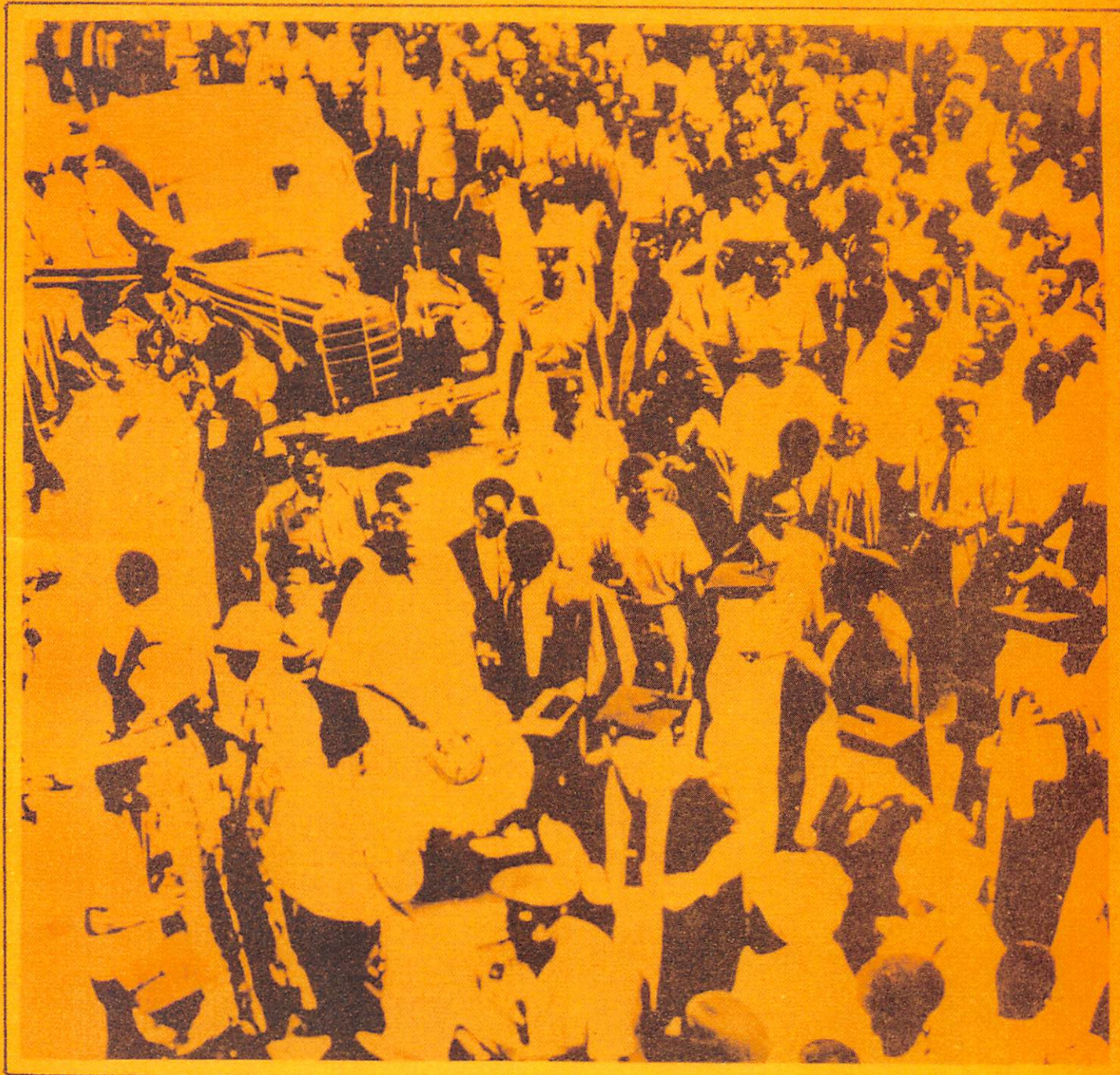


IBADAN VOICES

Edited by **T.N. Tamuno**



Ibadan University
in
Transition

REMINISCENCES OF AN IBADAN STUDENT LEADER

LEROY EDOZIEN

At the time I became a University of Ibadan student in October 1974, the University community's heartbeat was easily palpable. The effervescence generated by the 1973 Silver Jubilee apparently had not quite died down; Student Union activities were at a boisterous level, and a hike in student population had its own dynamic effect. Also, there were excitatory extra-university influences such as the Udoji award and the growing disenchantment with the government.

Those freshmen who expected to meet a community engrossed in the serious, quiet business of academics must have been taken aback. Drum-beating, gong-clanging groups of campaigners jogged and danced between cafeterias and halls of residence. The halls were bedecked with posters, and cafeteria tables plastered with bills proclaiming this message or announcing that event. The lecture theatres were crammed with numbers too large for quietude. No, this community was too vibrant to be your stereotype Ivory Tower.

The rumbustious campaigns for the impending Students' Union elections contributed in no small measure towards this dynamism. The Union had been in difficulties the previous session; there had been a clash with the Police during Adekunle Adepeju memorial activities; then, there had been a financial scandal involving some officers of the Union. But there were other factors that stimulated interest in the 1974 campaigns; like the keenness of the contests for the post of President and Public Relations Officer. The contest between John Nwodo and Banji Adegboro for the presidency must go down in the history of student unionism at Ibadan as one of the fiercest. One candidate was an eminently eloquent, ideologically right-of-centre gentleman whose greatest asset was his charisma; the other was an acknowledged radical, more of a jihadist than a poet. At the end of the day it was Nwodo who smiled.

The presidential battle may have been the most gruelling, but the contest for PRO (sometimes given the sobriquet 'Pure Aro') won the accolades for sing-

song. Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe's supporters were all over the place, chanting 'Ekwe-Ekwe, PRO! Ekwe-Ekwe, PRO!...' Victor Osarenren's inability to neutralize this sing-song was his undoing.

