



An Analysis of Cost of Governance and the Quest for Part-Time Legislature in Nigeria

EME, I.O

Department of Public Administration and Local Government University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Dr.Hillary,I
Ekemam

Department of Political Science Imo State University Owerri

Emmanuel
Iheanacho

Department of Political Science Imo State University Owerri

ABSTRACT

The debate concerning the workability of a bicameral legislature, coupled with the finance cost has been an ongoing one. The debate was again brought to the fore recently with a recommendation by delegates at the National conference for legislators to function on part-time basis, rather than the present full time. The delegates contended that this will drastically reduce cost of governance, which is already over bloated. Expectedly, the recommendation by the Standing Committee on Public Service chaired by a former Head of Service of the Federation, Ebele Okeke, got the approval of majority of delegates after a long debate. The jumbo salary being paid the country's legislators, which ranked the highest in the world, according to a new study, has attracted sharp criticisms from Nigerians across the country, including economists and lawyers. A report by The Economist magazine revealed that Nigerian federal legislators with a basic salary of \$189,500 per annum (N30.6m) were the highest paid lawmakers in the world. Quoting data from the International Monetary Fund and The Economist magazine of London, the study looked at the lawmakers' basic salary as a ratio of the Gross Domestic Product per person across countries of the world. According to the report, the basic salary (which excludes allowances) of a Nigerian lawmaker is 116 times the country's GDP per person of \$1,600. The \$189,500 earned annually by each Nigerian legislator is estimated to be 52 per cent higher than what Kenya legislators, who are the second highest paid lawmakers, earned. As expected, the first salvo of condemnation to the recommendations came from the Senate where members of the opposition political parties rejected the proposal by the delegates. Senate Minority Leader, George Akume (APC, Benue North West), who addressed journalists on behalf of his colleagues, said: "Part-time legislature is not and can never be the answer to executive impunity and corruption in the country." He argued that executive impunity was largely responsible for high cost of governance in Nigeria, stating that delegates to the confab do not "understand and appreciate what constituted elected offices, especially the legislative seats stand for in the governance of the country under democratic template." This paper seeks to address the pros and cons of part-time legislature and its implications on the cost of governance in Nigeria. The paper concludes by positing that the logical corollary is a considerable cut down of salaries and perks of office that currently obtain. Amidst the abject poverty in the land, Nigerians can no longer tolerate a situation where a legislative clique feeds fat on the commonwealth.

KEYWORDS : Corruption, Cost of Governance, The Legislature, National Conference, Jumbo Salary and Constitutional Amendment.

Introduction

That Nigeria cannot afford the financial cost it currently bears on democracy is an incontrovertible fact. The huge expenditure is unnecessary, insensitive and a flagrant betrayal of the expectations of all Nigerians. This then explains why the cost of governance in Nigeria, especially the jumbo pay of public office holders has been an enduring debate since the inauguration of the current republic. While the majority of Nigerians wallow in abject poverty, their elected representatives, not more than a few thousand persons, treat them so sumptuously that it rankles. This waste in government and the extravagant life-style of state actors, especially legislators, constitute such a drain on the common till that it is impossible for any country carrying such a burden to make progress.

This is further corroborated by the annual budget which allocates about 70 per cent of the entire appropriation to recurrent expenditure. Indeed, the emerging consensus is that those representing Nigerians in the National Assembly and their executive counterparts take so much from public coffers, with no such corresponding policy outcomes as could give joy to most Nigerians. A recent report by The Economist magazine which ranked Nigeria's lawmakers as the highest paid in the world has appropriately refocused public attention on the matter. The report revealed that the annual salary of legislators in several countries, which include Ghana, \$46,500; Indonesia, \$65,800; Thailand, \$43,800; India, \$11,200; Italy, \$182,000; Bangladesh, \$4,000; Israel, \$114,800; Hong Kong, \$130,000; Japan, \$149,700; and Singapore, \$154,000. The Nigerian federal legislator's annual earning was put at about \$189,000 (N30 million) annually. This amount, scandalous as it may seem, is nothing compared to what they get from the

system through other means. The sensibility of the people may be further incensed when the various allowances ostensibly for running their offices which include oversight allowance, recess allowance, wardrobe allowance and the bizarre constituency allowance, among others, are computed.

Although the spokesmen of the National Assembly have called into question the latest assertion from the highly respected magazine as not representing the facts, but they lose the plot since they are yet to convincingly tell Nigerians exactly what their total remunerative package is. Worse still, they have not been able to explain the source of funds for their ostentatious lifestyle. Each of them has always dodged the questions about the actual salary and corresponding allowances that a legislator earns suggesting that there is something to hide. Even from the little information on the public domain, there is nowhere in the world where people who do so little get so much pay. There has not been any overly display of enthusiasm for public service but rather a disposition to self-aggrandizements.

In the developed world such as Netherlands which spends about 47.7 per cent of national income on governance, Sweden, 42.8 per cent; U.S., 21.0 per cent and England, 37.8 per cent, cost of governance is high with concrete deliverables and not on padded emolument of public officers. The legislators in Nigeria have not only lost their moral authority, they also have by their dealings transformed the National Assembly into an infrastructure of corruption. The matter has today gone past the caution threshold. The National Assembly has itself become part of the problem of the nation's young democracy and needs total restructuring. Not too long ago, the Senegalese government

scrapped its Senate in order to free resources for the goals of development.

It is against this backdrop that the recent recommendation by the National Conference for part-time legislature is generating huge academic debate. This paper examines the feasibility or otherwise of such a proposition.

Contextualizing the Legislature

A legislature is a kind of deliberative assembly with the power to pass, amend, and repeal laws. The law created by a legislature is called legislation or statutory law. In addition to enacting laws, legislatures usually have exclusive authority to raise or lower taxes and adopt the budget and other money bills. Legislatures are known by many names, the most common being parliament and congress, although these terms also have more specific meanings. The legislature is the branch of government that makes new laws and changes old ones.

