UNIT 24  INTEREST GROUPS, PRESSURE GROUPS AND LOBBYING

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24.1 INTRODUCTION

You have read in the last unit that political parties are organised groups of people who seek popular support to govern a country. No one person can be a member of more than one party. In democracies, parties are competitive, and those voted to power assume responsibility of governance. In the present unit, we will discuss about the interest groups, pressure groups and their pressure politics, generally known as lobbying. A group may include large or small number of people having common social, cultural, trade of business interests. There can be no bar on a person being member of two or more groups. Interest groups are not political parties as they do not participate in electoral politics, and on their own have no direct role in the governance of the country. However, if necessary, in their interest, they may support one political party or the other, and try to influence legislation and executive decisions by using various methods of exercising pressure on the government of the day. When a group carries on its function of pressurising members of the legislature by contacting them in the parliamentary galleries, the practice is known as lobbying. This term originated in the United States where lobbying is an accepted practice, and there are regular lobbyists who charge fees for influencing the legislators and officers in the interest of certain groups.

Without being political parties, without contesting elections in their own name, and without seeking government jobs or entering the legislatures, the interest and pressure groups do play a vital role in contemporary democracies in the decision-making process. We will examine their varied role in this unit.
24.2 INTEREST GROUPS AND PRESSURE GROUPS

People having common interests often get together. When they organise themselves to protect and promote their interest they are known as interest groups. Cell phone operators in India, oil producers in different countries, automobile manufacturers in the United States in their associational forms are all interest groups. We in India have a very large group called the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. It includes various chambers of commerce and industry. As such it represents large number of interest groups. There are numerous such groups in every country today. Interest groups have been defined by a number of prominent writers. Some prefer to use the term pressure groups, while others call them interest groups. Actually there is a clear distinction between the two, though it is not always easy to lay down clear demarcation.

24.2.1 Interest Groups Defined

Almond & Powell have defined the interest groups, and discussed their role in the wider context of interest articulation. In every society, there is a process of presenting people’s demands before the policy-makers. Almond & Powell say that, “The process by which individuals and groups make demands upon the political decision-makers we call interest articulation.” These demands may be of temporary nature like a demonstration worldwide asking the United States not to wage war against Iraq. Or, the demand may be articulated for a long-term interest, like traders demand for tax relief, or trade unions’ demands for better working conditions. As Almond and Powell have said the interest articulator may be as varied as an unorganised mob or a well-organised systematic organisation. Admitting that their definition may not be perfect, yet Almond and Powell say: “By ‘interest group’ we mean a group of individuals who are linked by particular bonds of concern or advantage, and who have some awareness of these bonds. The structure of interest group may be organised to include continuing role performance by all members of the group, or it may reflect only occasional and intermittent awareness of the group interest on the part of individuals. Thus, an interest group is an association of people to achieve certain specific objectives, and for this purpose it may even pressurise the institutions of the state.

Discussing the pressure groups, David Truman describes them thus, “Pressure groups are attitude groups that make certain claims upon other groups in the society.” The activities of the government have direct impact on the lives of people. On the other hand, activities of the individuals cannot help affecting the decisions of the government. This work can be effectively done only by organised groups of people. Hitchner & Levine prefer the use of the term interest groups. They say that, “An interest group is a collection of individuals who try to realise their common objectives by influencing public policy.” They argue that interest groups and pressure groups are not the same thing. The term pressure groups have a negative connotation as it implies use of pressure, or unwanted interference, by groups to achieve their objectives. Interest groups can be described as the non-state actors, or individuals, or modern states. But, politics alone is not the objective of their activities. According to Hitchner & Levine, “The interest group system is thus a part of both the general culture and social framework and the political structure of a particular state.”
Interest groups are organisations of people for the achievement of certain specific goals, who, if necessary, pressurise the state. They may be regularly involved in the pressure politics, or may at times involve themselves in pressure politics, and at other times perform other functions to promote their interests.

