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Chapter 15: An Overview of the Idea of Pressure Group.

Pressure means to persuade someone to do something. Pressure group is an organized body with common interests whose aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies and law to its own advantage. It is referred to as 'The Functional Representative'. It has the idea that various pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their functions for example Nigerian Bar Association, Nigerian Medical Association, Christian Association of Nigeria, Nigeria Labor Congress etc. Pressure groups came into existence to enhance and protect the interest of their members. They aim to ensure that the government does their biddings, and with some pressure through the right channels, the pressure groups are able to make the government listen to them. They influence both public policy, administration and even determine political structures of the society.

Pressure group and political parties activities may look similar but they are different from each other. Political parties seek to gain power pressure groups do not. Pressure groups are not actually accountable for their actions while political parties do. Despite all these differences they do have things in common, they relate together to achieve something in common. 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. While pressure groups have their important place in the scheme of things in a nation, there are some down side . Sometimes due to their selfish interest, pressure is able to alter the direction of government decisions, not considering government limited resources.

Types of pressure groups.

Interest groups: They are seen as sectional groups representing people in a society. Example , the trade unions for instance, Confederation of British Industry (CBI) known as the voice of business in the country and in Nigeria, Convention on Business Integration (CBI).

Cause groups: They are promotion groups, who seen to promote a particular cause, Example , charities groups , environmental groups, Amnesty groups that campaign for the need to end human right abuse. It is aimed at achieving a single objective.

Insider groups and Outsider groups: Insider groups are regulated regularly by the government and have access to ministers and legislators . Example is Nigerian Bar Association. They may

have high or low profile. Outsider groups have no links to government or its relatives, they use other ways to impact. Example is Animal Liberation Front. They are radical in nature because they are mostly denied by government. Both insider and outsider groups change from time to time based on government or party in power.

Anomic groups: They have unprecedented actions as they work based on moment and situation in the country. They may sometimes act violently. Protest, riot are some of the means they mount pressure.

Associational groups and Non-associational groups: Associational groups are registered under proper authorities and have their own constitution and so on. Non-Associational groups have no formal organization and their arrangements may be based on kinship or family, tribe etc.

Functions of pressure groups.

Links government to people: They stay up to date on relevant information and are able to sensitise people on such matter and relate to government the people opinion.

Promotes participation in government: They engage in activities and other measures to put their view across the government.

Serving as sources of information to government: This interaction offers the government viable information on aspects of issue they may not be aware of.

Curtailing of dictatorial tendencies: They ensure that government do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby drifting into dictatorship.

Promotion of the interest of the minority: They ensure the interest of the minority are not trampled upon by the government. They act as watchdogs of the government.

Influencing legislation: They put pressure on government to influence its policy and change a particular policy that do not favor their members.

Pressure Groups Lobbying.

Pressure groups employ various strategies to achieve their goals including lobbying elected officials. Pressure groups lobby in so many ways. They lobby with government officials directly or they might sometimes go through friends, spouses, children or other relative. They may sponsor bills in legislator houses or contact them to ensure passage of the bills.