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**CHAPTER 15**

**In about two pages review chapter 15 ‘An overview of the idea of pressure group’. In Salient issues in Government and Nigeria’s politics, pages 194-200**

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP**

Pressure group is a formal or 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 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 functions, which is usually done through their professions. Anifowose (1999) described pressure group as “interest groups, lobby groups, or even protest groups.”

Pressure groups came into existence to complement, and protect the interest of their group members by applying pressure through the right channels and means they are able to make the government to listen to them. Pressure groups could be religious, business like, educational, ethnic-oriented, e.t.c. Examples of pressure groups are; Academic staff union for university (ASUU), Oodua people’s congress, Arewa people’s congress e.t.c.

Pressure group is different from political parties in different ways. Firstly political parties seek to gain government powers while pressure groups do not seek to gain any power rather they want to influence political decisions. Secondly, political parties have a wide range of policies while the pressure groups narrow their goals. Also political parties are accountable for their actions while pressure grouos are not. Lastly, the political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups. Although pressure group and political parties are different they also have similarities, they both relate together to achieve certain social changes.The pressure group primary aim is to checkmate and make democracy better for the people, they also treat the gaps in democratic process and encourage participations in the society.

Pressure group is beneficial to a democratic society but problems can arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by the voice of a group of small people with narrow interest. Also, in a democratic society there is a need for compromise in order to reach consensus regarding the common good and if the pressure group remains rigid and refuse to compromise on specific issues they can potentially monopolise the democratic process by focusing public debate on specific issues. Pressure groups can also use their selfish interest to alter the direction of government decision while not considering the government’s limited resources.

There are different types of pressure group; The interest group which are sectional groups representing the people in the society an example is the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). The cause group which are promotional group which seek to promote a particular cause. i.e charities and environmental group. The insider and outsider group; The insider group are regularly consulted by the government. I.e Nigeria Bar Association while the outsider group have no access or link to the government or its machinery. i.e Animal Liberation Front. The anomic group which have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society, they may sometimes act violently. The association and non association groups; the associational groups which are registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country while the non associational are pressure groups without a formal organization, they are gathering by virtue of kinship, or even family attachments.

The pressure groups are functional in the society by performing important roles ; they serve as a link between the government and the governed by staying up to date on relevant information and are able to sensitise the people on such matter and at the same time relate to the government what the opinion of the people is. They also promote public participation in the activities of the government by engaging in demonstrations and other measures to put their views across to the government. Pressure group serve as a source of information to the government while the pressure group lobbies the government on various fronts the interaction offers the government valuable information on aspects of issues they may not even be aware of.

Pressure group criticizes government policies to curtail any dictatorial tendency the government may have this ensures that the government do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship. They also ensure that the interest of the minority is not trampled upon by the government. The pressure group is instrumental in the mounting of pressure on the government so that it can implement policies that are to the benefits of citizens. They also put pressure on the government to influence its policy, change a policy or withdraw entirely a particular policy that does not favour their members or the citizenry.

Pressure group adopts various strategies to achieve their goals; lobbying government officials, they may also sponsor bills in legislative house and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the bills. The degree to which different pressure groups achieve their goals may depend on their ablility to be recognized as legitimate by the population, media and those in power. ss