24.2.2 Meaning of Pressure Groups

We have said above that the terms interest groups and pressure groups, despite differences in their nature, are often used as synonyms. In this sub-section, we will concern ourselves mainly with the meaning of pressure groups. Duverger was of the view that, “Most pressure groups... are non-political organisations, and pressure politics is not their primary activity. Any group, association or organisation, even those whose normal concerns are far from politics, can act as pressure groups in certain areas and under certain circumstances.” It is generally believed that the pressure groups try to bring about changes in policies of the government either by influencing its institutions, or even otherwise. However, the pressure groups do not enter the legislature on their own. Carter & Herz had argued that the modern pluralist society, full of economic, professional, religious, ethical and other interest groups, is faced with the major problem of how to coordinate the activities of different groups on the one hand and government and politics on the other. Interest groups enjoy freedom to be established and function in a free democratic society. When these groups endeavour to influence the political process, and thereby get favourable decisions in matters such as enactment of legislation, imposition of taxes and duties, framing of rules and issuance of licences, etc. then these interest groups transform themselves into pressure groups. Another writer V.O. Key was of the opinion that the interest groups are such private organisations who are established to influence the public policy. They do not take part in the selection of candidates or the legislative processes. They devote themselves to pressurise and influence the government in order to promote their interests.

Writing in the context of liberal democratic countries, particularly, the United States, S.E. Finer had opined that, “…the pressure groups are, by and large, autonomous and politically neutral bodies, which bargain with the political parties and the bureaucracy irrespective of the political complexion of the government in power.” The groups can adopt various methods of bargaining, in their interests, including even unconventional or corrupt methods. It is obvious that the pressure groups are associations of individuals for the promotion of the interests of their members. Every individual has numerous interests. One may be an office-bearer of a residents’ welfare association, father of university-going children, and a sugarcane farmer, a shareholder in a large business house or industrial establishment and may also be a social activist as also a trustee of a religious or charitable institution. All the interests of one individual cannot be served by one group. He or she, therefore, may join several interest groups to put pressure on the state for different purposes.

Interest groups, or pressure groups, are not new phenomenon in politics. These groups have existed, in one form or the other, at all times. But, these groups are deliberately organised and are much more powerful today. This is because modern governments have taken upon themselves numerous non-traditional responsibilities. As mentioned earlier, an interest group is a voluntary association of individuals who join hands to
protect and promote their particular interest. What is an interest? La Palombara defined interest as “a conscious desire to have public policy of authoritative allocation of values move in a particular, general or specific direction.” We must, however, remember that there are always some groups which are not concerned with public policy. We are not concerned with them in the present unit.

For our purpose, an interest group is a group which has a stake in pressure process. There is a view that the terms like pressure groups, organised interests, lobbies etc. are all synonyms. But there are certain differences also. According to H. Zeigler, it is “an organised aggregate which seeks to influence the context of governmental decisions without attempting to place its members in formal governmental capacities.” In the words of Alfred de Grazia, the pressure group is “simply an organised social group that seeks to influence the behaviour of political officers without seeking formal control of the government.”

Every society is divided into a number of groups. With the passage of time, they have become more and more specialised. While there are numerous groups like those of industrialists, bank employees, university teachers, workers in industry and commerce, which operate within a country, there are other groups that transcend national borders. There are certain essential features of the pressure groups. These are (i) pressure groups are part of the political process of a country (ii) they attempt either to strengthen or change the direction of government policy and (iii) they do not seek, as pressure groups, to directly capture political power and run the government.

24.2.3 Mass and Traditional Groups

The interest or pressure groups may be divided into two categories, on the basis of their organisation. These are either mass groups or traditional groups. This distinction is similar to the one between mass and traditional parties.

