

PRESSURE GROUPS

IN ASSAM

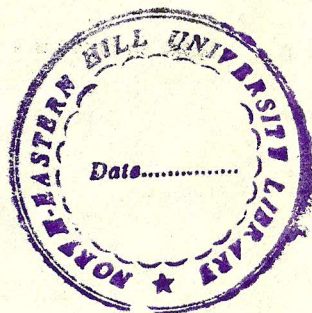


INDRANI BARUA

'Pressure Groups in Assam' is a book based on original Research. It includes studies on the special interest groups dominant in the political scene of Assam in the post independent period. They have made positive impact in the state politics and therefore, the study of these groups have become necessary.

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Pressure Groups in Assam



Indrani Barua

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*Dedicated to the
Memory of Great-Grand Father
Late Anundoram Barooah, Bar-at-Law, I.C.S.*

Foreword

It is impossible to conceive a society without some prevailing conception of public interest, otherwise known as common good, respublica, the commonweal, the general welfare etc. The term Pressure Group is only one of the terms of this phenomenon. The different terms have different meanings and lay emphasis on different things at different times one at different places. At present the term Pressure Group is detested in western democracies. The term 'General Welfare' is preferred to all other terms. In this State, the term Pressure Group has not yet gained notoriety as in developed countries.

Pressure Groups otherwise called Special Interest Groups, have been attacked by politicians and the general public. In his Farewell Address to the Nation, Jimmy Carter said that the Special Interest Groups are a disturbing factor in human political life. In his inaugural address, Ronald Reagan made essentially the same point. He said "We hear much of special interest groups. Our concern must be for a special interest group that has been too long neglected" by which he meant all Americans. Both Carter and Reagan were echoing Senator Edward Kennedy, who said in 1978, that "the Senate and the House are awash in a sea of special interest contributions and lobbying." Republicans and democrats, conservatives and liberals, politicians of all persuasions have attacked special interests. And most Americans agree with them that special interests are thwarting the will of the people. According to a poll an overwhelming majority is convinced that special interest get more from the Government than the people do.

In recent years Special interest groups are attacked frequently. Early in his 1984, presidential campaign, Walter Mondale called for the Democratic party to "declare a war on special interests and he also said that he would not accept any campaign contribution from them. Another presidential candidate Senator Gary Hart took the same stand. The denunciation of Special interests, however, has been a commonplace, of American political rhetoric since the beginning of the Republic. In 1777 Samuel Adams was reflecting the sentiments of many when he worried that the people of Boston might soon forget their own generous feelings for the public and for each other as to set private interests in Competition with that of the great Community. Americans are continuously worried that the power of special interests—or what Adams called private interests—was making it difficult to pursue what Jimmy Carter called our common interest.

In Assam the pressure groups have not become so unpopular with the common man. We have had pressure groups at all times. During the Ahom period, there were Mels, Nam Ghars and Khels. All of them may be considered as pressure groups. They were formed to serve a special purpose. Strictly speaking they cannot be called pressure groups. There were mels to organise Bihu festivals. They were formed for the administration of justice in their locality. They consisted of the village elders.

After the annexation of Assam by the East India Company, some sort of pressure groups were formed. In my investigation in the working of the local Government institutions in this region, several private associations, consisting of both officials and non-officials for particular purposes. In 1833, Gauhati was a fishing village with just 3000 souls mainly concerned with agriculture. The sanitary condition of the area was deplorable. Soldiers were dying like flies. To improve the sanitary condition of the place, a voluntary association called the Town Improvement Committee was formed. They put pressure on the Government of Bengal to sanction a sum of Rs. 3000 for

provision of sanitary services to the Citizens of Gauhati. Such associations existed not only in Gauhati, but also in Nowgong, Sibsagar, Tezpur, Dibrugarh etc.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Ahoms formed the Ahom Association to protect the interests of their community. This is Pressure Group in the accepted sense of the term. The Ahom Association was able to secure some boons from the Government like scholarships for their children, protection of the Tai language and representation in the legislature and local bodies.

Besides the Ahom Association, in Upper Assam, there was the Sarvajanik Sabha, consisting of the elite class to protect their special interests. Most of the members of the Sabha were rich and they were opposed to any reform that would result in fresh taxation. They were opposed to social reforms.

Besides the Sarvajanik Sabha there were Ryots Association. In the Surma Valley there was the Surma Valley Political conference, which was a militant organization. Bepin Chandra Pal was the moving spirit of the Conference.

Since the Sarvajanik Sabha was in Upper Assam concerning itself with the upper classes, the lower Assamese felt that there should be abroad based organization for the whole of Assam—Brahmaputra Valley. So the Assam Association was established in the beginning of the present century. This association was dominated by moderates. It believed in constitutional methods. It was dominated by men like Manik Chandra Barua. But in 1920, it came under the control of the extremists who believed in direct action. It adopted the programme of the Congress. It languished for some time. In the present century a number of private associations were brought into existence. But I think that some of these private associations were responsible for the disintegration of Assam.

Dr. Indrani Barua has dealt with this subject comprehensively and competently. She avoided the Beaten track and

made a novel approach to the subject. She collected her bricks from many a masons yard but the design is her own. The work is based on original sources. So far I know no one has worked on the subject. It is the first of the kind and is of permanent value for a long time to come. The style is simple, free from shibboleths and slogans. It is eminently readable. It is one of the few best theses that Gauhati University has produced in the Arts Faculty.

