

Effective Industrial Relations and Conflict Management: Essential Requirements for Enhancing Productivity in Nigeria

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Abstract: In Nigeria today, the new phase of capitalist globalization is seeking to transform established notions and hence practices of industrial relations and industrial disputes management as at no other time. Under the aegis of a neo-liberal ideology that is rooted in a new labour capital relation, workers are being indoctrinated to believe that ideology, paradoxically, is dead; that capitalism is the end of human history; that established relations of exploitation are immutable; that workers must find accommodation within these relations; that employers can now do much as they please. The argument of this paper is that this approach is counter-productive because in practice, it has the potential of leading to more and not less conflict between the employer and the employee. Fundamentally it has major consequences for productivity at the individual, organizational and societal level. It is important to note that labour and management hold the key to the nation's socio-economic development. This implies that their disposition can make or mar the economy as the case in Nigeria today. It is against this backdrop that this paper underscores the indispensability of effective management of industrial relations and industrial system is a fundamental requirement for enhancing the performance of the national economy. This paper utilized the methods of qualitative and syntheses of scientific literature as it relies on secondary data collected from books and journal articles, and were content analyzed in relation to the scope of the paper.

Keywords: industrial relations; conflict management; productivity; capitalism; Nigeria

JEL Classification: M1; J28; M54

1. Introduction

The new phase of capitalist globalization is seeking to transform established notions and hence practices of industrial relations and industrial disputes management as at no other time. Under the aegis of a neo-liberal ideology that is rooted in a new labour capital relation, workers are being indoctrinated to believe that ideology, paradoxically, is dead; that capitalism is the end of human history; that established

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relations of exploitation are immutable; that workers must find accommodation within these relations; that employers can now do much as they please. Armed with these and other elements of the neo-liberal ideology, the most right-wing employers, which include governments and states in most of the Third World, are busy under the supervision of the World Bank and IMF, introducing programmes that are not only destroying the lives and living standards of their people but also taking them several decades back. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are being destroyed while the morale of the surviving workers is being greatly undermined. Is it any wonder that many more managements are being confronted with the problem of employee commitment, motivation and productivity? Indeed, as the neo-liberal ideology takes more roots in the organizations of the Third World, the problem of declining productivity deepens. Third world governments and work organizations in the Third World find that they cannot eat their cake and have it; they find that the elegance of neo-liberalism does not deliver on the results and outcomes that are of most importance to them (Iyayi, 2000; Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2017).

In the case of Nigeria, for example, eight years of faithful and dogged adherence to neoliberal orthodoxy have produced more poverty, average life spans have decline from 51 years in 1999 to 43 years in 2005; health outcomes have worsened; primary and secondary school enrolment is in decline while crime and insecurity are on the increase (Akuh, 2016). This argument is still forceful today, average life spans have decline to 40 years, there is high the rate of unemployment and abject poverty and rising spate of conflicts across the length and breadth of the country, notably the marauding herdsmen militancy, the new face of militancy in the Niger Delta, the vociferous separatist agitations in the South-South and South-East, and the spate of kidnappings, armed robberies, abductions, and other forms of violent crimes, all of which are creating survival, stability and security challenges for the country.

In this process, many trade union leaders find themselves either helpless or willing, and therefore, active accomplices. These developments have had major consequences for productivity at the individual, organizational and societal level. This fact makes it more necessary that we have an understanding of the relationship between effective industrial relations and productivity. To understand this relationship, it is necessary however to first have an understanding of industrial relations that is different from that being popularized by a gloating capitalism in its current new state of globalization. The argument of this paper is that this approach is counter - productive because in practice, it has the potential of leading to more and

not less conflict between the employer and the employee. Fundamentally it has major consequences for productivity at the individual, organizational and societal level.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Industrial Relations: An Overview

