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TRADE UNIONS AND THE DEMAND FOR DEMOCRATIC DIVIDENDS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was set out to establish the roles of trade unions (organised labour) in the democratic process and the demand for dividends of democracy embodied in good governance in the country. In that end, was the conceptual clarification of terms - democracy and trade unions. Hence, it was established that democracy being literally defined as the government of the people, for the people and by the people, was meant to exist for the benefit of the people translated to what is popularly referred to in Nigeria as the dividends of democracy/good governance. It is the incentive and mouthwatering carrot that pacifies the people for the loss of their sovereignty to the state as instituted in the social contract entered into by both parties. Democracy in its philosophical and idealistic posture exists for the maximum benefit of the majority of the people. However, as practiced in Nigeria, those accruable benefits are usually elusive due to the nature and character of the operators of the system. Hence, the need for the proper positioning of the organised labour as a catalyst for the actualization of the expected dividends of democracy through enacting of roles geared at political mobilisation of the workers/masses in the political process and formation of political party (Labour party in the country) or its alignment with other ideologically fitted political party aimed at wresting political power from the bourgeois ruling class. The study noted that as noble as the objective might seem, its actualization was beset with constraints of elitist nature of the leadership structure of the Labour organisations itself, disunity among the labour organisations and paucity of fund for effective political mobilisation and education. Hence,

suggestions for redress and proper positioning of the organised labour aimed at eliciting good governance/dividends of democracy for the citizenry were proffered.

KEYWORDS

Trade Union/organised labour, democratic dividends.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy has been seen as a system of government whereby the people either directly or through their representatives participate in the governance of their affairs. It is a system of governance whereby the people of a given nation/country participate in policy/decision formulation and implementation/execution in the country. Democracy therefore is a system of governance that ensures that the people are carried along in the process of governance. It is a governance system that foresees that the interests of the greater number of people referred to as the masses are catered for and protected. Democracy as a system of government ensures that the views and interest of the people are well represented and cared for. No wonder it has been popularly referred to or defined as the government of the people, for the people and by the people. As the government of the people, it implies that the source of authority of the government is derived from the people. That inputs ownership of the government on the people. On the other hand, democracy as the government for the people implies that the government is meant for the people. In other words, the people are the direct beneficiary of the government. This equally implies that the benefits or the dividends derivable for the act of governance is accruable to the people. It also implies that the government is supposedly an instrument or source of

benefit to the people and so governance benefits are expected and demands placed on the operators of the system. More so, democracy as the government by the people signifies ownership and control of the system of governance by the people. It indicates an authority over the system by the people. It reveals the strength, power, authority and control which is being possessed and wielded by the people over the system. The summation of the above attributes of democracy as highlighted reveals that it is a system of governance that is a product of the people, controlled by the people and for the benefit or good governance of the people.

Going by the above submission, democracy therefore confers on the people the power of control of the system. It bestows on the people the power to determine the governance process. It confers on the people the power to determine who should govern them. In this context, power and authority reside with the people through their representatives as in the case of representative democracy as applicable and practiced in Nigeria. Governance is by the people and for the people. Democracy as a form of government projects and protects the interests and aspirations of the people of the country.

Through representations, the generality of the people usually referred to as the masses make their inputs and demands on the system or government. They equally limit and control the power and authority of those elected to represent them in the government through an act of recall thereby ensuring that the abuse of power by the representatives are curtailed and/or prevented. The essence of this is to ensure good governance where by the dividends of democracy/governance is guaranteed to the highest number of people in the country.

To ensure that the people derive the benefits accruing from governance which is the essence of government as enshrined in the social contract entered into where by the people relinquish their sovereignty to the Government for governance benefit (Haralambos & Mead, 1980), social groups in varied forms and colourations tend to emerge with the intent of projecting and protecting these interests of the people. One of such interest groups is the organized trade union.