V. VENKATA RAO

Preface

The literature on pressure groups is already staggering in volumes in most of the Countries in the World. It includes not only western Democratic Countries like the U.S.A. and Britain but also a totalitarian Country like the Soviet Union. By now, innumerable texts have been flowing endlessly beginning in the U.S.A. to the other sides of the globe. In India, pioneering works on special groups are to be found in the writings of scholars like M. Weiner's 'politics of scarcity' and G. Almond's 'politics of underdeveloped Countries.' These books have, undoubtedly, reflected a corresponding increase of interest and the results have been hailed with enthusiasm by all tailors in this academic vineyard.

This book is written in the light of the hypothesis that pressure groups are themselves a part of politics. An academic study on the pressure group in Assam has been taken viewing its relevance in the political process in the past few decades. The existence of the pluralistic type of society in modern times means the presence as well as the relevance of the innumerable variables and their proper representation. The formal structure as well as the party system have proved inadequate. On the other hand, a third approach of unofficial power has come into existence namely the special groups. India is a Country of great diversity in language, religion, Customs and Culture. Assam being a part of India has a polyglot character having tremendous ethnic diversities. Besides, she has many more special problems than the other states of India; these are the existence of different racial stocks, international boundaries,

strategic military position, frontier location, economic backwardness etc. Since, the government as well as the party system have not been in a position to focus problem areas a third line of representation has necessarily come into existence. The organisation of voluntary infra-structure have been a development of the post-independent era. Therefore, a picture has been depicted about the most dominant groups in the political Scene of Assam during the period 1947-1985.

The book has been divided into nine chapters. In the first chapter the Philosophy of Pressure Groups has been studied. The meaning and definition, the characteristics, the necessity and Justification have been analysed. Because, any work on pressure group is not relevant without a thorough understanding of the term in all its implications. Again, a group cannot come into existence without definite goals. So, the goals or rather the aspirations of the pressure groups of our Consideration have been studied in this chapter.

The second chapter deals with the Historical background of all the pressure groups. Although the period Commences from the time of independence yet it is necessary to know the Historical background. A discussion has been made about the factors influencing the emergence of organised demands in Assam.

The third chapter deals with the Organisation of the respective groups. This means a study of the machineries of action, the formal apparatus like the members, the General Assembly, the Secretariat, the officials, the Committee System, amendment etc. Consequently, it seems to be the most important point or rather the core of our study.

The fourth chapter is Concerned with Leadership. Certainly, a vast multitude of members cannot go into action at one and the same time; on the other hand, a single person to lead them all has not only become indispensable but also has actually come into existence. Leadership Complex of a group is an

important segment of the entire way of life. A dynamic leader has not only to associate himself with institutions and their functions but also to visualise change and, therefore, function as agencies of change.

In the fifth chapter, discussions has been made about the financial position of the groups which include the sources of revenue and expenditure physical resources is, no doubt, a very important strategy of group success. Without a steady and stable income a group cannot just make it's impact felt.

In the sixth chapter, the question of party affiliation of the groups have been dealt with. The relationship between the Pressure Group and the political party is a controversial one. Therefore, the position of the Pressure Groups in Assam vis-a-vis the political parties is important.

In the seventh chapter, the method of approach adopted by the Groups is discussed. Infact, the techniques of the Pressure Groups are vitally connected with the success or strength of group action. A legitimate process of bargaining short of violence is certainly a requisite quality for successful operation of group activity.

In the eighth chapter, impacts the group activities in Assam has been considered. The success of the Pressure Groups can be measured in terms of the impact felt in the public life. The achievement of the various objectives as well as the responses of the Government are, therefore, discussed.

In the final chapter, the hypothesis has been discussed. It includes the concluding remarks about the birth of pressure groups in Assam, their genesis, organisation, objectives, characteristic approaches, Justification a well as a few points of suggestions,

I express my gratefulness to Dr. V. Venkata Rao Professor Emeritus, for introducing this work to the students of Political Science. I offer my thanks to the enterprising publishing house Omson's Publications for undertaking it's publications.

Guwahati

INDRANI BARUA

Contents

FOREWORD	vii
PREFACE	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xvii
GLOSSARY	xix
1. Philosophy of Pressure Groups	1
2. Historical Development	29
3. Organisation	53
4. Leadership	105
5. Party Affiliation	128
6. Physical Resources	139
7. Tactics	154
8. Impact	174
9. Conclusion	203
BIBLIOGRAPHY	232
INDEX	239

List of Abbreviations

AASU	All Assam Students' Union
AAGSP	All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad
ABUSS	Asamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha
ACTA	Assam College Teachers' Association
ASF	Assam Students' Federation
AOC	Assam Oil Company
APCC	Assam Pradesh Congress Committee
APSC	Assam Public Service Commission
ASTWA	Assam State Transport Worker's Association
CPI	Communist Party of India
CEC	Chief Election Commissioner
DPI	Director of Public Instruction
ICS	Indian Civil Service
INA	Indian National Army
INC	Indian National Congress
INTUC	Indian National Trade Union Congress
IPC	Indian Penal Code
ITA	Indian Tea Association
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NRC	National Register of Citizens
RCPI	Revolutionary Communist Party of India
RSSS	Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangha
SRC	State Reorganisation Commission
UGC	University Grants Commission

Glossary

Asam	Assam
Asamiya	An Assamese
Aru	And
Ain	Law
Anchalik	Regional
Avarakshan	Maintenance
Abhidhan	Dictionary
Bachar	Age
Basani	Select
Bagishar	Garden
Bhasa	Language
Bhavan	Hall
Bisaya	Subject
Cha	Tea
Chatra	Student
Chatarar	Students'
Galpa	Story
Gyan	Knowledge
Jiwani	Biography
Karya Nirbahak	Executive
Ki	What
Khatian	Document
Mandir	Temple
Madhyam	Medium
Niyamabali	Rules
Nyas	Trust
Paribhasa	Technical term
Patrika	Journal

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