

Executive Mansion Nails *Daily Observer's* Preposterous Editorial: Brands It as Objectively Inept

"Government Holds the Peace in Its Own Hands, Mr. Minister"

A REJOINDER

"We used to think that if we knew one, we knew two, because one and one are two. We are finding that we must learn a great deal more about "and." ~Arthur Stanley Eddington

The pursuit of "nothing but the obtainable version of the truth" is a fundamental encapsulation of the sacred cannon of responsible journalism. But when the trappings of age, wisdom and experience are canopied mischievously and tend to ignore the truth holistically – we find ourselves wanting in this day and age.

There is no such thing as "western version of journalistic objectivity, balance, impartiality and social responsibility". The theoretical, academic and scholarly intrigues are virtually the same no matter where on planet earth we are located. If the folks incensed by typically western mentality vaguely write and "liken all Liberians to rebels" – would that be a fair assessment? No! Because it amounts to a parochial generalization as it were.

Judging Liberia's Justice Minister Benedict Sannoh on account of: "has not made too many public statements since his appointment several months ago; so there are not many of us who know exactly where he stands on national and international issues" – is a non-issue. Introspection is an essential part of the business of journalism. Simply put – the *Daily Observer* should have mustered the professional courage to engage Minister Sannoh.

Does it have to come from the Minister of Justice to the effect that: "the threat to peace in Liberia was not external, but internal" in order to wear the garment of believability? The *Daily Observer* – as an integral part of the Fourth Estate of the realm needs no schooling as such. The media cover extensively the actions and inactions that affect our lives as ordinary people, society, country and government.

The issues that abound are contextualized through their various editorials. What then is new or simply it comes from the Justice Minister? The Minister was simply re-echoing some of the complex issues being created by the very media especially when social responsibility becomes elusive. How could the *Daily Observer* on the one hand suggest the Minister is right but goes on to question whether he knows what the daily purportedly means? Isn't that contradicting to say the least?

In an oblivious celebrated style – the *Daily Observer* has become a "Tutor" in the business of "Political Governance" in Liberia. Quite a welcoming development - though. "The peace is firmly in the government's hands because it has to do, as always, with how government handles and utilizes the country's resources—human, financial and policy resources."

The essence of scholarly engagement must consistently have a compelling empirical foundation. The moment we begin by scrambling thought – we defeat the thrust of such academic effort. The *Daily Observer* attempts to obscurely identify Liberia's primary problem "from time immemorial but falls short in noting specificity. The Editorial has blatantly done injustice to its audience already.

The Editorial, while seeking to make a historical antecedent argues: "Remember, from the very beginning, how one of the MAJOR resources—the ballot—was denied the indigenous majority". What is the point after all? In sharp contradiction – this country went to elections in 1997, 2005, 2011 – where choices were made – not on

the basis of “indigenous versus settlers”. The troubling issue of *peace* is even the more tempered with by the *Daily Observer’s* editorial that has reawakened same in its so-called analysis. By using “indigenous” in context suggests division and so how does the Observer intend to contribute to our peace by being “divisive”? Remember state radio in Rwanda and how it was used to impact the ‘genocide’ in that country. Alluding to the ‘ballot’ as a contributing factor: “That marked both the beginning of the Republic and the problem” – without discussing the complexities at the time was a disservice to the many avid readers of the *Daily Observer*. Ironically, the *Daily Observer* is apparently suggesting - “We have always applauded the Constitutional Convention, chaired by S. Benedict, and Joseph Jenkins Roberts, our first President, for taking the historic and herculean initiative of establishing Africa’s first independent Republic.” So, who is doing the applauding? Could it be those disenfranchised?

Could it be political commentators including the *Daily Observer*? The *Daily Observer* pontificates: “But one of the cardinal mistakes they made was to deny the *indigenous majority* the ballot—and that lasted for over a century, until the 1980s. If ‘peace’ is supposedly linked to ‘resources...’ we are baffled in content and context – what is the *Observer’s* own message as a messenger that the ‘indigenous majority’ was denied the ballot dating more than a century. There is something fundamentally amiss, which is obscurely not connecting the dots as it were.

Conversely the *Daily Observer* postulates: “In 1985, Samuel K. Doe’s Elections Commissioner, Emmet Harmon and their cohorts made the same mistake”. In light of the *Observer* context clue being elusively heralded – the *indigenous majority* denied over time the ballot – in 1985 presided over the ‘ballot’. However, the outcome has been unknowingly concealed. What is the message being conveyed to the new generation of Liberians who did not have the opportunity to be a part of that critical element of our history?

