

## **Western Region Housing Corporation and Urban Housing in Southwestern Nigeria, 1958-68**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Despite the general awareness in the literature of the trend of housing schemes in Nigeria, especially since the late 1970s, the unprecedented contribution of the Western Region Housing Corporation (WRHC) to urban housing development has escaped scholarly attention. Indeed, WRHC was established in 1958 to meet the residential need of the urban working class in industrial estates in Southwestern Nigeria. The implementation by WRHC of a policy that provided a virile public-private partnership stimulated the rapid growth and development of industrial estates in urban centers in the region. The present study uncovers this neglected theme of urban housing development program and the historical lessons learnt thereof. Anchored on archival records, this paper argues that the WRHC was successful in its early years of operation and achieved its immediate goal of housing delivery through the ideology of “Welfare-Capitalism” that found expression in the principle of public-private partnership and good governance.*

**KEYWORDS:** Western Region Housing Corporation, industrial estates, Southwestern Nigeria, public policy, good governance, Welfare-Capitalism, urban housing

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**Date of Submission:** 15 January 2018

**Date of Acceptance:** 26 January 2018

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is facing an acute housing estate deficit due to poor and inadequate urban housing delivery system (Akeju, 2007; Ihuaha et al., 2014). Whereas the estate sector is driven principally by private investors and enterprises (Ikejiofor 1997; Akeju 2007) (a phenomenon that symbolizes the growing dominance of capitalist initiative in the national economic policy), nonetheless, Nigerians continue to wallow in unaffordable and inadequate urban shelter. It is on this note that the present study examines the success and shortfall of the Western Region Housing Corporation (WRHC), a largely unstudied or at best an understudied theme in Nigeria’s urban history, as a historical blueprint for sustainable housing development in the country. Despite the seemingly decline of the Welfare State Theory (WST) (Gilbert, 2002; Rudra, 2002) and the growth of Western Capitalism (Baumol, 2002; Thuric et al., 2013), this paper builds on Sinn’s concept of “Redistributive Taxation Insurance” (Sinn 1994). Specifically, it opens up a dialogue on the vitality of a compromise between WST and Capitalism as well as the vitality of good governance for sustainable development of developing states based on the principle of social equity and responsibility. Indeed, the WRHC was an epitome of this phenomenon and an exemplary case of the productive “globalization” of socialism cum capitalism in the early post-colonial era in Southwestern Nigeria.

While it was a grievous oversight on the part of the colonial government in Nigeria that it did not make any provision for the establishment of a comprehensive housing scheme

in its 1945-1955 development plan in spite of the over-population in residential areas and the poor environmental health in Lagos and environs; however, it became compelling on the indigenous welfarist government of the Western Region of Nigeria that took over the administration of the region in 1952 to evolve a housing policy in order to attain physical development of land for domestic and industrial purposes in its 1955-1960 development plan. In December 1956, the Western Region House of Assembly enacted a law that created the “Housing Trust”. The objective of the Housing Trust was to acquire land with “clean” title to establish housing estates for the public to lease and build their own houses according to the specifications of the Housing Trust. The Housing Trust could also build houses and sell them to the public.

The several factors provided the motivation of the Western Region Government to embark on the development of residential and housing estates through the machinery of WRHC. The government was convinced that the housing and industrial estate projects would help to diversify its economy and provide shelter and employment for its citizens who live in urban centers. Nigeria was regarded as having great potential wealth and large market for manufactured industrial goods. The country was assessed to have been in dire need of having heavy and secondary industries to reduce its dependence on imported goods, reduce capital flight, lower the cost of goods in Nigeria for its people and promote and transform the country into an exporter of manufactured goods. To achieve these goals, the WRHC must be at a vantage position with the co-operation of statutory bodies to provide industrial estates that would have well laid out roads, drainage and facilities such as water, electricity and post offices. It must be in a position to attract industrialists and international capital into the region. The state on its own part must mitigate the burgeoning problem of land acquisition. Going by the dictates of the corporation’s Law, Law No.12 of 1958, the WRHC was limited to building estates, providing residential houses. To set up the industrial estates in the Southwestern Nigeria, law was amended in March 1960 to allow the corporation to undertake industrial development and management of industrial estates in the region – a scenario that put into motion an unprecedented welfare driven urban housing development in the region.

