



Since November,
1949.

Thur. 12th April,
2007

Tribune **NIGERIAN**

Time for change in Edo politics

By Seo Ogbonmwan

Lucky Igbinedion

Historically, the people of Edo State are of one origin as they migrated from the centre, now Benin City, at different times in the history of the ancient Benin Empire. The linguistic structure, culture and traditional rights are still a binding force, even in the 21st century.

Some of us who are ardent believers in the oneness of origin of Edo people, strongly believe that Edo State politics should be the politics among kinsmen or among blood brothers and sisters. The unity of origin of Edo people should manifest in unity of purpose, action, decisions, sharing and in all aspects of the state politics.

But it is not so presently. The fight for the creation of Mid-West Region and the success of the antecedent referendum was a manifestation of that unity of purpose. Chief Dennis Osadebay's premiership and the disposition of social amenities and infrastructure in the old Mid-West region and, subsequently Bendel State under Brigadier Samuel Ogbemudia, also reflected that unity of origin of the people.

The good deeds of yesteryears have been completely eroded through mismanagement and lack of accountability, poor maintenance culture and poor utilisation of revenue that accrued to Edo State from the federal government. Is it then not obvious that they will punish their tormentors in the next polls? The questions are, can they? Will they have the will and the opportunity to do so?

In the current dispensation, when one of the godfathers is bringing in the army boys to disrupt rallies of opposition parties because the Defence Minister is from his clan and the godfather had a hand in his appointment as minister, such irresponsible actions of the godfather and the minister will definitely move all of us towards the cliffedge if not checked by the federal government.

The use of the military in political rallies is a very dangerous new dimension in Nigerian politics which must be resisted at all cost. Edo State belongs to Edo people

and not to a few political rogues who do not care about the welfare of the people. The outcome of the forthcoming elections is very crucial as the results will define Edo State politics for many years to come. If the state PDP is allowed to take the reigns of Edo State government again, Edo people can forget their future as a free people.

All political parties should come together as one and chase the uncaring PDP government away from Edo State as its rule has been a scourge on our people. In the state, due to the modus operandi of PDP godfathers and their godsons, the stranglehold on Edo people by another PDP government after the next election will be asphyxiating and may send many more able-bodied men and women to their early graves.

The PDP government has suffocated Edo people for the last eight years; they must not be allowed to perpetuate their insensitive attitude in government any more. This is the time to stand up and be counted as an Edo man or woman and prevent another PDP government in the state. Our forefathers fought great wars that established the ancient Benin Kingdom. Therefore, tell your brothers and sisters at home to abhor the PDP at the polls. Ideally, the best and most suitable person should rule and guide any organization or nation, but in Edo State, for the purpose of non marginalisation, brotherhood, oneness and feeding that unity flame, leadership should reach all the senatorial districts so that they can have that sense of belonging to that larger Edo family.

Then electoral outcome will be based on their manifestos and not the present situation of sponsorship and selection by the political godfathers who are keen to maintain the status quo of dominance to the detriment of the generality of our people. To progress in our state, the people must ensure that their votes count and every effort must be made to subjugate the political party machinery, especially that of the ruling party, to the will of the people. Accountability should be to the people rather than what obtains now where accountability is to the party hierarchy. In the last few years of PDP reign in Edo State, tribalism and ethnocentricity have been pushed to the fore to the detriment of our unity of origin.

In perpetuation of this ethnocentric politics, all the federal manpower allocation to Edo State, including the Minister of Defence (Onolimeme), through Edo State quota in the National Population Commission (Otaigbe), National Economic Intelligence Agency (Ehizokhale), National Maritime Agency (Eigbadon), INEC (Egbase), Executive Secretary, National University Commission (Okojie) and the Chief Medical Directors of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (Okpere), the Federal Government Neuropsychiatry Hospital in Benin (Ihenyen) and even Edo State University at Ekpoma (Akpede), are all from a section of Edo Central Senatorial zone, courtesy of Chief Tony Anenih, Chairman, Board of Trustees (BOT) of the PDP to the detriment of law-abiding Nigerian citizens from the North and South Senatorial zones of Edo State.

A win by the PDP government in Edo State will make the above disparity in sharing federal government manpower allocation to Edo State a child's play as it is a case of the winners takes all. Where there is love, a slice of bread can be shared and this attitude of total control and allocation of all available resources, be it human, financial, or appointment by one individual in the name of the PDP, can no longer be tolerated. You all will recall the rancour and intrigues that went into the nominations from Edo State into the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The governor of Edo State submitted his list as the number one citizen in the state and Chief Anenih submitted another list to counter the governor's list. This issue deteriorated into one of the nominees being excommunicated from his village of origin.

Edo State can and should no longer allow a situation where we have a parallel government operating in the state; one by the political godfathers and the other by the political godsons. For the state and its people to progress economically, improve in their standard of living and general health and to reduce the number of our mothers and sisters who die in childbirth and reduce the number of our babies who die soon after birth, we must have a unified government, led by a governor chosen by the people and who listen to the people, listen to the state House of Assembly and public-spirited individuals who give unsolicited advice based on their training and expertise.

The type of ethnocentric politics prevailing in the state should not be condoned or allowed to be perpetuated. Edo North and Edo South should also have their share of the federal government representation.

SEO OGBONMWAN

**IF WE ARE ONLY FOR OURSELVES, WHAT ARE OUR LIVES FOR?
MAKE A DIFFERENCE, MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.**