The student intake in 1974 as well as 1975 was far above the optimum dictated by available facilities. It was understood that the University had no choice in this matter since government's directives had to be followed. To worsen matters, there was mass migration of students from Jos Campus to Ibadan in the 1975-76 session.¹ Declining the invitation to be pioneers of the University of Jos, the students moved *en masse* to Ibadan and compelled the University to treat them as her legitimate children. With the rise in student population, facilities were stretched beyond their limits. As halls of residence brimmed over, the scenic landscape had to give way to less attractive but more exigent wooden structures tagged 'prefabs'. These buildings were veritable ovens until fans were installed in them. In Nnamdi Azikiwe and Independence Halls, they were nicknamed 'boys' quarters'. The wooden extensions to Queen Elizabeth Hall had more glamorous names: the buildings opposite the University Bookshop were called 'Hollywood' while the newer ones along Jaja Avenue were called 'Woodstock'; but to many students 'Woodstock' was too beautiful a name for these sheds, so they called them 'Poultry' after all, they contained 'chics'! The accommodation problem from early 1976 compelled the University, for the first time since it moved out of its Eleiyele temporary campus in 1952, to board students in rented quarters. The hired two-storey complex opposite the University's second gate on Oyo Road was annexed to Sultan Bello Hall. Classrooms and lecture-theatres too were overcrowded. Students had to perch on windows to receive lectures in theatres that were packed sardine-style.

In spite of the inconveniences arising from inadequate facilities, there was no inclination towards violent student protest against local conditions. Perhaps, one reason for this was that there was enough at the national level to command the critical attention of students. In the last year or two of Yakubu Gowon's government, students seemed to be the only section of the society who could freely raise a dissenting voice. It became our lot to agitate for the release from detention of citizens who were labelled 'security risks' by government. This agitation must have pinched vested interests strongly in a few high places. Tai Solarin appreciated that and paid a 'thank-you' visit to the University immediately upon his release from detention. I remember being woken up at about 1 a.m. the night Tai

¹ Students at the Jos Campus demonstrated at Ibadan on 2-7 March, 1976 to press the case for their return to Ibadan when Jos became a University. After discussions with the Vice-Chancellors of Ibadan and Jos and the NUC they were allowed to choose between Ibadan and Jos degrees.

Solarin the activist,² was led to Independence Hall by a large crowd. Gaunt from deprivation, weary from late-night calls at other halls, he had lost his voice and could hardly say more than 'thank you all' when he mounted a dining-hall table.

Social Life

Money wasn't too much of a problem for university students between 1974 and 1978. First, students benefited from the easy circulation of naira that came after 'Udoji'. Then, there was the Student Loans Scheme financed by the Federal Government. Under this scheme, students obtained loans of up to ₦500 per academic year. At times, when arrears were paid some students found themselves ₦1,000 wet—in those days, enough to keep one gliding in euphoric clouds for a pretty long time.

In the circumstances, 'washing' ceremonies were held every other day to 'launch' new stereo equipment or motor-bikes. Night clubs like Chrisbo, Yesmina, Safari and Grand Stand Hotel (better known to regular student clientele as 'Headquarters' 'HQ') were lavishly patronised by Uites. By 1976 motor-bike racing was a craze. Heavy-duty motor-bikes were the in-thing. The lit stretch between Kuti Hall and the Pro-Chancellor's Lodge became a track for night races and acrobatics on motorcycles. Races were also reported to have been held on the Ibadan-Ife highway, students from our sister universities joining in. It was in one race from a cinema-house in town back to the University campus that a female student of Ibadan Polytechnic fell off the back seat of a bike and lost her life.

The heavy pockets of students as well as the increase in student population must account for the mushrooming of social clubs and societies during this period. In addition to such established and registered clubs as Sigma Club, Kegites (Palmwine Drinkards) Club, Club 41, Pyrates Confraternity and Embasie Club, there were infantile unregistered clubs which curiously had such bizarre names as Voodoo, Mad, Wee and Experience. Almost all of these clubs were exclusively for male students and I often speculated on why our female colleagues didn't come up with a counterpoint, even if only to square up to male-chauvinism.

Sigma Club had a highly successful HAVANA NITE carnival in 1975. This too could be attributed to the Udoji hangover, although the bandstand was itself crowd-pulling. At 2 a.m. that night, tickets were still being sold and the queue of ticket-in-hand patrons extended from Trenchard Hall to Kuti Hall! When at 6 a.m. Fela Ransome-Kuti and his Africa 70 Band decided to wind up their performance, fans wouldn't let him. This led to a melee in which chairs and bottles

² A fearless social critic who also, for some years in the mid-70s, served as Public Complaints Commissioner for the Oyo, Ogun and Ondo States with the Commission's headquarters at Ibadan.

were freely used. Trenchard Hall lost virtually all its panes while the University Tower Court gained a carpet of glass pellets. The then Acting Vice-Chancellor was stunned when he saw the scene later that morning. Subsequently, moves were made at Senate level to ban the annual carnival. This, however, was forestalled by a powerful counter-lobby.

Social life on campus at that time was profoundly influenced by the *Bug*, a fast-selling pamphlet that revelled in gossip and bit as painfully as its name suggested. 'Make them cry, make them laugh, make them think' was its motto, and it did just that. Penned in off-beat prose, it was caustically droll in its cartooning, vitriolic in its criticism of social deviants and melodramatic in its propagation of gossip and jest. Its front-cover clearly warned that 'all characters in this publication are fictitious' and use was made of coded names and addresses, but it wasn't difficult identifying who was concerned. *Bug's* Judge Oroko of Cage 5A, Gworo territory was identified as George Okoro of Room A5, Sultan Bello Hall. Where else but in the *Bug* could one read lambasting reports on the freshman who wore his matriculation gown to Dugbe market, about girls who wouldn't sit as ladies should, about lecturers who compromise principles in affairs with their female students; where else could one find tell-tale cartoons of couples who extended bedroom activities to holy grounds, uncompleted buildings and not-too graceful nooks; or read more comic condemnation of 'inadvertent' stealing of meat from refrigerators, and undies from laundrylines in Queen Elizabeth Hall:

The *Bug* couldn't have published the way it did without generating controversy. It was not unusual for the table of the Student Affairs Officer to be flooded with petitions soon after an issue of the *Bug*. As Chairman of the Press Club in 1975, I was a number of times faced with testy situations arising from vexatious *Bug* publications. On one occasion, a 'bugged' female student travelled all the way to a distant station and returned with her fuming husband, but I managed to defuse tension.

Halls of Residence

The off-campus system was continuing when I entered the University; Students were required to spend one year living out of campus. Many 'off-campites' lived at Agbowo village, just opposite the University, but a good number squatted with friends in on-campus halls of residence.