Many of the discussants before us would have presented views on the essence of industrial relations. In order to show how our understanding differs from the conventional wisdom, we find it necessary to present what the essence of industrial relations is. Very simply, industrial relations is about the - struggle between employers and employees for control over work relations. Industrial relations is thus an area of practice that is characterized by struggle. This means that effectiveness in industrial relations or, of an industrial relations system will have different meanings for the different parties involved in industrial relations. For the employer, effectiveness means the ability of the employer to exercise unfettered control over workplace relations; the employer decides and the employees obey, or where they disagree, they must follow a procedure established by the employer to express and resolve disagreement. For the employee are represented by the union, the effectiveness of the industrial relations process consists in the degree to which the employees can exercise greater control over workplace relations— the decisions made about the conditions of work, level of wages, performance evaluation, nature and location of jobs, accumulation and disposal of the profits that accrue from his or her work; discretions that can be exercised at work, relations to the means of production, distribution and exchange, the role of the union and union leaders in the workplace, the power of the union and the application of that power.

Industrial relations practically involves the context in which rules promote relations in industry, taking into consideration the relative powers, needs and aspirations of the actors and how these affect socio-economic development of Nigeria. It can be conceded that the state of the economy of the country is far from being satisfactory and for there to be a change, all actors must give prominence to socio-economic development (Fashoyin, 1980). Though it is true that conflict is inevitable in all of these situations especially because of the divergent needs of the actors, the ultimate goal of industrial relations is to promote industrial peace and development in the system. From this point of view, industrial relations necessarily has different criteria for measuring effectiveness and what therefore, the essential requirements for raising

productivity are. In the final analysis, the crucial question is always productivity for whom?

In this presentation, we shall assume that both the employer and the employee are interested in raising productivity, even if it is for very different reasons. While the employer may be interested for reasons of increasing the rate and level of profit extraction, the employee may be interested simply for the reason of self actualization or as part of the unavoidable necessity of maintaining and perhaps enhancing a certain standard of living. The question that we shall then seek to answer will be: what needs to be obtaining in the industrial relations process and industrial disputes resolution system within organizations and institutions in capitalist society for the productivity of employees to be enhanced? From our experience, we believe that ten conditions need to be obtained. These are:

- 1** To discard the popular notion of industrial harmony and effective industrial relations.
- 2** To provide for workers as a group to exercise the right to organize in union.
- 3** To build the Hyde Park phenomenon into the industrial relations situation.
- 4** To do justice to the issues that is raised by workers as a result of their general and specific work experiences.
- 5** To link industrial relations issues synergistically with other HR and management issues in the organization.
- 6** To provide for the education of workers in a way that enables them to differentiate between the choices in the work environment and which choices coincide with the interests of workers as a group in the organization.
- 7** To challenge unions as representatives of workers to conduct themselves in the best traditions of union governance.
- 8** To ensure that management does not act by fiat or exercise unilateral power over issues that are central to the interests of workers.
- 9** To challenge management to act in its enlightened self-interest.
- 10** To manage effectively, the challenges in the external environment.

Now let us take each of these conditions one by one. In doing so however, we shall be more concerned with what the employer needs to do to ensure true industrial harmony and hence effective industrial relations and conflict management.

2.1.1. Discarding Popular Notions of Industrial Harmony and Effective Industrial Relations

Many employers and policy makers tend to believe that industrial harmony occurs only when there is an absence of substantive cases of industrial conflict. In the pursuit of this idea, employers deploy various tactics - denial of the right to workers to become members of or to establish trade unions, non-recognition of workers' unions even when they are established dismissal of union leaders, seizure of union dues, projection and promotion of particular employees to union leadership positions, blackmail of the union in the eyes and minds of the public – to ensure that there is industrial peace'. We find several examples of this orientation in the public service - from the level of the federal government to that of the local government. We also find it in all kinds of public sector organizations. These tactics may lead to a situation where workers find it impossible to express and act on their individual grievances and collective interests. Such a situation may indeed seem to be 'peaceful' and characterized by 'harmony'. The fact of the matter, however, is that conflict will be latent rather than manifest and thus have major negative implications for employee behaviour and productivity. To avoid these consequences, employers need to understand that industrial peace means creating an environment in which justice is the fundamental principle for organizing the relationships and interactions between the employer and the employee (Dunlop, 1958). It does not mean an absence of conflict but a process of resolving conflicts that does real justice to the claims of the contending parties.

