leading to a persisting recession in many countries. According to estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO), about 495

million Full Time Employment (FTE) had been skimmed off as a result of the pandemic.

Many corporations resorted to large scale employee restructuring and downsizing in order to cope with the impact of the pandemic.

The severity of the after-shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic is no less impactful on Nigeria. The Nigeria Labour Congress has been on the offensive against anti-workers interests hiding under the pandemic to maximize the

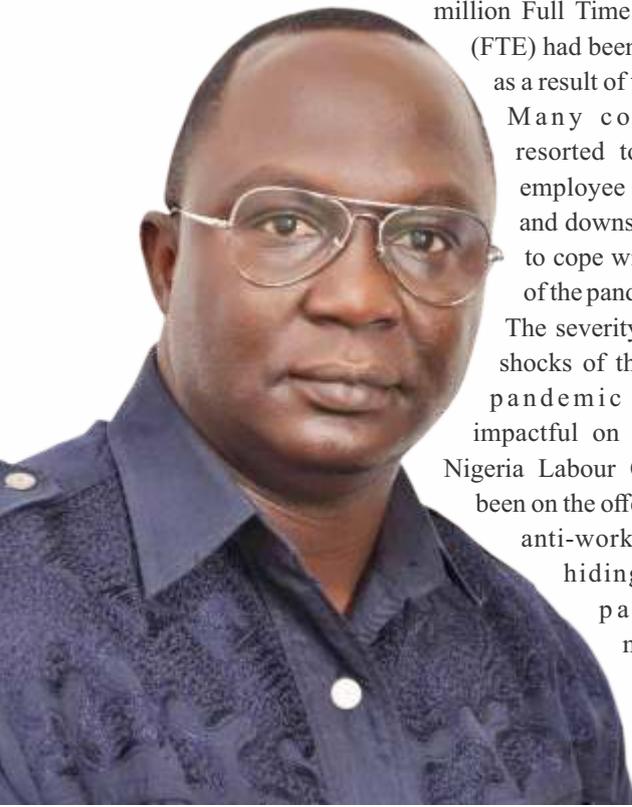
pains of workers. In June 2020, the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nigeria Employers Consultative Association (NECA) on job protection. The MoU extracted commitments from employers to retain jobs. The result has been quite phenomenal. Millions of jobs have been rescued from terminations. Given the pressure from Congress, government also announced a number of post lockdown recovery packages for businesses.

In public governance, the post lockdown challenges have been very inundating. The government has resorted to massive withdrawal from subsidies of essential goods, utilities and services. The impact of this has been severely felt in the electricity and petroleum sectors where the government had announced astronomical increases in the tariff and prices of electricity and refined petroleum products, respectively. Organized Labour has been very diligent in engaging government on these issues. On September 28, 2020, we signed an agreement with government freezing further increases until the root causes of the volatilities in our electricity and petroleum sectors are established. Two technical committees were put in place by government and labour to undertake a holistic examination of the state of these two important sectors. While the committee was yet to complete its assignment, government announced further increases in electricity tariff and the price of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS). The response of Organized Labour was robust as we demanded for reversals or the government would face the risk of widespread industrial actions. We were able to get the desired reversals and reduction in the announced tariff and price increases.

In 2021, we will sustain the pressure to ensure that workers survive and thrive beyond the pandemic. We will increase our advocacy and struggle on the implementation of the national minimum wage and respect for all Collective Agreements. We will also double up on Occupational Safety and Health within the gamut of Decent Work. We will also focus on the availability of affordable vaccines for all workers and the poor. We will intensify efforts at increasing trade union density through robust initiatives on organizing. While we look forward to a very productive and rewarding year ahead, I once again wish all workers in Nigeria and all over the world a very HAPPY NEW YEAR with many pleasant returns!



**Comrade
Ayuba Wabba, mni**
President, Nigeria Labour Congress





From the **EDITOR IN-CHIEF**

Iwelcome Nigerian workers to what we believe is a promising year for the working people of Nigeria and their families. The outgone year was such that the world had never experienced in a long time. Perhaps since the second World War, the world has never seen such a widespread lockdown of the global economy. The outbreak of the novel corona virus also known as COVID-19 impacted virtually all the countries of the world, albeit, with varying degree of infection and fatality. After a brief lull marked by global relaxation of lockdown measures including re-opening of workplaces and businesses, resumption of schools and removal of restrictions on international travel, the corona virus in the last quarter of 2020 assumed a new and deadlier resurgence in what is now known as the second outbreak and with country specific variants being reported.

Well, the good news is that major pharmaceutical companies have announced major breakthroughs in the development of vaccines against the virus. Some of these vaccines are already being distributed and administered to people in different parts of the world especially in developed climes. The result so far has been quite promising as the world banks on the wider availability and administration of the vaccine to force the so called “herd immunity” which will present a significant stonewall in the efforts to stave off the virus.

In his new year message to workers which was titled “Beyond Survival – Nigerian Workers Deserve Better in 2021”, the President of the Nigeria Labour Congress and the International Trade Union Confederation, Comrade Ayuba Wabba echoed the need for the availability of affordable vaccines for the working people of Nigeria and the world. The President argued that no country and worker or person should be left behind in the current drive to vaccinate people against the novel corona virus disease.

In the President's New Year Message which formed the fulcrum for the Cover Story of this January 2021 edition of the State of the Struggle, the President of Congress

identified six overarching priority concerns of Congress in the year 2021. The topical focus includes vigorous promotion of decent work and protection of pensioners, security of lives and property, good governance, economic recovery and resilience, promotion of tripartism and overcoming the COVID-19 challenge.

In line with the fine traditions of the SOS including engaging veterans of the labour movement, we interviewed a former President of the NLC and two term Governor of Edo State and also the immediate past National Chairman of All Progressive Congress (APC), Comrade Adams Oshiomhole. The explosive and bare-all interview revealed the trajectory of a life of activism, trade unionism, and politics. The story as never told before ended with the expression of desire to return to the NLC in some quiet role. That would be the Comrade Governor's way of appreciating Congress contributions to the man that he has become. The interview is simply unmissable and “unputdownable”. Also, in this edition of the magazine, we bring to you an interview with the Venezuelan Ambassador to Nigeria, HE David Valasquez Caraballo where the Ambassador revealed the dynamics of the Bolivarian revolution and lessons the working class can learn.

This edition of the SOS which will be the first widely circulated print copy also features news from affiliate unions, NLC state councils, an article by Brother Owen Tudor, ITUC Deputy General Secretary on COVID-19 and Occupational Safety and a piece by Comrade Denja Yaqub on the life and times of Late Comrade Didi Addo, foremost trade union leader, former Commissioner in Edo State and ISSSAN General Secretary.

Happy Reading!

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COVER STORY

BEYOND SURVIVAL...

NIGERIAN WORKER DESERVES BETTER

Cover Story by

Comrade Emmanuel Ugboaja

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Beyond Survival: Nigerian Workers and People Deserve Better in 2021

The President of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Comrade Ayuba Wabba in his 2021 goodwill message titled “Beyond Survival: Nigerian Workers and People Deserve Better in 2021”, congratulated Nigerian workers, pensioners and people on the celebration of the 2021 New Year Day. He posited that there was a lot to celebrate this New Year. According to him, the New Year calls for the celebration of life, hope, and survival amidst the great turbulence, troubles and trials that marked 2020.

The full text of the 2021 New Year Message by the President of the Nigeria Labour Congress, reproduced below, averred that the year 2020 was largely defined by disruptions by the novel corona virus (COVID-19) in the way we work, live and play occasioning some of the broadest global lockdown and dislocation in recent history.

“The impact of the novel corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic with a current global death toll of more than one million seven hundred thousand and an infection rate of more than eighty-two million persons has left giant craters in our psyche and a lot of sour tales on the

lips of billions of people in the world.

Perhaps, there is no other place where the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt than in the workplace. Millions of workers all over the world including Nigeria lost their jobs and means of livelihood as businesses contracted owing to the extensive lockdowns and the spill over economic shocks. According to estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO), as at September 2020 about 94 percent of the global workforce were already impacted by the hiccups occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. The income losses from this impact currently stands at 495 million Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs. The monetary equivalent of this loss of income by workers totals to the tune of about 3.4 trillion United States Dollars. The real bite of the virus, apart from the high death toll, is the fact that it has recruited in its wake a huge army of working-class poor. The ILO estimates that the contraction in productivity as a result of the extensive lockdown and associated slow economic recovery has exacerbated and deepened the crisis of working class poverty globally.





The grim outlook painted in 2020 by the outbreak of the novel corona virus disease appears gloomier when we consider the fact that before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic the world was already faced with the prevalence of massive inequality: income inequality, racial injustice and gender discrimination in addition to the destruction resulting from extreme weather events due to climate change. We were also confronted with the choices associated with the best and worst impacts of technology which were devoid of a rights base. These events were already driving an age of anger barrage especially as marked by civil unrests and distrust in democracy in different countries of the world before Covid-19 made a landfall in virtually all the countries of the world.

Comrades and compatriots, the long shadows thrown by the COVID-19 insurgence will not just go away in 2021 by the wave of some magic wand. The global community would need to keep up with international solidarity and a great invocation of the appeal of our shared humanity if we are to survive the looming second wave of this deadly virus. The development of vaccines for the management of the novel corona virus is a step forward in the mobilization of our basic human instincts of survival for the great push back against this uncommon invisible foe. Yet, we must be modest to admit that the mere development of vaccine is not enough. We must think of how to make the vaccines affable, affordable, and available. We reiterate the call for the production of pro-poor vaccines for developing and under developed economies of the world. If there is one lesson that this virus has taught us, it is that we are all in this together.

While we await the mass production, distribution and administration of the vaccines, we use the occasion of this New Year to salute the contributions of the Nigerian

working class in steering the narrative of 2020 away from the precipice of complete breakdown to a plateau of recovery, resilience and resurgence of hope. We salute the uncommon sacrifice of our frontline workers. To the nurses, doctors, laboratory workers, nutritionists, health environmentalists, morticians, transport workers, informal sector workers, security personnel and journalists who stoically kept the wheels of survival rolling at the most turbulent times of 2020, we owe you oceans of gratitude.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the devotion to duty by our frontline workers was the difference between deaths in millions and the lower casualty figure so far recorded in our clime since the outbreak of the pandemic. This is quite contrary to early prognostics by some foreign experts who predicted that the fatality toll in this part of the world would be in millions. Well, even as we continue to keep up our guards, we can say that we have consigned those prophecies to the dust bin of history thanks to the fervor, vigour and rigor of the excellent services provided by our frontline workers. We also take this moment to honour the memory and work of frontline workers who paid the supreme price in the line of duty. We owe you a world of gratitude for our survival. Your labours will not be in vain. Your sacrifice will always be remembered.

For us at the Nigeria Labour Congress, the year 2020 was a year of digging deep into a reservoir of initiatives to confront an unprecedented workplace health emergency. First, we understood the acute importance of knowledge in dealing with a novel pandemic. We assessed the situation through surveillance visits to the hotspots. In synergy with our affiliate unions especially those in the

frontline sectors, we developed a worker-based strategy on dealing with Covid-19. Second, we acknowledged the primacy of collective leadership in dealing with the onslaught of the pandemic. This was what inspired the setting up of the Labour Civil Society Situation Room on COVID-19. This initiative was cascaded to the state level where we replicated State Councils Civil Society Situation Rooms on COVID-19. The purpose was to engage the social partners on effective and efficient management of the fallout of the pandemic.

Third, we matched our intentions with real actions on the field. Flowing from our observations on the field especially from hotspots where frontline workers are actively deployed in the battle against Covid-19, we engaged a n d communicate d o u r concerns to relevant public authorities

s particularly the COVID-19 Presidential Task Force. These concerns include deficits in the supplies of critical care resources including personal protective equipment for health workers, conducive care environment for workers and patients and the need for adequate incentives and motivation for health workers.

Out of the importunity of the pandemic, we also saw opportunities. We saw a window to look inwards and mobilize our local resources in combating COVID-19 and in the process boost the domestic economy. We partnered with the National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN), Abuja chapter to produce thousands of face masks. These masks were distributed free of charge to frontline workers especially those in healthcare, sanitation, media and the informal sector.

Media advocacy was kept on the front burner throughout the first phase of the pandemic and the associated lockdown. In partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the NLC developed a number of public and workers education messages which were disseminated through mass media platforms particularly as radio jingles and social media adverts. The National and State chapters of the Labour Civil Society Situation Room also intermittently released press statements highlighting to government and private sector employers the concerns of Nigerian workers and people on the pandemic and offering workers perspectives on how to tackle the challenges.

Our modest efforts bore some fruits. One of the significant results was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Jobs Protection between Organized Labour and the Nigeria Employers Consultative Association on June 15,

2020. The overarching aim of the MoU is to promote health, boost productivity, protect jobs,

strengthen social dialogue cum tripartism and preserve the means of livelihood for millions of Nigerians.