Each hall had its own culture but the halls were broadly classified into two groups: Independence and Nnamdi Azikiwe were the radical halls: noisy, restless and manifesting a streak of the unpolished. Then, there were the relatively small, conservative, quiet halls: namely, Mellanby, Tedder, Kuti, and Sultan Bello Halls.

The existence of these halls dates back to the days when the institution was a University College and this was reflected in their architecture as well as location. For this reason those of us in the newer halls often referred to them as being located in 'UCI'.

Whenever there was need to mobilize students, Nnamdi Azikiwe Hall was the first port of call. It used to be said jokingly that 'Zikites' were under the inductive influence of the nearby zoo. Another joke was that Zik Hall was a 'sick' hall. Of course, female students were more at home in the gentlemen's UCI halls than in the dreaded Zik Hall.

Hall spirit was high, especially in the 'radical' halls. In 1975, the final of the inter-hall soccer competition was stalemated on account of haywire hall solidarity. The match was to have been played between Independence Hall and Nnamdi Hall, but Mellanby Hall students, protesting against the handling of their semi-final match against Zik Hall, shed their traditional gentleman cloak, sat on the pitch and wouldn't let the match be played. An hour's pleading didn't move the Mellanbites; so the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor V. Oyenuga, who was Guest-of-Honour, decided to leave. But as the trophy was being taken into a waiting car, an unknown student ran up to the porter and snatched the silver cup. A struggle for the cup ensued between Zikites, Mellanbites, and Independites, each side determined that the coveted prize should sleep in its premises that night. When the stampede was over separate groups went home with different pieces of a mutilated cup.

The fisticuffs over custody of the cup were only an extension of the 'war' between Nnamdi Azikiwe and Independence Halls. The previous night, a teeming band of Independites had invaded Zik Hall carrying a mock coffin and chanting war songs. It later moved to other halls singing its opponents' *nunc dimitis*. Zikites were stung by the effrontery of Independites. How could the great Zik Hall be subjected to such stinging indignity? Before Independites knew it Zikites had reciprocated the siege.

Cafeteria System

Each hall of residence used to have its own dining hall, but after the 1971 student crisis the pay-as-you-eat system was introduced and feeding centres were limited to Mellanby, Kuti, Tafawa Balewa (postgraduate) and Azikiwe Halls. Mellanby Cafeteria, being closest to Queen's Hall, drew more female students than other cafes put together. So, male students from distant halls used to go there primarily for the purpose of 'shadowing'. It seemed to be the major starting point for the 'October Rush'. Those who were involved in the game would remember the table christened 'West End' where keen gents ran commentaries on who-was-who

and who-was-doing-what. Kuti Hall cafeteria was hailed for the generosity of its stewards ('Kuti for Quantity').

In 1976, the Central Cafeteria was commissioned and cafeterias in Mellanby and Kuti Halls were closed down. The new cafeteria was 'ultra-modern' but it wasn't possible to use it the way the planners had intended it to be used. Witness the inability of the ultra-modern washing machines in the Cafeteria to dissolve *amala* paste³ off plates and cutlery. The quality of food offered by the cafeteria was low and rather than mitigate the problem of congestion it worsened it. For these reasons there was a sharp decline in the use of the cafeteria by female students, most preferred to cook their own food. The Central Cafeteria was nicknamed 'Angola' after the then troubled country.

It was congestion in the existing cafeterias that motivated the Administrator-General of Independence Hall, Tony Chiaghalam, to mount a spirited campaign in 1975/76 for the reopening of his hall's cafeteria. The University authorities, citing logistics, were initially reluctant to grant this request, but by 1977 the need had become imperative, and the cafeteria was reopened.

In 1974/75, we paid 20 kobo for breakfast and 25 kobo for lunch and supper. Later, this was reduced to 10k for breakfast, 20k for lunch and supper; but in 1978 the costs were hiked to 50k a meal, a twist that led to nationwide student unrest. The increase in costs was accompanied by a decrease in quality; such items as jelly, fruits, ice cream, and margarine, took leave of the menu and have since not returned.

There is an argument that runs thus: student feeding enjoys about 100% Federal Government subsidy. This means that what the students pay 50k for actually costs ₦1 or more (during mid-semester breaks students are asked to eat at ₦1.50 a meal). How about paying out this subsidy to the student and then charging economic rates at the cafeterias? The student would then have a choice between accepting what the cafeterias have to offer and going elsewhere. As a corollary, contractors could be invited to run the cafeterias. If this system were to be adopted, the catering services would be faced with the challenge of either providing attractive services or folding up. My friend, Balogun Chike-Obi, once put this idea across to a principal officer of the University but nothing came out of it.

For a long time, after catering services in some halls were terminated, the dining halls were in disuse. Professor Tamuno observed this when he visited the halls shortly after assuming office as Vice-Chancellor, and directed that these halls be converted into common rooms. Those of Tedder, Mellanby and Sultan Bello Halls now also serve as venues for wedding receptions.

³ A local yam-flour meal.

Nwodo Must Go

John Nnia Nwodo had a rough tenure as President of the Students' Union in the 1974/75 academic year. In February 1975, the University along with a couple of other Nigerian universities was closed down following violent student agitation for the release of political detainees, free medical services, free education at all levels, and some other demands.

But it was not the national problems that caused Nwodo's headache. It was a local campaign of calumny orchestrated by petulant pseudo-radicals who were discomfited by either the President's ethnic denomination or his ideological focus, or both. The leftist camp did not take its defeat at the polls in good faith. It constituted itself into an opposition party of sorts whose aim was to villify the president and bamboozle him out of office. It spoke highly of Nwodo's courage that he stood firmly against the daring assault of this embittered group. On several occasions, his life was imperilled. There were times when cudgel-wielding, frenzied mobs invaded the Adekunle Adepeju Memorial (Students' Union) Building searching for an elusive Nwodo. On one such occasion, a mob barged into a Sigma Club meeting, vainly hoping to pick up Nwodo who was also Sigma Chief Scribe. There was another occasion when an attempt was made to lure him from his room at 2 a.m.

The atmosphere for the better part of that session was charged with cries of 'Nwodo must go'. Today, an inscription of that slogan remains legible on a panel in the Students' Union Chamber.

But what was Nwodo's crime? Ostensibly, the charge was that his Executive was a non-starter, but there was little doubt that his critics were motivated by less uplifting factors than desire for dynamic leadership. It didn't need ingenuity to discern the inverse relationship between the decibel level of protesting 'radicals' and the breath of their ideological vision. Nor were their more primitive sentiments and propensities thickly veiled. The President's 'crime' was simply that he did not belong to the 'right' group.

