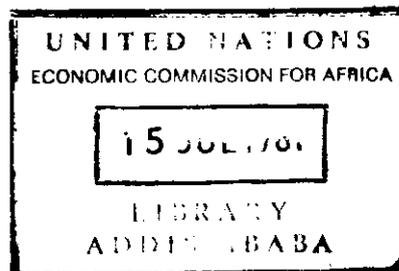


THE POLITICAL CLASS, THE HIGHER CIVIL SERVICE AND THE CHALLENGE OF NATION-BUILDING



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UNITED NATIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

Let me begin this talk by expressing my most sincere gratitude to the organizers of this star-studded *Workshop on the relationship between Policy-makers and the Higher Civil Service under the Executive Presidential System of Government* for giving me the opportunity not only to participate but also to present one of the three papers.

I have been specifically requested by the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation to write on the "Political Class, the Higher Civil Service and the Challenge of Nation-building". I presume I have been given this topic partly because my career has straddled, *inter alia*, both groups and partly because the relationship between them in the interest of national development and integration has been a matter of professional and personal interest to me for many years.

As a higher civil servant myself, before and during the early years of independence, I have had to deal with politicians, prepare briefs for them, write their speeches and see in practice, as distinct from the theory propounded in the textbooks, the relationship between politics and administration, between the politicians and the higher civil servants. Then, several years later, I had the honour of being given political responsibilities as a member of the Gowon Cabinet and this afforded me the unique opportunity of observing this relationship from the politician's perspective - even though I am all too conscious of the fact that the general run of Nigerian politicians will not regard me as a true member of their "profession" or "vocation"!

But throughout my years in the University as Professor of Public Administration and Director of the Institute of Administration of the University of Ife, I devoted considerable effort and a great deal of searchlight on this issue as I believed then that our inability to work out a proper and realistic *modus vivendi* between the political class and the higher civil service, the misunderstanding by each side as to its proper function and role and the lack of appreciation by both sides of their interdependence was one of the major failures of the first Republic and consequently one of the remote causes of the emergence of the military rule in January 1966.

In order to ensure that the nation drew the necessary lessons from its experience, I organized a programme of nine weekly lectures and symposia on the inter-actions between politics and administration in Nigeria for senior officers of governments and corporations as early as February 1966, i.e. barely 2-3 weeks after the January 1966 *coup d'état*. Of course, at that time, I, like most other Nigerians, regarded the military regime as a corrective one and

therefore temporary. I was then not aware of the conversation that had taken place around the time that these lectures and symposia series began, a conversation between Oputa Udoji, who was then Secretary to the Military Government of Eastern Nigeria, and Odumegwu Ojukwu, its military governor, at which the latter cynically, even as early as February 1966, asked the question "Which military regime has lasted less than ten years? ". 1/

Under pressure from many who had participated in the programme, I decided to publish the texts of the lectures and symposia under the title *Nigerian Administration and its Political Setting*. 2/ As I stated in the preface to the book, it was not possible or practicable for politicians, because they had then become discredited and were in hiding, to take part in the programme either as speakers or as participants.

When I received the invitation to participate at this Workshop and to deliver this lecture, my first reaction was to look for a copy of the book and see whether in the light of the development since 1966 we really have learnt anything. And I must say quite frankly that while we certainly have moved round and round the circle, we have not made much progress in terms of a clear and unmistakable understanding of the respective role of the political class and the higher civil service in Nigeria. And we are in danger of sliding back to the pre-1966 delusion and myths that politicians are the boss possessing the power of life and death, while the higher civil servants are the meek who must do their masters' bidding; that politicians are the policy-makers, while the higher civil servants are merely executors of policies, and that the politician is the master of public policy, while the higher civil servant is simply the instrument or the hand-maid of policy.

If we still believe in these myths then it means that for 14 years we have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing for the reality is very much different, regardless of textbooks and constitutional instruments. We must, as a people, have to build our politics and our administration dynamics on our history and experience and in the light of our peculiar circumstances and our own geo-political situation.

More of this later. Meanwhile, let me provide a brief background to the evolution of the relationship between the Politician and the Administrator and the phases we have been through during the past 30 years in order to enable us to put the whole issue in a wider historical perspective and to draw, once more, the necessary lessons from our rich and chequered experience.

1/ Reported in Chief Jerome Udoji "Personal Profile" in *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, vol. XIII, Nos. 3 & 4, 1979, p. 202.

2/ Published by Hutchinson Educational, London 1968.

II. THE EVOLVING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE POLITICAL CLASS AND THE HIGHER CIVIL SERVICE AND THE EMERGENCE OF CONFLICTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

It was not until 1952 that the political class became a factor in Nigeria's Government and Administration. This was the year when the Macpherson Constitution enabled Nigerian politicians to become intimately connected with the executive arm of government. Before then, i.e. between the beginnings of colonial Nigeria in the mid-nineteenth century and 1952, the colonial administrator combined legislative, political and executive functions. Although a few Nigerians were elected and/or appointed members of the colonial legislative and/or executive councils, the senior colonial administrator played the dominant role in legislative and executive functions. He was all in all-law-maker, policy formulator and policy implementor. He even combined some judicial functions with these roles.

Then in 1952, not only did Nigeria have legislative councils the overwhelming majority of whose members were elected and who belonged to one political party or the other, the country also had introduced the cabinet ministerial system. However, under the 1952 Constitution, the ministers were given only collective responsibility over State matters as members of the central or regional cabinets. The higher civil servants, who, at this time, were, of course, still expatriate colonial administrators, remained in charge of their departments. While they were willing to co-operate with the new ministers, they were still determined to be in charge of both policy and administration. Needless to add that this brought the higher civil service into conflict with the new political class, a conflict which was regarded as part of the struggle for the effective transfer of power from the imperial authority to the nationalists.

