



NIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS

MOTTO: LABOUR CREATES WEALTH

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PRESS RELEASE

18TH OF JULY, 2023

THE PROPOSED PALLIATIVE CASH TRANSFERS ROBS THE POOR AND PAYS THE RICH: WE REJECT IT

We have restrained ourselves from making further comments publicly on the vexatious issues around the recent but unfortunate unilateral hike in the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) in the guise of the so-called subsidy withdrawal which has unleashed predictably as we had earlier warned unimaginable and unprecedented hardship, sorrow, anguish and suffering upon Nigerian workers and masses.

Our resolve is anchored on our strong and abiding faith in the outcomes of the processes of social dialogue and its mechanisms especially within a democratic setting which fortunately all the major stakeholders in the nation's socioeconomic framework pleads to at this particular point in time though some have demonstrably shown that it does not go deeper than the rhetoric.

However, the government of Nigeria seems to have been misled into believing that resorting to impunity and imperiousness in governance in a democracy is a beneficial option as it pursues its stated and unstated objectives. It is this belief that we are sure has continued shaping the actions of this government since its inauguration on the 29th day of May, 2023 to continue inflicting mindless and heartless pains on the populace one after the other without the decency of embracing the tenets of democracy which requires wide and deep stakeholder consultation on weighty matters of state.

Nigerians would remember that the federal government had called for dialogue in the aftermath of its disastrous forlorn trajectory in the astronomical increase in Petroleum product price and our subsequent call for a nation-wide industrial action. We were also witnesses to the actions of the federal government in procuring an unholy injunction from the Courts which were served us in gestapo style by trucks laden with fully armed soldiers and Policemen. In all of these provocations, we remained committed to the principles of the Rule of Law, good conscience and democracy so that we can continue to be the moral compass for leaders in the public space. This explained our decision to suspend action on the proposed strike.

As it stands, rather than reciprocate the goodwill of Nigerian workers, the federal government has insisted on threading the path of dictatorship and seeking to impoverish the people further by taking steps that can only be described as robbing the people of Nigeria to pay and feed the Rich.

It is on this basis that the NLC strongly condemns the decision of the Tinubu led administration to seek the approval of the National Assembly to obtain another tranche of external loans worth N500b from the World Bank for the purposes of carrying out a phantom palliative measure to cushion the effect of its poorly thought-out hike in the prices of Premium Motor Spirit. Remember that the US\$800m which was already proposed before the devaluation of the Naira by this government was worth about N400b then but is now worth about N650b after devaluation. It is from this, it proposes to bring out N500b for distribution.

The proposal to pay N8,000 to each of the so-called 12 million poorest Nigerian households for a period of six months insults our collective intelligence and makes a mockery of our patience and abiding faith in social dialogue which the government may have alluded to albeit pretentiously.

The further proposal to pay National Assembly members the sum of N70b and the Judiciary N36b is the most insensitive, reckless and brazen diversion of our collective patrimony into the pockets of public officers whose sworn responsibility it is to protect our nation's treasury. We believe that this may amount to hush money and outright bribery of the other arms of government to acquiesce the aberration.

It is unconscionable that a government that has foisted so much hardship on the people within nearly two months of coming into office will make a proposal that clearly rewards the rich in public office to the detriment of the poor. What this means all this while is that the government is seeking ways of robbing the very poor Nigerians so that the rich can become richer. There is no other way to explain the proposal to pay a misery sum of N8,000 Naira to each of the mysterious poorest 12 million Households for six months which amounts to N48,000 and pay just 469 National Legislators N70b or about N149m each while the Judiciary that has about 72 Appeal Court Judges, 33 National Industrial Court Judges, 75 Federal High Court Judges and 21 Supreme Court Judges and a total of about 201 Judges receives a total of N35b or N174m each. If these other two arms are projected to receive this, what members of the Executive Council will receive is better left to the imagination of Nigerians perhaps, the balance N150b will go to them.

These proposals are not just unacceptable to Nigerian workers but are also dictatorial thus undemocratic. It is not a product of social dialogue which would have produced collectively negotiated outcomes by critical national stakeholders. We had thought that this government given the circumstances of its emergence



ought to have been a stickler to all the preachments of the fine tenets of democracy which would have shored up its image and begins to build legitimacy for itself unfortunately, it seems to be in a hurry to abandon the remaining pretensions to democracy that the previous administration left behind.

Furthermore, the actions of the federal government shows that it does not have trust and confidence in the very Presidential Committee that it set up to take a comprehensive look at the consequences of the Petroleum Product price hike and make recommendations on the way forward to ameliorate its negative impacts upon the citizenry. What this means is that the government may actually not be interested in the work of the Committee and may have used it as a window to pretend to Nigerians that it is taking steps towards dealing with the consequences of its policies.

We do not understand why the federal government would seek to undermine itself as its action suggests. Why not wait for the Committee to sit and come up with the needed recommendations which would then guide government's fiscal and monetary policies? Seeking to borrow and going to the NASS for an approval means that it has already taken decisions on what it wants to do and has a budget thus is in need to borrow to fund these activities. Like they will tell you; it is a fait accompli.

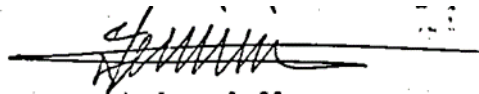
We reiterate that we do not have confidence in how the data for the never changing 12m poorest households was generated neither do we have confidence in the mechanisms being pursued for the distribution of the cash transfers. The history of such transfers especially the school feeding programmes even while the children were at home due to Covid-19 pandemic and the Trader Moni saga fills Nigerians with trepidation reminding us of the continued heist of our collective resources by those in Public office. We have continually demanded that this register be made public but, it seems to have become an instrument of the occult shrouded in mystery and wielded by the grandmasters whenever opportunities like this presents themselves.

It is important to inform Nigerians that despite having shown our readiness to commence work in the Committees, the federal government which convenes the meetings is yet to inaugurate the National Steering Committee thus stalling the Work of the Proposed Committees. If the government had wanted an expedited action which Nigerians want more, the best approach would have been to quickly inaugurate the Committees and allow them do their work but as we write, nothing has been done except the continuation of the borrowing spree and subsequent allocation to themselves.



NLC would not want to continue to be part of the usual charade of Committees with outcomes that are never implemented. We would not want to waste the time of Nigerians especially workers on Committees that have already been programmed to fail thus ignored. We do not want to provide a cover for government to get away with the hardship it has imposed on the people. We do not want to legitimize impunity.

As a result, if the government does not want to stop these fortuitous actions that it is pursuing in the name of palliatives, we will be forced to constructively review our engagement with the government on this vexatious issue and take matters in our own hands.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Ajaero', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

**Comrade Joe Ajaero
President**