Nwodo had more to contend with beyond the acrimonious campaign by the Black Nationalist Movement and related gangs. His Executive Council was rent by internal sabotage. There was no acceptance of collective responsibility; rather, there were cliques as well as irreconcilable clashes of interest.

Nwodo was, indeed, a man more of rhetoric than of action, but there hardly was anything he could have done in the face of bickering within his team and acrimony outside it. His situation was not helped by the premature resignation of the PRO: Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe. The PRO resigned on the grounds that he could no longer function within a dismembered Executive, but his associates thought his real motives were not unconnected with academics. To the generality, his

resignation was an act of cowardice, and Ekwe-Ekwe was reported to have gone into hiding after his resignation, anticipating the fury of those who would have liked to teach him a lesson or two in ruggedness.

Nwodo was lucky to have the Treasurer, George Owarieta, on his side and he exploited this allegiance, starving rebellious executives of funds. He also benefited from Sigma Club ties with two other members of the Executive who from time to time played the role of fifth columnists in opposing cliques.

The relationship between Nwodo and the Secretary, Lanre Dada, was particularly sour. Dada himself got into trouble with the student body a number of times—like when his office issued to students Lecture Time-Table cards bearing a J. Lanre Dada quotation 'All Scholastic Knowledge is barren unless it makes men more materially productive, morally upright and more socially elevated.' In other years these cards carried quotations from such philosophers as Thomas Watson, Benjamin Disraeli, Kwame Nkrumah. Students viewed Dada as peevish and self-conceited and rained a hail of critical releases on him. One release allowed that 'Dada's notion of scholastic knowledge was too materialistic. . . ' while another charged him with a 'desideratum of basic intellectual humility.'

In spite of everything, Nwodo completed his full term of office. The last paragraph in his valedictory statement to students was a humorous 'At last Nwodo must go!'

'The Dawn of a New Era in Student Unionism'

One of the lesser acclaimed developments of the Nwodo era was the great interest generated in student unionism. By the third term of the 1974/75 session 'underground' campaigns by aspirants to Union posts had started. The first step towards a successful campaign was to get known well in advance. And the easiest way of achieving this was by issuing regular releases; the more pungent these were, the better. The Students' Union butterfly was a meeting point for political aspirants. Political debates were held over cans of liquor (that was the time when our country was a dumping-ground for assorted brands of canned drinks) and by the end of the session clear images of who-was-to-meet-whom in the next Union elections had emerged.

I returned to the campus for the 1975/76 session fully prepared for the battle for the post of Public Relations Officer of the Union. My publicity machinery for the election was vigorous and effective, and before polling day there was clear indication which candidate would step into the PRO'S office. In the last days of the campaigns my election team was heralded with shouts of 'You have won!' I remember with glee the night I was swept shoulder-high off a Mellanby Hall cafeteria table by a lion-hearted Obelagu Agu.

Election 'bombs' were usually anticipated on the eve of D-Day; so, when an eleventh hour release bearing fictitious signatures speculated that since I was a JFK Scholar I may well be a CIA agent, I wasn't caught unawares.

One of the highlights of the elections that year was the re-emergence of Banji Adegboro.⁴ After losing to Nwodo the previous year, Adegboro settled for the post of Administrator-General of Independence Hall. Later, he contested for but lost the presidency of the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS). But in the 1975 University of Ibadan Students' Union elections he beat three other contestants to become President.

The Black Nationalist Movement (BNM), a body that was long on propaganda and slogan but short on articulate blueprint for national rebirth, was active in the politics of 1974-76. All but one member of the 1975/76 Union executive contested the elections with the support of BNM. The sole exclusion was Leroy Edozien (PRO). Other members of the executive were Banji Adegboro (President), Akin Adesokan (Vice-President), Foluso Ayo Adedigba (Secretary), Bolaji Ogunjobi (Assistant Secretary), Tayo Fatunde (Treasurer), Edward Aina (House Secretary) and Dayo Adeleke (Sports Secretary).

My friends saw a number of apparent incompatibilities and believed that working in that Executive would be an uphill task for me. The BNM expected that I would resign in frustration. How wrong they all turned out to be. I enjoyed my tenure of office and worked arduously. The Executive christened its term 'the dawn of a new era in students' unionism'. Adegboro assumed office with zeal and tried to maintain a high tempo throughout his stay in office. His missionary zeal was, in part, inspired by the dynamism which Murtala Muhammed injected into the national psyche. Under Adegboro's leadership, students identified more with the Union and Adekunle Adepeju Building became a beehive. It was somewhat ironical that the same dynamism which revitalized student unionism also brought it a devastating blow.

Retirement Exercise, 1975/76

There was widespread dissatisfaction with the Federal Military Government's retirement exercise in late 1975. The Students' Union was inundated with protests. Retired workers sent in letters of complaint and requested the Students' Union to help get them reinstated. Students felt that many who should have been retired were spared, and the purge was seen as an exercise in victimization.

⁴ Banji Adegboro died as a result of a motor accident while serving his term under NYSC scheme, 1981

The Union issued a release calling for documented student reaction. Within hours, lists of 'deadwood' reached the Union. Hidden facts came into light; photocopies of Sundry Debtors' accounts and other documents were banded. Allegedly covered up corrupt practices were unveiled.

It was on the basis of this feedback that the Students' Union compiled a list of 'retirables'. Letters expressing dissatisfaction with the retirements exercise and requesting action on this list were forwarded to the Council of the University and to Supreme Headquarters, Lagos. Council set up a committee headed by one of its members: Mr Aper Aku⁵ to look into this.

13 February 1976

A one-hour Chemistry lecture had just ended and we were on our way to the laboratory when we felt something unusual in the atmosphere. Soon, word reached us that there had been a *coup d'état*. I rushed to Adekunle Adepeju (Students' Union) Building. Some students had gathered there and were restive. Only the Vice-President, Akin Adesokan, and I were Union officers there. I briefly addressed the assembly, and we thereafter proceeded westward through the Faculty of Arts to the Faculty of the Social Sciences, chanting songs of condemnation. More students joined us on the way and as we made a U-turn, leading for the main gate of the University, the crowd had become mammoth and hot-blooded. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tamuno, and Registrar, Mr Okudu, were waiting in front of the Administration Block when the procession passed that way. They asked me why this was happening and I said it wasn't possible to chain the students; my objective was just to ensure that the demonstration wasn't carried beyond the gates of the University.

