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**Government and political institution (GST 203)**

***A review of chapter fifteen (15)”an overview on the idea of pressure group” in “Salient issues in government and Nigeria’s Politics.***

To amount pressure is to persuade someone or coerce a person into doing something. This makes interest groups a formal and 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 it’s own advantage. Personally, I see Pressure Group as a group or set of people with a common ideology and philosophy in seeing things the same way and are brought together by their common interest. Pressure Group could be referred to as “The Functional Representative”. This is the idea that various pressure groups represents various sectors of the society based on professions. For example, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) represents the lawyers and solicitors while the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) are representatives of those in the medical field. There also the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which champions the interest of academics and conditions of learning in Nigerian Universities; mostly the federal and state universities in Nigeria. This pressure groups seem to be the most populous among others in Nigeria, most times when the government is not treating them right u hear of an ASUU strike just like the one that happened earlier this year 2020. The first ASUU strike
occurred after the end of the military era in 1999, Nigerians ushered in democracy and a government that promised to be people oriented. But it didn't take long for Nigerian students to experience a disruption in their academic pursuit. Few months after the Obasanjo-Atiku administration was sworn-in, ASUU embarked on a nationwide strike and it lasted for five months.

According to Anifowose (1999) pressure group is described as “intrest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups”. Pressure groups came into existence to compliment, enhance or even to protect the interest of their group and members (Oyeleye 1988). What pressure group seeks to achieve is to make the government carry out their bid and with pressure through the right means or channel, the government will listen to them. Pressure Groups too influence public policy, administration and even go a long way to determining the political structure of the society and forms of government. These groups could be religious, business-like, educational, ethnic-oriented, gender-sensitive, economic or social among others. There are many pressure groups in Nigeria namely thus Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), Area People’s Congress (Representing the Yoruba’s), and so on.

Political parties activities may sometimes appear to be similar but it is no firstly because the aim of political party or entity is to gain power and control governance in a state but pressure groups don’t seek power but rather the seek to influence political decisions. Secondly, political parties have a wide range of policies but pressure groups narrow their goals. Thirdly, political parties actions are accounted for but this is not in the case of pressure groups because they are not being voted for. Political parties are organized groups unlike pressure groups. These do not point to the fact the both don’t have anything in common. They do infact, they could relate together to achieve societal changes and they might align their interests with that of political parties that are believed to possess the capability to further their interests. Pressure groups existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of people in the society. Also, to treat the gap in the democratic process to inform debates among ourselves, to encourage participation and to enhance good accountability in our daily society. Most times, Pressure groups have their short comings or downside, due to their selfish interest pressure is mounted to alter the direction of government decision while not considering government limited resources e.g. When professional bodies go on strike, citizens suffer and government might be incapacitated due to shortage of funds to meet the requirements of these association.

Types of groups, The Interest groups are seen as the voice of the society representing the people and are also seen as sectional groups. For example trade units like CBI (Confederation of British Industry).

The cause groups are promotional groups which seek to promote particular causes For example Charities and environmental groups

The Anomic group have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work base on moment and situations in the society. They are not guided by appropriate behavioral style or rule and mist times act violently; riot, protest, strikes and sometimes revolutionary forms in which they amount pressure.

Associational groups and non-associational groups: The associational groups are formal and recognized in a state. They are registered even with their location known but the non-associational group in the other hand arise as a virtue of kinship or family, social tradition, tribal or even race affliction, just to mention a few.

Insider groups and outsider groups: An insider group like the NBA have access to government and it’s machinery however they could be low profiting but they seek to influence government policy and the outsider groups have no link to the government or legislation like Rights for Animal, Earth liberation and so on. They are radical because they are denied by government. However, both groups changes from time to time based on the government in power.

Functions of pressure groups are as follows: linking the government to the people, pressure groups stay up to date on relevant information and sensitize the people and also relate to the government what the people think

Promotes participation in government: Pressure groups engage in demonstrations and other measures to put their views across to the government their activities therefore promotes political participation and carries the citizens along.

Serving as a source of information to the government: As the pressure groups lobby government on various fronts, the interaction offers the government available information on aspect or issues they might have no knowledge of.

Curtailing of Dictatorial Tendencies: Criticism of government policies curtail any Dictatorial tendency government may have. Also pressure groups ensures that government do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby thrilling in dictatorship

Other functions of pressure groups include promotion of the minority interest, influencing legislation and lobbying among others.