

CHAPTER TWO

ILORIN DESCENDANTS PROGRESSIVE UNION (I.D.P.U.) AND THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME

By Abdulmuttalib Ahmad Ambali OFR

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

The Chairman, Hon. Justice Saka Yusuf

The Lady Chairperson Arch. Halimat Tayo Alao

The Special Guest of Honour, Navy Captain Mohammed Adebayo
Lawal

The Special Guests; Alhajis Saka Saadu and Ayinla Olomoda

The Chief Launcher, Alhaji Abdulsalami Ayinla

The President, Ilorin Descendants Progressive Union, Alhaji Shehu
Abdul Gaffar

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I do not find it comfortable to be in a straight jacket of being so flattered and called Guest Speaker in an organization, which I am humbly proud to belong to by the virtue of my birth. I always consider myself a life member whose name cannot be removed

from the register and whose membership cannot be terminated. This is because; I have no other place to call mine beside Ilorin. It calls for a lot of caution and you have to watch it when you are called guest in your home. This strange or should I say, odd and tight circumstance in which I find myself makes me appreciate the situations that lead some people to erroneously or otherwise, pray God Almighty to please deliver them from the scheming of their friends only, because they are capable of taking care of the machinations of their enemies. I realize then that it is easier to know how to escape the traps enemies than how to beat the tricks of the friends.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have chosen, **“Ilorin Descendants Progressive Union, I.D.P.U. and the challenges of our time”** as subject matter of my topic in which I do not only protest but also refuse to be a Guest Speaker. Rather, I prefer to play the role of a mirror in the dressing room of Ilorin Descendant Progressive Union (I.D.P.U.). It is not open to debate because it is not challenged anytime, anywhere and in any form that I.D.P.U. is the oldest surviving development organization in our community. The Union is the catalyst that gave birth to other development organizations in Ilorin Emirate. The development organizations that can claim to

have been in existence before I.D.P.U. in Kwara State (old & new) can be counted on our finger tips, if any. However, we must realize that being the first is not as difficult as maintaining the first position. I will not have satisfaction with the first place within the whole of Kwara State until the target of being one of the best models of the development organizations in the whole country is attained by the grace of Almighty God.

The Union has every cause to reflect over its modest achievements and thank God that it is the consensus that it is recognized as the advance party of the army of progress and development in Ilorin. It spearheaded the development projects such as, the re-construction of the Pakata road. The pioneering-proprietorship of Ballah Secondary School in Asa goes to its credit and honour. Its modest secretariat house in one storey building at the ends of Kamalud-deen and Pakata roads, has served and continues to serve as the meeting, melting and processing point of I.D.P.U. and non I.D.P.U ideas out of which a number of the developments have emerged. Ilorin Foundation and the ongoing City Hall are classical examples of the product of "Pakata Forum" I.D.P.U. is a conspicuous partner in the re-construction of our Multi-Million Naira Ultra-Modern Central Mosque. It played a

leading role, expected of it prosecuted successfully the Ilorin Chapter of Kwara State Industrial Fund Launching Ceremony.

Ilorin Descendants Progressive Union (I.D.P.U.) remains right from its inception to date, not only a ghost but also a myth that polices the conscience of all government functionaries from committing assaults on the rights of Ilorin people. To avoid its wrath, it has become the tradition of the ruling classes to be cautious on the interests of the seat of Kwara State Government. The invitations of the sister development organizations spread all over the nooks and crannies of the state were responded to positively and favorably by I.D.P.U. on behalf of itself and the entire Ilorin to promote the much-desired cordiality and brotherliness between us and our good neighbours in the State.

The consensus over I.D.P.U. hardly goes beyond this point. As soon as your survey goes beyond this point, the similitude of the image of I.D.P.U. becomes that of the elephant in the popular Indian fable in which a number of blind men were asked to touch different parts of an elephant. The description of each blind man depended on the part of it which his hands touched. The first blind man whose hands were placed on the tusk of the elephant said it was like a big snake. The second man who touched the legs

described it, rightly of course, as a mortar and the third man who touched its ears described it as a tray.

