

SWEDEN:**A Nation With "No Excellencies!"**

Did you know that, Sweden, a Scandinavian nation that transformed itself from an impoverished, agricultural society into one of the wealthiest, most socially just and least corrupt countries in the world, is a nation with 'no excellences'? Sweden does not offer luxury or privileges to its politicians. They do not treat their elected officials differently than the citizens? Swedish Ministers and MPs do not have official cars or private drivers. They travel in crowded buses and trains, just like the citizens they represent. They are not allowed to have private secretaries and their parliamentary offices are as small as 8m. Swedish politicians who dare to spend public money on taxi journeys, instead of riding the train, end up on news headlines. Even the Speaker of Parliament (Riksdag), receives a card to use public transportation.

Only the Prime Minister has the right to use a car from the security forces on a permanent basis.

Swedish parliamentarians live in tiny apartments in the capital, where they wash and iron their own clothes in

communal laundries. At the municipal level, unlike our LGA Councilors and Houses of Assembly members who live large on our resources, Swedish councilors do not even earn a salary. They do not have a right to an office. They work from home.

According to Business Insider, an MP in Sweden earns \$78,000 a year. That's less than the quarterly office running cost of a Nigerian parliamentarian. When foreign Heads of States visit Sweden, they sometimes ride with their Prime Minister in public transportation. Judges also do not have the right to official cars, private secretaries or perks.

A former Swedish Deputy Prime Minister, Mona Sahlin, once bought a bar of chocolate, nappies and some other personal items with a government credit card. There was national uproar and she lost her job. The scandal went down in the annals of Swedish politics as the "Toblerone Case." Yet, Sweden tops as the number one country with the best quality of life and social purpose on Earth. Sweden is ranked the best country to be a woman and raise children in, and for a sustainable lifestyle.

Health care and college education are free in Sweden and its people boast one of the longest life expectancies in the world. Almost all of Sweden's trash is recycled.

Swedes donate about 1 percent of their gross national product to humanitarian aid programs around the world each year. The literacy level in Sweden is 99 per cent.

Sweden is recognized for having an abundance of clean air, given its high tree cover percentage, and they have the highest number of non-religious population in the world. How did a non-religious society come to love simplicity, humanity and even God, more than the very religious nations, who are struggling to produce honest leaders that can give their people basic rights? Why do non-productive leaders in struggling countries prefer to spend more public money on their personal luxuries than on the welfare of the people that voted for them? How did a nation with no excellences, manage to become so excellent, while nations filled with countless excellences, are unable to become excellent? Think about it and decide today to be part of building a new nation that will at least have less excellences