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

According to Anifowose(1999), pressure group is described as interest groups, lobby groups, or even protest groups, etc. Pressure group seeks to achieve that government does their biddings. Pressure groups makes the government acknowledge and listen to them. This group's influences both public policy and administration etc. ASUU (academic union for university) , Afenifere, Oocua people's Congress ( representing Yoruba tribe), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria bar Association, Nigeria labor Congress, etc, are examples of pressure groups.

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.

While pressure groups have their importance place in the scheme of things in a nation, there is some downside. Sometimes, due to their own selfish interest, pressure cos mouthed to alter the direction of government decisions, while not considering government’s limited resources. For example, when some professional bodies go on strike citizen suffer and government might be incapacitated due to shortage of funds to meet requirements of these association.

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 underprivileged, 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, media advocacy and direct political action. Also pressure groups may sponsor bills in the legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the bills. 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.