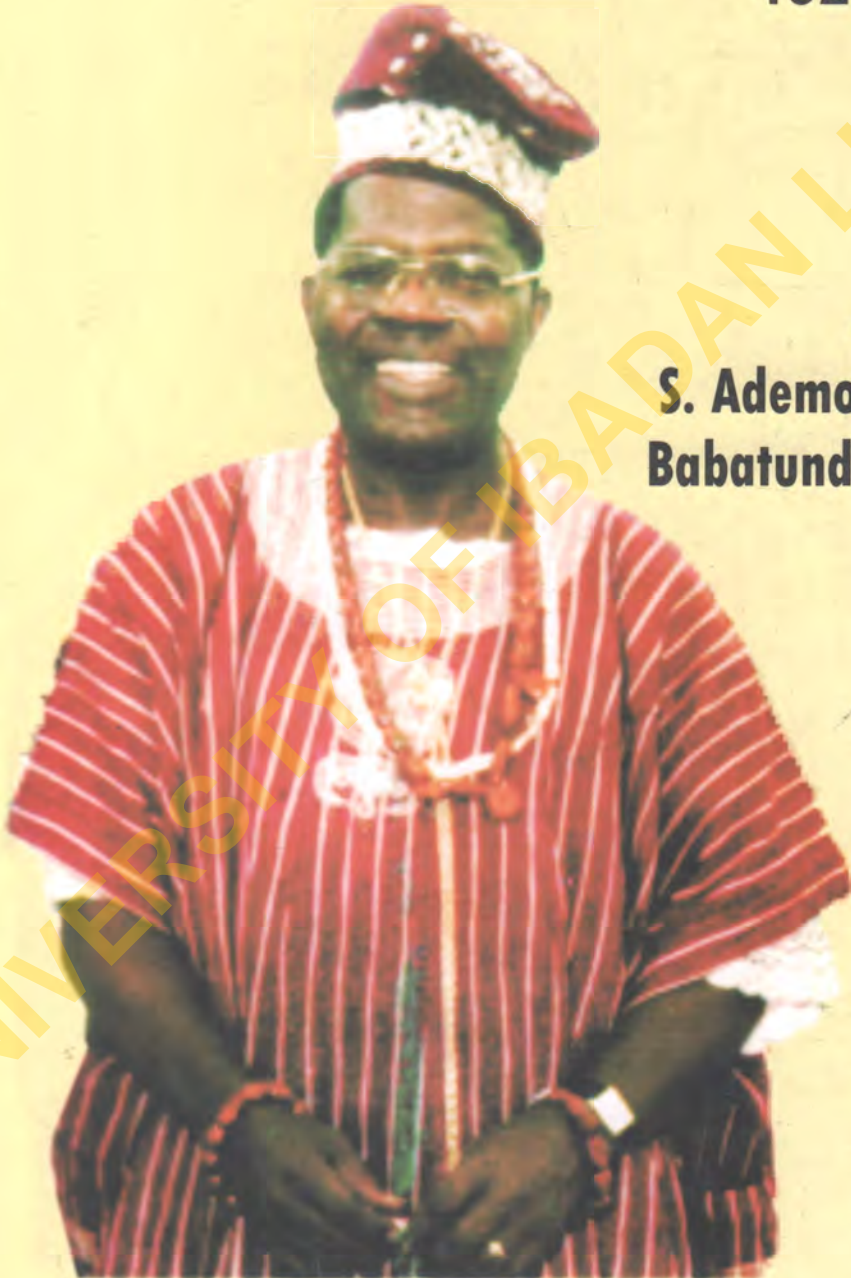


# Ayo Ogunsheye

**THE WORKERS' ECONOMIST**

**1923-1990**

edited by  
**S. Ademola Ajayi**  
**Babatunde Sofela**



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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# OGUNSHEYE'S CONTRIBUTION IN PERSPECTIVE: TWO DECADES LATER

Ayodele Samuel Aborisade

The entrance of Ayo Ogunsheye into the business world in the year 1970 was an epochal event in his life, even though many of his colleagues in the university and his family members saw this as an intrepid move that could end in total fiasco. The zeal to explore new opportunities as stated in previous chapters, prompted his decision to deliberately face the acid test of a hitherto unknown terrain which later catapulted his personality, both within government circles and the world. His unique intellectual capacity enabled him to make innovative business decisions, the significance of which were felt in his primary constituency, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, before it was felt in the economy through feasible policy recommendations to government at both the state and federal level.

It is, however, imperative to assert that the recommendations made by Professor Ogunsheye started manifesting positive results within the confines of the business world. As a result of his emergence as the vice-president of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1977, coupled with his vantage position as the executive director of Henry Stephens Group of Companies, the nation started benefiting from his intellectual prowess. His vision and mission was to transform the nation from its mono-economic status to a diversified economy that could compete favourably in global economic space. His vocal agitation was for the diversification of the nation's economy. His previous contributions and the agitation of other stakeholders in the business world led to the formation of the Nigerian Export Promotion Council

(NEPC) in 1976. The rationale behind its establishment was not unconnected with the formation of ECOWAS in 1975 through the Treaty of Lagos which was designed to ensure regional integration in order to facilitate the development of the sub-region.

The need to tap into this opportunity and to increase the foreign exchange earnings of the country in order to deal with the declining prospects of crude-oil export, the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) was established to deal with the problem of over reliance on crude-oil export, which constituted 90 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings at the time. The most credible person to head the new export promotion council was Professor Ayo Ogunsheye, who became the pioneer chairman. The Nigerian Export Promotion Council, being a new government agency, was largely unknown to the Nigerian people. It was through the administrative astuteness of Ogunsheye that the organization grew from its embryonic status to the enviable height it has today.<sup>1</sup> The success witnessed by the Council during this period cannot be divorced from the selfless efforts of Ogunsheye. The Council now has a series of affiliated bodies and offices around the globe. At its inception, however, the council comprised 36 members: one from each of the 19 states, 11 representatives of federal ministries and government parastatals and 6 representatives from private-sector organizations. There were many financial constraints that served as major impediments to NEPC's smooth operation. Finally in 1992, the federal government in its bid to surmount the financial difficulties of the Council removed some of the bureaucratic red tape and bestowed greater autonomy on the NEPC in order to engage the organized private sector. Regional offices were established across the country, while the headquarters in Abuja coordinated their activities.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges faced by NEPC at its inception, the non-oil sector at the end of 1976 increased by 18.3 per cent over the preceding year, which was dull because of the outright prohibition by the Federal Military Government on the exportation of timber, groundnut and groundnut oil, as well as cotton. However, the export of cocoa showed an appreciable increase both in terms of volume and value from 1976, after the establishment of NEPC.<sup>3</sup> This unprecedented turnaround of the non-oil sector was consolidated by Professor Ogunseye's NEPC of that period. For instance, manufactured goods from Nigeria which were affected by the taxes and other forms of

restrictions imposed by foreign countries, especially the ECOWAS markets, still witnessed a significant increase from 0.7 to 1 per cent in the year 1978.<sup>4</sup>

