

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.

Indrani Barua (20-8-40)

M.A., Ph.D.

Distinction awarded :

'Gold Medal' for being first in first class, in Political Science, in the M.A. Examination of 1962, Guwahati University.

Present Occupation :

Lecturer in Political Science,
B. Barooah College, Guwahati.

ISBN 81-7117-076-5

Rs. 240

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OMSONS PUBLICATIONS

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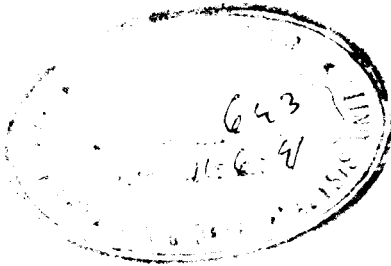
First Published 1990

ISBN 81-7117-076-5

324.41005462
B A K

Published by

Omsons Publications
T-7, Rajouri Garden
New Delhi-110 027



000643

Printed at

Taruna Enterprises
518/14, Anup Market
Yamuna Vihar Road, Maujpur
Delhi-110 053

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1

Philosophy of Pressure Groups

A. MEANING AND DEFINITION

One of the most pervasive factor in the political process of today is the existence of a number of pressure groups. The term "pressure group" has come into use to signify any aggregate, organised or unorganised group which applies pressure tactics. It is defined as "any combination of persons, bound together by shared goals and attitudes, who attempt to obtain decisions favourable to their preferred values by all means at their disposal but specially by gaining access to the governmental process."¹

The first American Political Scientist to pay much attention to the phenomena is A.F. Bentley, who in his process of Government speaks about the various pressures exercised by interest group. Pressure groups also appears as normal usage in scholarly writings of the late 1920s like W.J.M. MacKenzie in his "Pressure Group—The Conceptual Framework."

D.B. Truman in his "The Governmental process" follows in the tradition of Bentley and defines it as "any group that on the basis of one or more shared attitudes makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance or enhancement of forms of behaviour that are implied by shared attitudes.

A de Grazia in his "The Elements of Political Science" defines pressure groups simply as any organised social group that seeks to influence the behaviour of political officers without seeking formal control of the Government.

In Great Britain one of the foremost observer of pressure Group S.E. Finer reserves the term Pressure Group for those activities which amount to the "application or threatened application of a sanction should a demand be refused.

D.D. McKean in "Party and Pressure Politics" speaks of Pressure Group as an organisation interested primarily in policy which do not ordinarily nominate candidates.

P. Odegard states that they are formed without regard for party opinion or other matters; they carry on agitations for or against projects deemed favourable or prejudicial to their interests.²

The political character of the pressure Group is particularly stressed by V.O. Key, Jr., "Such Groups while they may call themselves non-political are engaged in politics, their's is a politics of policy in the main."³

R.M. MacIver in his definitional analysis of pressure Group acknowledges as 'serviceable' the use of the term pressure Group as denoting "any aggregate, organised or unorganised, which applies pressure tactics."⁴

Garcean and C. Silverman says, "All Pressure Groups must devise means for gaining access to and influencing those who are Constitutionally empowered to make, administer or otherwise define the Law".⁵

From the above, we can come to a number of assumptions. Firstly, to begin with, Pressure Group signifies the existence of a group life. It is an attempt not of a particular individual but a group attempt, a concerted effort. This group may be an elite

