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MATRIC NUMBER: 19/LAW01/183

DEPARTMENT : LAW

COURSE CODE : GST 201

ANSWER

AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

UNDERSTANDING PRESSURE GROUP

A pressure group is a formal or organized body of with a common interest whose fundamental aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies and laws at its own advantage. This is usually done through occupation or professions. For example, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Academic Staff Union of Universities. Pressure groups influence public policy, administration, and even go a long way to determine political structures of the society and forms of government. Some examples include ASUU Afenifere, Oodua People’s Congress, and Arewa People’s Congress and so on.

Pressure Groups and political parties’ activities may sometimes appear similar but are different from each other. Firstly, political parties seek to gain government powers while pressure groups aim to influence political decisions. Secondly, political parties have a wide range of policies while pressure groups narrow their goals. Thirdly, pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions while political parties are. Fourthly, political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups. However, 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. While pressure groups are considered beneficial to a democratic society, problems can arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific groups. Sometimes due to their selfish interest, pressure is mounted to alter the direction of government decisions, while not considering government’s limited resources.

TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

INTEREST GROUPS: This group is also seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society, For example, the trade units, for instance, CBI (Confederation of Business Integration).

CAUSE GROUPS: The groups are promotion groups which, which seek to promote particular causes, for example, charities and environmental groups. This group lacks formal structure.

INSIDER GROUPS AND OUSIDER GROUPS: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have access to ministers or legislators. An example includes Nigerian Bar Association (NBA). However an insider group may be high or low profile, regardless they intend to influence government’s mission and visions. On the other hand, outside groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries. They have to use other ways to make impact. An example of this group is the Animal Liberation Front.

ANOMIC GROUPS: These groups have unpredictable actions and behaviour as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. They are not guided by an appropriate behavioural style or rule and may sometimes act violently. Protest, rioting, strikes and sometimes revolution are some of the means which they mount pressure.

ASSOCIATIONAL GROUPS AND NON-ASSOCIATIONAL GROUPS: Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. These groups have their registered offices, constitutions and so on. On the other hand, non-associational groups are pressure groups without a formal organization. Their arrangement and gathering are by virtue of kinship or even family attachment, social traditions, tribal or even race afflictions, just to mention a few.

FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Firstly, they link government to the people. Secondly, they promote participation in government. Thirdly, they serve as a source of information to the government. Fourthly, they help in curtailing dictatorial tendencies government may have. Fifthly, they help in the promotion of the interest of the minority.

INFLUENCING LEGISLATION

Pressure groups put pressure on government to influence its policy, change a policy direction, and withdraw entirely a particular policy that does not favour their members or the citizenry. This is another function of pressure groups.

PRESSURE GROUPS’ LOBBYING

Pressure groups may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy, and direct political action (e.g. organized protest). 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 was legitimate by the population, media and by those in power.

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.