Succinctly put, Professor Ogunsheye's ingenuity was the harbinger of success for the contemporary NEPC. Despite lip-service declarations of the successive Nigerian governments to diversify the country's economy which have hampered the nation's export orientation and culture, the NEPC today has five local offices and two international offices. The local offices are located in Lagos, Aba, Akure, Kano and Jos. The national head office is at Abuja while the international offices are in Kenya and China. Prior to the restructuring in 2006, there were centres in Côte d'Ivoire, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, USA and Germany. The new arrangement portrays the existing realities because China imports a lot of non-oil items from Nigeria, such as cassava chips, charcoal, solid minerals and nuts.

The country through NEPC is targetting the East African market as potential importers of non-oil products from Nigeria and this is what has prompted the establishment of a regional office in Kenya. Since 2001, NEPC has been making concerted efforts to consolidate the country's position as the world's largest producer of cassava because of its potential for production of ethanol. This noble objective has also been sustained through the closure of European and American offices due to their interest in the importation of Nigeria's crude oil. The NEPC, in collaboration with foreign nations, is articulating policies to deepen the situation so as to enable cassava processors in the country actualize these gains through simplification of the hitherto complicated bureaucratic processes that accompany the exportation of unprocessed raw materials, semi-processed agricultural products, handicrafts, gift items, etc.<sup>5</sup>

The significant contribution of the NEPC towards the diversification of the nation's economy cannot be discussed without mentioning the strong and virile foundation laid by its pioneer chairman, Professor Ayo Ogunsheye. Professor Ogunsheye's effort at diversifying the country's economy started manifesting almost two decades after his demise. For instance, the country through NEPC witnessed a significant improvement in the export prospects of non-oil products in 2006. These included cotton yarns and woven fabrics which had an estimated export value of \$49.955m, constituting 5.22 per cent

of the country's annual export capacity, as projected by the NEPC; sea foods also had an export value of \$50.589m, constituting about 5.28 per cent of total export; aluminium and articles as speculated by NEPC have the capacity to generate about \$41.653m for the country annually, constituting about 4.35 per cent of total export; plastic and polybags were also expected to generate \$17.631m, with a value of 1.84 per cent of total export; cashew nuts and edible fruits were expected to generate \$39.396m, making up about 4.12 per cent of the total export; rubber was projected to generate \$62.7m constituting about 6.13 per cent of total export; processed leather was also estimated to generate \$299.694m with a value of about 23.99 per cent of the country's total trade annually; while cocoa and cocoa preparations were to provide an income of \$215.221m making up about 22.48 per cent of total export.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, in 2008, the export of cocoa and cocoa preparations increased from 22.28 per cent in 2006 to 22.85 per cent, while the exportation of processed leather dropped from 23.99 per cent of total export in 2006 to 18.21 per cent of total export, with other products witnessing slight improvements in their export prospects. Despite the improvement in the export prospects of the country's non-oil products, the vision of Professor Ogunsheye in ensuring the total diversification of the nation's economy still remains a model in our quest to emerge as a nation that does not solely depend on crude oil export. The nation still earns the bulk of her foreign exchange from crude oil export. Between 2009 and 2010 for instance, the country exported 50 per cent of her crude oil to the United States and Brazil, while 50 per cent was exported to other countries in Europe, Asia and South America.<sup>7</sup> Coincidentally, this period also witnessed an unprecedented breakthrough in the export prospects of the nation when the NEPC vigorously harnessed the untapped opportunities embedded in the exportation of yams. The efforts of the NEPC eventually paid off when the nation realized over 70 billion naira from the export of yams in 2009.<sup>8</sup> If Ogunsheye were still alive, he would have been proud that his noble vision for the country was waxing stronger. He was a formidable expert of diversification which the country's manufacturing sector failed to exploit even though he was willing to assist. Two decades after his demise, some aspects of his vision for the nation are manifesting, while some are still far from being realized.

### **Ogunsheye and the Regional Integration of West Africa**

The problem of colonial links which constitutes a major stumbling block to the development of intra-West African trade was identified by the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry during Ogunsheye's tenure as its vice-president. To this end, the chamber under his leadership emphasized the significance of diversifying the nation's economy to enable Nigerian industrialists acquire experience in the production and marketing of their products. This conforms with international marketing practices, serving as a means of stimulating appropriate technological advancement that will improve the standard of industrial products in Nigeria.<sup>9</sup> The need to achieve these conceived objectives through the removal of barriers among member states made the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry under Ogunsheye's leadership identify some of the problems that needed to be surmounted in order to enhance the future prospects of the West African subregion. Some of the problems identified were:

- lack of transport and communication links,
- the prevalent ignorance and sheer bias against manufactured products originating from countries with no colonial links, and
- difficulties in the balance of payment, resulting in severe foreign exchange restrictions in trade.

The recommendations offered by the Ogunsheye-led Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry to ECOWAS and the federal government were incorporated into the policy framework of ECOWAS to accelerate the development of the sub-region.<sup>10</sup>

The noble contribution of Ogunsheye's vision for expanding trade in the West African subregion reflects the current initiatives espoused by ECOWAS to accelerate development in the sub-region. Examples are: the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (TLS) and the Common External Tariff (CET), which were designed to enhance free movement of goods and services in the sub region. The problem of telecommunication that was identified by the Ogunsheye-led Chamber of Commerce and Industry had been temporarily surmounted decades after its identification. Physical integration and infrastructural development projects have been initiated in the area of transport, telecommunications and energy. For instance, in the transport sector,

the construction of West Africa highway network as part of the continental network: trans-coastal from Lagos to Dakar, has been done.<sup>11</sup> In order to facilitate transportation within the sub region as advocated by the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry under Ogunsheye's leadership in 1978, ECOWAS leadership at the dawn of the new millennium, endorsed the plan to create ECOAIR (a regional airline) and ECOMARINE (a regional shipping line).