2.1.2. Providing for Workers as a Group to Exercise the Right to Unionize

We are all aware of the situation where in the so-called new generation banks, it is forbidden for employees to unionize. Of course new generation banks are not alone in this odious practice. Many public sector organizations are to be found in their bad company. Some years ago, the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company declared the union there illegal and sacked all the leaders of the union. The Federal Government has also either banned or attempted to ban unions in several other public sector organizations over the years (Fatile, & Adekanbi, 2017). This practice has negative implications for productivity. First, in adopting this approach, such organizations and government flagrantly abuse the rights of employees as Nigerian citizens to freedom of assembly, association, expression and organization guaranteed under the Nigerian Constitution and relevant labour laws, International Labour

Standards and Conventions. Secondly, since it denies the right of workers to solidarism on the basis of the common, work-determined identity, it also has implications for the development of team work and team spirit so vital in today's increasing competitive world. Thirdly, it creates the need for workers to establish out-of-work context groups that promote interests that may undermine workplace relations and productivity. To obviate these and other negative consequences it is clear that one essential requirement for enhancing productivity is to ensure that employees exercise the right to unionize. Indeed, management and unions have a responsibility for ensuring that this happens.

2.1.3. Building the Hyde Park Phenomenon into the Industrial Relations Situation

Hyde Park is a specially designated place in London, England, where anyone can go and express his or her views on any matter under the sun without the fear of arrest, intimidation or being sanctioned. At Hyde Park, the individual can criticize any other individual, government policy, head of state and even God. Every speaker at Hyde Park attracts an audience that listens and applauds or disagrees. In industrial relations, the Hyde Park phenomenon consists of creating space within organizations for the airing of any and all grievances by employees. It requires the organization as a matter of principle to recognize the right not only to dissent but also to the expression of such dissent, disagreement or conflict by employees. That requirement implies among other things that there must be tolerance within the organization for dissenting voices both within employees and management as distinct social groups, that there exists a vibrant grievance handling system and those union leaders are not perceived as enemies or rebels or in the new neo liberal language as terrorists within the organization. In 'Made in Japan' Akio Morita and former President of Sony corporation tells us that in Japan, union leaders are very often promoted to management positions because holding an elective union office shows clearly that the individual has demonstrable leadership qualities. The idea of promoting union leaders is not to bribe the union leaders or decimate the ranks of union but to encourage the union to throw up more leaders. Such an orientation pays off because it implicitly recognizes union work, union positions as effective, valid and necessary for the growth of the organization.

2.1.4. Doing Justice to the Issues that are raised by Workers

An effective industrial relations situation must ensure that actions are taken that substantially address the issues that are raised by workers and their organizations. It is one thing for workers to be able to express their grievances; it is quite another thing for these grievances to be addressed in a manner that removes the source of the grievances. Doing justice to the issues raised by workers means that:

- i.** There must be discussions and negotiation over the issues so that agreements are reached on how the issues are to be resolved.
- ii.** The discussions must be conducted expeditiously, as soon as the issues arise.
- iii.** The agreements reached must be implemented in accordance with the terms and conditions stated in the agreement.

In effect, the industrial relations process must have integrity. The consequences of lack of integrity in the industrial relations process can be seen in the relationship between the Buhari's regime on the one hand and the NLC and ASUU on the other. Example is the last year minimum wage saga and till now federal government is yet to implement the new minimum wage.

