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PENGASSAN globalise battle with Exxon Mobil

31 March, 2006

PETROLEUM and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), is today in far away New York, United States, bringing the attention of the world especially fellow workers to the perceived anti-labour policies of Exxon Mobil and is seeking support to compel the oil giant to change its alleged anti-workers acts.

At a meeting of an International conference called Global Companies, Global Unions, General Research, Global Campaigns, PENGASSAN Acting President, Comrade Peter Esele, told Vanguard that he is reporting the oil giant alleged anti-workers' practices to the international forum and would seek their support to address the issues.

According to the Acting PENGASSAN President who is leading a delegation of the association to the conference: "It is a fact that Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited and Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc have been in operation in Nigeria for a period of not less than twenty (20) years prior to their merger with Exxon in 1999. During this period, the Industrial Relations practice in the Company has been fraught with strange elements which are novel to industrial relations practice in other places.

The practice has been characterised by the following strange practices: In year 2004, the Upstream Company of Exxon Mobil spent over six months on the negotiation table. It took the Association over two years to formalise the unionization of the Contract Staff Branch. They are not direct employees of the organization but their sweat and blood improves the stake of the company yet they are not considered good enough to be made regular staff. At the end of the exercise and in order to discourage this group of employees, the leader of the Contract Staff, Comrade Monday

Odigwe lost his job in strange circumstances. Today it is very difficult to get this group of employees to participate in Union activities.

In the same vein, in Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc, the situation has not changed. It is even worse. As at the time of this presentation, the negotiation which the company commenced over one year ago is still not progressing. This forced the National Secretariat to intervene to end the protracted negotiation but the end is still far. The pictures pointed about the two affiliates of Exxon Mobil show the tension generated among workers and the industrial disharmony that is looming over Exxon Mobil”.

“The Management of Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc has continuously moved in its bid to strangle the workers by excluding the workers contribution on welfare issues which affect them. The subtle way which the Managing Director of the Company has ensured that only his opinions and ideas are what Management should do is by moving issues which are in the Collective Agreement and subject to negotiation into company Policy so that it will not be negotiated and Management will twist to the disadvantage of the workers, e.g. consistent violation of Workers Collective Agreement together with Company’s Policy on separation, termination and workers’ ten years housing scheme.

Policy Matters which does not bother on Staff welfare, as we all know, are the prerogative of Management and is therefore at the whims of Management. This is not only exploitative but agonizing. In Nigeria, all activities of the companies operating in the Oil and Gas Industry are regulated by the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) a Government Department set up to supervise and regulate the activities of the Companies. Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc has complete disregard to Regulatory Procedures. An example is where the Management of the Company dismissed a member of our Union working in the company without approval from the Agency. Our intervention to make the Management see reasons to reverse the dismissal has been rebuffed. The matter is still pending”.

Continuing, Comrade Esele said: In Nigeria, the Labour Laws allow for tripathism which puts Management, Workers represented by the Union and the Government together. In Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc, the Managing Director has clearly stated that he is not to run the Company with union and as such representation on any matter even on welfare matters is not considered by the Managing Director. The Collective Agreement which had been agreed by the Company and the Union is being discarded by the Managing Director and his management team and he issues benefits at dates and time convenient to him but not to be discussed with the Union. In the last two

(2) years, which the present Managing Director has held away in Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc; the Union has received the worst form of bashing. I wish to report that the Managing Director is in the habit of using any form of forum in black mailing the PENGASSAN Branch Executive against his members. This position has played out itself in persistent intimidation, harassment and molestation initiated by the Managing Director on members of Branch Executive. Sadly enough our members in the company have not been spared this agony. The issue of Freedom of Association has been seriously hampered”

He added that the association would impress it upon members “to come up with suggestions, opinions and above all bring pressure to bear on the Management of Exxon Mobil Corporation who may not be aware of the tragic industrial practice going on in Nigeria”.

Souce: Vanguard. 10/02/06

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