Furthermore, in the course of our engagement with emerging public policy issues on COVID-19, Congress was able to secure reversals to a number of adversarial industrial pronouncements by both private sector employers and the government. One of the outstanding results in this regard was the reversal of the sack of thousands of workers by Access Bank PLC upon the relaxation of the general restrictions imposed at the cusp of the first wave of the novel corona virus pandemic. The intervention of Congress also aborted moves by other financial institutions, private sector employers, and





small to medium scale businesses to follow suit and lay off workers in millions.

On the part of government, a number of poorly conceived policy actions were resisted by Congress. Upon the outbreak of the novel corona virus and while Nigerians were still under lockdown, the government on three occasions announced increases in the electricity tariff. The Nigerian Labour Congress and Organized Labour in Nigeria resisted the tariff increases. The government was forced to reverse the increases. There were also sustained efforts to increase the price of refined petroleum products especially the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) commonly called petrol. Congress at different times was able to secure the suspension, reversal or reduction of the price increases.

During the struggle against the recent increase in the pump price of petrol which led to the declaration of a strike ultimatum for 28th September, 2020, government was forced to negotiate with Organized Labour. This yielded a number of milestones which if diligently pursued would permanently incinerate the causative pathogens responsible for the chaos that has for decades dogged Nigeria's downstream petroleum sub sector and which are fundamentally responsible for incessant increases in the pump price of refined petroleum products. These pathogens include the total collapse of our local petroleum refineries, dislocations in our products distribution network and the pervasive corruption that has crippled the proper governance of our carbon resources.

In 2020, we took some flaks from a section of the public. We understand that some of the misgivings are due to misunderstanding and mis-expectations on the role of labour in contemporary industrial relations milieu. While many perceive labour especially the Nigeria Labour Congress as the alternative army that can always

unilaterally crush every adversarial policy and conduct of government and private sector employers, the truth is that the NLC is only a workers' representative organization whose primary duty is to project and protect the interest of Nigerian workers through dialogue, consultation, negotiations, collective bargaining and in extreme situation through resort to industrial actions. Even when we are pushed to deploy this means of last resort, it remains only a means to bring the other social partners to the negotiation table for win-win outcomes. To insist on strike actions when the other party is ready to negotiate is not only a betrayal of genuine working-class struggle but also a capitulation to anarchism. Trade unionism is not exactly subscription to anarcho-syndicalism! We are not anarchists.

The Nigeria Labour Congress has always been a foremost pan Nigerian, pro-poor working-class organization. We appreciate the historical burden placed on our shoulders and we remain committed to fully and truly discharging this responsibility to the Nigerian workers and people. Our unalloyed devotion to this call of duty would be renewed in the year ahead of us. This is particularly crucial given the fact that an Organized Capital under the pressure of economic downturns, as always, would want to have an easy pick of a sacrificial lamb from the stables of the working class. It is important at this point to reiterate that Nigerian workers and indeed workers all over the globe are no longer available as commodities of sacrifice for woes orchestrated by a greedy and overreaching capital. We will not stay duck to be picked by bullets of unfair redundancy, wage cuts, slave work conditions, unhealthy work environments and unbearable living conditions especially hyper-inflation amidst inflexible remuneration.

Certainly, Nigerian workers and people deserve better in 2021 and the years beyond it. We deserve decent and living wages including the national minimum wage paid as at when due. We deserve an enabling work environment that satisfies the demands of 21st century occupational safety and health standards. Nigerian pensioners deserve prompt and adequate payment of their pension and sundry retirement benefits. Nigerian youths, the aged and the vulnerable among us deserve a sustainable social security scheme that provides meaningful support while unemployed, during sickness and at times of great need such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. In short, Nigerians deserve a full life!

Overall, we, the Nigerian workers and people, demand

freedom from the shackles of economic strangulation, social turmoil, political tumults and the resultant widespread insecurity that has shaken our dear country to its very foundations. We demand an end to the insurgency of terrorism. We demand an end to the rural banditry spreading like Harmattan fire all over the country. We demand an end to the criminal commoditization of human beings by organized kidnapping networks. We demand safety in our schools, workplaces and worship centers. We refuse to continue to live as refugees in our own country. We refuse to be cowed into silence. We just want to be normal human beings again. We believe we are not asking too much from our government at every level.

Pursuant to the foregoing demands, the Nigeria Labour Congress would be pursuing the following industrial and social actions in the year 2021:

1. Vigorous Campaign for Decent Work and Protection of Pensioners

In 2021, the Nigeria Labour Congress will intensify the campaign for decent work. Our drive will be steered by the four strategic objectives of decent work - opportunities for full employment, rights at work, social protection especially for pensioners and social dialogue. We prioritize decent work because work is divine and of intrinsic value as both a means and the end of production and also as an invitation to co-create with God.



It is unfortunate that till now, some states have refused to pay the new national minimum wage. It has also been reported that some states that had signed collective bargaining agreements with our state councils on the payment of consequential salary adjustment and pension benefits owing to the new national minimum wage have started renegeing on their commitment. In the midst of the prevailing astronomical increase in the cost of living, it would only be tantamount to a death wish on workers for any State to refuse or renege to pay the new national minimum wage and the consequential salary adjustment.

Accordingly, we call on all our state councils still struggling with their state governments on the payment of the national minimum wage and consequential salary increase and those whose state governments have unilaterally cut wages and are owing workers salary arrears to prepare for mass industrial action and protests this New Year.

Furthermore, we insist that government must make possible the enabling environment that would foster job creation and full employment in line with the constitutional responsibilities of the State to ensure the welfare and security of citizens. As we saw with the recent “ENDSARS Protest”, unemployment and poverty are perfect recipes for the breakdown of law and order and are also harbingers of widespread anarchy.

Comrades, in order to withstand further shocks from the resurgence of fresh outbreaks of Covid-19 and or other health and socio-economic dislocations, we must design a recovery plan that rebuilds the social contract between government and societies and hoisted on the foundations of resilience. In order to achieve this, we must ensure that Decent Work is at the centre of government actions to bring back economic growth and build a new national and global economy that puts people and the planet first.

2. Prioritization of the Security of Lives and Property

In 2020, we witnessed some of the most audacious backlashes of the waves of insecurity in our country. Terrorists groups and cells of armed bandits overran large swathes of our lands carving out domains of operations at great cost to citizens' lives, limbs and livelihoods. Workers were not spared as many workers became victims of the outrageous bloody campaign by the agents of evil and misery. The recent murder of hundreds of farm workers in Koshobe, Borno State and its environs introduced a new angle of industrial safety concerns to the specter of terrorism in North East Nigeria.



In 2021, we will fully unfurl our plans for a national advocacy campaign on insecurity. Part of the plans is to convene a multi-stakeholders conference on insecurity in Nigeria. If there is anytime we must prioritize national security it is now as nobody knows what next the widening fissures in our national security walls would allow in. Consistent with the provisions of Article 10 of ILO Convention 190 which permits workers to remove themselves from work situations that could harm their persons, we might be forced to ask workers to withdraw their services from workplaces that are not secured and safe.

3. Promotion of Good Governance

A key preamble of ILO Constitution buttressed in the 1944 Philadelphia Declaration posits that there can never be sustained progress anywhere until there is social justice and injustice anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere.



As has been our historical prerogative, the NLC will continue to champion the cause of good governance, inclusive growth, sustainable development and social justice. We will pay serious attention to the attributes that define good governance such as accountability, transparency, inclusion, rule of law, effective and efficient allocation of resources and popular participation in public governance. We shall insist that these attributes are not only restored as cardinal bearings in our body polity but also respected especially through institutional reforms including the reform of the electoral space.

4. Economic Recovery and Resilience

As a patriotic organization, the Nigeria Labour Congress will in 2021 continue to pursue programs that would engender economic recovery and resilience especially after the backlashes of the COVID-19 outbreak. We will continue to promote backward integration policies that place premium attention on the use of local resources

including domestic skills and expertise in optimizing our raw materials value chain.



The COVID-19 crisis makes our appeal more pertinent now than ever. No country develops by being the dumping ground for other people's creativity and enterprise. We must evolve sound policies and put in place the infrastructure that facilitate the production and distribution of "Made in Nigeria" goods. This way we will even our trade balance, strengthen the Naira, create sustainable jobs, improve the living conditions of our people and accumulate wealth for genuine economic diversification. Our starting point must be the recovery of our national oil refineries as agreed with government. This will save us the severe hemorrhage that our economy is subjected to.

5. Strengthening Tripartite Relations

No person can clap with one hand. For the sake of industrial harmony, progress and sustainable development, we invite all the social partners to clap with both hands to the music of dignity of labour, fair allocation of proceeds of production and social justice.



We commend the National Industrial Court of Nigeria for signing off 2020 on the note of social justice. The recent judgement of the NICN affirming the subservience of our industrial relations practices to ratified international labour standards brings succor and hope to Nigerian workers as it strengthens labour's hand in its demand for workplace liberties, equity and justice. In 2021, we expect the strengthening of our national labour administration especially through improvement in labour inspection and social tripartism including collective bargaining and a just dispute resolution mechanism that is fair to all social partners. It would be easier to achieve all these through progressive labour law reform and institutionalization of tripartite social dialogue process.

6. Overcoming COVID-19

Finally, we must all brace up to what could be the last frontier of the struggle against the novel corona virus disease in 2021. The resurgence of COVID-19 in many countries of the world especially with the discovery of new strains of the virus calls for measured but concerted response by governments globally. The occupational safety and health of workers especially frontline workers must continue to receive the deserved attention from public authorities. We renew our calls for the provision of adequate personal protective equipment, conducive work environment and enabling compensation cum health hazard allowances for workers who risk their lives to keep us safe and well.

It is heartwarming that in the already established COVID-19 vaccine distribution and administration



protocol in many parts of the world, frontline health workers top the priority list. We call for the inclusion of all workers, the aged, the vulnerable, employers and public officials in the priority list of recipients of the COVID-19 vaccine.

We will never say enough of the need for a pro-poor vaccine. We reiterate our call on the international health community to work together to ensure that the already developed vaccines and future vaccine developments would not come at a price that would dig deeper holes in the pockets of developing countries which economies are already overwhelmed by the impact of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The current global health insurgency is primarily a public health emergency and so the solution should not be commoditized but treated as a service of humanitarian gesture.

We call on the Nigerian government and governments of other African cum developing economies to take up the challenge of the corona virus by rejigging our public health systems, our capabilities for research and innovation and robust mobilization of public consensus for effective adherence to health protocols for our collective survival.

In Conclusion

Beyond survival, we must thrive and flourish! This is our expectation and prayers for 2021. We will not only say our prayers. We must be ready to work our prayers. For faith without works is dead. Part of our work for 2021 is to ensure that we stay healthy by following COVID-19 safety rules. We must indulge the Holidays with caution. We must observe all health protocols. It is not over until it is over. I urge Nigerian workers to redouble their commitment to productivity. The investment of our labours will release the blessings – a fair share of the reward of surplus value and the future we truly deserve. In line with his New Year Message, the President of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Comrade Ayuba Wabba started the New Year on a drive of activism. In his response to the announcement by government of yet another increase in electricity tariff, the President in a press release statement released in the first week of January told government that Nigerians had bled enough and were no longer available as sacrificial lambs for the clear failure of the privatization of the electricity sector.

The NLC President decried the fact that while Nigerians were trying to embrace the warmth of the New Year, the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) in its 'wisdom' decided to slam the country with the cold

hug of yet another astronomical and umpteenth increase in electricity tariff.

In condemning the hike, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) accused government of attempting to start Year 2021 for Nigerians on the grinding stone. It went on to accuse the government of announcing the increase without recourse to the negotiation process that the government and Organized Labour in Nigeria signed up to about three months ago describing the situation as completely unacceptable to the workers and the generality of the Nigerian people.

The NLC described the hike as very awful and indeed a cruel act of government given the soaring inflation and poverty rates in the country. The renewed onslaught of COVID-19 also made the tariff increase very insensitive. Fearing for the impact of the new increase on manufacturing in Nigeria especially “Made-in-Nigeria” goods and services which labour said will find it greatly difficult to cope with this new tariff. Congress President posited that the tariff hike would sound the death knell for many manufacturing concerns in Nigeria leading to either mass lay-off of workers and or upsurge in importation.

The NLC also was criticized the double speak in the NERC communique announcing this hike in tariff.

“In one breath, NERC denied any new increase in tariff. In another breath, it announced that electricity tariff would be adjusted from N2 per kilowatt/hour to N4 per kilowatt/hour - a 100% tariff increase. The statement in quick reversals also lumped consumers in Band D and E under the new tariff. This volte face is contrary to our agreement with government which excluded Band D and E from further increases in electricity tariff. This clearly paints a picture of deliberate mission by government to hoodwink and take Nigerians for a ride.”

In surmising that the increase in electricity tariff apart

from negating the agreement we reached with government in September 2020 will further imperil our local economy, lead to the loss of millions of jobs by Nigerian workers and trigger wider social discomfitures, labour called for its reversal immediately.

In a follow up press statement issued in the second week of January 2021, precisely January 8, 2021, following the decision of government to accede to labour's position demanding the reversal of the electricity hike, Labour buttressed its earlier positions with the following arguments.

