

Unpopular Essays

BASSEY EKPO BASSEY



"THE first wave of student demonstrations in this country were either for patriotic reasons or yielded patriotic results. Students of the Yaba College of Technology had to smash windows to keep the first indigenous Nigerian government from entering into a military treaty that would have transferred major decisions concerning the Nigerian Army to No. 10 Downing Street in down town London. Similarly, a strike action by the juveniles of King's College in 1943 transferred Nigerian politics from the narrow elites of Lagos and Calabar, to the broad masses of the Nigerian people"

WHEN Gab Fagbure, a commissioner in the former Western State said that students had no right to consider themselves future leaders, he had no idea how many people would be sold to his views.

There were people (mostly students) who were enraged by the commissioner's statement, and there were people who were amused by it. Today, some five years after it had been uttered, Gab Fagbure's vexed observation appears to have solidified into an official attitude towards students in Nigeria.

Because of that, there is a country-wide effort partly to discredit the students who might still have the illusion of being future leaders and partly to compel them to conform with the sacrosanct routines mapped out by the "wisdom of our elders."

The senate at the University of Ibadan leads everybody in this respect. Henceforth, there shall be no student demonstrations on campus without the consent of at least, 51 per cent of the entire student population;

Beyond the veil of ostensible democracy, this measure by the senate in question is an effort to keep protest out of the campus. If for example, students of biology want to demonstrate against their curriculum, they will now have to explain it to the entire student

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BENUE State's Governor Shelleng has got the matter correctly gauged. He talks of the lads in dismal and unpatriotic terms. According to him, student leaders are being used "as tools by Nigeria's enemy of progress."

We argue that the attitude is unfair because, historically, the Nigerian student has been an agent of progress, not of destruction. He has been perceptive where the oldest generations failed to see beyond their nose.

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Nigerian Students:

The Issue Of Functional Irresponsibility

country, the outrage of a misgoverned society that is too afraid to protest, will always find expression in the strike actions of students.

But sometimes, those strike actions have been selfish and even irresponsible. The recent protest lodged by some students of colleges of technology against a Federal Government directed that they cut grasses on their premises is a case in point.

Protests like this have, on several occasions, called to question, the maturity of our student population and portrayed them as community that is hard put to defining its values.

But in general terms, the "nuisance" approach of students to national issues can be described as functional irresponsibility. No

body who will then go to the polls to decide whether such a plan was kindly conceived or not.

It also means that the demonstrating students, must be able to produce on demand, evidence that 51 per cent of the students in fact approved of their show. Where this involves signing signatures, who is going to jeopardise his career by formally declaring himself an agitator?

As has been said, this move towards fascism is not local to the headmasters at the university of Ibadan. It is part of an unfair establishment conspiracy, the country over, to check what they imagine is the nuisance value of the younger generation.

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keep the first indigenous Nigerian government from entering into a military treaty that would have transferred major decisions concerning the Nigerian Army to No. 10 Downing Street in down town London.

Similarly, a strike action by the juveniles of King's College in 1943 transferred Nigerian politics from the narrow elites of Lagos and Calabar, to the broad masses of the Nigerian people. Yes, the N.C.N.C., the first populist political organisation in this country, was the direct result of a protest by King's College students against the housing of British colonial soldiers on their premises during the Second World War.

And recently, the progressive thrust of Nigerian students has been expressed in their attitudes towards corrupt and progressive regimes. The moment university students decided that Gowon had become a decided disadvantage to the country, the man's regime

started the plunge that saw it out of office in July 1975.

It was also reported that when Dimka (of blessed memory) made his radio announcement to the effect of all of us being together, students of the University of Ibadan took to the streets to signal what would have counted as the beginning of a protracted civilian resistance to a regime nobody was prepared to tolerate.

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"THIS is the success story of students in Nigeria. The story tells of the need for every group that rules this country at any point in time, to gauge their popularity by student response. In a situation where students have demonstrated their determination to have a say in the social and economic issues of the country, the outrage of a misgoverned society that is too afraid to protest, will always find expression in the strike actions of students"

body for instance approved of the apparent irresponsibility involved in the burning down of a police post by students of the university of Lagos in 1973, but there was no disputing the functional aggregate of such methods in persuading Yakubu Gowon that the country no longer wanted him.

The test of any education policy regarding the dissent outlets of students, is its ability to balance the need for peace on our campuses with a recognition of the ultimate good for the society of students "indiscipline".

At the moment, such policies are guilty of exaggeration on the side of peace. Col Amadu Ali, Federal Commissioner for Education articulated this failure when he announced that any school involved in a violent demonstration shall be closed indefinitely except the head of state intervenes on its behalf.

But the head of state addresses himself to the problem in more fundamental terms. He looks at the student problem as "symptoms of extreme materialism which is definitely alien to traditional society in this country".

But the society is no longer traditional. The country's lop-sided wealth has meant a dislocation both of the economy and of traditional values. The runaway inflation, the problem of conspicuous consumption have taken their toll of students values. Because of that, they sometimes permit themselves the indulgence of adult indiscipline.