What was the impetus for WRHC’s success in its early years of operation? What was its structure, policy, functions and sources of funding? What is the contribution of WRHC to the social development of the working class and urban dwellers in Southwestern Nigeria? What lessons did the organization learnt from the conceptual underpinning of socialism and capitalism? What is the pattern of the adaptability of these global processes to local reality? What led to the decline of WRHC in the later years of its operation? These questions and others were critically answered in this study. This work is organized into three important sections, followed by a conclusion. The first section is this introductory section. While the second section examines the organizational structure, policy and functionality of WRHC; the third section critically appraises the dynamism of Welfare-Capitalism in the social history of urban housing in Southwestern Nigeria using the WRHC as a case study. The concluding section summarizes the analysis. The approach is qualitative based on the descriptive analysis of mainly archival records and extant literature.

## **THE WRHC AND THE PROVISION OF URBAN HOUSING**

In the early 1950s, there was a spate of land disputes among private landowners and between landowners and developers. This was disturbing to the government because of its consequences in escalating interpersonal and communal conflicts and retarding real estate and industrial development in the region. The government threatened to seize disputed lands for several reasons among which was that genuine property developers were being discouraged to acquire land and build houses. It was to arrest the growing rate of land disputes in the region that the Communal Land Right was passed into Law in 1958. In addition, the Western Region House of Assembly enacted the Western Region Housing

Corporation Law, Cap. 30 of 1958 (a). The law became effective by the Western Region Notice number 289 on June 20<sup>th</sup> of 1958. Section 6 of the law made provision for the corporation to make its resources available to the public in the region in order to acquire dwelling houses.<sup>1</sup>

This clause of the law was necessary to assuage the fear of the opposition parties in the Western Region House of Assembly that the corporation would be manipulated to serve mainly the interest of the members of the Action Group of Nigeria (AGN); the ruling party that formed the government. The law facilitated the disposal of communal land in the region. It also provided for the Committee Land Trustee (CLT). The CLT was invested with the powers to administer the communal land. Families and individuals could also administer their land. The WRHC was empowered by the legislation to acquire land for the purpose of constructing a housing estate. Any failure by the corporation to reach agreement as the amount to be paid in respect to land acquisition could be resolved by the intervention of the Government Counsel. The counsel was authorized to declare the land acquired compulsorily for the government to have been in public interest should the land owners refuse to accept government terms. The magistrate or High Court could equally determine dispute on compensation payable to the land owners.

One of the problems the WRHC aimed to solve was to reduce overcrowding of the masses in their residences in Lagos and Ibadan as well as other towns in Southwestern Nigeria. The thrusts of the WRHC were to assist people own their houses and at the same time make profit for the government. Concerning its mandate, the WRHC was prepared to provide housing accommodation of improved standards for various segments of its clients who were of Western Region origin. In 1960, the WRHC was able to identify in several locations in the region, land suitable for both industrial and residential estates, test the soil and other feature.<sup>2</sup>

In Ikeja Lagos, the corporation acquired 300 acres for housing estate. This estate was divided into several zones of high, low and medium density plots for sale. The high-density plots were 601 x 1001 feet. Various types of houses were designed as prototype for private developers in the estates. The corporation also made available to members of the public types of houses built on its land, the title of which was three guineas since original owners sold them to the Government. The houses in the estate served as models of what modern houses should be. The houses and estates were provided with amenities like pipe born water, electricity, and modern sanitary and drainage system.

In Ikeja Housing Estate as on March 31, 1960, the corporation had 77 houses under construction. The public responses to the housing programme of the corporation were encouraging. The corporation received 273 applications for its houses in Ikeja and Bodija. The regional government was also impressed that its housing policy was well received by the populace. The corporation built many houses and sold to people. A three room house was sold at £1,000 but when it became obvious that the corporation sustained losses, the price was increased to about £1,100. Initially the corporation sold a unit of four-bedroom house at £1,580 and later increased it to £1,650 in Bodija and £1,670 at Lagos. Another type of building model, HC 12, initially sold for £3,350 had its price increased to £4,000. The buyers were not expected to sell the houses to any one without authorization from the housing corporation. The government owned the land and the buyers of the houses were meant to understand that what they paid for was the cost of developing the land and building their houses. Although land and house owners in Ikeja Industrial Estate had freehold title to the land acquired for a period of 99 years, they were prohibited from selling or subletting the land without the approval of the WRHC.<sup>3</sup>

