

77 Pressure Groups

MEANING AND TECHNIQUES

The term 'pressure group' originated in the USA. A pressure group is a group of people who are organised actively for promoting and defending their common interest. It is so called as it attempts to bring a change in the public policy by exerting pressure on the government. It acts as a liaison between the government and its members.

The pressure groups are also called *interest groups* or vested groups. They are different from the political parties in that they neither contest elections nor try to capture political power. They are concerned with specific programmes and issues and their activities are confined to the protection and promotion of the interests of their members by influencing the government.

The pressure groups influence the policymaking and policy-implementation in the government through legal and legitimate methods like lobbying, correspondence, publicity, propagandising, petitioning, public debating, maintaining contacts with their legislators and so forth. However, some times they resort to illegitimate and illegal methods like strikes, violent activities and corruption which damages public interest and administrative integrity.

According to Odegard, pressure groups resort to three different techniques in securing their purposes. First, they can try to place in public office persons who are favourably disposed towards the interests they seek to promote. This technique may be labelled *electioneering*. Second, they can try to persuade public officers, whether they are initially favourably disposed toward them or not, to adopt and enforce the policies that they think will prove most beneficial to their interests. This technique may be labelled *lobbying*. Third, they can try to influence public opinion and thereby gain an indirect influence over government, since the

government in a democracy is substantially affected by public opinion. This technique may be labelled *propagandizing*¹ .

PRESSURE GROUPS IN INDIA

A large number of pressure groups exist in India. But, they are not developed to the same extent as in the US or the western countries like Britain, France, Germany and so on. The pressure groups in India can be broadly classified into the following categories:

1. Business Groups

The business groups include a large number of industrial and commercial bodies. They are the most sophisticated, the most powerful and the largest of all pressure groups in India. They include:

- (i) Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI); major constituents are the Indian Merchants Chamber of Bombay, Indian Merchants Chamber of Calcutta and South Indian Chamber of Commerce of Madras. It broadly represents major industrial and trading interests.
- (ii) Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM); major constituents are the Bengal Chamber of Commerce of Calcutta and Central Commercial Organisation of Delhi. ASSOCHAM represents foreign British capital.
- (iii) Federation of All India Foodgrain Dealers Association (FAIFDA). FAIFDA is the sole representative of the grain dealers.
- (iv) All-India Manufacturers Organisation (AIMO). AIMO raises the concerns of the medium-sized industry.

2. Trade Unions

The trade unions voice the demands of the industrial workers. They are also known as *labour groups*. A peculiar feature of trade unions in India is that they are associated either directly or indirectly with different political parties. They include:

- (i) All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)—affiliated to CPI
- (ii) Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)—affiliated to the Congress

- (iii) Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS)—affiliated to the Socialists
- (iv) Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)— affiliated to the CPM
- (v) Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS)— affiliated to the BJP

First Trade Union in India: All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was founded in 1920 with Lala Lajpat Rai as its first president. Upto 1945, Congressmen, Socialists and Communists worked in the AITUC which was the central trade union organisation of workers of India. Subsequently, the trade union movement got split on political lines.

3. Agrarian Groups

The agrarian groups represent the farmers and the agricultural labour class. They include:

- (i) Bhartiya Kisan Union (in the wheat belt of North India)
- (ii) All India Kisan Sabha (the oldest and the largest agrarian group)
- (iii) Revolutionary Peasants Convention (organised by the CPM in 1967 which gave birth to the Naxalbari Movement)
- (iv) Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (Gujarat)
- (v) R.V. Sangham (Tamil Nadu)
- (vi) Shetkhari Sanghatana (Maharashtra)
- (vii) Hind Kisan Panchayat (controlled by the Socialists)
- (viii) All-India Kisan Sammelan
- (ix) United Kisan Sabha (controlled by the CPM)

4. Professional Associations

These are associations that raise the concerns and demands of doctors, lawyers, journalists and teachers. Despite various restrictions, these associations pressurise the government by various methods including agitations for the improvement of their service conditions. They include:

- (i) Indian Medical Association (IMA)
- (ii) Bar Council of India (BCI)
- (iii) Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ)
- (iv) All India Federation of University and College Teachers (AIFUCT)

5. Student Organisations

Various unions have been formed to represent the student community. However, these unions, like the trade unions, are also affiliated to various political parties. These are:

- (i) Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) (affiliated to BJP)
- (ii) All India Students Federation (AISF) (affiliated to CPI)
- (iii) National Students Union of India (NSUI) (affiliated to Congress)
- (iv) Student Federation of India (SFI) (affiliated to CPM)

6. Religious Organisations

The organisations based on religion have come to play an important role in Indian politics. They represent the narrow communal interest. They include:

- (i) Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS)
- (ii) Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)
- (iii) Jamaat-e-Islami
- (iv) Ittehad-ul-Mussalmeen
- (v) Anglo-Indian Association
- (vi) Associations of the Roman Catholics
- (vii) All-India Conference of Indian Christians (viii) Parsi Central Association
- (ix) Shiromani Akali Dal

“The Shiromani Akali Dal should be regarded as more of a religious pressure group rather than a political party in view of the fact that it has been concerned more with the mission of saving the sikh community from being absorbed into the ocean of hindu society than with fighting for the cause of a sikh homeland”² .

7. Caste Groups

Like religion, caste has been an important factor in Indian politics. The competitive politics in many states of the Indian Union is in fact the politics of caste rivalries: Brahmin versus Non-Brahmin in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, Rajput versus Jat in Rajasthan, Kamma versus Reddy in Andhra, Ahir versus Jat in Haryana, Baniya Brahmin versus Patidar in Gujarat. Kayastha versus

Rajput in Bihar, Nair versus Ezhava in Kerala and Lingayat versus Okkaliga in Karnataka³. Some of the caste-based organisations are:

- (i) Nadar Caste Association in Tamil Nadu
- (ii) Marwari Association
- (iii) Harijan Sevak Sangh
- (iv) Kshatriya Maha Sabha in Gujarat
- (v) Vanniyakul Kshatriya Sangam
- (vi) Kayastha Sabha

8. Tribal Organisations

The tribal organisations are active in MP, Chattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and the North Eastern States of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and so on. Their demands range from reforms to that of secession from India and some of them are involved in insurgency activities. The tribal organisations include:

- (i) National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)
- (ii) Tribal National Volunteers (TNU) in Tripura
- (iii) People's Liberation Army in Manipur
- (iv) All-India Jharkhand
- (v) Tribal Sangh of Assam
- (vi) United Mizo Federal Organisation

9. Linguistic Groups

Language has been so important factor in Indian politics that it became the main basis for the reorganisation of states. The language along with caste, religion and tribe have been responsible for the emergence of political parties as well as pressure groups. Some of the linguistic groups are:

- (i) Tamil Sangh
- (ii) Anjuman Tarraki-i-Urdu
- (iii) Andhra Maha Sabha
- (iv) Hindi Sahitya Sammelan
- (v) Nagari Pracharani Sabha
- (vi) Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha

10. Ideology Based Groups

In more recent times, the pressure groups are formed to pursue a particular ideology, i.e., a cause, a principle or a programme. These groups include:

- (i) Environmental protection groups like Narmada Bachao Andolan, and Chipko Movement
- (ii) Democratic rights organisations
- (iii) Civil liberties associations
- (iv) Gandhi Peace Foundation
- (v) Woman rights organisations

11. Anomic Groups

Almond and Powell observed: “By anomic pressure groups we mean more or less a spontaneous breakthrough into the political system from the society such as riots, demonstrations, assassinations and the like. The Indian Government and bureaucratic elite, overwhelmed by the problem of economic development and scarcity of resources available to them, inevitably acquires a technocratic and anti-political frame of mind, particularistic demands of whatever kinds are denied legitimacy. As a consequence interest groups are alienated from the political system”⁴. Some of the anomic pressure groups are:

- (i) All-India Sikh Student's Federation.
- (ii) Nava Nirman Samithi of Gujarat.
- (iii) Naxalite Groups.
- (iv) Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).
- (v) All Assam Student's Union.
- (vi) United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).
- (vii) Dal Khalsa.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. G.A. Almond and G.B. Coleman (eds), *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, Princeton, (1970), P. 185.
2. J.C. Johari: *Indian Government and Politics*, Vishal, Thirteenth Edition, P. 591.
3. Paul Kolenda: Caste in India since Independence (in *Social and Economic Development in India* by Basu and

Sission, P. 110).

4. G.A. Almond and G.B. Powell: *Comparative Politics*, 1972, P. 75–76.