In parliamentary systems of government, the legislature is formally supreme and appoints a member from its house as the prime minister which acts as the executive. In a presidential system, according to the separation of powers doctrine, the legislature is considered an independent and coequal branch of government along with both the judiciary and the executive.

The primary components of a legislature are one or more *chambers* or *houses*: assemblies that debate and vote upon bills. A legislature with only one house is called unicameral. A bicameral legislature possesses two separate chambers, usually described as an upper house and a lower house, which often differ in duties, powers, and the methods used for the selection of members. Much rarer have been tricameral legislatures; the Massachusetts Governor's Council still exists, but the most recent national example existed in the waning years of caucasian-minority rule in South Africa.

In most parliamentary systems, the lower house is the more powerful house while the upper house is merely a chamber of advice or review. However, in presidential systems, the powers of the two houses are often similar or equal. In federations, it is typical for the upper house to represent the component states; the same applies to the supranational legislature of the European Union. For this purpose, the upper house may either contain the delegates of state governments, as is the case in the European Union and in Germany and was the case in the United States before 1913, or be elected according to a formula that grants equal representation to states with smaller populations, as is the case in Australia and the modern United States.

Because members of legislatures usually sit together in a specific room to deliberate, seats in that room may be assigned exclusively to members of the legislature. In parliamentary language, the term *seat* is sometimes used to mean that someone is a member of a legislature. For example, saying that a legislature has 100 "seats" means that there are 100 members of the legislature, and saying that someone is "contesting a seat" means they are trying to get elected as a member of the legislature. By extension, the term *seat* is often used in less formal contexts to refer to an electoral district itself, as for example in the phrases "safe seat" and "marginal seat".

A legislature is a type of representative deliberative assembly with the power to create and change laws. The law created by a legislature is called legislation or statutory law. Legislatures are known by many names, the most common being parliament and congress, although these terms also have more specific meanings. The main job of the legislature is to make and amend laws. In parliamentary systems of government, the legislature is formally supreme and appoints the executive. In presidential systems of government, the legislature is considered a power branch which is equal to and independent of the executive. In addition to enacting laws, legislatures usually have exclusive authority to raise taxes and adopt the budget and other money bills.

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Although the term 'legislature' bears different names like 'Parliament', 'National Assembly', 'Congress' and the like, there is no serious contention about its definition. It is generally referred to as an official body, usually chosen by election, with the power to make, change, and repeal laws; as well as powers to represent the constituent units and control government. The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Science defines legislatures as political institutions whose members are:

Formally equal to one another, whose authority derives from a claim that the members are representative of the political community, and whose decisions are collectively made according to complex procedures (Loewenberg, 1995:118).

Loewenberg (1995) conceptualizes legislatures as "assemblies of elected representatives from geographically defined constituencies, with lawmaking functions in the governmental process". In the same vein, Jewell identified two features that distinguish legislatures from other branches of government. According to him, "they (legislatures) have formal authority to pass laws, which are implemented and interpreted by the executive and judicial branches and their members normally are elected to represent various elements in the population". This paper while subscribing to these definitions refers to the legislature as the central element of democracy due to its aforementioned significance. It is significant to note that legislatures vary in terms of composition, structure and role, from one democracy to the other.

An Analysis of Cost of Governance, the National Assembly and the Quest for Part-Time Legislature

The on-going National Conference has thrown up debates about the nature of Legislature at the centre; whether indeed, the nation still needs an expensive bicameral Legislature at this moment of our socio-economic cum developmental challenges with 109 distinguished senators and 360 honourable members in addition to both their permanent staff and non-permanent legislative aides. According to its 2007 annual report, the National Assembly Service Commission (NASC) stated that "the National Assembly staff strength was 3,375 made up of 1,073 junior staff and 2,302 senior staff", as well as "a total number of 2,412 Legislative Aides made up of 605 Legislative Aides for members of the Senate and 1,807 for the honorable members" respectively excluding the Commission's own "staff strength of 230, which was made up of 111 junior staff and 119 senior staff". This statistics has tremendous implication on the cost of governance. In fact, the debate about the cost of governance in Nigeria has led to a nuanced recommendation in some quarters that one of the chambers of the National Assembly (NASS) be scrapped as part of efforts to streamline the huge cost of running our public sector.

Undoubtedly, from the face value, the argument would appear plausible particularly against the backdrop of refusal of the National Assembly to cut down and or breakdown its statutory transfer of N150 billion captured as a lump sum money under the 2013 Appropriation Act (same figure for 2014 budget) and other previous gregarious acts of profligacy.

The salaries and allowances of legislators at the federal level in Nigeria no doubt led to wide spread condemnation, reactions and counter-reactions throughout the country. While some believe that the huge allowances and salaries (Jumbo pay) is a disservice to the na-

tion, majority of Nigerians argue that the jumbo pay being enjoyed by federal legislators in Nigeria is having negative effect on the education sector and other critical sectors of the economy. Thus, public reactions showing the consequences of unregulated salaries and allowances on the economy forms the major thrust of this section.

In a newspaper report captioned "National Assembly Epitomizes Backwardness"-Sagay, published in *The Punch Newspaper* of Monday, 20th December 2010, Prof. Itse Sagay noted that it cost about Two Hundred and Ninety Million Naira (N290,000.00) annually to maintain each member of the National Assembly and regretted that this is happening in a country where virtually every amenity does not work and where average earning of 80 percent of the populace is below three hundred naira (N300.00) per day. Whereas the earning of a Nigerian Senator per day is more than the yearly income of a doctor; it is more than the salary of 42 Army Generals or 48 Professors or 70 Commissioners of Police or more than twice the pay of the United States President Barak Obama or nine times the salary of US Congressional Representative. Reacting further, he expressed regret that while man in Africa has remained mentally, emotionally and intellectually stunted at all levels, man in other parts of the world has been liberated from the animal feeding frenzy. The outcome of the later is the development of science, technology, creation of resources and the march forward of civilization. According to him,

That is why others produce and Africans everywhere consume. The man in Nigeria is the typical African man who has remained at the animal level, absolutely refusing to grow or develop. This is what the national Assembly is daily epitomizing as all their legislation is geared towards more feeding for themselves either in terms of money, power or influence. Not a thought is spared for any legacy. The idea of adding value to the society into which they were born never occurs to them (Sagay,2010:8).

