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**CHAPTER 15**

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP**

***Understanding pressure group***

Mounting pressure means to persuade someone into doing something. This means that a pressure group is a formal or organized body with a common interest whose fundamental aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies and laws to its own advantage. A pressure group promotes its interest regarding an issue, its interest regarding an issue; it seeks to influence government decisions and politics. The pressure group is referred to as “The Functional Representative”. This is the idea that various pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their functions.

According to Anifowose (1999), “pressure group is described as interest groups, lobby groups protect the interest of their members or groups (Oyeleye 1998). What pressure groups seek to achieve is to ensure that government does their biddings. These groups influence both public policy, administration, and even go a long way to determine political structures of the society and forms of government.

Pressure groups and political parties’ activities may sometimes appear similar, but they are different from each other. The first distinction is that political parties seek to gain government powers while pressure groups do not seek to gain government power but rather, their aim is to influence political decisions. Secondly, political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas pressure groups narrow their goals. Also, pressure groups are not accountable for any of their actions while political parties do account for their actions. In addition, political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups. With these differences, pressure groups and political parties have some things in common. Pressure groups and political parties relate together to achieve social changes. Pressure groups may align their interest with that of certain political parties that are believed to possess the capability to further their interests.

Pressure group’s existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of people in the society. They treat gaps in the democratic process, inform debates among ourselves, to encourage participations, and to enhance good accountability in our daily society. While pressure groups have their importance place in the scheme of things in a nation, there is some downside. Sometimes, due to their own selfish interest, pressure is mounted to alter the direction of government decisions, while not considering government’s limited resources.

There are five types of pressure groups, which are:

1. Interest Groups: This group is seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society.

2. Cause Groups: These groups are promotion groups, which seek to promote particular causes. It is always aimed at achieving a single objective.

3. Insider groups and outsider groups: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislators. On the other hand, outsider groups have no access of links to the government and its machineries.

4. Anomic groups: These groups are not guided by an appropriate behavioral style or rule, and they may sometimes act violently.

5. Associational Groups and Non- Associational Groups: Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. Non- associational groups are pressure group without a formal organization.

There are many functions of pressure groups. One of the functions of pressure group is that it serves as link between the government of the day and the people it governs. Secondly, it promotes public participation in the activities of government of the day. Another function is that it serves as sources of information to the government. Also, the activities of pressure groups ensures that government do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship. Pressure groups act as watchdogs on the government. Another function is that they are instrumental in the mounting of pressure on government so that it can implement policies that are to the benefit of citizens.

Pressure groups may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals, including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy, and direct political action i.e. organized protests.