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**CHAPTER 15**

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

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**UNDERSTANDING PRESSURE GROUPS**

To mount pressure is to persuade someone or coerce a person into doing something. This makes a pressure group or formal 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 functions. For example the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), we also have Academic Staff union of universities (ASUU) which champions the interest of academic and condition of learning in Nigerian’s university.

 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 protect the interest of their members or groups. 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 the government listen. In addition to that, these groups Influence 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 others. The first distinction is that political parties seek to gain government powers, while on the other hand, pressure groups do not seem to gain power, rather their aim is to influence political policies. Second, political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas pressure groups narrow their goals. Also pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions, while parties do account for their actions. In addition, political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups, however these differences do not point to the fact that political parties and pressure groups do not have anything in common. Pressure groups and political parties relate together to achieve social changes.

 Pressure groups existence is to checkmate and make democracy better to compensate for the tyranny of majority of the people in the society. While pressure groups are acknowledge as potentially beneficial to a democratic society, problems can arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific groups. While pressure groups have their important place in the scheme of things in a nation, there is some downsides. Sometimes, due to their own 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.
* ***CAUSE GROUPS:*** These groups are promotions groups, which seek to promote particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups.
* ***INSIDE AND OUTSIDE GROUPS:*** inside groups are regularly consulted by the governments who have regular access to the minister and legislator. For example, The Nigerian Bar Association, while outside groups has no access or links the government and its machineries. They have to use other ways to impact. For example, Animal Liberation Front which champions for the rights of animals.
* ***ANOMIC GROUPS:*** these groups have unpredictable actions and behaviors as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. These groups are not guided by an appropriate behavioral style and they may sometimes act violently. Protest, rioting strikes, and sometimes revolutions are some of the means through which they mount pressure.

**FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

* ***LINKS GOVERNMENT TO THE PEOPLE*:** pressure groups stay up to date on relevant information and are able to sensitize the people on such matter and the same time relates to the government what the opinions of the people are.
* ***SERVING AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION TO GOVERNMERNT:*** some pressure groups lobby government on various fronts, the interaction offers the government valuable information on aspect of issues they may not even be aware of.
* ***INFLUENCING LEGISLATION:*** they are instruments used in mounting pressure on government so that they can implement policies that will be beneficial to the citizens.
* ***PROMOTION OF INTEREST OF THE MINORITY:*** as they go about their activities they ensure that the interests of minority groups are not trampled upon by the government.