The Civil Liberty organization (CLO) through its Executive Director, Ibuchukwu Ezike, in a report published in *The Punch Newspaper* of 12th December, 2010, stated Law making process in Nigeria and indeed in most countries of the world should be on part time basis. This will reduce unnecessary cost and discourage parasitic dependence, corruption and waste of public funds, especially as our law makers have failed to use their oversight roles to curb corruption and executive lawlessness (Ezike,2010:1).

In a related development, the President-General, Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC), Mr. Peter Esele, in a report captioned "Legislators' pay should reflect salaries, allowance of Nigerian workers"-Esele published in *The Punch Newspaper* of Wednesday the 12th January, 2011, noted that the jumbo pay for legislators and other political office holders in Nigeria is very regrettable, especially when you compare their pay with the state of the Nigerian economy, living standards of those they represent, life expectancy in Nigeria, the perceptual income and the salaries paid to Nigerian workers, Nigerian professors etc. He added that it is more unfortunate when compared with the United State President, Barak Obama's salary of \$400,000 per annum. According to him, Nigerian Senator collects forty million naira (40,000,000.00) per quarter while each member of the House of Representative receives about \$1.2 million dollars per annum"(Esele,2011:4).

Similarly, former members of the National Assembly and prominent civil rights activists in the country have described the jumbo pay of Nigerian law makers as a conspiracy between the federal executive and the legislature. In a report captioned "jumbo pay: executive, legislature taking Nigerians for a ride-Ex-Senators, others" published in *Saturday Punch* of 25th December 2010, former members of the Senate Dr. Femi Okurounmu, and Chief Olabiyi Durojaiye contended that the take-home pay of the federal law makers had become an impediment to the growth of the nation. Okurounmu, a senator between 1999 and 2003 under the Umbrella of the Alliance for Democracy (AD), described the remunerations of the federal legislators as not only sacrilegious, but also outrageous while Durojaiye also described the "extra-ordinarily high pay of the law makers as portraying the nation in bad light. According to them, a senator earns about fifteen million naira every month while a member of the House of Represent-

atives earns about ten million naira a month(Okurounmu,2010:6).

While commenting on the legality and constitutionality of the federal legislators salaries and allowances, renowned Lagos lawyer and activist stated unequivocally that the jumbo pay currently being enjoyed by federal legislators in Nigeria is a breach of Section 70 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which allows the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission to fix and determine the salaries and allowances of public servants including political office holders in Nigeria. In a newspaper report captioned "lawmakers activities are informed by selfish interest", Falana, published in *The Punch Newspaper* of Thursday, 30th December, 2010, Femi Falana stated, "I have challenged the law maker's Jumbo pay in court. I want the court to declare that the National Assembly has no powers to fix salaries while all excesses collected by the law makers so far, should be forfeited to the state, he noted. In his contribution, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi stated clearly that Nigeria as a country cannot continue to spend its revenue on re-current expenditure especially when the nation is experiencing debt crisis. According to him increasing overheads leads to pressure on inflation and we at the CBN have a challenge of stabilizing the system, especially the interest rates, he added. Reacting further in a news report captioned "legislators' jumbo pay: Sanusi refuses to back down. Tells House of Representatives, my figure is right, published in *The Punch Newspaper* of 8th December, 2010, the dynamic and fearless C.B.N governor maintained his earlier position when he said "I believe it is extremely important for the central Bank of Nigeria to express its opinion which should not be taken as a insult or attack. I was speaking about the growth prospect of the Nigeria economy. I spoke about the structure of government finance. More and more of our revenue is being spent on overheads which also lead to pressure on inflation, he concluded. Specifically, the central bank governor recalled that in 2009, about 20 percent of the national revenue was used to service domestic debts spent on overheads, in 2010, he disclosed that the percentage jumped to 26 percent, an indication that it would rise again in 2011, he warned. It will also be recalled that the details of the federal legislators salaries and allowance was first made public by former president Olusegun Obasanjo and Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, governor, Central Bank of Nigeria. From the foregoing analysis, it is obvious that the federal government is spending heavily on re-current expenditure (salaries and allowances of legislators and political appointees) at the expense of capital projects and human capital development which actually propels growth and development of the economy. The legal battle between Mr. Femi Falana and the federal government over the legality of the federal legislator's salaries and allowances coupled with the increased demands for salaries by workers in other sectors of the economy confirms the fact the salaries and allowances of federal legislators in Nigeria is creating negative effect on the economy especially as it concerns the morale of workers in the education sector(Falana,2010:12).

Also affirming this fact, Senator Olabiyi Durojaiye, a member of the National Assembly from 1999 to 2003, stated that teachers are neglected and the police are not well paid whereas, these two sectors are crucial in the development of any country. In a newspaper report captioned "Jumbo Pay: Legislators Should not Earn More than Teachers, Police, published in *The Punch Newspaper* of Monday, 21st of February, 2011, the former senator categorically stated "I believe that if we want to have a very stable society, these two sectors (education and security) must be catered for. The legislator should not be paid more than these people. The future of the next generation rests on the teachers, and they are unhappy. They are ill-equipped and ill educated. The condition of service is not conducive for them. Our teachers prepared us, coupled with the home training we received. The police are ill-treated and do not have more than two uniforms. For them, there is no money to buy boots. With these, how will they be able to nip in the bud the issue of kidnapping in Nigeria? If we can organize a national conference, we will achieve a lot,"(Durojaiye,2011:20) he concluded.