Ayo Ogunsheye's call for enhanced telecommunication facilities in the sub-region also became manifest when ECOWAS further endorsed the plan to boost the region's telecommunication in order to enhance trade flow among member states. To this end, 'Inter-telecommunication 1' was put in place to connect West African capitals in 2003. All these cannot be divorced from Ogunsheye's vision for the development of West Africa.

Ayo Ogunsheye was an advocate of stable power supply within the country and the West African sub-region as a whole, because he saw that as a pre-condition to formidable industrial development. Unfortunately, two decades after his demise, the country is still battling with the problem of electricity and this has greatly retarded the industrial and marketing capacity of ECOWAS member states. Recognizing that the Nigerian economy remains the bedrock of the region's economic prospects, Nigeria and other West African nations initiated the West African Power Pool to ensure the inter-connectivity of national electricity grids with an installed capacity of 10,000 MW—which is expected to supply the region's energy requirements by 2015.<sup>12</sup> All these are results of the visionary efforts of Ogunsheye toward ensuring the industrialization of Nigeria and West Africa as a whole.

In addition, ECOWAS realized the potential of Ogunsheye's recommendations for the socio-economic development of the sub-region through strategic partnerships. Thus they supported the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in order to appropriate a platform for good political and economic governance capable of sustaining socio-economic development.<sup>13</sup>

### **Administrator and Manager of Resources**

Ayo Ogunsheye's contribution to the socio-economic development of Nigeria was aided by the pivotal role he played during economic recession which befell the country in the 1980s. The oil glut in the 1980s, which caused a decline in the price of crude oil globally, depressed the Nigerian economy because the country's economy was not sufficiently diversified. Fluctuations in price of crude oil made the country vulnerable to economic shocks that were being experienced during that period. One noticeable recommendation that Ogunsheye's team offered under the umbrella of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in 1982, was for a reduction in government spending. This important advice was what propelled successive administrations in Nigeria since the 1980s, to reduce the bloated administrative machinery of government. This trend was further sustained when the country returned to civil rule in 1999, as prudent management of the nation's resources was crucial, especially during the 2008 global economic recession. In addition, the decision of the Federal Government of Nigeria to prepare the 2009 budget which was pegged at \$37 per barrel under a worst case scenario of global oil prices was an idea hatched by Professor Ogunsheye and his team during the oil glut of 1980s.<sup>14</sup>

More than that, the utilization of the country's huge gas deposits which became operational in the mid-1990's was a direct outcome of solutions offered by Ogunsheye and his team during the oil glut era. This was the period when the country was made to recognize the abundant opportunities in the gas sector. The recommendations helped the country borrow a leaf from Indonesia and Algeria who have diversified their economies through maximum utilization of their gas deposits as far back as the 1970s. The country has made a giant stride in the exportation of gas with huge resources accruing to the nation, thereby boosting the nation's foreign exchange earnings. Apart from gas, the incessant problems of refining crude oil for domestic consumption and export, which became intractable in the late 1990's, was identified by Ogunsheye's team in the oil glut era, in which the federal government was advised to embark on the refining of crude oil for export and to also boost domestic consumption as demonstrated by Algeria, Libya and Venezuela. Today, the country still exports her crude oil to other parts of the world, especially the developed economies for

refining. The problem has been aggravated due to the low capacity of the four major refineries to meet domestic consumption, let alone exporting the refined crude oil to other parts of the world.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the decision of the Federal Government to establish the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2000, through a 34-member committee that was inaugurated enabled the petroleum advisory body to harmonize the country's oil policy. This was due to the pioneering role played by the Ogunsheye-led Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry which conceived the need for the country to set up a petroleum advisory body comprising of experts from the private sector, universities and specialized agencies to keep the trend in the oil market with constant review and advise government on oil prices.<sup>16</sup> The establishment of PPPRA which necessitated the need to deregulate the oil sector was also a reflection of Ogunsheye's foresight and intuitive understanding of the Nigerian economy.

As stated earlier, the country's effort to diversify the economy was not unconnected with the significant roles played by Ogunsheye and his team during the oil glut imbroglio of the 1980's. The recommendations made by Ayo and his team in order to alleviate the economic difficulties which the nation was experiencing, drew the attention of the federal government in 1983, to strengthen the Nigerian Export Promotion Council and also, to push Nigerian exports to other parts of West Africa and the world, through information gathering, as this will enable the country discover the import needs of other nations.<sup>17</sup>

This economic depression made the federal government step up its efforts towards economic diversification. To this end, a powerful delegation was sent to the Far-East in May 1983 with Professor Ogunsheye as one of the representatives of the organized private sector. The aim was to explore business opportunities as well as the development of agriculture, agro-allied and medium-scale manufacturing industries in Nigeria. Furthermore, the delegation was saddled with the responsibility of improving Nigeria's trade with countries in the Far East, in order to correct the persistent trade imbalance between Nigeria and such countries, which was a matter of concern for both the government and the private sector.<sup>18</sup> To this end, the mission visited Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Japan and the Soviet Union,

all in a bid to accelerate the diversification and development of the country's non-oil sector.

