

Corruption and Criminal Dehydration of the Country's Economy by Members of the National Assembly

Didymus Tamen

Abstract

For too long this nation had been at the receiving end of a lecherous National Assembly whose primary function, it would seem is to skim off the nation either by padding budgets or harassing Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), and ministry officials into parting with substantial parts of their annual budgets in bribes to get allocated to them billions of naira as constituency projects, which projects are nothing more than a mirage at the end of the day. Even more scandalous is the fact that members of the National Assembly allocate fat salaries and allowances to themselves. This paper critically examines this and finds out that there is a huge gap between what is approved and what National Assembly members take as salaries and allowances. The paper also evaluates this scam and find out that, on paper it appears as if they are earning the official salaries while in reality their earnings have been padded with bloated and irregular quarterly allowance disguised as "running cost". The paper concludes that the pay of members of the National Assembly accounts for 25 percent of the total recurrent overhead budget of the Federal Government. This huge pay is damaging to the overall health of the nation's economy. That the lure of the incredible legitimate financial reward and the illicit financial exploits have turned the political climate in Nigeria almost to an exclusive reserve of the greedy, selfish, heartless and corrupt desperados. The paper recommends that it is time we undertake a comprehensive review downward of the huge pay of members of the legislature to bring it in line with the best practices in other countries. That politics should never be the cheapest platform to wealth and power but should be an avenue to offer genuine services to the people.

Introduction

Politics and indeed representative government originated in ancient Greece, where the people selected individuals to represent their families at councils. The Greek concept of politics more accurately refers to a process by which men debated matters concerning the "Polis" – the political community, and take actions in an attempt to realize the public interest or the common good. Thus, politics was seen as a controversy, a process of resolution of conflict through discussion, bargaining and compromise. It can be deduced that this form of representation practiced by the Greeks led to today's representative government and the establishment of legislatures worldwide.

The legislature performs the important function of making laws for good governance. It also aggregates and articulates interest of various groups in society. The Nigerian legislature is bicameral in nature – it is composed of two houses (Senate and House of Representatives). The Senate is made up of 109 members based on the equality of states, while the House of Representatives consists of 360 members based on the population of states.

The underlying cause of corruption and criminal dehydration of the country's economic by the members of the National Assembly has its root in greed and corruption. This has stunted the development and growth of political democracy in Nigeria. Members of the National Assembly today are greedy and corrupt thus placing their selfish interest before that of their respective people and the state. This level of greed and corruption goes a long way in making development and the maintenance of internal stability a difficult task. These representatives when drunk with wealth and power behave in absurd manners – a good example is the exchange of blows over certain embezzled funds and the struggle for power by members of the National Assembly. This clearly shows how members of the National Assembly have become driven not by the will to service but by the drunkenness of selfish and obsessed corrupt practices.

Thus, this paper is an examination and assessment of corruption and criminal dehydration of the country's economy by the National Assembly and the harmful effects on the nature and character of political competition and development in Nigeria. The paper is divided into six parts; closely following this introduction is conceptual analysis and theoretical framework. After this, we look at looting from the people and how legislators encourage corruption. We also examine criminal dehydration of the country's economy by members of the National Assembly. Finally, we treat the way forward in form of conclusion.

Conceptual Analysis

(a) *The Legislature*

The duty of the legislature is to exercise legislative functions – lawmaking. The power to make laws includes making new ones and amending or repealing

old ones. Legislative activities span both the legal and practical. The former relates to what the constitution empowers the legislative to undertake. That is, law making, policy making, investigative powers and what may appear to be quasi-judicial functions. While the latter relates to their relations with their constituencies, political parties and other interest/pressure groups, and perhaps with the arms and tiers of government (Tukura, 2011).

Akintunde (2004) defines the legislature by looking at its antecedents to the social contract where men put themselves under government and his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will and indivisible parts of the whole to live in unity and harmony. This put men into government (social contract) and thus a body was constituted to make laws. The legislature therefore is the body of elected individuals charged with the responsibility of enacting laws for peace, order and good governance of society.

