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AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

A pressure group is an organized body with a common interest whose fundamental aim is to influence government policies and laws to its own advantage. Different pressure groups represent various sectors of the society based on their functions. They are therefore referred to as the “The Functional Representative”. Pressure groups came into existence to protect the interest of their members and with some pressure through the right channel, pressure groups are able to make government listen to them. Some examples of pressure groups in Nigeria are ASUU (Academic Staff Union for University), NLC ( Nigeria Labor Congress) etc. Political parties and pressure groups may appear similar but while political parties seek to gain government powers, the latter seeks to influence government decisions. Also, pressure groups are not accountable for their actions while political parties do account for their actions.

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

There are downsides to the existence of pressure groups. Sometimes due to their own selfish interest, pressure is mounted to alter the direction of government decisions, while not considering government’s limited resources

TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

1: Interest Groups: This is also seen as sectional group, representing the people in the society. For example, the trade units

2: Cause Groups: These groups are promotion groups which seek to promote particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups

3: Insider groups and outsider groups: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislators and they may be high or low in profile. For example the Nigerian Bar Association. On the other hand, outside groups have no access to the government and its machineries. The insider or outsider group changes time to time based on the party or government in power

4: Anomic Groups: These groups have unpredictable actions and behaviors as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. They are not guided by any behavioral style or rule

5: Associational Groups and Non Associational Groups: Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. On the other hand, non associational groups are pressure groups without a formal association. Their arrangement and gatherings are by virtue of kinship, family attachment, social traditions, tribal or even race afflictions

FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

1: Links government to the people

2: Promotes participation in government

3: Serves as source of information to government

4: Curtailing of Dictatorial Tendencies

5: Promotion of the interest of the majority

6: Influencing Legislation

PRESSURE GROUPS LOBBYING

Pressure groups may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals, including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy and direct political action (like organized protests). Pressure groups lobby in so many ways. They lobby with governmental officials directly. They might sometimes lobby these government officials through friends, spouses, children and other relatives.