Two decades after Ogunsheye's demise, his vision for the development of the non-oil sector has been hampered by corruption in the country. For instance, the 2009 corruption perception index released by Transparency International ranked Nigeria as 130 out of 180 countries surveyed. Apart from that, Ogunsheye's abiding concern that a stable power supply is a sine-qua-non to a viable and functional non-oil sector, has been negated by a generator-importing cabal which does not want PHCN to work, thereby creating an unfriendly business climate, capable of discouraging both local and foreign investors.<sup>19</sup> His efforts towards a functional non-oil sector have been stalemated due to lack of serious transformative government policies. Though some improvements were recorded in the agricultural sector—when a breakthrough was made in the export of yam to other parts of the world, opportunities in other aspects of the non-oil sector, however, remain untapped, as the country still operates a mono-economy. For instance, a report by Economic Confidential in 2010 revealed that Nigeria earned ₦34 trillion in 10 years. According to that report, Nigeria earned ₦31 trillion from the oil sector and ₦3 trillion from the non-oil sector between 1999 and 2009. It added that the oil sector accounted for 89.28 per cent of total revenue while the non-oil sector, including solid minerals, generated only 10.72 per cent of the total sum.<sup>20</sup>

Ayo Ogunsheye made various efforts to enhance the efficiency of the manufacturing sector by developing the capacity of other sectors which were expected to provide the raw materials and machinery. These efforts however, have not been fully exploited by the nation in the effort to revamp the non-oil sector two decades after his death. For instance, the Raw Material Research and Development Council (RMRDC) issued a report in 2010, which states that raw materials and other machinery used for industrial processes cost the country over ₦500 billion annually.<sup>21</sup>

Two decades after his exit from this world, the existence of weak institutions in the country is having a deleterious effects on the export potential of Nigeria. The absence of Professor Ogunsheye, his wealth of experience and his uncommon ability to understand issues and provide practical solutions has not helped Nigeria tap into the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA), an economic initiative that was

pioneered by the United States, which allows the exportation of shoes, bags, clothes made from African fabrics as well as other consumable goods into the US market without tariff until 2015.

Ayo Ogunsheye understood that to ensure a friendly business climate in a country, adequate security for both local and foreign industrialists must be in place. He therefore advocated that the law enforcement agencies be adequately equipped with sophisticated weapons in order to deal with the perpetrators of heinous crimes in the country.<sup>22</sup> As early as 1983, the Nigerian Association of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) with Ayo Ogunsheye as a key member, suggested that the recruitment level of police personnel be raised, and higher remunerations attached so as to attract young school leavers and university graduates into the force. NACCIMA further suggested an upgrading of the Nigeria Police through the supply of computer facilities and vehicles, especially cars and motorcycles.

Furthermore, the concept of community policing partly emanated from Ogunsheye and his colleagues in NACCIMA and this has been a debatable point in the country since the return of the country to civil rule in 1999. Ogunsheye appreciated the significance of community policing as a way to enthrone an effective neighbourhood security system which will in turn encourage the development of the industrial sector which is the key to proper diversification of the Nigerian economy. The contemporary restructuring and refurbishing of the Nigeria Police, which is an ongoing programme, also embraces recruiting quality personnel. All these ideas were mooted by Professor Ogunsheye and his associates at who had a noble dream for the nation's economy.

The current state of security in the country remains fragile and has turned the hitherto friendly business climate of the country into a dangerous zone for investors and prospective investors, especially in the manufacturing and industrial sectors.<sup>23</sup>

Concerning smuggling, the Ogunsheye-led Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry made positive projections on how to curb this criminal activity, that has greatly retarded the growth of the manufacturing sector. One of the recommendations given by the chamber under his tutelage in 1983, was for the establishment of a special unit in Nigerian Customs. Such a special unit he proposed,

should be saddled with the obligation of curbing the nefarious activities of smugglers operating along the country's borders. Further recommendations were made that members of the special squad be given appropriate incentives and handsome rewards to curb the corrupt tendencies of members to the barest minimum. Members of such special customs teams should also be re-posted periodically to reduce the possibility of complacency and corruption.

The impact of these positive recommendations can be seen in the decision taken by the Nigerian government to put in place a special task force in the late 1990's, that was made up of the Nigerian Custom, the Nigeria Police and those of Benin Republic, at Seme border, to ensure that the activities of smugglers are checkmated. Though this initiative has not yielded the expected result, smugglers who were initially having a field day, are now facing tough times not only at the Seme border, but at other boundaries that the country shares with its neighbours. The customs department has also utilized his recommendation on the need to constantly check containers with special equipment, especially those containers that were known to have been used for smuggling in the past.<sup>24</sup> One of the positive impacts of these recommendations was the frequent discovery of containers loaded with arms and ammunition. For instance, the discovery of containers loaded with arms on the eve of the 2011 general elections by the Nigerian Customs in Apapa, Lagos, and the one loaded with cocaine in which some Chinese nationals were indicted. Unfortunately, some of the foreigners who are involved in smuggling, are not always prosecuted by the appropriate authorities, thereby contravening Ogunsheye's recommendation about declaring foreigners involved as *personae non-grata* and proscribing as well as prosecuting those companies and their internal collaborators, respectively.

### **Ayo Ogunsheye's Vision and the Birth of Modern Lagos**

The oil glut of the 1980's no doubt created a turbulent period in Nigeria as most states were unable to shoulder their financial obligations vis-à-vis their day to day administration. This economic predicament also affected Lagos State, but Ogunsheye's uncommon ingenuity and that of his team at the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry offered useful suggestions to the state government to ease the financial downturn. The first noticeable suggestion was the reduction of the

state's budget for the 1983 financial year, so as to cope with the realities of that time. This position was further reiterated in 1984 when the state government, then under the military was still providing two free social services initiated by the civilian government of Alhaji Lateef Jakande: free education and free health services. The government was advised to cut expenses incurred in carrying out these two social services. However, some critics in Lagos objected to this recommendation; it was perceived as anti-people; one capable of depriving the down-trodden in the society of fundamental social services that sustain their living and give them a sense of belonging as citizens.

### **Private Sector Business and Government**

Lagos State, which constituted about 67 per cent of total industrial investment in the country during this period, was able to attract both local and foreign investors to invest in the state, especially during the oil glut era. To this end, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry advised the state government to always collaborate with the organized private sector on matters of mutual interest and to participate in the work of certain agencies, including the Industrial Promotion Committee and the Committee on Infrastructural facilities. The belief was that the organized private sector could contribute immensely to the formation of policies and strategies for the rapid economic development of the state.<sup>25</sup> During this period, efforts at accelerating the industrial development of the state through the construction of a metro line that was capable of bringing goods produced by industries closer to communities was made, with the hope of expanding the market potential of these industries and employment generation for 'Lagosians'.

Recent happenings in Lagos show that Ogunsheye's dream for Lagos is becoming reality. The Ahmed Tinubu administration laid the foundation of this dream, while its implementation was carried out by the Raji Fashola administration. The metro line has been created from Badagry to CMS since the Fashola administration commenced in May 2007. This goes to show that Ayo Ogunsheye was one man that saw the future prospects of Lagos State during his life time.