Trade unions in representative democracy exists not just to project and protect the interests of the workers in the industry or organisations but function to ensure that the dividends of governance are accruable to the masses. They exist and function to the extent to which the masses of the nationplace demand and expectations on them. They transcend to the status of a pressure group whose mandate as prescribed by the people is the articulation of the masses expected demands and benefits (good governance) from the government. As pressure group, organized trade unions act as watch dog to the government thereby ensuring that the government of the day abide by the stated constitution of the country. It sees to the effective implementation of the governmental agendas as stated. It sees that the social contract

entered into by the people with their government are upheld and maintained. As pressure group whose aim is geared at restoring the dividends of good governance to the people, it mobilises and galvanizes the people in the formation and selection process of their representatives during the electioneering process. It does and achieves these through information articulation and dissemination and more so, advocacy.

Organized trade unions consequently assume and become the means and the vanguard of the people for the articulation, projection and demand of their interests and benefits from the government.

These are premised on the believe that the people are unorganized and disadvantaged in the power game between them and the government hence they look up to the organized bodies like the trade unions for the balance of the power gamewhere by their interests and the dividends of governance can be derived and appropriated for the benefit of them all.

Knowing then the enormous roles of trade unions in the democratic process and governance in terms of the articulation, galvanizing and demand for the dividends of democracy/governance for the people, to what extent can the trade unions in the country (Nigeria) be said to have lived upto this mandate? Trade unions being not just an economic interest group for the agitation and protection of the economic interests of the workers which they are originally formed to protect, but also by political extension a political/economic pressure group whose mission is the projection and protection of the interests of the masses from the few but powerful political elites (Ogunbameru, 2005), the question then is, can the trade unions as seen in the Nigerian society be said to live up to this mandate and expectation? Can the trade unions in the country be seen as pressure group that

agitates and projects the interests of the people in terms of the demand of the dividends of democracy and good governance for the people? These and some others are begging questions and so constitute the central focus of this study.

Conceptual clarification

Trade union: As it is usually inferred, trade union is a continuous association of workers who have come together with the sole purpose of improving on their working condition (Girigiri, 1999; Fashoyin, 2002). According to Ootobo (2000, 66), trade union has been conceptualised to mean “any combination of workers, whether temporary or permanent, the purpose of which is to regulate the terms and combinations of employment of workers whether the combination in question; would or would not apart from this action, be an unlawful combination by reason of any of its purposes being in restraint of trade and whether its purpose do not include the provision of benefits for its members”. It is observable from the above definitions that trade union consists of three vital elements of which one is; the continuity of organisation, the other is that it has to do with employment and the third has to do with the issue of goal or purpose of the organisation.

However, the Marxists in their conceptualization see trade union as an association of marginalized and exploited workers/wage earners whose surplus values are expropriated from them and of whose existential working conditions and social relations of production will compel them into class consciousness and to class struggle for the repudiation and the eventual dethronement of the existing order (Nwachukwu, 2011).

Irrespective of the perspective or definition adopted, trade union invariably has to do with the collectivity of workers who are gainfully employed in an organisation be it big or small whose manifest interest is the projection and protection of their economic interests and general working life. For there to be trade union, there must first be a collection of individuals. More so, these individuals must agree to collectivise their interest/s. Furthermore, these workers that have agreed to come together must be in an employment. In other word, they must be wage earners implying that they must be employees as against being employers. Essentially too, there must be a reason, goal/s or purpose for their coming together. They must have a stated goal which in this context is the protection and agitation for the improvement and betterment of their wages and their general working conditions. Any other thing or agitation outside this condition is deemed not to be within the mandate of the union.

However as will be seen in due course, certain socio/political conditions do sometimes instigate the organised trade unions to delve supposedly outside their stated mandates as is observable in Nigeria where organised trade unions dabble into political issues that tend to have direct and/or indirect implications on the working conditions/lives of the workers. Instances abound in the country where the Nigeria labour congress had to interfere in the government policy decisions that seemed to have negative effect on the working lives of the workers as evident in the President Olusegun Obasanjo versus Comrade Adam Oshiomole petroleum subsidy removal and the increase in the pump price of petrol saga. Here the organised labour under the leadership of comrade Oshiomole went outside the economic and working condition improvement/protection mandate to interrogating and resisting the implementation of government policy

decision on the justification of its over bearing harsh economic implications on the workers. Just of recent there was a call on the workers in Rivers State, Nigeria by the leadership of the Nigerian labour congress to get actively involved in the electioneering process in the country so as to be in the vintage point to determine who becomes the governor of the State and the president of the federation. These are indications of the role of trade unions in politics and/or governance in the country. This however, will be further discussed in subsequent heading but before then, let us have an understanding of the origination and historical development of trade union/ism in the country.

