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**CHAPTER 15**

**UNDERSTANDING PRESSURE GROUPS**

To mount pressure is to persuade someone or coerce the person into doing something. This makes a pressure group 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 promotes its interest regarding an issue; it seeks to influence government policies and decisions. For example, the Nigerian Bar Association represent the lawyers and solicitors, while Nigerian Medical Association represents doctors’ interests. There is also the Academic Staff Union of Universities which champion the interest of academics and conditions of learning in Nigeria universities. Some other examples of pressure groups in Nigeria are: Afenifere, Oodua People’s Congress (representing the Yoruba tribe), the Arewa Consultative Forum, Arewa People’s Congress. (representing the Hausa tribe), Christain Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Labor Congress, etc.

**TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

* Interest groups
* Cause groups
* Insider and outsider groups
* Anomic groups
* Associational and Non-associational

**FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

* Links government to the people
* Promotes participation in government
* Promotion of interest on the minority
* Serving as sources of information to the government
* Curtailing of dictatorial tendencies
* Influencing legislation

**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. 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 as legitimate by their population, media and by those in power. For example, civil rights groups, trade unions and professional associations are more widely recognized and accepted than newly formed pressure groups or single issued pressure groups.

Lobbying is the attempt by business, charities, political action committees, individuals and pressure groups to influence politicians in the legislative, or justices in the judicial, to create certain pieces of legislation, loosen regulation, or to rule a certain way in a judicial process.

Lobbying is typically done on behalf of other clients such as businesses or charities, by firms who specialise in lobbying. Most of these firms will have offices in legislative capitals across the United States including Washington DC and State Capitals. In Washington the lobby firms are known as K Street, named after the street in which most lobbying forms have their offices. Lobby firms will routinely recruit former politicians to make use of their contacts that they obtained over their political careers. The movement of former politicians to the lobby firms is part of the revolving door process in US Politics.

Lobbyists will seek to persuade politicians to enact legislation that will be favourable to them or to their clients. This can be done through any number of methods including gifts, meals out, politician donations or by seeking to influence a politicians constituents to demand a change.

Pressure groups and political parties may sometimes appear alike but they are different from each other. the first distinction is that political parties seek to gain power while on the other hand, pressure groups do not seek to gain power. But rather, their aim is to influence political decision. Secondly political have a wide range of policies, whereas pressure groups narrow their goals.