2.1.5. Linking Industrial Relations Issues Synergistically to Other HR and Management Systems and Processes in the Organization

The industrial relations system does not stand alone; rather its character is determined by the surrounding environment of HR and management systems and processes. Very often, it is the operations of these systems and processes that give rise to the issues with which industrial relations is concerned. Therefore these systems and processes must function effectively for the industrial relations system to function effectively. Of particular importance in this regard are the following HR management systems and processes:

- a.** The appraisal systems and the decisions to which the system gives rise such as promotion, pay increases, new job assignments, training and development, etc.;
- b.** Disciplinary procedures and processes;
- c.** Training and development;
- d.** Recruitment, selection and placement;
- e.** Change management;
- f.** Succession planning and career management;
- g.** Pensions management.

2.1.6. Providing for the Education of Workers

Very often, employers labour under the false impression that it is better to have an uneducated and uninformed union leadership than an educated and informed one. The truth of the matter is that education and information make it easier to conduct relations between parties (Oshabiya, 2015). Thus, it is essential that management provide for the education of workers and their leaders in ways that will enhance their effectiveness as workers' organizations. Towards this end, workers leaders' need to be equipped with:

1. Knowledge of industrial relations generally;
2. Knowledge of and skills in conflict management;
3. Negotiation skills;
4. Communication skills.

2.1.7. Challenging Unions to Conduct their Affairs in the Best Tradition of Union Governance

Many employers believe that a compromised union leadership is better than a leadership that has integrity. For this reason, they seek to bribe union leaders and project those workers who can be counted upon to toe the management line to union leadership positions. Many union leaders also tend to believe that it is better to keep their members uninformed so that they can relate with employers in any way that they choose. Whether from the ranks of management or union leaders themselves, the position, is not only opportunistic; it is counterproductive. Such a strategy may weaken the union but a weak union is also a divided union. And a divided union is not only an unstable union; it is fertile grounds for wildcat action. It is also a fertile grounds for general discontent, a discontent that can affect attitudes and hence performance. It is thus important, if these consequences are to be avoided, that management challenges and union leaders challenge themselves to conduct the affairs of the union in the best tradition of union governance. The elements of this tradition include the following:

- i. Internal democracy;
- ii. Integrity and accountability on the part of union leaders;
- iii. Conducting union work from the perspective of the working class;
- iv. Abiding by the principle of working class solidarity.

2.1.8. Avoiding Rule by Fiat on the Part of the Employer

If many employers believe that they can do as they please in the industrial relations situation, then all levels of government believes that they can get away with anything in the industrial relations situation. This accounts for the several, seemingly inexplicable actions that they very often engage in. Let us take the level of state governments. State governments, as employers have been known unilaterally to:

- a. Cut and seize workers salaries;
- b. Dismiss or retire prematurely large numbers of workers from their jobs;
- c. Change industrial laws or act in defiance of those laws (for example, change the retirement age of workers);
- d. Delay or refuse to pay workers' salaries;
- e. Reduce or abrogate certain fringe benefits that apply to workers;
- f. Use the regular courts, the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) and the National Industrial court (NIC) to legitimize illegal actions or force illegal and unpopular decisions on workers (as in the premeditated dismissal of workers, asking workers to suspend industrial action while the problems that led to the industrial action remain unresolved, stopping union elections as in the NLC elections in 1987 in Benin, etc).

All these and other actions are counterproductive because they lead to workers' alienation and demoralization. They also indicate to workers that the reward for commitment and loyalty could be sudden dismissal or retirement (Nwokocha, 2015). For example, many observers have noted that the Murtala and Obasanjo purge of the civil public service in the mid-80's is what created the subsequent work ethics of corruption, lack of dedication, inefficiency, ineffectiveness, lack of accountability and other ills that currently plague the public and civil service system. These ills are deepening today in the light of the current onslaught of the Buhari's government against the Nigerian people.