During 1962, the corporation completed the construction of 22 houses; bringing to a total of 96 the number of houses it built at its 456 acres residential estate in Ikeja. In that same year, it had 42 houses under construction with 20 almost completed. In Ikeja and Ibadan

Residential Estates, the corporation was able to build 24 bedroom houses out of 50 it projected for completion in 1963. The corporation made plan to build 2,000 low cost housing units for 2,000 workers within the Ikeja estate alone.<sup>4</sup> By 1965, the corporation had developed 60 HC 6-model houses, 45 HC 9-type house, 52 HC 11-houses and 20 HC 15-houses. Meanwhile, there was a list of about 200 applicants who wished to purchase houses in the estate. By the mid 1966 about 160 residential houses had been allocated to people by the corporation in both the low and high-density areas of the Ikeja Housing Estate. In 1963, the corporation sold 180 plots of land and acquired more 800 acres of land in Ikeja for its Housing and industrial estates expansion programme.

At Bodija in Ibadan, the corporation acquired 400 acres of land for its housing estate. The Bodija Estate was in the heartland of Ibadan; close to the Regional Government Secretariat, the University of Ibadan, the University Teaching Hospital, the Ibadan Airport and the old University of Ife temporary site in Ibadan. The location of the estate was seen as an elitist haven. The land was divided into plots of different sizes. There were about 100 plots of 100 x 100 yards sold for £400 each. There were 50 plots of 1 acre each leased for £180 per acre per annum and 60 x 100 yards, which went for £300 per plot. The estate was estimated to accommodate 1,200 houses of various designs and prices.<sup>5</sup>

There were four different types of houses in the estates. The 200 HC 5 was a model bungalow with a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms, shower room, WC and a car porch. Its price was £2,000. The 100 HC 9 model house was a large bungalow with a living room, kitchen, three bedrooms with built-in-wardrobes, one store, bathrooms and WC. This model of house was sold for £2,500. The third model house was the 70 HC 11. This model was a two-storey building with living rooms, study, ground floor, WC, kitchen, store, three bedrooms with wardrobes, bathrooms, garden, garage and terrace. It also had separate boy's quarters with two rooms, kitchen shower and EC. Between 1959 and 1960, the corporation had built 186 houses and 76 others were under construction out of 1,200 housing units approved for the Bodija Housing Estate.<sup>6</sup> In Bodija, 4-room house was sold for £1,580. The H12 House was sold for £3,350 and later the price went up to £4,000.<sup>7</sup> At the end of 1961, 53 houses were constructed; bringing to 221 that had been built at the Bodija Housing Estate, In the same year, precisely on March 31, 1961, 85 different types of houses were sold at the Bodija Housing Estate for a total sum of £150, 211s, 25s 2d at a gross profit of £16,485, 11s 8d and a net profit of £5,214 according to Z.O.Oshosanya and Company; an auditing firm.<sup>8</sup> In 1962, 62 houses were completed bringing the total to 211 houses.<sup>9</sup> Compared with the rate of development at Ikeja Housing Estate, by the end of March 1962, the number of residential houses whose construction had been completed was 96, while 61 houses were under construction. In Bodija, of the HC 6 type house, a three-bedroom bungalow was sold for £1,750 per unit and this type of house proved popular among the public and was in high demand. There was also 3- bedroom apartment termed HC 14, which was initially sold for £1,000 but later its price increased to £1,100. Another model of 4 bed room of the HC 14 model was sold for £1,580 in Bodija Housing Estate in Ibadan and £1,670 in Lagos Housing Estate.<sup>10</sup> Two different models of the HC15 houses were common in both Ikeja and Bodija Housing estates and were sold for £4,330 and £4,250 respectively. In 1962/63, the corporation sold 80 plots of land in Bodija Housing Estate in Ibadan to the public whose applications were approved. In the 1961/1962,, the WRHC embarked on the construction of total of 256 housing units in Ikeja, Lagos and Bodija, Ibadan Nigeria (Table 1).

