

NAME: BABAKANO RABIYATU ALIYU

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CHAPTER 15: AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

A formal group is 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. A pressure group promotes its interests regarding an issue; it seeks to influence government decisions and policies. The pressure group is referred to as “The Functional Representative”. This is usually done through their occupations or profession, ethnic oriented, gender- sensitive. For example, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), represents the Lawyers and Solicitors, while Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) represents doctor’s interests. There is also the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which champions the interests of academics and condition of learning in Nigeria’s universities, Oodua (representing the Yoruba tribe), Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC).

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. Rather, their aim is to influence political decisions. Second, political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas pressure groups narrow their goals. Also, pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions, while political parties do account for their actions.

Pressure groups’ existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of people in the society and to treat the gaps in the democratic process.

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, e.g charities and environmental groups), Insider Groups and Outsider Groups, Anomic Groups (these groups are not guided by an appropriate behavior, they work based on the

moment and situation of the society. Associational groups and Non- Associational groups (associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities and have their own registered offices, constitutions and so on. While, non- associational groups are without a formal organization.

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 government of the day, They serve as sources of information to the government, they help curtail dictatorial tendencies, pressure groups champion the rights of the under-privileged, especially promotional pressure groups, they are instrumental in the mounting of pressure on government so it can implement policies that are to the benefits of 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 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.