LABOUR-MANAGEMENT CONFLICT IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM: IN ENUGU STATE 1999 - 2007

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Abstract
Conflicts have been understood to be part of man's existence. Conflict is one of the daily problems that confront humans. It is an issue that is fundamental to the working of any organisation- simple or complex. Specifically, it has been one of the basic problems in modern management-employee relations. In all organisations, the challenge is how to establish and maintain effective working relations. Unfortunately, there are strong pressures, both economic and psychological, within organisations for intergroup conflict to arise. The Nigerian Local Government system is not immuned to conflicts and their destructive effects. In Enugu state, there is high incident of conflicts, which most of the time hinder effective and efficient service delivery. The paper posits that the absence of efficacious institutional framework for conflict resolution in the local government system underscores the persistence of tension and anxiety in the system, a situation which often times degenerates to full-scale industrial conflict. It therefore proffers viable options for building a more serene and amicable industrial atmosphere in the system.

Introduction

Conflict is part and parcel of human existence; it is therefore inevitable. Yet, it is perceived as something abnormal, dysfunctional, and therefore, detestable. Man, as a dynamic being, strives daily to improve on the conditions of his life. Man, as experience has taught him, is an active agent of God's creation. This informed John Dewey's (1922:199) unmistakable assertion that man is "a being who responds in action to the stimuli of the environment". In other words, to escape from life's difficulties, positively, to satisfy his total needs, man has to be active and productive and not remain a spectator in the daily drama of his environment. To meet these

challenges of existence, he is sometimes involved in the struggle for the extraction and/or appropriation of scarce resources (economic and psychological) with other human beings. This was why Otite (1999:1) posits that:

> Conflicts arise from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals and, or groups in defined social and physical environments. Changes in the social environment, such as contestable access fo new political positions, or perceptions of new resources arising from development in the physical environments, are fertile grounds for conflicts involving individuals and groups who are interested in using their new resources to achieve their goals.

The Nigerian local government is an integral part of the larger Nigerian political system where there are always conflicts of interests, especially with reference to the distribution of patronages and the material resources of the state. This has engendered aggressive conflictual situations which has brought back the old but still relevant debate on the relationship between political office holders and permanent local government staff in public administration (Obasi, 2002).

Specific examples of conflict in the local government system are:

1. Functional conflicts between the secretary to the local government and the head of personnel management, especially with respect to the responsibility for signing cheques and vouchers.
2. Disagreements between some local government chairmen and councilors over allegation of non-consultation with the local government legislature before supervisors (allegedly ill-qualified) were appointed.
3. Agitations over the powers and functions of the vice-chairman of the local government.
4. Anxieties over the remunerations and conditions of elected government functionaries.
5. Protests over alleged interference by the political parties and interest groups in the administration of local governments under their control.
6. Alleged difficulties being encountered by certain local governments in funding the payment of the salaries of their staff.
7. Conflicts between the executive and the legislative branch of the local government in some areas over the award of contract (Onylelakin, 1992:2)

We can infer from the above examples that conflict outcomes are twofold: (a) Relating to the social system (Thomas, 1979) and (b) We can equally, from the above examples, agree with Van derVliert, (1984) that the antecedent conditions of conflict include organisational group, individual and relational characteristics.

Specifically, this paper among other things, is concerned with conflicts between the labour and the management in the local government system of Enugu State. It indicates that workplace issues are invariably interwoven with the social, economic and the political spheres and argues that the critical issues that give conflicts between the labour and management in Enugu State, and perhaps, the whole country, it's essential character emanates from the social and economic spheres which in contemporary social discuss is called the environment of administration.

Conceptualising Conflict and Conflict Resolution
Conflict

One of the most cited traditional definitions of conflict is that it is "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure, or eliminate their rivals" (Coser, 1956:8). According to him, such conflicts may take place between individuals, between collectivities or between individuals and collectivities. And intergroup as well as intragroup conflicts are perennial features of social life (Coser, 1968). Implicit in the above definition is that conflict may be conceptualised as a way of settling problems originating from opposing interests and from the continuity of society (Otite, 1999).