The third stage in this evolving process came between 1954 and 1959. The 1954 Constitution, which replaced the Macpherson Constitution, gave both collective and individual responsibility over the administration of the ministries to the ministers; thus introducing, in principle and form, the Westminster-Whitehall model of the cabinet system of government. The 1957 constitutional changes which conferred self-government on both the Western and Eastern Regions finally brought into being a fully-fledged ministerial system in the two regions. By 1959, both the Federal Government and the Northern Regional Government had followed the footsteps of the West and the East.

Thus, by the time of independence in 1960, Nigeria had the exact replica of the Westminster-Whitehall model with the myths which go with it, at least as described in the textbooks, which is to the effect that the political class makes

the laws and lays down the policies while the higher civil service executes these policies and administers the laws. The dichotomy between politics and administration had been established. To remove any doubt about the 'proper' place of civil servants *vis a vis* politicians, a government manual stated that:

'The Public Service . . . is held responsible for applying Government rules and regulations equally and fairly to everyone . . . (It) does not determine the basic policies of the Government which it serves; it is an instrument of the public, subject to direction and open public scrutiny through the system of parliamentary control. Under the parliamentary system of government, such as is practiced in Western Nigeria, the public elects a legislature which, in turn, acts as the public's custodian of the Public Service. A minister, an elected member of the legislature, is held accountable to that body for each and every act of that part of the Public Service which he directs - his Ministry.' 1/

The 1954-59 constitutional development also brought about significant changes in the Nigerian Civil Service. The first and perhaps the most significant was the splitting of the Nigerian Civil Service into four public services - the Federal Public Service and three regional public services. Between 1946 and 1954, the central and unitary character of the Nigerian public service had been maintained although, as constitutional development took place, it had been considerably modified by the delegation of authority to the regional administrations of certain powers of appointment, promotion, posting and discipline. Then in 1954, with the introduction of a fully-fledged Federal Constitution, each government had its own civil service. The granting of full ministerial powers coincided with the establishment of regional as well as federal public services.

This period of rapid constitutional development was also marked by the intensification of the Nigerianization process. The nationalists were determined to accelerate this process partly for patriotic reasons, partly in order to remove the anomaly whereby political power would seemingly lie in the hands of Nigerians while administrative control continued to reside in the hands of the colonial administrators and partly because the political leaders were genuinely convinced that a Nigerianized higher civil service would co-operate more readily with the political class than an expatriate controlled civil service, and would, in fact, be more submissive or could be forced to be so. Indeed, to some extent, the first generation of top Nigerian civil servants seemed overly anxious

1/ *Office Manual*, O & M Division of the Treasury Government Printer, Ibadan, 1964, p. 6.

to establish the master-servant relationships with the politicians, partly out of gratitude and partly out of a genuine desire on their part to ensure the success of the newly established nationalist governments. The politicians were not reluctant to remind civil servants that they had not taken part in the "political struggle" and, accordingly, deserved to play a subordinate role.

Thus, by the end of this third phase and for some years thereafter, politics had established its hegemony over administration, and the politicians were lording it over the higher civil service. The seeds of discord and mistrust between the political class and the higher civil service had thus been sown. Accordingly, the fourth phase, from 1960 until the January 1966 *coup d'état*, was a particularly difficult period marked by conflicts of growing intensity, by constant interference by politicians in the administration of the civil service, particularly in such matters as appointment, promotion and discipline and by arbitrary use of power such as indefinite suspensions of some higher civil servants.

The average minister conceived his role as approving or disapproving whatever proposals or recommendations were placed before him by his permanent secretary. He expected the higher civil service to think out the policy and submit it for approval. During this period, the cases of the political boss, exercising his right and discharging his duty of giving leadership and laying down policy guidelines for his department, were few and far between. In the main, however, "it is true to say that for most of the time the administration has been left to its own devices . . . the convention that the minister is the master and the administrator is the instrument of policy has not been strictly applicable to public administration in Nigeria. Very often it has been the administrator who has been both the master and the instrument of policy". 1/

Why was this? Why did the political class fail to perform their assigned or ascribed role and yet want to pretend to the contrary with a view to hoodwinking the public? Before answering these questions, let us examine more closely why the political class was more successful during the third period, 1954-1959, than they were during the fourth phase, 1960-1965. The root of the success at the regional level, particularly during the period 1954-1959, lay in the existence of a strong party system in each region which had produced a strong and virile government. Not only did each regional government consist of some of the best brains and most talented and

1/ Augustus Adebayo, "Policy-making in Nigerian Public Administration, 1960-1975" in *Journal of Administration Overseas*, vol. XVIII, No. 1, January 1979, p. 5.

experienced people in the country, each party had a well-articulated programme which was pursued with such a single-minded determination that even the most hardened cynics were bound to concede that "the political masters in the regions were indeed masters of policy and dictated the pace and direction of government". 1/ The situation was different at the federal level. There, the government was an uneasy coalition of strange bedfellows with a weak "political consensus and insufficient agreement at the political level to permit the formulation of sustained and consistent policy". 2/ In the circumstances, administration was the mainspring of policy. This dominant role of the federal higher civil service paved the way for an even more decisive role in policy formulation during most of the military regime.

The reasons for the failure of the political class to play effectively their ascribed role of policy-makers during the first republic, even in the regions where this was not the case before independence, are primarily six. First and foremost, there was the growing inability on the part of many politicians to represent the national interest. Party and personal interests were mistaken for national interests. The result was that the higher civil service gradually assumed the role of the custodian of public conscience, the trustee and protector of true national interests against wily and corrupt politicians. Secondly, political instability sapped the energies of politicians. The internal crisis within the Action Group and the subsequent split of the Party sapped the energy of politicians and the government of Western Nigeria for years. Indeed, they never recovered until all political parties were banned in 1966 and yet in the years when the Action Group party enjoyed unity and cohesion, it was a pace setter in the development process. The same was true of the former NCNC which governed the Eastern region during this period. It was more often than not involved in party squabbles and disunity which inevitably affected its effectiveness as a government party. Thirdly, there was the question of the calibre of the persons who were appointed ministers. While some of them were highly educated, possessing considerable experience which stood them in good stead in the discharge of their ministerial duties, quite a number were ill-equipped either by education or training and/or by experience for the posts to which they were appointed. They had no choice but to depend on their permanent secretaries for leadership, whatever they may say to the contrary publicly.