Table 1: Western Region Housing Corporation under Construction in 1961/1962

| Type   | HC6 | HC14 | HC11 | HC11A | HC11B | HC15 | TOTAL |
|--------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| Ikeja  | 20  | -    | 42   | -     | -     | 15   | 77    |
| Bodija | 40  | 24   | -    | 26    | 13    | 2    | 188   |
| Total  | 60  | 24   | 42   | 26    | 13    | 17   | 256   |

Source: Annual Report of the Western Region Housing Corporation, 1961/1962: 7

As a result of the social responsibilities imbedded in the policy of the housing corporation, its profitability alone cannot be used to determine the significance. It was in this regard that Z.O.Oshosanya, alluded that the corporation could have made more profit if it had not sold certain portions of the Bodija Housing Estate to the Western Region Government for the erection of the United Kingdom Deputy High Commission's residence as well as that of the Western Region Head of Civil Service. Seven acres were sold to the two bodies at the rate of £1, 250 per acre but in the open market the same size of land was sold for £2,000. On the directive of the regional government, the corporation sold a few acres of land to the Asbestos Cement Company at a highly subsidized prize. A total area of 700 acres was sold on non-commercial rate of £8,750 rather than the profit sum of £10,164. The portion sold to the government was £1,414 less than market price.<sup>11</sup> Since the government compelled the corporation to lease or sell its land at subsidized rates, the later protested that the former was interfering *ultra vires* with reference to Section 7(1) of the Housing Corporation Law No. 12 of 1958, which states that

The corporation shall so manage the business that taking one year with another, on its revenue, it shall be sufficient for meeting all charges properly chargeable to the revenue. Furthermore we are unable to find any section in the said law which empowers the corporation to subsidize directly or indirectly government purchases of land developed by the corporation...Besides being an *ultra vires* act, such subsidy, if repeated, will not only make it impossible for the corporation's income and expenditure to break-even but it will also make repayment of the land capital to government impossible after five years of fructification period.<sup>12</sup>

The corporation, its board claimed, was an autonomous statutory body; therefore, in any transaction between it and the regional government, it was expected that mutual consultation and agreement should be employed rather than issuance of directives from the government. Going by the law that set up the corporation, the board and its top management staff were correct, in principle and practice, the kind of autonomy envisioned by the WRHC was a mirage. Sometimes, the interference by the government was in the interest of the corporation, but most often attempted to strike a balance between profitability and the implementation of its social responsibilities to the people. For instance, whenever the government saw a land that could be good for developing into a housing estate, it would advise the corporation to acquire it. If the corporation gave its consent, the process of acquiring it would become the responsibility of the government; it would also perfect documents on the transfer of the land to the corporation.<sup>13</sup>

Another strategy of developing the housing estates and help people own houses was funding of the mortgage scheme by government. The corporation approved 85 loans with £203,715 for buyers who purchased 211 units of houses. The mortgage programme attracted much of public interest. As in April 1960, the corporation had received 700 mortgage applications by those who wanted to buy its land and build their own houses. By the end of 1961, the government had made £1m available to the people as loans to build their own houses within and outside the estates.<sup>14</sup>

## THE WRHC AND VARIOUS SCHEMES

The corporation also operated a mortgage scheme that gave 146 loans to applicants at the value of £225,951. Through the mortgage scheme 495 loans amounting to £1,005,330 was given to developers to build their own houses. The beneficiaries were fairly distributed all over the region. By the end of 1961, the corporation had built 1,000 housing units in different parts of the region. By March 31, 1962, the total loan approved for borrowers to build their own houses was £1,236,516. Another 85 loans valued at £203,715 was approved for purchase of the houses built by the corporation; bringing to a total of £386,876 to 211 purchasers, an average of £1,834 per individual.<sup>15</sup> From 1958 to May 1962 about 585

mortgage loans were approved to the tune of £1,310,440 for people of Western Nigeria. The period of repayment was fifteen years, while the maximum loan given to individual successful applicants for building their houses was £4,000. The interest rate was 7 per cent. The actual amount disbursed to the borrowers was £484,876 and out of 245 who benefited from the mortgage loans scheme, 83 persons defaulted.<sup>16</sup> This amounted to £10,598.11s 7d as at February 1962. For the mortgage loan defaulters, at the end of 1966, there were 283 loan debtors, each owing not less than £500.<sup>17</sup>

