

THE WORKER

The realities confronting the Nigerian worker today leaves very little room for celebration. What, with the dysfunctional labour policies in our environment and near collapse of the domestic economy of the average worker, is there to celebrate? Probably the realization that he is still alive and as such, can hope for a better tomorrow that has been long in coming.

The concept of work for mankind takes its root from the Holy Scriptures where we find that man at creation was assigned the responsibility of dressing and keeping the garden in which he lived. From this original concept and definition, it is clear that the ability of the man to subsist was not predicated on whether he had a job or not. The needs of the man were quite clearly provided by his creator. The point here is that originally, the concept of man working was to give him a sense of responsibility and a mechanism for wealth multiplication, not a determinant for his survival.

However, what we are faced with in today's world is an indication of the decay that the human has been exposed to. Man has to work for a living since the value of a man's life is measured in monetary terms. This is a global reality that is even more evident in our local environment where the acquisition of material wealth is very highly celebrated with little regard paid to the means of such wealth acquisition.

In the light of the foregoing, the menace of the job insecurity becomes a worrisome reality to cope with. In a nation where our tertiary institution is churning out graduates by their thousands annually into the labour market, it is an anti-climax that those jobs are faced with various forms of insecurity.

The Labour Act of 2005 still generates a lot of discourse in different quarters with the emphasis being placed on the sincerity or otherwise of the government. One is forced to wonder if indeed the law is meant to give workers the supposed freedom in a democratized and decentralized labour or to demolish the structure of the Nigerian Labour Congress thereby checking the ability of organized labour to present a common front on issues whenever necessary.

Job insecurity and lack of transparency are two aberrations forced on our labour force basically due to the greed and selfishness of those in position of authority whether in the public sphere or private establishments. Now, while it is only idealistic to envision a world free of these aberrations, we can in practice get as close to this ideal as possible.

Organized labour has remained one of the most vibrant and effective tools for the generality of our people to get the government to pay attention to our voices. We must not lose this power. For as long as the nation's workforce is distracted by issues of job insecurity and lack of transparency in whatever form, productivity will remain low.

I must not fail to point out the contribution of the improperly packaged and privatization programme of the present day administration to this quagmire our workforce is confronted with. Now while privatization in principle may be a laudable and tested means of economic recovery and empowerment for nations, the Nigerian brand of privatization is obviously skewed. What we have witnessed is another example of imported solution which has not been contemplated in the Nigerian perspective, the hurried

sales of hitherto government owned establishments to individuals and companies with no intention of keeping these establishments operational.

As a nation, we have to come to a point where we understand that for our economy to see any progress, the agents of such desired progress the workforce must be rightly esteemed. It therefore becomes an obvious fact that for our workers to enjoy the fruits of their labour and for our national economy to improve, we the Nigerian people have to look to a new government. A new crop of leaders that will esteem the average Nigerian above the material wealth found in different parts of the nation.

The present leaders of our nation lack moral rectitude to do this. What they keep singing are rhetoric that bear no meaning to the Nigerian worker. If only our leaders can love the workforce as themselves, then our economy will be better for it.

I therefore call upon the Nigerian worker to take a stand with me on the journey that we have embarked upon to turn around the fortunes of the average Nigerian, and by extension, the collective enterprise known as Nigeria. It may be a long, challenging and demanding journey, but once we are resolved, we can achieve anything.