- First is the unsustainability of using international economic indices to determine domestic electricity tariff. Something is inherently wrong in calculating in US dollars the cost of the gas used by GENCOs in generating electricity in Nigeria. The current practice violates fundamental economic theory of comparative advantage especially for a developing economy as ours. Related to this is the calculation of ancillary electricity supply logistics in foreign currencies and transferring same to electricity consumers.

- Second is the perversity of offloading the cost of electricity capital accumulation on end consumers. It is tenuous and economically unreasonable for electricity generation and distribution companies to upload the cost of acquiring their equipment and operational facilities to electricity consumers. This has occurred at two distinct levels so far. The bailout fund to DISCOs from public coffers was one instance. The other instance is the inbuilding of equipment importation cost into what consumers are paying. The Honourable Minister conceded this much when he talked about minor adjustment in light of foreign exchange realities.

Congress argued that in other capitalist climes, investors procure their working capital from profits accruing from their investments not from uploading and transferring





the cost of capital acquisition directly to consumers. If the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) continues to use this strange template to design and review its tariff template, then there would be no end to continuous increases in what Nigerians pay for electricity. Amidst the current electricity tariff volatilities, the situation of the average consumer would be worsened by the current reliance on alternative sources of energy owing to prevailing instability in public power supply.

- Third is the opacity in the predisposition of the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC). The feelers from many stakeholders in the electricity supply chain suggest that the regulator in the sector pulls more on the side of the DISCOs and GENCOs rather than on the side of consumers of electricity both industrial and private users. The lack of representation of critical mass of electricity consumers in NERC has aggravated this concern.

From the foregoing, the NLC established the fact of acute adversity imposed by the Power Sector Reform on ordinary Nigerians and the manufacturing sector. This reinforces its earlier calls for a holistic review of the entire power sector privatization program as it has clearly failed to achieve the economic goals set forth in Chapter Two of Nigeria's Constitution with regards to protecting the economic welfare of citizens and in violating Constitutional expectations that the commanding heights of the Nigerian economy should be managed by the State.

It was on this premise that the Nigeria Labour Congress called on government to go beyond the reversal of the recent tariff increases to adorn the robe of gentlemen negotiators. The NLC demanded that all commitments made by government to Organized Labour during the negotiations of September 28, 2020 be respected.

Labour also demanded a cessation to unilateral actions that only undermine the spirit of social dialogue and erode the confidence of Nigerians on the intentions of government. Labour warned that its return to the negotiation table would be premised on firm assurances and commitment by government that future negotiations would be done in utmost good faith.

On the implementation of the national minimum wage, the leadership of Congress has written to a number of state governments reminding them of their constitutional duties to uphold the law including the National Minimum Wage Act that stipulates a national minimum wage of N30,000. In a letter dated 4th January 2021 to the Kano State Government, Congress President, Comrade Ayuba Wabba implored the State Governor to resume the payment of minimum wage to workers and consequential adjustment to salaries as premised in law and agreed with workers, respectively but suspended on the pretense of adjustment to economic realities imposed by the impact of COVID-19.

Comrade Ayuba Wabba in a separate letter dated January 19, 2021 to the Imo State Government also urged the State Governor to commence full implementation of the national minimum wage, conclusion of negotiations with Organized Labour in Imo State on consequential salary adjustment and the payment of arrears of salaries owed Imo State workers and pensioners. Already, the Imo State Council of payment the NLC has already commenced an indefinite strike action to press home their demands. The strike action has been sustained despite very hostile response by the state government.

Cover Story by

**Comrade
Emmanuel Ugboaja
and Comrade
Echezona Asuzu**



Happy Birthday

NLC PIONEER PRESIDENT & FORMER GENERAL SECRETARY, OATUU

The Nigeria Labour Congress Celebrates the NLC Pioneer President
and former General Secretary of Organization of African Trade Union Unity.



Comrade Hassan Adebayo Sunmonu, OON, Ordre du Mérite (Burkina Faso), Hon. Doctorate (ABU, MAUTECH)

as he clocks the milestone Age of



The entire Nigerian Working Class Celebrates the Iconic Contributions of
Comrade Hassan Sunmonu to Advancing the Cause of the Nigerian and
African trade union movement.

Signed:

Comrade Ayuba Wabba, mni
President



VETERANS CORNER

COMR. ADAMS OSHIOMHOLE
FORMER NLC PRESIDENT
FORMER EDO STATE GOVERNOR



SOS: Congratulations Comrade Governor for a successful tour of duty at the highest echelon of political leadership in Nigeria especially your two terms tenure as Edo State Governor and more recently your leadership of one of Africa's largest political parties. As a trade union veteran, how do you describe this unique experience?

Comrade Adams Oshiomhole: Thank you very much. I think it's a good idea to have a magazine now. I recall we used to have one which we called the "Labour News" when we were at Olajuwon. There was the challenge of printing it regularly because of cash trap and all that and the world was a bit much smaller and your circulation depended on how many you print and you circulate. The world has now changed to the online stuff. So, you can now produce stories that circulate all over the world. I think at this point 'congratulations' is in order.

Well for me, I have said it to many people that this is like three hundred and sixty degrees in terms of life experiences. I feel this has given me a greater insight into what I will call the "Nigerian condition". As a factory worker working at the lowest level as a daily rated employee, I came face to face with the enormous power of capital and even the seeming ease with which that power is abused especially when it comes to how the employer perceives the employee. Because I work in a factory of four thousand employees, people are more known by reference to their employment number rather than by name. And the managers deal with those numbers as if he is not dealing with people. Moving to the point of representing textile workers, that made me to understand that though management or managers or owners of businesses or capital belong to the same class but the attitude or approach to dealing with employees vary considerably. I think that is informed often by the cultural background of the employer. So, you find a marked difference dealing with Indian managers compared to the Lebanese managers compared to the British managers compared to the Japanese, the Chinese and then compared to the Nigerian managers.

And then coming to the NLC, that gave me a bigger platform to have an insight into not just the private sector that is clearly profit driven to how the public sector is managed or mismanaged by civil servants and the attitude by the public sector managers like the Permanent

Secretaries and Directors compared to their counterparts in the private sector. And then you find out that you are also buffeted by issues of governance. This is because you deal with government now not only as an employer of labour but also as those responsible for the management of the state where political considerations and all sorts of considerations come in. So, we then begin to deal with political economy and we begin to deal with the issue of inflation, monetary policy, fiscal policies, industrial policies and social policies etc.

For me, I cannot thank the Nigeria Labour Congress enough for the privilege of being able to provide leadership for organized labour for eight consecutive years. That gave me, so I thought, a greater insight into the Nigerian condition. And then I thought I knew it all because I had then interacted, engaged and interfaced in contestation within the labour movement and mediate within and between unions and now interface with some national governments and state governments, organizing protests and holding protests and so on. And also attending meetings in cozy homes, in the Villas, in state government offices. So, I used to say with all sense of pride that I had interacted both vertically and horizontally and I knew virtually everyone I needed to know.

But those engagements with govt and all those struggles for a just society tried to educate employers to their own enlightened self interest and also educating government officials who are not always as deep as we think they are that even for their own enlightened self interest there is a lot of public policies that they need to review. So, this gave me a sound understanding of issues. So, going into politics which I think was pertinent – Benson, you remember I left NLC I think on the 17th or 18th of February 2007 and then by April 14, 2007 I had to run to contest for office of the Governor of Edo State. Probably two months between concluding my tenure and running for election in 2007.

And thanks to labour, I think those skills that many union leaders take for granted – I mean the power of persuasion, of communicating in very clear language to very ordinary people, trying to meet them and going to their level and mingle with them with the way we union





VETERANS CORNER

leaders interact with workers. I found out that that was the only connection I had – no money, no connection, if I know Police they were my adversaries, my opponents, key players and manipulators of the apparatus of state – the conventional challenges we deal in the labour movement. In the end, I won. It was stolen. But again, I found out labour leaders enjoy tremendous goodwill that we sometimes underestimate. I think a lot of people believe that we won the election. Now, it is part of history. I am the first person to be rigged out of election and the loser became the winner using the judicial process to reclaim it peacefully. Before then, there was no such judicial precedence in Nigeria. Even the judges were quite sympathetic and the people were on my side.

Now to governance, there are a couple of things I used to read about. There are some writers who refer to the working class as aristocrats in relation to the rural poor. I used to think that this is out of bias but when you really travel round rural Nigeria and you meet poor people, you will find out that within the rank of the poor some are clearly much poorer and deprived than others. And this poor people, you find them across the 774 local government areas in Nigeria. I would not have been able to appreciate that level of poverty but by going round rural Edo and discovering that many communities cannot be accessed by road. All they have in their lives is natural rainfall that God may give or may not give. It is either they get good harvest or bad harvest.

I confronted those realities and it deepened my knowledge of the Nigerian condition and the complexities. There are also few things that I realized in the process – that even the public servants that we defend that they too can be oppressive to their fellow workers. And they can sometimes be an obstacle for example that someone is entitled to get his or her pension and needs to get his or her paper facilitated and a fellow civil servant puts all manner of obstacles on his or her way even though he or she would also go through the same process when himself or herself retires. So, understanding the complexities in Nigeria in terms of our geo-politics, my foray in politics made that a lot clearer to me.

But then like I always say we had a conversation – Benson you were part of that conversation and maybe Chris and the late Olaitan – now

that I am going into politics how am I going to look? Do I dress like the conventional politicians? And we had to debate issues of dress codes and it reminded me how democratic labour is in comparison to the rest of society – everything had to be discussed. Some people said I should wear traditional outfits. I remember Olaitan said “but you are a comrade, this is who you are.” So, I ended up deciding that I will wear my regular Khaki uniform which I maintained throughout my eight years as Governor.

So, I found myself becoming the Chairman of the governing party and interacting with what we know as the oppressive class. So, all that experience made the 360 degrees. But the key thing I got from there was that that experience enabled me to understand how diverse this country is. You know everybody talks about the diversity of Nigeria but not everyone knows the extent of that diversity. Nigeria is truly truly diverse in terms of culture, values, attitude to things and so on and so forth. All of that I had to deal with as Chairman of the APC ruling party. To conclude this leg of your question, I would simply say that my labour background is something I would always be truly truly proud of. In terms of solidarity, a body of ideas which you can call ideology that binds the labour movement together, albeit, with some variance. Some are more committed to it than others. But generally, there is a shared commitment to social justice, to equity, to fairness, to what is a domino of a caring society for the aged, the children, equal work for equal pay and all that. And we embark on struggle on the basis of these shared ideas. We win and we celebrate that we are able to bend and squeeze something out of the hands of the employer or the oppressor – that we are able to moderate his powers by deploying our own countervailing force by organizing, mobilizing and asserting that power as a collective to counterbalance the enormous power of capital and the state.

In politics to my shock, I found out that the ruling class or politicians, let me say a section of the political class, there is no such thing as shared ideals. It is about individualism – all man to himself and God for us all. We can subscribe to belong to the same political parties but you can have it from the far right – almost fascists to the far left, I don't know how many of communists you will find – maybe you can find the ones you can call the socialists – all in the same political party. They engage





in fight not based on those ideals but on the basis of who gets what. Thus, the formation of public policies suffers from these fights. And then ethnicity is deployed to further divide the oppressed class and religion is invoked to seal the division and to pitch the poor – poor Muslims against poor Christians, poor southerners against poor northerners, poor westerners against poor easterners and those oppressing them then manage to get away from accountability by simply invoking primordial sentiments. This is not so in Labour.

So, if it is possible for me to be active again in the labour movement, I want to say that every sacrifice you make, every blood you sweat and every inconvenience you suffer in police cell or prison is worth it because the working people and their families and the Nigerian masses appreciate it. But for the political class, it is not worth it. Everybody is just basically positioning for himself. God has enabled me to have this full cycle, so I can say that I understand Nigeria a lot much more than if I didn't have this three-hundred-and-sixty-degree experience.

SOS: In all of this your journey particularly in Edo State where you left landmark achievements attested to by even your political opponents, what would you describe as your greatest and legacy achievement as Governor of Edo State?

Comrade Adams Oshiomhole: Well to start with, I have always known that I was not going to change who I am as the Governor of Edo State – quote and unquote the values and how Governors are perceived. I was going to change the way the office of the Governor is perceived and I used this word – **“we will demystify governance”**. And that flow from my own experience of how Governors behave and how they talk. So, the first thing I did was to say I was still going to dress as if I am still working at Arewa textiles where we had the khaki uniform.

That was my first decision and I was wearing that uniform every day of

the week. So, that people will know that there is nothing extra ordinary about being a Governor – that you do not need to wear a watch of two hundred thousand Pounds or wear such a garment that people will be afraid to touch you lest they stain you. So, I made a definite statement that Khaki is not a statement of your social status, it is just about who you are – that I am a worker who happens to be a Governor – because that is who I am and I am going to preserve it forever. Of course, the only time I had problem with them was when the members of the House of Assembly said that they had a dress code and that I must conform with their dress code and that I cannot wear safari or khaki to address them. So, I had to wear a suit. All I tried to achieve with my dress style as Governor was to pass the message that a worker is in charge here. And to inspire every worker in every factory not to feel inferior because even a Governor wears khaki.

