

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF SCANDALS

DIRTY DEALS OF LEGISLATORS AND PERMANENT SECRETARIES

How budgets are collapsed, staff denied allowances, training and money shared by top shots

A top bureaucrat at the National Assembly, Mrs Ifeoma Ofili, has opened a can of worms in the National Assembly as she exposed some of the dirty deals being carried out by federal lawmakers in connivance with permanent secretaries who are the statutory heads of the major units of the Assembly. Ofili, who spoke at a Retreat for legislative staff, organized by the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), for directors and Committee clerks on June 27, 2025, in Abuja, revealed that the political leadership of the National Assembly now collapse budgetary provisions for the bureaucracy into theirs and share it amongst themselves, leaving no funds to operate and run the administration. According to her directors are now beggars. Only the Permanent secretaries and the legislators have access to funds. And they 'eat' what belong to other workers in addition to their own. She specifically said that funds budgeted for staff welfare that included; training allowances, healthcare, and sports are now collapsed into a curious and ambiguous budget lines after passage and diverted by lawmakers for their personal use. Ofili, in a video that has gone viral, further revealed some damning allegations of widespread corruption among federal lawmakers, saying that they collect bribes in the name of oversights, doctor legislative reports, deny staff their legitimate entitlements among others. Mrs. Ifeoma Ofili, who is a director with the National Assembly serving in the House of Representatives and former Clerk of the House Committee on Local Content, pointedly said that lawmakers regularly demand and collect bribes from Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in the guise of so-called oversight responsibility, a practice she noted seriously undermined legislative integrity. She particularly accused the lawmakers of manipulating reports of public hearings by hiring consultants to write falsified reports, bypassing committee clerks who are legally and procedurally mandated to handle such reports. In her words; "Talking about oversight. How do you account for the fact that the flight ticket to go and oversight was paid by the agency? What are you coming to write? You go there, they tell you what to write, they give you money, they accommodate you, they give you flight and the members will come and fight over the money that they were given. "They will not give anything to the clerk. They will not give the committee assistants that they took along. Now, you are compelled to write a report of what you did not see, what did not happen, and you have to lie. Me as a Catholic, I will just go for confession first," she stressed.

Ofili also said that during a public hearing last year, she was informed by the committee that a consultant had been hired to write the report and upon inquiry, she discovered the consultant did not even attend the public hearing. She further said; "Secondly, financing a public hearing. We did a public hearing last year and then the committee called me to tell me that a consultant was employed to write a report. And then I asked the consultant, were you at the public hearing? He said 'no.' So, what do you want to

write? I, Ifeoma should give you the materials to write the report? I said no, it's not going to happen. I will not work with you. I put my feet down and I told him I'm not going to work with him. "And I sat down, because they are looking at us as if we do not have capacity. I'm just two steps out of National Assembly for retirement. So, right now, my mother says she's not dancing so that people will give her money. It is so that they will see me. So, I will say what I want to say. I sat down and I did a proper report of that public hearing and I took it to the chairman. "I said, this is the report, and they were looking at me like, you mean it. I said, yes. 'Oh no, you have to change that. I said no, this is what happened.' If you want to change it, you can now go ahead and change it, but the original report is in my system. I don't use secretaries. I type my report myself. So, if they want to change it, they should go ahead and change it, I am



waiting," she insisted. The concerned director, also questioned the sincerity of purpose of the lawmakers' public posturing, particularly during high-profile investigations into government agencies, saying that while legislators often appear firm on camera when addressing financial misconduct in MDAs, many of the probes are usually compromised behind closed doors. According to her; "Then we are talking about punishing MDAs. They will come on TV and they will say, 'this erring MDA did this.' All the atrocities that are being committed in the National Assembly, who punishes them?" she asked. Ofili also said; "We don't follow the budget process the way it is. They will budget money for... for instance, staff budget, money for training, money for clinics, money for sports, money for books,

they collapse it. "It is in the National Assembly we are still hearing about 'collapse.' Now, allowances that are budgeted for National Assembly staff are collapsed. So, we as citizens, because we are still citizens, first, before we became National Assembly staff and then you have no power to even go and hold a press conference because we have sworn to oath of silence. So, I can't even tell the world how I feel. "Allowances that are constitutional, even, put it in the constitution this time, statutory allocation to the National Assembly staff, they collapsed for themselves. How do they want the National Assembly staff to function?"

