

## *Appendix 44:*

THISDAY EDITORIAL

### **Still on the Okigbo Report (BZ Security and Compensation Issues)**

---

**Jan H. Boer, 2007<sup>1</sup>**

02.04.2007 Feb 4 2007

The Okigbo Panel Report has become a metaphor for Nigeria's notoriety for poor record keeping. Nearly ten years after the report was submitted to the then Sani Abacha administration, neither the government nor any member of the panel appears to know where a copy of it can be obtained. If that is not a national scandal we wonder what then is.

For those who may not know, the Okigbo report refers to the proceedings of a panel set up by the Abacha government to look into how much money accrued to the national coffers from the sale of crude oil during the 1991 Gulf war, and how it was spent. There was widespread impression among Nigerians that the Babangida government did not account properly for the windfall. Many believed that the huge extra income was diverted into private accounts. It was in the wake of the national uproar on the issue that a panel headed by the distinguished economist, Dr Pius Okigbo (now late) was set up. The panel completed its assignment and duly submitted its report to the government but now no one seems able to say where it is. The first time the challenge to produce the report came up, the government balked at it, thereby creating the impression that it was either reluctant to make it public or did not know where to obtain it. Then at the Oputa Panel on human rights abuses, the government was again challenged to produce the report but it wasn't able to do so, again suggesting that the report was no where in sight.

Thereafter, human rights activist and senior lawyer, Gani Fawehinmi, took up the challenge by filing a suit to compel principal characters in the scandal to be brought to book. Fawehinmi is asking the court to compel then minister of petroleum and mineral resources, Prof Jibril Aminu, then governor of the Central Bank, Alhaji Abdulkadir Ahmed (now late), the auditor-general of the federation, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and former President Babangida to account for the \$12.5 billion that was said to have accrued from excess crude oil sales during the Gulf War.

However, on January 25, the secretary to the government of the federation deposed that the report was missing and therefore cannot be produced. That notwithstanding, it would appear to us that government is not sincere in the effort to locate the Okigbo report. We are aware that within the presidency there is a directorate in charge of commissions, panels and committee reports. That a report as vital as the Okigbo panel's would be missing is a severe indictment of such a directorate and indeed the presidency as a whole. Besides, are we to believe that the report has no duplicate any where in the country or that no member of the panel has a copy or is willing to make it available?

It is amazing that this government has allowed the issue to drag on to the embarrassment of the nation. Even if the report is missing, what effort is the government making to recover it? A sincere and honest search for the Okigbo report will certainly yield positive result. In this regard, we suggest the institution

---

<sup>1</sup>I encourage you to google "Okigbo Report" for many articles on the subject. It will give you an eye full and make you wonder how deep corruption can eat into the nation's fabric.

of high-powered judicial inquiry with far-reaching powers, including the power to summon anybody who may have useful information on the whereabouts of the report. To make it easy for Nigerians to volunteer information, the panel must be in a position to guarantee the confidentiality of those volunteering information.

If this government fails to solve the riddle of the Okigbo panel report, it would have reinforced the impression that it is either afraid of Gen. Babangida or unwilling to recover the report. Either way, it would be an unfortunate verdict on a government that is supposedly fighting corruption.