It is true that the legislative by constitutional right are to approve budget submitted by the executive arm of government before it can become law. In carrying out this function, they have the right to either step up or step down any estimate submitted to it, based on the reasonability of such figure vis-à-vis what it is appropriated for. Thus, the National Assembly has the right to appropriate to itself whatever

er amount it deemed fit, for its services, salary, allowances (recurrent) expenditure, as well as for capital expenditure. But this power should be used judiciously in the interest of the people. In view of our yardstick for measuring the performance of the legislature as exemplified by the National Assembly, few questions readily comes to mind. Were the National Assembly effective and productive in the discharge of their assigned role? How prudent were they in budgeting and resource management? Does the quality of their output match with the expectation of their lawmaking and oversight responsibilities? From available fact, the legislature has failed the nation in these areas of effectiveness, quality, economy, and productivity. For instance, on the floor of the House of Representatives on February 19, 2009, the speaker, Dimeji Bankole, condemned his colleagues for being "unserious" with their legislative work, declaring that their performance i.e legislative work was unsatisfactory. In his words, "...as at yesterday ie February 18, 2009, we had passed only 21 bills in this House, with eight reports considered since inauguration on June 4, 2007. Already three have been considered... but this is below the target." Again, on May 11, 2009, the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua slammed the House, lamenting that only one bill, the Appropriation Bill, had been passed five months into that year. (The Nation, Tuesday, May 10, 2011, P. 18). Even though the National Assembly had passed several other bills before the close of business on 29th May 2011, but the speed with which such exercise were carried out leaves much to be desired. What about the principles of economy? Is the National Assembly economical in the use of tax payers funds in the discharge of its legislative duties? In this area also the Nigerian legislative is found wanting. Funds are appropriated and expended without recourse to the cry of the poverty stricken majority of people. This was the scenario that prompted the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria to cry-out for a rethink. There are 109 senators, 360 members of the House of Representatives, making a total of 469 members of the National Assembly. There are 990 members of the 36 State House of Assembly. The total legislator in Nigeria today are 1459. According to Aluko in 2006, the actual recurrent expenditure on the 469 National Assembly members was N51.6billion or N110 million per member. It is estimated that in 2010 it will rise to N118.9 or N253 million per member. The actual capital expenditure on the National Assembly in 2008 was N15.6million or N33.3million per member. The total actual recurrent and capital expenditure per member in 2008 was thus N143.3 million. It is expected to rise to N294.3 in 2010. There are also 990 members in the 36 states Houses of Assembly. The actual recurrent expenditure on them in 2008 was N45.5billion or N46million per member. It is expected to rise to N52.5 billion in 2010 or N53million per member. (Aluko, 2010, cited in the Nation, Thursday, March 4, 2010, p.15). As already hinted, on November 28, 2010, at Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, the Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Lamido Sanusi, revealed that 25 percent of the Federal Government's expenditure on overheads is consume by the parliament. Prof. Itse Sagay provided facts and figures on the ridiculous salaries and allowances of the federal lawmakers. According to him, in 2009, a senator earned N240 million (\$1.7 million) in salaries and allowances, while his House of Representatives counterpart earned N203 million (\$1.45 million). In sharp contrast, a United States senator earns \$174,000 per annum, while a British parliamentarian earns \$64,000 per annum (The Punch, Tuesday 10, 2011, p. 18). Nevertheless, this package was applicable to Nigeria's sixth National Assembly (2007 – 20011, May 29). But due to pressure from the National Assembly for increased remuneration for its members (Senate and House of Representatives), an upward review of these salary and allowances was effected from July 2009, in line with remuneration package for political, public and judicial office holders approved by the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC).

An Associate Professor of Economics at the Ekiti State University, Dr. Abel Awe, said the lawmakers' jumbo salary was indicative of the huge gap between the poor and the rich as well as between the ruler and the ruled. He said it was unfortunate that the country was running the costliest democracy in the world. Awe said,

This is part of the reason why 70 per cent of the nation's budget is allocated to re-current expenditure. We are using a huge chunk of the nation's resources to service just less than 1,000 people in a country of over 160 million people. We are running the costliest democracy in the world. We can't develop this way when we spend huge money to service a few people. How will you get money for productive activi-

ties to expand the economy? An average Nigerian cannot access good medical care, good roads and other basic things of life when the legislators are smiling to the bank. This democracy is satanic. We have to review this democracy. The cost of maintaining the lawmakers is outrageous. What they are taking is too much (Eme,2014:53).

An economist, Mr. Henry Boyo, said the study had shown clearly that the cost of governance in Nigeria was very high. Boyo, who noted that the cost of governance was predicated on the provisions of the Constitution, said it was high time Nigerians cried against the bloated cost of governance. He said,

Our legislators' actions or salaries are actually accommodated by the Constitution. In the past, we had less money and we had enough as a country. People are asking for a change of Constitution. It is unfortunate that it is the people who will do it that are the ones in charge. The legislators will not vote against themselves (Eaghene,2014:43).

The Managing Director, Financial Derivatives Company Limited, Mr. Bismarck Rewane, said although Nigeria remained a complex environment, that did not justify excessive wages. According to him, "We cannot underestimate what it takes to bring law and order to a state that has been in a virtual state of anarchy for years, but there's no justification for excessive compensation"(Olorok,2014b;9). The Chief Research Analyst, Stakes Capital, Mr. Sanyaolu Kehinde, said this was an obvious case of how politicians were running government. He said,

There's nothing to justify the amount these people are earning because we don't see the work they are doing. It also exposes the fact that we don't value work. We prefer to reward work not done. The Nigerian politician is not service-driven. If we have 12 elections in one year, I can assure you that we will still not have good leaders because the system is faulty. The number of people who are not service-driven in Nigeria is high. There are only a few good people in Nigeria, very few people are left who are not thinking about themselves (Ibrahim, 2013:32).