The second thing I realized is that governance is about power and the exercise of power is value driven and not value neutral. So, you have to consciously decide who benefits more and who pays for it. Whether the government wants to put more money in an airport where only the Governor can fly or cannot fly or choose to build a school is a conscious choice to make. In my own case, Edo has one of the oldest Government Houses in Nigeria by the reasons of the fact that Benin was the headquarters of Midwest region and that was where the Governor of the Midwest region operated from.

You know people said that Edo State has no Government lodges. Even when the President came, he had to stay in one little room like that because I said that I am not going to put resources in building what other states call “Ultra-modern Government House”. Because I found out that if you really want to work well as a Governor, you do not really sleep well. So, I said what is the point of building a lousy comfortable government house that I won't even stay in. So, I looked at the cost and decided to do an ultra-modern public hospital. Till today, I stand to be

corrected, there is no public hospital that has the kind of appeal like the one I built in Benin to replace the one that was built in 1903 which was the hospital they were still using.

Now, you remember the day the President went to commission it, as we were driving just before making U-turn, he said “is that a bank or a modern shopping mall?” I said no, that is the hospital. He said “you don't mean it”. I said that is the hospital you are going to commission. And when he went in, he was extremely impressed. That was the day he announced that they would need me in Abuja. So, I said that I had a clear choice to make – either build a very modern Government Lodge for the comfort of the Governor, the first family and my guest or build a hospital that will be available to the masses. But not one

that when you see it hale and hearty and you stay there for one hour, you come out sick. I

wanted to build a hospital that when a poor man is rushed to the place

– if he was unconscious when

he woke up, he would be

wondering whether he

was in heaven

because the hospital

is cleaner than his

own residence.

That was my

vision that this

should be made

available to the

poorest and be

opened to the

poor.

The second point I

made was that I

would have probably

aged if not passed on

by now if I did not go to

public school with well-

paid teachers who taught me.

You know that by default

education in Nigeria has actually been

privatized without any policy to that effect.

When I say that education being privatized by

default what I mean is that Governors are not investing in primary

education or secondary education because these are completely within

the mandate of the states not federal. That is the foundation. Once this

foundation is not there the basis for upward mobility is compromised.

So, I decided that I am a product of public primary school and public

secondary school. That was all I was able to have before I left home.

Now, you are in a public school and you can see the skies. When it is

raining, there is nowhere to hide. Teachers carry plastic chairs for

themselves and the pupils sit on the floor. The lucky ones have broken

bricks to sit on. I have graphic pictures of this reality in Edo State.

I said no that we have to reverse this because I had a moral

responsibility to repair the ladder without which I would not have even

been the President of the NLC not to talk of becoming a Governor.

This is because becoming the President of the NLC requires more than

raw courage. You also need some intellectual capacity to be able to

articulate policy options and interrogate government policy choices.

That would require a level of knowledge.

So, I started rebuilding what is now known as the red roof revolution such that children could go to schools that appeal to their young minds. I replaced benches with chairs – one pupil one desk. For the first time, we abolished using screeded floors and ensuring the class room had ceramic tiles and aluminum doors and windows ensuring that each child had a desk and that we used long span roofing which the ruling class used to build houses before the current designs that people are using now. We built quite a number of such school buildings in the 192 wards. At least in every ward we had about three or four of such buildings. So, there is no ward that you will not find a child who would say “Oh! thanks to Oshiomhole.” That policy alone not only increased

the enrollment in public school, it also attracted children

from mushroom private school back to public

schools.

Also, in order to give complete

meaning to our reform of the

education sector in Edo

State, we also introduced

what we refer to as the

“Comrade Bus”. Of

course, I was not

pretending about

the fact that once

you work with

the labour

movement, you

are called a

comrade. You

know we used to

debate it that this

'comrade' thing is

not a title. We are

comrades in struggle

and should not be used

as a title. It should not be

used as a title. Well, that is

an academic exercise. And

you normally see people say

“well, you know I am not a comrade

but I like what you people are doing”. But

comradeship is not just about working for a trade

union or trade unionism. It goes beyond because it is about anyone

that is willing to make sacrifices for the common good and committed

to social justice in its finest tradition.

Remember I said that going into politics exposed me because I went on

campaigns in the villages and I was shocked to see the level of poverty

in the village. Now to deal with that poverty is to deal with the abject

poverty in the villages. Now to deal with that, I focused on building

roads that connect one local government to another local government

in the rural community. So, villages that never had access roads, I built

standard roads there. I said that to be rural is not to be inferior so I

insisted on standard roads in the villages. There was a road I did to a

place that was completely inaccessible which is now being used for

marathon race. And the race is now in the calendar of the International

Athletics Association Federation (IAAF). So, every year, they now

have an event there. I think they now have a gold status.

I also discovered that politicians like isolated rural communities

because it is easier to rig elections where you do not have access roads.





In those places, they vote for themselves in the local government headquarters where they form a consensus on how they want to write results depending on the balance of forces.

Once there is access road, you cannot write result for them. Even the participation of rural people in governance cannot happen without access road, even the delivery of primary healthcare cannot happen without access roads. Even if you freight materials to a community and build a school, you are not likely to find teachers willing to go to a place that they don't have access by car or a motor bike.

So, those were my biases. I decided even in the cities to devote infrastructure to the most deprived parts of Benin City. You know how Constain/Siroko axis was abandoned. It was turned to a refuse dump. The landlords left and the poor people were living there. I rebuilt there and converted the refuse dump to a garden. I constructed about fourteen roads there. I put street lights, put drainage, put side-walks. That was the one I named after Gani Fawehinmi because I said that if Gani were to be alive those were the kind of people he would fight for using the law as an instrument to defend those who ordinarily would not be able to defend themselves.

So, throughout my tenure I built roads looking at the one that will have maximum socio-economic impact and affect more people. The result is that I did not invest much in building roads to what you call Government Reservation Areas. This was my own of making the point that governance is not value free. You must choose who you want to favour and who pays. I put street lights on poor neighbourhoods where we rebuilt roads but there was no street light to the Government House where I was living. It was my own deliberate policy of delivering the greatest good to the greatest numbers. Now, the greatest numbers are the people living in high density areas and not those living in low density areas.

The key legacy for me is education. We built a University and upgraded one College of Education to a University. This was because I believed that the demand for university education would increase. This is for a number of reasons. The world is moving from brawn to brain education. You need more educated people to drive a knowledge driven economy. So, however you look at it, education is key. And the key foundation that was dear to my heart was quality and free primary education. Once you have that every other thing can follow. That is the foundation.

SOS: Comrade, owing to the prevalence of COVID-19, many State Governors are latching on to that to reverse negotiated agreements with workers – one of those is the national minimum wage which is now a law and the consequential adjustment of

salaries. When you were a Governor, you paid Edo workers more than the then prevailing National Minimum Wage? What would be your advice to Governors that now claim they cannot pay minimum wage?

Comrade Adams Oshiomhole: My advice will not be to the State Governors. My advice will go to the NLC and to the industrial unions. To be honest, I am pained that the industrial unions in the NLC and the TUC that expended so much energy negotiating for a minimum wage which no one can dispute the validity. Minimum wage is not a living wage, that is why it is called a minimum wage. The ideal employer should not pay minimum wage. They should pay higher. Government is not expected to pay minimum wage. Government should pay higher than the minimum wage. Minimum wage is meant to be a floor below which no worker should be engaged. Just look at the use of minimum wage in other parts of the world – where workers lack the power to negotiate, the law comes in to protect them. Then, unions use the power of combination to force employers to pay the right wages. So, to breach a law does not require advice to the law breaker. We advise those who are victims of lawbreaking to take it up. That is why unions are formed. When I was Governor and I am happy that I refused to allow that office to change who I am. I told them and I think this guy was there – Mimiko who was elected on the platform of the Labour Party and was opposed to the minimum wage. And I told him that you cannot use Labour Party platform to emerge as Governor and you are opposed to minimum wage. I told Governors that when it comes to the issue of labour and compensation, I am not with you. This is because all these issues of not being able to pay is a fraudulent argument. It doesn't require rocket science or a wizard in economics. Nigeria has keyed in to market capitalist economy. What drives price is the cost of producing a product.

Nobody in a market economy sells below his cost. You can talk about demand pull inflation where a lot of money is chasing few goods and the price of goods go up. But even when the price collapse, if you sell below your cost, you go bankrupt. The silliest argument I have heard is for anybody to say "inability to pay" because that is not correct.

If any Governor, any Minister, any President wants to buy a bag of cement in Sokoto, in Kano, in Edo, in Port Harcourt to construct a road, if we do not agree on the cost, then there is no construction. You do not say Edo is not as rich as Rivers or Akwa Ibom, therefore, then give me Edo rate. There is nothing as Edo rate. The price is the same. When you go to the market to buy tomatoes, do they ask you "how much do you earn?" - for you to buy the tomatoes? When you want to buy Toyota cars, do they sell at the income of the buyer? The point of inability to pay is senseless. It is provocative. My own problem is that I see labour

not doing what they should be doing. That is why you form unions. Corona virus has nothing to do with it. Dying of corona virus in less than seven days is certainly less painful than dying of poverty that put you on the economic sick bed for twelve months. No! I think the unions here, the public sector unions, the civil service unions, they are to be blamed. Let me ask NLC – have they stopped paying the minimum wage in the private sector? The textile industry as poor as they are, are they not observing it? Construction workers are they not observing it? Whatever is left of Iron and Steel Workers, are they not observing it? Why should government that make law be the one to break the law. These are not things I will advise people. No, I am not going to advise Governors. I am going to advise the NLC and through NLC public sector unions to justify their existence. They are not justifying their existence.

Now when you have a Collective Agreement signed by the Employer and the Employee, does any of the party have the right to breach it? If you do, you have two types of disputes – Dispute of Interest and Dispute of Right. Dispute of Interest is when you make proposals and the employer refuses. But when an agreement is reached and signed by both parties, it becomes a Right. It is more so when in the case of the national minimum wage which is an Act of Parliament. That law is enforceable in court. If labour has become so weak and so powerless that they cannot defend the minimum wage, they should at least fall back on the law and get lawyers to go to court and seek conviction. And I know as a matter of fact that when you have a dispute, if the court finds that you have violated the minimum wage law, they can garnish the account of government and pay to the workers.

So, I have no advise to Governors. I have advice to the NLC and to the unions. The national minimum wage is a law. And every day, you allow employers be it at the federal or state, you make the efforts invested in making the law useless and not worthwhile. And I made this point during my last engagement with the NLC. I know of a state during the last minimum wage that was not even paying N18000, they were paying N14000. If you have not even forced people to comply with the old law, why make people pay the new one. Laws are

compulsory, they are not conventions. They are not moral obligations. The law is law and if the law breaks down, there would be no governance.

So, why would anybody have to break the law that has to do with the right of people unilaterally. Even collectively, workers cannot agree that they would forfeit what the law says. Though there is a principle in law that if you decide to sleep on your rights, the law will keep sleeping. So, my message to workers particularly the public sector unions is to go and justify the *raison d'être* for your existence as trade unions. That is being lost. When Governors were arguing about the minimum wage, I increased that of Edo State. And I was paying it up to the time I left office and my successor had no option but to continue. Look at the Federal Revenue Allocation, Edo is not on the first ten. We are about the 16th or 17th. So, it is not about how much you earn, it is your priority. So, if a Governor says “I cannot pay minimum wage”, is he able to decide what he pays when he is constructing a road and says “sorry, I do not have money, please give me corona price for a cubic meter of road or for a bag of cement”.

So, you should tell those guys that they should not take automatic check-off dues for granted - whether we work or not, the check-off dues come in. workers deserve services for the dues they pay. I know right now given the devaluation, wages generally in the economy have been depressed almost by 50 per cent. Because I think that by the time you negotiated the last agreement, the official exchange was N307 or so. Now, you go and want to buy raw materials in the open market, it is almost N500. So, what does that mean in real terms? Though exchange rate can be misleading. What is important in labour economics is Purchasing Power Parity because what you can buy with N480 now in Nigeria that is less than one dollar, in US it cannot buy you anything.

So, generally, I think you guys have to get the public sector unions to go back to the drawing board. If laws are violated, is it Collective Bargaining Agreement that would be obeyed?

Watch out for Part 2 of the Interview in the Next Edition of the SOS.



Oshiomhole's interview by some members of the editorial board of "The State Of The Struggle" , - the congress magazine.