An effort was indeed made to prevent the demonstration from going outside the campus, and it ended with a barricade of the main gate. A friend of mine rode on a motor-bike to the gates, called me aside and asked if I wasn't smart enough, didn't I see that other members of the Union Executive had stayed away? . . . Must I stick out my neck?

A couple of days later, after the situation in Lagos had been brought under control, students went out to town to condemn the assassination of General Murtala Muhammed and solidarize with General Olusegun Obasanjo. The Campus was not left out of the sorrow felt by the nation in the days following Murtala's tragic death. Overcome by this grief, N. C Aniemeka, First member for Tedder Hall in the Student Representative Council, issued a press release arbitrarily renaming that hall after Murtala Muhammed.

⁵ In October 1979, he became Governor of Benue State.

The students' demonstration in town was acclaimed in the Press, but it created problems within the University. Most of the vehicles with which students went to town were forcibly taken from the central parking yard in the Department of Works, Maintenance and Transport. That was the second time in two months that students had 'commandeered' vehicles, the first being Rag Day. Students easily subdued the security men, took the car keys and drove away university vehicles. In some other cases, drivers on official duty were compelled to detour and service students' needs. Days after, many of these vehicles were yet to be returned. A number of them, having run out of fuel, were abandoned by the roadside. Some were put into private use and a number, including at least one driven by an unlicensed driver, were involved in accidents within and outside Ibadan. Even when the vehicles were safe the keys were missing. Neither of the two occasions of assault on university vehicles was engineered or condoned by the Union Executive, although allegations were made against one or two of its officers. Indeed, I issued a couple of releases warning that the Executive would not provide protection for any student in whose possession a commandeered vehicle was found. Vice-Chancellor Tamuno set up a committee headed by Professor O. Kujore to probe these two episodes.

Adepeju Day 1976 and the Balewa Hall Incident

February the first was an annual event in the University of Ibadan in commemoration of the day in 1971 that Adekunle Adepeju, a second year Agricultural Economics Student, was shot dead in a confrontation between policemen and demonstrating students. In 1974, there had been another confrontation between Police and Uites. The 1975-76 Students' Union executive, however, was determined to avoid any clash with the Police. At the start of our tenure, we visited the Commissioner of Police, Oyo State Command, Mr E. J. Umoren, accompanied by the Acting Deputy Registrar in charge of Student Affairs, Mr Olu Daramola. We pledged to maintain cordial relations with the Police, and the Commissioner in turn promised cooperation. Indeed, we enjoyed maximum Police cooperation on Rag Day. And on Adepeju Day, much to everyone's surprise, we had the full support of the Police. Top police officers took part in the Adepeju memorial activities and students were transported to Adepeju's grave at Molete in down-town Ibadan, in the company of Police riders.

Vice-Chancellor Tamuno also took part fully in the activities and accompanied students to Molete. On behalf of the University, he donated ₦5,000 to the Adekunle Adepeju Fund launched that year by the Students' Union. Just when it appeared we were set to accomplish the feat of a big but peaceful Adekunle memorial, the apple-cart was upset.

The incident of 3 February 1976 was the boiling over of tension that developed from the eve of Adepeju Day. A candle-light procession organized by the Union had started solemnly from Azikiwe Hall, called at Independence and Balewa Halls, and was on its way to the 'UCI Halls' en route to the spot where Kunle Adepeju⁶ had been shot.

At the right-angle corner west of Balewa Hall, an approaching motor-car was halted by the students in front, but the driver wasn't a patient man. Before those of us towards the rear realized it, this man was meandering through the crowd at high speed. Intricate acrobatics were instinctively contrived as startled students dived and tumbled for safety. It remains a surprise to me that none of us was knocked down by the dare-devil driver. On recovering from this shock, I rushed across to see the students, including a girl, who were wriggling in pain near the roadside gutter.

Meanwhile, many students rushed towards Balewa Hall. Apparently, the offending driver had dropped a passenger in front of Balewa Hall then zoomed off. Enraged students searched nooks and corners of Balewa Hall but could not find this man. After a brief call at Balewa Hall to find out what was happening I left for the Health Centre at Jaja Avenue where injured students had been taken, and ended the night's outing in front of Queen's Hall, where a circle of candles was burning around the fateful spot.⁷ The following morning I learnt that some students found their way into Mr Benedict I. Orji's room 2 at Balewa Hall and removed some of his property.⁸

Postgraduate students were incensed by the Orji affair. Some of them issued releases that aired vexed views which were generally shared by Balewa Hall residents. That hall became dangerous territory to undergraduate students.

On 3 February 1976 I travelled to Lagos with a number of students including the Vice-President of the Students' Union. Our trip was in connection with the impending Students' Union Week. We returned to Ibadan late at night. After dropping the driver and other students, the Vice-President and I were returning to Independence Hall in the Union's Toyota bus when we ran into a crowd in front of Balewa Hall. We asked what was happening and were given a summary of what had transpired that night. According to reports, the Administrator-General of Independence Hall, Tony Chiaghalam, had been molested when he strayed into a Congress of Balewa Hall students that had been called to deliberate on the impetuosity of the undergraduates. Mr Chiaghalam argued that he had

⁶ Between Oduduwa Road and the main entrance to Queen Elizabeth Hall.

⁷ Where Kunle Adepeju died.

⁸ Mr B. I. Orji, a third year research student in the Department of Animal Science, resided in Room B10 of Tafawa Balewa Hall.

only gone to appeal to his colleague, the Chairman of Balewa Hall, that tolerance be exercised in the matter, but postgraduate students saw him as a trouble-seeking intruder and proceeded to deal summarily with him.

Independence Hall students thereafter marched to Balewa Hall to return fire for fire. As it turned out, the Balewa residents, following decisions reached at the Congress, had that night undertaken a protest march to the Vice-Chancellor's Lodge. An army of undergraduates armed with cudgels laid ambush for the returning postgraduates. Had the latter not been accompanied by Vice-Chancellor Tamuno, it would have been a bloody night.

