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AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure group is a formal or organized body with a common goal whose fundamental aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies and laws to its own advantage. It can also be referred to as "the functional representative" because pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their function. Such as Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) representing lawyers and solicitors.

Pressure groups seek to achieve the fact that government does their biddings and sometimes with pressure applied through the right means. These groups could be religious, business-like, educational, ethnic-oriented, gender-sensitive, economic or social among others. Examples of pressure groups in

Nigeria include Academic Staff Union for University (ASUU), Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) and others.

Pressure groups and political parties sometimes appear similar but they differ.

Some differences occurs in the range of policies; political parties have a wide range of policies while pressure groups narrow their goals. Another difference is power based in the sense that political parties seek to gain government powers while pressure groups do not seek to gain power. Also political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups. Pressure groups and political parties relate together relate together to achieve certain social changes. Pressure groups are acknowledged as potentially beneficial to a democratic society, problems may arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific groups at times like this voice of a small group of people with narrow interest can become overly influential. In the democratic process, there is a need for compromise in order to reach consensus regarding the common good. If pressure groups remain rigid and refuse to compromise on specific issues, they can potentially monopolies the democratic process by focusing public debate on a few specific issues. Many at times the decisions of some pressure groups affects the

people wrongly such as strikes which citizens suffer and government might be incapacity due to shortage of funds to meet the requirements of these associations.

There are five (5) basic types of pressure groups which are interest groups also known as sectional groups representing the people in the society such as trade unions. Cause groups also known as promotion groups which seek to promote particular causes such as charities and environmental groups. Insider and outsider groups; insider group may include Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) they are usually consulted by the government so they have regular access to ministers or legislators while outsider groups have no access to the government and its mechanisms such as Animal Liberation Front. Anomic groups have unpredictable actions and are sometimes violent in protests, rioting, strikes through which they mount pressure. Associational and Non-associational groups; associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities of state as for non-associational groups they possess no formal organizations but are guarded by virtue of kinship

The functions involved are linking of government to its people, promotes participation in government, serves as sources of information to government, curtailing of Dictatorial techniques, promotes the interest of the minority, influences legislation and many others. Finally, pressure groups may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goal including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy and direct political action such as organized protests.