or teachers or students or proletariat or like other categories. Secondly, the most common denominator for all interest articulation is the sharing of attitudes. Beyond their individual peculiarities men are conditioned by their group loyalties. Identification of men with a landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a merchantile interest, a moneyed interest with many lesser interest, grow up of necessity in civilised nations and divide them into classes motivated by different values. These common motivations are, in fact, the "building blocks" of the Group shaped by the interactions within the Group, the experiences of its members etc. Thirdly, Pressure Groups cannot operate without formal organisations without which an average citizen is an innocent by stander and also a bewildered one. Organisation represents concentrated power which can exercise a dominating influence in the political process. Institutional machinery like a Secretariat or Bureaucracy is necessary to see that the Group attitudes are translated into Resolutions and Communicated to points of decision making. Fourthly, the authors of the Pressure Group keeps them away from Law making functions. They are not Law making agencies; at the same time, they attempt to help the Legislature to pass Laws in their favour. It implies external inducements to control the behaviour of the Legislators. Fifthly, a pressure group comes into existence with a view to fulfill certain doctrines or goals. Further, the objectives which a particular group stands for should fit the prevailing pattern of values in the country at large. Sixthly, an important feature of pressure group activity is the prevalence of democratic condition. The remarks of Madison namely that the 'Liberty is to faction what air is to fire' means that pressure groups thrive in the lands of the free and cannot flourish under totalitarian conditions. Seventhly, the question of leadership is another common feature. A group needs a leader to advance its claims effectively. He needs access to the administrators as well as Legislators. Wide official contact with intimate knowledge of the political process are the invaluable assets of the leader. Eighthly, the word 'pressure' indicates the application of techniques or methods of influencing decision makers. It is through the various tactics that the pressure

group get accepted their preferred values and gain access to the governmental process. Lastly, we can find out that a pressure group operates in order to get its grievances redressed by the Government. This necessitates the action or response of the Government. Pressure group tactics are futile if it fails to make a favourable impact on the Government. So, these are few assumptions so far as the meaning and definition of the term "Pressure Group" is concerned.

Pressure Group and Interest Group

The pressure group as well as the Interest Group are voluntary associations of individuals who are bound together for the defense of their respective interests. However, the pressure group greatly varies from the interest group. The pressure group is politically relevant. It is involved with Government and politics. But interest group do not have direct political significance. Interest Groups like that of Investors, Stockholders, American Dog Food Institute, an International Baby chick Association, National Flying Farmers Association, National Horseshoe Pitchers Association, a League for Less Noise etc. Promote material and symbolic goals. They do not have political interest. Most of the time they are busy with internal affairs—with meetings, election of officers, discussion, resolution, reports etc. Herein lies the difference with Pressure Groups which, however, has direct political significance, because they actively try to influence the course of public policy, work to put favourable statutes into Law or attempt to persuade office holders to exercise their authority for the benefit of the Group.

Secondly, the most distinctive feature of the interest group is the place they hold in society. The interests which they represent link their membership with community values. Where the formal system of representation proves inadequate interest group represent community values more realistically than other bodies. Thus, while the pressure group functions as links of communication between the Government and the

governed, the interest group represents a communication channel between the membership and the community values.

Thirdly, both pressure group and interest group varies from one another so far as the group methods are concerned. To quote MacIver, "a pressure group is defined by its technique, an interest group by its objectives."⁶ This means that a pressure group has no internal function but is directed outward to the overcoming of resistences. An interest group also seek in some way or at some time to exercise social pressures, still the distinctions are relevant. For, the exercise of pressure is not inherent in the concept of an interest group like a musical organisation, a philatelic society whereas the exercise of pressure is a defining function of a pressure group. The concept of pressure is, therefore, of more limited significance for the interest group. Therefore, the theory of interests can be applied to explain the solidarity, equilibrium as well as the conflicts in the social system whereas, the theory of pressures can be made an explanation of divisions, dominances and resistences within a society.

However, Labour Unions, Associations of Manufacturers etc. are interest groups when they are bargaining with each other over wages and hours, they are pressure groups when they try to influence the content of legislation. Another case in point is the American Medical Association.⁷ It may be said that the AMA is an interest group when it concerns itself with standards of medical practice within the profession. In the congressional election of 1950, however, the Association taxed the membership \$ 25 each, thereby created a Fund of several million dollars and spent it to influence the election of Congressman opposed to the creation of a national governmental programme of health insurance. Thus, we can see that interest group may become pressure group when occasion arise.

Pressure Group and Political Party

The terms 'Pressure Group' and the 'Political Party' are not independent and unrelated to each other, on the other hand,

there are facts which indicates the linkage of the pressure group to the political party.