Olowu (2001) argues that conflict is a perceived incompatibility of goals - what one party wants, the other party sees as harmful to its interests. It is therefore the simultaneous occurrence of two or more mutually antagonistic impulses or motives" (Chaplin, 1979:109). According to Omoluabi (2001), conflict connotes disagreement, dispute or controversy in ideas or viewpoints held by two or more individuals or groups.

Conflict, generally, is usually considered as dysfunctional and should be avoided. But contrary to this viewpoint, it has both negative and positive effects. So, it should not be seen in a negative light of dysfunctional or disjunctive process, and a breakdown of communication (Otite, 1999). It should, therefore be seen as a normal process of interaction, especially in a plural society, like Nigeria, where resources are scarce; because, as concluded by Smooha (1975:69) and cited in Otite (1999), both pluralism and conflict are related in complex ways. Conflict has been divided into two forms: manifest conflict process (MCP) and aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCPs). Manifest conflict process (MCP) is a situation in which at least two actors, or their representatives, try to pursue their perceptions of mutually incompatible goals by undermining, directly or indirectly, the goal-seeking capability of one another. On the other hand, Aggressive Manifest Conflict Processes is a situation in which at least two actors, or their representatives, try to pursue their perceptions of mutually incompatible goals by physically damaging or destroying the property and high-value symbols of one another; and or psychologically or physically injuring, destroying, or otherwise forcibly eliminating one another

(Sandole, 1980 and 1993). Naturally, MCP is the preferred form and as observed earlier, there is nothing really wrong with that form of conflict, because as rightly concluded by Burton (1972:137-8):

> Conflict, like sex, is an essential creative element in human relationships. It is the means to change, the means by which our social values of welfare, security, justice, and opportunities for personal development can be achieved. ... The existence of a conflict is the only guarantee that the aspirations of society will be attained. Indeed, conflict, like sex is to be enjoyed.

The characteristics of conflict as identified by Omoluabi (1995 and 2001) are:
1. Conflict is a complex, multidimensional construct encompassing different aspects of individual and group behaviours.
2. There must be at least two issues or views or motives or individuals or groups or parties for the concept of conflict to have meaning.
3. Parties to conflict usually have high affective involvement on issues.
4. The views and interests of parties in a conflict situation are often polarised
5. Both parties to a conflict, usually have articulate leaders who are primarily responsible for fostering the development and maintenance of the conflict.
6. Attempts are occasionally made to resolve conflicts when followers of leaders to the aparties press for a resolution as a result of the negative impact of the conflict on them (followers).
7. The resolution of conflict sometimes requires a third party.
8. The third party would be effective in the conflict resolution exercise if the party is respected and perceived to be neutral by the feuding parties
9. A conflict can be resolved partially or totally.
10. The resolution of a conflict may be temporary or enduring.

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts which in some academic circles, are termed disputes, from the characteristics above, therefore follow their own courses and stages, usually terminate in the successful reconciliation of the parties concerned. This is through the process of resolution, which is also called conflict management or conflict transformation.

According to Omoluabi (2001:7), "it is the process of using interpersonal communication to get parties to a conflict to reduce the differences in their ideas and views, so as to arrive at amiable and satisfactory consensual ideas and views through arbitration, bargaining and negotiation". Conflict resolution is different from dispute settlement, because as noted by Burton (1995), settlement refers to negotiated or arbitrated outcomes of disputes while resolution refers to outcomes of a conflict

resolution. However, it should be noted that even though both operate on the same principles, they may refer to different conditions and scope of social relationships (Otite,1999). In most cases, they are used interchangeably; but conflict resolution is principally aimed at intervention to change or facilitate the course of conflict.