2020 IN PICTURES



2020 IN PICTURES



2020 IN PICTURES





NEWS FROM **THE AFFILIATE UNIONS**



NUT Remains the Only Union in the Pre-Tertiary Education Sector

On 15th January, 2021, the Supreme Court ordered the Court of Appeal to reconstitute a panel to hear the appeal instituted by the Academic Staff Union of Secondary Schools of Nigeria (ASUSS). The Supreme Court Panel that gave the judgement included Olabode Rhodes-Vivour, Kudirat Motonmori Olatokunbo Kekere-Ekun, Chima Centus Nweze, Amina Adamu Augie and Uwani Musa Abba Aji. The order originated from a law suit filed by the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) against some regulatory agencies of the Federal Government particularly the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment whose officials made attempts in the past to register ASUSS contrary to the clear provisions of the law.

The President of the NIT, Comrade (Dr) Nasir Idris responding to the Supreme Court judgement said that contrary to the erroneous claims in the media that the judgement translated to the recognition of ASUSS as a trade union in the pre-tertiary education sector, the judgment was simply a directive for an appeal judgement by the Court of Appeal to

return to the appellate court owing to the disqualification of one of the deciding judges who was not initially part of the trial.

The Secretary General of the NUT, Comrade (Dr) Mike Eneh threw more light on the case when he clarified that the judgement had no relation to the substantive matter of the suit brought by the NUT against ASUSS but simply a contestation on the jurisdiction of the Federal High Court to entertain the case in the first place since ASSUS claimed that the matter was solely an industrial matter. Dr. Eneh went on to poke holes in the arguments of ASSUS on their claim of representing secondary school teachers positing that the pioneer leaders of the Nigeria Union of Teachers at its founding in 1931 were essentially secondary school teachers and administrators. He gave the example of the founder of the NUT, Reverend Ransome Kuti who was the Principal of Ijebu High School. The same with Dr. Alvan Ikoku and the same with the pioneer Secretary General of the NUT, Mr. T.K. Cameron.



The Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) Rejects Unilateral Award of Redundancy Benefits for Sacked Intels and AMS Workers



The Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) has declared as unacceptable the attempt by the management of Intels and AMS to award redundancy benefits on their own without consultation with the union. In a letter by MWUN to the Managing Director of Intels Nigeria Limited and signed by Comrade Edwin Sambo for the Secretary General of MWUN, the union condemned the decision of the management of Intels Services to stagger the payment of the redundancy benefits and said that such an arrangement is not acceptable to the union and to the workers.

It would be recalled that in December 2020, Intels and its subsidiary company, the AMS, terminated the

appointment of hundreds of workers under their employment. The decision to terminate the employment of the workers was taken by the management of Intels and AMS in the middle of negotiations with MWUN. The decision to lay off about 600 workers was also in breach of an earlier agreement with the Maritime Workers Union. In further display of industrial tyranny, the management of mobilized armed security personnel to assault workers who protested the ill treatment meted to them by the management of Intels and AMS.

The response of the leadership of maritime workers to this affront and assault on workers' right was robust. The Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria declared an industrial action against the management of Intels and AMS. The strike commenced on 14th December 2020 and lasted for one week. Instead of attending to the industrial issues at hand, the management of Intels dragged the matter to the National Industrial Court of Nigeria. Yet, in a continuous run of impunity, the same management prejudiced and abused the court processes by going behind the court to impose a redundancy benefit payment schedule without any consultation with the union and workers.

The Injustice Against Medical and Health Workers Continues



The struggle by the Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria (MHWUN) in conjunction with the Joint Health Sector Unions of Healthcare Professionals (JOHESU) for the workplace rights of workers in Nigeria's health sector has intensified. Some of the major issues being canvassed by the leadership of MHWUN and JOHESU includes the following:

1. Review of the defective implementation of Covid-19 Special Inducement and Hazard

2. Allowance;
3. Payment of all withheld Salaries of health workers including the withheld April and May 2018 Salaries;
4. Adjustment of Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS) as was done with Consolidated Medical Salary Structure (CONMESS) since 2014;
5. Implementation of National Industrial Court of Nigeria (ADR) Consent Judgement and other Court Judgements; and
6. Structural and Infrastructural decay in our health sector.

Most of the issues in contention are actually disputes of rights since they originated from a Terms of Settlement signed with the Federal Government since September 30, 2017. A major issue in the Terms of Settlement is with regards to the upward review of CONHESS Salary Structure. Despite the agreement between the Federal



Government and JOHESU that the Terms of Settlement would be fully implemented within one week from September 30, 2017, the Federal Government has instead of demonstrating fidelity to its signed commitments have deployed all sorts of maneuver to deprive health workers in the country of their earned benefits.

Even the implementation of the COVID-19 Special Inducement and Hazard Allowance is being done in utter disregard to what was agreed between JOHESU and government. The COVID-19 Special Inducement and Hazard Allowance is supposed to be 50 per cent of Basic Consolidated Salary of healthcare workers but government has paid far less than this. The government even went ahead to openly admit that it had made mistakes in computing the COVID-19 Special Inducement and Hazard Allowance to medical and

healthcare workers in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress has through several letters and participation in industrial negotiations tried to make government see reasons to abide by its won agreement with Nigeria's health workforce especially given the huge contributions of health workers to the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the President of Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria, Comrade Josiah Biebele moye at the 47th Session of its National Executive Council which took place on the 10th December 2020 reminded government of the need to quickly redeem its commitment to Nigerian health workers warning that the patriotism shown by Nigeria's medical and healthcare workers should not be taken for granted or as a sign of weakness.

BUK SSANU/NASU Embarks on 3 Day Protest



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The Nigeria Union of Mines Workers (NUMW) Sets Targets for the Mining Industry for 2021



The Nigerian Union of Mines Workers (NUMW) in an interactive session with the media has said that the completion and operationalization of Ajaokuta Steel Company (ASCO) and National Iron Ore Mining Company (NIOMCO) cannot be overemphasized in view of the ability of the complex to create at least fifteen thousand jobs for Nigerians.

Saying, we are aware of the avowed commitment of the President Muhammadu Buhari administration to the completion of the project, we are of the opinion that

government should accelerate its pace, as the pace of progress is slow, and does not represent Nigeria's passion for progress in the area of jobs creation.

Speaking on behalf of the union, the President of NUMW, Comrade Hamza Muhammad quipped, “We specifically task the Federal Government and the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development as well as the steering committee for the implementation of completion and operationalization of ASCO to work to realize set goals in the coming year 2021.”

Furthermore, Comrade Muhammad posited that if the achievement of the resuscitation drive would present great gains for the country in terms of jobs creation, industrialization and national economic development”, he stated.

The union went on to call on the government to convene a stakeholders' consultative conference on the Nigerian Mines and Steel Sector. The conference, if convened, will serve as platform for the discussion of the challenges of the sector by relevant stakeholders who know the sector well enough, to give correct advice to the government.



NEWS FROM STATE COUNCILS

Industrial Unrest Averted in Kano State



The planned statewide total industrial shutdown in Kano State has been averted as the Kano State Government and Joint Negotiation Council (JNC) have reached an agreement to suspend the deduction of civil servants' salaries and pensions in the state. It would be recalled that the Kano State Government had in November and December 2020 made illegal deductions from the salaries and pension benefits of workers and pensioners in the state, respectively.

The Kano State government continued in the illegal act of unilateral deduction to the chagrin of the NLC Kano State Council and the Joint Negotiating Council (JNC) in Kano State. In a letter dated 8th January 2021, the Chairman NLC Kano State Council, Comrade Kabiru

Ado Minjibir, drew the attention of the Kano State Government to the following concerns

1. Minimum wage is a product of tripartite negotiations and is an Act of Parliament which makes it binding on all employers in Nigeria;
2. Salaries and pensions are contracts and thus legitimate rights which cannot be unilaterally changed or shortchanged;
3. The continued unilateral deductions in the salaries and pensions of workers and retirees in Kano State have exposed workers to huge suffering and hardship

The Kano State Council Chairperson went on to warn the State Government that it risked a total shut down of work in the state if it persists with the illegal deductions. Earlier, the National President of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Comrade Ayuba Wabba, had written the Kano State Governor, HE Umar Ganduje, in a letter dated 4th January 2021 warning the Governor of the dire consequences of illegal deduction of workers' salaries. The Congress President also reminded the Kano State Governor of the progressive history of the state being the first state to pay above the national minimum wage in 1981 when the National Minimum Wage Act was first passed into law.

Imo State Governor Declares War on Workers



On January 25, 2021, hoodlums and armed thugs invaded the state secretariat of the Nigeria Labour Congress at Owerri Imo State. The hooligans who ransacked and vandalized the state secretariat destroying and carting away valuable property worth

millions of Naira. The armed mob was to repeat their deadly mission the following day which was on the 26th of January 2021. The twin attacks were done in broad daylight and without any reasonable intervention by the Imo State Government or the security apparatus in Imo State.

The motive behind the attacks was to become manifest when the rampaging mob trooped to the Imo State Government House to the warm reception of the State Governor. Like is proverbially said; "the witch cried at night and the child died in the morning." The Imo State Governor was to crown the malfeasance by inaugurating an illegal and shadowy State Labour executives without the vote of Imo Workers.

At the time of filing this report, seven staff of the Imo State NLC Secretariat are currently for their lives in



NEWS FROM STATE COUNCILS

different hospitals in the state. It is even more worrisome when the State Government has failed to make any pronouncement on the criminal desecration of the NLC Secretariat in Owerri, Imo State thus clearing any doubt that the Imo State government encouraged the mob action against the leadership of Organized Labour in Im State most of whom are in hiding at the moment. The offense of the leadership of the NLC Imo State Council was to demand that the State Government honours its contractual obligation to workers and pensioners in the state who are owed nearly ten months salaries. Some of the specific grounds of violation of workers' and pensioners' rights as identified by the leadership of Organized Labour includes the following:

- i. Non-payment, staggered payment and under payment of Imo State workers' salaries since February 2020;
- ii. Non-payment, staggered payment and under payment of Imo State pensioners since February 2020;
- iii. Demand for immediate conclusion of the N30,000 National Minimum Wage negotiations in Imo State and its immediate implementation;
- iv. Demand for the reversal of the payment of salaries to the Office of the Accountant General through the payroll system;
- v. Demand for the reversal of the payment of pension to the Office of the Accountant

- vi. General under the supervision of the Head of Service, Imo State;
- vii. The immediate stoppage of the use of consultants for the payment of salaries and pensions;
- viii. The immediate commencement of promotion/conversion exercise, and implementation of incremental date;
- ix. The implementation of the 2014 promotion exercise in parastatals;
- x. The rejection of extension of service for retired Permanent Secretaries and others, and
- xi. Non remittance of check-off dues to trade unions in Imo State.

In a letter dated 19th January 2021, the President of Congress, Comrade Ayuba Wabba implored the Imo State Governor to attend to the demands of workers. Instead of listening to the Congress President, Governor Hope Uzodimma decided to deploy violence as a tool of industrial relations.

The national leadership of Congress has already mandated a high-powered delegation from the NLC to engage with the leadership of Organized Labour in Rivers State on the way forward as Labour prepares for maximum response to the sad state of affairs in industrial relations in Imo State. Already, workers in Imo State have declared an indefinite strike action until all their demands are met by the State Government.

Osun State Pensioners Abandoned to a Slow and Painful Death



Pa. Amiola Sunday is a 64-year old retiree from the employment of Osun State Ministry of Education. He was engaged in the services of the Oyo State Universal

Basic Education Board as a classroom teacher in 1981. He has been left without a kobo of his retirement benefits for the past four years including a seven month modulated salary arrears, gratuity and monthly pension. Today, Pa Amiola has been turned into a destitute by a system he served diligently. Owing to deteriorating health including a failed eyesight, Pa Amiola has been forced to sell all his properties including his house and other valuable assets. In order to survive, Pa Amiola now begs for alms in the streets of Ikire, Osun State. The condition of Pa Amiola violates Chapter Two Section 17 (3) (f) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which states that children, young persons and the age are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, and against moral and material neglect.



NEWS FROM STATE COUNCILS

The situation of Pa Amiola Sunday typifies the condition of many retirees and pensions in Osun State especially subscribers to the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) in Osun State who have been abandoned to die a slow and painful death. The genesis of the misery wrecking the lives of Osun State pensioners started with the policy of “half-salary” which allowed civil servants in the state on Salary grade Level 0-7 to earn full salaries while those on 8 and above were to have their salaries reduced by up to 50%.

Pa. Amiola Sunday despite his condition counts himself as lucky as many of his fellow pensioners have died without collecting the pension and retirement benefits owed them. Mudashir Adetoro, another retiree in Osun

State was snatched by the cold hands of death on September 21, 2018 without collecting a dime of what was owed him by the Osun State Government. He died from a liver complication and without any health insurance or finances, he easily succumbed to death. The State of the Struggle asks “how many more retirees will be sacrificed to the gods of impunity, callousness, and man's wickedness against his fellow man in Osun State before the Osun State Government does the needful and clears the arrears of salaries owed Osun State employees?”

