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LEVEL: 200L.

COURSE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTION.

MATRIC NUMBER: 19/LAW01/234.

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

To mount to pressure group is to persuade someone or coerce a person into doing something. This makes a pressure group 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.

 Pressure group is as “The Functional Representative”. This is the idea that various pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their functions. This is done through their occupations or professions, for example, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) represents the Lawyers and Solicitors, while Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) represents doctor’s interests. What pressure groups seek to achieve is to ensure that government does their biddings. And with some pressure through the right channels and means, pressure groups are able to make government listen to them. In addition to that, these groups influence both public policy, administration, and even go a long way o determine political structures of the society and forms of government. These groups could be religious, business-like educational and so on. Some examples of pressure groups include; ASUU (Academic Staff Union for University), Oodua People’s Congress (representing the Yoruba tribe), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); and so on.

 Pressure Groups and political parties’ activities may sometimes appear similar, but they are different from each other. The first distinction is that political parties seek to gain government powers, while on the other hand, pressure groups do not seek to gain power. Their aim is to influence political decisions. Second, political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas pressure groups narrow their goals. Pressure groups are not actually accountable for their actions. Political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups. However, political parties and pressure groups do have things in common such as; the both relate together 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.

TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Interest Groups

This group is also seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society. For example, the trade unions like CBI (Confederation of British Industry).

Cause Groups

These groups are promotion groups, which seek to promote particular causes. For examples; charities and environmental groups. For instance, we can see the Amnesty International, which campaign for the need to end human right abuses. Any group that champions social movement is also seen as “cause group”, even though the group lacks formal structure.

Insider Groups and Outsider Groups

Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislators. NBA (Nigeria Bar Association) is an example of such groups. However, an insider group may be high or low in profile, nevertheless they intend to have influence on government’s mission and visions. On the other hand, outside groups have no access to the government and its machineries. Examples of this set of groups are the Animal Liberation Front which champions rights for animals and so on.

Anomic Groups

Groups here have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. They are guided by an appropriate behavioral style or rule and they may sometimes act violently. Examples of means they use to mount pressure are protest, riot strikes and so on.

Associational groups and Non-Associational Groups

Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country, they have their own registered offices, constitutions and so on. Non-associational groups on the other hand, are groups without a formal organization, their arrangement and gathering are by virtue of kinship or even family attachment, social traditions and so on.

FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Act as links to Government and people: this is one of the functions of pressure groups, it serves as a link between government and the people. They stay up to date on relevant information and are able to sensitize the people on such matter and also relate to the government what the opinion of the people is.

It serves as sources if information to Government: this function of pressure groups, is that they serve as sources of information to the government. As the pressure groups lobby government on various fronts, the interaction offers the government valuable on various fronts, the interaction offers the government valuable information on aspects of issues they may not even be aware of.

Influencing Legislation: Another function of pressure group involves them being instrumental in the mounting of pressure on government so that it can implement policies that are to the benefit of citizens. They put pressure on government to influence its policy and change a policy direction.

PRESSURE GROUPS’ LOBBYING

Pressure groups may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals, including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy and direct political action. The degree to which such groups are able to achieve their goals may depend on their ability to be recognized as legitimate by the population media, and by those in power. They lobby in so many ways, they lobby with governmental officials directly, for example, they lobby legislators, minsters and other government machineries. Also, they may sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact the legislators to ensure the passage of bills.