

SACKED IMO 3,000: TIME FOR RESTORATION HAS COME
PRESS STATEMENTS BY THE NIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS (NLC)

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) recently had to address the Nigerian media on the unholy and irresponsible actions taken by the Government of Imo state against its own citizens which it not only had constitutional responsibility to protect but also swore to an oath to protect but chose to rather desecrate that oath and perjure itself by cowardly sacking thousands in her employ against all known labour standards and justice.

One of the highlights of that Media briefing was the 14-day ultimatum which we gave to that Government within which we had expected it to have rescinded that amoral action, recalled the workers, apologised to the citizens of the state especially her workers and desisted from further abuse and intimidation of workers in the state and their leaders. Nothing has however thus far changed unfortunately.

The ultimatum which expires on the 12th of this month and by which time we hope that discernible steps would have been taken by the Government of RochasOkorochoa to redress the damage and correct its actions as was expected of any responsible Government driven by Governance effectiveness at heart mindful of the source of sovereign power; Congress having been seeing the unrepentant posture and the recalcitrant mien of the Government actors in the state; and, having unfortunately been observing the stubborn and wicked pronouncements and the body language of the Governor, has become painfully compelled to warn the Government that it will embark on industrial action that would cripple the Government in Imo state but will help it understand and appreciate the fine principles of respect for the moral and legal rights of her workers and citizens without further notice.

To this end it is important to inform the Governor that the movement is united on this if he is planning on hiding under current events in the Congress. His disappointment should also increase if he knows that the Congress has set up a Joint Action Committee (JAC) to oversee our engagement with his Government. We hope that this will send a clear message of our determination and avowal to get him to align with the sovereign will of the people and workers in Imo state.

We know the capacity for chicanery and violence which the Governor possesses perhaps that is what has emboldened the unlawful actions he is bent on foisting on the workers in the state but we assure him that we are fully prepared. We have seen all manners of wicked and narcissistic behaviour directed against Nigerian workers in the past and fortunately, we have withered all of them and are still standing unbent. We assure the Government that after this struggle, we shall remain standing as this has always been the historical truth. The Police is also advised not to collude with the Governor to continue suppressing the people because it will only add to the battered image of the force and will not stop the people from overwhelmingly expressing their desire for equity, justice and fairness.

We call on our allies in the Civil Society movement, market women and men, businessmen, elders and community leaders including students to join forces with us as we prepare to restore sanity to Governance in Imo state. We advise residents of Imo state especially those in Owerri to stockpile food and other necessities as we will go the entire hog to ensure that Rochas is made to subject himself to the sovereign will of the people. We also warn those who use the roads that may lead in or out of Owerri to seek other routes as traffic in these areas will be seriously affected.

It is imperative that we use this same opportunity to once again dissociate ourselves from the proposed Monday 8th action against the increase in Electricity tariff by the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and the Federal

Ministry of Power. We believe that we have not held dialogue sufficiently with the right parties in the matter but are bent on taking action against parties that do not have power to change the course of action that has been taken to increase electricity tariff.

We are deeply committed to effective and strategic dialogue in resolving the increase in electricity tariff but not the picketing which we believe has not allowed the full exploration of all the peaceful options available to us as a movement. We are mindful of embarking on actions that would be detrimental to the ethos and traditions of the Congress thus undermines our moral authority as a mass based organisation built on the mobilisation of strategic social morality. We cannot compromise this at this time.

Congress believes that it is counter-productive picketing the DISCOs over the Tariff increase which they were clearly not responsible for effecting but which they are also a beneficiary. We believe that just as we engaged the federal Government when it recklessly increased the price of petroleum products in 2012 and not the Oil Companies, it will be ill-advised to at this time picket the DISCOs rather than the federal Government that is directly responsible for taking that decision.

We therefore call for clear-headed thoughts and targeted action amongst all stakeholders in this effort to stop the Government from implementing this new increase in electricity tariff. An understanding of the issues involved is key to successfully extricating Nigerians from this economic strangulation if we are serious. It is important that we ask ourselves why it seems that some people are afraid of confronting the federal Government even when it is clear that the Government is responsible for this evil against Nigerian workers and masses. We have not seen where pussy-footing and shadow-chasing has yielded any tangible results except if some people want to take Nigerians on a grand merry-go-round– a journey to nowhere.

We will not be part of a clear plot to deceive Nigerians which this action may portend because it clearly will not yield discernible results. The purpose of picketing is to force the picketed organisation to negotiate and yield grounds to you. In this case, the purpose of the planned action on Monday is to force the DISCOs to negotiate and reverse the tariff increase. Yes, we can force them to dialogue but can we force them to reverse the decision? NO. Simply because they cannot give you what they do not have power to do. That power resides elsewhere- NERC. We can force NERC and the Government to reverse the wicked decision.

We ask again; why are we wasting time pursuing shadow instead of engaging the Federal Government that is the culprit in this impishness? The proponents of Monday's action should answer us but on our own side, we have committed to opening up further dialogue with the right party – the federal Government on this to ensure that this matter is resolved. If not reversed, we assure Nigerians that the same passion that shall be unleashed on Rochas in restoring the dignity of workers in Imo state shall also be unleashed on the Federal Government to force them to reverse this senseless and anti-people policy.

That is our commitment and that is our pledge!

Comrade AcheseIgwe

(Deputy President)

For the President of NLC