

THE National Executive Council (NEC) of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) met Saturday-Sunday, April 4-5, 2009 at the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, and took the following resolutions:

1. THE FGN/ASUU AGREEMENT

NEC,(i) having taken reports from ASUU Branches which overwhelmingly expressed dissatisfaction that the Agreement had not been signed.

(ii) affirming with confidence that the reconstruction of the education system is the fastest and surest way of building a productive and viable economy.

(lii) recognizing that the reconstruction of the University System is vital to the process of reconstructing the education system, and,

(iv) affirming that the signing and implementation of the FGN/ASUU Agreement is necessary for the reconstruction of the university system and the education-system as a whole,

(v) believing firmly that the implementation of the Agreement would reposition Nigerian Universities to become internationally competitive and to play a greater role in national development,

(vi) noting that the African countries (Southern African and other countries) that have been attracting Nigerian academics have continued to improve the funding of their universities and education as a whole in spite of the global crisis of capitalism, NEC resolved that the prolonged delay in the signing of the Agreement is no longer acceptable. NEC therefore resolved to refer the matter to the branches for further advice, and will meet soon to evaluate the situation and take appropriate action. In the mean time, NEC appeals to the public, especially parents, to ensure that the present situation does not degenerate into a completely avoidable crisis. After two years of patience in negotiation and over four months of restraint post-negotiation, ASUU should not be blamed if the Union goes as far as is necessary to get the Agreement signed.

2. THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSITIES

(I) NEC noted that the underfunding of Federal and the State Universities is increasingly causing continued deterioration of the living conditions of our students. This issue is addressed in the unsigned ASUU-FGN Agreement.

(II) CONTINUED VIOLATION OF THE LAWS OF THE UNIVERSITIES AT RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (RSUST) AND IMO STATE UNIVERSITY (IMSU)

(a) NEC observed that the violation of the University's Law regarding the appointment of a Vice Chancellor for the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST), Port Harcourt has not been redressed.

(b) NEC also observed that at Imo State University (IMSU), Owerri, the violation of the University Statute in issuing a compulsory leave order to the Vice Chancellor has not been addressed.

NEC resolved to take necessary legal action on both cases following due consultation with

ASUU's lawyer, and to pursue them to a just conclusion.

(III) Kano University of Science and Technology (KUST)

NEC called upon the Visitor to Kano University of Science and Technology (KUST) to ensure fairness and justice in the appointment of a Vice Chancellor for the University.

(IV) University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)

NEC reviewed the refusal by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to deduct and remit the check-off dues of ASUU members and resolved to institute a legal action following due consultation with ASUU's lawyer.

(V) The Appointment of Members of Council for Federal Universities: Persisting Violations.

NEC observed that there remain in the Governing Councils of some Federal Universities some individuals, including some Chairmen, who are, by the Universities Miscellaneous Provisions Amendment Act (2003), not qualified for membership of a University Governing Council. NEC calls upon the Federal Minister of Education to ensure that these errors are remedied without further delay.

3.0000 THE NATIONAL SCHOLAR

NEC welcomed the publication of ASUU's organ "The National Scholar" (March, 2009) addressing the topic "DEREGULATION AND FUNDING OF UNIVERSITIES" and commended its reading to both members and the public.

4.0000 THE ASUU ANNUAL RESEARCH GRANT AWARD

NEC approved the award of (20) Research Grants to ASUU members for the completion of their Ph.D research work, for the year 2008. NEC encouraged members to apply for the 2009 awards.

5.0000 STATE OF THE NATION: DEEPENING CRISES OF STATE AND SOCIETY THE GENERAL SITUATION IN NIGERIA

As the nation again moves towards another general election in 2011, the political situation in the country is becoming, just like in 2003 and 2007, charged. Members of the ruling class, concerned only with capturing state power and personal aggrandisement, are again realigning and jostling for positions and amassing more wealth, while teachers, demanding legitimate living wages in many parts of the country are condemned by rulers as rebels, and workers demanding a new minimum wage are treated with neglect. Revelations in national dailies over corruption scandals involving the ruling class are now daily occurrences. The poor state of infrastructure has worsened in the past two years, such that in the energy sector daily power outages across the country are normal. The situation in sectors such as education (at all levels), transportation (especially federal roads) industry (layoffs and closure of factories, the most recent of which is the threat by PAN