The Chairman, Nigerian Bar Association, Ikeja Branch, Mr. Monday Ubani, said the legislators had created "a big hole" in the nation's treasury. Ubani, who scored the legislators low on output, said they had failed to justify their fat pays, adding that their submissions in both legislative chambers "are at variance with that of sovereign Nigerians." He called on Nigerians "to decide whether we need both Houses, and if yes, whether on part time or full time basis." Ubani said,

This is a fact already and well known to Nigerians and the world. It is not a new story. What is baffling is that their legislative output is not commensurate to the amount of salaries and allowances they are earning. Take for instance, the ongoing constitution amendment. Their propositions and submissions on almost all the important clauses are at variance with that of the sovereign Nigerians. Both Houses have created a big hole on our national treasury (Ibrahim,2013:32).

On his part, human rights lawyer, Mr. Bamidele Aturu, lamented the wide disparity between the earnings of the citizens and their legislators, who according to him, are the idlest, yet earn the most in the world. He said what was obtainable in Nigeria was a parody of democracy whereby the ruling class earned well but preferred to subject the issue of N18,000 minimum wage to debate. Aturu said,

We are running a parody of democracy in this country. It is a democracy for the rich. The people are getting poorer for building a nation, while the politicians are getting richer for doing nothing. Those who are not creating wealth in the country are sitting on the wealth of the people, and those who are creating the wealth, the workers, are being paid peanuts. Can you imagine there is still a raging and scandalous debate among some governors on whether or not to pay N18,000 minimum wage? Yet we are in a nation where the idlest legislators are being paid the highest in the world (Eme,2014:57).

The National Assembly however, rejected the report that its members are the highest paid lawmakers in the world. While reacting to the report published in *The Economist* magazine, the spokespersons of the two chambers of the National Assembly described it as grossly exaggerated. The Chairman, Senate Committee on Information and Media, Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, said the report was misleading and incor-

rect. He said it was easy for anyone to verify what Nigerian lawmakers earned given that such information could be obtained from the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission. Abaribe said,

My reaction is that the report is incorrect. It is very easy for anybody to know what we earn by going to the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission. The report is not correct because it did not emanate from the RMAFC, because that is the only body that determines what a lawmaker earns (Eme and Onyishi,2013:4).

In the same vein, the spokesman of the House of Representatives, Mr. Zakari Mohammed, dismissed the report as incorrect. He said,

Whatever is being written is mere exaggeration and does not reflect what is accurate. They fail to realise that what we take as salaries are different from what we use in running our offices. These are two different issues. Most times, people just lump everything together and claim that it is our monthly salary; that is not correct. At the appropriate time, we shall react, because it is not just about the House but the National Assembly. The National Assembly will react at the right time (Olokor,2014a:,8).

For any society to make progress there must be a government to run its affairs. However, citizens would perceive government as a burden when its recurrent expenditure is repeatedly higher than its capital expenditure, which should impact positively on the economy, especially in the areas of employment generation, investment and other activities that induce growth. This is the challenge that stares Nigeria in the face.

Specifically the debate concerning the workability of a bicameral legislature, coupled with the finance cost has been an ongoing one. The debate was again brought to the fore recently with a recommendation by delegates at the National conference for legislators to function on part-time basis, rather than the present full time. The delegates contended that this will drastically reduce cost of governance, which is already over bloated. Expectedly, the recommendation by the Standing Committee on Public Service chaired by a former Head of Service of the Federation, Ebele Okeke, got the approval of majority of delegates after a long debate.

The committee also recommended that henceforth, no political appointee, from ministers to commissioners and local government chairmen, should employ special advisers, special assistants, and personal assistants or make any such appointments under whatever guise in order to further control the cost and size of government. The committee stated that instead, such political office holders should utilize the staff of their ministries of posting where it becomes necessary, as contained in Circular Reference Number B63833/73 of January 3, 2000(DAILY Post Editorial,2014:14).

As expected, the first salvo of condemnation to the recommendations came from the Senate where members of the opposition political parties rejected the proposal by the delegates. Senate Minority Leader, George Akume (APC, Benue North West), who addressed journalists on behalf of his colleagues, said: "Part-time legislature is not and can never be the answer to executive impunity and corruption in the country"().

He argued that executive impunity was largely responsible for high cost of governance in Nigeria, stating that delegates to the CONFAB do not:

Understand and appreciate what constituted elected offices, especially the legislative seats stand for in the governance of the country under democratic template. I do not believe as wrongly proposed by the unelected delegates at the national Confab that part-time legislature would help in appreciable terms, in the reduction of cost of governance in Nigeria. It cannot serve in any way as antidote to executive impunity and corruption that had over the years been the cause of high cost of governance in the land (Etaghene, 2014:32).

But in his reaction, Senator Smart Adeyemi decried the high cost of running government and the attendant huge wage bill accruing to political office holders. Adeyemi who represents Kogi West Senatorial District on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), how-

ever, advocated for a change from the bicameral legislative system, to a unicameral system, as part of the ongoing review of the 1999 Constitution. He said:

I do not believe we should run a bicameral (legislative) system in Nigeria. I believe one chamber is enough. If we are going to have the Senate, let's have the Senate, if we are going to have the House of Representatives, let's have it alone. I am in the system and I know that the cost of running government is too expensive; it is against the interest of the people. That is why everybody wants to be a politician, people now take politics for a profession and that is why there is corruption in the system. The process of running government should not be more costly than what the system will give to the people. Is it not madness for a governor to appoint 70 special assistants? It is a fraud! When you want to assess the performance of a government it is not by paying salaries. What makes a leader is your ability to manage the resources that are available. When a governor tars roads, it is not an achievement because the money is there (Olokor, 2014a:8).