Alonge (2006) looks at legislature as a body mainly responsible for law making for the whole country. Generally, it is composed of elected representatives in a country that operates representative institutions. However, the function of the legislature has gone beyond the classical function of law making. It now serves as the garb of legality to decisions of the executives. The deliberative function is now usually carried out in the form of committees and commissions on national issues for the promotion of welfare and sustenance of good government.

The legislature can thus be seen as an organ through which the will of the states is expressed and achieved. It occupies the paramount place in all states as it exercises large control over the sources of supply and its power to create public office and to establish new services. Thus, the legislature in a sense is the regulator of administration. To this, Laski (1952) regards the legislature as the mirror of the will of the national. It is taken as the chief means of the expression of the popular will; or as a body that can speak on behalf of the people. By virtue of being a body of the representative of the people, it is considered to be the most important organ of the political system.

(b) Corruption

The most serious cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of our society today is the problem of corruption. It is a global concern and its problem is very much prevalent in endemic proportion in Nigeria, geminating in many forms and at all levels of the society. Corruption from its practice in Nigeria goes beyond mere bribery taking and giving, it encompasses acts which according to Erumabi (1998), are immoral, decayed, impure, debased and manifest in diverse ways within the structure of government and amongst the governments.

Transparency International quoted by Folapo and Falosey (2006), defines corruption as behaviour on the part of officials in the public sector, whether politicians and civil servants in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves, or those close to them by the misuse of public power entrusted on

them. Otiye (2005), sees corruption as the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour or moral depravity. Thus, corruption is an act of soliciting, appropriating, collecting and giving, either in money or kind, from or by individuals or organizations. Anti-corruption law (Act, 2002) explains corruption to involve bribery, fraud and other related offenses".

From the above definitions, three things come out clearly; first is that, corruption is a dishonest act, wicked and bad; secondly, corruption is seen as immoral and antithetical to the positive virtues of society, and thirdly, corruption involves an abuse or misuse of position and authority.

Therefore, corruption in Nigeria has not only become a rock inhibiting the free movement of our development, it has also transcended the boundaries of offering and taking of money which has been used as a tool of settlement to secure rulership legitimacy and regime stability. Indeed, the greatest source of corruption in Nigeria is the predominant fraudulent means of acquiring political power which directs its use or misuse. Thus, politics offers the cheapest platform to wealth and power in Nigeria.

This is political corruption that manifests in activities connected with election, succession and appropriation and the manipulation of the people and institutions in order to acquire wealth and to retain power and office. It is the unlawful or improper use of influence, position, power and other means to achieve one's selfish and political ambition. It includes according to Tamen (2011), "dishonesty, injustice or partial behaviour on the part of politicians and government officials, abuse of the political system against the masses". Moreover, political corruption is an abuse of the political system, subversion of the rules, of mistrust of the principles that make democracy effective. It is an obstacle to transparency in public life, it undermines the principles of representative democracy and good governance; it causes to the electoral and legislative bodies distortion by way of reducing accountability and representation in policy and decision making.

Theoretical Framework

Corruption and obsession are generally based on the individuals' perception on what values the individual posits as being of utmost importance to the individuals self gratification. In pursuance of those gratifications, individual may engage in activities which may or may not conform to the norms of society. Corruption and obsession are therefore inherent in the behavior of individuals and the value theory provides us with an understanding to the corruption and criminal dehydration of the country's economy by the members of the National Assembly.

The values systems theory was heavily influenced by Kluckhohn (1951) and Schwartz (1992). The theory defines values as desirable goals, varying in importance and serves as guiding principles in people lives. This makes individuals take certain actions or decisions and conform their behaviours in society. These scholars have

identified different types of values in terms of their goals such as; power which has to do with social status, prestige, dominance over people and resources, authority, hedonism which gratifies ones pleasure, and security. Schwartz (1992) contends that those values are organized dynamically according to their mutual compatibilities and incompatibilities. To him, values make up the behaviour and way of life of individuals in society.

