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CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

To apply pressure is the process of convincing someone or coerce them into doing something. This means that a pressure group acts as an organised body that puts pressure on any governmental institution with the main goal of influencing government policies and laws to its 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.

Pressure groups came into existence to complement, enhance or even to protect the interest of their members or groups. In nature, these groups could be religious, business-like, educational, economic, etc. Pressure groups and political parties activities might appear similar sometimes, but they are different from each other. This is because political parties seek to gain government powers, while persuade groups do not seek to gain power but their aim is to influence political decisions.

Pressure groups exist in order to checkmate and make democracy better, and also to treat the gaps in the democratic process and to enhance good accountability in our society. However, while pressure groups are acknowledged as potentially beneficial to a democratic society, problems can arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific individuals or groups.

Types of pressure groups

Types of pressure groups includes:

Interest groups: These are sectional groups representing the people in the society

Cause groups: These are promotional groups which seek to promote particular causes (eg charities and environmental groups)

Insider groups, Outsider groups and Anomic groups: These groups are not guided by appropriate behaviour, they work based on the moment and situation of the society.

Associational groups: These types of groups are usually registered under appropriate authorities and have their own registered offices, constitutions and so on

Non-associational groups: These groups are without a formal organisation

Pressure groups perform different functions; they serve as a link between the government of the day and the people it governs. It promotes public participation in the activities of the government of the day. They serve as sources of information to the government, they help curtail dictatorial tendencies, pressure groups, they are instrumental in the mounting of pressure on government so it can implement policies that will be beneficial to the citizens and most importantly lobbying. Pressure groups lobby in order to achieve their goals, they even lobby with government officials directly. The degree to which groups are able to achieve their goals may depend on their abilities to be recognised as legitimate by the population, media and by those in power.