This leads to the fourth reason. The dependence of ministers on their permanent secretaries because of their incapacities and inadequacies brought with it a great deal of resentment and lack of mutual trust and confidence

1/ Augustus Adebayo, *ibid.*, p. 9.

2/ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

partly because of the agonising realisation on the part of the politicians of their limitations and partly because of the ignorance and general ineptitude of the so-called political masters in policy fields bred contempt for them from the higher civil service. Fifthly, and paradoxically, is the problem of excessive control of and interference with administration by the political class. The task of supervising junior officers was made difficult by the interference of some politicians. It was not uncommon in those days for politicians to take actions which tended to undermine the integrity of the civil service. They also rendered the public service commissions ineffective by interfering with the appointments, the promotions and the discipline of civil servants.

Finally, there was the gross misunderstanding of the true meaning and nature of power. It is true that in theory politicians are men and women who compete for power within a country with a view to using it to achieve goals embodying varying degrees of public welfare, including the engineering of social and economic change. But towards the end of the first republic, Nigerian politicians generally tended to behave like the politicians described by V.S. Naipul in his book, *the Mimic People* when he said,

“Politicians are people who truly make something out of nothing. They have few concrete gifts to offer. They are not engineers or artists or makers. They are manipulators . . . Having no gifts to offer, they seldom know what they seek. They might say they seek power. But their definition of power is vague and unreliable. Is power the chauffeured limousine . . . the men from Special Branch outside the gates, the skilled and differential servants? . . . Is it power to bully or humiliate or take revenge? . . . The politician is more than a man with a cause, even when this cause is no more than self-advancement. He is driven by some little hurt, some little incompleteness . . .” 1/

In Third World countries, particularly in developing Africa, many politicians tend to mistake words and the acclamation of words for power. Politics for them are a do-or-die, once-for-all charge. It is a winner-take-all game with no second prizes whatever. Such was the state of the political process in Nigeria by the end of the first republic.

It was inevitable that such a system would collapse. Whatever people may now say about the thirteen-year-long military rule, it was, in January 1966, a welcome relief from the excesses of the political class, from their subordination of national interests to personal and partisan political interests, from their wheeling and dealing antics and from their political brinkmanship.

1/ Penguin Books Ltd., 1967, p. 37.

At the time of the coup, the only viable institution, whose integrity still remained intact was the civil service. Naturally, therefore, the new military rulers entered into an alliance with the higher civil service for the governance of the country. And it soon became clear both under Ironsi and later under Gowon that the success of the military regime depended overwhelmingly on the co-operation of the higher civil service - not merely as implementors of policies but, and more importantly, as initiators of policies. From 1966 to 1975 at the federal government level, the higher civil service became the mainspring of policy. The disunity within the armed forces of Nigeria from 1966 to 1967, the Aburi 'concordat' and its aftermath, the civil war, the problems of setting up the new State administrations created in 1967 and the challenges of post-civil war reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation-all led to enhancing the authority of the federal higher civil service and deepened the dependence on them by the military authorities. Whatever we may say in retrospect, there is no gainsaying the fact that the federal permanent secretaries and their senior colleagues did serve the cause of national unity and nation-building well during this period, particularly during the early years. They were the *fons et origo* of policy and decision-making. Even after civilian commissioners had been appointed as political heads of ministries, the coalition between the federal military government and the federal higher civil service waxed strong as the former still remained suspicious of politicians.

Even military governors who ran their States with iron hands and succeeded in reducing their State higher civil service to a position of near complete subservience had to woo the federal permanent secretaries for support on any matters or issues of interest to their respective States. As Augustus Adebayo acknowledged in his article to which I have already made reference,

"it is the awareness of the influence of the federal permanent secretary over policy or decision-making that made Military Governors during Gowon's regime (to) leave their domain and spend the evening with the permanent secretary at his residence in Ikoyi, lobbying for his support over matters that might in due course come before the Supreme Military Council, the Federal Executive Council or even directly before the Head of State". 1/

Human nature being what it is, some of the higher civil servants allowed the newly-acquired and growing power to enter into their heads. Power, they say, corrupts. Some of the federal higher civil servants became corrupted by

1/ Augustus Adebayo, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

their power. They became arrogant and insensitive to public opinion which, although not unaware of their entrenched position as the springboard of public policy, did not like their relishing in it. Consequently, the entire higher civil service and indeed the entire civil service became the subject of public criticism. Even I could not help raising the alarm when in my address early in 1972 - a few months after I had become Federal Commissioner for Economic Development and Reconstruction - as President of the Nigerian Economic Society, I said that "a new bourgeoisie is forming, a bourgeoisie that Karl Marx could hardly have foreseen - the bourgeoisie of the civil service. And it is flatly, stupidly and cynically bourgeois - pretentious, arrogant and insensitive". 1/

The mass retirements of 1975, after the "palace coup" or the "changing of the guard" that replaced the Gowon Ministry with the Murtala-Obasanjo Ministry on 29 July 1975, was in many ways a reaction to the arrogance of the all-powerful federal higher civil service. But in a typically Nigerian fashion and style of doing things, instead of being a corrective measure, instead of being a warning for the future, it became a kind of witch-hunting, a Nigerian-type McCarthyism which ended by our nearly throwing the baby out with the bath water. As we all know, the Nigerian public and the Nigerian press are the most ephemeral in their praises - this moment they cry "Hosannah" and the very next moment they shout "crucify him". And it is regrettable to admit that although as individuals we are very sympathetic, loving and kind, as a people we can be extremely sadistic, rejoicing in the downfall of fellow human beings, particularly if we think that such human beings are more important than ourselves, that they are what are popularly called "Very Important People".