The director gave a grim picture of the plight of members of staff of the National Assembly, particularly that have retired, whom she noted are frequently abandoned and left without pay for years after leaving service, stressing that some of the retired staff are made to wait for one to two years before receiving their retirement benefits. In the words of Ofili; "Many of the retired staff appear abandoned and become like destitute, with some of them calling their former colleagues to beg for money to buy fuel is not uncommon to see them standing at the entrance of the National Assembly, unable to afford the cost of fueling their cars. "So, apart from what the constitution says, who is looking at what the lawmakers are collapsing and chopping? They chop their own and chop our own," she enthused.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

A Parliament of owls

BY MAHMUD JEGA

The Englishman [or the Empire of Englishmen] who sat down and coined weird collective nouns for groups of animals, did they have Nigeria in mind? Were they helped in the task by a Junker of Germans, a vineyard of Frenchmen, a mob of Italians or a samurai of Japanese?

Think of the collective noun a parliament of owls. Englishmen who coined it had the Nigerian National Assembly in mind. The large eyes of owls which resemble an MP's eyesight for money, owls' nocturnal habits which resemble rubber stamping of executive bills, their ability to rotate their heads in all directions which resembles defecting from one party to another, their flying silently in the night to grab prey with sharp talons which resembles budget padding, and their shrieking in the night which resembles constituency projects, all point to English mischief in coining this collective noun. The collective noun glaring of cats describes Nigerian State Houses of Assembly. They glare helplessly while executives trample on budgets, sidestep financial rules and personalize treasuries, much like cats that only glare and mew.

The collective noun lamentation of swans reminds me of Nigerian trade unions. They are constantly lamenting about minimum wage, cost of living, industrial safety, check off dues, length of maternity leaves and arrest of union leaders. The collective noun thunder of hippos was coined by Englishmen to refer to ASUU, which is forever agitating for higher salaries, earned academic allowances, "adequate funding of universities," university autonomy, appointment of Vice Chancellors and salary for work not done during long strikes under the dubious clause called "non-victimization."

Englishmen had the Nigerian Presidency in mind when they

coined the collective noun a tower of giraffes. Its long neck surveys the whole scene for more taxes, increased oil production, more money from non-oil exports, having a firm grip on funds through Treasury Single Account and IPPIS, harvesting more money by ending subsidy and floating the naira, cajoling Central Bank to print more money under ways and means, and borrowing money from every available foreign source, to be paid for by generations yet unborn. The collective noun a cauldron of hawks was meant to describe state Government Houses. Contractors, consultants, politicians, civil servants, clerics, traditional rulers, babalawos and assorted thugs swamp them, a sign of the concentration of power that has become steadily elaborated in Nigeria since the military era. No appointment letter, no voucher, no contract documents and no land allocation is of any effect until it comes from the Government House, which is infested with circulating hawks.

When the Englishman invented the collective noun a bank of Komodo dragons, he had Nigerian bankers in mind. Komodo dragons are the most voracious and the most merciless of eaters; they run down a goat or a calf and eat it alive. Nigerian bankers run down a customer's meagre savings and eat it alive, by charging for every debit or credit alert, account maintenance fee, stamp duty and many hidden charges. They empty their ATMs, then charge a customer extra sums for withdrawals from ATMs of other banks. Try borrowing money from a Nigerian bank; by the time they calculate the compound interest, you would wish that you are being chased by a Komodo dragon. The collective noun implausibility of gnus was meant to describe Nigerian civil servants. Someone once said that civil service bureaucracy is stultifying. It is



inscrutable, bewildering, puzzling, and beguiling. And it is the root of corruption; citizens resort to bribery in order to get around the rigmarole bureaucracy of the civil service. What did the Englishman mean by the collective noun a convocation of eagles? Is it only universities that hold convocations to award degrees and diplomas, many of them undeserved, especially the honorary ones? He had Nigerian politicians in mind. Nothing is more vigilant in the sky than an eagle, and nothing is more vigilant near a sub-treasury than a Nigerian politician. A politician's eye for a juicy contract is as sharp as an eagle's eye for prey. From 100 meters up, an eagle can spot the slightest movement of a mouse, and from several thousand kilometres away, a politician can spot the smell of a juicy contract.

Nigerian bandits were the target of the collective noun a murder of crows. Which murder does a crow make when compared to a Nigerian bandit, who storms villages and towns, blocks highways, raids schools, ambushes farmers at their farms, chases fishermen through rivers and creeks, storms shops and makes away with victims, including women and children, only to demand for ransom payments in staggering amounts, which bankrupts whole families and clans? Their soul mates, Nigerian kidnappers, are the objects of the collective noun a prowl of jaguars. They are forever on the prowl for persons to seize. Informants feed them with information that a city-based well to do person is about to visit home, and if they cannot get him, they will make do with even the poorest person, whose family must sell his farm in order to raise ransom.