When Adesokan and I entered Balewa Hall, the Vice-Chancellor and some other officers of the University were appealing to the postgraduate students to cool tempers. An angry female postgraduate suddenly broke loose and hauled a missile at the crowd of undergraduates. They responded with a barrage and we, the mediators, took cover in the Porters' Lodge. Shortly after, the Vice-Chancellor was able to bring the situation under control, and the undergraduates returned to their halls singing, 'Tamuno, we are sorry!'.

Those were the days when the country boasted a plethora of probe panels. A panel of three professors—S. Afolabi Teye, B. J. Dudley and A. Ogunseye (Mrs)—was constituted to look into the Balewa Hall disturbances and report to the Vice-Chancellor. The panel invited some students to testify before it, but I was not invited.

The Vice-Chancellorship

There was a time when the Vice-Chancellorship in Nigerian universities was a hallowed institution. Under the military, this position of honour suffered dis-investiture. And it would not be totally uncharitable to assert that during this era the Vice-Chancellors in their acts of commission and omission were influenced, even if remotely, by the fact of their incumbency being subject to the whims of the uniformed powers that were.

Professor H. Oritsejolimi Thomas was the Vice-Chancellor during my first year in the University. His contact with students was minimal and it was not until the swearing-in of the 1975/76 Students' Union Executive that I saw him up close. He was said to be an austere figure who wouldn't brook undue assumptions.

After Professor Thomas had been retired in November 1975 from office in a manner that testified eloquently to the grittiness of military insensitivity, the mantle fell upon Professor Tekena Tamuno who only a few months earlier had taken leave of the University to serve as Principal of the University College, Ilorin.

Professor Tamuno started his term with a 'man-of-the-people' image. He christened his method 'Partnership in Progress' and his administration was manifestly open. He was closer to students than his predecessor. He met with student leaders frequently and was physically present at many student activities. Among the many gestures of solidarity which students saw on his part was his appearance in denim-type casuals for Adepeju Day ceremonies on 1 February 1976.

Unfortunately, the honeymoon didn't last long, and we saw that the genial T. N. Tamuno could also be as explosive as TNT. In the wake of the student crisis of May 1976, the Vice-Chancellor, apparently disillusioned with the outcome of his novel approach and perhaps under pressure of less liberal staffers, swivelled round almost one hundred and eighty degrees in his disposition towards the student body. It was the degree of that turn that made it a not-to-come development. For while it is true that men are tempted to take a kilometre when offered a centimetre, it isn't too healthy to deny them some latitude.

By the time Professor Tamuno's tenure ended, he had weathered more than a few storms. These included not only student and staff agitation but also sustained and well-orchestrated Press fire. In the light of this experience it is no wonder that his successor, Professor S. O. Olayide (whom I understand is referred to as Solomon by some close associates) assumed office on a difficult note.

Ban on Student Politics—May 1976

The 1975/76 session was to have been Banji Adegboro's year of graduation from the Faculty of Arts. He decided to forego that session and devote his time fully to student politics. Accordingly, he applied to Senate for a 'sabbatical'. Senate's reply came late in April 1976, and was in the negative.

Meanwhile, Adegboro had not registered for any course during the session—which meant he had broken a university regulation. The tersely worded letter from the Registrar communicating Senate's decision left Adegboro in a quandary. Even if by special dispensation he completed registration formalities, how could he get adequately prepared for examinations which were only four weeks or so away? Adegboro presented his case to the generality of students and then specifically to student groups, clubs and societies which in turn wrote letters of appeal to the University authorities. There was sympathy for him among the students especially as many saw Senate's stand as a pay-back for the President's uncompromising posture. Although some ostensible factor may be given as the official reasons behind Senate's decision, there is little doubt that Adegboro's radicalism was the principal factor.

It is worth recalling that some of the key figures in Senate featured outstandingly in the Students' Union's list of 'deadwood' recommended for retirement; also,

Adegboro's first outing as the Union President was to address students of his own faculty who were protesting against the increase in the minimum faculty requirements, under the Course Unit System, from 60 units to 80 units, and he had in that address roundly criticized lecturers in the faculty. Perhaps Adegboro would have tangoed his way out of the quicksand situation but for his less discriminating petulant associates.

A meeting of the Student Representative Council (SRC) with Sola Olubuyide,⁹ as Speaker was summoned to discuss the issue. The meeting had dragged on for some time before Councillor Charles Sagua of Alexander Brown Hall (the Clinical Students' Hostel at UCH) rose to deliver what turned out to be the climatic speech of the night. Employing gesticulatory emphasis to reinforce high-mettled rhetoric, a style that was characteristic of his contributions in the student Parliament, he called for quick-stick action: give the Vice-Chancellor a couple of hours from 8 a.m. next morning to take positive action on Adegboro's case; should this ultimatum not be met, give him another couple of hours; if there is no positive development by mid-day, then be poised for 'action'.

The level to which emotions were stirred by this contribution was reflected in the tumultuous applause it received. Within minutes, a motion had been passed along the lines of Sagua's suggestion. Signing those *ultimata* to the Vice-Chancellor without the modulation of a dispassionate second thought was an act which, I believe, Olubuyide (later, a qualified medical doctor) would always recall with regret.

As Senate met in the evening next day, a crowd of students waited restively outside the Senate Chamber. Word leaked to this crowd regarding Professors So-and-So who were allegedly spearheading the anti-Adegboro moves in Senate. When this crowd milled to the Adekunle Adepeju building it was addressed by a Lecturer whose leftist hue was unmistakable. When this charged crowd left the building, I remained in my office trying to get a call to Lagos.

The Union Secretary, Foluso Adedigba, later informed me that he learnt the students had attacked the homes of some members of staff. It was that same night that some students led a 'kidnapped' Professor Obaro Ikime¹⁰ to Adekunle Adepeju building. Foluso and I had a rough time bringing the situation under control.

The Professor, I understood, was 'captured' at Kuti Hall. After he had been taken into an office in the building, Foluso and I, working uphill against mob dynamics, laboured to get hostile students out of the office. Even when this had been achieved and the Professor remained locked inside the office, many of the

⁹ Then a medical student.

¹⁰ Head of History Department, and Dean of Arts, (1979-81).

captors stayed at the windows, jeering and taunting, some of them with looks that suggested blood-thirstiness.