More than that, the ability of Lagos to ensure sufficient water supplies cannot be isolated from previous efforts of Ogunsheye and his team in 1984. The recognition of the need to maintain constant water supply in the state propelled Ayo and his team to point-out that water

distribution in the state did not reach the people, and that the 110 million gallons provided on a daily basis, from the Ogun/Oshun River Basin Development Authority remained inadequate. This advice propelled the state government to enter into a loan agreement to finance its new mini-water work project.<sup>26</sup> Contemporary Lagos now boasts of an organized water corporation named Lagos State Water Corporation (LSWC), an organization that has sustained effective water distribution to 'Lagosians'. Though it was established in 1980 through the formation of the Lagos State Water Board, the recommendations given by Ayo and his colleagues in the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the need to increase water distribution in the state so as to encourage the growth of industries in Lagos, especially small-scale industries, encouraged the state government to officially back up the formation of LSWC, with an enabling edict in 1985 so as to key into the vision of the chamber under the leadership of Ogunsheye. Today, the teeming population and industries in Lagos are benefiting from the water scheme, with industries springing up in the state since the era of the Tinubu administration, at a rate higher than that of any other state in Nigeria.

The planting of trees which has taken a centre stage in the consciousness of Lagos State since the beginning of Fashola's administration in 2007, is not unconnected with recommendations made by Ayo and his colleagues that Lagos State must sustain a hygienic environment to boost its tourism potentials. They also stated that beverage-producing industries who need hygienic environments to operate smoothly will be encouraged to set up factories, especially in collaboration with the state government. The state was also advised to partner with the organized private sector on the issue of waste, which threatened its ambition of achieving a clean and hygienic environment.

The state has effectively accomplished this feat. For instance, the Tinubu administration initiated the Private Sector Partnership (PSP) programme on waste disposal in the state. Lagos State is wearing a new look today, because of the visionary contributions of Ogunsheye.

The administrative savvy of the Lagos State Government in managing the chaotic traffic situation that abounds in the state since the dawn of the millennium, is also highly traceable to Ogunsheye's vision for the state. In 1984, he advised the state government to establish a water transportation scheme, as a means of easing traffic

congestion in the state; the state failed to act on the suggestion but its relevance became manifest at the dawn of the new millennium when Ogunsheye's visionary proposal on traffic de-congestion was revisited. Ogunsheye also recommended the creation of an institution capable of managing the challenges of high density traffic control. These are indeed steps in the right direction because his contributions have become the fundamental pillar upon which traffic management of contemporary Lagos rests. For instance, the establishment of Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) by the Tinubu administration in 2001 reflects the foresightedness of the late professor. Lagos has become the best organized state in terms of traffic management, and this has not only attracted investors into the state, but has facilitated the distribution of manufactured goods as espoused.

In addition, the idea of revamping water transportation under Fashola's administration in order to reduce the burden of Lagosians and investors was an integral part of Ogunsheye's contribution to ensuring the free flow of traffic in the state which in the long-run will enhance the economic potential of the state. In 2007, the Ministry of Tourism under Fashola's administration with Senator Tokunbo Afikuyomi as the honorable commissioner was mandated to accelerate the development of water transportation, and since then, positive developments have taken place as Lagosians now ply the CMS-Ikorodu route using ferries that were supplied by the state government, in order to revive the hitherto emasculated sector. The implication of this is that Lagos State has generated more revenue and more investors have also been attracted to the state. Lagos State is now the only state in the country with the highest internally generated revenue (IGR) of about ₦10 billion monthly as at 2007, with a substantial increase in its IGR capacity since the beginning of the Fashola administration. These are the manifestations of Ayo Ogunsheye's vision of the development of a centre of excellence in contemporary Nigeria.

The proscription of street trading which gained momentum since the evolvement of the Fashola administration in Lagos state in 2007 can also be traced to the visionary proposals of Ogunsheye. Ayo foresaw the importance of a friendly atmosphere in promoting viable economic activities; this formed part of the submissions made by him and his cohorts in the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry. As far back as 1983, street trading had been going on without effective check.

Though the precarious economic situation of that time was also taken into consideration by Ayo and his team, as the government of that time was made to see the importance of establishing new, affordable markets for street traders. With this arrangement, it was believed that street trading will reduce to a minimal level in the city of Lagos. It was further suggested that such markets should be leased out at affordable rates to traders, and all loans were to enjoy low interest rates. To this end, petty trading will reduce the rate of unemployment caused by the global economic recession of that time.

Another motive to ban or reduce street hawking, it that it will reduce traffic congestion, which had previously impeded the free flow of traffic and economic activities in Lagos. Two decades after Ogunsheye's death, his laudable proposals have manifested. For instance, the creation of Lagos Microfinance Bank by the Fashola administration in 2008, lends credence to Ayo's effort at creating employment opportunities for the teeming population in the state through the bank's lending service.

Street trading, which had always proved difficult to eradicate, has now become a thing of the past in Lagos. For instance, the Oshodi and Yaba markets street trading was a clear-cut indication of a dream that was conceived by him in seeing Lagos as a megacity whose economic potentials can be fully exploited through total transformation. As stated earlier, the unpalatable traffic situation that hitherto defied solutions especially in Oshodi and Yaba areas, as a result of perennial increase in the population of the state, has been curbed to the barest minimum if not totally suppressed. The Oshodi and Yaba scenarios show that one of the banes of smooth traffic in the state is street trading. Today, these two areas are free from traffic congestion due to the outlawing of street trading.

The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry also believed in the dictum that 'a healthy population contributes significantly to economic growth'. To this end, a proposal was made to the then civilian government of Alhaji Lateef Jakande to safeguard the health of Lagosians through the establishment of an ultra modern abattoir at the outskirts of Agege.<sup>27</sup> The establishment of an ultra-modern hygienic abattoir in the Agege area of the state, with sophisticated and modern machines put in place, has provided safe meat products for a large segment of the population.

