BOOK REVIEW

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Book Title: Labour Unionism, Leadership and Development in Nigeria

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The book presents a comprehensive explanation of leadership and labour unions in the advancement of society, two contentious issues in Nigerian politics and social development. The work emphasises the essential role that labour unions play(ed) in the development process that the state has repeatedly failed to see in postcolonial Nigeria. Trade Unionism, Leadership and Development in Nigeria see trade unions as reform agents, genuine partners in development, as well as recalcitrant, because of their activities that are often disruptive of the system. It is an exhaustive study that covers virtually everything that is of significance in the emergency of the Nigerian nation and labour movement/industrial relations. It addresses the challenges of leadership, collaboration, and politics in Labour Unionism, both to the workers' welfare and the stability of the nation's political system.

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The analysis first derives a nuanced understanding of the issue from both workers' experiences and the colonial legacy. It also formulates an interpretive relationship and collaboration between trade unions in Nigeria. The first and third chapters of the work trace the dynamics of leadership in the Nigerian Trade Union Movement. Although leadership has no widely agreed meaning, it touches on several conceptual issues of leadership; it makes a range of suggestions both for the term itself and for various related concepts, such as leadership and leadership development. Each of these meanings uses a slightly different expression. While the substance is essentially the same, there are some distinctions. They are all characterised by awareness, education, and struggles in the cycle of development. Though scholars and socio-political commentators have different perspectives on the role of people in the advancement of society, they have always agreed that ideas (critical thinking/quality) are the drivers of history, not human beings. From the foregoing, their explanation is based on the fact that the fortunes of organised labour have not been static but like the pendulum, which oscillates between moments of grace and glory as well as serious decline, all depending on the quality of leadership in place.

The work critiques the development crisis by recognising leadership as a major constraint in Nigeria. In Nigeria's contemporary political and social space, authors conclude that there is a lack of leadership acumen and charisma for both organised labour and government (as they have done in the process of colonization) to extract the country from the quarantine of poverty, stagnation, and political turmoil. Chapters two, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen of the work pursue answers to basic critical questions about the role of the labour union in democracy and the challenges that underpin virile and viable labour unionism in Nigeria, as well as possible solutions to these intractable problems. The authors have gained a good understanding of the structure of industrial relations and have not ruled out the importance of communication between management and the organised labour union in managing the conditions of employment. Thus, it distinguishes between collective bargaining and conflict resolution,

especially to avoid turning industrial relations into a permanent fire-fighting operation. From their emphasis, it is not only that both sides address capacity issues but also use the right methods in negotiating in the case of multilateral or tripartite discussions.

In Nigeria's experience, work maintains that strike remains the only language (true industrial tool) understood by employers when employees are pressing for demands. As a result of the industrial strike, the prevalent form of industrial conflict tends to be relatively unique to the distortion of academics. Although this is true in my personal experience, industrial disputes in Nigeria appear to intensify in higher institutions than in others. But when two elephants war, it's the grass that's going to suffer. In other words, while labour over the years has won and lost some battles, the authors maintain that people and students, as well as their members, have been the victims of agitation, particularly when the government remains firm on their plea.

In fact, few scholars have accomplished the herculean task of domesticating trade-union activities as academic knowledge, and it is not uncommon for academics to argue that their books are accessible to non-academic readers, even though it is obvious that language and presentation are nuanced and difficult for non-experts to discern. But, as far as this book is concerned, one may conclude that the contributors expressed their ideas lucidly. Drawing on several sources, including the first-hand experience of some comrades, the work incorporates historical, philosophical, and analytical methods or methodologies in providing a Nigerian-centred understanding of leadership in labour unionism. This may be possible because of the sound knowledge of history and journalism combined with the in-depth knowledge of the military relationship with labour that the editors have.

The concerns presented in chapters four, six, seven, and eight deal with continuity and change between trade unions and government in the provision of good governance, growth, and capacity building from colonial to post-independent Nigeria. Building on the current political process, emphasis has been put on how the labour union can use the industrial relationship to ensure the stability, competitiveness, and efficiency of businesses without undermining the rights and

interests of employees. They warn, however, that the labour movement should not be concerned only with fielding or endorsing candidates for electoral positions but should be crucial in the formulation and implementation of policies if it is to maintain its place as a key social partner.

I was not entirely convinced by the narratives about the relationship between the military and organised labour, as I expected the chapter would have been dedicated to this, even with a serving military general as co-editor. In particular, the explanation of why the army is limited to handling industrial conflicts. While they (the military) came through the back door, the industrial strike was used to combat their illegitimacy.

Specifically, the findings in this book show that the ideal structure of industrial relations is attainable but does not mean that industrial conflicts and disputes will disappear. But beyond all doubt, the writers argue that, among other things, ideological quarrels limit the success of the labour movement. But if the labour movement could be politically neutral and concern itself exclusively with trade union jobs, the desired altruistic labour union could be accomplished. The reasons for this are that the participation of its leaders in politics with a different philosophy and politicians that differ from that of the movement has further denounced the picture of the Nigerian Labor Congress. Through doing so, the trade union was not taken seriously at the time of unrest by the politicians for whom it served.

In a final analysis, The authors emphasise the importance of sophisticated Labour political ideology in Nigeria, using Zambia and Poland as relative left-wing and liberal elements for the Labour party. Though the authors do not rule out the importance of foreign political ideas in enhancing the final review, using Zambia and Poland as a relative left wing and a liberal feature for the Labour Party, the authors reiterate the need for a sophisticated Labour political philosophy in Nigeria. While the authors do not preclude the value of foreign policy ideas to enhance political integration and leadership, they have avoided capitalist exploitation in the Nigerian space. It is therefore desirable that any borrowed political and economic ideas be Africanized and

reshaped to represent the African experience to ensure that they serve the needs and interests of Africa. One might wonder how the NLC could disintegrate due to partisanship, as previously stated. However, if the NLC and its affiliates are to form a workers' party, they should act based on dignity, democratic principles, and core values that are open and accountable. In other words, the labour movement might share an ideological engagement with politicians who share common ideological views on workers' interests, that is, the left and or liberal elements.

At the end of the day, Okpe et al. demonstrated a balance between the legitimate interests of the state and the interests of workers on the one hand and the priorities of equity on the other. More than ever before, the work traces the antecedents and identifies and articulates models for the involvement of labour policy in the creation of the Nigerian community. The work is a reliable addition to Nigeria's vast and growing body of political and labour history literature.