2.1.9. Challenging Management to Act in its Enlightened Self-Interest

An effective industrial relations system, particularly from the point of view of protecting the interests of management, is one that challenges management to act in its enlightened self-interest. Indeed, everything we have said so far has been to challenge management to act in its enlightened self-interest. More specifically, acting in its enlightened self-interest requires management to:

1. Act objectively in dealing with workers and their unions. Management must not become emotionally involved in the prosecution of all or particular cases of disputes with the union. The case of the relationship between management and the union in a federal government owned teaching hospital provides an illustrative example of this problem. The emotional involvement of management in prosecuting its case against the leadership of the union led to the mutual destruction of both parties and serious performance problems in the hospital.

2. Promote a family-like feeling in the organization; a feeling that management and employees share the same fate. This feeling has to be promoted and reinforced by management action and behaviour. Thus management must:

- i. Avoid using double or multiple standards in dealing with employees.
- ii. Demonstrate integrity and accountability in financial and other matters.
- iii. Flatten the hierarchy in order to reduce status and other social distinctions between workers and managers.
- iv. Promote merit as the basis of attaining rewards in the organization.
- v. Genuinely empower workers to perform by (1) providing them with the skills to perform, (2) giving them opportunities to apply those skills, (3) providing them with materials and equipment to showcase their competence, (4) granting them sufficient authority to make use of resources and take decisions and (5) rewarding employees adequately for competent performance.
- vi. Operate with a sense of justice. This means that management must not seek to take advantage of unjust, punitive and obnoxious labour laws or seek to avoid abiding by laws which recognize the rights of workers.
- vii. Must seek to pay wages and salaries regularly. There can be no excuse for withholding the wages of workers.
- viii. Pay the union its check-off dues.

2.1.10. Managing Environmental Demands

Industrial relations practices do not occur in vacuum; rather they take place in a larger environment that tends to shape the action and behaviour of the parties. Given the fact that there are different levels of industrial relations, (enterprise, industry, national, and international), the higher level often serves as the external environment for the lower level. In this regard therefore, industrial relations at the enterprise level is shaped by developments at the other levels. These developments need to be managed adequately for industrial relations to produce the desired results. Today,

the major development at the International level is the new stage of capitalist globalization. Capitalist globalization has produced mountains of wealth in one part of the world and bottomless misery in the other part of the world. As the UNDP Human Development Report documented in 2003 cited in Molwus, Ewuga, and Orih, (2016):

Human development challenges remain large in the new millennium. Across the world, we see unacceptable levels of deprivation in peoples' lives. Of the 4.6 billion people in developing countries, more than 850 million are illiterate, nearly a billion lack access to improved water resources, and 2.4 billion lack access to basic sanitation. Nearly 325 million boys and girls are out of school And 11 million children under age 5 die each year from preventable causes — equivalent to 30, 000 a day. Around 1.2billion people live on less than \$1.00 a day and 2.8 billion live on less than \$2.00 a day'. While East Asia and the Pacific 'made rapid, sustained progress In most areas, from expanding knowledge to raising standards of living the situation in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa is very different with these areas 'lagging far behind other regions with human and income poverty, still high. The adult literacy rate in Sub-Saharan Africa is 60%, well below the developing country average of 73%. Life expectancy at birth in Sub-Saharan Africa is 48.8 years, compared with more than 60 in other regions of the world. And the share of people living on less than \$1.00 a day is as high as 46% in Sub-Saharan Africa compared to 40% in South Asia and 15% in East Asia and the Pacific and in Latin America.'

The report on the Human Development Index for Nigeria in 2001 indicates that the country ranks number 151 out of the 174 countries in the world. The first 21 countries are in the advanced capitalist world. Without any known natural or mineral resources, Cuba ranks number 56; well ahead of Brazil, (74) and the Russian Federation of Gorbachev and Yeltsin (62). All the underdeveloped countries are to be found at the bottom of the table. All the 85 countries listed in the Human Poverty Index belong to the underdeveloped parts of the world with Nigeria occupying the 62nd position. The statistics for Nigeria in 2001 are indeed frightening:

- a)** a. Life expectancy at birth is 50 years for a Nigerian (49 for a man and 51 for a woman) compared to 77 years for those living in OECD countries and Cuba;
- b)** b. 33.3 percent of Nigerians wilt not lives to 40 years of age;
- c)** c. 52.2 percent of Nigerians will not live to be sixty years old;
- d)** d. the poorest 20 percent of Nigeria's population have access to only 4.4 percent of the incomes earned in Nigeria whereas the richest 20 percent of the population are in control of 58 percent of the nation's wealth;

- e) e. 70.2 percent of the population lives below the poverty line of at least US\$1.00 per day;
- f) In 1995, our external debts accounted for 79 percent of the Gross National Product;
- g) In 1997, 1.5 million people under age 49 were diagnosed with HP//AIDS in all the OECD countries put together; the corresponding figure for Nigeria alone stood at 2.3 million. The rate of HIV infection in any given country is closely related to the level of poverty in that country.

Workers and their families belong to the poorest section of Nigeria's population. Moreover, all members of the trade unions in Nigeria are connected in one way or another to the poorest sections of the Nigerian nation. Thus they experience more directly the consequences of human poverty, one of the results of globalization. The comments of Ambassador Fafowora (2002:34) on the level of poverty in Nigeria are worth quoting at length. This is what he said:

“But how really poor are Nigerians? And what do we mean by the term mass poverty? In 1980, Nigeria was ranked 35th in the world by the World Bank as a middle income country, with a per capita income of nearly \$1, 000 per annum at the prevailing exchange rate of \$2 to the Naira. At today's exchange rate, this will be about N130, 000 per annum. By 1996, the World Bank report showed that Nigeria had dropped to the 13th poorest country in the world, with a per capita income of less than \$300 per annum or N35, 000.00 per annum at today's exchange rate. In real terms, this means that the condition of Nigerians is three times that worse than it was just thirty years ago. In 1988 FOS data showed that Nigeria's poverty level was 28.1 percent. By 1996, the poverty level was 65.6 percent or 67 million people. On a comparative basis, Nigeria is today poorer than virtually all our neighbours. Ghana is ranked 33rd with a per capita income of \$410. Togo is ranked 25th with a per capita income of \$320, while Benin is ranked 30th with a per capita income of \$370. Cameroon is ranked 47th with a per capita income of \$680, more than twice the per capita income of Nigeria”.

Iwayemi, 2002 cited in Iheama (2000) has similarly noted that:

‘A second characteristic of failed development In Nigeria is the dramatic upsurge of poverty in the last decade in Nigeria. This is evident from the fact that two out of every three Nigerians are now classified as poor (FOS, 1999) compared to one in every three in the 1990s’.

The interesting and fundamental observation that must be made about the worsening poverty in Nigeria is that it coincides with the advent of the so called new democratic government in Nigeria. The coincidence is not accidental. It reflects a relationship that is consciously developed and sustained by the centres of globalization with the active connivance and conspiracy of the ruling elite in Nigeria. Nigeria's ruling elite have worked to ensure that economic and political decisions favour the interests of members of the elite and those of international capital. The ruling elite have thus created an environment that is extremely hostile to productivity and effective industrial relations (Olukayode, 2015). Writing in the Vanguard of June 9th 2004 in reaction to the NLC strike over the latest round of Obasanjo / World Bank inspired fuel price increases, Bamidele Aturu of the United Action for Democracy (UAD) observed that since the year 2003 when the UAD launched the massive campaign for the resignation of the Obasanjo government, nothing has happened to alter our resolve. Rather, developments in the country continue to affirm the validity of our position that only the removal of this government through a programme of mass democratic action can provide a basis to end the orgy of misrule and willful infliction of hardship on the people. Decadence and degradation characterize every aspect and sphere of our national life-economic, social and political. A cloud of gloom and apprehension continues to envelop the land. The Incompetence, insensitivity and despotic arrogance of the government have become legendary. In the face of grave national problems, as has its woeful inability to provide workable solutions to the myriad of problems that currently riddle our society. More worrisome is the current orgy of misrule and willful infliction of hardship on the Nigerians under this present dispensation.