Inputs from an investigative piece from the International Centre for Investigative Reporting

As the 31st January 2021 Ultimatum by Abia State Workers Against the Abia State Government Expires



The leadership of Organized Labour in Abia State led by the Nigeria Labour Congress had issued an ultimatum to the Abia State Government for a complete shutdown of the state. Responding to the situation, the Chairperson of NLC Abia State Council, Comrade Uchenna Obigwe said that government is owing arrears of salaries to parastatals including Hospitals Management Boards, Abia University Teaching Hospital, Abia State Polytechnic, Arochuku Technical, Secondary School teachers and three months salaries of Abia State Local

Government employees. He also said that workers at the Technical School in Aba are being owed five months salaries. Also trapped in the quagmire of unpaid entitlements are the pensioners in Abia State.

Responding to the ongoing strike by health workers in Abia State which has been on for the past one month, the state Chairperson said that the State Council is in full support of the strike action. He however cautioned other workers who are being owed by the state government from embarking on any strike action as the state council was already engaging the state government on the sad situation and had already secured a commitment from the Abia State government that all the owed salary arrears would be paid by the 31st of January 2020. He warned that the state council would be forced to declare a statewide strike action if by the 31st of January 2020, the salary arrears are not paid.

While the ultimatum expires, Public and Civil Servants in Abia State have taken their case to God as the Abia State Government having been owed salaries and other entitlements accruing to up to twelve months.



INTERNATIONAL WINDOW

Interview with the Venezuelan Ambassador to Nigeria – *H.E David Valasquez Caraballo*



SOS: Compliments of the Season, Your Excellency! The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has gone through a number of challenges in recent years both at the domestic and international front, what is your assessment of the Venezuelan situation?

Ambassador: Thank you so much for finding time to come and interview us at the Embassy. I have been in Nigeria for two years now. When we arrived we established a very strong relationship with the NLC. As part of my familiarity visits, I had paid a courtesy call to the NLC Headquarters. The Bolivarian revolution has for the past six years been under a very special situation. After the passing away of President Hugo Chavez in March 2013. The enemies of the revolution – the authorities of the United States believed they had the opportunity of defeating the revolution. At that time, President Nicholas Maduro won the election to complete the term of President Hugo Chavez.

They enemies of the revolution opened different antagonism against Venezuela. One of these was the rule under President Obama. After Obama, Trump increased the level of antagonism against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The impact of the action you can see in the lives of the Venezuelan people six to five years ago. The minimum wage for workers in Venezuela was more than three hundred dollars per month – one of the highest in

Latin America. But these gains were lost because of the attack against the oil industry, the financial persecution, and the attack against the private sector.

Yesterday, President Maduro presented to the National Assembly of Venezuela the report of the situation in the country after 2020. They used a number of immigrants to Venezuela to promote the picture of disaster, crises, exodus. But the peculiarity that Venezuela has is that we have less than two million emigrants during this time. But we have more than 9 million immigrants into Venezuela before this time. We have more than five million from Colombia. From Europe, we have more than two million. From the Middle Eastern countries, we have many more. Maybe, we have up to five hundred Nigerian living in Venezuela. During the twenty years of the revolution, President Hugo Chavez promoted the regional integration of the American Caribbean community, the integration of the Bolivarian Association of the People. The Bolivarian revolution was a very strong actor in the region to change the relationship with the United States. Before then the United States was the vanguard in the region. But President Hugo Chavez changed all that so that they cannot do that. But with the attack – the terrorist attack against the elected political leadership of Venezuela, they promoted unrests to destabilize the country. This includes both the military action from Colombia, the

mercenaries, the troops moved from Colombia to Venezuela to attack President Maduro, the direct attack by terrorist action in 2019 against a parade. So, you see the attack in the political and economic fronts and against our capacity to solve the problems of our people. In my case as the Ambassador of Venezuela in Nigeria, I use my personal account to pay for my daughter's fees. This money was blocked by OFAC and stopped. This is not only an attack on the government but also an attack on the people of Venezuela – the private companies – companies from Mexico and the Caribbean were attacked by the US to prevent the possibility of commerce with Venezuela to block basic necessities. The mercenaries also promoted with the cooperation of the National Parliament elected in 2015 as the opposition party won the Parliament and they used their position to attack and promote the sanction against the people of Venezuela.

SOS: So, what is the current situation?

Ambassador: Back to your question on the current situation, in 2020, we have new capabilities especially after the Parliamentary elections of December 6, 2020. In the new Parliament, we recovered the majority. More than six million people participated in the electoral process. We have increased our number in parliament. Out of 277 members in Parliament, the Bolivarian Revolution won more than 250 seats thus becoming the majority in the Parliament. We have approved one special law which is the anti-blockade law. We have won the mandate to use the Parliament as an instrument of defending the interest of the Venezuelan people. And this new Parliament, with the anti-blockade law, this move was important to preserving the peace of the country.

Venezuela is a very peaceful country and we now have the opportunity of opening new processes with this

Parliament – process of recovering the economic plan with this anti-blockade law. We are working to protect the social protection of the people – the capacity of the salaries, the service affected by the sanctions, affected by the different attacks and actions of the opposition. We are working in a very strong relationship with Russia, Iran, China, Turkey and with African countries to re-organize the mechanism for trade and commerce. We cannot use the normal financial sector so we have to use a new mechanism.

We created sometime ago a new cryptocurrency of petro and we have countries which are working with the cryptocurrency also. We are looking in different way to re-establish the economic capacity of the country because the oil sector was affected by the price fall and then the attacks against the country. Prior to 2015, we received more than 50 billion dollars in oil revenue. But in the last five years, we have received less than 5 billion dollars in oil revenue. And the political position of President Maduro to preserve the legacy of President Chavez to continue on the way of the Bolivarian Socialism, to continue the popular power, the popular participation was very important.

So, we need to go ahead not only to defend but to advance. We need to go ahead to improve the capacity of the people, the capacity of the government, the capacity of the economy, so we have continued to build on the revolution. This moment is a very important one for the country as we continue economic recovery, the social recovery and the political stability. We will have regional elections for the Governors at the end of this 2021. We have conditions and new capacities for the oil, gold, mine sectors and the crypto currencies and to bypass the impact of the blockade from the United States. The United States, we can see from the 6th of January 2020, they had very serious internal crisis and we don't have big expectations for the Biden Presidency but maybe some issues may change with the Biden



Administration.

In Latin America, the narrative is very positive with the elections in Ecuador. We can recover the alliance in Ecuador. In Bolivia, the people defeated the people there did a coup against the popular government of Evo Morales. The United States will continue promoting interventionist actions. Until President Chavez arrived in 1999, the interest of the United States in Venezuela remains the same – take control of the country, take control of the natural resources. The ways to do that may be different between one or another US government but we will continue to defeat all these attacks. 2021 like President Maduro said yesterday will be the year for the recovery of the economy, of the social and economic capacity of the people.

SOS: What are peculiarities in the diplomatic relationship between the Venezuelan government and the outgoing administration of President Trump and other western countries compared to past US governments?

Ambassador: In 2018, President Nicholas Maduro was elected President with more than 66% of the vote. But in that time, the opposition did not recognize election in Venezuela. The United States and the European Union did not recognize the election of President Maduro. For that reason, in 2019, he promoted the puppet Guidado as the interim President. For two years, the European Union recognized Guidado as President but he never had the capacities and the conditions of the government. The strong unity between the people and the armed forces and the social movement which support the revolution never permit any form of real action of this political set up against the government of Venezuela. Immediately, the United States recognized the presidency of Guidado we cut bilateral relations with the United States. Actually, we don't have diplomatic ties with the United States. Actually, we are open to dialogue with respect to the sovereignty, with respect to our constitution, with respect to our democracy without any imposition. The term of Guidado as a member of Parliament finished on the 4th of January. The European Union took a very strange decision. They said that they don't recognize Guidado as the interim President because his term as a Deputy (in Parliament) had finished but then also they don't recognize President Nicholas Maduro (laughter). So, maybe they can appoint a leader as they did during the colony/ So, when you see the diplomatic ties with other Ambassadors, all the European countries receive Venezuelan Ambassadors appointed by President Nicholas Maduro – from the United Kingdom to Spain.

With European Union, it is a very special situation. They do not recognize us but we have Ambassadors in their countries while they have Ambassadors in Venezuela. But the toughest situation with the Europeans is the blockade on Venezuelan funds. For example, in London, there is about 5 billion dollars Venezuelan dollars frozen. In some other European countries, we have similar situations. Maybe in the future, we might have normalized situations with these countries.

I say this because the new Parliament has the duty to promote the Venezuelan sovereignty, the Venezuelan constitution and the Venezuelan law. We are ready and open for dialogue with the Biden administration. Some days ago, the International Criminal Court took one decision on a territorial dispute case between Venezuela and Guyana. Immediately, the United States sent their armed forces to Guyana to sign agreement with the military and to promote the participation of oil companies like Exxon in this area. They are using the conflict between Venezuela and Guyana. This is a case that has been there for more than one hundred years. After the independence of Guyana, they brought one territory to Guyana and so started a conflict.

So, the United States government will continue to use several ways to attack the Venezuelan revolution. In more than 22 years, we prevailed over all these actions. After the failed coup attack against President Chavez in 2002, the first country to recognize the coup was the United States. When Guidado was propped up, the United States recognized him. We believe that maybe the Democrats would fix some of the problems caused by Trump.

SOS: What is the vision behind the Bolivarian Revolution?

Ambassador: President Chavez was interested in the process to transform our polity. He wanted to transform the nationalist project into an anti-imperialism and socialist republic. When President Hugo Chavez won the election, the oil price was very low but the economic conditions were very high – 60% of the population operated below the poverty line and many Venezuelans lacked access to medicines and other healthcare supplies. There was a big crisis before President Chavez. The President therefore set up the guideline for the Bolivarian revolution in several ways. Internally in the country – the economic recovery and social investment. So, we believe in the multilateralism and multipolarity not one country ruling the world. We believe in the capacity of the different region – Africa, Latin America, Middle East, Asia.

The Bolivarian Plan, that is the plan of the fatherland has at least five points. One is the independence –

Venezuelan independence, the political capacity – the possibility to establish one system in the participatory democracy. The second point is the economic development and the process to build the socialism with the use of our resource – the human resource, the natural resource, the capacities to build a very strong economy. This is to satisfy our necessities in this special conditions. The other point is the environment defense - the action to preserve the life of the planet. The effort to preserve the environment at different levels of agreement at the multilateral levels. Fidel Castro talked about this situation. President Hugo Chavez talked about this situation – to preserve the life of the planet versus the action of the capitalism and the imperialism to destroy the life.

The other issue is about the geo-political level – the international region especially to promote the relation between the countries in the solidarity with respect to the conditions to mutual benefits. This is the basis for the relations with Russia etc. It is also to establish the new rules of engagement at the international level. This does not only apply to the United Nations. It is also about the relations between the different countries. It is about the relations with the different blocks and the different systems in the world against the vision of one country ruling the entire world order as in the supremacist position. So, we are talking about the life in the planet, the multilateralism and multipolarity and democracy and regional integration. Venezuela potentials with all its capacities to contribute to the regional and international development.

In Latin America, we have two mechanisms, the SELAC – without the United States and Canada and the Organization of American States under the instruction of the United States. They are different visions – the Monroe Vision and the Bolivarian Vision. I think President Nicholas Maduro was the Minister of Foreign Affairs under President Hugo Chavez for more than six years. And some sectors of the opposition don't

recognize the capacities of President Maduro. In some occasion, this mistake of the opposition is good for us. President Maduro is still working in the same way as President Chavez to build the Socialism in Venezuela and to maintain the anti-imperialist position and to establish the respect for relations in the different levels in the world.

SOS: What has been the Impact of the Bolivarian Revolution on the Workers of Venezuela? How has the Bolivarian Revolution improved the lot of Venezuelan workers and how can this help in strengthening the relations between Venezuelan workers and Nigerian workers?



Ambassador: When resident Chavez talked about Socialism, he talked about the different aspects of socialism. The socialism in the economy, the socialism in the social sector, the socialism in the ethical and political level, the socialism in the human relations. In the working class in Venezuela we have a very strong history. The fields such as the oil sector is more than hundred years. The participation of workers in the Bolivarian revolution is very important. It

was recognized by President Chavez and was recognized by President Maduro who said that he is a working class President because he was a member of the trade union in the transport sector. He is a worker and he understands the very important role of the working class in the country.

When we talk about the socio-economic level of the working class, Venezuela government before this special situation, Venezuela has one of the highest minimum wage in Latin America. President Chavez before he passed away approved one special law for the right of the workers in Venezuela to recognize the pension, to recognize the wages, to recognize the different levels of relations between the workers and the state and between the public and private sectors.

Furthermore, the salary – the social protection, to

protect the housing needs of workers, the Bolivarian revolution in ten years built three million four hundred thousand houses for the people – workers, farmers, people, families etc. This process was possible because of the cooperation of the working class. This process was possible because President Chavez and President Maduro recognized the condition of our people without house. Before that, we built about two million houses. But within twenty years of the revolution, we had built more than twenty times the number of houses that we met before the Bolivarian Revolution. In the agricultural sector, we have seen the effect in the lives of Venezuelan workers and people. As President Maduro said, this anti-blockade law has helped us to establish the economic condition of the working class. We have been able to establish the rights of the workers at the different levels the Minister of Social Affairs comes from working class.