A cross-section of Ogun lawmakers expressed mixed reactions to the adoption of the report of the committee on Public Service at the on-going National Conference on part-time legislature. Chairman, Public Accounts Committee in the Ogun House of Assembly, Abiodun Akovoyan, said part-time legislature would not allow those in the legislature to perform effectively and optimally.

Citing example of the workload as a full-time legislator, Akovoyan said his committee has not been able to cover the auditors' report of over 70 agencies in the state due to the burden of its task. According to him:

We are doing full-time and we have been unable to cover all the necessary areas. Is it when we are on part-time that we will be able to do it. I am the Chairman of public accounts, but if we want to do our job thoroughly in a year, the 365 days are not enough. If we are on part-time, I will not leave my work and come and sit down here in the House, and this will automatically have an effect on the people of the state. So, I do not think I want to go with part-time legislature as an option (Olokor, 2014a:8).

However, the Chairman, Ogun State House of Assembly Water Supply and Energy committee, Oludaisi Elemide, described the idea as a welcome development. Elemide, representing Odeda Constituency, said anyone aspiring to become a legislative member should have been successful in his or her chosen career. For him, "their Background must be able to speak for them. If they have succeeded in their respective chosen career, then they will bring the wealth of experience into play in the house" (Olokor, 2014b:9). On his part, Folorunso Adegbesan, representing Ijebu North II Constituency, said part-time legislature was better for the country, saying it would help in reducing the cost of governance.

According to Ibrahim (2013), as both, the executive and the legislature have responsibility for the high cost of governance, the tradition of one accusing the other of guilt in this regard should cease. The legislature however has special responsibility because they determine the final budget and there are increasing accusations that the process of appropriation is being increasingly compromised by self-interest of legislators. It might be the case that they have attenuating circumstances.

Joel Barkan for example has argued that legislatures, or more accurately, legislators acting individually, rather than as members of a corporate organization that engages in collective decision-making, perform the additional function of constituency service. In most African countries, legislators have imposed upon them two forms of constituency service - (a) Regular visits by MPs to their districts to meet constituents and assist some with their individual needs. (b) Involvement in small to medium scale development projects that provide various forms of public goods - roads, water supply systems, schools and scholarship schemes, health clinics, meeting halls, etc. to their constituents. This constituency service function has always provided the subtext for raising emoluments of legislators but has never really been placed on the table for discussion. The consequence is that the Nigerian National Assembly has had a very bad press and an eroding reputation with the public. Press reports, allegations from the Exec-

utive branch and statements by major national players and analysts have presented the members of the National Assembly as self-serving individuals who pay themselves enormous illegal allowances. In addition, they have been accused of using their powers of oversight to blackmail ministers and heads of agencies for pecuniary gain. Finally, over the years, there have been accusations that certain laws have been passed on the basis of hefty inducements to legislators.

Ibrahim (2013) believed that there is the tension between legislating and constituency service because the first seeks to arrive at decisions that serve the entire nation while constituency service is, by definition, addressed to a smaller sub-community of society. In Nigeria, the legislature has responded to its constituency service function at three levels. First is the introduction of constituency projects in which legislators propose specific projects for their constituents, which are implemented, not by them, but by various ministries, departments and agencies under the Millennium Development Goals Programme. So while the executive branch carries out the projects, the legislators get the credit.

The second is the increase of constituency allowances to allow legislators respond to regular appeals from constituents for financial help for weddings, burials, ill health and so on. In addition to other demands for jobs, contracts and every conceivable demand. Thirdly, almost all legislators have developed a set of personal projects, which they develop for their constituents. The argument for constituency services can be stretched to all public officials and indeed all persons with a regular income. We are all participants in a demand system in which relations, friends, associates and everyone else come to people considered to be relatively more well off who then become targets of solicitation. It is because of these more well spread phenomenon that civil society and the media have responded very negatively to these developments and the articulation of their concerns has played a major role in creating the reputation erosion that Parliamentarians have been suffering from. There must be limits placed on those who finalize the budgets on what they pay themselves if we are to maintain sanity in public finance.

Clearly, this is not the first time the issue of remuneration, as it relates to the National Assembly will be making the headlines. It has always been the contention of many political pundits that legislators take away too much from the national treasury, thereby leaving very little for execution of projects that will benefit the people they claim to represent.

At an event hosted by the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre in 2013, former Education Minister, Obiageli Ezekwesili had said Nigeria's federal legislators have gulped N1 trillion since 2005. She had presented a global comparison of legislators' remuneration across the world polished by the United Kingdom based The Economist Magazine whose report indicated that Nigerian federal legislators with a basic salary of \$189,500 per annum (N30.6m) were the highest paid lawmakers in the world. She also posited that part-time legislature would save costs (Eme, 2014).

The jumbo allowance of the National Assembly members for a long time has been a source of worry for many Nigerians, who continue to argue that the value the country's 469-member bicameral National Assembly adds to national development is debatable and incommensurate with the financial resources expended on them. This has also increased calls that it either be done on part-time basis or reverted to a single chamber legislature.

Others who have also made cases for the amount of funds spent on the upkeep of the federal legislators have noted that under Section 63 of the 1999 Constitution, "The Senate and the House of Representatives shall each sit for a period of not less than 181 days in a year."

Analysts therefore argue that if the lawmakers should sit for only 181 out of 365 days in a year, they should work part-time rather than full-time and earn sitting allowances rather than the jumbo salary they are paid. The argument is predicated on the fact that the funds expended on servicing the legislature is not justified in the 181-day annual sitting and the number of bills passed within the period. They further maintain that the full-time legislature is a drain on the nation's resources.