Like the mass political parties, the mass groups also have large membership. The groups having thousands or even lakhs of members require an effective organisation. This category includes well-organised trade unions, and also organisations of farmers, associations of craftsmen, and associations of small businessmen. These are groups related to industrialists or workmen of various types. In addition, there are youth organisations, associations of athletes, and cultural committees. The earliest mass groups were set up on the initiative of socialist parties to organise the working people. Thus, the bases of both the trade unions and socialist movements can be traced to the working people. Today, there are numerous interest groups having a common objective, but operating in the social sector. Some of such groups, according to Duverger, are groups concerned with disarmament, abolition of nuclear weapons, and those fighting against casteism, communalism and fundamentalism. However, in the People’s Republic of China and other former and present socialist countries several mass organisations act as subsidiaries of the concerned Communist Parties. Practically every enlightened person helps interest groups in giving them the form of mass movements, by their active association. Some of the mass groups are youth organisations, women’s groups and peace movements largely, but not essentially, in communist countries. Duverger describes
them as the parallel hierarchies. Such groups are now becoming active in western liberal democracies.

You have read in the last unit that traditional political parties are generally associated with elitist sections. Similarly, traditional pressure groups value quality more than the members. They are relying more and more on the elitist sections.

The earliest elitist groups include the intellectuals’ organisations of the eighteenth century, and the twentieth century political clubs of France. For example, The Jean Moulin Club of France is one such group. It has only about 500 members. Its members (elite) include senior government officials, engineers, university professors and influential journalists. Even in India, there are a number of elite groups with limited membership. One such elite group in India is Association of Defence Officers’ Wives. Similarly, there is Association of Steel Producers. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (as mentioned earlier) is a very powerful elite group. Traditional, or elite group of different countries include groups of concerned country’s industrialists, associations of higher administrative service officers, unions of intellectuals, of writers, of poets, or artisans etc. There are many such groups in the UK, USA, France, Germany, Japan and India.

24.3 INTEREST/PRESSURE GROUPS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

A distinguishing feature of interest/pressure groups is that they seek to influence public policy-makers, but without attempting to take over directly the control and conduct of the government. Political parties, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with governance – to contest elections and try to secure majority of seats in the legislature, or the office of chief executive, and govern the country. Neumann pointed out the distinction between parties and the interest groups thus:

Fundamentally, pressure groups are the representation of homogeneous interests seeking influence. The interest group is strong and effective when it has a directed specific purpose. Political parties, on the other hand, seeking office and directed towards policy decisions, combine heterogeneous groups. In fact it is one of their major themes to reconcile the diverse forces within political society. Theirs is an integrative function which is not the domain of the interest groups.

Maurice Duverger made a distinction between the two in the following words:

Political parties strive to acquire power and exercise it—by electing—mayors and deputies, and by choosing cabinet ministers and the head of state. Pressure groups on the contrary, do not participate directly in the acquisition of power or in its exercise; they act to influence power while remaining apart from it… they exert pressure on it… Pressure groups seek to influence the men who wield power, not to place their own men in power, at least not officially…

It is possible that sometimes members of a pressure group may become members of the legislatures or even the executive; but even if that happens, it is kept secret. Harold R.
Bruce wrote: “In their relation to the political parties pressure groups are in the singular position of being independent of them and also cooperative with them as a given situation may dictate. Pressure groups are normally not partisan in character; they disregard party lines; they seek popular support among the voters or support of members of legislative bodies and executive authorities…” Similar views were expressed by Duverger. He wrote, “Certain powerful groups actually have their own representatives in governments and legislative bodies, but the relationship between these individuals and the groups they represent remains secret or circumspect.”