Origin and historical development of Trade unions in Nigeria: The origin of trade union in the country can be traced to the British era even though some scholars are of the view that the British colonial government were never in support of the formation and existence of trade unions in her colonies of which Nigeria was one. The fact however is that the activities of what could be termed of trade unionism started in the country during the colonial period. Record has it that the first trade union to emerge in the British colonial Nigeria was the Nigeria civil service union. This union was formed on Monday 19th August 1912 (Otobo, 2000, Egboh; 1968). The union because of its mode of formation and activism was assumed and subsequently regarded in the trade union circle as not being a trade union but an association of like minds in the civil service that just came together to uphold the tenets of the Service without the intent of projecting and likewise protecting/agitating for the economic and socio/political benefit of its members. The union was never seen as being dynamic and vibrant and so could not fall within the confines of a trade union. It was therefore an elitist association.

It was the elitist posture of the Nigeria Civil Service Union where by it was unable to protect the workers interests even in the face of grave marginalization and exploitation by the then British administration that led to the formation of the Nigeria railway union and the Nigeria union of Teachers in 1931. These unions were noted for their vibrant and dynamic posture in the pursuit and demand for improve conditions of work for their members and so were seen as the fore runners in trade union activism in the country.

In spite of the vibrant nature of these trade unions, the origin and emergence of modern trade unionism in the country could be traced to the enactment of the trade union ordinance act and the General defense regulation of 1938 and 1942 respectively (Ananaba, 1970). These acts gave legal recognition to the establishment of trade unions in the country and so could be tagged as the instigator and stimulant to modern trade unionism in the country.

It is important to recognize the role of the Nationalists in their struggle and agitation for the pol-economic and socio-cultural emancipation of the country under the British administration of the citizenry of the country (Ugbudian 2017). Their roles in no small measure acted as a buffer to the activities of the trade union movements in Nigeria. Hence, it will not be out of context to posit that the activities of the Nationalists in somewhat measure over-lapped with the early history of trade unionism in the country.

It should however be noted that the historical evolution/development of the central labour organisation in the country was replete with controversies arising from international affiliation which was dictated by the varied ideological dispositions of the World federated trade unions and that of personality clash by the contending trade unionists of the time. These controversies saw the

emergence of varied central labour organisations such as the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUCN) and the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC). Others include the Trade Union Congress (TUC), United Labour Congress of Nigeria (ULCN) among others. It was however in 1970 that a united and generally accepted central labour organisation was imposed and foisted on the unionists by the then military head of state – General Olusegun Obasanjo. This move/imposition heralded the death of the controversies surrounding the possible existence of a united central labour organisation in the country. It was this move that however announced the emergence and then existence of a one and supposedly united central labour organisation in the country in the name of the Nigeria labour congress (Ofili, 2021).

The unity and oneness of the one labour organisation or a central and united labour organisation in the country was later punctuated with the promulgation of the Trade Union Amendment Act of 2005 which tended to balkanize trade unions by its recognition of more than one central labour organisation in the country and further by its stipulations of conditions that tended to stifle the dynamism and vibrancy of trade unions in the country. The Act has as condition that membership of an individual/employee into any trade union must be by volition and not by compulsion as was the initial condition. More so, no employee due to his/her failure to join a trade union should be victimized and also, for a trade union to declare and embark on an industrial action most especially strike, it must obtain a simple majority vote of all the registered members of that trade union (Ofili, 2019).

The enactment of the Act resulted in the birth, formation and existence of (for now) two central labour organisations in the country. These are the Nigeria labour congress (NLC) and the Trade Union

Congress (TUC). This has further implication in that labour by this Act is no longer one and so divided and not united in interest and aspiration. This division has the tendency of weakening the ability of the trade unions to balance their power base in the power game between them and the government or their employer/s (Abu, 2009).

Arising from the imbalance in the power game equation, the negotiation power/ability of the trade unions in relation to the government/employer/s tends to be rendered redundant and ineffectual and so leaves the workers helpless and at the mercy of their employer/s which most often times tilt towards exploitation and marginalization (Olufolajimi, 2006).

