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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

To amount pressure 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. A pressure group promotes its interest regarding an issue; it seeks to influence government decisions and policies. The pressure group is referred to as 'The Functional Representative'.

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 do not seek to gain power. In addition, political parties more formally organized than pressure groups. However, these differences do not point to the fact that pressure groups and political parties have nothing in common. They do. In fact, pressure goods and political parties relate together to achieve certain social changes.

While pressure groups have their important place in the scheme of things in a nation, there is some downside. Sometimes, due to their own selfish interest, pressure is mounted to alter the direction of government decisions, while not considering government's limited resources. For example, when some professional bodies go on strike citizens suffer and government might be incapacitated due to shortage of funds to meet the requirements of these associations. ASUU and NMA may indeed have genuine agitations, but when they go on strike, they hold other stakeholders to ransom and insist that government accommodate their requests.

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 units, for instance, CBI (Confederation of British Industry) known as the voice of business in the country, and in Nigeria, Convention on Business Integration (CBI).

2. Cause Groups

These groups are promotion groups, which seek to promote particular causes, for example, 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 the need to end human right

abuses. Any group that champion social movement is also seen as 'cause group', even though the group lacks formal structure. It is always aimed at achieving a single objective like protesting about the expansion of airports, seaports, railways etc. just to mention a few.

3. Insider Group

Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislators. The Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) 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.

4. Anomic Group

Groups here have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. These groups are not guided by an appropriate behavioral style or rule, and they may sometimes act violently. Protest, rioting, strikes, and sometime revolution, are some of the means through which they amount pressure

5. Association Group and Non associational Group

Association groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. Also, these groups have their own registered offices, constitutions and so on. On the other hand, non-associational groups are pressure group without a formal organization.

Functions of Pressure Group

1. Curtailing of Dictatorial Tendencies

Criticism of government policies curtail any dictatorial tendency government may have. Also, the activities of pressure groups ensure that governments do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship.

2. Serving as Sources of Information to Government

Another function of pressure groups is that they act as sources of information to the government to the government. As the pressure groups lobby government on various fronts, the interaction offers the government valuable information on aspects of issues they may not even be aware of.

3. Promotes Participation in Government

Another function of pressure groups is that it promotes public participation in the activities of government of the day. Some pressure groups engage in demonstrations and other measures to put their vies across to the government.

4. Influencing Legislation

They are instrumental in the mounting of pressure on government so that it can implement policies that are to the benefit of citizens. Pressure groups put pressure on government to influence its policy, 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 (e.g., organized protests). Clearly, some pressure groups exert more influence than others.