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COURSE: GST 203 MATRIC NO.: 19/MHS11/149.

PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure has to do with mounting, persuading or forcing an individual into doing something. A pressure group is a formal body with common goals whose main aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies and laws in its own advantage. There various pressure groups and each of them represent different structures based on their function e.g. Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) for the lawyers and NMA (Nigeria Medical Association) for the Doctors.

According to Anifowose (1999) pressure group is defined as “interest group, lobby groups or even protest groups”. Pressure groups came into existence to compliment, enhances or even protect the interest of their members or groups (1998).

Pressure group and political parties are kind of similar in a way but are different from each other. The existence of pressure group is to checkmate and make democracy better to compensate for the oppression of majority of people in the society. Sometimes due to the selfish interest of the members of a pressure group, pressure is mounted to disrupt the direction of government decisions.

There are many types of pressure group and they are;

* Interest groups; this groups is known as sectional group representing the people in the society. E.g. trade units.
* Cause groups; this groups are known as promotion groups they seek to promote a specific cause. E.g. charities, environmental groups and NGO’s, example of cause group is ‘the amnesty International’ which campaign for the need to end human rights abuses.
* Insider and Outsider groups; the insider groups are groups that are usually consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislation e.g. the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA). While outsider group is a group that have no connection or access to the government and its machineries.
* Anomic groups: groups that have unpredicted actions and behavior as they work based on present situation in the society. This group is not guided by an appropriate behavioral style or rule and may act violently at times.
* Associational groups and non- associational group; associational groups are groups which are usually with suited authorities in a state or country while non- associational group on the other hand are groups without a formal organization.
* Institutional group; this are groups whereby the members are made up of professionals, e.g. Doctors, Lawyers, teachers etc.

There are many functions of pressure groups and here are some of them:

Pressure group serve as a medium between the Government and the people being governed. Pressure groups are updated on relevant information and are able to sensitize on such matter.

Promotes the participation in Government; pressure group promotes public participation in the activities of the government. Some pressure groups engage in demonstration and other operations to put their perspective on an issue across to the government.

Curtailing of dictatorial tendencies; the activities of pressure groups ensures that the government do not sustain power in themselves there by drifting into a dictatorship government.

Promoting of the interest of the Minority; pressure groups champion the rights of the under- privileged especially promotional/cause pressure groups. As members of pressure groups go about their daily activities they ensure that the interests of the minority groups are not tampered with by the Government.

Influencing legislation; another function of the pressure group is that they are instrumental in the mounting of pressure on government so that they can implement policies that are of benefit to the citizens.

Serving as source of information to government; the pressure groups lobby government on various fronts, their interactions offers the government valuable information on aspect of issues they might not be aware of.

Techniques of pressure groups

Lobbying; lobbying is when pressure groups influence their actions through inner actors of governmental bodies to execute their plans. The use of lobbying also serve as a function because it is also an instrument being used by members of the pressure group so that it can implement the interest of the citizens. Pressure group lobby in so many ways. They loony with governmental officials directly e.g. they lobby legislations, ministers and other government machineries. They might sometimes lobby these government officials through friends, spouses and other relatives.

Striking; pressure groups knows the best time to strike the government decisions and policies to get audience or attention from the people of the government.