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**CHAPTER 15**

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

To mount pressure is to persuade someone into doing something. Therefore a pressure group is a formal or organized body with a common interest where the fundamental aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing governmental 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. E.g. ASUU (Academic Staff Union of Universities) which champions the interest of academics and condition of learning in Nigeria’s universities.

According to Anifowose (1999) pressure group is described as interest groups, lobby groups, or even protest groups. They come into existence to complement, enhance or to protect the interest of their members of groups. In nature, these groups could be religious, business-like, educational, ethnic-oriented, gender-sensitive, economic, or social, among others.

Pressure groups and political parties’ activities may sometimes appear similar, but they are different from each other. The first distinction is that political parties seek to gain governmental powers, while on the other hand, pressure groups do not seek to gain power. Rather, their aim is to influence political decisions. Secondly, political parties have a wide range of policies while pressure groups narrow their goals. Also, pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions, while political 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 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.

The existence of a pressure is to checkmate and make democracy better. Also to treat the gaps enhance good accountability in our daily society.

***INSIDER AND OUTSIDER GROUPS***

These groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislators. The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) is one of such groups. An insider group may be high or low in profile. On the other hand, outside groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries, they have to use other ways to makes impact. Examples of such groups are the Animal Liberation Front. Such groups are radical in nature because they are mostly denied by the government. the insider and outsider groups change from time to time depending on the government.

***ANOMIC GROUPS***

Groups here have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. These groups are not guided by an appropriate behavioral style or rule, and they may sometimes act violently.

***ASSOCIATIONAL GROUPS AND NON-ASSOCIATIONAL GROUPS***

Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. These groups also have their registered offices, constitutions and so on. Non- associational groups are pressure groups without formal organization. Their arrangement and gathering are by virtue of kinship or even family attachment, social tradition or even race afflictions.

**FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

**LINKS GOVERNMENT TO THE PEOPLE:** It serves as a link between the government and the people it governs. They stay up to date on relevant information and are able sensitize the people on them.

**PROMOTES PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT:** It promotes active public participation in the activities of the government of the day. Therefore the activities of pressure groups provide political participation and carries the citizenry along.

**SERVING AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION TO THE GOVERNMENT:** As pressure groups lobby the government in various forms, the interaction offers the government valuable information on certain aspects they may not even be aware of.

**CURTAILING OF DICTATORIAL TENDENCIES:** The activities of pressure groups ensure that government do not perpetuate themselves in power leading to dictatorship.

**PROMOTION OF THE INTEREST OF THE MINORITY:** They ensure that the interests of the minority are not trampled upon by the government. Thus, pressure groups act as watchdogs to the government.

**INFLUENCING LEGISLATION:** Pressure groups are instrumental in mounting pressure on the government so that it can implement policies that are to the benefit of the citizens.

***PRESSURE GROUPS’ LOBBYING***

Pressure groups may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals including lobbying officials, media advocacy etc. the degree to which such groups achieve their goals depend on their ability to be recognized as legitimate by the population, media, and by these in power. For example, civil rights groups, trade union, and professional associations.

Pressure groups lobby in many ways. They lobby with government officials directly. For example, they lobby legislators, ministers and other government officials through relatives. Also, pressure groups may sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure passage of bills.