Thus, political parties are directly engaged in political activity, including selection of candidates for election, presenting formally formulated policies and a clear platform for seeking popular votes, and if successful to run the affairs of state. Those who get lesser number of votes and seats, sit in the opposition and offer constructive opposition to the ruling party. None of them come within the role of the pressure groups. The interest/pressure groups are essentially non-political associations. Their primary functions may be economic, social, religious or humanitarian. Pressure is not their main business. They do so if necessary for the promotion of the interests of their members. Parties are committed to a wide-range of issues and policies; their goal is political power. An interest group, on the other hand, has a narrower focus. It is primarily to articulate specific demands that it comes into existence. As Professor S.R. Maheshwari wrote, “It is the task of a political party to reconcile and aggregate their competing demands of interest groups and put them into coherent programmes and action plans. Thus viewed, political parties prevent the interest groups from directly dominating the decision-making apparatus and process in a country.”

The relationship between the parties and pressure groups is not the same everywhere. Each political system has different nature of parties and groups, as also their relationship. In the United States and Britain, the interest groups articulate demands, seeking to transform them into authoritative policies by influencing the political processes. While the groups are functionally specific and differentiated, the parties play the aggregative role. As Almond wrote, “... the party system stands between the interest groups system and the authoritative policy-making agencies and screens them from the particularistic and disintegrative impact of special interests.” Secondly, France and Italy offer a different type of relationship. In these two, and some other countries, both the parties and interest groups exist as fairly well organised entities, but not as autonomous systems. The parties control the groups in various ways. Thus, one finds communist-controlled or socialist party-controlled trade unions. In such a situation, “the interest groups get prevented from articulating functionally specific, pragmatic demands, for their activities have become highly political.” When groups allow themselves to become affiliates to parties, they, in turn, weaken the capacity of parties to aggregate various interests. Thirdly, in several third world countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, neither the parties nor the pressure groups stand very well differentiated. In the words of Gabriel A. Almond, “Associational interest groups such as trade unions and business associations may exist in the urban westernised parts of the society, but in the village and the countryside interest organisation takes the form of lineage, caste, status, class, and religious groups, which transmit pressure demands to the other parts of the pressure structure by means of information communication.” In many of the Third World countries,
parties tend to be ad hoc arrangements, without clear policies and without grassroots organisation. Consequently, adds Almond, “… the significant political groups are neither the parties, nor the associational interest groups, but elements of cliques from the bureaucracy and the army.”

Whatever pattern is followed in a political system, it is clear that the pressure groups, despite being independent of the parties, do still maintain contacts with them, in one way or the other, and try to influence legislation and decision-making process through these contacts.

### 24.4 CLASSIFICATION OF INTEREST GROUP

Interest groups have been variously classified by different scholars. Some of these classifications are briefly discussed below. Certain conclusions will be then drawn from these analyses.

#### 24.4.1 Almond’s Classification

In detailed analysis of interest groups, Almond says that there can be four different types of groups. This classification has generally been supported by Hitchner and Levine also. According to Almond, the interest groups are of following types:

i) Institutional Interest Groups;
ii) Anomic Interest Groups;
iii) Associational Interest Groups; and
iv) Non-Associational Interest Groups.

The institutional interest groups are closely connected with various institutions and even political parties. These groups also exist within legislatures, bureaucracies, churches, corporations and even armed forces. They are very active in the bureaucracy, for it is there that most of decision-making is done. They are equally close to legislatures. They form part of a highly organised structure, but this structure has been created for purposes other than what these groups articulate. These groups do not need any other organisation to articulate their demands. As Almond said, institutional interest groups are “formal organisations, composed of professionally employed personnel, with designated political and social functions other than interest articulation. But, either as corporate bodies or as smaller groups within these bodies (such as legislative blocs…). These groups may articulate their own interests or represent the interest of other groups in the society.” Such groups are very influential and powerful. In some of the third world countries, they are not satisfied only by exercising influence. They even seize power, as, for example, the military clique did in Burma, or Bangladesh (After Sheikh Mujib’s murder), or Pakistan, or Nigeria. These are exceptions. These groups are generally concerned with better conditions for their members.

