OLATUNJI OYINDAMOLA BLESSING

19/LAW01/205

AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

A pressure group or an interest group is made up of people with similar interests or goals who are there to influence the decisions of the government to its own advantage. Most pressure groups are put together through their occupation, for example we have the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) which is there to represent the Lawyers and Solicitors of Nigeria, ''Pressure groups came into existence to complement, enhance or even to protect the interests of their members or groups" (Oyedele 1998). Examples of pressure groups in Nigeria are, Academic Staff Union for University (ASUU), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and many more.

At first sight pressure groups and political groups might look alike but there are a few distinct differences, one of them being that while political parties wish to be in power, to rule and make decisions, pressure groups only wish to ensure that decisions made by government favor their members or the group itself.

There are several types of pressure groups, the following are a few of them and their functions explained;

a. Economic pressure groups: These pressure groups focus on the economic wellbeing of their members. They comprise mostly producers and manufacturers. Examples are the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) and the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN).

b. Insider groups and Outsider groups: Insider groups may be high profile or low profile, they often have access to government or ministers because they are regularly consulted by them, examples are the Nigerian Bar Association. Outsider groups on the other hand have no connection to the government and usually have to use other methods to get their points across to the government, an example of such a group is the Animal Liberation Front.

c. Religious groups: These are pressure groups of people that belong to the same religion and wish to influence government decisions in favour of their belief or members. Examples are Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and the Christian Association of Nigeria.

d. Anomic groups: These are interest groups that use violence, demonstrations, arson, assassination, strikes and the like in expressing their aims and objectives. They are mob groups, not well organised but may be interested in some common goals. Street demonstrators and student riot groups are examples.

e. Associational groups and non-associational groups: Associational interest groups have distinctive name, national headquarters, professional staff, and political agenda tied to specific group characteristics, goals, beliefs, or values. Non-associational interest groups on the other hand lack formal structures and reflect largely unvoiced social, ethnic, cultural, or religious interests and are usually formed by value of kinship.

The functions of pressure groups include:

a. Linking the government and the people

b. Promoting participation in government

c. Curtailing dictatorial tendencies

d. Promoting the interests of the minority

e. Serving as source of information to the government

f. Influencing legislation.

Lobbying is any attempt by individuals or private interest groups to influence the decisions of government. Pressure groups lobby in several ways which include lobbying with government officials, or through their spouses, friends etc. Pressure groups sometimes sponsor bills in legislative houses.