The other implication of the Act is the frustrating and limiting of the capability of trade unions to embark on strike arising from the condition that requires its canvassing and mustering of simple majority vote in favour of a strike action before it could be embarked upon. This condition may appear reasonable and justifiable but in reality, it limits trade unions strike potential in that it is most difficult to get all the registered members of a union to partake in a vote and then obtain a simple majority from that vote. Why insist on a simple majority of all the registered members rather than on simple majority of members present in the voting meeting or congress which is easier and more realistic? The rationale behind this clause however is to frustrate and limit the power of trade unions in declaring and executing strike action in the country. This off-course has further implication on trade unions in particular and the country at large.

Democracy: The concept democracy has been defined in simple term as the government of the people for the people and by the people. It is a form of government where the people have a say in the conduct and running of the affairs of the government. Democracy is

a form of government in which power belongs to the people but confined on few elected individuals who act and represent the general interest of the electorates (Merriam Dictionary).

It is a system of government where by the entire populace of the nation through their elected representatives make laws and take actions that entail peace, security, socio-economic and political development of the country. It is a government system that propagates, ensures and promotes good governance in the country. Good governance in that there are provisions for checks and balances thereby ensuring that the contractual obligations between the people and the State as an entity are upheld and maintained. It is this good governance posture arising from the overarching binding social contractual obligation by both parties that endears the governance system to the people.

This posture is however questionable as some scholars as Robert Michel in his Iron law of oligarchy (Haralambos & Mead, 1980), are of the opinion that democracy is nothing other than an oligarchic system whereby few individuals in the name of representativeness overwhelmingly lord it over the majority of the masses (Ogunbameru, 2005). Here it is presumed that the oligarchical structure of the democratic governance clothed in democracy obliterates its assumed democratic principles. Rather than democracy projecting and protecting the general interest of the masses, it rather projects and protects the premeditated and self-centered interests and aspirations of the few ruling elites who by virtue of their possession of the state coercive apparatus manipulate and subdue the deluded masses. Democracy rather than being benevolent and beneficial to the people becomes despotic and depriving as is supposedly witnessed in Nigeria where

the masses live at the discretion and mercy of the ruling political elites in terms of resource allocation and distribution. Rather than the democracy which is supposedly the hallmark of benevolence being what it is meant to be, has become dysfunctional and unbeneficial. As in the Nigerian context, it has resulted in the inglorious demand/call for the dismantling of the edifice of democracy and the erection of the obnoxious, incongruous and the one-time people rejected military regime which is now being perceived as being more people friendly and oriented arising from its one-time governance role manifested in people oriented infrastructural projects and development. The one-time infamous has suddenly become the apple of the people's eye while the supposedly famous and grandiose system (democracy) is the now vilified and scorned object by the masses. What a pathetic situation.

The near rejection of the democratic system of governance in the country is most obvious when juxtaposed in its assumed principles and dividends. In Nigeria, there is this much talked about the 'dividends of democracy'. This indicates a clamour and expectation of the fundamentals of democracy such as freedom of speech and of association, freedom to life and other necessities of life, inclusiveness and equality, voting rights, minority rights, protection of life and properties among other rights (Wikipedia). These supposedly are the assumed benefits or dividends of democracy.

It is these dividends that endear it as a governance/administrative system to the people. The belief that the system will provide ample opportunities to the people where every man will be privileged to actualize his goals and aspirations unhindered by the system. The system provides good governance in terms of provision of public

infrastructure and amenities to the people. The system provides an ample opportunity to the people to live a quality life. These and many others are supposedly the embedded attributes and attractive of democracy.

Though democracy is associated with lots of dividends and benefits to the citizenry of the country, however as applicable in the country, these benefits supposedly appear to be imagined than witnessed. Instances abound in the country where the trust of the people reposed on the custodians of their wills expressed in the election of their representatives, rather than attract and bestow on the people these democratic dividends/good governance, go on to exploit, marginalize and pauperise them wantonly through treasury looting, abuse of the rule of law and physical brutalization and assault as evidenced in the recent alleged eighty-billion-naira fraud by the Attorney General of the Federation among others.