Another programme evolved by the corporation was the saving scheme. It was designed to assist people acquire its houses. In 1962, the saving scheme account attracted 4 percent for a period less than one year and 5 per cent interest on deposits for a period of one year and above to the depositors.<sup>18</sup> On a monthly basis, each depositor was required to save a minimum of £5.00 while other levels of deposits were in multiples of £5.00. The Saving Scheme of the corporation showed an impressive patronage. The total deposits amounted to £48,069 in 1960. In 1961, the deposits increased to £64,438 in response to the diligence of the corporation's workers.<sup>19</sup> The corporation also encouraged banks and other financial organizations and local authorities and other corporations to save their surplus funds with it. With generated funds, the corporation was enabled to continue with the expansion of its housing programme during this time of lean income from the WRMB. Out of the budgeted loan of £541,000 from the government for its operations in 1961/1962, the corporation received £397,000. The savings account scheme became a reliable source of funding the Corporation's projects, though in a meager scale. As at March 31, 1962, there was unprecedented surge by depositors to withdraw their money as a result of uncertainties created by the unfolding political turmoil in Western Region of Nigeria. Consequently, the Corporation was said to have owed the depositors £64,438 in 1962 against £48,069 in the previous year. The financial situation of the corporation was not critical since as at that time, its assets had a value of £1,095,763, while its liabilities amounted to £388,996, leaving the net worth of it at £656,934 and £553,032 in 1961.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1960/61, 215 loans were approved to the tune of £457,675 bringing the total amount of money granted, as loans to £877,810. An average amount of £2,032 was granted as loans to each borrower at the rate of 7 per cent. The corporation made a gross profit of £61,531 in 1961; having given loans to 383 borrowers to the tune of £707,875. In the 1962/63 financial year, the corporation executed 159 mortgages and 33 supplemental Deeds of Mortgages and 147 Deeds of Sub-lease. By March 31, 1962, 508 mortgagors had been issued with loans totaling £1,064,275.<sup>21</sup> The shortfall of funds in 1961/62 was £181,445 against £243,600 in 1961. From 1962, the Government could not provide £600,000 annually for housing as indicated in the 1962-68 development plans.<sup>22</sup> Under the mortgage scheme, in 1961, 97 members of the public had their loans applications approved at the cost of £123,785 for building in the corporation housing estates. In order to construct houses on communal lands, 383 members of the public were issued with certificates of occupancy. From 1958 to May 1962 about 585 mortgage loans were dispensed to the beneficiaries amounting to £1,310,440.<sup>23</sup> At its inception in 1958, the WRHC had its programme approved by the government up to April 1, 1960. By March 31, 1960, a total of £433,125 had been approved to borrowers for erection of their personal houses. The Government gave the corporation a loan of £740,000 out of the latter's budget of £920,000. As at March 31, 1962, a total of 562 loans, amounting to £1,236,510 had been given to those who applied for the mortgage loans. Another category of 85 applications was granted loans to the value of £203,715 to purchase houses built by the corporation by 1962. On loans to build in non-corporation Housing Estates, 383 applicants were given loans worth £707,875 as at March 31, 1961, but only £418,550 was actually distributed out of an annual budget of £600,000.<sup>24</sup> The staff of the corporation got allocation of plots to build their own houses. They were also given loans at the interest rate of 6 per cent. The board members got loans at 5 per cent interest while

members of the public got it at 7 per cent. The policy of the corporation was to deduct the loan from the salaries of the staff on installment for a maximum period of 15 years. These fair interest rates were reasonable enough and motivated people to work assiduously for the success of the corporation and to invest in the housing scheme. When the parliamentary secretaries joined the scheme in 1962 a good number of them abused it; they defaulted repayment and frustrated the policy.<sup>25</sup> The failure of the political elites to honour their contractual agreement increased the difficulty of the WRHC to recoup payment arrears from other categories of defaulters. Initially the board of directors of the corporation found it difficult to prosecute the defaulting parliamentary secretaries in courts of law, later it resolved to sue the 6 affected parliamentary secretaries in the court to fulfill their obligations to the corporation. Additional measure taken by the corporation to get the parliamentary secretaries to pay their debts was to appeal to the Premier of the Western Nigeria and the Minister of Land and Housing to impress on the politicians on the necessity to pay the debt they owed to the corporation. For rural people, with regard to the government farming schemes like plantations and farm settlement, the government planned in 1958 to build modern villages and provide them with infrastructure. The corporation planned to build 2 bedroom houses in the plantations housing estates and farm settlements and to sell each unit of house for £200. On its loan schemes for a unit of house in the housing estate in the urban areas, the corporation could give a maximum loan of £4,000 to any successful applicant who was willing to build a house of his own.

