

15.3 PRESSURE GROUPS

An interest group represents the social, economic and political interests of a particular segment of the society, that segment may be farmers, teachers, miners, workers, journalist or students. The segment has to have an interest, an objective which is something particular to that segment only. Interest is always specific. Pressure groups are the interest groups which try to secure their interests by influencing the formulation and administration of public policy. They have the ability to influence, coerce, pressurise and persuade. They are referred to as civil society organisations which are non-partisan groups that attempt to influence some phases of public life. Every pressure group is an interest group, but all interest groups are not pressure groups. An interest group has an interest but abstain from using pressure tactics; a pressure group has an interest and uses pressure tactics to pursue its goals.

Some Definitions of pressure groups:

- According to Myron Weiner - "By interest or pressure group we can mean any voluntary organised group, outside the government personnel, the adoption of public policy, its administration and adjunction."
- According to Almond and Powell- it is a "group of individuals, who are linked by particular bonds of concern or advantage, and who have some awareness of these bonds."
- According to Zeigler it is, "an organized aggregate which seeks to influence the governmental decisions without attempting to place its members in formal governmental capacities".

So, the chief features of pressure or interest groups may be identified as under:

- a) It is an organized group of people;
- b) It is non-political in nature, for it does not aim to capture power;
- c) It is a group with a particular interest which binds its member together;
- d) It exists to exert influence on decision-making bodies so as to change their policies in their favour to meet specific goals.

The factors which affect the functioning of interest groups and pressure groups are -

- The organizational capacity, strength and discipline to keep its members to pursue their ends.
- Its financial resources to promote public relations campaigns through media, politicians, civil servants, etc.
- Capacity to elicit peoples' support and sympathies for its cause.
- Capacity to obtain and earn access to the decision-making bodies.

Types of Pressure Groups :

Almond and Powell have divided Pressure Groups into four categories. These are :

- Institutional pressure group-These groups are formally organized . They are part of government machinery and raise their protests with constitutional means. For example bureaucracy, army, central election committee etc.
- Anomic pressure group-These are the group that have analogy with individual self-representation. They may be constitutional or unconstitutional. For example ULFA. Naxalite etc.
- Associational pressure group-These are organized specialized groups formed for interest articulation but to pursue limited goals. For example, teachers association, student association etc.
- Non-Associational pressure group-These are the informal groups which includes groups like caste group, language group, etc.

There is a vast difference between political parties and pressure groups. The distinction between political parties and pressure groups can be made as under:

Pressure Group Politics in India

- Political parties are political in the sense that they are part of the political system; pressure groups are non-political in the sense that they are part of the social system.
- Political parties stay in the midst of political arena; pressure groups stay out of the political arena.
- Political parties participate in the working of the political system; they contest the elections and form either the government or the opposition. Pressure groups do not contest elections, nor do they participate in the working of the government.
- Political parties seek political power and such their object is general; pressure groups act as attributes of political parties.
- Political parties are outward-oriented; pressure groups are inward oriented.