For the purpose of this paper, we shall take into cognizance the values of power and hedonism. Power is the ability to make individuals behave and conduct themselves to the whims and caprices of the power holder. It directs the behaviour of individuals or groups in the desired direction of the individual wielding the power. Power is also the ability or capacity to influence, condition, mold and control human behaviour for the accomplishment of political goals. To this end, members of the National Assembly are largely obsessed by this value, as "power corrupts and absolutely power corrupt absolutely". Therefore, as members of the National Assembly get into office and enjoy the power associated with it, they engage into various vices to ensure that they continue to enjoy such values. When this happens, we tend to see the Nigerian legislature taking decisions that would alter their lives, and adopt or reject certain policies as it affects them negatively.

Again, hedonism posits that only pleasure motivates individuals and makes them behave in the manner to ensure that they achieve the highest esteem. The positions acquired by members of the National Assembly provide a lot of pleasure and prestige associated with it such as cars, money, houses and other materials. These things make them get corrupt and obsessed, and they strive to remain in office through all necessary means including all manners of practices.

In summary therefore, the value systems theory takes its strength in the fact that it explains obsession and corruption as behaviours which are inherent in individuals, and posits that such corruption and obsession which cannot be measured are a reflection of the values which members of the National Assembly have imbibed as the norms, hence the ongoing corruption and criminal dehydration of the Nigerian economy by members of the National Assembly. It is with this that we consider the theory as being appropriate for the work under study. We therefore adopt it as being our working instrument for the paper in spite of its weakness.

Corruption in the National Assembly

In a presidential system, the legislature is an important arm of government whose activities impact greatly on the conduct of government business. The legislature is empowered by the 1999 constitution (as amended) to make laws for good governance of the country and control how public funds are expended. Since the return of democracy in 1999, the federal lawmakers have gotten more prominence in the media. But this is not for legislative vibrancy or for being

effective checks on the executive. Rather, the nation's lawmakers have been in the news for all the wrong reasons.

There has been a systematic pattern of corruption in both houses of the National Assembly since 1999. The modus operandi has predicated on serial extortion of money from ministers, heads of departments, agencies and company executives whose organizations have misfortune of being investigated by the National Assembly. For ministers and heads of parastatals to be cleared by the Senate, they are expected to "perform". Those who perform are given a pat on the back while the stubborn ones who refuse to perform are drilled.

Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, former Minister of FCT under President Olusegun Obasanjo was the first minister to blow the lid on the systematic corruption in the National Assembly. He accused two principal officers of the Senate – Senator Ibrahim Mantu, Deputy Senate President, and Jonathan Zwingina, then Deputy Senate Leader, to part with the sum of ₦54 million to be cleared by the Senate as a minister. Rufai was later forced to apologise as a "political solution" to end the matter (Agbo, 2012).

Again, the Adolphus Wabara led-Senate was dogged by a ₦5 million bribe-for-budget scandal involving Fabian Osuji, a former Minister of Education. This was a joint project between the Education committee of both houses of the National Assembly. Though, the case was thrown out at the appeal court on technicalities, they never really established their innocence. However, both of them lost their positions as a result of the scandals. It is a common occurrence that ministers and heads of parastatals have consistently cried out that the National Assembly extorts money from them to pass their budget. Thus, MDAs that understood their body language have their budgetary allocations increased.

This was the case of the National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), who in 2011 ran into stormy waters with the National Assembly in the exercise of their oversight functions. The National Assembly indicted the agency for allegedly not remitting its internally generated revenue to the Federation Account as provided for by the constitution. However, it was revealed that what was actually in contest was offshore grant from global integrity agencies meant for inspection of facilities outside the country which needed a lot of independence to ensure the integrity of the exercise. It was alleged that some lawmakers wanted the money shared out but were turned down (Agbo, 2012).

Furthermore, oversight function is another avenue for corruption in the National Assembly. The Ndidu Elumelu-led power probe bribe scandal was a case in point. Ndidu Elumelu power project committee was saddled with the responsibility of probing the \$16 billion purportedly spent on power during the eight years of President Olusegun Obasanjo government. While Nigerians thought something radical would come out from the probe, it ended up in an anti-climax to the extent that even members of the committee refused to sign the report. No wonder therefore that, the same House Committee on power and its counterpart

in the Senate was later implicated in a ₦5.2 billion contract scam at the Rural Electrification Agency. To this, Senator Nicholas Ugbane, chairman of Senate Committee on Power and Ndidu Elumelu, his House counterpart, were arraigned with others on 158 count charges in an Abuja High Court by EFCC (Banjoko, 2012).