In the political sector, we can talk of the participation of workers at different levels. Not only at the level of the elected positions such as Mayor and Governors. Also in the organization of the different mechanisms for the participation of the working class. We have the big central trade union organization which involve all the sectors of the working class. In every strand of workers organization, we organize special committees for the political participation of the working class. During the economic war, the working class created different levels of organization to promote the economic recovery plan. The workers played their role to recover the oil industry, the gas sector, the transportation capacity, to restore the electrical system in Venezuela. The working class also played roles in defending the revolution – in organizing the militias because we need to defend the revolution against any kind of military intervention.

Also, the process to build the Socialism, with one barrel of oil at one hundred dollars, the state had money. But when you need to build with your hands the industry, the economic, the transportation, if the working class does

not have the conscience, the commitment and the organization, the revolution would suffer. But in the past five years, the working class has played its role to establish the service, the production capacity and the social capacity in Venezuela.

In Venezuela, we have a mix of the private and public sector. Like many other socialist economies, it is not possible to have only the public sector. We have a mixed economy. We have successful experience of the working class leading the industries, leading the productive sectors of the economy – in the basic industries in iron, oil, food. We also have the working class play their role at the level of the local governance.

At the level of the Parliament, the working class has one strong participation from the Bolivarian Socialist Centre Trade Union are now members of the Parliament. During the constitutional assembly, the working class has one member elected directly from the working class. We can compare – the participation of the Venezuelan workers at the economy, the social and political level is very strong.

The working class of Venezuela and the working class of Nigeria has a lot of opportunities for bilateral relations. Last year, we started the Anti-Imperialist Working Class Movement. This is one area of cooperation in the struggle between the Venezuelan and Nigerian working class. The working class in Venezuela has participation in the institutions. But this is not just about institutionalizing the process because they have their own life. The State recognize the role of the working class and transfers the ballot to the working class in different areas. We don't have these tripartite meetings between government, workers and the private sector to bargain on salaries etc. we don't have this mechanism. It is more direct between the workers and employers. The State respects the conditions of the working class and the trade unions. It is a new mechanism. Actually, Venezuela and Nigeria can share this experience.

SOS: On the issue of migration, in terms of labour laws and the protection of migrant rights, do migrants in Venezuela enjoy the same right and protection like citizens and workers in Venezuela?

Ambassador: When we established the economic capacity of the revolution, we did not put any barrier between Venezuelans and immigrants. There has been no xenophobic conditions in Venezuela. Venezuela provides services for all immigrants in the oil industry and other sectors with the participation of migrant workers. So, in Venezuela there is no discrimination in employment conditions at all.





HEALTH AND SAFETY MUST BE A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT AT WORK!

The World Health Organisation's constitution states that “The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.”

As we begin a second year of the global Covid-19 pandemic, it is clearer than ever that health and safety at the workplace is central to our working lives. We are building a global campaign leading up to Workers' Memorial Day on 28 April, demanding that health and safety is recognized as a fundamental right at work.

Workers' health and safety has not been treated with sufficient priority in the pandemic, and it was never treated with sufficient priority beforehand. But there is a huge body of knowledge that shows that working people are safer the more they are consulted and engaged in prevention and protection at the workplace.

Covid-19 has highlighted inadequate occupational health and safety services and practices in many workplaces, such as the failure to provide adequate sick pay for the ill and the vulnerable, poor ventilation and inadequate testing when people have to be at work, and shortages of suitable masks.

In many countries, Covid-19 is not even acknowledged as an occupational disease, despite the nurses, teachers, food workers, drivers and others who have developed the disease because they have gone to work to keep health services going and keep people fed.

Tackling these problems requires action at local, national and global level. We should start with the implementation of the International Labour Organisation's 2019 Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work which declared that “safe and healthy working conditions are fundamental to decent work”.

The ILO conference resolution subsequently adopted asked the Governing Body to make “proposals for including safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work” in the same way as the eight fundamental ILO Conventions (on child and forced labour, discrimination at work and freedom to join a union) do. These rights, along with maximum limits on working hours, living minimum wages and social protection form the basis of the labour protection floor we want, part of the New Social Contract we are demanding. In particular, to address the risk of further pandemics and learn the lessons of MERS, SARS and now Covid-19, the ILO needs to adopt a Biological Hazards Convention.

Making health and safety a fundamental right would be a

recognition that our lives matter more than money.

But it would also:

a. oblige governments to follow the ILO occupational health and safety Conventions and report regularly on progress and compliance, and encourage governments and employers to spend more money on protecting people at work;

b. encourage greater adherence to the rights set out in the Conventions, such as the right to refuse unsafe work and the requirement to consult trade unions about health and safety. Joint management-union safety committees, and worker consultation about prevention and protection must be at the heart of tackling the pandemic in the world of work; and

c. build respect for workers' health and safety into trade agreements and multilateral arrangements, like World Bank and regional development bank rules, WHO guidance, etc. Unions would then take up the task of persuading multinational companies to embed decent health and safety in global supply chains as part of mandatory due diligence.

Above all, we must not forget the specific problems faced by women workers who have borne the brunt of the pandemic in terms of the heightened occupational exposure in the jobs they do, their unequal responsibilities for childcare and the threat posed by domestic violence.

And we also recognise that black lives matter in the pandemic as well as in economic and social discrimination. Colonialism and imperialism have left countries without the resources needed for decent incomes, social protection and quality health services, and have now affected how vaccines are distributed.

The NLC's President, Brother Ayuba Wabba, as President of the ITUC, has been leading the fight on the ILO Governing Body to develop a roadmap to put workers' health and safety at the heart of the fundamental rights at work.

Now Nigeria's government, and governments around the world, have to answer our call. Put workers' health first, not corporate greed!



Owen Tudor, ITUC Deputy General Secretary



African youth and COVID-19: Effects and Possible Mitigation Options

The United Nations figures indicated that 226 million youth aged 15-24 lived in Africa in 2015 representing nearly 20% of Africa's population, making up one-fifth of the world's youth population. If one includes all people aged below 35, this number increases to staggering three-quarters of Africa's population. Further, about 60% of Africa's population in 2019 is under the age of 25, making Africa the world's youngest continent. According to the UN's demographic projections, the median age in Africa will be 19.8 in 2020. On the continent, Mauritius is expected to have the highest median age, 37.4, and Niger is expected to have the lowest, 15.1. In 2019, more than 1/3 of the population is aged between 15-34. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation relying on the UN data extrapolated that by 2100, Africa's youth population could be equivalent to twice Europe's entire population.

These analyses point to the fact that the African continent is a youthful one and will remain so for a while. The case of a growing youth bulge has been established but it remains to be seen how it can be harvested positively in furthering the development and prosperity aspirations of the continent and her peoples. No doubt, the coronavirus pandemic has compounded the already challenging situation that African governments are facing in dealing with the growing youthful population. This article briefly x-rays the challenges that COVID-19 posed to African youth and tries to tease out some options that young African workers and African trade unions can engineer in addressing and converting these challenges to gains.

In the first quarter of 2020 when the World Health Organisation finally declared the coronavirus (first discovered in Wuhan, China in November 2019) as a global health crisis and a pandemic and subsequently labelling it as COVID-19, Africa has pre-existing conditions that hampered youth development and the conversion of the youth bulge to socio-economic gains. These challenges were mainly socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental. These pre-existing challenges are being replicated during, or have been exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19.

One of the nagging challenges is unemployment. A report by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) that showed between 2008 and 2019, the number of persons seeking jobs increased from 6.5 million to 10.3 million. For Nigeria, the same time frame, youth unemployment stood at 4 out of every 10 persons without a job. With the implementation of the various public health measures to rein in COVID-19, it is observed that 7 in 10 persons engaged in the private sector (small and medium enterprises) lost their jobs.

Closely linked to employment losses and gaping unemployment is the issue of wage and holiday/leave allowances losses. For sectors most hit by the pandemic such as aviation, tourism, hospitality and personal services, most enterprises in these sectors laid-off workers, placed some on technical redundancy and others on leave. Majority of the workers affected by the different approaches of their employers were without pay. These persons had to fall back on savings and borrowing for survival. Unionized workplaces did

not suffer such fates but given the loss unionization in these industries, a lot of workers were shortchanged.

For those who had their jobs, the fears of contracting the disease were real and deep among young people. The fears were heightened by the low availability and provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) mostly at the early and difficult stages of the outbreak. For young persons as essential services providers, there were cases of such workers reporting being infected and some succumbed to the virus. In essence, the challenge of staying safe and healthy and also the ensuring of a safe and healthy workplace are challenges that workers, trade unions and employers, as well as governments, have to collaborate to tackle.

Linked to safety and health issues at workplaces is the psychological and mental challenges that covid-19 posed to children and young people. During the various restriction measures imposed and enforced, most young persons who are giving to adventurous activities and initiatives suffered psychological and mental difficulties restricted and confined to very limited spaces. Though as generation Y and Z, they are “smartphones and internet savvy”, they, nonetheless, experienced boredom and loss of productivity on account of stifled opportunities for outdoor inspirations and motivations.

COVID-19 has also exacerbated the decline of economic activities which was already noticed to be making a south trajectory. The 2018 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) indicated that 43.2% of Africa's citizens live in a country where sustainable economic opportunities have declined in a decade (2008-2017). As observed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), African economies will witness serious economic contractions that will hamper economic growth outlook. For these reduced economic opportunities, young people suffer more from the impacts. For good measure, governments' spending on social services has been drastically affected. Nigeria has gone into another economic recession and most poor and less developed economies in Africa will not be able to finance their national budgets.

Still relying on the 2018 IIAG report, disinvestment in infrastructure on the African continent will compromise Africa's pace and capacity to effectively battle, defeat and recover from effects of COVID-19. The 2018 IIAG noted that despite progress in Infrastructure development, the scores remain low, ditto Transparency & Accountability which remains the worst performing sub-category. Data in the 2019 Ibrahim Forum Report titled Africa's Youth: Jobs or Migration? – show that education, now more than ever, is affected by this. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa had a skills deficit where higher education levels did not enhance job prospects. With 30 million young people expected to enter Africa's labour market annually in the next decade, relevant education models must be rolled out across Africa. Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalysed the need for, and access to, widespread e-learning platforms which allow the school year to continue without contact.

The 2020 Afrobarometer data indicated that where infrastructure is present, digital literacy tends to be higher as citizens' readiness to transition to digital learning is “primarily shaped by their level of formal education and access to electricity. This data also show that though the availability of electricity has increased in the last decade, the continental average for households that have access to both a reliable electricity grid and cell phone service is 62%. COVID-19 has made it harder for most households to afford and pay for high electricity bills. Governments are expected to step in and assuage this hardship being suffered by households by lowering electricity bills; monetizing palliatives as electricity payment so that children and young people can be assisted to learn online. Increasing the prices of utilities will harm indigent citizens and millions falling into indigence exacerbated by COVID-19. African trade unions have continued to advance these arguments as measures that African governments should consider and adopt.

The enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties by young people were affected by COVID-19. Importantly, the right to participation and engagement in governance was limited and stifled. In a sense, COVID-19 has provided a crucial opportunity for the politicisation of access to socio-economic, as well as civil rights, to be reviewed at all levels of governance within Africa.

To drive solutions that will improve the lots of young Africans, Now Generation Network (NGN - a youth NGO) in its 2020 survey highlighted solutions that African governments should explore to consciously mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. The solutions include: development and implementation of social welfare policies, tax cuts, and subsidies to mitigate the economic impact on citizens and businesses, and fully supporting vulnerable families with food supplies to enable them to stay home”. Yet, the commitment to saving livelihoods can however not be separated from the political commitment to transparency and accountability towards eradicating endemic corruption for such measures to be affected and effective.



Comrade Joel Odigie
Deputy General Secretary of ITUC- Africa

From the Archives

THE HISTORY OF MINIMUM WAGE



Not many people know that before Minimum Wage (the lowest remuneration that an employer is not permitted to go below and which cannot be changed by collective agreement and personal contracts) there was Maximum Wage. As a matter of history, Minimum Wage originated from Maximum Wage. In 1349, King Edward III set a maximum wage for labourers in medieval England. King Edward was a wealthy land owner who depended on serfs or labourers to work the land. After the devastations caused by the Black Plague in different parts of the world particularly in England especially as marked by an acute decimation of the population, there was an acute shortage of labourers. This motivated the few remaining labourers to charge very high wages for their services. In order to protect the economic interests of the landowners and maintain some kind of stability in the system, King Edward was forced to enact a trade law known as the Ordinance of Labourers in 1349. This law was aimed at setting a wage ceiling otherwise known as Maximum Wage which no landowner was expected to pay beyond for the services of serfs or labourers.

