A TOAST TO THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

The rivalry between the professions of law and medicine dated back to the medieval period a when the two became subjects to studies on their own having been hatched by the general knowledge of philogophy.

To be called upon the, to propose a toast of the second oldest profession after law is in rare priviledge.

In the good old days, any Nigerian going after the golden fleece in United Kingdom or elsewhere was expected to read either law or medicine.

It is therefore not surprising that Nigerians who read courses other than either of these two, were looked upon as misfits.

It was not until the year 1511 when the Medical Act was promulgated in the United Kingdom that the practice of "physic and surgery" was restricted to qualified and licenced persons who must be graduates of Oxford of Cambridge. An amending Act was passed in 1542 which exempted persons knowledgeable in the "operation of certain herbs, roots and waters" from registration.

The **college of Physicians was founded by Royal** Charter in 1518 and the College of Surgeons came into being in 1800.

The regulatory body for modern medical practice came into being in 1858 vide **Section 3 of the Medical Act of that year.** The Act not only set our criteria and qualification for registration as a physician or surgeon, it united the medical profession under a central control.

It was from this historical background that the medical profession in Nigeria evolved and it formed the foundation of the Medical and Dental Practitioners Act Cap 22 Laws of the Federation, 1990. It must be pointed out quickly, that the medical profession in Nigeria is as old as, if not older than the amalgamation of Nigeria.

The medical profession has succeeded in liberating itself from the labyrinth of the civil service structure. The members of the profession should be having a good laugh and as well deserved chest-beating for securing the mouth watering salary structure that goes by the acronym of MSS. I now understand that the least paid medical Doctor in the service of any Government hospital has a minimum monthly take home package of not less than N5,000,00. This is a feat, if one compares this with the take home pay of some of the Chief Judges of our States which is about the same amount while the Judges of the High Court earns far less than this. Will you then not agree with me that if a fresh medical graduate earns what takes a Judge a minimum of 12 years call to earn in a month, it is a feat to the dexterity of the men of the stsytoscope in economic matters.

That the members of **this profession are** able to secure better conditions of service from the government, while **their** compatriots who are lawyers in government services are earning peanuts despite the fact that they draft all laws including **the Medical** and **Dental Practitioner** Act, only goes to show what libe-**ralism as opposed to conservatism could do** to a professional body.

One more word before I warm my seat, It is part of the ethics of medical **profession that as much as practicable, male doctors** should **not** examine **or** attend to female patients without the presenee of at least a female nurse. One would want to see the observance of this high ethical standard in most of our hospitals. The recent multi-mullion dollar suits in United States against Doctors that abused their priviledged positions when they compromised their female patients whom they examined all alone, should be a red signal for upholding the practice,

My Lords, colleagues, distinguished Nigerians, can we please rise to toast to the continued well-being of the only profession where the practitioners possess the certificate to do and undo,

YUSUF O.ALLI ESO;