Some barriers to conflict resolution have also been identified by Omuluabi (1995):
- Inadequate understanding of issues of the conflicts.
- Mutual mistrust between the leaders of the feuding parties.
- Distrust of the arbitrator by one or both of the parties to the conflict.
- Unacceptable arbitration conditions.
- Perceived security risk of the venue for negotiations.
- Unsuitable negotiators.
- Inflexibility of negotiators.
- Inappropriate negotiation strategies.
- Issuing ultimatum by the feuding parties.
- Using delay tactics by negotiators.

One can from the above conclude that conflict resolution performs a healing function in any organisation. This is supported by Otite's position (1999:8) when he observed that:

> It provides opportunity for the examination of alternative pay-offs in a situation of positioned disagreements, and restores normalcy in societies by facilitating discussions and placing parties in conflict, in situations in which they can choose alternative positive decisions to resolve differences.

Theoretical Foundation of the Study

Theories are logical instruments for explanations of problems discovered. To effectively do this, or have any value, a theory must explain or suggest ways of explaining why a subject matter has certain characteristics (Faleti, 2006). Even though, a lot of scholars have espoused some theories of conflict, such differences in the theories have equally led to differences in approaches to conflict resolution. In the circumstance:

> practitioners ... work at different levels ... operate in different domains ... and derive their ideas from a variety of resources ... (and) the domain in which they operate influence their goals, methods and overall approach (Sandole, 1992:ix)

We shall adopt the structural conflict theory as our framework of analysis. This theory according to Faleti (2006) can be sub-divided into two - the radical structural theory (espoused by the Marxist dialecticial school, e.g., Marx Engels and Lenin and the Liberal structuralism (with Ross and Scarborough as exponents).

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As reflected by Faleti (2006), conflict is built into the particular ways societies are structured and organised. The main point of the theory is that conflict occur because of the exploitative and unjust structuring of the society which invariably lead to domination and eventual feeling of deprivation by the victims of such domination. Implicit in the above is that structural theory emphasis how competing interest groups tie conflicts directly into social, economic and political organizations of society, as well as the nature and strength of social networks within and between community groups.

According to the structuralists, some of the factors that predispose to conflict situations are economic, social and political institutions and even elite cohesion. Generally, the structural theory is against situations "where existing structures are tilted in favour of one group while putting the others at a disadvantage (Faleti, 2006:43).

Industrial relations system in Nigeria is inextricably hooked to the Nigerian state. It is, therefore, shaped by the Nigerian state (Otobo, 1988). This means that all institutions within the State are affected by the structure of the State. Thus, even though, Otobo (1988), was referring to the colonial and the immediate post-colonial State, the structure of the State have a lot of impacts on industrial relations. This was why Miliband (1969:30), in his examination of the role of the State, says

> The social characteristics of these people (positions in institutions which constitute the State), power exercised by political and economic bodies and groups of persons outside the State institutions, the political process and thus the attendant general distribution of power, remain crucial considerations in evaluating the role of the State in industrial relations.

Right from colonial times, the Nigerian worker has been the victim of intimidation, repression and coercion. The colonialists through those measures, discouraged the emergence of a revolutionary working class movement or trade unionism (Otobo, 1988). This, subsequently conditioned the socio-economic world-view of labour and its political behaviour, since the attainment of independence, to matters related mainly to economic concerns like wages, costs of living allowance etc. This colonial legacy continued after independence, through three decades of military regimes and with the enthronement of democracy in the country.

What this implies is that the working class is ever pitted against the capitalist class as well as the State, in an effort to ensure that the interests and conditions of the worker are improved on. In the face of the enormous power of the State, trade unions' effectiveness depends on the might of the government for the achievement of the workers needs - the material and the psychological.

