

DUPE ADELAJA, AMNESTY AND TRAITORS

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President Obasanjo has been accused that his cabinet is populated by “recycled” officials. This accusation is not entirely true and for those who persist, may I ask them in which cabinet the Honourable Minister of State for Defence – Navy – Chief Mrs. Dupe Adelaja served in the past? This honourable lady’s curriculum vitae shows that she had served only with the Kitchen Cabinet of her husband, and that was not a political appointment; indeed her education, lack of experience and sophistication, zone, state or local government or even ward was not a consideration for that position.

When President Obasanjo commenced the cycling of children of old politicians, his first sample was Mrs. Dupe Adelaja, daughter of AD chieftain Senator Abraham Adsanyan. The President was later to extend this peculiar form of patronage to the Akinjides, Ekwuemes, Awolowos etc. In all these the pre-qualification requirement appeared to be who is your father? Portfolios were assigned and reports indicate that they are all doing fantastically well, the economy is booming and the polity is calm and peaceful, they all deserve a second term. And I so move.

A wit once said that it is better for people to think you are a dim-wit when you are silent than for you to open your mouth and confirm it.

The Honourable Mrs. Dupe Adelaja had never been quoted since she was appointed a Minister, there is nothing remarkably bad about that because there are about nine other Ministers like that; let’s face it, they all cannot be the Tony Anenihs, Adamu Ciomas, Ojo Maduekwes, Bola Iges, Segun Agagus and Chef Sunday Afolabis of the “come and eat” fame. We must have the Dupe Adelajas who opened her mouth only once and allowed her tongue to betray her. This writer moves that her tongue be declared a traitor; and he thereafter denied any form of sustenance, be it Poverty Alleviation, Child Care Support or Pension for that matter.

On a more serious note, public officers who make official statements have to appreciate that each utterance is seen as a statement of government policy, bereft of personal opinion and prejudices. When a highly placed public officer of the rank of a Minister makes a statement of the type credited to Mrs. Adelaja, about ex-Biafran soldiers and her quaint definition of traitors, one is saddened and ashamed for our country; because in her statement she portrayed her abysmal ignorance of the substance and essence of amnesty and pardon. And for a Minister, that is most tragic.

Does Mrs. Adelaja know that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was tried and convicted for treasonable felony, went to jail and freed, before he was pardoned and thereafter rehabilitated by Gowon's appointment as Federal Commissioner of Finance and Vice-Chairman of the Federal Executive Council?

Does Mrs. Adelaja know that it took the generosity of General Abdulsalaam Abubakar to free General Olusegun Obasanjo from prison just about three years ago and grant pardon, rehabilitate him and finally restore him to his present position as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which position enabled just to appoint the erstwhile nonentity Dupe Adelaja to a Minister of traitors? Does she know?

I will not bother about the definition of a traitor for as George Santayana once said, one man's traitor is another man's hero. As I desire to help Mrs. Adelaja out of her distress, and she should be in distress like anyone whose foot is stuck in their mouth; I will explore on the subject and essence of amnesty and state pardon. I hope that the picturesque illustration of the two personages, Awo and Obj who suffered the vilification and stigma of being traitors at sometime or the other and their eventual full restoration does the enlightenment, to further illustrate, let's try definitions and notable statements.

The Blacks Law Dictionary defines Amnesty as being "A sovereign act of forgiveness for past acts, granted by a government to all persons who have been guilty of crime or delict, generally political offences, - treason, sedition, rebellion, draft evasion and often conditioned upon their return to obedience and duty within a prescribed time Included in the concept of pardon is **amnesty** which is similar in all respects to a full pardon in so far as when it is granted both the crime and punishment are abrogated..."

Thus every government official of the rank of a Minister ought to know the full scope of Amnesty or State pardon which we all know that the Nigerian State has granted all the former Biafran officers even if Mrs. Adelaja is as unforgiving as Queen Elizabeth I who told the dying Countess of Nottingham that "God may pardon you, but I never can". She is not allowed to pronounce it as state policy. By the Nigerian State Policy and in accordance with the definition in the dictionary All the crimes of the "traitors" have been abrogated, they are free and should be fully restored.

Some people do not have it in their heart to forgive (pardon) those who have transgressed against them in defiance to their dictates, just like Mrs. Adelaja purportedly did when she defied her father to serve in the Obj cabinet. Her rebellion against her father may be seen as an act of treachery (if all we read in the papers are true) and as a traitor to the family she must be presumed to have forfeited all blessings and benefits

deriving from her patrimony, for that is the emotive definition of pension, if we follow her logic.

On a final note, it behoves Mrs. Adelaja to tender an apology to the nation for bringing her office as a Minister to disrepute through unguarded irresponsible and careless statements which threaten the peace and unity of our Nation. Further, we expect the Minister of Defence to issue a press disclaimer to the statement by Mrs. Adelaja, her immediate boss General Yakubu Danjuma must clarify the Government's position on the issue of Pension for ex-Biafrans, while we urge Mr. President to quickly rid his government of the blight of this "pepeiye" minister.

Chief Chibuzo N. Ziggy Azike, KSC
10, Chilaka Close
Suruler, Lagos
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