Efforts to keep this development in check were still underway when the telephone in my office rang (of the two lines in the Students' Union offices, one was in the PRO's room). When I picked up the receiver I heard the voice of a worried Vice-Chancellor Tamuno asking the whereabouts of Professor Ikime. I informed him of the situation at the building and assured him the Professor was safe. He wanted to come over but I suggested it might be better to hold on for a while for the students to disperse. Dr Johnson Ekpere also phoned, saying the Professor's wife and children were panic-stricken. I assured him there was no cause for alarm. It was the second or third time the Vice-Chancellor phoned that I gave the green signal. A few minutes later he drove in and took a slightly numbed but physically unhurt Professor Ikime home.

A couple of days later, Colonel David Jemibewon, the State Military Governor, visited the homes vandalised by students, then met with Union executives at the Students' Union Secretariat. He counselled against the use of violence in pursuing grievances and demands.

It was after these developments that Professor Tamuno clamped a moratorium on all student activities, dissolved the Union, froze the Union's accounts and ordered a dusk-to-dawn curfew on campus. Armed policemen flushed us out of the Union secretariat and paraded the campus.

Thus, suddenly, calm was restored to a charged atmosphere. Two separate probe panels looked into this crisis. One was headed by the Chairman of Council, Alhaji Abdurrahman Okene, while the other, set up by the Vice-Chancellor comprised Professors A. I. Ette, A. Maduemezia and L. A. Salako.

Justice à la Ibadan

Senate was having an early afternoon emergency meeting. What else would this principal organ of university governance have on its agenda for this meeting than the crisis that had set new heights of student effrontery, the crisis that was the talk of the town? Senior administrative officers paced the corridors and kept typists busy with Senate-related papers.

Trust the Press boys to be where the action is. Tayo Kehinde of *New Nigerian*, Bolu Oni of *Sketch*, Eric Teniola of *Herald* and a host of others were around. Lasun Adeyemi of *Daily Times* allowed that his editor in Lagos was expecting a story that afternoon. The journalists talked to the PRO of the dissolved Students' Union. It was the same bent for news that kept the PRO around until the Senate meeting was over.

As soon as the meeting was over, the PRO walked unsuspectingly across the road to meet Dr E. Edozien and Professor A. Maduemezia at the car park. What he got from them as response to a 'good-day' was a shocker: 'You are rusticated. . .'. At this point, the PRO became a 'Pure Aro' indeed. Fuming and fretting, cursing and swearing, he scuttled into the Registrar's office where the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar were having a meeting. The Registrar, Mr Okudu, rose, called the PRO aside and cautioned him to be tranquil; any protests, the Registrar said, should be forwarded in writing and peacefully.

Yet to recover from the shock and not to be so easily quietened, the 'rusticatee' left the Registrar's office still charged and attracted a crowd at the Central Porters' Lodge with his effusion.

After the Vice-Chancellor's statement had been cyclostyled at the Press office, the rusticatee, now in better control of himself, grabbed a copy and marched towards his hall. Part of the statement read that the Committee which probed the Balewa Hall incident had found Leroy Edozien culpable and that the Disciplinary Committee had recommended, and the Vice-Chancellor had approved the recommendation that Leroy Edozien be rusticated for two terms with immediate effect.

Opposite Kuti Hall, the rusticatee met Tony Ayeni and showed him that part of the Vice-Chancellor's release which stated that Tony Ayeni had been expelled from the university for his part in a series of crises. Ayeni was dumb-founded and as the rusticatee left him he was still turning thither and thither as if standing on seismic ground.

When I got to Independence Hall and told acquaintances that I had been rusticated, they dismissed my word—the Vice-Chancellor's statement had not reached that part of the campus yet. When some of the doubting Thomases read my own copy of the statement they were shocked.

Tony Chiaghalam rode up to the small group around me. 'Tony Black!' I hailed. Then, I dropped what was supposed to be a bombshell, but he was unshaken. 'You are joking', he said, unconvinced. I handed the statement over to him and pointed at the relevant portion. Tony Chiaghalam rusticated for two terms with immediate effect for his role in the Balewa Hall incident. After gazing unbelievably at the sheet for some time he uttered: 'This is the late Tony Chiaghalam'. Thereupon, he kicked his motor bike forcefully and zoomed off in what looked very much like a suicidal death-race.

Banji Adegboro and three activists—Tony Ayeni, Ben Oguntuase and Segun Awonusi—were expelled for their roles in either the 'sabbatical leave' crisis or the commandeering of vehicles or both. Ayeni and Oguntuase were both final year

Petroleum Engineering students. The speaker of the SRC was rusticated for a term for his role in the 'sabbatical leave' crisis.

It beat me flat how a committee of three egg-heads, including a political scientist and an educationist, could find a man guilty of an offence without giving him a hearing. That was definitely against the principles of natural justice.

I appealed to the Council of the University against the decision of Senate. The Master and Warden of Independence Hall, Professor Fabiyi and Dr F.B. A. Giwa, respectively, also sent in strong letters of appeal on behalf of Tony Chiaghalam and me.

Council at its meeting in June 1976 scrutinized the appeals before it and upheld those of Sola Olubuyide, Tony Chiaghalam, and Leroy Edozien, and accordingly quashed Senate's decision with regard to these students.

It was saddening to me that the University which announced our rustication with the most sonorous clarion in her publicity kit did not deem it necessary to announce Council's decision on our appeal. I made available to the Press the letter by which Council's decision was communicated to me and the decision was reported in some newspapers, but was that enough to erode the sludge which the University had cast on our persons?

Meanwhile, the Police were looking into other aspects of the student crisis of May 1976. I received an 'invitation' from the Police through the Student Affairs Officer to appear for 'a chat' at the Oyo State Headquarters of the CID on 12 June 1976. That day happened to be my birthday and I spent about six hours 'celebrating' it at the Iyaganku Station.

For starters there was an identification parade. The invited students were lined up along with strangers. A Police photographer was in attendance. Mrs Fayemi and Mrs Bassir, wives of Professors whose houses had been attacked by students in May 1976, as well as someone said to be the Bassirs' houseboy were called out to identify the attackers they could recognize.

Standing in that parade was blood curdling. It was chilling enough having spectators from the barracks gaze curiously at you, to yourself immaculately innocent but to them a suspect. Of greater impact was the baseless rumour which had circulated among the University senior staff that Leroy Edozien was the chief of the plunderers. I was by virtue of my orange complexion prominent in the line-up. What if one of these matrons should place her arm on my shoulder? To my relief the exercise ended without that spectacle. Later we met with the Deputy Commissioner in charge of the CID in Oyo State, were interrogated and wrote statements. This exercise was a front-page headline report in the next day's *Sunday Times*. I have not heard from the Police since then. What I heard

for some time was the question: Does 'rusticate' mean 'send to rust', or something like that?