The anomic interest groups, Almond said, are “more or less spontaneous penetrations into the political system from the society.” These groups often appear when normal means of expressing dissatisfaction prove ineffective. They may be concerned with
religious or linguistic or ethnic disturbances, or demonstrations, even assassinations and hijackings. They are generally characterised by unconventional, usually violent means. Such groups may influence the political system in numerous unconventional ways. They are occasionally found even in the western developed nations.

The associational interest groups are closely associated with formally organised institutions. They are functionally specialised, and they articulate the interests of specific groups, such as management, labour, business and agriculture. These groups are found in those countries where right to association is constitutionally recognised. Some of them have regular paid employees on their roles to influence the concerned institution. These groups are generally concerned with economic interests. The Federation of Economic Organisations, and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry are some of the examples of associational groups. The associations of teachers, lawyers, doctors and other professionals all come in this category.

Unlike the well-organised associational system, the non-associational groups are based on factors like kinship, ethnicity, status and religious. They articulate the interests informally and irregularly. They do not have any permanent organisation.

24.4.2 Jean Blondel’s Classification

Interest groups have been classified by Blondel on the basis of factors responsible for their formation. Broadly speaking there are two categories of groups. These are (i) community interest groups; and (ii) associational groups. Both the categories are further divided into two sub-categories each.

The community interest groups are formed to promote community interests. The social relations are in the back of their formation. Community life brings people together. They share the joys and sorrows of people together. Most of the community groups are informal; only some are formally organised. They put pressure on the government to seek state protection and assistance. The community groups are divided between (a) customary and (b) institutional groups. The groups that essentially follow the customs and traditions of the community fall in the category of customary groups. The groups of castes and sub-castes in India are of this type. Blondel has described those community groups as institutional who are formed by people living together for a long time, and who develop common social relationship. Some of the examples of this type can be welfare associations of serving or retired soldiers like the veterans unions, the civil servants welfare associations, or the senior citizens’ welfare bodies.

The associational groups identified by Blondel generally follow the pattern of Almond and Hitchner & Levine. These groups have two sub-categories (a) protective groups and (b) promotional groups. The protective groups try to protect the interests of their members like those of trade unions and associations of traders or professionals. They, thus, have more or less homogeneous clientele. The promotional groups, on the other hand, have membership or large cross-sections of community. The promotional groups may include group for disarmament, or the Greens seeking promotion of environmental security. Besides, the protective groups generally manage to have greater influence over policy-making process than the promotional groups. As Robert Salisbury wrote, in the context of British groups, the protective groups have “substantial influence over policy”, whereas
“promotional pressure, even when they mobilise a large following, tend to be regarded as having only a minor impact on public decisions.” Finally, the protective groups generally have more flexible strategies, while the promotional groups face the problem of goal adaptation following the change in political situation. The protective groups never run out of the agenda, while the promotional groups are terminal in nature, at least in conception.

24.4.3 Maurice Duverger’s Classification

Maurice Duverger, who prefers to use the term pressure groups, talks of two main problems. These are: First, whether those groups should be called pressure groups whose only function is to exert political pressure, or even those can be called pressure groups which have multi-dimensional activities. Second, whether the term pressure groups should be used only for non-official groups or even official groups can be brought in this category. It is in the context of these two questions that Duverger offered the following classification.

In the context of his first question, Duverger distinguishes between (i) Exclusive Groups; and (ii) Partial Groups. In the first category are those groups whose only function is to put pressure on the political system. Thus, the French Parliamentary Association for the Defence of Educational Freedom is an exclusive group. There are several groups in the United States who are whole-time in the business of pressure politics, through the device of lobbying (see below). The partial groups, on the other hand, are essentially set up to be the promoters of interests of their members, but in that process do occasionally use pressure tactics. There are numerous such partial groups in every democratic country including Britain and India. Several associations of professionals (doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, and architects), of university or school teachers, or women activists, or those concerned with cultural activities also, if needed, try to put pressure on civil servants, legislators and others. But, there can be no rigidity in this classification. Any partial group may take to whole time pressure politics.