Ayo Ogunsheye's incomparable initiative as the pioneer chairman of the organising committee of the Education Endowment Fund in Lagos state in 1984, reflects the significance of his remarkable footprint in the sands of time. The Education Endowment Fund has not only been sustained in the area of education, it has also spread its tentacles to the sports sector. In fact, other bodies have been established to complement the efforts of the Education Endowment Fund. These bodies were created as integral parts of the fund. One of these bodies is the Lagos State Sports Endowment Fund which collaborated with corporate bodies to host Corporate Games West Africa, which was held between March 24 and 27, 2011, in Lagos, with about thirty corporate bodies participating in the sporting event. The games featured eleven sports including tennis, volleyball, basketball, badminton, beach soccer, 5-a-side soccer, table tennis, running, golf and squash. The rationale behind organizing this memorable event was to provide an avenue for corporate bodies to connect and unite, which will not only enhance human capital development but also develop industries in the sub-region.<sup>28</sup> With all these, it can be unambiguously and incontrovertibly stated that Ayo Ogunsheye was one of those architects that laid the foundation of the building of a modern Lagos.

### **An Incomparable Contributor to the Growth of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Economic Diversification**

The emergence of Ayo Ogunsheye as the president of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1983 marked a watershed in the history of the chamber to date. As stated in the previous chapters, Professor Ogunsheye's moment of glory came in 1986 when he used his good office as the national vice-president of NACCIMA to get the approval of the federal government to allow the Lagos chamber to take over the organization of the Lagos International Trade Fair in that year. Since then, the Lagos chamber has put a lot of work into organising the trade fair that it is not only known in Nigeria, but in West Africa and the world at large. Since his demise in 1990, the Lagos Trade Fair has become one of the fundamental variables that have encouraged the growth of the manufacturing sector, as small scale producers have increased their capacity to sustain the growth of the sector. The chamber has been able to collaborate with internationally affiliated bodies in order to boost its international image and to increase the

economic potential of the nation. For instance, the British Chamber of Commerce participated in the 2010 Lagos International Trade Fair organized by the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The trade exhibition, which took place at the Trade Fair Complex along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway, between 5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> November 2010, was attended by Mr Robin Gwynn, the British Deputy High Commissioner, while Mr Duro Lakalu, the deputy president of the chamber, represented Mr Akinola Akintunde, the president of the chamber. This collaborative effort was a step in the right direction because the chamber, in collaboration with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), organized a Trade Exhibition and Investment Conference in the UK between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> November 2010. The exhibitions were held in the cities of London, Birmingham and Coventry, with the acting Nigerian High Commissioner, Ambassador Dozie Nwana (CON) and the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Senator Jubril Martins Kuye, as well as many other dignitaries from Nigeria and Britain in attendance.<sup>29</sup> One may not be out of place to submit that the giant strides achieved by the chamber and the international image which it enjoys, are products of Professor Ayo Ogunsheye and his teams's pioneering efforts. Fortunately, his death has not made the organization, which he selflessly served during his life time, to go moribund.

On the other hand, the diversification of the economy which Ayo Ogunsheye and his team championed during his lifetime has continued to take a centre stage not only in the consciousness of the country's leadership, but also in international bodies that were established to accelerate the development of the continent.

Ogunsheye's concern about the restructuring of the agricultural sector has provoked other initiatives from the federal government. For instance, the first, second and the third National Fadama Development Projects were the effects of the laudable contributions of the likes of Professor Ogunsheye. The Third National Fadama Development Project that is currently being undertaken by the federal government was the consolidation of Fadama 1 and Fadama 2. The proposed project supports the government's objective to enhance growth in other sectors of the economy apart from the oil sector, in order to achieve increased food security, reduce poverty and create employment opportunities, with improved opportunities in rural areas.

The Fadama 3 project was also designed to sustain the New Agricultural Policy (NAP) and the Rural Sector Strategy (RSS), Strategic Investment Programme. These initiatives were hatched in partnership with the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), with 30 Local Government Areas as possible beneficiaries in 19 states of the federation.<sup>30</sup> The Fadama 3 project, which was designed to be implemented over a five-year period, from July 2008 to June 2013, has helped to reduce the vulnerability of the poor and the physically challenged, as well as the development of rural communities. The programme also takes into cognizance capacity building for local governments, which helps to enthrone effective service delivery to rural communities.<sup>31</sup> Grants are currently being channelled through government at the state level, with the hope of assisting farmers/pastoralists and other economic interest groups, which in turn will help sustain the economic diversification of the nation.<sup>32</sup>

The diversification of the country's economy, as proposed by Professor Ogunsheye under Fadama 3, has also been sustained by the federal government through strategic partnership with reputable research institutes within and outside the country. For instance, contacts have been established with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the West African Rice Development Association (WARDA), and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), to develop technical propositions/ recommendations on crop, livestock and other activities, and to also respond to problems and constraints identified by farmers. The production and the development of non-traditional crops such as vanilla, macadamia, ginger, gum Arabica, pepper, flowers etc have been intensified to ensure total diversification of the non-oil sector of the economy.<sup>33</sup> These developments are the legacies of Professor Ogunsheye, a leading advocate of economic diversification in his lifetime. Some of his visions for the non-oil sector are still pipe dream attempts because they have been squandered on the altar of lip service declarations and due to lack of commitment from major stakeholders and the government. Nevertheless, Ogunsheye's dream of a diversified economy cannot be said to be totally dead due to the impact of some of his contributions, two decades after his demise.

### **The Trade Unionist**

Professor Ogunsheye's positive contributions to nation-building cannot be limited to the economic sphere because his activities cut across all strata of our national life. He first came into limelight as the Assistant Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Teachers, after a spell as a teacher in a Roman Catholic school in Lagos and was able to distinguish himself due to his intellectual prowess. His experience, first as a teacher, and later as a trade unionist, protecting the interest of teachers, gave him an insight into the problems facing workers in Nigeria, namely, the need for continuing education for workers, as well as the inadequacy of their remuneration in relation to the cost of living in the country. The outcome was the thrust of the workers memoranda laid before the Tudor Davies Commission, which he presented on behalf of the Supreme Council of Nigeria Workers in 1946. This move compelled the colonial government to instruct the Colonial Office Commission to work out modalities on Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) for Nigerian workers.<sup>34</sup>

One other area where Ayo Ogunsheye brought his influence to bear on trade unionism was his advocacy for continuing education. He was a fierce advocate for continuing education so that teachers and workers at all levels, as well as trade union leaders can upgrade their educational levels. The extra-mural classes he championed, first for Lagos, and which he later established in various parts of the federation, were designed to enable youths acquire higher educational qualifications---GCE, Higher School Certificate(HSC) ---and qualify for admission into universities in Nigeria and abroad. As director of the Extra-Mural Department, University of Ibadan, he established these classes all over Nigeria. Many of them became university organized courses and later, Departments of Adult Education of other universities, featuring adult education programmes. In Ibadan, under his leadership, the Extra-Mural Department became an academic department, offering courses for trade union workers and agricultural extension workers.

