NAME: IBE ELIZABETH UGOCHUKWU

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DEPARTMENT: IRD

CHAPTER 15: AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP.

Pressure group can 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. The pressure group is also referred to as Functional representative. This means that pressure groups represent different parts of the society based on their respective functions. It is carried out through their professions. Example the Nigerian Bar Association representing the lawyers and solicitors, Nigerian Medical Association representing the medical practitioners.

According to Anifowose(1999) pressure groups is described as “interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups.” Pressure groups influence government activities. In nature, pressure groups can be religious, educational, gender-sensitive, business-like, social or economic and so on.

Pressure groups activities are sometimes said to appear similar but are different. Firstly, political parties seek to gain governmental power while pressure groups do not seek to gain governmental power, but they seek to influence governments decisions. Secondly, political parties have wide range of policies while pressure group have narrow goals. Thirdly, political parties have account for their action while pressure groups do not have any account of their actions. Also, political parties are more organized than pressure groups. Aside these differences, pressure groups and political parties relate together in certain areas of interest.

Pressure groups existence is to checkmate and ensure democracy, to treat the loopholes in the democratic process, to encourage participation and to enhance accountability in our society. Although, pressure groups are credited for being potentially beneficial to a democratic society, problems can arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few groups. In this situation, the voice of a small group of people with narrow interest can become overly influential.

Even though pressure group have their important side in the scheme of things in a nation, there is also a downside. Sometimes due to their selfish interests, pressure is mounted to alter the direction of government decisions, while not considering governments limited resources.

There are different types of pressure groups, some of which are: Interest groups, Cause groups, Insider and outsider group, Anomic groups, Associational and Non-associatiosal groups. Pressure groups serve as a link between the government and the people, It promotes public participation in the activities of the government, It serves as a source of information to the government, It ensures that governments do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship, It helps to promote the interest of the minority. It also helps in mounting pressure on government so that it can implement policies that are of benefit to the citizens.

Pressure groups adopt different strategies to achieve their goals, including media advocacy, lobbying and direct political action. Some pressure groups exert more influence than others. Pressure groups lobby in different ways, It could be directly with government officials or they lobby with government officials through friends, relatives, children and many more. They also ensure the passage of bills through contacting legislators.