A tribe of antelopes. I was wondering; was that meant to describe the geopolitical groups Afenifere, Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Arewa Consultative Forum, Middle Belt Forum, Ijaw National Congress and Southern Leaders Consultative Forum, groups not envisaged by the constitution but which have usurped some of the roles of constitutional agencies? Nearly 50 years ago, this country did away with the mention of "tribe" in the national anthem but two years ago, without any public debate, the Presidency smuggled it back, which the National Assembly speedily rubber stamped, sorry, ratified. It said though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand, but the geopolitical groups are bent on thwarting that promise, much like a tribe of wildebeest running helter skelter during their annual migration. The collective noun a mess of iguanas best describes Nigerian political parties, eighteen registered ones with, at the last count, one hundred and ten others waiting to be registered. Some of these were once registered, they failed to clinch a single assembly seat anywhere and, in accordance with the Electoral Act, were deregistered, only to attempt a return as briefcase political parties.

The Englishmen did not stop there, but went ahead to coin more collective nouns in order to describe specific Nigerian political parties of this day. The relevant one for All Progressives Congress [APC] is an obstinacy of buffaloes. Just as APC resembles PDP, buffaloes resemble domestic cattle but woe unto anyone who confuses a buffalo for a cow. A friend of mine once visited the Abuja National Park and told me that he saw some prized cattle "from Argentina" that are surrounded by strong iron fences and deep trenches. Cattle? I

said you better run; those are buffaloes! A coalition of cheetahs was coined by Englishmen to describe APC's most vibrant competitor on the political scene right now, i.e. All Democratic Congress, ADC. Cheetah is the fastest land animal, and ADC chieftains are the fleetest of Nigerian politicians. Some of them have been in up to four political parties in the past year alone, while many of them are simultaneously members of two or more political parties, a Nigerian first which is about to enter the Guinness Book of Records. On the other hand, the collective noun a consortium of octopi was meant for PDP, the former ruling party, with eight hands planted in every pie. The collective noun a waddling of ducks best describes Labour Party, which waddles on the political scene with at least two heads, one of them attached to APC while the other gravitates towards ADC. Kwankwasiyya movement and its appendage political party, NNPP, was the target of the collective noun a murmuration of starlings. Very dazzling, when starlings are conducting a synchronized flight, but its ultimate aim is not known, just like the Kwankwasiyya leader lambasting the Presidency soon after a closed-door meeting, and his top aide saying it is him who will decide which party to move to. With many Nigerians saying they are befuddled by INEC's BVAS, the sudden collapse of iREV during the 2023 presidential elections and long delay in registering new political parties, Englishmen coined the collective noun implausibility of gnus to describe the institution. This gloomy looking antelope looks on askance at a hunter, just as INEC watches parties dissolve in chaos, with some people seizing control of them and not allowing their secretaries to sign letters convening their NEC meetings. SIECs are the aim of the collective noun a conspiracy of lemurs. All 36 SIECs return a clean sweep for the party that governs the state in local government elections, irrespective of party, region or geopolitical zone. Central Bank of Nigeria must be the cohort of zebras that Englishmen were thinking of. Like a zebra's stripes, it says the naira is appreciating when it is actually bumpy; it says naira is free floating when it spends billions of dollars to shore it up; and CBN says governments are awash in money even when it is helping them to shop for foreign loans.

Supreme Court must be the target of the collective noun a court of kangaroos. It delivered judgements that left Rivers State Government, PDP National Working Committee and Labour Party more confused than ever. For nearly six months Supreme Court has refused to take up a suit to determine the constitutionality of sacking elected state governors and MPs under a state of emergency. Nigeria Police must be the target of the collective noun a thunder of hippos. It is a bewildering sight when several dozen hippos splash into the Orange River, just as bewildering when Nigerian Mobile Policemen are marching in rehearsal for putting down a strike or to protect a local musician in whom the ruling powers are well pleased.

The collective noun a bicycle of bees must have been directed at Nigerian journalists, who are ever looking for someone to sting but without the honey bee's sweet honey. The collective noun intrusion of cockroaches was designed for Nigerian street beggars, while the collective noun a memory of elephants refers to Nigerian social media activists. To construct some more weird collective nouns, the Englishmen need further help from a pyramid of Egyptians, a great wall of Chinese, a nuke of North Koreans, a tariff of Americans and a genocide of Israelis.