In the years to follow, there were subsequent amendments to the Ordinance of Labourers such as the Statute of Labourer which was enacted in 1351. This Ordinance of Labourers increased the penalties for paying a wage above the set rates. As the public use and understanding of minimum wage increased, the practice became tilted towards using the wage ceiling as a benchmark for achieving living wages. Thus, in 1389, the Statute of Labourer was amended to fix wages to the price of food. As time went on the Public Commissioner responsible for setting the Maximum Wage also began to set formal Minimum Wages. This practice was eventually formalized in 1604 by King James I with the passage of the Act Fixing a Minimum Wage for workers in the textile industry. It took nearly three centuries, for the first modern legislation to regulate minimum wages to be institutionalized in New Zealand and Australia. At this time in New Zealand, Australia, England, and mainland Europe, owners of Capital exploited the army of women and young workers who were employed in large numbers. The sweatshop owners were thought to have unfair bargaining power over their employees and a minimum wage was proposed as a means to make them pair fair wages to their workers. Over time, the significance of minimum wages changed to helping families become more self-sufficient.

Thus, the first modern Minimum Wage policy was developed in 1894 in New Zealand and later in 1896 in Australia. The United Kingdom was to follow suit in 1909 while statutory minimum wages were first introduced nationally in the United States in 1938.

In 1928, the International Labour Organization adopted the Minimum Wage Fixing Machinery Convention Number 28. This was to be followed up in 1970 with the adoption of a more comprehensive Minimum Wage Fixing Convention Number 131. Convention 131 requires ILO member countries to minimize exclusions to the application of Minimum Wage Fixing, ensure that minimum wages are reviewed from time to time, provides that minimum wage can only be fixed in full consultation with social partners who must negotiate independently and on equal footing, that the minimum wage levels takes into account the needs of workers and their families as well as relevant economic factors, and that measures to enforce the minimum wage are employed.

The history of the National Minimum Wage in Nigeria dates as far back as 1974 when there was an increase in the minimum wage earned by workers, though, not backed by any enabling law. It was in 1981 that the first National Minimum Wage that was backed by law was put in place and pegged at N125. The process continued all through 1981,1991,1993,1998, 2000 culminating in the then National Minimum Wage (Amendment) of N18,000 in 2011. This was recently reviewed to N30,000 and passed into law by President Muhammadu Buhari on the 18th of April 2019.



By Comrade Asuzu Echezona
Assistant General Secretary, Office of the NLC President

Young Workers' Corner



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DIDI ADODO — ANOTHER PAINFUL ETERNAL EXIT

By Denja Yaqub



When we first met mid-80s, he strikingly exhibited all the attributes of a courageous, determined, focused comrade optimistic, like the rest of us, of the imminence of a revolution that would "soon" upturn the entire system that viciously divides the society in an unbalanced class of exploiters and the exploited; oppressors and the oppressed; the poor and the rich.

Beyond that, he displayed an exceptional glee in compassion for everyone around him, in addition to his clear passion for the struggle for a better society where equity, fairness and justice would prevail in the socio-economic, political lives and wellbeing of our people.

His presence and roles in organisations of left extractions were colossal, as huge as his frame, though most times anonymous but not underscoring his high level of commitment and discipline.

A very personal friend and comrade; we closely related for over three decades until death snatched him off mother earth on Tuesday 12th January 2021.

Comrade Didi Aifediyi Adodo was an epitome of humour, compassion, organised, selfless and focused individual in astonishing manners. The struggle was his life; he was never carried away by whatever circumstances he found himself.

In the students' movement, Didi was a major figure at the

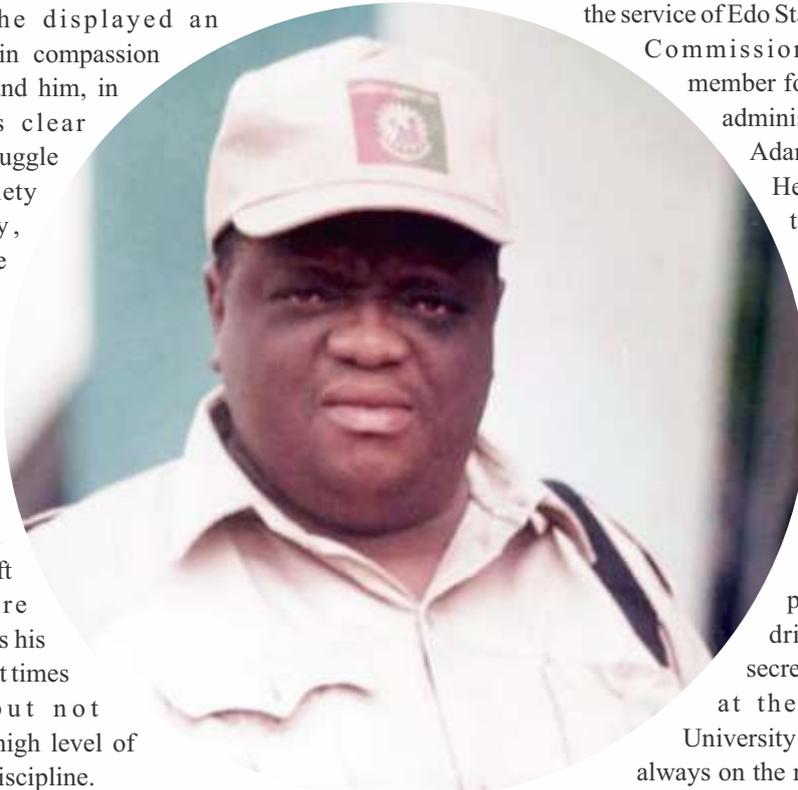
University of Benin where he read Political Science and leader of the University's branch of the Patriotic Youth Movement of Nigeria, an underground coordinating organisation of all campus based left organisations in Nigeria. He attended meetings and protests across the country.

He left the university to serve the labour movement dutifully throughout his adult life; though briefly in the service of Edo State Government as a Commissioner and cabinet member for eight years in the administration of Comrade Adams Oshiomhole.

He joined the staff of the National Secretariat of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU, as Administrative Officer. Though working with a few other colleagues, he was practically the driving force of the secretariat, then located at the campus of the University of Ibadan. He was always on the roads, hardly in one city for one full week.

Routinely, when he receives his salary at the end of every month, he will invite comrades in the student movement, members of the Marxist Socialist Movement at the University of Ibadan and gave each of us part of his salary for feeding, without our prompting. He was full of extraordinary compassion; very natural without any pretence.

He left ASUU voluntarily to become General Secretary of the Iron and Steel Senior Staff Association of Nigeria



(ISSAN) where he diligently organised steel workers across the country at a period the steel industry faced serious financial crisis fundamentally due to bad governance and it's attendant fleecing fingers of government functionaries who saw the government owned steel firms as conduit to syphon funds meant to stabilise the companies to produce materials capable of lifting the country's manufacturing capacity.

He fought from Ajaokuta Steel Company to Aladja, Oshogbo, Katsina and several others to defend workers whose rights were threatened with declarations of redundancies, outright sacks or non-payment of salaries that ran into months and in some cases, years. He fought against government policies driven by neo liberal economic interests that ultimately circumscribed the survival of the industry till date.

He was an astute trade union negotiator; a collective bargaining expert who knew where the shoe pinches workers and what are to be done to assuage or annihilate the pains.

Didi was a resourceful and courageous organiser par excellence. He did not only organise workers in the steel industry, he organised other trade unions to form the Senior Staff Consultative Association of Nigeria, SESCOAN at a period the military, under the dictatorship of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha descended on trade unions in the country, constraining their rights to independently organise and defend workers as well as advance our collective struggle for democracy.

As the onslaught continued, SESCOAN was transformed to Congress of Free Trade Unions to ensure all trade unions can be affiliated to it in the event that the Nigeria Labour Congress is brought down by the military government who had already seized the NLC Secretariat and imposed a Sole Administrator to decimate the labour centre's capabilities as pro-democracy struggles heightened in the country.

Though trade union and workers rights were deliberately circumscribed during the Abacha military dictatorship, CFTU provided platforms that kept the movement alive to its responsibilities through sustained agitations, conferences and meetings, most times clandestine in planning.

Didi worked tirelessly with several other comrades to connect trade unions to the pro-democracy struggles that studiously combated military dictatorship in Nigeria; which eventually led to the return of civil rule. He was either a founding member of several organisations or a key member of numerous civil society groups that grounded the country against military despotism.

He was actively a member of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights led by late Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, Campaign for Democracy and United

Action for Democracy; working closely with Beko, late Alao Aka-Bashorun, late Chief Gani Fawehinmi, late Baba Omojola, Dr. Osagie Obayuwana, Comrade Femi Aborisade, Comrade Jonathan Ihonde, Comrade Lawson Osagie, Comrade Femi Falana, Comrade John Odah, Prof. Sylvester Odion-Akhaine, Comrade Tony Iyare, Prof. Itse Sagay and many others. Amongst all, he was closer to late Dr, Festus Iyayi who was President of ASUU when he was employed as administrative Officer at its headquarters. He was also a member of the Socialist Congress of Nigeria.

He also played active role in the formation of the Labour and Civil Society Coalition which brought together several civil society organisations in labour's struggles against bad governance in the country.

He played a major part in ensuring the reunification of the Nigeria Labour Congress and the defunct United Labour Congress recently. He was the General Secretary of the ULC. He knew what a strong, united labour movement meant to the struggle.

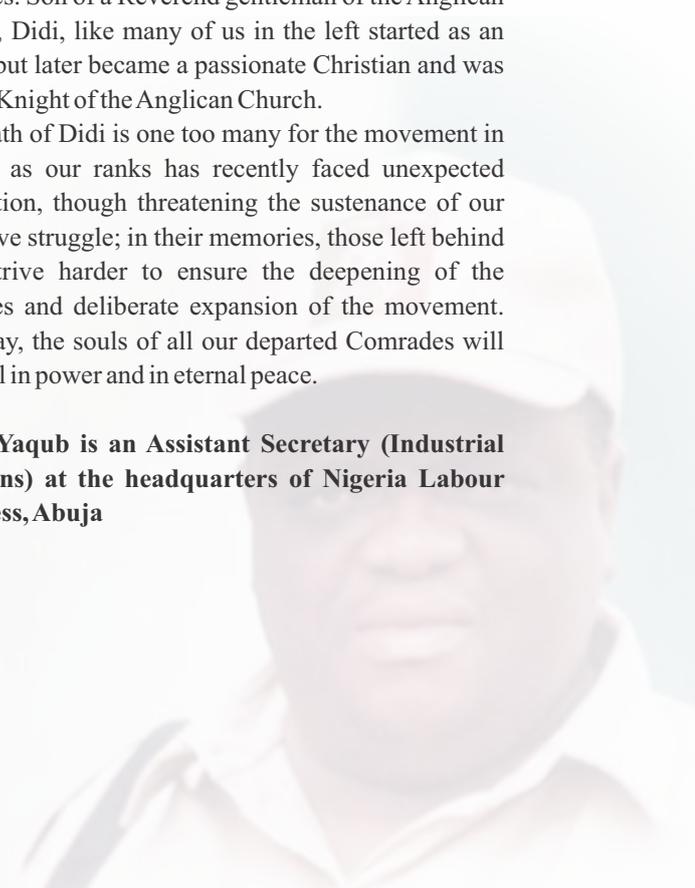
Didi was also a founding member of the Labour Party at both national and Edo State levels. He played active roles during the campaigns for the first term of Comrade Adams Oshiomhole for the Governorship of Edo State which initially started with an alliance between Labour Party and Action Congress of Nigeria.

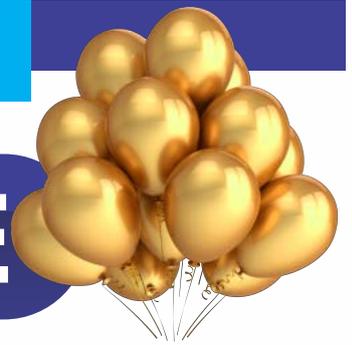
Indeed, he faced several fatal attacks during the campaigns in 2007 and protests that followed the elections up to the judgement of the election petitions tribunal in Benin City.

Didi Adodo left behind a wife, Ngozi and three children who are all university graduates. A decent family man who never modulated his family's importance in all his activities. Son of a Reverend gentleman of the Anglican Church, Didi, like many of us in the left started as an atheist but later became a passionate Christian and was made a Knight of the Anglican Church.

The death of Didi is one too many for the movement in Nigeria as our ranks has recently faced unexpected decimation, though threatening the sustenance of our collective struggle; in their memories, those left behind must strive harder to ensure the deepening of the struggles and deliberate expansion of the movement. That way, the souls of all our departed Comrades will rest well in power and in eternal peace.

Denja Yaqub is an Assistant Secretary (Industrial Relations) at the headquarters of Nigeria Labour Congress, Abuja





SOCIAL SPACE

2020 IN PICTURES



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We stand in Solidarity with our Heroes - Workers in the Frontline

They Work so that We may Live...
We Appreciate All Frontline Workers... Thank You



Health Workers



**Aviation &
Maritime Workers**

Journalists



**Sanitation
Workers**



**Road
Transport
Workers**



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Workers**

**Informal Sector
Workers**



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you can call the following NLC help lines
+234 811 7077 418 and +234 811 7077 419

