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**Question: In about 2-Page review Chapter 15, "An Overview of the Idea of Pressure Group," in Salient Issues in Government and Nigeria's Politics, pages 194-200.**

**Answers:**

**An Overview of the Idea of Pressure Group.**

**Understanding Pressure Groups:** To mount pressure is to persuade someone or force a person into doing something. This makes a pressure group 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. 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. This is usually done through their occupations or profession. According to Anifowose (1999), pressure group is described as “interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups”. Pressure groups came into existence to complement, enhance or even to protect the interest of their members or groups (Oyeleye, 1998). What pressure groups seek to achieve is to ensure that government does their biddings and with some pressure through the right channels and means, pressure groups are able to make government listen to them. In addition to that, these groups influence both public policy, administration and even go a long way to determine political structures of the society and forms of government. In nature, these groups could be religious, business-like, educational, ethnic-oriented, gender-sensitive, economic or social, among others. Some examples of pressure group in Nigeria are: ASUU (Academic Staff Union for University), Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), etc.

Pressure groups and political parties’ activities may sometimes appear similar but they are different from each other. The distinction includes the following;

* Political parties seek to gain government powers while pressure groups do not seek to gain power rather their aim is to influence political decisions.
* Political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas pressure groups narrow their goals.
* Pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions while political parties do account for their actions.
* Political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups.

However, these differences do not point to the fact that pressure groups and political parties have nothing in common. They do. In fact, pressure groups and political parties relate together to achieve certain 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 existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for tyranny of majority of people in the society, to treat the gaps in the democratic process, to inform debates among ourselves, to encourage participations and to enhance good accountability in our daily society. However, while pressure groups are acknowledged as potentially beneficial to a democratic society, problems can arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific groups. In this situation, the voice of a small group of people with narrow interest can become overly influential. Moreover, in the democratic process, there is a need for compromise in order to reach consensus regarding the common good. If pressure groups remain rigid and refuse to compromise on specific issues, they can potentially monopolise the democratic process by focusing public debate on a few specific issues. 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. For example, when some professional bodies go on strike, citizens suffer and government might be incapacitated due to shortage of funds to meet the requirements of these association.

**Types of Pressure Group.**

* **Interest Groups:** This group is also seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society.
* **Cause Groups:** These groups are promotion groups, which seek to promote particular causes.
* **Insider Groups and Outsider Groups:** Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers and legislators.
* **Anomic Groups:** Groups here have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society.
* **Associational Groups and Non-Associational Groups:** Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country while non-associational groups are pressure group without a formal organization.

**Functions of Pressure Groups.**

1. Pressure Groups links government to the people.
2. Pressure Groups promotes participation in government.
3. They serve as sources of information to government.
4. They curtail dictatorial tendencies.
5. They promote the interest of the minority.
6. They influence legislation.

**Pressure Groups’ Lobbying:** Pressure groups may adopt variety of strategies to achieve their goals, including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy and direct political action (e.g., organized protests). Clearly, some pressure groups exert more influence than others. The degree to which such groups are able to achieve their goals may depend on their ability to be recognized as legitimate by the population, media and by those in power. For example, civil rights groups, trade unions and professional associations are more widely recognized and accepted than newly formed pressure groups or single-issue pressure group.

Pressure groups lobby in so many ways. They lobby with governmental officials directly. For example, they lobby legislators, ministers and other government machineries. They might sometimes lobby these government officials through friends, spouses, children and other relatives. Also, pressure groups may sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the bills.