This represents the perceptions of different individuals and groups of I.D.P.U. at different times and under different prevailing circumstances. I am not competent and even it is not relevant to say anybody is wrong but for the genuine patriots in the Union, a word is enough for the wise.

Ironically, the political leadership for example, in their age of infancy sucked the human milk of the Union and later, for a brief time had good days of honey moon with I.D.P.U., but as soon as they secured in-road into the hearts of the un-mindful people, the Union is discarded like the drugs whose dates of potency have expired. The part of the political leaderships which did not win the heart of the bride does no regret it today.

The common denominator is that any Ilorin man conscious of development cannot afford to be indifferent to I.D.P.U. He either agrees or disagrees with the Union's styles definitely, not its goals and objectives. I chose to regard that disagreement itself as forward matching and because life itself is not static but dynamic. As such man and human society should not be static but dynamic. One obvious characteristic dynamism is that it generates friction

and in terms of social values that means difference and very often dispute. Difference or preferably let us say the right to differ, lies at the root of all issues involving progress as it does at the root of all matters that involve inquiry, investigation and research, aimed matching forward of a group of people constituting a society. We must therefore not only recognize but we also have to safeguard the right of the individuals and groups to differ, to question, dissent, and ensure that our differences should act, react and beneficently. The differences may take the form of politics, ideology, individual style or approach to any given problems or to satisfy personal wants and desires or to fulfill the purpose for which the society is established.

I venture to say that under no circumstances shall we allow this difference (in the course of approaching our goals) to divert our attention from what should be our common objectives and goals. A detached observer who watches us with Keen interest will see the traces of our differences in the organizations or let me say chain of development organizations we form, such as the Resource Group, the Solidarity Club, the Ilorin Joint Ward Development Association, Ilorin City Club, the Ilorin Front, just to mention a few

of our a little to the right and a little to the left organizations leaving few or nobody in the centre of our development.

Thanks to God, the differences of our perceptions and approaches to the development in Ilorin had not been destructive to our common goals. The million-dollar question is why can we not put our heads and hands together to work to attain the common goals? For instance, our reactions are not only similar but indeed identical to the transfer of the headquarters of the Niger River Basin Development Authority from Kwara State Capital to Niger State Capital, the sad fate of Ilorin International Airport, the work on the ten thousand line exchange digital which has stopped, despite that the building is ready waiting to be equipped, the long awaited but yet to come Ilorin-Ibadan dual carriage way,* the way and manner the recent States Creation exercise took place in the country and our fate in the subsequent creation of the Local Governments; to mention just a few of the challenging incidents of our time.

It is in view of these and other similarly motivated events that I.D.P.U. cannot afford to go into the state of coma for a long period of time before rising to the challenges of our time. As the Central Vanguard Organization of our development, the seemingly

silence, if not inaction is difficult to understand. The magnitude of the effects of the events are enough to make a dead person shake up in the grave if he cannot rise and call for our positive action in unison.

Obviously, this is expected justifiably to be at the instance and initiative of the I.D.P.U. with a view to designing a common strategy to rise to the challenges of our time as people of common fate. I repeat for the sake of emphasis that the cumulative effects filled our atmosphere with the clouds of fear, loss of confidence in self and insecurity that called for the I.D.P.U to play the unique role of ***An-Najm Athaqib*** i.e. the star of courage and hope that pierces through the era of fear, confusion and despair. We all waited in vain.