As if that was not enough the recent stock market probe equally underscore the rot of corruption in the National Assembly. Hon. Herman Hembe and some of his committee members have been arraigned by the EFCC on corruption charges. The committee persuaded Mrs. Arunma Otteh, the Director-General of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to approve a grant of ₦39 million for the committee's public hearing on the problems of the capital market. However, it should be noted that, by the self-accounting rules of the National Assembly, money is provided for all committee activities. Similarly, Hon. Hembe and his deputy were equally accused by the DG of SEC of collecting an unspecified sum of money as estacode to attend a conference in the Dominican Republic but never attended.

The lawmakers also go after juicy contracts in the MDAs with a lot of viciousness including blackmail. If they do not get it the minister, DG or Executive Secretary is in deep trouble. A case in point was the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) which initiated a well-designed new licensing system but was shot down on spurious reasons by the National Assembly. However, it was strongly alleged that the real reason for their action was because a principal officer of the National Assembly was angry that his son failed to get the contract from FRSC on the system (Agbo: 2012).

The constituency project is a major avenue for corruption in the National Assembly. Under this abused practice, lawmakers include projects to be done in their constituencies in the budget year. Though, on the surface, the contracts are supposedly awarded by the relevant ministries, the lawmakers nominate the contractors who are actually their fronts. In the circumstance, they take so much of the contract money that the contractor's ability to execute the contract is hampered.

The lawmakers also claim huge sums of money illegally as quarterly allowance as "running cost" which runs into millions. For a senator it comes to about ₦58m and a member of House about ₦45m – which is outside the law provided by RMAFC. But, despite these huge earnings, they still extort money from hapless prospects. For instance, according to Agbo (2012), the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) could not be passed by the National Assembly because of an alleged heavy lobbying by the multinational oil companies who understand how to manipulate the itching palms of National Assembly members.

Therefore, to sum up, a history of sleaze runs through the National Assembly since its return in 1999. It can be seen in Salisu Buhari, first Speaker of the House in 1999 who was removed over certificate scandal. Evan(s) Enwerem, his Senate counterpart was also removed after a running controversy about his academic

claims. Chuba Okadigbo lost his job as senate president for contract and anticipatory approaches (see table below for more details).

Table 1: National Assembly History of Scandals

S/N	Alleged Actors	Position	Accusations
1	Hon. Salisu Buhari	Speaker	certificate scandal
2	Senator Evan(s) Enwerem	Senate President	name falsification scandal
3	Senator Chuba Okadigbo	Senate President	contract scandal
4	Senator Ibrahim Mantu and Jonathan Zwingina	Deputy Senate President and Deputy Senate Leader	₦54M scandal to clear Mallam Nasir el-Rufai
5	Hon. Ghali Na'Abba	Speaker	spending of ₦4,000 public fund to fly his sick uncle abroad
6	Senator Adolphus Wabara	Senate President	₦50M bribe budget scandal involving Minister of Education Prof. Fabian Osuji
7	Hon. Dr. Shehu Matazu	Chairman, House Committee on Education	₦50M bribe for budget scandal involving Minister of Education, Prof. Fabian Osuji
8	Hon. Patricia Etteh	Speaker	₦628M contract award scandal
10	Senator Nicholas Ugbane et al	Chairman, Senate Committee on Power	₦5.2B rural electrification scandal
11	Hon. Ndudi Elumelu	Chairman, Senate Committee on Power	₦5.2B rural electrification scandal
12	Hon. Paulinus Igwe and Mohammed Jibo	Members, House Committee on Power	₦5.2B rural electrification scandal
13	Senator Iyabo Obasanjo	Chairman, Senate Committee of Health	₦300M scandal involving Federal Ministry of Health
14	Hon. Dimeji Bankole	Speaker	₦40B loan scandal and ₦2.3B car scandal
15	Hon. Bayero Nafada	Deputy Speaker	₦40B loan scandal
16	Hon. Herma Hembe	Chairman, House Committee on capital market	₦39M public hearing of capital market involving Mrs. Aruma Otteh, DG of SEC
17	Hon. Herma Hembe et al	chairman and deputy chairman, house committee on capital market	unspecified amount from SEC to attend a conference in the Dominican Republic but never attended
18	Hon. Farouk Lawal and Mr. Boniface Emenalo	Chairman and Secretary fuel subsidy adhoc Committee	₦3M (\$600,000) collected from Mr. Femi Otedola

Source: Compiled by the author.

