

LG Needs Autonomy To Perform Efficiently– Hon Tirsell

By [CHIBUZO UKAIBE](#),

SOME OF YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE CLAMOURING FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT, IS IT NOT SUDDEN?

Well, I don't want to believe that we amend the Constitution every now and then. The Constitution is amended only when there is need and it usually comes from members of the public. As long as the good people of Nigeria want to amend it, we would look into it and see where we are convinced and make an amendment; that is why from time to time we visit our Constitution to see how it will suit the taste of time.

MANY PEOPLE ARE OF THE VIEW THAT SEPARATING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FROM THE STATE WOULD GIVE IT AUTONOMY AND BRING ABOUT THE DESIRED DEVELOPMENT TO THE GRASSROOTS, WHAT IS YOUR VIEW?



Yes, I agree that if they are given autonomy, they will do better. I was a local government chairman and I knew what we went through. If actually we are operating a true federalism; I don't see why local government should not be given her full autonomy to operate. Also, if we believe that we have three tiers of government, it should have its own autonomy. The federal government has its own autonomy; no one interferes with what happens at the federal level or at the state. The local government should have same, even though there is always need for checks and balances on both tiers of government. So, I am of the view that the local government should be given her full autonomy to operate as a tier of government.

BUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHAIRMEN ARE CONSIDERED AS THE MOST CORRUPT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WITH THE MANNER THEY EMBEZZLE PUBLIC FUND, WHAT IS YOUR VIEW?

I don't want to agree to that. I am aware that some of these local governments are being stressed up by other tiers of government. I think they are being informed on how to use government funds; I don't see how one would go there and play with funds or do certain things that it would not be checked. So I don't believe that the local government is a place where people go and

waste funds without doing any work. We are coming from the grassroots and we have seen what the local governments are doing to better the lives of the rural people. As we all know, it is the closest government to the grassroots, so I don't think that impression is right.

MANY GEO-POLITICAL ZONES ARE AGITATING FOR ADDITIONAL STATES TO THE EXISTING ONE TO ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRY, ARE YOU IN SUPPORT OF IT?

Well, in my own personal view, I don't believe that the creation of more states would enhance development in this country. I think there are other issues that need to be addressed than just creating more states, because creating more states would bring about more problems as far as I am concerned. It is like getting the same resources meant for a state and shared among other states created from it. So I don't see that as development, even though it has its advantage in terms of employment which is one of our major problems in the country. I don't see this country doing better if more states are created. So I am of the opinion that we should manage the few states we have and solve the problems of our economy other than just state creation.

OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS ON THE FALL ON A DAILY BASIS, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE GOVERNMENT TO REVERSE THIS UGLY TREND?

It is true that the standard of education has drastically fallen in this country. We are worried to the point that we have taken up the issue even here in the House. Right now as I am talking to you, the House Committee on Education is handling the matter. No one is happy about the new development in our educational sector. We are also aware that the sector is lacking many things. For instance, if you go to some of our schools, you would discover that some of the infrastructural facilities and other things needed to enhance learning are lacking, especially in the public schools. Gone are the days when public schools produce good results.

I'm a product of public school, unlike now that public schools are getting worse and worse every day. I don't want to blame the teachers, government doesn't seem to do more to the public schools; teachers should be motivated with certain entitlements as at when due, and priority is also paramount. That is why I appreciate the governor of Ondo State. We were in Ondo State for a one-week retreat and I saw what the governor did there; I was very impressed. I think it's just a matter of priority.

I also learnt that in Ondo State, most people are begging to take off their children from private schools to the public schools; he has experts from outside managing the public schools in Ondo State. So if other governors can do that, the federal government should equally emulate that. I think it will go a long way in helping our educational system. So, a lot need to be done to our schools because we are really lacking behind, look at countries around us, they are better than us in education. Ghana is excellent when we talk of education. So we need to do more, but more importantly let's privatise our educational sector so that we can move forward.

WOULD APPOINTING A RETIRED JUDGE OVER A RETIRED POLICE OFFICER TO HEAD THE EFCC HELP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION?

Well, I don't know what it takes to appoint the EFCC chairman, but as far as I am concerned, I think if one is experienced and have the desired leadership quality, such one can be appointed. It's just like legislation because it deals mostly with the Constitution; people now believe lawyers are best for the job. But we are drawn from all fields of life and I don't think the lawyers are better in issues like this. So I don't see it as something that serious, it must not be a Judge, anyone can do it. There are policemen who can equally do the job. Farida Waziri is a retired police officer and she is doing her best; Ribadu did same.