Indeed, the degree of rot in the polity is such that unless something decisive is done now to 'arrest the drift, the country would appear inexorably headed for anarchy and ruin. While the people buckle under the yoke of economic deprivation, Joblessness and all forms of social injustice and malaise, principal actors in all strata of government continue to display obscene opulence and grandeur, a feat made possible by blatant and unabashed looting of the public treasury. It is in the light of the foregoing that we see the latest increase in the price of fuel. We are all aware of the fact that Nigeria has profited hugely from the sale of crude oil. As at the last check, the country had realized about N175.5 trillion from this source alone. Only a sense of sadism and unthinking profligacy can explain the exorbitant price increase of fuel to N150 per liters given the prevailing harsh living conditions.

A bad and an anti — people government cannot enunciate policies that will make for industrial harmony in the industrial relations system. It is for this reason that no matter what individual employers do, productivity cannot increase significantly at the enterprise level. In the case of the public service, it is hoping against hope to expect that productivity will increase in such an atmosphere (Mukoro, 2020). To increase productivity, it is obvious that both employers and workers must take actions to ensure that the bad government is removed.

3. Conclusions

Developments in the national economy in recent years have showed clearly that the proper management of industrial relations and industrial system is a fundamental requirement for enhancing the performance of the national economy. Irrespective of what the conservative, liberal, and neo-liberal writers may want we to believe about industrial relations the fact remain that it is an area of practice that deals with the struggle between employers and workers for control over workplace relations. In this struggle, government is either an employer or on the side of the employer or both. Marx and Engels cited in Omole, (1999) noted that in all previous societies leading up to and including capitalism, the struggle either led to the mutual ruin of the contending parties or the victory of one of the parties. In capitalist society, the employer is for a time, the victorious party. However, this victory is often tenuous and under constant challenge. The more conscious employers recognize this and therefore adopt a code of conduct in industrial relations that is meant to hide the essence of the fundamental conflict of interests between the employer and the worker. In capitalist society, therefore, the effectiveness of an industrial relations system depends on the degree to which the self-enlightened practices of the employer actually lead to a true masking of the true relationship between employer and the worker- so much so that the worker may even come to identify with the aspirations and goals of the employer. It is however a relationship that is always based on a lie. The more effective relationship would be one that frees both the employer and the worker from the restraints and constraints that this lie imposes. Such a relationship can only be constructed out of the abolition of exploitation and therefore out of a change in the system of production, distribution and exchange relationships that characterize capitalism.

We are aware of the current posturing of neo-liberalism, the official ideology of capitalism in its new stage of globalization. That posturing suggests that capitalist production relations and hence society are the end of man. That posturing has also

pronounced the death of socialism, of any society that takes from each according to his/her abilities and gives to each according to his/her needs or that believes in the essence of the individual as being naturally good rather than greedy and evil. That posturing has a history that goes back to the pre-capitalist era.

It is thus that feudalism pronounced the death of capitalism, which was then seeking to overthrow it. We know that capitalism triumphed in much the same way that feudalism triumphed over the earlier modes of production. From 1450 onwards when the triangular trade in slaves emerged, capitalism also pronounced that the trade would go on forever. When the slave trade came to an end and colonialism replaced it, capitalism again pronounced that colonies would remain for imperialist countries to plunder forever. We now know that formal colonialism was also forced to close down all around the world, today, the era of neo-colonialism and global imperialism led by the US is making the same familiar noises. Indeed, when socialism first emerged and was defeated in the Paris communes in 1870, capitalism washed its hands and declared an end to the matter. We are therefore not surprised by the current claims. What needs to be done however is for all working class people and organizations to commit themselves to the construction of a just social order. In the Nigerian situation, that commitment means that workers as a class and all working class organizations must insert themselves into the struggle for political power so that they can construct and sustain a just, humane and equitable social order. Effective industrial relations and high productivity can only be guaranteed on the basis of the success of that struggle.

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