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AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP.

To mount pressure is to persuade someone or coerce a person into doing something. This makes a pressure group a formal or organised 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. The pressure group is referred to as ‘the functional representative’. This is the idea that various pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their function. This is usually done through their occupations or professions be it religious, ethnic oriented, business like, educational . for example, the Nigerian Bar Association represents the lawyers and solicitors, while Nigerian Medical Association(NMA) represents doctors interests, Oodua People’s Congress(representing the Yoruba tribe), Christian Association of Nigeria(CAN) representing the Christian society. There is also the Academic Staff Union of Universities(ASUU) which champions the interest of academics and condition of learning in Nigerian universities.

According to Anifowose pressure group is described as ‘interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups’. Pressure groups came into existence to complement, enhance or even to protect the interest of their members or groups (Oyeleye 1988). What pressure groups seeks to achieve is that the government does their biddings and with some pressure through the right channels and means, pressure groups are able to make the government listen to them. Also, these groups influence both public policy, administration, and even go as far as determining political structures in the society and forms of government.

Pressure groups and political parties’ activities may sometimes appear similar but are different from each other. The first distinction being political parties seek to gain government power while on the other hand pressure groups do not seek power. Rather, their aim is to influence political decisions. Also pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions, but political parties are held for theirs. In addition political parties are more formally organised than pressure groups. However this differences does not mean pressure groups and political parties have nothing in common. They do. In fact pressure groups and political parties relate together to achieve certain social changes.

TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS.

Pressure groups have their important place in the scheme of things in a nation and of course divided into different stationed and specializations. Here we will be taking three;

1. 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 campaigns for the need to end human right abuses. Any group that champions social movement is also seen as ‘cause group’ even though the group lacks formal structure.

2. Insider groups and Outsider groups

Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers and legislators. They intend to have influence on governments missions and visions. On the other hand outside groups have no access or link to the government and its machineries. They have to use other ways to make an impact. Example this set of groups are the Animal Liberation Front, which champions rights for animals. And many others like it. Groups in this category are radical in nature because they are mostly denied by the government. However, the insider and outsider groups change from time to time based on the party or government in charge.

3. Associational and Non-Associational Groups

Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. Also, these groups have their own offices, constitution and so on. On the other hand Non-associational are pressure groups without a formal organisation. Their arrangement and gathering are by virtue of kinship or even family attachment, tribe or even race afflictions, just to mention a few.

Functions of pressure groups;

1. Links government to the people; it serves as a link between the government of the day and the people it governs. They stay up to date on relevant information, sensitise the people on such matters and still relate to the government the opinion of the people.

2. Serving as source of information to 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; some pressure groups engage in demonstrations and other measures to put their views across to the government. The activity therefore promotes political participation and dissuades apathy and carries the citizenry along.

4. Curtailing of dictatorial tendencies; criticisms of government policy curtails any dictatorial tendency the government may have. Also, the activity of pressure groups ensures the government do not centralize themselves in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship.

5. Promotion of the interest of the minority