to close down operations) and health, have now assumed crisis proportions. On the whole, a general worsening in the conditions of living of the people is noticeable, clearly marked by deepening poverty, insecurity (political murders, kidnappings and robberies), job losses, various forms of socially destructive activities by youth gangs across the nation, and political crises in some of the states. Underlying all these is a widespread and pervasive feeling of planlessness "7 Point' agenda", "road maps" and "rebranding" that lack roots and direction), arbitrariness in the exercise of power (the political crisis in certain states, such as Ogun, Ekiti, Plateau, and Bauchi, for example) and a ship, Nigeria, that appears to be drifting.

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SITUATION: THE DEEPENING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISES

ASUU has continued to draw attention to the current crisis of global capitalism, in particular to the expanding gaps between the rich and poor, the collapse of basic infrastructure, especially of the erratic power supply and its impact on industrial production and on the people's daily life. We have explained how the blind pursuit in our country of economic policies that International Financial Institutions themselves have pronounced unworkable are compounding an already bad situation. Although the Human Development Index (HDI) is not a comprehensive measure of human development, it gives a broad indication of the general condition of well-being of a people in each country.

The deepening social and economic crisis in Nigeria is clearly demonstrated by our country's ranking on the Human Development Index which places Nigeria, one of the richest and most resource-endowed countries on earth, 158th out of 177, behind countries such as Senegal and Eritrea, as shown in Table 1 below. Similarly, Table 2 indicates the HPI-1 value for Nigeria which measures extreme deprivation in health by those not expected to survive to 40years of age. Nigeria's HPI-1 value is 37.3, ranking it 80th of 108 developing countries

The data and tables below were obtained from the 2007/8 Human Development Report, indicating that the situation described applied a year or so before the current ruling regime in Nigeria. But the deepened crisis in all sectors - economy, power, health, education, transport; the extreme poverty, joblessness, the increasingly unproductive economic base, etc, and the virtual stagnation at the center, suggest very strongly that the conditions and indicators of well-being have worsened in our country.

Thus, citizens of Barbados, Rwanda and Malawi have better Human Poverty Indices (HPI)-1 indices; citizens of both Uganda and Cote d'Ivoire have a greater probability of surviving past 40yrs than Nigerians; Mali and Guinea have more population with greater access to improved source of water than Nigeria, and Tanzania and Algeria have a higher adult literacy rate than Nigeria.

These are indicators of more serious, underlying crisis in the national economy, the resolution of which cannot be achieved through deregulation of the petroleum or other sectors of the economy. At a time when the most developed capitalist states are creating barriers to good and services from especially the previously colonised world, when vigorous state intervention is becoming the norm in such economies, it would be suicidal for Nigeria to blindly pursue a policy of rolling back the state from the provision of basic and critical social services. Indeed, there does not appear to be any far-reaching, formal, concrete plan for tackling the economic crisis, for the so-called seven point agenda has been a mere collection of general statements and ad-hoc proposals, with no set targets and no timelines. This is why almost every Ministry has its own plan: for education, it is now a 'road map'; for agriculture, it is expanded rice production scheme'; for information, it is 'rebranding Nigeria'.

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SITUATION

The political situation is reflective of the worse economic situation. At the national level and across the states, factional struggles within the ruling class over the sharing of public wealth and state power are raging, just as they are indications of an increasingly violent attempt at repositioning themselves for the 2011 general elections. At the national level, actions of the

National Assembly and prominent ruling class members especially in the energy sector, the Ogun and Ekiti State crises, the controversy over the removal of the Chairman of INEC, the Constitution Review Process, the Electoral Reforms somersaults and others, are clear indications of the crisis of the ruling class. In general, these actions have shown that the extremely personal interests are being protected. They are taking place at a time when the levels of poverty, the collapse of social infrastructure and general insecurity across the country have reached frightening proportions. The increasing frequency of kidnapping, murder, robbery operations, and other forms of general insecurity give the impression that there is 'no state' or that at the very most, that such a state is incapable of addressing the basic constitutional responsibilities.