We consider it an intriguing inference on the part of the *Daily Observer* to liken the paradox of the 1985 elections thus: Though the 1985 elections were historically our first truly *inclusive and truly democratic*. What could have been *inclusive* and *truly democratic* about a process that banned the Liberian People’s Party (LPP) and United People’s Party (UPP) from participating? These were issues that informed *Observer’s* editorial and commentaries in those dark days and so why would the *Observer* bury the truth? The *Observer* has caused this country an injurious moment by failing to convey the truth. The people exercised their franchise but it was an exercise not worth the overwhelming enthusiasm and euphoria because it amounted to a bogus process.

Isn’t it conflicting that the elections the *Daily Observer* termed as “inclusive and truly democratic” witnessed ballot boxes missing? For the record – it was not the Elections Commission that selected the late Pastor Peter Amos George-led Special Committee to “count” the ballots at the Unity Conference Center by the Head of State at the time. How would the *Observer* present the first draft of history where one kind form the “indigenous majority” (Samuel Doe) the polls in his favor against another “indigenous majority” - Jackson F. Doe.

“This misuse of this primary resource—the ballot—just as the first (1847 and subsequently) had done, led to seething undercurrents of disenchantment and tension, and ultimately led to the 1980 coup and, 10 years later, to civil war.” The correlation in the assembly of thoughts here is bewildering and until the *Daily Observer* can succinctly articulate the intended message – in terms of clarity and simplicity – it has obviously developed literary suspense scenery, which is indeed worrying.

If the process owing to the 2005 elections that brought President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to power has been billed as by far our “most democratic” – then we have made progress. The basis of objectivity is to explore all sides factually, historically, realistically, and impartially with every semblance of balance. Yes we all would not see from the same lens but that would not erode any profound judgment of right-thinking analysis.

The *Daily Observer* states in the paper's official position: "But what has that led to? How are the nation's other resources—human, natural and policy—being managed, and to whose advantage? Take the human resources. If agriculture, education and health are in shambles, then what is left for the people to survive on? Take the agricultural—our people are hungry because most of the food we eat is still imported and they have no money to buy it—and No One seems to care". Is this a fair assessment? Did the *Observer* tell its audience what were and the complex realities? No! The *Daily Observer* was successively burnt down in the 80s but has that been the case under this administration. The freedoms being enjoyed is not to any special advantage.

Liberians are no longer going to other West African countries in their droves for medical treatment following the completion of the Jackson F. Doe Memorial Hospital. Senior government functionaries and ordinary Liberians are taking advantage of the services available. If the *Observer* in all fairness carries out professionally a desk research content analysis of progress made in the health sector and reported in its pages – many will come to realize that this is mere political mischievousness. Government is not suggesting that all is perfect but a naked attempt to use some isolated incident as a reflection of the totality is unfair.

Admittedly, there are challenges, which any responsible government will confess to but to suggest that "children have no school to attend throughout the country, and are sitting on the floor" – without appreciating where we are coming from – is not objective. The fight against 'Ebola' cannot wipe us all. We celebrate our community and that is why we will be doing the community national this year. But the community would not have mobilized aggressively without the leadership.

Granted the *Daily Observer* should emerge as a "government" – what would it have done better in terms of managing the resources that have been and are being allegedly squandered? There has been too much criticism in the marketplace but could we help our dear country with answers? Interestingly, the *Daily Observer* has become the "Judge, Jury and Executioner" in the ongoing National Oil Company (NOCAL) saga: "NOCAL was swimming in money, until the President's son, Robert Sirleaf ended his three-year tenure there as its Chairman. Today, NOCAL is broke"! Why should we believe the GAC any longer when a newspaper has become the latest integrity institution on the block indicting people left, right and center?

Rather than asking its readers "What is happening to the Liberia Telecommunications Authority and all the money it has garnered from the GSM companies" –a bit of investigative journalism should be the *Observer's* preoccupation in every respect. That the *Daily Observer* would call for widespread arrests only because a General Auditing Commission's report mentions scores of people is not just unfortunate but objectively inept.

No, the true peace does not lay "Herein" amidst biases, prejudices, missing facts, half-truths, gossips and misrepresentation of the facts. The question directed at the Hon. Justice Minister should be addressed by the *Observer* since it has eluded its sacred and noble role of independence – objectivity – impartiality and social responsibility. No government has ever been run by "Angels" but this government has made tremendous strides comparable to what the *Observer* might have seen, heard or learned about. MAINTAINING PEACE FOR WELL OVER TEN (10) YEARS IS ANYBODY'S GUESS THAT INDEED THIS GOVERNMENT HOLDS THE PEACE CONTRARY TO *DAILY OBSERVER'S* INNUEDOES.