It is with this in mind picture that while speaking in Lagos at a conference on the theme: "Strong System as a Necessity for Building a Virile Nation", Olusegun Obasanjo former President, said inter alia: "Integrity is necessary for systems and institutions to be strong. Today, rogues, armed robbers are in the State Houses of Assembly and the National Assembly. What sorts of laws would they make?" (Banjoko: 2012). This is the reason why no one really takes the House reports serious: they are mostly products of fraud and therefore shallow (Agbo: 2012).

In spite of all these heavy allegation of corruption in the National Assembly, no member has been sentenced and sent to prison. This is contrary to other countries that are serious of fighting corruption. Take the case of United States where we borrowed the presidential system of government, it is not like this. A number of parliamentarians have been sent to jail on account of corruption. For example, William Jefferson a member of the US House of Representatives from Louisiana was caught stashing away in his freezer \$90, 000 bribe he collected in a corruption scam involving Atiku Abubakar, Nigerian former Vice President. He was jailed 13 years in 2009. There was also the case of another member of the US House of Representatives, Jim Traficam, from Ohio. He was found guilty on 10 felony counts of financial corruption and was sentenced to 18 years in prison and also expelled from the House in 2002 (Banjoko: 2012).

Criminal Dehydration of the Country's Economy

The ordinary citizens are today more familiar with the symptoms of government's appalling profligacy even when they have nothing to point at for the huge expenditure supposedly done for their benefits. Not with successive budget cycles coming with its own cycle of excuses on why the government cannot deliver on project plans. To appreciate the incongruities of the political economy of the current administration is to understand why its fiscal figures cannot seem to add up. At the revenue side the figure has been impressive with oil prices keeping well above the budget benchmark price and projections. The nation's Light Bonny trading for \$116.85 per barrel (*The Nation*, 2011: 19).

Yet, despite these positive indications, the management of the accrual has been tragically unimpressive. The nation continues to record impressive growth on paper; this has not translated to any material improvements in the living standards of the people. That lack of fiscal restraints and the general indiscipline has turned to be catastrophic for the economy. When government ought to be making appreciable investments in vital infrastructure, what has become similar are phantom projects of dubious conception and utility. Corruption has remained a big issue in the nation's public finance. It is with this, that Ololade (2010) concluded that, "the lure of the incredible legitimate financial exploits have turned the political climate almost an exclusive of the greedy, selfish, heartless and wicked desperados who would do nothing... to better the lives of the citizens". It is

from this point that one should appreciate the criminal dehydration of the economy by members of the National Assembly.

Based on Certain Political, Public and Judicial Office Holders (Salaries and Allowances, etc.) Amendment Act 2008, the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) – the body legally allowed to fix salaries and allowances for public office holders in Nigeria approved ₦2, 484, 242.50 and ₦2, 477,110 as monthly salaries for the Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives. Officially too, a senator is supposed to collect ₦29, 479, 749 per annum (Oloade, 2010). A detail breakdown of the salaries and allowances can be seen below:

Table 2: Non-Regular Allowances of the National Assembly

Non-Regular Allowances	Senate	H/R
Basic Salary	₦11, 145, 200	₦9, 926, 062
Furniture	₦3, 039, 600	₦2, 744, 454
Vehicle Loan	₦5, 066, 000	₦4, 963, 031
Duty Tour Allowance (Per day)	₦23, 000	₦21, 000
Severance Gratuity	₦6, 079, 200	₦5, 955, 637
Estacodes	\$600	\$550

Source: *The Nation*, Saturday August 2010, p.37.