For the I.D.P.U. to maintain and justify its position of being engine room of our community development, whose activeness signifies the activeness of the whole community and whose dormancy spells the passivity of the whole society, it has to rise to these challenges. It seems, we have out of sheer frustration, put off from our minds other perennial problems of our society and we have resigned ourselves to the fate waiting for the heaven to help us when we do not care a hoot to help ourselves. The dwindling

numbers of our sons and daughters both in quality and quantity in the Federal Civil Service and other Federal Institutions, the near absence of our boys and girls in the academic and administrative sectors of the University named after our community and other institutions based in Ilorin such as the University Teaching Hospital, have ceased to worry us. We resort to seeking Golden Fleece of admissions into the Universities in Sokoto, Kano, Jos and Maiduguri because we have no place in the University built on our soil until our guests are satisfied. *

If I may ask, can we fairly put all the blames on the others without making a critical and inward self-assessment of our educational plights right from the primary to secondary school levels? Which universities have places for the half-baked Secondary School products? Ask an average person to recommend the best Secondary Schools for you in town. He readily mentions St. Anthony or Cherubim and Seraphim Secondary Schools. They are both established in Sabo-Okò. The primary schools where the pupils do not run shift a' Bishop Smith's Demonstration School in Offa Road, Wesley and St. James' C.A.C Primary Schools. They are all established by our Local Government Education Authority at the low-density areas of Ilorin for our lucky guests. The children of the

hosts attend Ansarul Islam L.G.E.A. Primary, Okemale and its likes, established in the high-density areas where morning and afternoon session shifts are the answers to their population to sit on the bare and dusty floors of the terribly dilapidated buildings called schools. *

Ladies and gentlemen, whether we look at the magnitude of our problems vertically or horizontally, they appear to me to be too much for an individual or group of individuals to assume that it can play the part of the all wise tortoise in the Yoruba fables. It will amount to shirking our duties or adopting defeatist approach to say that things will sort themselves out. If we say the time has not come for all of us to close ranks, we are only waiting for the plantain to rot in the name of getting ripe.

Conclusion

A way to conclude this address is to re-assure ourselves that our problems are half-solved once they are identified and recognized. Our greatest problem is disunity. It is my considered opinion that we cannot afford to waste our precious time further on whether or not there is need for all the development organizations in our community to come together to face our common challenges. We cannot afford to embark on another

venture of voyage of exploration of duplicating and dissipating energy to look for a new forum. Our surest bet is to reinforce I.D.P.U. to be able to rise to the challenges of our time. To allow the charity to start from where it is due, the Union should recognize and demonstrate that its leadership does not enjoy the monopoly of wisdom to solve our multifarious problems.

The Union therefore has to stretch its hands of comradeship and co-operation and fling its doors open and widely to accommodate all shades of opinions: the rightists, the leftists, the centralists, and what have you. The Union should take the bull of our problems by the horns and arrange a meeting of all the key development organizations with a view to putting our heads and hands together to work for realizing our common objectives and goals.

The Union should allow the far-reaching re-organizations to enable it reach the grassroots of the society whereby the Central Organizations strata will be based on the traditionally recognized boundaries of our wards. All the Ministries and offices within the State, the Union's branches all the country will serve as regular sources of collecting the Union's dues to ensure regular and reliable income for development projects. The units based on

wards in the town should make good use of the mosque units to ensure the involvement of all and sundry in the crusade. Rights to participate in the Union's elections should be based on the payment of the annual dues.

It is a duty imposed by the Constitution on the Union's Education Committee "arrange public lectures and symposia for the purpose of increasing the community's awareness of the importance of education". I venture to say we have to go further beyond the scope of education because a society does not grow or live on education alone. The regular activities of the Union should not be limited to the annual rituals in December. A way to tap our highly placed and gifted sons and daughters is to schedule periodic forums in forms of lectures, seminars and symposia to generate cross-fertilization of ideas all spheres of our life; politics at mature level, the economy of our area, our history, culture, religion, industry etc. It has to be planned ahead to cover a period of every two months or more, from February to November, each year.

Finally, I sincerely apologize, if, in the course of this speech anybody's ox is gored. It is not intended but my friends* who drafted me to the stage are answerable for all the omissions and commissions. While they were refusing to grant me the permission

to have my way to escape the task of being the speaker, they guaranteed me the right to have my say. This is my say in the manner I know how to say it. May God grant all of us pardon and bless us all.

Thank you. God bless.