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Nigeria's Expensive National Assembly

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THE National Assembly symbolises the sovereignty of Nigerian people. There are two chambers in the National Assembly which comprise of the House of Representatives and the Senate. There are 360 members in the House of Representatives with 109 Senators in the National Assembly. Altogether, there are 469 legislators. Each member of the National Assembly is entitled to 5 Legislative Aides, notably, Senior Legislative aide who should be a Lawyer, a Legislative aide, a Personal Assistant, a Secretary and an Office Attendant or a Messenger. A Senior Legislative aide earns 250 thousand naira per month while a Legislative aide and a Personal Assistant earn 70 thousand naira each per month. The aides are trained twice yearly and paid 120 thousand naira. They are also paid duty, transport and other allowances quarterly as extra. They are paid 50 thousand naira extra for feeding during training.



Senate President, David Mark

There are 2,345 Aides for Reps and Senators. The cost implications for their remunerations total N140.7m annually. Sadly, in the last 2 years, 34 Senators have not sponsored any bill or moved any motion out of the 109 Senators. Each Senator earns N240 million naira per year (\$1.7m) and collects N45m quarterly and each Rep earns N204 million naira per year (\$1.45m) and collects N33m quarterly as Constituency allowances. The Economist Magazine of London recently did a comparative study on the take home pay of Parliamentarians across the globe and found Nigerian lawmakers as the highest paid. Despite the inexplicably parlous state of the Nigerian economy, NASS legislators, amended Section 81 of the 1999 Constitution which led to jumbo pay for them from November, 2010. NASS legislators are rapacious financial conspirators against public good. They have grown richer while the people they claim to represent have become more impoverished. In nine years, Federal, States and Local Councils consumed 80 trillion naira. Fifty six trillion naira out of the 80 trillion naira was paid as salaries and allowances to public office holders mainly politicians.

A Legislator has three major Legislative duties which include activities on the floor of the House and in the Constituency. They are;

- Contributions to Bills and Motions
- Contributions to Committees and Oversight functions and
- Constituency duties.

Many of them only show interest in the oversight functions because of the largesse that usually accompanies the functions from the supervised Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). There are discussions and opinions that Legislature in Nigeria be made part-time duty but beneficiaries are unwilling to let go because of huge financial benefits. Nigeria does not need a bicamera legislature. NASS is unnecessarily unwieldy. The Senate alone would just have been enough. The exorbitant pay cuts across the three tiers of Government — Federal, States and Local Councils. Nigeria is not as rich as Britain or America. The waste of public resources on legislators is preposterous, imprudent and injudicious.

A parasitic political class majorly peculates Nigeria's wealth. Besides, misrule by the elite has greatly consigned a vast majority of Nigerians to a life of despondency, attendant misery and abject poverty. Government has continuously left the generality of Nigerians in the last decade in a constant state of denial that neglects the basic needs of citizens. Nigerians need a "groundswell" around



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a constant state of denial that neglects the basic needs of citizens. Nigerians need all round, sound and qualitative education, good health care services, clean water, power (electricity), security, agriculture, infrastructure and improved clean environment for sustainable decent living. These are primarily the basic things a responsive Government in charge of the people's huge resources should provide. A responsive Government is flexibly dynamic, proactive and responds quickly to changes and reasonable demands of the citizenry. The System, defacto, dejure ideally appoints the best informed minds, the brightest brains, the most patriotic and most resourceful in strategic positions in governance. Any Government that is unable to provide these basic necessities should be changed or replaced no matter who heads it (the leadership).

- Dr. (Prince Oyakhire) writes from Benin

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