Consequently, the Federal Military Government mistook the acclamation of the Press and the vocal public for support, for the righteousness of their action and went on a rampage, on a rape of the one institution that has stood the test of time and has served Nigeria well, in spite of all limitations just because of a few bad eggs. For when the political class messed themselves up and the nation between 1962 and 1965, it was the civil service that kept the nation going. And when the armed forces messed themselves up and nearly brought down the nation with them from 1966 to 1970, it was again the civil service that provided the bridges of unity and continuity. Unfortunately, the mass retirement of 1975 gravely undermined the integrity of our civil service without in any way correcting the obvious weaknesses in the institution. Even General Obasanjo was honest enough to admit that much in his Jaji speech when he said,

1/ Adebayo Adedeji - *Presidential Address*.

"This Administration has tried to reshape and redirect the society since its inception in July 1975. Although we have achieved a halt from the drift of the past, it was not a clean break. We started with mass retirements from our public service in the hope that new lessons would be learnt and new attitudes cultivated. The popular acclamation which the exercise received from the public accentuated our hopes but after a short time, the hopes receded. In their utterances most Nigerians displayed shocking callousness and sadism; and in their actions gross indiscipline and selfishness. I came to realise later that what really interested many Nigerians in the retirement exercise was not the positive lessons of it but the misfortune it brought to some families. Immediately the exercise was halted, all the enthusiasm hitherto displayed disappeared and the people relaxed into their careless old way of indiscipline, inefficiency and slackness while the Government, in spite of its efforts, turned out to be the victim of their gullible criticism of these same ills which they have refused to abandon. A society that measures the effectiveness of any Government by the number of forced retirement and dismissal of public officers and takes delight in the misfortune and downfall of others must be a sick and inhumane society". 1/

The mass retirement which was not confined to the civil service but was extended to the entire public service including universities, had the immediate consequence of making the higher civil service more reticent in performing their traditional role and extremely reluctant in performing their functions as the main policy-makers. The feeling of insecurity among public officials was exacerbated and many capable, efficient and experienced senior officials voluntarily retired prematurely. In one fell swoop, Nigeria lost, by the hundreds, some of the most experienced and seasoned public officials. Although in many cases this loss was to the gain of the private sector, it had no doubt undermined the capacity and capability of the civil service in nation-building and national development. While it may even now still be premature to evaluate the long-term effects of this action, there is no doubt that it has already adversely affected initiative and entrepreneurship - two essential requirements of development administration and management.

Accordingly, the higher civil service handed over by the military regime on 1 October 1979, was not, in mood and motivation, the same that was

1/ Speech by His Excellency Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo, Head of the Federal Military Government, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, at the Formal Opening of the Command and Staff College, Jaji, on Monday, 12 September 1977 pp. 5 & 6.

inherited by the military at the beginning of its regime. Then it was confident, buoyant, optimistic and extremely highly motivated. The legacy of the military regime was a civil service denuded of some of its most experienced and able senior officials, a civil service which is diffident and unsure of itself and certainly unwilling to take risks and stick its neck out in the decision-making process, a civil service where the much-reduced class of the gifted and the dedicated is just biding its time before quitting. That was the inheritance of the restored civilian government on 1 October 1979.

III. THE CHALLENGES AND REQUIREMENTS OF NATION-BUILDING AND OF ENGINEERING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

So much for the past. What about today and the future? What challenges face the political class and the higher civil service in the years ahead? Without doubt, the two major challenges which face all African States are nation-building and the social and economic transformation of their societies from their present level of under-development to dynamic and self-reliant States. These, as we have learnt to our discomfiture during the past two decades, are by any standard Herculean tasks which call for determined and dedicated leadership; for national and individual sense of purpose and direction; and, above all, for discipline and political restraints and moderation, again at both national and individual levels.

Both tasks - nation-building and the engineering of socio-economic transformation - are enough to daunt even the most dynamic and determined leadership. They call for the release of all our creative energies if we are to face the challenges successfully; for the creation of the right type of political, social and economic environment; and, for the total mobilization of all our human and material resources.

Africa will, indeed, need to call upon its inner resources of fortitude, sacrifice and political will if it is to overcome economic imperialism which has thrived for centuries and if it is to build in each state a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, a just and egalitarian society, a land of bright and full opportunities for all its citizens and a free and democratic society.

These tasks, difficult as they are, are further complicated by the pluralistic nature of the African society and the dualistic nature of its economy. For Africa is a pluralistic society *par excellence*. In each of the fifty independent African States, particularly in those countries south of the Sahara, the co-existence of many ethnic groups, each with its own distinctive cultural

characteristics, social structures and mores, organizational behaviour, and different attitudes to work, saving, investment and consumption, makes the task of nation-building particularly difficult.

Our heterogeneity is further complicated by the type of modernization process we have embarked upon - a modernization process that has been termed *acculturative modernization* which promotes a duality of norms, of patterns of behaviour, and of attitudes and structural affiliations. This is because we have mistaken modernization to mean westernization and/or industrialization. On the contrary, modernization for us in Africa should mean the seeking of a symbiosis between the African traditional inheritance and the new things of the whole wide world.

This implies three conditions. First, a social system that builds up the self-confidence of the people in their innate abilities and that can constantly innovate without falling apart; second, a differentiated, flexible social structure; and, third, a social framework that provides the skills and knowledge necessary for living in a technologically advanced world.

For us in Nigeria, the building of a strong and united nation with the concomitant modernization process has been subjected during the past twenty years to considerable strains and stresses. Our failures brought about the collapse of the first republic and the waging of a civil war. The way the wounds of that war were quickly healed through the spirit of reconciliation and the political development leading to the creation in 1967 of 12 States and in 1976 of 19 States provided us with the opportunity to start afresh in the task of nation building.

In the field of socio-economic development, we have been luckier than most African States. Thanks to our natural and human resources endowments, we have been able to sustain a reasonably high level of economic growth and development. But this development, paradoxical as it may sound, poses serious problems for our national unity because of its unevenness as between the different parts of the country; because of the skewed and unequal distribution of the fruits of that development, including personal incomes; and, because our peoples' expectations are invariably far ahead of our economic performance. All these factors have led to greater competitiveness, not only inter-State and interpersonal competition but also inter-ethnic rivalry and jealousy.