LABOUR

In general, however, policy is underpinned by the neoliberal assumptions that are consistently intensifying the country's integration into the global capitalist economy in crisis and thus further entrenching poverty. Part of this process is the current attempt to review labour laws. Since the imposition the 2003 anti-labour Act, global capitalist powers and their local collaborators have decided that labour is 'too free' in Nigeria, and that there is a need to regulate it. Thus at present, the National Assembly has already begun debates on new labour laws that will further constrain the trade unions, especially in terms of wages, collective bargaining, right to industrial action, and so on. The labour movement must resist these efforts to put labour in chains in the service of an unproductive ruling class and international capitalist powers. NEC unequivocally supports the demand of the workers of Nigeria for a N52,500 minimum wage and the demand of the teachers for the implementation of the Teachers Salary Scale (TSS).

THE SEVEN-POINT AGENDA

NEC reviewed thoroughly the "SEVEN-POINT AGENDA" and came out with the following positions. While we believe that a wholistic approach to resolving the social and economic problems will require an economic and political overhaul of the country, the following are specific observations on the "Agenda".

1. GENERAL

The "Seven-Point Agenda" is not anchored in a people-oriented economic philosophy. A continuation the NEEDS/SEEDS philosophy of its predecessor, the "Agenda" is nothing but a superficial tinkering with the same IMF/World Bank Economic philosophy and policies that have been directed at draining our people's resources into the system of global financial capital and stagnating our people's economic, social, educational and political advancement. Our position is that there is no fruitful way of fine-tuning the programme of enslavement. What is needed is to get out of it and establish a patriotic philosophy and programme of development.

2. POWER

To address power problems of Nigeria, the country needs to focus on fundamental issues of generation, transmission and distribution. They are:

The energy required to move all sectors of the economy towards developing the nation i.e. our energy demand profile, needs to be established.

The different possible sources of energy available in the country and those that can be

developed and harnessed e.g. fossil fuels (coal and crude oil derivatives), hydroelectricity, solar, wind, nuclear etc and how much energy can be obtained from each source, must be found.

An energy budget that will form part of the energy policy of the country must be rolled out. The budget will ensure that the remotest areas of the country have power supply projects tailor-made to suit the sources available in the area.

An effective means of addressing corruption in the energy sector must be put in place.

An efficient means of instituting discipline in the utilization of energy e.g. developing energy-conservation consciousness among consumer must be put in place.

All the gas being flared should be converted to thermal stations where electricity is generated for the country.

The problem of waste through transmission losses and the logistics of scheduling must be addressed.

Instead of addressing these fundamental issues, the "7-point Agenda" makes a catalogue of and general statements about private investment, 'improving transmission diversification of gas distribution grids etc, no specific programmes and no time targets. As usual since 2000, huge sums will be released in disparate areas to show "we are doing something". As predictable, we will be back where or worse than we started, and a few will become much, much richer.

4. TRANSPORT

1. ROAD

To address the transportation problem in Nigeria:

(1a) The Federal Government should construct 8 major roads (6-lane at least) linking the extreme ends of the country e.g. two (2) diagonally: Maiduguri-Lagos and Sokoto-Calabar, two (2) across the country: Kano-Port Harcourt and Ilorin-Yola and four (4) spanning the borders of the country: Sokoto-Maiduguri; Sokoto-Lagos; Lagos-Calabar; Calabar-Maiduguri; and also possibly Lagos-Benin-Onitsha-Enugu-Port Harcourt. It is worth-noting that even if one major road is constructed per year, this will be an 8-year project and at the end of it inter-zonal transportation would have been addressed

(B) The states can then construct feeder roads to link with the major roads. The 'Seven Point' offers no such concrete programmes.

2. RAILWAY

The Federal Government should construct rail lines alongside each of the major roads while states along those in 1(b). The preferable rail transportation should be the electric or magnetic levitation mode. Nigeria should catch up on modern transportation methods. What is needed, again, is a concrete programme with schedules of implementation. But the "Seven Point Agenda" offers none.

3. WATER WAYS

Some areas of the country are better suited to water transportation. The Federal Government should set up a concrete programme to install inter-state coastal transport systems while the states set up intra-state ones. The proposals in the "7-point Agenda" are unsystematic, and too general, with no specific wide-spread links/plans on which to measure achievement or failure.