Rather than the people being beneficiaries of the practice of democracy in the country, the reverse is usually the case as the people are disenfranchised in the derivatives of the democratic process. Rather than being the benefactors and beneficiaries, the people are turned into victims and captives of democracy. Are these the essence of democracy? Are these the reasons for the clamour for democratic government in the country? Why has democratic governance as it is practiced in the country not been people friendly and so not dividend yielding? Why has the practice of democracy as a system of governance in the country seen as a curse rather than a blessing to the masses? What are those conditions that have made democratic practice in the country so draconic and people unfriendly? Why is the practice of democracy in the country so heinous, blood sucking and regrettable?

An attempt at addressing the above questions brings to fore an understanding of the nature, character and

perception of the democrats or those saddled with the responsibility of projecting and upholding the democratic principles and policies in the country. What is their perception of those they are made to lead? The political elites in the country rather than see themselves as those elected or selected to lead, see and treat the masses as those that have been conquered by them. They see the led as conquered people whose booty must be looted and squandered. It is this perception by the ruling autocrats that parade themselves as democrats that explains the aggressive, wanton and massive pilfering of the general goods and resources of the nation. According to ThisDay online paper of April 2, 2018, the paper has it that the federal government of Nigeria releases more names of alleged treasury looters (Ogunmade & Shittu, 2018). The paper has it that the Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed released the list of names of those that supposedly or allegedly looted the treasury of the nation and in that list were the names of the PDP chieftains who he claimed are facing charges of corruption and financial crimes in the court (Ogunmade & Shittu, 2018). The paper went further to publish the details of the loots in cash recovered as follows; N78,325,354,631.82, \$185,119,584.61, £3,508,355.46 and ₦11,250 between May 29, 2015, and May 25, 2016. Other cash and assets recovered under interim forfeiture under the same period include; N126,563,481,095.43, \$9,090,243,920.15, £2,484,447.55 and ₦303,399.17 (Ogunmade & Shittu, 2018).

Commenting further on the arbitrary looters list which mainly contained the names of PDP members, the paper went further to insist that the government in power which is the APC should go ahead and publish the comprehensive list of the nation's treasury looters in line with the judgment of Justice Hadiza Shagari so as to prove its sincerity in its anti-corruption war. The



foregoing is an indication of the wanton looting of the nation's treasury by the so termed democratic governments in the country. Governments that were to uphold and promote the principles of democracy which chiefly are accountability and transparency, has descended to the lowly posture of 'impunitious' treasury looting. This (Ogunmade & Shittu, 2018) referred to as a breach of invaluable trust deposited on them by the Nigerian people. Why the massive treasury looting? This is explainable by the myopic perception of the ruling political elites on the masses as conquered people whose enormous resources must be brutally exploited as booty for their voracious aggrandisement.

Conjugating on why the political office holders and by implication democracy flourishes in treasury looting in the country, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja was of the view that Nigerians are not ready to demand for positive change in that political office holders no longer see evil and crime in their actions (Jannamike; 2021). He then lamented that the magnitude of decay and offensive misuse and misappropriation of public fund and resources in the country are enormous, alarming and condemnable (Jannamike; 2021). This misuse of public fund can be attested to by the lavish and extravagant lifestyle and attitude of the political office holders in self aggrandisement. In Nigeria, the political office holders falsely presenting themselves as democrats leave lavishly at the expense of the commonwealth of the nation. They flout wealth with arrogance and impunity. This attitude is most explainable by the very reason of their assumption of the status of a conqueror who has the singular audacity of booty appropriation and expropriation of the conquered.

More so, democratic governance in the country has not been able to leave up to its bidding in terms of good governance (provision of the dividends of

