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Review on an Overview of the Idea of Pressure Group

Pressure is to persuade someone into doing something. Therefore, pressure group is a formal or organized body with a common interest whose main aim is to put pressure on the government policies and laws to its own advantage. It promotes its interest regarding an issue. Pressure groups are referred to as ‘the functional representative’ because of the idea that pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their functions. According to Anifowose, “pressure group is described interest groups, lobby groups or protest groups” and “it came to existence to compliment, enhance and protect” according to Oyeleye. These groups can be religious, business like, educational, ethnic-oriented, gender sensitive etc. Examples of these pressure groups include ASUU(Academic Staff Union for University), NBA(Nigeria Bar Association), CAN(Christian Association of Nigeria), NLC( Nigeria Labour Congress) etc.

Pressure group activities may appear similar but they are different from each other. The first distinction is that while political parties seek to gain power, pressure groups don’t rather they influence the decisions. The second is that 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 do account for their actions. In addition, political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups. However, these differences don’t point to the fact that they have nothing in common. They relate together to achieve certain social changes. The existence of pressure groups is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of the people in the society and treat the gaps in democratic process to enhance good accountability. Pressure groups are acknowledged as beneficial to a democratic society, problems can arise when it is dominated by smaller groups and in this case the voice of the smaller group can become influential. So, in a democratic process, there is need for compromise in order to reach a common ground. While pressure groups have their important place in the nation, due to their selfish interest, they are bound to alter the governments’ decisions while not considering the governments’ limited resources. For instance, 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. Example include the ASUU strike hold stakeholders to ransom and insist that the government accommodate their request.

There are five different types of pressure groups namely; the interest groups, cause groups, insider an outsider groups, anomic groups, associated and non-associated groups.

The interest groups are also known as “sectional groups”. They represent the people in the society e.g. the trade units.

The cause groups are promotion groups which seek to promote particular causes e.g. charities and environmental groups.

The insider groups are regularly consulted by the government and have regular access to ministers or legislators e.g. the NBA. They may be high or low in profile but they have a great influence. On the other hand, outside groups have no access to the government and its machineries e.g. the animal liberation front which champions the rights of animals.

The anomic groups have unpredictable actions as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. They tend to act violently sometimes using protest, rioting striking and sometimes revolution. They are not guided by proper and appropriate behavior.

Associational groups are registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country and thy have their own registered offices while non- associational groups are pressure groups without a formal organization and their arrangement are by virtue of kinship, social traditions, social, tribal and race affections.

The function of pressure groups include; the link government to the people by staying up to date on relevant information and being able to sensitize the public on such matters, they promote participation in government activities by demonstrations, they serve as sources of information to government through lobbying- these interactions offers the government valuable information , curtailing of dictatorial tendencies to ensure government doesn’t perpetuate itself in power, promotion of interest of the minority(they act as watch dogs), and influencing legislation. They put pressure on government to influence its policy.

Pressure groups may adopt to different strategies to achieve their goals which may include lobbying elected officials, medial officials and direct political actions. Some exert more influence than other pressure groups but the degree to which they can exert their goals depend on the ability to be recognized as legitimate by the population and those in power e.g. civil right groups, trade unions and professional associations. Pressure groups can lobby with government officials directly, through government official friends, spouses, children and other relatives and the may sponsor bills in legislative houses to ensure they are being passed.