By August 1961, the corporation had under its mortgage service to approve 146 loans of £225,951. On non-corporation's houses, 495 loans were granted to applicants at the cost of £1,005,330.<sup>26</sup> Barely seven months later, precisely March 1962, the number of mortgage loans awarded to its customers showed an increase to 163 at the value of £407,620. As at March 31, 1962, the grand total loan of £1,236,510 had been given to 520 borrowers at an average of £2,200 per individual at 7 per cent interest. The gross profit of the corporation for the year ended March 31, 1962 was £61,531 and the net profit of £37,886 after provision had been made for the loss of £45,369 as a result of the land sold to a few bodies like the Asbestos Cement Company at a discount as directed by the regional government.<sup>27</sup> Apart from Ikeja and Bodija Housing Estates, a loan of £1 million was made available to commoners to build private residential houses in 25 towns and cities in Southwestern Nigeria. For instance, this facility aided the urbanization and infrastructural development of urban centres such as Benin, Sapele, Warri, Okitipupa, Agbor, Uromi, Akure, Ondo, Oke-Igbo, Ijebu-Ode, Abeokuta, Ilaro, Badagry, Ikorodu, Shagamu, Ago-Iwoye, Ogbomoso, Odogbolu, Ife, Ikare, Ado-Ekiti, Efon-Alaye, Ikole, Ilesha, Ilobu and Ibadan benefited.<sup>28</sup>

The fixed assets of the corporation stood at £1,095,759 while its liability was £388,995 by the mid-1962. From 1958 to 1962, the corporation had approved 585 mortgage loans valued at £1,310,440. It also gave another 245 loans valued at £485,876 being unpaid outstanding cost of purchased land converted to loans.<sup>29</sup> It also had a working capital of £706,763. By the end of the financial year of the corporation in 1963 that was March 31, 1963, the overall financial transaction of the corporation yielded a gross profit of £28,861 but a net loss of £14,393 in the same year. As at June 1962, 83 defaulters debt amounted to £10,598.11s.7d.<sup>30</sup> This net loss recorded rose from £7,483 in 1962 to £21,876 in 1963 – a period of two years.<sup>31</sup>

The government of the Western Nigeria had, by 1963, equity capital of £500,000 in the corporation. Interestingly too, sundry deposits of the Mortgage saving scheme rose to £105,503 and the excess current assets over current liabilities was £609,039. It invested only £63,990 on mortgage loans scheme. Meanwhile the repaid loans by mortgagors rose to £1,665,656.<sup>32</sup> The loan services of the corporation operated successfully during the period, loan for 89 persons that amounted to £212,800 were approved for the applicants. Another sum of £218,075 was approved for the purchase of the corporation houses at the rate of

£1960 per individual borrowers. The corporation in 1962 had a net working capital of £706,763 after making provision for depreciation of £120,442 on the current assets of £1,095,759. It was of interest to all the stakeholders in the Western Region's Housing scheme that the net value of the corporation operation improved from £553,032 in 1961 to £65,934 in 1962. Out of £541,000 earmarked for the operation of the WRHC's loan scheme by the Western Region Government in 1962 government afforded only £397,000 bringing the total loan account to £1,397,000. In 1962, the approved estimate for the corporation was £1 million as equity capital apart from £500,000 granted.<sup>33</sup>

The attempt by corrupt political elites to infiltrate the productive structure of the WRHC seems to have started in 1959/1960 financial year but delayed due to the strong incorruptible nature of the corporation's leadership pioneered by Festus Awosika. For instance, on March 1, 1960, Alfred Rewane applied for four plots of land after he had been given one. This was against the policy of the WRHC. The corporation wrote and reminded him that the policy was for one man to have only one plot and the matter ended just there. However, by the late 1962, the WRHC experienced an irreversible financial setback due mainly to corruption perpetrated by the political elites. The leaders of Action Group of Nigeria, the political party that formed the regional government, were given huge loans to build their own houses. Most often, the loans approved for them were far more than the maximum of £4,000 given to ordinary citizens. For instance, Adegbenro got a loan of £9,500, Keasington Momoh was given a loan of £9,500, and Agunbiade also got a loan of the same amount. Bisi Onabanjo, Sowole, all got the loan of £9,500 respectively. Alfred Rewane and Tony Enahoro like a few other ministers and chairmen of boards of public enterprises were each given a maximum of £45,000 housing loan respectively against authorized maximum of about £6,000.<sup>34</sup>

