

## UNCULTURED BEHAVIOUR OF SOME PARLIAMENTARIANS SUBVERTING THE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER: BY MARTIN A. B. K. AMIDU

The internet is awash with the news that some Members of Parliament yesterday exhibited both in and out of parliament unpardonable un-parliamentary behaviour amounting to contempt and rioting in Parliament. When ordinary citizens complain about their behavior we are charged with or threatened with the arbitrary and archaic procedure of contempt of parliament. We now have a golden opportunity to see how equality is equity before the law when it comes to Members of Parliament.

I have confirmed this news by just listening and watching a video showing Hon. Alhaji Mohammed Muntaka Mubarak, the Minority Chief Whip, speaking to a group of pressmen gathered around him outside what appears to be the chamber of parliament (I suspect he was speaking to the parliamentary press corps) and charging the Speaker of Parliament with exercising the discretionary constitutional and statutory powers of his office capriciously. The Constitution, Standing Orders and laws of the Ghana notwithstanding, no matter what, the last thing we expect of a true Ghanaian brought up within all our cultures is to exhibit the highest degree of decorum when speaking to others let alone to or of elder persons. I formed the impression that apart from the above contemptuous statements spoken by the Hon. Alhaji Mohammed Muntaka Mubarak outside parliament to the press he had earlier during the sitting of parliament also “registered his anger in a robust way by saying that the minority would no longer countenance any act of disrespect by the speaker...”

Another Member of Parliament, Hon. A. B. A Fusieni also speaking to Class FM’s Ekow Annan is quoted to have contemptuously said the following of the Speaker of Parliament: “For want of a better term, the Speaker has exhibited gross levels of bias that is unbelievable. In the annals of the history of parliament. I have never seen this kind of behavior.... We are going to be forced to take maybe unprecedented action that has never happened in the annals of our fourth republic... We are very close and there are a number of options available to us Minority to exploit including the impeachment of the speaker...” Our democracy is endangered when members of parliament can issue threats and use intimidatory language to rudely chastise the Speaker outside Parliament in such an uncouth manner.

Compare the above uncouthness with the decorous language of Hon. Haruna Iddrisu (Minority Leader) reacting to his not being given the floor a second time on the matter; and the equally decorous response of the Speaker in Parliament:

Minority Leader: “You know the essence of parliamentary questions is significant and integral to the exercise of oversight. Your refusal to allow me to even as Minority Leader to

proceed can only be an effort to cripple us. We respect you as chair of this house; we have a responsibility as leaders to support you in maintaining order in this house.’ He exclaimed.

Speaker: “I have consistently made it clear to both sides of the House – Majority and Minority – that no one will be allowed a double bite as I said on many occasions to both the Minority and the Majority. In all honesty you all know that. Let me make it clear that this argument was unnecessary and that in future what is going to happen is no leader shall have double bite at the chamber.”

Like it or not, the reputation and dignity of the office of the Speaker of Parliament has deliberately been brought into serious inexcusable opprobrium and disrepute both in and outside Parliament by those indecorous Members of Parliament who rioted, banged desks, wagged their figures at the Speaker and granted interviews to the media to bring the high office of the Speaker who was elected by the whole House and not by one political party into disrepute and contempt before reasonable members of the public.

I agree in toto with a quotation attributed to the Majority leader in the Daily Guide Africa that: “The majority leader said that the threat by the minority to impeach the speaker was contemptuous of parliament, according to Order 30 (j), while the riotous behavior of the minority members was equally contemptuous as captured under Order 30 (3) (a) of parliament.”

On or around 12<sup>th</sup> January 2017 the Hon. Alex Agyekum took the floor of the House to threaten and intimidate me by calling for me to be hauled to Parliament for contempt for saying nothing contemptuous of the present Parliament. In any case unbeknown to him as a blind man, so to speak, I was stepping on stones. The Hon. Ras Mubarak also this July took to the floor of the House and threatened and intimidated Mr. Sydney Casely-Hayford, a distinguished citizen and far old enough to be his grandfather, with being charged for contempt of Parliament for articulating to students at a public academic forum what had always been constitutionally protected as part of his freedom of thought and conscience but became contempt when he exercised his right to freedom of expressing those thoughts and conscience.

We elected the 275 Members of Parliament out of about 26 million citizens to show exemplary conduct to the nation in the discharge of their functions on our behalf in Parliament. Consequently, those who are calling for mere apologies to the serious dent on the distinguished and eminent Speaker’s reputation earned over several years as a University teacher, professor, lawyer, Member of Parliament and an ambassador to assuage the deliberate contempt are not helping to uphold the Constitutional order. The reputation,

dignity and honour of the office of Speaker (bi-partisanly elected) must not be allowed to be used for partisan, cheap and uncouth posturing in any way.

What is good for the goose is good for the gander. A stitch in time also saves nine. Citizens' Vigilance for Justice demands that fellow Ghanaians join us to defend the Constitution against these contemnors. Citizens, let's be awake; we are sovereign over Parliament and must hold it to account!

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