It is within the structure of the Nigerian society presented above, that the leaders of the nation had always determined to curtail, as much as possible, the

benefits that accrue to the worker in both the public and private spheres. In most cases, the responses from government on workers' demands were like personal favours from those in power - both federal, State and Local governments - and so they have only temporary palliative effects (Gboyega 1996:176). From this, we can appreciate that the structural conflict theory helps us to explain that the conflict between management and labour results from the fact that there exists conflicting and contradicting interests. These interests are not only inherent in each group but are also irreconcilable with that of the opposing group. In this case management posses the profit consciousness while the labour possesses the wages consciousness. This means that in an industrial dispute each party from the on-set tries to make its own consciousness or interest dominant, as well as increase its sphere of domination. As a result, both are permanently in a struggle or in a fight over dominant interest and consciousness,

Empirical Instances of Industrial Conflicts in the Local Government System of Enugu State

In Nigeria, it is usually perceived that industrial conflicts are caused by such factors as non payment and late payment of salaries and entitlement, retrenchment of workers, and sometimes, breakdown or non-fulfillment of agreement reached between workers and management (Ezeani, 2002). Unfortunately, the proximate causes of most industrial conflicts are not identified. The factors in this category, though not easily identified, except by a perceptive mind, concern the social deprivation, economic marginalisation and political domination. Generally, the increasing awareness of workers in the local government system regarding their social conditions since the return of civilian government in 1999, and the near repressive handling of their discontent by the state governments have tended to dispose them to strikes, a situation that leads to loss of many man-hours, before such conflicts are eventually resolved.

Specifically for Enugu State, one of the causes of industrial disputes in the local government system is the way and manner of recruitment of staff, especially junior workers. In all the seventeen local government areas, there were recruitment of junior staff, especially between 1999 and 2002/3. In most cases, the people recruited were not qualified for the posts given to them, but because of political interference, such were not only hired against the rules of the game but were promoted along with the qualified ones. Such workers, because of their close relationship with some political figures usually take the law into their own hands (Ozor, 2003). In most cases, they do not go to work but are always expecting their salaries at the end of the month. Such staff belong to the group that were, between 1999-2007 called *Akpu obi* or hard boys who were used for political thuggery in all the elections conducted between 1999 and 2007.

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The local government executive and the personnel department had no control over them, as such the other workers felt that the above group were sacred cows who could access their salaries on-line. This situation led to a break down in the disciplinary tone of the councils, as the rest of the staff protested, through labour (Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees) the withholding of staff salaries by politicians on the flimsiest reason. Surely, this was a plume on the feathers of the cordial understanding between the management and branch union of NULGE in almost all the councils of the State.

One other source of conflict in the system was the creation of 39 local government centres out of the 17 original local government areas by the administration of the former Governor of the State, Dr Chimaroke Nnamani. The constitutionally recognised number of the local government areas in Enugu state was 17, but 39 development centres were created in addition to the 17. The number of the development centres was later increased to 59 by the administration of Governor Sullivan Chime in 2007, with appointed Administrators and Supervisors who at the helm of affairs. This led to a series of restructuring in terms of manpower redistribution, fiscal relationship between the 17 council and the 59 development areas; equally of importance, was political realignment with the grassroots.

The exercise meant that workers of each council had to be divided among the 2 or 3 development centres, created out of each of the 17 councils. One of the main problems that confronted members of staff of such development areas was the remote locations of their headquarters. When the seat of the administration of the 17 councils were the headquarters of such councils only, workers had no problem of accommodation as sufficient structures were constructed within the local government and its environs. With the creation of such development areas, workers were forced to commute to and from their former places of residence as they could not get decent accommodation in their respective development areas.

This has some implications. One, they were usually late to work on the day they could attend. Secondly, they were forced to shuttle to work, which then raised the issue of transportation and its cost to the workers of such development areas. Ozor (2003: 27-28) vividly captured the situation thus:

> Living in remote areas of the local government would not have raised much problems for workers if there were reliable and cheap means of transportation. Transportation problem is as acute as that of accommodation problem. Most staff spend not less than thirty percent of their monthly take-home pay as transport, and yet report to work late and regular.