Under the watch of Ayodele Okusaga, corruption assumed an unprecedented proportion at the corporation. For instance, under the Emergency Regulation of 1962 the Finance Committee of the WRHC allocated land to M.A. Ogun on August 21, 1962. The normal procedure for allocation of land was for the Board to ratify allocations before making announcement of the allocation to the public. In this way, lands were first allocated before official ratification. In the normal procedure, applicants were not expected to know the exact plot they would be given. But by 1962, it was possible for applicants to make choice of land already allocated to someone to be retrieved from the original allottee and reallocated to another person due to nepotism.<sup>35</sup> Ayodele Okusaga parked into the corporation chairman's house built at the cost of £7,000 and used additional £3,000 to renovate it. His monthly electricity bills increased from £27.10 to £81. His wife was given post-dated cheques by the Chief Accountant of the corporation on the instruction of the chairman, Ayo Okusaga, to fund LPOs issued her to purchase items, which following the policy of the corporation ought to have been procured only by its employees, and she was not one of them. The chairman was therefore said to have been extravagant and corrupt by the ethical standard of that era on corporate governance.<sup>36</sup> Emmanuel Olatunde Olakanni who became an Executive Director of the corporation on April 1, 1964 and its chairman in December 1965 had by January 1966 acquired 9 parcels of land. He built three houses and improperly acquired a sublease of a parcel of land in Ikeja and processed a Deed of sublease of WRHC property at Kikelomo Ola in the name of his under aged daughter contrary to the policy of the corporation. In addition, a sum of £45,092.16s was found in his bank account at Barclays Bank. In another bank account of his, £571.05s 3d was found.<sup>37</sup> Before he assumed public office, he had only the sum of £5,740 in his bank account.

Apart from corrupt practices, the political crisis of the first half of the 1960s that culminated in the declaration of emergency had a very far-reaching adverse effect on the WRHC. The corporation could not embark on its capital projects as enunciated in the 1962-68 development programme due to the crisis and lack of funds. There was no contract

awarded in respect of building works but three contracts were given out in relation to civil engineering works, and other legal instrument of less importance in 1963. Consequently, the number of depositors reduced and so did the amount of money in the Savings Account of depositors in the WRHC withdrawals increased, outrageously. The administration department suffered a setback; its resources including working capital were reduced.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, while corruption and political instability led to the collapse of the WRHC, the organization nevertheless achieved its immediate goals and showcased the vitality of welfare-capitalism and good governance to the economic growth of developing societies.

## CONCLUSION

The WRHC solved the hydra-headed perennial problem of land acquisition for individual and corporate developers. Suffice it to state that one of the most remarkable achievements of the Western Region Government was the development of industrial and housing estates. With collaboration between the WRHC and private developers and capitalists, the most expansive and modern industrial estates were constructed in Ikeja Lagos and Oluyole and Bodija in Ibadan. hundreds of housing units were built by the corporation in Lagos and Ibadan, the two most populous cities in Sub-Saharan Africa. It made loans available to the people of Southwestern Nigeria to build their own houses and encouraged property ownership through mortgage saving schemes. In addition, the corporation provided facilities like electricity, water, schools, markets and hospitals in the estates – a far cry scenario in today's urban housing programmes in Nigeria. Whereas, plans were agog to expand and establish industrial estates in other urban centres of the region like Ijebu Ode, Ondo, Benin and Okitipupa. Unfortunately corruption and intra-class conflict of the AGN from 1962 onwards undermined the unprecedented tempo at the urban housing and estate development by the government. Despite these challenges, the achievement of the WRHC remains a landmark in the social history of urban housing in Nigeria. In essence, this case bring to the fore the productive potential of good governance cum welfare-capitalism in a developing economy.

## END NOTES

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