Firstly, the members of both these groups share attitude on what is needed. A common sharing of attitude and interest is one of the basic foundation of members for both a political party and a pressure group.

Secondly, the pressure group claims support from various members of the society while the political party demands loyalty of voters. Thus, both these groups make certain claims upon other groups.

Thirdly, both pressure groups and political parties are to be found nowhere, in the written constitution. On the other hand, both these organisations are informal and extra-constitutional agencies that provide a good deal of propulsion for the informal Constitutional system.

Fourthly, the relationship between pressure group and political party may be one of collaboration of times. This means that the organised groups tend to operate in the closest communication with one or other of the political parties. Thus, pressure group staffs may needle administrators into action in taking care of citizen's complaint which relieves the party and its representatives. This indicates the idea of Parallelism and collaboration between the group and the party.

Lastly, although pressure groups avoid formal party affiliations, yet, sometimes we find partisan orientation among the groups. At times, major policy questions of the pressure groups cut across party lines. Organised groups sometimes are involved in the drafting of party platforms and in campaign activity. In this way, the existence of the partisan clusters among the groups presents another aspect of the close linkage between the pressure group and the political party.

However, it is also true that both pressure group and the political party differ enough to require distinct labels.

To begin with, firstly, the pressure group has an independent position. It functions autonomously as a mechanism of communication between its membership and government.

Secondly, the purpose of the pressure group is to achieve influence over specific policies rather than to acquire control over the Government as a whole. The latter is the purpose of a political party.

Thirdly, in the method of acquiring power, both the pressure group and the political party varies to a great extent. The political party concentrates on winning elections, but the pressure group never submits its own candidates to the voters. The pressure group can be defined as an organised attempt to influence government policy decisions without officially entering election contest.

Fourthly, there are contrasting objectives of party and pressure group. Pressure group fight for partial interest while the political party appeals for the common interests. The pressure group thrive on group interest but the political party seek to form a large enough following from many groups to win an election. Thus, both of them operate in different ways.

Fifthly, all the above conceptions amounts to the idea that a 'division of labour' prevails between political parties and pressure group. The functions of a political party are the nomination of candidates, responsibility for the conduct of Government etc. While the basic function of the pressure group is just that to give political expression to the values of the minority groups.

Historical Background

The historical background of the representation of special interests makes an interesting reading. It can be traced back to the role of the 'Estates' in the Middle Ages.⁸ The nobility, the clergy, the Yeomen, the merchants and the artisans—although

they formed part of Society in the European countries were assumed to play a separate special role in Society and to have certain duties and privileges in connection with their status and occupation. Each grouping had some elements of self-government.

The 'Guide' was organised with merchants and artisans with the power to determine for all members the conditions of work, the wages, the obligations of membership, the quality of production, price of articles sold, controlling the choice of representative to the English House of Commons etc.

However, the French Revolution and the American Revolution resulted in the destruction of the Estates and Guilds. It was followed by the growth of social movements like individualism, Marxism, Communism, Syndicalism etc. Professional interest representation in medicine, Law setting the examples of training for students, qualifications required, ethics of their practice came to be established. It was followed by new pattern of industrial institutions like worker's association, trade organisation, business enterprise etc. All these constituted what is known as functional representation. In America, a noted economist Henry C. Carray wrote to President Buchanan in 1857 that the legislation of the country had fallen into the hands of the shipping and railroad interests.⁹ In Germany, the Weimar Republic sought to institutionalise the advisory role of major interest group like Labour Tront, Teacher's League, Jurists League, Physician's League, Fechnician's League, Organisation for war victims, Public Welfare Organisation etc.¹⁰ The growth of pressure group was equally luxurient in France.¹¹

In India, the earliest modern political group was the 'India League' in Calcutta of a group of young educated urban youth who were concerned with raising the age limit for the Indian boys in the I.C.S. examination. It was followed by the Indian National Congress in 1885. Afterwards, the Indian National Movement aggregated new interests like Hind Mazdoors, The I.N.T.U.C., Mahila Samiti, Congress Volunteer Force, Youth