Table 3: Regular Allowances Expressed as Percentages of Basic Salaries

Hardship allowance	50%
Constituency allowance	250%
Newspaper allowance	15%
Wardrobe allowance	25%
Recess allowance	10%
Accommodation allowance	200%
Utilities allowance	30%
Domestic Staff allowance	75%
Entertainment allowance	30%
Personal Assistance allowance	25%
Vehicle maintenance allowance	75%
Leave allowance	10%

Source: *Tell*, July 12, 2010 p.51.

Of all these allowances, the most intriguing is the constituency allowance which is approved by RMAFC to public officers to enable them execute projects in their immediate constituencies thereby giving the people the dividend of

democracy. However, they are paid far above what is approved; the major flaw of this allowance is that the law does not require the politicians to explain how the money is spent. It should be noted that, in the world over the project execution is an exclusive function of the executive arm of government, but in the typical ingenuity of Nigerians, this is also extended to the legislature. Technically, the constituency allowance is a scheme of the executive arm to turn the oversight function of the legislator to an “over blind one using this allowance to rub their palm” and buy their silence.

However, investigation reveals that, there is a huge gulf (gap) between what is approved by the RMAFC and what National Assembly members actually take. For instance, House of Representatives member pockets N35m quarterly or N140m annually, while a senator gets home with N45m quarterly or N180m annually (Orebe, 2011). This translates to N720m being spent to maintain a senator in 4 years and N672m for a House of Representatives, for working just 180 days in a year. Thus, the real scam is that while on paper it appears as if they are earning the official salaries in reality their earning have been padded with bloated and irregular quarterly allowance disguised as “running cost”.

The National Assembly also spends about N4.5m on the aides of each of the legislators. The lawmakers are entitled to five legislative aides – a special assistant, secretary, legislative assistant, legislative aide and senior legislative aide. The salaries of these aides are however not included in a legislator’s allowances because they are paid directly by the National Assembly. Many of the legislators do not employ the number of aides they are officially entitled to. Instead, they employ those aides whose pay comes directly from the National Assembly.

To meet these unilaterally emoluments since the RMAFC knew nothing about them, the leadership resorted to borrowing; for instance, N10b loan was approved to be taken by the House of Representatives at an executive session in March 30, 2010 to finance the increase in legislator’s allowances, which were not provided for in the 2010 budget. The approved new allowances stand as follow:

Table 4: Legislators Allowances

	Old	New
Speaker	N100m	N100m
Deputy Speaker	N80m	N80m
House Majority Leader	N46m	N60m
Deputy Majority Leader	N43m	N57m
Chief Whip	N41m	N55m
Deputy Chief Whip	N40.5m	N54.5m
Minority Leader	N36m	N54.5m
Minority Whip	N34m	N50m
Deputy Minority Leader	N33m	N42m
Members	N32m	N35m

Source: *Tell*, June 20, 2011 p.41.

This was immediately followed by the Senate that also carried out similar increases. Every senator now apart from the principal officials collects ₦60m up from ₦45m they used to collect (Suleiman, 2011). Hence, a Nigerian Senator earns at least 8 times as much as an American Senator, and over 3 times more than the American president. Again, using their old earnings as the bench mark, a minimum wage earner (₦18,000) in Nigeria will need to work for at least 777 years to earn a senator's annual pay.

It cost tax payers ₦290m yearly to maintain each member of the 109 Senator and ₦200m to maintain 360 members of the House of Representatives in a country where 80 percent of the population earn below ₦300 per day. It is with this that Lamido Sanusi, then governor of the Central Bank, while speaking at the 8th Convocation of the Igbinedion University Okada, Edo State expressed fear that the economy would not improve to meet the nation's target of being one of the 20th largest economies in the world if 25% of the nation's expenditure continued to be expended on the recurrent expenditure of the National Assembly. (*Vanguard*, Monday, Nov. 29, 2010). According to Sanusi, the pay of members of the National Assembly accounts for 25% of the total recurrent budget of the Federal Government (Fafowora, 2010).

Needless to say that, this huge pay to the National Assembly is damaging to the overall health of the national economy. It will lead to increased industrial strikes by all public officers for better pay and add to the inflationary spiral in the economy. It simply does not make economic sense for the government to commit such vast amounts to administrative costs when there is a crying need for more investment in such critical sectors of the economy as education, health and infrastructure. It is time we undertake a comprehensive review downwards of the pay of public officers particularly members of the National Assembly, to bring it into line with the best practices in other countries. It is morally unjustifiable for lawmakers to pay themselves so stupendously in a country with a very low standard of living, grinding poverty and low income per capital.

