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QUESTION;

REVIEW CHAPTER 15 ON THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE IN POLITICS, IN SALIENT ISSUES ON GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIANS POLITICS.

ANSWER

To mount pressure is to persuade someone or coerce a person into doing something. This makes pressure 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 to its own advantage. The pressure group is referred to as “The functional representative”. This implies that various pressure group present different sectors of the society based on their functions. Examples of such are Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), which represent the Lawyers and the Solicitors, while the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) represents doctor’s interest. Also the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSUU) which champions the interests of academic and conditions of learning in Nigeria’s universities.

 According to Anifowose (1999) pressure group is described as “interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups. Pressure group came into existence to complement, enhance or even to protect the interest of their members of groups (Oyeleye, 1998). What pressure group is up to is that the government meets their needs and does their biddings. And with some pressure through the right channels and means, pressure groups are able to make the government to listen to them. These groups influence both public policy, administration, and even a long way to determine political structures of the society and forms of government. Some examples of pressure groups are Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Arewa Consultative Forum, Arewa people’s congress (representing the Hausa tribe), Oodua people’s congress (representing the Yoruba tribe).

 Pressure group and political parties’ activities may sometimes appear similar, but they are different from each other. The first distinction is that political powers seek to gain government powers, while pressure groups do not seek to gain power rather they aim at influencing political decisions. Secondly, political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas pressure groups narrow their goals. Thirdly, pressure groups are not accountable for their actions, while political parties are accountable for their actions. For example when you vote for a political party during election period that is to make them accountable. These differences do not point to the fact that pressure group and political parties have nothing in common. Thou they do because they achieve certain social changes. Pressure group’s existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of people in the society, to treat the gaps in the democratic process, to encourage participation, to enhance good accountability in our daily society.

 Pressure group have their importance place in the scheme of things in the nation, there is some that are 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. Like for instance when professional bodies go on strike citizens suffer and government might be incapacitated due to shortage of funds to meet the requirement 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 or attend to their needs.

 The types of pressure group that we have are;

Cause groups: they are also known as sectional group, which seek to promote particular causes. For instance, Amnesty international which campaign for the need to end human right abuses. Any group that campaign social movement is also known as “cause groups” even though that group lacks formal structure, it aim at achieving a single objective, like protesting about the expansion of airport , railways etc.

Interest groups: also seen as the sectional group representing the people in the society. For instance, CBI (confederation of British Industry) known as the voice of business in the country, and in Nigeria, Convention on Business Integration (CBI).

Anomic groups: these groups here have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situations in the society. They are not guided by an appropriate behavior style, and they may sometimes be violent. Protest, rioting and sometimes revolution are some of the means through which they mount pressure.

Associational groups and Non-associational groups: Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. These groups as well have their own registered offices, constitutions and so on. On the other hand, non-associational groups are pressure 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

Links government to the people: one of the functions of pressure group is that it serves as a link between the government and the people it governs. Pressure group stay up to date on relevant information and are able to sensitize the people on such matter and at the same time relate to the government what the opinion of the people are.

Promote the interest of the minority: pressure group champions the rights of the under-priviledged, especially promotional pressure groups. As they go about their activities, they ensure that the interests of the minority are not trampled upon by the government. Therefore, pressure group acts as watch dogs on the government.

Serving as a source of information to the Government: another function of the pressure group is that they are the sources of information to the government. As the pressure group lobby government on various fronts, the interaction offers the government valuable information and aspects of issues they may not even be aware of.

Influencing Legislation: another function of pressure group is that they are instrumental in the mounting of pressure on government so that it can implement policies that are to the benefit of citizens. Pressure group as the name implies, put pressure on government to influence its policy, change its policy direction, and withdraw entirely a particular policy that does not favour the citizens.

Pressure group Lobbying: pressure group may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals, including lobbying elected officials. Clearly, some pressure group exert more influence than others, 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. For example, trade unions and professional associations are more widely recognized and accepted than newly formed pressure groups. This group (pressure group) lobby in so many ways, they lobby with government officials directly. For example, they lobby legislators, ministers and other government officials through friends, children and other relatives. Also, pressure group may sponsor bills in legislative house and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the bills.