Human rights lawyer Bamidele Aturu lends his support to the proposal from part-time legislature. He said:

It is a very good proposal if the National Assembly will allow it. We don't have the resources to spend on people who will sit around doing nothing. Part-time legislature will save the country enormous resources because lawmakers will still practice their profession. If you are a doctor, a lawyer or journalist, you will still practice your profession (Ibrahim, 2013:32).

He further argued that the Second Republic was largely a part-time legislature and that the process of lawmaking was better than what Nigeria presently has under a full-time legislature. For Adebayo Adedolu, a lawyer and political analyst, the nation's full-time bicameral legislature is wasteful. He said: "The legislature should be part-time the way it was during the First and Second Republics. The lawmakers should be paid sitting allowances instead of all this money wasted on jumbo salary"(Etaghene, 2014:43).

Indeed, government has over the years continued to lament that it spends a greater part of its budget on recurrent expenditures than on capital projects, even in the face of dwindling resources. And given that every major economy is driven by small and medium scale businesses, there is the need for government to free as much fund as it can, in order to provide the needed infrastructure and facilities that will enable such businesses thrive.

Some analysts also wonder how government at different levels can afford to spend so much on their legislators when it is a known fact that majority of the citizens live on less than \$3 per day, and that many of the state governments have kicked against paying a minimum wage of N18000 (\$114.73) per month, as passed by the federal legislature.

In this regard, Nigerians are once again questioning the appropriateness of the jumbo pay of public officers, especially cabinet ministers and national legislatures. Nigerian legislatures earn more than their contemporaries in more developed and wealthy nations in spite of the alarming poverty level and serious underdevelopment the nation.

In 2010, former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and new Emir of Kano, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi while delivering a lecture in late November 2010 stated that 25 per cent of overhead in the nation's annual budget is spent on the National Assembly. As expected, National Assembly members raised a lot of dust and hurled him before the Senate Committees on Appropriation and Finance where he stood his ground and rejected calls by the lawmakers for him to apologise for giving false figures to the public.

Nigerians will not forget in a hurry, how Sanusi, instead backed up his claims with figures from the Budget Office on the 2010 budget, stating that "Total government overhead was N536,268,490,280. The total overhead of the National Assembly was N136,259,768,112, which is exactly 25.1 per cent of the Federal Government expense" (Eme and Onyishi, 2013:22). Realizing that figures are facts, the National Assembly let him off. Clearly, National Assembly salary and allowances have clearly become a financial burden on Nigerian resources, and it is still unclear if this is sustainable in the long run. Hence, this has necessitated calls by many Nigerians on the need to restructure and mandate the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) to review salary structure for all political office holders, with a view to eliminate or cut unreasonable remunerations

Recommendations

It is no longer news that Nigerian legislators are the highest paid lawmakers in the world. When this fact was first revealed a few years ago, the federal lawmakers tried to justify the jumbo pay package without any success. The matter is once again on the front burner of public discourse as the respected international magazine, *The Economist of London* recently affirmed that Nigerian lawmakers, with a basic salary of \$189,500 (N30.6 million) yearly, excluding allowances, are indeed the highest paid lawmakers in the world. As the magazine noted, it is unfortunate that Nigeria is running the costliest democracy in the world. Even Kenya that comes second on the dishonourable ranking of costly democracies does not pay even half of Nigerian lawmakers' salaries to its legislators. The disparity widens more down the line out

of the 28 countries investigated. The magazine had also, in an earlier report, declared our national legislature as the "filthiest arena of the most corrupt politicians in the world."

The jumbo pay of Nigeria's lawmakers raises some salient questions. For example, what does lawmaking in Nigeria entail that ours should be the most exorbitant legislature in the world? Is it that our lawmakers do more than their counterparts elsewhere or that our representatives are just greedy? Should the country be shouldering their excesses and wastages on platoons of aides? With members of the National Assembly, in particular, also collecting tens of millions of naira as quarterly allowances, what we have in the country is simply a bazaar of public finance expenditure without commensurate output.

We call on our lawmakers to review their battery of emoluments downwards in realistic appreciation of the need to commit more funds to development programmes. They should de-emphasise agitations for unrealistic constituency allowances and reduce their expenditure. Our lawmakers, oftentimes, engage in unnecessary brawls, fisticuffs and free for all. At other times, they engage themselves in debates over issues that are not critical to the people's needs and aspirations. If it is not same sex argument, it is upping of legislative allowances. There is hardly any seriousness in debates. The National Assembly chambers are usually half-filled, with some of those in attendance dozing off amid debates, under the full glare of television cameras. There is a dearth of robust debates, laudable and enduring contributions from lawmakers and evidence of research on legislative matters. If our lawmakers are not on prolonged and, at times, indeterminable holidays, they are busy hopping from one social event to another with irrational passion.

As we have had cause to point out in the past, there can be no rationalization for the huge cost of legislators on the public purse. This is one of the reasons why some people have advocated the making of legislation a part-time affair in the country. This way, a lot of public funds could be saved. A situation where lawmakers are required to sit for only 187 days in a year, while receiving full time salaries, speaks volumes of the level of mediocrity in the national legislature. The current legislators' pay is not just alarming it is scandalous, especially in a country as relatively poor as Nigeria. Our current socio-economic milieu does support this kind of flagrant deployment of scarce resources to meet the inexplicable wants of lawmakers who make up an insignificant percentage of our population. Nigeria is at the bottom of everything when compared to the developed world. The country's educational sector, technological endeavours, healthcare and other social infrastructure are in a shambles.

Former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, had also sometime ago decried the outrageous pay our lawmakers receive, pointing out that a large chunk of public funds go down as outlay for lawmakers' pay and gamut of allowances. Sanusi declared that 15 per cent of the country's national resources is spent on lawmakers who constitute less than one per cent of the population. It is amazing that the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) has not deemed it fit to do anything to reduce the legislators' indefensible pay.