Incidentally, they were expected not only to go to work regularly, but on time too. This led to some disputes between the executive and the union officials. For example, the then Chairman of Eha-Amufu local government development centre, had always insisted that workers should be in offices by 8.00am daily. Those who could not meet up had their salaries seized at the end of the month. In such a situation,

NULGE officials would intervene but such interventions were always met with intimidation of union officials by the political office holders, as they were always reported to the office of the Special Assistant to the Governor on Local Government and Political Matters. In a manner reminiscent of the colonialists, NULGE officials in such a circumstance, not only suffer the withholding of favours but in some cases were instantly dropped as members of the executive.

One of the most significant factors responsible for social conflicts and their resurgence in the local government system of Enugu State is the lack of equity and social justice and also, the lack of any confidence that the ruling class will be guided by it (Onyeonoru and Aborisade, 2001). Between 1999 and 2007 democratic dispensation, the local government system was completely subordinated to the state. Staff of the local government had the worst of times as wages were not only paid irregularly but workers were owed salaries for upwards of two years. Under such' circumstances, the question of fringe benefits could not arise.

So, with a general wage review (based on agreement between NLC and the federal government) to ₦7,500.00 as minimum wage, Enugu State government forced its workers to accept ₦5,000.00. This was inspite of the fact that the workers' economic situation was worsened by government withdrawal of subsidies to previously subsidised commodities in line with the policy of SAP (Obasi, 1999). It is within this socio-economic situation that the state government was not only owing arrears of salaries, but was not ready to implement the new minimum wage.

Such was the indifference of the State Government to workers welfare, yet. it made the Chairmen to pay councillors, supervisors and other political office holders (POHs) hundreds of thousands of naira every month. Implied in this is that politicians approved stupendous benefits for themselves at a time workers of the councils were owned several months' arrears salaries and leave allowances. Secondly, it is also within this context that political executives at local government levels were hiring temporary workers usually known as executive assistants. The names of such people are sometimes sent from the government house, inform of directives which the chairmen are expected to comply with immediately.

Often, such executive assistants' who do not have any identifiable credentials were not expected to have schedules but receive salaries far above the highest staff of the councils. Initially, the branch executive of NULGE put up complaints over such huge salaries. In such situations, political office holders play the ostrich by ignoring the protests by NULGE.

A typical example was in 2003/2004 when some allocations meant for the councils were released, perhaps by mistake, in a month. The treasurers/accountants of Nsukka, and Udenu local government areas and their development centres, saw such as an opportunity to pay some arrears of salaries and emoluments to their respective workers. Incidentally, the chairmen of the councils and development centres promptly reported to the state government who immediately relieved such officers of their posts. The intervention of Labour, even though subtle (because it has been emasculated) could not save the positions of such officers.

Again the tendency of workers to lose manifested in 2004 at Igbo-Eze south local government area, when workers embarked on demonstration for non-payment of arrears of salaries and leave allowances owed them by previous Administrations. The leadership of the branch union organised the workers to protest against the management, who they felt, was not willing to pay such arrears of salary. Initially, efforts were made by the management to go into dialogue with labour over the matter, but this was resisted by the union. Unfortunately, the perception that the state government had started releasing the statutory allocations of the councils including Igbo-Eze South, was wrong. Contrary to that, the councils were only given the monthly salaries of the workers. The resultant industrial action paralysed the council for more than one week.

In their reaction, the management felt that their protest had come to transcend the specific interests of the workers, and extended to political alignment and cleavages (Ozor, 2003). This meant that the branch union had been infiltrated by rival parties -Labour party and/or All Nigerians People's Party (ANPP). Thus, the ruling party at the council level (PDP), concluded that the intransigence of the union officials under the then political climate within the council area, cannot be separated from the political aspect.