In spite of its achievement in the development field, Nigeria is still a relatively under-developed country. *Per capita* income is still relatively low; illiteracy and superstition are still rampant; and agriculture is still predominantly of a subsistence nature. Its economic structures still reflect largely its

colonial past and have still to be geared towards the exploitation of its resources for local manufacture and consumption. Agriculture which is the backbone of the economy has for years been either stagnant or declining with the result that the country now imports a lot of food items - rice, fish and meat - all of which could be produced locally. And, if I may add, in parenthesis, the present attitude to food imports, particularly grain imports, is an invitation to national disaster and will aggravate our economic dependence. Like in other African countries, Nigeria's industrial base is still inadequate. Industrial output has in the past been heavily concentrated in the areas of light industries - food, textiles and beverages - although there has been a significant shift in recent years in favour of basic industry, including iron and steel and petrochemicals. chemicals.

Population and urban growth rates are very high. Despite substantial progress in eradicating endemic and communicable diseases, the majority of Nigeria's population still has no basic health care and infant mortality is still very high, particularly in the rural areas. The incidence of debilitating diseases like malaria and sleeping sickness is a predominant factor in the low productivity of labour. Our transportation systems have still to be adequately developed and made less expensive. Although there have been marked improvements in the educational sector with the introduction of free primary education and the building of more universities, we still have a large illiterate population and serious problems of unemployment and underemployment and of making effective and rational use of our immense human resources. And, most unfortunate of all, Nigeria is fast joining the league of countries with the highest incidence of crime.

Nation-building and the engineering of socio-economic transformation are therefore intertwined. They are like the horse and the carriage. You cannot have one without the other. One must be used to propel and reinforce the other. Indeed, in the final analysis, it is our success or failure in the socio-economic fields that will determine our capabilities to evolve a politically strong and virile nation-state. Social and economic stagnation can be an even more destabilizing factor than rapid process of development and acculturative modernization; unequal and unbalanced national development with its cumulative effects on wealth and income distribution can spell doom to national unity or at least subject it continually to severe strains and stresses.

Our pluralistic society provides us with a unique opportunity to build an economic and social structure that is peculiarly African and that brings forth some of the best in Nigeria. This we can do only if we cease to concentrate on the negative and divisive aspects of multi-ethnicism in Nigeria - separateness and exclusiveness, mutual antagonism, clannishness and nepotism and what have you, and look at the positive and dynamic aspects of our multi-ethnic society.

It is perhaps important to emphasize a point that is more often than not forgotten whatever may be the rhetoric to the contrary. This is that the ultimate purpose of development is the development of man - the realization and unfolding of his creative potential through improvements not only in his material conditions of living which enable him to fulfil his psychological needs but also through the satisfaction of his psychic needs. In other words, development must be construed as a process by which man's over-all personality is enhanced. And for society as a whole, development must mean the development of the collective personality of the society. Thus, economic development cannot be treated as an independent variable divorced from its social and political bearings.

In any developing society there are usually though not always, three groups to be found from whom the society as a whole may expect the manifestation of a will and a capacity to plan for the future of the society and to organize and administer its natural and human resources and its external relations in order not only to set in motion the growth processes but also in order to achieve what we called in the early 1970s the five national objectives to which I made reference a few minutes ago, or in order to achieve the fundamental objectives and directive principles of State policy as stipulated in our new Constitution.

These three groups are the higher civil service, the armed forces and the so-called middle class from whose rank the leadership and membership of the political class are drawn. Since we have just completed 13 years of military rule in Nigeria, we are rich in experience as to the role of the military in nation-building and socio-economic development. Let us therefore in the next few minutes focus our attention on the role of the political class and the higher civil service in these tasks in the light of our review of the chequered history of Nigeria since 1952; in the light of the challenges and requirements called forth by these tasks; and, in the light of the nature of our present constitution based on an executive presidency and the principle of the separation of powers between the executive, the legislative and the judiciary and on a multi-political party system.

IV. THE ROLE OF THE POLITICAL CLASS IN NATION-BUILDING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Of all our national objectives, our ability as a nation to establish a free and democratic society has been on trial ever since independence. For 13 years, the democratic process was replaced by military rule. After one year of civilian rule, many thoughtful people are beginning to wonder whether we are really capable of establishing a genuinely free and democratic society - whether there is not an inherent incapacity on our part as a people to nurture a democratic system to full blossom.

Right from the lifting of the ban on political activities, our politicians - not all I must say - have behaved as if we have learnt no lessons from the pre-January 1966 experience and its aftermath, as if the entire political class had, like the sleeping princess, gone to sleep for over 13 years only to wake up and resume where they left off. All the weaknesses of our political processes before 1966 - polarisation, brinkmanship, political ethnicism, mistaking of partisan or personal interests for national interests, etc. - have begun to rear their ugly heads. To an outside observer, it looks as if we are using the democratic process to undermine the very essence of democracy. The optimism that welcomed the dawn of 1 October 1979, is being replaced by a great deal of caution, if not growing pessimism. And yet, it is in the interests of the political class to ensure that our rejuvenated democratic process takes root and thrives. Otherwise the class may disappear once again from the scene.

Since I strongly believe that the development of a genuine, free and democratic society is a *conditio sine qua non* for nation-building and development, I may be forgiven if I repeat that this is the greatest contribution that the political class can make to the achievement of these objectives. Whatever else they may wish to contribute, this is the greatest challenge that faces them. Their utterances, the very way they conduct themselves, their public image, their ability to build up public confidence in the political class as a positive factor in the development process and as consisting of men and women who are truly patriotic and who are genuinely interested in seeking power in order to use it not for self-aggrandisement, but for nation-building and development - all these will determine whether democracy will survive in Nigeria. The whole essence of democracy is the resolution of issues, however difficult, by discussion and compromise and not by adopting extreme, take-it-or-leave-it positions or by engineering one political crisis after another. Democracy cannot thrive in a situation of permanent political crisis and polarisation.

