**19/LAW01/002**

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**GST 203**

**GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA**

**QUESTION:**

In about 2 pages, review chapter two “AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP” in “SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA’S POLITICS”. Pages 194-199

**ANSWER:**

A pressure group is a formal or organised body with a common interest whose fundamental aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies to its own advantage. It promotes its interest regarding an issue and 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 and this is done through their occupations or professions. Examples of such groups are; the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) which represents the Lawyers and Solicitors and the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) which represents the interests of doctors.

Pressure groups and political parties’ activities may appear similar, but they actually differ from each other. The first difference is that political parties seek to gain governmental powers while pressure groups do not seek this governmental power but have their aim at influencing political decisions. The second difference is that political parties have a wide range of policies whereas pressure groups narrow their goals. Another difference is that whereas pressure groups do not usually account for their actions, the same cannot be said for political parties. Additionally, political parties are more formally organised in comparison to pressure groups. Despite such a number of differences, political parties and pressure groups do have things in common. They relate with each other in order to achieve certain social changes. Pressure groups may align their interest with that of certain political parties that are believed to possess the capability to further their interests.

Pressure groups exist in order to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of the majority of the people and to treat the gaps in the democratic process. They also inform debates among ourselves, encourage participations and enhance good accountability in our daily society. However, problems can arise in a democratic society when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific groups. If pressure groups remain rigid and refuse to compromise on specific issues, they can potentially monopolise the democratic process by focusing public debates on a few specific issues.

There are various types of pressure groups, each one performing a different function from the rest. Interest groups are sectional groups, representing the people in the society. Cause groups are promotion groups which seek to promote particular causes. An example is environmental groups and charity groups. Cause groups champion social movement and are aimed at achieving a single objective. Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government and have access to ministers or legislators. A suitable example is the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA). Anomic groups have unpredictable actions as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. On the other hand, non-associational groups are pressure groups without a formal organisation. Their arrangement and gathering are by virtue of kinship or even family attachment, social traditions or even race afflictions.

There are various functions of pressure groups which are; linking the government to the people, promoting participation in government, serving as sources of information to the government, curtailing of dictatorial tendencies, influencing legislation, and promoting the interest of the minority.