The National Assembly should embark on a path of transparency and accountability in engaging Nigerians in a frank conversation about the imperatives of constituency servicing and its limits. They should be open about what they receive, they should also respond to numerous calls by Nigerians for a cap on the legislature's recurrent budget. Even more important, they need to take a more proactive role, together with civil society partners in getting citizens and constituents to understand better their legislative functions so that expectations on them are reduced.

Civil society and the media have a responsibility to take a lead in this debate and educate the public on the reasons they should be moderate on the type of personal demands they make on their legislators. In addition, civil society and the media should orient their civic education programmes and activities towards getting the citizenry to better understand the legislative process so that their set of expectations from their legislators begins to change.

Conclusion

A Daily Sun special report recently on the juicy pay package that makes the National Assembly so attractive that politicians are ready to kill for a seat at the chamber has resurrected the debate for a part-time legislature. Those bickering over the jumbo pay of outgoing federal lawmakers come 2015 may have to wait for the real shocker: The 469 outgoing lawmakers supposed to earn N338.6 billion for the four years, investigations have revealed. For, Daily Sun can authoritatively report, it will cost the country at least three hundred and thirty-eight billion, six hundred and forty-five million eight hundred and forty-five thousand, five hundred and ten naira N338,645,845,510bn in taxpayers' money to keep the 469 members of the incoming seventh National Assembly in office for the next four years. The amount which covers salaries and sundry allowances to be earned by the lawmakers does not, however, factor in the deferential pays and other perquisites that go to the principal officers of the two chambers of the federal legislature. It does not also include expenses incurred on duty tours and es-tacode. It is also silent on the unverifiable lump sums that come from 'oversight functions' and 'lobbying'.

Instructively, however, only a meager N18.245 billion is the actual salary projected to be paid the legislators over the period. The rest of the jumbo pay would come in the form of the quarterly allowances the two chambers of the legislature approved for themselves last year. They christened it, "running cost/quarterly allowance." The breakdown of the allowance which comes down to N42 million and N45 million for every Rep and Senator respectively would see the members of the Green Chamber earning an additional N168 million every year, a figure that translates to N672 million for the four years such a lawmaker would stay in office. For the Red Chamber, it comes to N720 million per Senator. Incidentally, what would reflect on the pay slips of the lawmakers would be the statutory salary which when added together, comes to a not-too-paltry N18.245 billion for the two chambers in four years. Of this amount, N4, 881, 394, 960 will be spent on the 109 Senators while the remaining N13, 364, 450, 550 will be spent on the maintenance of the 360 members of the House of Representatives.

In line with the remuneration package for political, public and judicial office holders approved by the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) from July 2009, a Senator earns an annual emolument of N8, 206, 920 while a member of the House of Representatives takes home N6, 352, 680 per annum. The cumulative emolument of a Senator for the four years will, therefore, come to N32, 827, 680. In addition, each of the 109 Senators is expected to pocket another N11, 145, 200 in allowances described by the RMAFC as non-regular, and are collected one off as the case may be, at the beginning of the tenure. The total annual emoluments comprise the basic salary which is N2, 026, 400 for a Senator and N1,985, 212.50 for a Rep, plus a number of regular allowances for vehicle maintenance and fueling, personal assistant, house maintenance, domestic staff, entertainment, utilities, constituency, newspapers and periodicals.

The non-regular allowances include accommodation (N3, 039, 600 for each Senator); furniture allowance (also N3, 039, 600); and vehicle loan (N5, 066, 000). Besides, each Senator is entitled to an annual leave allowance of N202, 640 or N810, 560 in four years.

In effect therefore, it will take N44, 783, 440 to maintain a Senator in the next four years or N4, 881, 394, 960 to maintain the entire 109 members of the Red Chamber as the Senate is referred to. In the House of Representatives, a member who is entitled to N6,352, 680 in annual emolument will earn N25, 410, 720 in four years, plus non-regular allowances totalling N10, 918, 668.75 as well as four years leave grants of N794, 085. What this means is that each Rep will earn N37,123,473.75 in four years. The non-regular allowances of the members of the House of Representatives include an accommodation allowance of N2, 977, 818.75; a furniture allowance of another N2, 977, 818.75; and a vehicle allowance of N4, 963, 031.25. At the rate of N198, 521.25 per annum, the leave allowances of each member of the House in four years will come to N794, 085. Added together, therefore, a Rep is expected to earn N37, 123, 473.75. In other words, the 360 members of the Green Chamber will take away N13, 364, 450, 550 from the national coffers in the next four years.

Besides, allowances have also been made for the severance gratuity of each lawmaker after a successful tenure. Each Senator and Rep will

smile home with 300 per cent of his annual basic salary as severance benefit.

For instance, the Senate President will earn N7, 452, 727.50; his Deputy and other Senators will get N6,927, 500.25 and 6,079, 200 respectively. In the House of Representatives the severance gratuity as approved by the commission include N7, 431, 330 for the Speaker, N6,861,102.75 for the Deputy, and N5,955, 637.50 for the rest of the members. There is also an annual leave allowance of N202, 640 (which comes to N810, 560 in the four years). It is usually to this statutory salaries from the Revenue mobilization and Allocation Commission that the lawmakers readily refer enquiries about their pay package.

It is on this ground that the Senators will tell whoever cares to listen that no Senator earns more than one million naira per month, and they are always armed with their pay slips to confirm it. But that usually is not the whole truth. In Nigeria's case, the bi-camera arrangement is not only expensive and unnecessary, legislative business must be made a part-time activity so that it is only those Nigerians desirous of public service who will take on public responsibilities. The logical corollary is a considerable cut down of salaries and perks of office that currently obtain. Amidst the abject poverty in the land, Nigerians can no longer tolerate a situation where a legislative clique feeds fat on the commonwealth.

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