Congress, R.S.S., Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, Kisan Movement, Ex-Serviceman Cell etc. The experience of the First World War and the depression that followed by is significant. It ushered in the introduction of definite, structural relationship between special interests and the Government. The adjustment of influence became a problem which requires understanding and co-operation of the Government as well as the interests. The Post-independence period is marked with the growth of Regional loyalties and the inability of the Government to cope with the problems.¹² Consequently, the people of India came to believe that the special interests can be attained only through the mass action of the organised group—without which a static and conservative Government cannot be moved at all.

In this way, the historical background of Pressure Groups underlie the existence of certain vicissitudes. Firstly, there is political discontent generated within a particular section of the people which lead to demands for political remedy. Secondly, special interests are set in motion by a change in objective external condition or by material deprivation. Sometimes, it may be a mass frustration leading to a new political equilibrium. Time is also another factor. A concrete condition may exist over long periods and at some particular moments unrest flares up to redress a longstanding wrong. In fact, the great proliferation of organised groups sprang in the 20th Century from changes in the social order that created political needs met only inadequately by older political institutions and procedures.

Classification

Differentiation among the pressure groups are also to be noted. Some are permanent while others are fairly shortlived. Again, there are groups at the national level as well as at the state level, local levels. The classification made by Almond is of important consideration.¹³ He has identified four main types of structure in the articulation of political interests. Firstly, there are institutional interest groups organised within authoritative political structures like the Army, bureaucracy, public corporations,

ministries, churches and the like. Secondly, Non-Associational interest Group refers to kinship and lineage groups, ethnic, regional, religious, status and class group. Thirdly, there are Anomic groups which refers to the spontaneous break throughs into the political system through riots and demonstration. Even though their actions are deliberately organised they have the potentiality of disturbing and changing the political system. Fourthly, there are Associational interest group which are the specialised structures of interest articulation like trade unions, organisations of business or industrialists, ethnic associations, associations organised by religious denominations, civic groups and the like. Their particular characteristics are explicit representations of the interests, orderly procedure for the formation of interests and demands and transmission of these demands to other political structures such as political parties, legislatures, bureaucracies etc.

However, generally speaking, business, labour, farm and reform pressure groups are found in all modern nations where social groups are free to combine, to govern themselves and to exert pressure on political affairs. Where several religious groups exist there we find religious pressures, where several nationalities are present we find nationalist's pressurer, where there are notable social and economic differences between one part of a country and another we find local pressure groups.

Functions

In 1835, Alexi de Tocqueville, a great French student of the American Culture said, in no country in the world has the principle of association been more successfully used or applied to a greater multitude of objects than in America.¹⁴ He was quite right and still is about the rich plurality of private associations through which Americans achieve personal and social satisfactions. Even after 149 years an American Political Scientist V.O. Key in 1961, pointed out that a prominent place must be given to the activities of private organisations if one is to understand the American Political system, for these associa-

tions constitutes links of communications between the citizen and the government.¹⁵ Further, these unofficial agencies are shared attitude group that makes certain claims upon other groups in the society by acting through or upon any of the institutions of Government.¹⁶ In this way, the role of the pressure group can be assumed in several directions.

Firstly, the pressure group is an important communication channel between the Government and the governed. They make available the valuable data and act as spokesman of the public. They supply the necessary information and statistics to policy makers, provide organisational devices and promote a healthy growth of democracy. It is through the instrumentality of the pressure group that the various interests of the people may be made available to the Government. In this way, they provide an important intermediary in the communication gap between the Government and the people.

Secondly, it provides an important check on the public officials in the making and implementing public policy. They are not engaged in politics but their's is a politics of policy. Their job is to keep a close watch on legislative development, present the views on Congressional Committees. Sometimes, they are called the third house of the Legislature, sometimes the invisible Government.

Thirdly, pressure groups endorse candidates, make campaign contributions and even canvass the voters for the election of party candidates sympathetic to their cause.