'Ali must Go'!

In April 1978 the University was again convulsed by student agitation, this time not against the University authorities but against the Federal Government policy on education. The government, which had earlier made university education almost completely free for Nigerians, made a sharp U-turn: not only were fees hiked, scholarship and loan schemes were abolished. The demonstrations, with which were associated the slogan 'Ali Must Go!' (after Colonel A. Ali, the Commissioner for Education), involved not only the University of Ibadan but also other Nigerian universities; students were killed in Lagos and Zaria. After a Federal Government-owned Peugeot car had been upturned and set ablaze behind the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Police in Ibadan were alerted.

I was on my way to Lagos at dawn when I found that armed anti-riot policemen had blocked the main gate. Students who wanted to leave the campus were not allowed to do so.

I had been invited to speak alongside Alhaji Femi Okunu¹¹ at a symposium to mark the Silver Jubilee of King's College Students' Council; I was determined to fulfil that obligation that day. Desperate to get to Lagos that day, I walked up to the leader of the Police contingent and pleaded that the freedom of harmless citizens to leave the campus should not be breached, but like a Nigerian policeman this officer wouldn't even listen. A short while later he ordered his men into action: the crowd of students beat a fast retreat as policemen charged with batons, and canisters of tear gas swarmed into Oduduwa Road. In the battery I was truncheoned on the arm and shoulder but my friend and I managed to sneak out and cross the road into Agbowo Village where there was still tear-gas to contend with. I saw a doctor in Lagos, then with a sense of accomplishment kept my appointment at King's College.

Throughout the 'Ali Must Go' demonstrations I steered clear of all rallies and meetings, lest it come to 'Leroy Edozien again!' Indeed, after the 1976 crisis I treaded cautiously. When in 1977/78 I accepted to serve as student representative on the Student Welfare Board, a committee of Senate, another member, Mr Aigboje Higo, Managing Director of Heinemann Books and an *alumnus* of the University, remarked that my contribution was uncharacteristically low-keyed, to which comment Vice-Chancellor Tamuno replied that my situation was understandable.

¹¹ A former Federal Commissioner during the era of military government.

Financial Squeeze

One of the more challenging tasks faced by the Tamuno administration was that of steering the University through a tight financial squeeze. That was when there was a cut-back in funding by the Federal Government. Under the pressure of this strait-jacket, the University declined to an all-time low in many respects. Laboratories were barren, maintenance services were grounded, there was a visible decline in almost every facet of University of Ibadan life. The roads were so bad that the campus became a miniature Aba in Imo State. Campus life lost its vitality as both the University and the students' coffers were dry. Not even the landscape was spared, as fresh green gave way to dusty brown.

The only factor which seemed to proliferate rather than decline was the number of petty traders on campus. Every other corner in the halls of residence was turned into a kiosk or beer pantry by wives of hall staff. Other parts of the campus were also invaded by hawkers and retailers of fruits, confectionery, clothes, books pornography and other items.

This development was not unrelated to the state of the national economy. Because prices were high at these kiosks, a local price control unit was set up by students. This unit soon became affiliated to the Federal Price Control Board (PCB) and some University of Ibadan students were appointed Auxilliary Price Control Inspectors. For some time, this unit was quite effective. Even 'Madam Bello' the doyen of campus retailers, once had her ever-expanding store sealed by the inspectors—and all other stores stayed closed, in sympathy with her.

Student Unionism—What Direction?

Only two of the years between 1973 and 1980 were free of student crisis in the University of Ibadan. There's no gainsaying this is not a healthy record. Each time the Union has been at the receiving end of an incapacitating backlash. Thrice between 1976 and 1980 it has been dissolved and its officers suspended. And when student leaders are expelled or rusticated, other students return to their books and forget the leaders whom they mandated to act. Thus, holding office in the Union has become a risky undertaking.

It is unfortunate that the Union is seen merely as a protest organ. There is a wide spectrum of student interests that could be served by the Union. And the Students' Union of the University of Ife has recently set a good record by embarking on a housing project for its members.

Another look should be made into the constitution of the University of Ibadan Students' Union. It probably would be better for the Union elections to be based on a slate system, but if this change is to be effected, checks must be introduced to

ensure that the slates are not extensions of national political parties. The review of the Students' Union constitution should include an overhaul of the machinery by which decisions relating to expression of ^{dissent} discussion are taken.

Also, the SRC is likely to function better if the bulk of its work was done in committees. Its present *modus operandi* is a far cry from Parliamentary practice and its members don't seem to be fully aware of their role *vis-à-vis* the Executive.

Recent developments indicate that the base of student interest in the Union is expanding, as conservative and 'born-again' candidates have been fielded in elections. This is a welcome development in the sense that all students, from extreme right to extreme left, are beginning to recognize their stake in the Union.

What Gain From All This?

It was E. H. Chapin who charged:

Do not ask if a man has
been through college; ask if a
College has been through him.

From one's first day in University one was determined not only to pass through the University of Ibadan but to let the University of Ibadan pass through him. While one is not 'a walking university,' one has gained a lot from active participation in campus activities in a string of capacities. One came out of all this with a better understanding of human behavioural patterns, broadened capacity for balanced judgement and richer perception of society at large—which are all implicit in the University's motto: '*Recte Sapere Fons*'.

My conclusion is that the University of Ibadan in my era cannot be described as an Ivory Tower spiritually isolated from Nigerian society. Far from it. Although our institution would readily pontificate on the ills of society, our university system is a microcosm of the ailing society—intrigue, putrefactive partisanship, indiscipline abound in the citadel.

Students would condemn disorder in the society but wouldn't even respect the queue in their cafeterias. A student would lament our technological drawback but, turn to use newspapers instead of soft tissue in a flush toilet, without any qualms, and don't be surprised if this student is a final year Technology student!

Once, when I took a post-B.Sc. student to task for showing a poor example, his indifferent and irritating reply was: 'We're only being Nigerians!' Equally disappointing was the experience I had when Victor Osarenren and I were on a room-to-room campaign just before the 1975 Union elections. There was this student who told us we didn't need to campaign in his room: 'I am a practising tribalist', he asserted, and that was going to determine who got his votes.