In this connexion, another challenge which the political class faces is an abiding respect for the Constitution and the rule of law. Many constitutions in Africa have ceased to be instruments of political control. We have so many constitutions without constitutionalism and so many laws without force and majesty. This the political class must avoid at all costs, otherwise we will revert to a state of political chaos.

Thirdly, the political class as a whole must at all times battle to raise the tone of politics. A foreign observer who reads our newspapers must be appalled by the degree of bitterness and acrimony that seems to pervade our political activities and discussions. We sometimes even allow political differences to degenerate into family or personal feuds. This, to say the least, does not enhance the prospects of the democratic process because it destabilizes

social relations and cohesion. An uncle of mine, who is now dead, once remarked, a year or two after the military came to power, that whatever criticism might be levelled against that regime, it had at least removed the social tensions that seemed to be a feature of political activities in our society - the personal feuds, the division within families on a partisan basis and the arson and thuggery against political opponents that were undermining the very foundation of our society.

Fourthly, it is the responsibility of the political class as a whole to be able to identify and, communicate with, and draw on the values and support of our traditional communities. At the same time, they have to be able to detach themselves from communalism, its particularistic ethos and often static conditions, to reach a social identity and goals that are as wide as the entire political community and that depend on a technology and social organization oriented to skills and merit. At the beginning of this talk, I warned against acculturative modernization which alienates the people from their traditions and society. Therefore, one of the challenges of nation-building is the need to embark vigorously on a process of de-alienation and to indigenize our development and modernization efforts through the processes of symbiosis.

Fifthly, the political class as a whole has an important role to play in achieving an increasing measure of self-reliance in our society and in our economy. Section 22 of our Constitution loudly proclaims that "the National ethic shall be *Discipline, Self-Reliance and Patriotism*" (emphasis is mine). Of all the new values to be created in Africa, self-reliance is the single most important one. Africa has depended for too long on external masters. There is no doubt that Africa cannot develop economically, socially and politically until it absolutely resolves to be self-reliant. This means developing in the individual as well as in the society such attitudes as the will to succeed in life through productive labour, to experiment, to be resourceful and to conquer new frontiers. Self-reliance means undertaking economic activities that enhance the capacity of the society to function over the long term for the well-being of all its members.

Thus, the political class has multi-faceted roles to play in nation-building and development. The class, as a whole, regardless of party and/or ideological differences, is expected to enable democracy to thrive and become grass rooted; to raise the tone, morality and purpose of politics; to honour the Constitution and accept the supremacy of the rule of law; to foster national unity and progressively reduce the importance of centrifugal forces; and, to contribute to the development of an increasing measure of national self-reliance in Nigeria. This list is far from being exhaustive. It is indicative of the many vital and crucial contributions that are expected of the political class in

the task of nation-building and national development. Their ability to perform these tasks effectively will depend in a large measure on the calibre - intellectual as well as moral - of the people who compose this class; on their motivation; on their perception of power and its use; and, above all, on the quality of their leadership.

But we must now disaggregate the discussion and examine, albeit briefly, the role of the political class within the framework of specific political institutions which have been provided for under the new Constitution. I have particularly in mind the role of political parties, of the National Assembly and State legislatures, and of the Executive in nation-building and national development. These institutions are the natural habitat of politicians. And since political democracy begins at the grass roots, the role of local government is also crucial.

In three basic respects, the Nigerian political system has been given shape, not by the prescription of the Constituent Assembly but through an historical evolution. These are: (i) the manifestation of a strong preference for a multi-State federation; (ii) the considerable expansion in the jurisdiction of the Federal Government which is an inevitable product of (i) above as well as of 13 years of military rule and the unsuccessful bid to break up Nigeria; and, (iii) the requirement that political parties must be different in name, power-base and function from those which operated prior to 1966.

Accordingly, the new Constitution provides guidelines for the formation and operation of political parties. Unlike most other African executive presidential systems of government which are based on a one-party system, Nigeria has opted for a multi-party system providing: (i) that these parties be truly national in character; (ii) that they be operated democratically and not run by cabals, and (iii) that their programmes, aims and objectives should be consistent with those contained in the Chapter on the fundamental objectives and directive principles of State policy of the Constitution.

In other words, one of the major instrumentalities on which we depend for meeting the challenges of nation-building and national development are the political parties. If they are to make positive contributions to meeting these challenges, then they will, in addition to fulfilling the formal provisions of the Constitution, give substantive backstopping to their members in the National Assembly, State legislature, local government and in the Executive. Each party will have to organize a policy-research oriented bureaucracy that is over the years as competent and effective as the civil services - both federal and State.

Each political party will have to develop the capability for (i) undertaking policy research and analysis; (ii) reviewing government policies and measures with a view to suggesting new dimensions to existing policies; (iii) developing new ideas and policy guidelines; and, (iv) conducting in-depth studies of the economy and society generally.

It is indeed imperative that each political party should have its own think tank if it is to become a true partner in the tasks of nation building and national development. For, the Nigeria of today is more complex and more sophisticated than the Nigeria of 1965. The economy has become even more complex and sophisticated and increasingly differentiated. Policy measures must therefore derive from serious studies and not from hunches and political expediencies. If political parties are to formulate the rules and pose the targets which the civil service, after the approval of the legislatures and the executive are to execute, then the functionaries of these political parties must not only be as talented as the members of the higher civil service but they must also be as skilled, versatile and knowledgeable.

The extent to which political parties succeed in organizing themselves to play an effective role, on a day-to-day basis, in nation building and national development, to that extent will members of our National Assembly and state legislatures be effective lawmakers and policy decision makers. In this complex and highly specialized world, our lawmakers have to be given highly expert and skillful backstopping by their political parties, otherwise they will fall victim to vested interests and pressure groups and continue to be susceptible to the tendencies of making promises which cannot realistically be fulfilled, thereby widening the gap between expectations and performance, and thus undermining the democratic process.