Ayo Ogunsheye also introduced literacy classes and functional literacy programmes for farmers and agricultural extension workers, who were to give farmers information on improved methods of cultivation. He even established an Institute of Adult Education with the help of UNESCO, which organized functional literacy programmes

for cocoa and rice farmers, with periodic publications in order to reduce the illiteracy level among farmers.

The agricultural sector was, however, neglected because of the discovery of oil, a more lucrative commodity, in Nigeria. Many of the programmes designed to increase the level of literacy among farmers collapsed with the neglect of agriculture. Even the laudable farm settlements in the south-western part of the country became deserted enclaves, left to be reclaimed by the jungle. Some of these are now being recovered under new government policies to stimulate agriculture. The Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, also has plans to reactivate the Institute of Adult Education and institute relevant programmes in support of farmers and functional literacy programmes.<sup>35</sup>

### **Trade Union Efforts of Ayo Ogunsheye**

The trade union efforts of Ayo Ogunsheye have continued to bear fruit two decades after his departure. There are now strong trade unions in Nigeria. Many of their leaders are now well educated. A labour party to reckon with is now in place. The trade union movement has succeeded in giving Nigeria its first Labour Party governor, in person of Comrade Adams Oshiomole of Edo State, who was a trade union leader under the umbrella of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) before contesting for governorship position on the platform of the Action Congress (now called Action Congress of Nigeria) in 2007. Another Labour Party candidate, Dr Olusegun Mimiko, emerged as the Governor of Ondo State, under the umbrella of the Labour Party (LP) after reclaiming his stolen mandate in 2009. If the political terrain encourages a level playing field in future elections in the country, the Labour Party may produce more candidates for the National Assembly and the State Houses of Assembly.

### **The Political Activist**

Although Ayo was never a card-carrying member of any political party in Nigeria, he worked closely with the Action Group, helping to write the manifestos of the party, and even, the daily election news published as part of the election campaign. He worked on the various committees that Chief Awolowo inaugurated, which served as the latter's

intellectual think thank of developmental programmes for the Western Region. Were he to resurrect now, he would be disturbed by the disarray, the lack of leadership and by the discordant voices in the South West and the country at large. The arrest of Awolowo and his detention came as a shock to Ayo. He never envisaged the collapse of the Action Group and the split that now exists even in the Awoist group.

Objectively, Ayo Ogunsheye would have been disturbed by the brazenness with which corruption is being perpetrated by our political leaders today, and saddened by the type of democracy that we are operating as a nation. The adult educator, who operated in all parts of Nigeria, from Kano to Lagos, from Ibadan to Enugu, whose best man at his wedding was Fetepigi, a Rivers man, would have been uncomfortable with the shrinking frontiers of loyalty and patriotism in present day Nigeria. He would have been saddened by the religious, intra-tribal and inter-ethnic conflicts that currently threaten the concept of one Nigeria. Beneath this gloomy picture, his contributions to nation building will continue to be a subject of positive debate in the political history of the country. Today, the appointments of tested technocrats by politicians and other public office holders could be greatly connected to Ayo's exploits in the formulation and the implementation of progressive policies of the governments that he selflessly served.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Educationist**

Ayo was an educationist par excellence. He believed that education had the power to transform a person from a village boy to a world renowned scholar; an illiterate community into an enlightened elite group; a primary source community i.e., farming, hunting, fishing or nomadic nation into a manufacturing and industrial nation. His trail-blazing exploits in the academia made him contribute to the development of education in the country before joining the business world. To this end, he organized series of workshops and conferences to educate various groups on various subjects or topics to prepare the nation for change. Apart from his immense contributions to the business world, it is on record that between 1954 and 1961, he organized workshops, seminars and conferences on issues that engendered deepening of democracy, economic reform and other tasks of nation building. Today, these issues still remain debatable points in Nigeria, even as the culture of

sensitizing the citizens through seminars and conferences, on how to face the challenges of nation building, can be said to have emanated from the pioneering role played by Ayo during the formative years of Nigeria as a country.<sup>37</sup>

The seminar on self government, which he organized in 1959, and the one, on the role of the press in West Africa, further stimulated the spirit of agitation among Nigerians and other West African nations to eject the colonial progenitors. This also provided Nigerians and other West African nations the opportunity to examine and study the federal and other systems of government and the role of the press in West Africa. (Jones Quartey and Herbert :Passim) The conferences, seminars and workshops were all designed to prepare the stakeholders for making appropriate decisions on national issues. He really believed in continuing lifelong education. He was always getting himself educated on subjects before organizing a programme . Before embarking on agricultural extension courses in preparation for training agricultural extension personnel, he took his young family with him to Holland for a special program for agriculturists. He also had a spell in India to study their unique experiment in small-scale industrial centres. Similarly, he went to Brazil to have a first-hand study of oil prospecting, when Henry Stephens obtained a concession to prospect oil in the Niger Delta.<sup>38</sup>

The workshop /seminar syndrome in Nigeria seems to be one of the legacies Ayo left behind for the civil service. One would have wished that they were follow up projects that would have made the difference to the developmental process on ground, as he did in his functional literacy project for improving the performance skill of cocoa Farmers. Recently, there's a renewed interest by the Federal Government to make the agricultural sector productive by linking it with the industrial sector, as this is capable of moving the nation to a favourable pedestal of a diversified economy as advocated by Ayo during his life time. One also hopes that the continuing education of the real farmers will be given primary and continuing attention. The adult education programme that he pioneered during the 1965/1966 session has become the fulcrum of national policies of the country. The Federal Government in 1998 put in place the National Policies on Education (NPE), in order to accelerate development through active participation of adults in the decision making machinery of the country.<sup>39</sup> Today,

adult education has become an important tool for sustaining continuing education for different categories of people that have completed their formal education which has greatly increased their basic knowledge and skills in their various professions. The Federal Government has adequately sustained the development of adult education through proper funding in recent years.<sup>40</sup> Ogunsheye's contributions played pioneering roles in recent developments in the education sector.

