CHAPTER 15

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

Understanding Pressure Group

To mount pressure is to persuade someone or coerce a person into doing something. A pressure promotes its interest regarding an issue; it seeks to influence government decisions and policies. The pressure group is referred to as “The functional representatives”. 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 professions. For example, the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), represents the Lawyers and Solicitors, while Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) represents doctor’s interests. There is also the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which champions the interests of academics and condition of learning in Nigeria’s universities. 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 groups, in Nigeria are: ASUU (Academic Staff Union for University), Afenifere, Oodua People’s Congress (representing the Yoruba tribe), Arewa Consultative Forum, Arewa People’s Congress (representing the Hausa tribe), Nigeria Bar Association of Nigeria (NBA), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC). 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.

Types of Pressure Groups

Interest Groups: This group is also seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society. Example, the trade units CBI (Confederation of British Industry) known as the voice of business in the country.

Cause groups: These groups are promotion groups, which seek to promote particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups. Any group that champion’s social movement is also seen as “cause group”, even though the group lacks formal structure.

Insider Groups and Outsider Groups: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislatures. However, an insider group may be high or low in profile; nevertheless they intend to have influence on government’s mission and visions. They have to use other ways to have impact. However, the insider and the outsider group changes from time to time based on the party or governmental in power.

Anomic Groups: These groups are not guided by an appropriate behavioral style or rule, and they may sometimes act violently. Protest, rioting, strikes and sometime revolution, are some of the means through which they mount pressure.

Associational Groups and Non-associational groups: Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. On the other hand, non-associational groups are pressure group 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 few.

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 opinion of the people is.

Promotes participation in Government: Another function of pressure groups public participation in the activities of government of the day. The activities of pressure groups, therefore, promote political participation and carry the citizenry along.

Serving as sources of information to government: Another function of pressure groups is that they as sources of information to the government.

Curtailing of Dictatorial Tendencies: Also, the activities of pressure groups ensures that governments do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship.

Pressure Group’s lobbying

Pressure groups lobby in so many ways. They lobby with governmental officials directly. Also, pressure groups may sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the bills.