democracy) in that its operators in the country see it as means of employment and not as service to the people. Politics which is the vehicle for political office ascendance as is observable in the country is the surest and fastest avenue for wealth acquisition which no lucrative business enterprise can guarantee. So, to enable them pilfer on the commonwealth of the nation, the political strategy of divide and rule is usually employed. This strategy manipulates the unity capability of the masses thereby reinforcing their susceptibility and gullibility to the whims and caprices of the ruling political class that masquerades as operators of democracy. To perpetuate their rule and grip on the masses, primordial and parochial sentiments of ethnicity, religion and political party affiliations are usually whipped up thereby keeping the masses ever divided (Ofili & Omoro, 2017). That explains the ethno-political/religious conflicts in the country where by the down trodden Hausa/Fulani people are instigated against their fellow down trodden Ibo and Yoruba people. Now and then, the incidences of religious conflict (Christian/Muslims conflicts in Kaduna, Kano etc.) are beefed up. This is done in furtherance of their grip on the nation's resources since to them politics and the occupation of political position/office is their main source of occupation as attested by one time Minister that what drove him into politics was nothing but unemployment. If the motivation to active politics is unemployment, then public wealth grabbing as against service becomes the end-product. Until the masses and the down-trodden in the country get united and have a progressive affront on the pervasive and voracious ruling class, the much cherished and clamoured good governance/dividends of democracy will ever remain elusive.

If the panacea for the emancipation of the masses from the evil grip of the political elites' rests on the

masses' unity, what then is that galvanizing/uniting force? Here the role of the organised trade unions and the civil rights organisations in the country become imperative. How can these bodies galvanise the unorganized masses in order for them to derive the dividends accruing from the practice of democracy in the country? In the consideration of this, emphasis will be on the role of trade unions in the country.

Trade unions and good governance/dividends of democracy in Nigeria: It is obvious as highlighted above that the masses are yet to maximally appropriate the dividends accruing from the democratic experiment/practice in the country arising from their inability to effectively organise themselves into formidable force that will coerce the ruling political class/elites into conformity. The ruling class (politicians) in the country over the years have manipulated the masses into disunity through religion and ethnicity to their advantage of treasury looting and self aggrandisement. Organised trade unions are hence being looked upon for redress. What then is the role of trade unions in the democratic process and how can this role bring about good governance/dividends of democracy for the people?

One way by which the organised labour in the country can ensure good governance in the country is by effective mobilization and sensitization of the populace on the workings of government. It is the role of the organised labour in the country to mobilize the populace into political participation in order to influence political policy/decisions affecting their wellbeing.

More so, the organised labour in addition to effective mobilisation and education of the masses on the principles and workings of democracy in order to ensure good governance in the country can and do engage/participate physically in the democratic

process by the formation of workers oriented political party or in the alternative, engaging in effective collaboration with an already existing workers oriented political party. The motive behind this move (party formation or collaboration) is essentially to stimulate the workers which invariably constitute the masses, to active participation in the governance system there by propagating, projecting and protecting the interest of the populace in the hierarchical nature of the democratic structure which has become humongously elitist/fettered on the privatisation of public purse as evidenced in the wanton public fund puffery and looting. It is this rationalization that became the driving force for the formation of the labour Party in Nigeria and the recent adoption of the party as its official party by the organised central labour bodies (Nigeria labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress) for the year 2023 general elections in the country. That equally accounts for the call for all workers and the down trodden in the country to join force with the Labour Party to wrestle power from the avaricious political elites in the on-going democratic electioneering process. This is geared at securing the government by the people and for the people. In other word, good governance for the people.

The role of trade unions in the demand for the dividends of democracy and good governance in the country can be seen also in their actives and posture as pressure group to the government. By constitutional dictates, trade unions exist to protect and propagate the interests as reflecting on the general welfare of the working people, however, it sometimes becomes the mouth piece of the masses most especially where the ruling party/government is seen to have become despotic. At this point, the organised labour assumes the position of a pressure group in order to arm-twist the government into being benevolent. This was evident in the case of the mass resistance of the

draconic policy of the incessant petroleum subsidy removal by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo by the organised labour headed by the then President Adams Oshiomhole. That resistance by the workers (organised labour/NLC) in the early 20s led to the rescinding of that draconic policy by the then government. This was an exemplified role by the organised labour that instigated and cajoled the unwilling government into position change for good governance in the country. No wonder the erudite scholar Karl Marx called on the workers to arise (Levin; 1980). This action/role if sustained can be a veritable trigger for actualization of the dividends of democracy and the overall good governance in the country.

Limitations to trade unions demand for good governance: It has been established that trade unions (organised labour) can enact positive roles for good governance in the country. While this is undisputable, it is also cardinal to note that their functional capacity is somewhat constraint by certain exigencies as espoused below.

