

Code of Conduct Bureau; a stitch in time saves nine

The Code of Conduct Bureau was set up by the Military administration of former President Ibrahim Babangida and consolidated by General Abdusalami's regime in good faith to help rid the system of corruption so as to maintain a high standard of public morality in the conduct of government business and to ensure that the actions and behavior of public officers conform to highest standard of public morality and integrity. Its primary mandate is to maintain national ethics by eliminate corruption and encourage productivity in the polity. Down the lane and very unfortunately the Bureau appears to have diverted from the ideals for which it was established. Instead of checkmating the activities of Public officers and bringing them to justice through the Code of Conduct Tribunal the reverse has been the case. In the last four years the Code of Conduct Bureau has investigated several petitions but very unfortunately only few of these investigated petitions and cases have been forwarded to the Tribunal for prosecution.



The Bureau itself seemed to be embroiled in misconduct as the leadership has been everything but transparent. The leadership of the Bureau under its erstwhile chairman Professor Muhammad Isah operated completely out of the statutory rules and regulations of the Civil service. Petitions were treated on the basis of contacts, connections and gratifications. The main essence of the establishment of the Bureau was sidelined and everything became a 'potpourri' of corruption. The leadership was pandering to the whims and caprices of its masters and those who put them in power. The petitions written by Nigerians against public officers became personal documents in the shelves and homes of the leadership and responses were delivered on the basis favoritism and nepotism.

The established procedures of engagement were hijacked and Bureau operated as a private enterprise. In most cases money and various forms of gratifications took the centre stage and some

public officers who have soiled their hands with corrupt practices were left off the hook to go and enjoy their loot neither was their cases referred to the Tribunal for prosecution. The erstwhile chairman was always at logger head with his board members who kept insisting that the right procedures be followed. There were serious petition and allegations of corrupt practices against the leadership of the Bureau but everything was submerged and covered up because of the contacts and support of the powers that be. Even the intervention of the two chambers of the National Assembly did not yield anything fruitful. The Bureau became a toothless bulldog as its operations became shrouded in secrecy and political aggrandizements. A greater percentage of public officers took advantage of the situation and did not declare their assets as nobody was monitoring and ensuring compliant. This coupled with the recent struggle for power has rendered the activities of the Bureau in Comatose.

Enough is enough. We cannot continue to operate such a sensitive establishment like the CCB in such manner if we are serious about upholding the integrity of public officers. Nigerians are looking up to the current administration of President Bola Tinubu to overhaul the entire leadership of the Bureau as the entire system has been corrupted by erstwhile leadership. The President should lead by example by declaring his assets which he is yet to do since he assumed powers. He should search for men and women of integrity to take over the administration of the Bureau to ensure that the ideals behind its establishment are realized. The entire system in the Bureau should be computerized to ensure compliance with modern day strategy for checkmating fraud and criminality. If the Code of Conduct is enmeshed in misconduct who then can checkmate the fraudulent and corrupt practices of public officers? A stitch in time will not only save nine it will save our nation from the hands of criminals and looters who take advantage of their positions as public officers.