One of the advantages of an executive presidential system of government is that it provides the National Assembly with the unique opportunity of being really *national* and not partisan or sectional because it cannot vote the President out of office and it is not in its interest nor that of the electorate that it should paralyse the machinery of government and thus halt the task of national development. Our new Constitution is based on the assumption that the legislatures will always adopt a bi-partisan approach in the resolution of many issues.

I hope that our assembly men have, during their several visits to the United States Congress and similar institutions abroad, observed that the majority of issues before Congress are decided on a bi-partisan basis and that whenever there is a vote it is not unusual for the voting pattern to breach partisan loyalties. It is not always a question of my party first; it is more often than not

one's contributions to national development and nation building. Because of the more sophisticated and better educated American electorate, legislators are judged, whenever they seek re-election, by the measures they have supported as against those they have opposed while in Congress. Party affiliations are not enough to guarantee their re-election. Finally, all our political parties must enter into an understanding to minimize political and social tensions by burying the hatchet immediately after the elections and not impose on the nation a state of permanent election campaigns which tend to heighten political tensions. Unlike the parliamentary system of government, the President cannot be voted out of office during his four-year term. This is also true of the Governors unless of course they become incapacitated. Nor can the legislatures be dissolved. Therefore, it is incumbent on all our political parties, while protecting their pursuit or retention of power, to give the nation a period of moratorium from election campaigns so that everybody can work together in the task of nation building and national development.

The Presidency, of course, straddles both the political and the administrative worlds. He is the leader of his Party, and, as a popularly elected person deriving his mandate from the whole country, he is not only the leader of the nation but also its father. And, finally, he is the Chief Executive and head of the national administration. In fact, he is the *fons et origo* of the Administration. This concentration of power in one person makes it appear, at first sight, that all efforts at nation building and national development depend on him and on him alone. In a way this is true because an executive president with such virtually dictatorial powers as are conferred upon him can move a nation to hitherto unattainable national heights or push it down to a hitherto unfathomable abyss. All these apply *mutatis mutandis* to the chief executives of our state governments.

In the recent history of the United States (after whose Constitution we have patterned our own), we have the example of the late President Kennedy who, because of his outstanding achievements as a national leader is still missed even today in spite of the fact that he was in power for a very brief period. In contrast to his record and legacy is that of President Nixon who had to give up office to avoid impeachment and who left behind a legacy of national shame and doubt in the minds of the people of the most powerful country in the world.

Yes, indeed, an executive president is a most powerful person. But how he exercises his power depends on the calibre of his cabinet advisers, of his presidential advisers as well as of his non-formal advisers and of the higher civil service. In the United States, the choice of advisers, particularly those of cabinet rank, is one of the acid tests that a president-elect has to face

If his choice is weighted in favour of party cronies or if ethnic consideration is suspected to have featured at all, then he is deemed to have started badly. He is expected to reach out for the best, the most able and experienced. And more often than not, these are not even party card holders but they are people who have established a reputation for themselves in their chosen fields and who can bring a great deal of skills, knowledge, competence and experience to the Administration. They are usually at least as knowledgeable, skilled, competent and experienced as even the first 11 of the higher civil service and therefore automatically command their respect and have no difficulty in establishing a mutually beneficial *modus operandi*.

This then brings me to the specific contributions expected of the higher civil service in nation-building and national development. But before discussing this, I wish to raise one matter of importance to the political class - the spoils system. If the chief executive bases his cabinet and other senior appointments primarily on merit which cuts across party barriers, he will appear to be undermining one of the strongest props of a nascent political party system, namely, spoils. But given the number of posts in the gift of the President under an executive presidential system, it should be possible to satisfy the spoils system and thereby pay party debts without sacrificing national interest. We must always remember that the sacred duty of the President to the nation, once he is elected to that office, is to mobilize the best talents in the country for the service of the nation. This he can do while he still satisfies the partisan needs of his party. To fail to do so is to betray his sacred trust, to undermine the task of nation-building and national development and to weaken, if not destroy, the fundamental principles of the Constitution.

Indeed, it is in the interest of national unity for the President, once he assumes office, to rise above partisan politics and change from the image and style of a politician to that of a statesman. As Nigeria's Number One citizen and father of the nation, he has to keep reminding us by his deeds and pronouncements that we are Nigerians first and foremost before we are Hausa, Ibo, Ibibio, Kanuri, Yoruba, Tiv or what have you; that we are Nigerians before we are UPN, NPN, PRP, NPP, GNPP and what have you; that we are Nigerians before we are members of the political class, the public service or the business community and before we are employers or employees. Not only must he strive daily to be above partisan politics and be the true father of the nation, more importantly, he must be seen by all Nigerians, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, party affiliations, etc. to be the true and sincere embodiment of the spirit of the new Nigerian, indivisible and indissoluble, a free and democratic society, a society whose political and social order is founded upon unity, peace and progress, freedom, equality and justice.

V. THE HIGHER CIVIL SERVICE AND NATION-BUILDING

The higher civil service constitutes, as I said earlier, one of the three groups in a developing country from which it is expected to flow a will and a capacity to plan for the future of a society and to administer that society's human and natural resources so as to set the growth processes in motion. At the beginning of this talk, I indicated at some length the evolution of the relationships between the higher civil service and the political class, and the emergence of conflicts and contradictions from 1952 to 1979. Therefore, during the few minutes that are left for this talk, I intend to concentrate on the present and the future. Fortunately, quite a number of the members of the higher civil service themselves, both past and present, have said and written extensively on their experience and on their perception of their role.