One of the constraining factors to the organised labours' ability to canvas for good governance/dividends of democracy for the workers and by extension the general masses borders on the issue of the oligarchical structure of the trade unions leadership. Robert Michel in his criticism of bureaucratic organisation observed that they are not just elitist but oligarchic in nature. This oligarchic nature tends to obliterate its supposedly democratic principles and philosophy (Haralambos & Mead, 1980). Trade unions in the country tend to find themselves in this tragedy in that they by their organizational structure is oligarchic and elitist themselves and so fails to uphold the democratic principles and philosophy which they expect the supposedly democratic government in the country to exhibit and practice. Due

to the fact that they are not democratic in their practice, they therefore lack the moral strength to impress that and /or demand so on the political office holders in the country.

Secondly, the erudite scholar Karl Marx in his quest for the emancipation of the working class and by extension the downtrodden in the society called on the workers to unite and arise (Ritzer, 2014). Unity here appears to be the magic wand for effective agitation and demand and this appears to be a scarce commodity in the trade unions circle in the country. The so-called organised labour unions in the country are so unorganized to ever be qualified to be referred to as organised labour unions. This lack of unity has manifested in the splitting of the then one central labour organisation known as the Nigeria Labour Organisation (NLC) into two central labour bodies; the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) (Ofili, 2019). Both central trade unions seem to be in a rat race competition of who will out-with the other. The incidence of the demand for the increase in minimum wage where both contending unions failed to strike an agreement on the demand and operational operandi leading to the undue prolongment of its implementation attests to that. This approach to the demand for good governance portrays failure and doom for the working class and the entire society that have great expectation from them. This labour disunity and fragmentation hampers their demand capabilities for the dividends of democracy and good governance in the country.

Essentially too, the paucity of fund tends to militate against the ability of the organised unions to agitate and mobilise the people for effective governance/dividends of democracy in the country. Trade unions derive their fund/finance from their members/workers check-up dues. Arising from

factories downsizing and labour rationalizations occasioned by the dwindling national economy, the financial buoyancy of the organised trade unions becomes a victim (Ofili, 2021). Where the organised trade unions are unable to muster enough finance, their ability to mobilise, educate and act as pressure group in the demand for good governance becomes difficult and frustrating.

Summary/suggestions: Democracy was seen as a system of government whereby the people either directly or through their representatives participate in the governance of their affairs. It is a system of governance whereby the people of a given nation/country participate in policy/decision formulation and implementation/execution in the country. Hence democracy was seen to be the government of the people, by the people and for the people as is popularly defined. This implies that the government source of authority and legitimacy emanates and resides with the people and so entitles them with some form of benefits defined in terms of good governance and/or dividends of democracy. The dividends of democracy become the incentives and mouthwatering carrot that pacifies the people for the loss of their sovereignty to the state as instituted in the social contract entered into by both parties (Shanka Rao, 2008).

Ironically, the operators/managers of democracy as a result of their elitist and oligarchical nature obliterates the democratic principles and tenets which is encapsulated in good governance and dividends of democracy. Rather than promote and guaranty good governance/dividends of democracy, they emasculate the people manifesting in treasury looting etc. arising from their perceived entitlement mentality and conqueror attitude etc. These attitudes strangle/hinder good governance.

In this context it was noted that in the effort to attract good government/dividend of democracy bearing in mind the negations and antithesis of governance, varied interest groups with sole objective of wrestling governance benefits emerge and converge. Such groups include the organised labour unions. To accentuate their objective which is the demand for the dividends of democracy/good governance for its members and the generality of the populace of the nation, masses mobilisation and education are carried out. In addition to this, they practically engage in active politics by the formation or affiliation to a political party such as the Labour party in Nigeria.

It was however noted that the efforts by the organised labour to ensure that good governance and the dividends of democracy are guaranteed in the country are constrained by factors as labour fragmentation and disunity, the elitist and oligarchical structure of the labour organisation and paucity of fund for effective masses mobilisation and education.

Consequent on the above, the study suggests that for the organised labour (Trade unions) to effectively enact the desired role in the democratic process and the demand for democratic dividends/good governance in the country, it must forge a common and united front that will see to its being advantaged in the power game with the political ruling class.

Essentially too, the organised labour should purge itself of its elitist and undemocratic posture which act as a constraint to its efforts and wheel of progress.

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