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GST 203 SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA’S POLITICS

ASSIGNMENT

AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

Pressure means to persuade a person into doing something. This make the pressure group a formal or organized body with a common interest whose basic 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 because various pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their functions and this is done through their occupations or professions. An example is Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) representing the doctor’s interests. These groups could be religious, business-like, educational, ethnic-oriented, gender-sensitive, economic, social, etc.

Pressure group is described as interest groups, lobby groups, or even protest groups (Anifowose, 1999). Pressure group came into existence to complement, enhance or protect the interest of their members or groups (Oyeleye, 1998). Pressure group seeks to achieve that government does their biddings and make the government listen to them.

Pressure groups and political parties’ activities may sound similar, but they are different from each other. Their differences are: political parties seek to gain government powers while pressure groups do not seek to gain power, rather, their aim is to influence political decisions, political parties have a wide range of policies whereas pressure group narrow their goals, pressure groups are not accountable for an of their actions while political parties do account for their actions, political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups. However, pressure groups and political parties actually have things in common. An example of the things they have in common is: pressure groups and political parties relate together to achieve certain social changes. Pressure groups may align their interest with that of certain political parties that are believed to possess the capability to further their interests.

Pressure group’s existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of people in the society. However, while pressure groups are acknowledged as potentially beneficial to a democratic society, problems can arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific groups. In this situation, the voice of a small group with narrow interest can become overly influential.

While pressure groups have their important place in the scheme of things in the nation, there is some downside. Sometimes due to their own selfish interest, pressure is mounted to alter direction of government’s decisions while not considering government’s limited resources.

The types of pressure groups are interest groups, cause groups, insider and outsider groups, anomic groups, association groups and non-association groups. Interest groups are also seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society, for example, the trade units, e.g. Confederation of British Industry (CBI). Cause groups are promotional groups which seek to promote particular causes, for example, charities and environmental groups. Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government while the outsider groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries. An example of insider group and outsider group is the Animal Liberation Front. Anomic groups are groups that have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. Protest, rioting, strikes and sometimes revolution are some of the means through which anomic groups mount pressure. Associational groups are groups with a formal organization, that is, they are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country while non-associational groups are pressure groups without a formal organization.

The functions of pressure groups are: it serves as a link between the government of the day and the people it governs; it promotes participation in the activities of government of the day, they are sources of information to the government, they ensure that government do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship, they promote the interest of the minority and 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 may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals, including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy, and direct political action e.g. organized protests. 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, e.g. civil rights groups. Pressure groups lobby in so many ways, e.g. they lobby legislators, ministers and other government machineries. They lobby with governmental officials directly. They might sometimes lobby these government officials through friends, spouses, children and other relatives. Pressure groups may also sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the bills.