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QUESTION: IN TWO PAGES, REVIEW CHAPTER 15 “AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUPS” IN SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA’S POLITICS BY TEMIDAYO DAVID OLADIPO AND IDOWU OLUSEYI OLALEYE

AN OVERVIEW ON THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure is used to persuade or coerce a person into doing something. 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 advantages. It can also be referred to as “The Functional Representative”. The idea is to represent different sectors of the society through their functions, usually done through their occupations or professions. Examples of pressure groups are the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) which represents lawyers and solicitors, Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) which represents the medical practitioners etc. but to mention a few. There are five types of pressure groups mentioned in this chapter and it is classified based on the structure of exerting pressure and also by its purposes. They are as follows:

Interest Groups; these sort of groups are also called sectional groups, representing the society in itself e.g trade units for instance such as the Convention on Business Integration (CBI).

Cause Groups: these groups are also known as promotional groups. They seek to promote particular causes. For example the Amnesty International which campaigns of the need to end human right abuses, any group which champion social movement, even if it lacks formal structure is also seen as a cause group. And other types such as the Insider and Outsider groups, the Anomic groups, the Associational groups and Non-Associational groups.

it also performs a number of important functions such as: it helps link government to the people, promotes participation in government, helps to curtail dictatorial tendencies, it promotes interests of the minority, it serves as sources of information to government i.e. giving information on aspects of issues the government might not even be aware of, it also helps to influence legislation amongst others. The aim of this group is to act as a checkmate and make democracy better, to treat the gaps in the democratic process, to inform debates among citizens, and to enhance good accountability in our society. The benefits of this organization cannot be over emphasized but there are probable criticisms. For instance in the situation where pressure groups remain rigid and refuse to compromise they risk a potential monopoly of the democratic process by focusing public debate on just a specific set of issues. Also in the case whereby a pressure group has selfish interests, it can mount pressure on the change of government policies not minding its limited resources. An example is whenever the Academic Staff Union of Universities in Nigeria (which is in charge of the academics and condition of learning in in Nigeria) goes on strike pushing stakeholders and insist on the government accommodating their requests. It can result in incapacitated government due to shortage of resources and suffering citizens.

Pressure groups are often said to be very similar and basically be the same thing as Political parties but this book has highlighted some differences in both organizations as well as a few similarities. The differences between pressure groups and political parties lie in the activities of each organization such as; political parties seek to control government while pressure groups seek to influence the decisions of the government; political parties have a wide range of policies while pressure groups have narrowed goals; political parties are held accountable for their actions once voted into power, but pressure groups cannot be held accountable for their actions; also political groups are more formal than pressure groups. Some similarities were the interaction between both to achieve certain social changes and the fact that pressure groups may align their interests with a political party capable of furthering their interests.

Pressure groups use a range of strategies to achieve their goals, but the most popularly known on is lobbying. This is the practice of actively trying to influence the legislation. Pressure groups can all find one way or another to exert pressure but obviously some pressure groups exert more pressure than the other one. This might be because of the legitimacy attached to such pressure groups by the people, media, and by those in power. For example civil rights group, trade unions and professional associations are more widely recognized and accepted by newer groups or single-issue pressure group. These groups lobby in different ways. They lobby with government officials directly. They could lobby these government authorities through their spouses, friends, children etc.