It is within this context that all avenues of discussion or dialogue collapsed. The political office holders, immediately contacted the state government, which was also PDP-controlled. Labour's action in the above dispute showed evidence of poor leadership qualities and as aptly observed by Ozor (2003:166).

> ... some Nigerian trade union leaders feel that they were chosen, due to their boldness and courage, to challenge and confront the chief executive of their management. They feel, rightly or wrongly, that the chief executive lacks the qualities for his position. Consequently, they assume the leadership of their unions with an air and a notion that they have to do a do or die duel with the chief executive.

He concluded that such leadership attitude usually wrecks good management/union relationship. Deriving from the above scenario are two facts. First, there was no attempt to evolve solutions. Second, there was no genuine efforts made to address the issues in dispute. What government resorted to in order to resolve the conflict was repression by the dissolution of the union and the appointment of care-taker committee through the instrumentality of the state executive council of the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), itself already compromised on the issue of government-NULGE relationship. This action was swiftly followed by the transfer of not only the local government branch union officials but all the members of staff who had worked up to six years at the council.

Lessons Learnt and Suggestions

One significant fact derivable from the cases presented above, and the structural conflict theory earlier adopted, is that conflict is an inevitable product of the structure of the society; and this has certain implications. The first is that trade unionism is seen as structurally determined, permanent and inradicable as conflict itself (Ezeani, 2002). Secondly, if trade unions are structurally determined, then, so must their methods be (Allen, 1971; cited in Ezeani, 2002). Thirdly, collective bargaining becomes an institutionalised form of conflict.

Generally, it is now clear that everything about the economy is quite skewed against the working class, especially the workers of the Enugu State local government system, between 1999-2007. For example, a comparison of workers' pay to that of political officer holders within the public sector does not suggest that there is a rationale or principle undergirding salary and wages in Nigeria. For example, while workers' salaries in the local governments increased by 15% between 1999 and 2007, those of political office holders increased by over 80%. In the face of this, local government workers have to devise appropriate strategies for survival. At the same time, both the local government chairman and the state governments should appreciate the problems of labour. They should do everything within their powers to have a peaceful labour-management relations.

There is the need to establish that rapport, if you like, that partnership which must exist and which is very vital for a solid socio-economic society which should move forward, especially in this troubled time, the time of social upheavals, and in time of world-wide economic meltdown.

As reflected in this work, during the early 1980s, protests by labour unions were mainly against the deplorable social conditions of Nigerian workers, emanating from the introduction of SAP. However, labour-management conflict, as we could see, may be explained by the deplorable socio-economic conditions of the worker. The social experience of the Nigerian worker, since the economic crisis and adjustment, suggests anything but equity. To adequately square up to this challenge, union leaders need to do more to provide effective and dynamic leadership to their members. We are of the belief that propaganda, self-education, public self-criticism, and effective strategies of bargaining and industrial intervention need to be initiated and sustained to strengthen the labour force. To effectively do this, labour should each time, have the relevant information. Even where information is shared, it is better to start with the problem than the solution and the relevance and weight of information are as important as the facts themselves.

Finally, judging and influencing attitudes in negotiations is essentially a preliminary part of the process but can be vital to a successful outcome. Experience has shown that most NULGE officials are not good negotiators. This is partly a function of inexperience and equally as a result of not being properly educated.

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Skilled negotiators usually know conflict resolution strategies and are familiar with the background of the dispute and in most cases keep their emotions under control (Olowu, 2001). We therefore suggest that branch union official should be those not only properly and adequately educated but also with the right experiences in intra-group conflict resolution. Gone are the days when elections into union positions were based on ethnic or sectional sentiments.

Concluding Remarks

Every group within an organisation will come into conflict with every other group with which it interacts. Each group will have its own goals. The extent to which other groups hinder the achievement of these goals will determine the level of conflict. One can appreciate, from our study, that the degree to which groups are objectively dependent upon each other for achieving their goals will be related to the level of conflict.

