

Ibrahim Mantu was in the Spirit

By Paulinus Nnah

Sen. Ibrahim Nasiru Mantu was a Senator of the Federal Republic who attained his political height as Deputy Senate President in 2003, and left in 2007, all on the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Just when the stage was set for 2019 general elections, and long before his demise on August 17, 2021, Sen. Mantu made some rather "startling" confessions over his party's culture of winning elections via rigging, which I guess rightly earned him the self-generated moniker of the "born again" politician. This is against the fact that he was born, and he lived and died a devout Muslim. Ironical, isn't it?

Evidently overwhelmed by the sorry state of the nation, which citizenry have been made to repeatedly undergo the worst frustration in their fruitless effort to make their choice of leadership, Mantu was moved to come clean about what many of our brand of politicians still reckon as politics today, but which in reality is far worse than slavery, apartheid, or even witchcraft. But all the same, Ibrahim Mantu was everything remorseful during that epic interview on Channels TV. Cued by the hostess who fired: "Sen Mantu... did I hear you say you've helped rig elections before now?", and he blabbed, in part: "...Yes. Yes, I did, because I'm now confessing the truth. What do I mean? You know, when you provide money, you give money to INEC boys... that they should favour you, provide money to the security. "All the elections in the past... I've been in this game for forty years. I can tell you each time..., not necessarily when I'm contesting election, when my party [PDP] sponsors a candidate, I will like that candidate to win election.

"What we used to do before, we make provision for INEC, we make provision for the security, we make provision for even the agents of other political parties, so that they will not raise any objection to whatever we're able to get.

"So, whether I rig myself or not, [but] by providing those financial resources and inducements to the officials, I'm rigging elections." When the hostess further asked: "Do you think we can diminish or remove the influence as 2019 approaches?", he said, sounding downright contrite: "I believe so because, you see, if people are born again like me, ...unless you give before somebody will take. So, don't give and you will not get a taker.

"You should've even asked me, why am I thinking this way? Look, I'm tired of being

seen as a criminal on the streets of the world because you're a Nigerian. ...That must change. "I am tired of living in poverty in the midst of plenty. No matter what you have, every day you see people coming to you; your relations, your friends, saying 'my mother is in the hospital', 'my wife has given birth', [and this happens] every day.

"But if everyone has enough to take care of themselves, they wouldn't come bothering you to say 'give me this, give me that'. And I believe that we have enough resources [in this country] that people can [be made to] live a decent life without being beggars to those who have, just because we have not gotten our own governing system right.

"So, we need good governance, and good governance can only be provided by good people, good people who are truly repentant, who actually are there to serve the people, whose primary concern is about the wellbeing of the people.

"Then, when we have such leaders, I can tell you they will judiciously and prudently use our resources for the common good of everybody."

How it was ever possible for a politician in the garb of Sen Mantu, who arguably belonged among the generation of politicians, whose other names for politics have been lies and deceits, to let the right spirit have hold over him to the extent that he began to see things from the right perspective and through the ordinary man's eye, can only be ascribed to the divine Providence.

In his regenerate state, Mantu saw everything wrong about his party's mores of rigging elections, he hated the way and manner he was seen and treated anywhere outside our borders, just because he was a Nigerian, whose every step must be painstakingly watched and every word taken with every sense of cynicism and skepticism, all because he hailed from a country where graft and malfeasance form the people's living ethics. After long forty years of "practicing" politics, the man suddenly started to loathe seeing poverty in the midst of plenty, even though he could very rightly be numbered among the stupendously rich in Nigeria. He became sick and tired of having poor folks swarm around him wherever he turned to get one favour or the other, having well known that the Nigerian nation had such resources that if well managed and evenly and equitably distributed would make for adequate provision for all to live well. Mantu then desired and wished for a better country where good citizens could be

freely and honestly chosen to take up the reins of governance, and the outcome of such governance would be good, and would be for the betterment of all. It can only be inferred here that the late Plateau State-born politician was in the spirit that happens to be in sync with the consciousness of the present generation of right-thinking and progressive Nigerians, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, political inclination and all such biases.

Quite regrettably, virtually all of today's politicians in the ilk of Mantu are yet too reprobate to be able to see things from the standpoint of the late ace politician. This is simply the reason why they are expending their last energy in campaign sprees; lost in their vain hope of finding the people to fool where they left them the last time they pulled their Jokers, instead of yielding their stony hearts to true penitence. This time is apt for them to vigorously engage themselves in door-to-door campaign of craving for forgiveness from God and from bruised and battered Nigerians. To the co-travellers of Sen. Mantu under the effete umbrella of the PDP, even the family of those wielding the ratty brooms of the APC, it is about time they began to see things through the remorseful eyes of Ibrahim Mantu. It is time they launched out, cap in hand, and seek every means of reparation and appeasement for the decades-long misrule and robbery committed against distressed Nigerian people, across all tiers of government.

This is, undeniably, not the best of times for grandfather political families to jostle for political conquest at 2023 polls, lest rude culture shock greets them in this era of epic Ballot Revolution. As it is at the national with the current mass movement for Peter Obi of the LP, so it is in Akwa Ibom State with the present conglomeration of support base for OBA of YPP, and down to the massive backing of Hon. Ekanem Brown also of YPP in Mkpato Enin LGA.

This is clearly a sign of things to come, that in line with Mantu's "vision" of a great country, all and sundry will rise in unison to enthrone the right leadership that will guarantee the Nigeria of our long seen dream, in 2023. Indeed, Sen. Ibrahim Mantu was in the spirit!