On the second basis, Duverger makes a distinction between (i) Private Groups; and (ii) Public Groups. The first country to have experienced the pressure groups was the United States, where private institution groups had begun to use pressure on the state apparatus. Gradually, even official or public groups also joined in the process of pressure politics. The official groups may even include those officials who secretly align themselves with one or more pressure groups to serve certain interests.

Duverger also refers to, what he calls pseudo-pressure groups. These groups include specialists who use pressure politics not for themselves, but for others. This is often done for monetary consideration. Duverger includes in this category, the technical experts as well as information (mass) media. A reference will be made below, while dealing with the role of pressure groups, to the role of mass media.

24.5 ROLE OF INTEREST/PRESSURE GROUPS

The role of pressure groups depends to a large extent on the type of government that a country has. Their role in the presidential system, as in the United States is more
significant than that in parliamentary democracies, like Britain and India. Their role is minimum, or non-existent, in one-party states, and particularly in authoritarian systems. Their role is highlighted by Henry Ehrmann, while discussing the merits of pressure groups. He says: “The interests which they represent link their membership with community values. Hence groups are likely to reflect more accurately than do other bodies, the concerns of the society in which they operate.” Further, where the formal system of representation proves inadequate, interest groups, represent community values more realistically than do parties.

Interest groups employ all conceivable methods to promote their interests. They request and cajole, they bribe and entertain. The most popular method of pressure politics, called lobbying, was developed in the United States. Lobbying is only one of the methods of pressure politics, yet it is the most effective. Lobbying is, peculiarly American practice, and its practitioners try to directly influence the lawmakers and other officials.

24.5.1 Lobbying

Lobbyists, in the words of Alfred de Grazia are “highly organised; they claim large membership lists; they have agents who are skilled in persuasion and public relations; they insist that their purposes are consonant with the public welfare.” Lobbying is, as mentioned above, an American practice, though it is not the monopoly of the United States. Lobbying is practised in many other democratic countries also, yet it will be appropriate to discuss this practice in the American background.

The term “lobbying” is used to indicate the technique of establishing contracts with the members of Congress and state legislatures to influence them to vote for or against a measure to suit the interest of a pressure group. Very often pressure groups engage ex-members of the Congress to influence the legislators. They are familiar with the lobbying techniques. There are several hundred regular ‘lobbyists’ working permanently in Washington D.C. They are paid employees of interest groups. They need not necessarily influence the legislators in the lobbies of the Congress, although the term is derived from that. According to Johnson, much of the time of Congressmen is spent “at the behest of groups and individuals, in urging administrative officers from the President down to ‘go easy’ on enforcing certain laws, to enforce others vigorously… and so on.”

Representatives of special interests haunted the environs of the First Continental Congress, but the word “lobby” was not used until 1808 when it appeared in the reports of the tenth Congress. By 1829, the term “lobby-agents” was used for favour-seekers at the capital of New York. By 1832, it had been shortened to “lobbyist” and was widely in use in the American capital.

The lobbyists build ‘contacts’ with the Congressmen “dog their footsteps”, and try to influence their decisions and votes. Generally they seek to promote the legitimate interests of the groups, but sometimes do indulge in selfish game also. In some rare cases even methods such as bribery—direct or indirect—and blackmail are also used to influence the legislators. A strong-willed Congressman may even be coerced by arranging a flood of letters, telegrams and telephonic calls from the voters in his district. In recent years legislative provisions have been made to curb the pressure politics and lobbying, but it
cannot be said that much success has been achieved in checking the practices. Political parties, pressure politics and lobbying have become parts of American political system.