### **The Humanist**

The Ogunsheye Foundation Library reflects the humanist in Ayo Ogunsheye. It consists of over 10,000 books and reports and various disciplines of knowledge, but largely on social science and humanities. The collection reflects the intellectual ferment that took place in Nigeria in the fifties and sixties. He also had a large collection of classical music records, art paintings of Ben Enwonwu, Emokpai, Fakeye and art works representing the best in art of modern Nigerian artists. Some of these were given to the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, when the neighbourhood youths began to raid the collection. Some of them were festival drums, ritual artifacts of Ifa and Sango, heavy with traditional 'pagan' worship connotations, having been supplied by travelling salesmen of the period, who obtained them from shrines of the traditional gods. Some of them were documented as national art works that must not be allowed to leave Nigeria. He also sponsored the establishment of the Mbari Art Centres in Western Region.<sup>41</sup> The Osun Osogbo groove, which he assisted Ulli Beir and Susanne Wenger to establish in Western Nigeria, became a UNESCO-recognized World Black Heritage Monument in 2005. This global recognition which the country attained through Osun Osogbo was part of positive contributions of Ayo to cultural development of Nigeria.

Ayo was also a lover of music. His classical music collection on wax records rose up to 2000 items. They included the greats of Western culture Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Hadyn Mozart, Sibelius to name a few. He and some friends started one of the first music society in Ibadan. They held and sponsored music concerts in the sixties in Ibadan. He also organized film festivals as part of the department's programmes to bring the world's arts and culture in the area of the cinema to the Nigerian public. The classical music culture did not seem to have caught on in Ibadan outside Lagos. The Muson Centre which

has been home to the Music Society of Nigeria holds music concerts by inviting some foreign music groups occasionally. These groups, however, sustained the trend during this period. Pop music and local artists of traditional music and church praise worship music seem to dominate the music in Nigeria today, two decades after Ogunsheye's demise. This may, however, be following a world trend. Ayo's son Segun, who is an engineer in Scotland, became a DJ on Radio Clyde in the seventies; he amassed a collection of wax records freely deposited at his doorstep by those who wanted to advertise their new release. Segun's collection of records exceeded his father's collection, but were all pop music of the period.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Business Executive**

*Those Who Can Do, Do. Those Who Cant Do, Teach.*

*I Want to See If I Can Do As Well As Teach.*

This was Ayo's jovial reply to those who questioned him, why he wanted to blaze the trail as a scholar in the business world. His real reason was well-documented in an article he wrote lamenting the fact that African business ventures tend to collapse after the death of their founding fathers citing the nineteenth century Nigerian business men, Da Rocha, Thomas and others, who ruled as captains of industries in Lagos. His thesis rested on the fact that they failed to put in place modern structures that can encourage viable economic ventures run by skilled professionals that will enable them to go public and invite investors to buy shares into their companies. Instead, they remained family ventures for sharing at the demise of their founders. Ayo was hoping he could demonstrate his administrative and managerial qualities by making Henry Stephens an exception to the rule if he took the offer that Chief Henry Fajemirokun offered him to prove his premise. As hinted in previous chapters, there was great opposition in academic circles and the family on his decision. Ayo succeeded in transforming Henry Stephens into a credible conglomerate after seventeen years as the executive director, building up the professional staff for the various companies, putting in place trade union regulations for proper management/labour relations, and establishing new companies like Rank Zerox. He however failed to persuade Chief Fajemirokun on the need for Henry Stephens to go public before his death in 1978.<sup>43</sup>

### **His Contributions to the Growth of O'dua Investments**

When Ayo Ogunsheye became the chairman of the Odua conglomerate, he encouraged the establishment of manufacturing industries in his home town Ile Oluji. These are the cocoa processing industry and the wood manufacturing Industry. These industries relied heavily on raw products of farmers in the town and exploiting the hardwood forests for lumbering industries. Twenty years after, they are not only making cocoa cakes for export, they are making cocoa beverage which is adjudged to be one of the best tasting cocoa beverages in Nigeria. It is hoped that with improved packaging they can compete on the world market. The processing and manufacturing of cocoa beverages have boosted the country's export potential and has created more jobs for our youth. Thus, Ile Oluji remains a vibrant growing town.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Nigeria of His Dreams**

It could be asserted that the significant roles played by Professor Ayo Ogunsheye cut-across the socio-political and economic aspects of Nigeria. These goals were geared towards evolving a nation that will be stable economically and politically, a nation where economic empowerment of the citizenry would be guaranteed through formulation and implementation of transformative policies by competent bureaucracies at all levels, a country whose leadership will see human capital development as an unavoidable index of development with the expansion of local industries. Ayo's dream for Nigeria was to see Nigeria developing progressively, a country whose status and stature was comparable to other developed nations.

The vision of Professor Ogunsheye was for the nation to evolve a credible leadership that will engender policies capable of transforming all facets of life, especially the diversification of the economy which in his estimation would have positive multiplier effects on the nation's growth. He also envisaged a transparent leadership on the eve of independence, a leadership that is capable of steering the affairs of the country by moving it from the valley of despair and hopelessness to the mountain of hope. Unfortunately, all these laudable visions were not comprehensively achieved during Ayo's life time because of the self-centeredness of the country's leadership. He would have been even more saddened by the level of corruption that has become a monstrous nightmare for the nation.

Furthermore, he was anticipating the evolution of a nation where corruption would be curbed to the barest minimum if not eradicated through selfless service by those occupying public office. A nation where the political terrain will not be hostile through the enthronement of level playing field, where credibility will not be sacrificed on the altar of politics and ethnicity. Unfortunately, all these dreams are not manifesting due to leadership problems that the nation has been facing since independence. Transformative policies that were suggested by Ogunsheye and his contemporaries which would have transformed the nation have been squandered on the altar of lip service declarations, lack of commitment and corruption by the political leadership. All the unpleasant happenings like lack of adequate security, unemployment, poverty, corruption and, above all, a do-or-die approach to politics are stagnating the nation. If Ayo had not passed away at a relatively young age, maybe some of his dreams would have been realized through his consistent agitation for transformative programmes capable of moving the nation forward. Unfortunately, the cold hand of death took him away in 1990, and all of these dreams have become a mirage.

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