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Matric. No: 19/MH/01/062

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Chapter 15: An Overview of the Idea of Pressure Group

A pressure 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 seeks to influence government decisions and policies by promoting its interest regarding any issue. It is referred as a "functional representative". Different sections of society have different pressure groups representing them based on their occupations or professions.

According to Anifowose (1999) Pressure group is described as interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups. Also according to (Opeleye, 1978) pressure groups come into existence to complement, enhance or even to protect the interest of their members or groups. What pressure group seeks to achieve is to ensure that government does their biddings. They could be religious, business like, educational, ethnic oriented, gender sensitive in nature.

Pressure Groups and political parties may be similar but have different activities. The first distinction is that political parties seek to gain government powers but on the other hand pressure groups do not seek 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, but political parties do account for their actions. Political parties are more organized than pressure groups.

Political parties and pressure groups also share some similarities. They both relate to achieve certain social changes. Pressure groups existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of people in the society. Even though pressure groups are beneficial for the government, problems also arise when the process becomes dominated by a few specific group.

Types of Pressure Groups

① Interest Groups: This group is also seen as sectional groups representing the people in the society. For example the trade unions, for instance, CBI (Confederation of British Industry).

② Cause Groups: These groups are promotion groups which seek to promote particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups. Any group that champions social movement is also seen as "cause group", even though the group lacks formal structure. It is always

Aimed at achieving a single objective

- ③ Inside Groups & Outside Groups : Inside groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislators. Outside groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries. They have to use other ways to have impact.
- ④ Anomic Groups : They have unpredictable actions and behaviour as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. They are not guided by any rule or appropriate behavioural style.
- ⑤ Associational Groups And Non-Associational Groups : Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. Non-associational groups are pressure groups without a formal organisation.

Functions of Pressure Groups

- ① It serves as link between the government and the people it governs.
- ② It promotes public participation in the activities of the government of the day.
- ③ They serve as sources of information to the government.
- ④ It champions the right of the under-privileged especially promotional pressure groups.

As : Pressure groups lobby in so many ways. They lobby within government officials directly. They might sometimes lobby these government officials through friends, spouses, children and other relatives.