Indeed, as a follow-up to the *Nigerian Administration and its political setting*, I launched a research project entitled 'Profile Study of Nigeria's Higher Civil Servants' while I was Director of the Institute of Administration, University of Ife. Under this project, some of the then top civil servants in Nigeria, including people like Chief S.O. Adebó, Chief J.O. Udoji, Chief C.O. Lawson, Mrs. Fola Ighodalo, and the late Abdul Attah, Andrew Ejueyitchie and Peter Adumosu, to mention only a few, came to the Institute each year and had three-hour sessions with our students, who are themselves senior and middle grade civil servants, on their background, their careers, their experiences and their views on such thorny issues as intra-civil service politics and the relationships between them and the political class. This project has been continued after my departure from the Institute and a special issue of the *Quarterly Journal of Administration* was brought out in 1979 containing some of these profiles. 1/

It is also clear from what I have said, so far, that as far as the future is concerned, the higher civil service would have to continue to contribute immensely to the task of nation-building and national development. Indeed, no government can succeed in Nigeria without the fullest co-operation of its civil service. Consequently, the governments, both federal and state, will have to continue to depend on their higher civil services for assistance in policy formulation, for policy execution, for providing the bridge between the past and the present, between an outgoing government and an incoming administration and, at the federal level, for being a unifying force containing in its rank

1/ *QJA* volume XIII, Nox. 3 & 4, April/July 1979.

people from virtually all the ethnic groups of Nigeria. Apart from the armed forces, the federal bureaucracy, including federal parastatals, are the only institutions that reflect, through their staffing, the diversity in unity and the pluralism of Nigeria.

The tasks which the higher civil service will face in the years ahead will even be more daunting and challenging. One of the implications of the political, economic and social objectives of the Constitution is a virile, efficient and effective public service. The Fourth National Development Plan, 1981-1985, whose outline was recently presented by the President to the National Assembly, shows clearly the imperative necessity of strengthening our public service and of creating the right political and social environment for it to be able to discharge its responsibility optimally. Of the total investment of N82 billion during the Fourth Plan period, the share of the public sector is N70.5 billion. Given this kind of ambition and our continued resolve that our governments should continue to control the commanding heights of our national economy, there is no gainsaying the fact that we need a public service that can rise to the challenge and the task.

What then are the minimum pre-requisites for such a public service in general and for such a higher civil service in particular? I have already referred to one of them - the creation of a favourable political and social environment. Here, at least, three steps need to be taken very urgently. First, the havoc done by the purge of 1975 to the morale of civil servants and the security of tenure must be ameliorated. In this regard, the civilian administration ought to see itself as a corrective regime. Secondly, the government must deliberately rebuild the public image of the public service and must protect its civil servants against unwarranted and cowardly attacks. No self-respecting person would want to be associated for long with an institution that is constantly maligned and degraded. Certainly, no one will give the best of his service in such circumstances. Unless the social prestige of the higher civil service is restored, the group will continue to be denuded and the Civil Service Commissions will find it increasingly difficult to attract some of the best products of higher institutions of learning to the public service. The cumulative effect of this over the years on national development and nation building is too grave to contemplate.

Thirdly, there must be an assurance that the higher civil service will be given every opportunity to perform its task objectively and to the best of its ability. In other words, the governments must show a capacity to listen to constructive criticism of their policies and programmes and consider professional advice. If a government is unwilling to utilize fully the talents of its civil service, if it is unwilling even to listen to advice, and if its members are too

prone to breach rules and regulations, men and women of integrity and conscience in the civil service will find their way out. It is usually the best and most talented that quit first.

The second pre-requisite for an effective and public-spirited higher civil service is its growing professionalization. This was one object of the Udoji Public Service Review. With the increasing differentiation of the Nigerian society and economy, and the concomitant complexities, the days of the intelligent amateur are long over. The period of muddling through is also long past. There is, therefore, an urgent necessity to intensify the professionalization of the higher civil service.

By professionalism I mean that the higher civil service should possess the seven main features of a profession. These are specificity of expertise; higher qualification; self-education; ethical self-sustenance; fiduciary relations; colleague control; and, recognition. As I wrote several years ago, "the road to professionalism is paved with all sorts of difficulties. There are many vested interests whose short-term interest is to maintain the *status quo*. The older generation of civil servants . . . belongs to this group . . . There is also the problem of inertia. Many senior civil servants whom one would have expected to support the professionalization of public administration are unwilling to be disturbed by what to them are no more than new fangled ideas. Through a mixture of conservatism and cynicism, they have turned deaf ears to any suggestion for change". 1/

The third and final pre-requisite is the need to work out conditions for productive co-operation between the political class and the higher civil service based on mutual respect, trust and confidence. In facing the challenge of nation-building and the task of national development, the politicians and the administrators meet in a common set of tasks in which there should be a distinction of gifts, division of powers and variety of skills. Each should accord due respect for the role of the other and should endeavour to strengthen the elements that unite them in the task of nation-building and national development rather than exacerbate division and distrust to the detriment of the nation. In other words, and as James O'Connell rightly concluded in his contribution to the *Nigerian Administration and its Political Setting*, the politicians should lead as they are ultimately responsible to the people but "they need to be able to stimulate their administrators, evaluate their advice, and act co-operatively with them . . . Political leadership without administrative and

1/ Adebayo Adedeji, "The Professionalization of Public Administration in Africa" in A.H. Rweyemamu and G. Hyden (eds.) *A Decade of Public Administration in Africa* (1975); pp. 142-143.

technical support is power in a vacuum; administration without political leadership is only tidiness in stagnation. Politics and administration belong together in the dynamics of a dialectical relationship. But there is no perfectly ordered model for this relationship, and no perfect delineation of responsibilities or functions will fit all the needs and possibilities of development". 1/ All that we can proffer by way of advice in this dialectical encounter is that the politicians should strive assiduously to politicize the civil servants while they on their part should use every available opportunity to civilize the politicians!

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It now remains for me to thank, once more, the organizers of this Workshop for the opportunity afforded me, an expatriate Nigerian, not only to participate in this most important Workshop but also to present this paper. I am also grateful to all of you for your attention and patience.

1/ Adebayo Adedeji, *op. cit.* p. 33.