Chapter 15: An Overview OF the Idea of Pressure Group.

A pressure group may be defined as 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 may be called’’ A Functional Representative” which means various pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their functions. Pressure groups seek to promote and protect the interest of their members. They influence the public policy and administrative sectors. These groups focus on various sectors such as business, education, religion, social, economic, gender-sensitive and so on. Examples of these groups are ASUU(Academic Staff Union of University), NBA(Nigerian Bar Association), NLC(Nigerian Labor Congress) and so on.

Although, pressure groups and political parties appear similar, they have a lot of differences such as their interests. Political parties aim at gaining government powers while, pressure groups are interested in influencing government decisions. In addition, pressure groups are not accountable for their actions but political parties have been elected through votes which makes them accountable. While they have their differences, they also possess similar features like; trying to achieve some certain social changes in the society and some of their interests align.

Encouraging participation among citizens in politics, making democracy better, enhancing good accountability of the government and promoting the interests of the people are some of the functions and benefits of pressure groups. There are always positive and negative consequences of everything. This means that some functions of pressure groups may yield problematic results such as limiting the rights of citizens. For instance, if there is a strike by the NMA and the government can not provide a solution immediately. Innocent citizens will suffer the consequences. This shows that pressure groups can be either positive or negative depending of the situation.

There are various types of pressure groups in existence. There is the interest group which focuses on representing the people of the society. It is also known as the sectional group. There is also the anomic groups which are very unpredictable in actions and behaviors meaning they can be violent or non-violent depending on their reasoning. They act based on the situation in the society. The cause groups is another type of group that seeks the promotion of certain causes such as charities. There is the associational and non-associational groups. The associational groups include registered members with authority in the state or country with their own offices and constitutions. Non-associational groups are groups without formal organizations. Finally, the insider and outsider group. The insider groups are regularly consulted by the government because of their influence. While, the outsider group has no access or link to the government.

Pressure groups perform various functions in the society. First, the connect the government to the people meaning they serve as a link between the people and the government and aid communication. Second, they serve as sources of information to the government meaning they provide valuable information on certain issues for the government. Also, pressure groups promote and encourage the public to participate in government activities of the day. Another function is that pressure groups is curtailing any dictatorial tendencies meaning they try to ensure that government power is not abused. Promotion of the minority’s interest is another function of the pressure groups. Pressure groups also mount pressure on the government so that it can implement the policies that will benefit the citizens.

To achieve their various goals, pressure groups adopt a variety of strategies such as lobbying elected officials either directly or indirectly(through friends and relatives), media advocacy(by using the media to express their desires and interests) and direct political actions(through organized protests). Different pressure groups use different strategies depending on the situation and the interests involved.