Again, from our study, it is clear that whatever its specific nature, conflict arises basically from motivational factors. Thus, the phenomenon of industrial conflict in the local government system of Enugu State, grows out of the needs of individual members of the labour. Secondly, from the case of Igbo-Eze South labour-management crises, it could be understood that human behaviour could be predicated more on perceptions than on objective facts (Olowu, 2001).

What we can derive from the above is that the question of interest is how to produce the cognitive change needed to reach agreements. This is because, experience has shown that lack of communication between the political class (management) and labour and a tendency to suppress rather than manage conflicts is one of the greatest problems in industrial labour relations at the local government level in Enugu State. Both sides, especially the political office holders have failed to understand that healthy conversations offer much prospect for all participants (Ogbu, 2004).

Research has shown that thinking intuitively, rather than analytically about a problem (Rappoport, 1965), and adopting a problem-solving (rather than a competitive approach to the discussion of differences (Summers, 1968), results in more compromise and cognitive change. Unfortunately, most political office holders, and in some cases union officials, always take competitive positions, because, as Ozor (2003) put it, they have both the bread and butter. Again because they are in most cases, not properly educated, they feel threatened by the enlightened position of some of their comrades at arm.

Furthermore, as the condition of the Nigerian worker deteriorates due to the negative impact of economic reforms, followed by the withdrawal of many of subsidies, the declining economic situation in the world and its concomitant effects, job loss and unemployment, the local government worker has all his/her safety valve blocked. This definitely is a challenging time for both the political office holders and

labour. So, unlike the early period of the economic crisis in the early 1980s, when protest of labour unions were mainly aimed at averting the loss of jobs and rationalisation (Bangura, 1986), the conduct of the ruling class especially at the local government level, where corruption and mismanagement of resources is now very high (Bienen, 1983; Diamond, 1988) have forced labour to resolve the contradictions arising from all these (Onyeonoru and Aborisade, 2001). Through the strikes and other non co-operative methods, the paper has shown that local governments, are not quite proactive in addressing early warning signals of eruption of industrial conflicts. Secondly, it has shown that government as a major partner in collective bargaining agreement can perfectly manipulate any engagement with NULGE in its favour through various means, such as intimidation of Union officials (Obasi, 1995).

We can generally conclude that the existing framework for conflict management in the local government system in Enugu State is ineffective as management does not bargain with staff in resolving conflictual situations. The attitude of management towards labour, especially on matters pertaining to conflict resolution is both undemocratic and unfriendly. This is a striking paradox considering the fact the Nigeria has since 1999 returned to civilian democratic experiment. This anti-labour situation is against the global trend in which the rapid maturation of liberal democracy has produced a concomitant in increasing industrial democracy.

What is to be done? Industrial peace and harmony are a *desideratum* for sustainable socio-economic development. The contrary is an ill wind that blows hot and lethal to government as well as labour. Attempts to manipulate both the administrative and legal processes entailed industrial relations that only exacerbates the situation. Nor those "papering -over" and suppressing industrial conflicts in the system help matters -"conflict suppressed" are "conflict complicated". This is because this strategy fails to address the well spring of grievances which manifests in conflict relations. On the contrary, measures should be put in motion to build institutional strategies for administering "social justice" and the concomitant collective bargaining in the work place. To this end, local government, State and national levels of Labour-Management engagements should be instituted without delay. And intra-labour democracy should be a priority of both labour organisations and government. It serves only personal interests to manipulate the process of electing/selecting labour leaders because the motivational basis for reasonable employee productivity is undermined by the imposition of labour leaders on workers. Related to this is the well known fact that it produces "peace of the graveyard". The 1999 constitution has eloquently and authoritatively guaranteed to Nigerians, including the workers, freedom of association. Interfering in the management of NULGE is not only undemocratic both also a culpable breech of the constitution.

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