A comparison with parliamentary remunerations and assignments in the other democracies shows clearly that the Federal lawmakers are indeed, ripping off the nation. The current annual salary for the members of parliament in Britain is 65,738 pounds. The package covers the cost of running an office, employing staff, accommodation and travel between parliament and their constituencies. In the US, as at 2009, the annual salary of each Representative was \$174,400 (*Tell*, July 12, 2010: 51).

Conclusion

Criminal dehydration of the economy by members of the National Assembly has largely been as a result of taking away huge chunks of money in Nigerian politics through greed and corrupt means. The study has established that politics

in Nigerian has become a gold mine, a quick means of amassing wealth thereby depriving the public of basic amenities due to them. This practice by the lawmakers grossly affects the economy and political system in Nigerian. It erodes the ability of the nation state to exercise her effective and efficient utilization of her resources, political agenda and political system. This to a very large extent affects the economy and political development of the country.

The main business of the legislature is to make laws for the good governance of the country. But, even in the discharge of this critical legislative function, the Nigerian legislators, especially in the last years, have failed. For example, the Senate passed only 97 bills out of over 320 bills sent to them in the last four years, while the House of Representatives passed 187 out of 489 bills in their custody. Out of these bills, the ones that Nigerians have commended and feel are relevant to their needs and aspirations are less than five – Freedom of Information, GSM, SIM registration etc (*Tell*, June 20, 2011:43). Thus, Nigeria's most appalling failure is seen by many as her inability to practice true democracy anchored on the rule of law. Novelist Chinua Achebe, in his book, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, argues that the central conflict in Nigeria is bad leadership which infects every other aspect of life – governance and business.

Therefore, in order to curb this behaviour of the National Assembly and its numerous effects on the nature and character of our politics, economic and national development, the following recommendations are suggested:

Strong Political will – political will is the mechanics of politics; that motive force that generate political actions. To achieve political action we call for a strong political will that should be placed in the heart and minds of the citizenry and the powers that be. When this is done, there would be a balance of power between state and society, and between political and economic power which is crucial in a vibrant and sustainable democracy.

Strong Institutions – integrity is necessary for systems and institutions to be strong. We therefore recommend for strong institutions especially those responsible for punishing those individuals who acted against the law – the police, law courts, EFCC, Code of Conduct Bureau, Civil Service etc. These institutions should be fortified and made to be responsive to their responsibilities.

One Man One Vote – One man one vote principle should be adequately instituted in the government and politics of Nigeria so as to ensure that the votes casted by Nigerians are counted. A situation in which a vast majority of electorates have been rendered unprepared to make the right choice in democratic elections cannot check the excesses of our representatives. But one man one vote will ensure accountability and responsibility since the public office holders may be rooted out in the next election if found wanting.

Good Financial Management – Good financial management system is also powerful instrument for preventing, discovering or facilitating the punishment of fraud and corruption. This allocate clear responsibilities for managing resources,

reveal improper action and unauthorized expenditures, facilitate audit by creating audit trails, and protect honest staff. By reducing opportunities for corruption and increasing the risks of detection, good financial management systems help change corrupt conduct from high profit/low risk "to high risk/low profit".

Audit and Control – This valuable instrument for improving government financial management and for increasing the efficiency in the allocation of public financial resources should be improved upon. Thus, we call for the reinforcement of auditing to intervene before resources are committed. With this method, corrupt activities could be stopped before they could have an impact of the use of resources.

Finally, it is in my personal opinion that to sow the seed of real change in Nigeria, there should be an elite movement of unconventional like-minded progressives of different professional, intellectual, technocratic and political persuasions. They should creatively devise appropriate blueprint and roadmap that do not necessarily violate the law, through which they could occupy the most strategic positions in the land, including the presidency. Once they are there, they should systematically impose systemic and socio-economic realities that focus primarily on the provision of decent living standards to the people through sustainable socio-economic reforms.

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