5. THE NIGER DELTA QUESTION

The formulation and the proposed solution of the Niger Delta Question in the "Seven Point Agenda" are politically unilluminating. The following proposals have been offered in serious political thinking in our country:

- (i) Restructuring and re-engineering Nigeria: Such a restructuring must remove the “minority question” from the political life and hence the political vocabulary and existence of Nigeria, addressing the issue of control and fair use of resources.
- (ii) An emergency approach: the establishment of a National Emergency Development Plan for the Niger Delta to last a definite span e.g. 10 years at most. This “Marshal Plan” will focus on the development of the economy, infrastructure, education, health, jobs, agriculture etc. of the aeras called “The Niger Delta”.
- (iii) Radical Transformation Approach: A radical transformation of Nigeria involving the political and economic re-organization of the country, such that giving every Nigerian would have a decent life, job, health care, education, adequate and affordable transportation, security, self-development, cultural expression, ending ethnic/nationality gender, religious, and all forms of domination.

ASUU does not oppose options (i) and (ii). However, the union believes firmly that the option of radical transformation of the country in (iii) would resolve the problems of restructuring and the emergency development of the Niger Delta. The establishment of a Niger Delta Ministry, bargaining with ruling class representatives, declaring Amnesty etc are too superficial if we are to be serious about resolving the problem of the Niger Delta.

6. HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

The present government fares no better than its predecessors in the funding of education and health. Its pious declaration that “the provision of health, education and social protection are core to empowering the population to achieve sustainable national development is not matched by budgetary allocation or fundamental for repositioning education, health care, transportation and social services. For years, ASUU has called for an Education Summit to examine the fundamentals of Nigeria’s Education System and reconstruct it to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. A ‘road map’ approach is not different in essence from the preceding Education Reforms (Obasanjo regime). Professor Olikoye Ransome Kuti’s radical innovation in the Health Sector is almost dead. The ‘Agenda’ offers no solution.

7. WEALTH CREATION

Instead of wealth creation, the theology of privatization, which is the basis of government's economic policy, is generating massive unemployment. Nigeria's oil wealth continues to be circulated in the hands of a few, while the overwhelming majority, over one hundred and forty million everywhere in Nigeria, and especially in the oil-producing areas, are living in miserable material conditions. The level of production is abysmally too low to generate wealth except for big time buyers and sellers, and members of the owning class created by the military and the civilian regimes. While the ruling classes in Europe and America and in some Asian Countries have been able to create some minimum welfare for their citizens, the grabbing ruling class in Nigeria, without establishing a productive economy, leaves the dispossessed and poor, the majority, to fend for themselves, i.e., to suffer and perish. The public sector is witnessing retrenchment. Wealth is a dream

for the majority who are victims of a corrupt ruling class. And no government, including the present one, has shown the will to generate wealth and use it for the prime benefit of citizens. The only way we can solve the problem of underdevelopment in Nigeria is the popular control of the productive assets in a welfare-state.

8.000 000 POLITICAL DISASTER

These observations, placed together with the Government's manipulation of the Uwais Panel's Recommendations on Electoral Reforms, leaving the appointment of the members of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to and retaining the State Independent Electoral Commission for those who stand to manipulate them for political advantage (i.e. the President and the Governors), rejection of proportional representation, etc are causes to worry about where our present rulers are driving us to. Similarly, the comedy going on the National Assembly over Constitutional Review, the spate of inquiries the report of which lend to no action, the near death of the war on corruption. the general contempt of rulers over the people, are also dangerous signs of a political disaster to come.

THE NEED FOR A NEW DIRECTION

(1) In view of all these observations on and evaluation of the state of the nation, NEC resolved to, in line with its tradition, initiate a CONFERENCE ON THE STATE OF THE NATION, as soon as possible.

(2) ASUU, however believes that in order that people of Nigeria may enjoy life in their country, the economic and political arrangements based on the worn-out IMF/World Bank philosophy moving Nigeria to the minimal state, should be abandoned. The Nigerian economy should be reconstructed to become a productive economy for social welfare, with a popular democratic government. The present path, which promotes poverty, disease and hopelessness, cannot deliver democracy in any form. What we need is not a Seven-Point Agenda, not NEEDS, not SEEDS, and not any latest version of IMF/WORLD BANK Adjustment programme.. What we need is an Agenda for popular democratic reconstruction, of Nigeria.

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FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC) ASUU