Most of the American interest groups have been economic in character. There have been labour pressure groups that seek to represent the point of view of organised labour in elections and in the Congress. On the other hand, there have been business pressure groups that sought to represent the interests of industry. In recent times, however, several groups have emerged that focus on social activities. Some such groups are, the National Council of Christians and Jews and the United Methodists. Thus, every major community has its own lobby. There are several new ideological interest groups like the Common Cause and the National Committee to Secure a Free Congress. This is a very special group known as “Save the Whale”. They print bumper stickers saying “Save the Whale”.

The common belief is that the pressure groups have an impact only on the legislative process. Actually, as Dr. Kirkpatrick asserts, pressure groups in America impact on decision-making process at every stage... They impact on public opinion. They have large campaigns. Advertisements get placed in newspapers.” The pressure groups are very active during national as well as local elections. The groups influence the executive officers and even the judges.

The French scholar Alexis de Tocqueville had once said if you put three Americans in a room together they would from an organisation. It is true. Americans have been described as “joiners”. They are organisers. They form pressure group and seek solution of all their problems through them. Dr. Kirkpatrick refers to the role of organised group even in non-government spheres. She told an Indian interviewer in 1978.

“I am a member of the American Political Science Association (APSA). Every learned profession in the United States has its own professional association. These conventions bring a lot of business into a town and to hotels; hotels survive on the business of these conventions.”

“The American Political Science Association has a contract to hold its next convention in Chicago. But the organised women groups inside the American Political Science Association mobilised a very effective political action campaign within the APSA, and secured a vote that the meeting should not be held in Chicago,” because Illinois (the state in which Chicago is situated) had not ratified an amendment to the Constitution providing for equal rights for all men and women.

It is true that pressure groups are now active in every democratic country including Great Britain and India. But, there is no doubt that the active role that the interest groups have played in the American politics is more significant than the role played by similar groups in other countries. They have actually become the ‘Anonymous Empire.’

24.6 SUMMARY

Interest groups are voluntary associations of people who have common interests to promote and protect. These interests may be economic, social, cultural, linguistic or religious. Each country has a very large number of interest groups. Since an individual
often has several interests—as an employee of the state, or of a public or private undertaking, as a devout believer, as an office-bearer of a residents’ welfare association, or as an activist of a movement such as Narmada Bachao Andolan or the Association of Defence of Freedom of Education of France. The groups may be permanent like the trade unions or chambers of commerce or industry. Some groups may be purely temporary such as group to fight sectional violence or to provide relief to the victims of earthquake or a cyclone. Some of the groups are private, while others are public or official. There may also be some semi-private group. Interest groups are generally called the pressure groups as most of them, most of the time, try to put pressure on the legislators, bureaucrats and other officials to have legislation enacted or policy formulated to suit their interests. There may be a small number of interest groups who may not resort to pressure politics, but such groups are rare. Thus, pressure is an important activity of interest groups.

Interest/Pressure groups have been classified by several scholars on different criteria. In the present unit, you have made aware yourselves of the classifications of Almond, Hitchner and Levine, Jean Blondel and Maurice Duverger. You have also read that depending on the base of a group it may be either a mass group or a traditional group. You have also read that pressure groups are not political parties. The two are entirely different. While parties seek political power of governance, the pressure groups are essentially concerned with interests of their members, and for that purpose they apply pressure. The most common device of pressure politics is lobbying. This practice originated in the United States, and is largely, though not exclusively, adopted in that country. In practice pressure is applied on the legislators and others not only in the lobbies of the legislature, but whatever the pressure tactics, like bribery, jobs for relatives, five star luxuries, etc., are used, collectively the device, wherever practiced, it is called lobbying.

24.7 EXERCISES

1) Define interest groups, and highlight the distinction between interest groups and the pressure groups.

2) Distinguish between mass and traditional interest groups.

3. Discuss the relationship between the political parties and the pressure groups.

4) Distinguish between institutional, anomic and associational interest groups.

5) Explain Maurice Duverger’s classification of pressure groups.

6) Discuss lobbying as a device of pressure politics.