In fact, the pressures of the multiple groups on Government compels the latter to make a continuous effort to adjust the conflict of groups in order to maintain maximum degree of satisfaction among the people. In this way, pressure group operations constitute a significant supplement to the traditional type of representation under democratic government.

Methods

Pressure groups can be defined by its techniques.¹⁷ This means that tactics are the very essence of the pressure groups. They make themselves felt at Governmental level through a variety of methods. A group becomes a reality when its executive committee calls for mass meetings, publish editorials, send delegations etc.¹⁸ •

The primitive techniques were rather crude. A. de Grazia¹⁹ mentions that the groups made themselves effective in politics by merely being around the places where political events were occurring and produced influences over time, calling, writing, speculative collusion, bribe, lavish gifts, entertainment and solicitation in an atmosphere of intimidation. The result was that huge tracts of land, vast natural resources, precious public rights were dispensed to special interests. However, as a result of a popular movements against political corruption the primitive techniques had to be changed. Less money was spent on buying votes and more on persuading representatives, crude demands had to be fashioned into the 'legitimate' requests of interest. In modern times, Government institutions like Legislature, Administration and the General Public constitute elements of environment. The group must either adopt its objectives to the limit fixed by its environment or seek to mould the environment toward acceptance of its objectives. The process is one of equilibrium that tends to develop in the relations between a group and its surroundings. This interaction with the environment has determined the modern methods of pressure groups.

In fact, the capacity of these groups for reaching the general public is truly impressive. This is made by dividing organisation media into three categories:

1. Programmatic media involves arranging an agenda compiling a speaker's list, developing topics and materials for discussion and distributing plans for mobilising community interests in an issue;

2. Assemblematic media encompass panel discussion, lectures and conferences; and
3. Memorandummatic media include news-letter, pamphlets, house organs and fact sheets.²⁰

As a matter of fact, manipulation of public opinion is the most essential function of the groups. It means manipulation of mass attitude. Since, pressure groups depend upon public understanding and support of their politics, they are supposed to give special emphasis on public relations. In fact, public relations efforts are of two types.²¹ The short term campaign may be made to mobilise popular views on a specific legislative proposal, to whip up public opposition to support a particular measure. It may range in magnitude from a few newspaper advertisements to those that involve lots of money. The long term measures are adopted to manage basic public attitudes. Long term opinion moulding are carried through institutional advertisement. Public relations campaign not only help creating favourable public attitudes but also in building a status for a group in public mind.

Secondly, there is the method of persuading legislators. The most common practice of the pressure groups is the Lobbying.²² A Lobbyist is a person engaged in outside the Legislature who seek to influence legislation. There may be a farm Lobby, a labour Labby, an oil Lobby and so on. All Lobbying is motivated by a desire to influence. The Lobbyist is an intermediary between the Government and the special groups. All Lobbying involves communication through which influence can be transmitted. The communication process of the Lobbyist is made by sending messages through intermediaries like the friends of officials, stimulate mass letters or telegram campaign etc.

Thirdly, a particular group may be instrumental in the passage of legislation by influencing administrative agencies. Pressure groups can inevitably direct their activities at the point

at which authority to make decision is lodged. Where power rests influence will be brought to bear.

Fourthly, pressure groups also concern themselves in opposing the confirmation of individuals to the Supreme Court of the U.S.A. who are thought to be biased against group interest. Their participation often gives litigation the distinct flavour of group combat.

Inter-group lobbying is another tactics of the groups. Pressure groups not only pay attention to the officials but also lobby each other. There are different types of relation among the groups. They lobby among potential friends (groups) for support and often attempt to obtain endorsements from them.

Impact

All pressure group activity involves government action. The techniques are externally advanced in order to get a more favourable attitude from the governmental authority. In other words, response from the authority is of prime importance in determining both the varieties and techniques of the pressure groups. Pressure may be exerted by means which are legally permitted or by methods which the Law forbids. Sometimes, pressures tend to reach or pass the margin where they may be interpreted as contravening the Law but also because the activity of Law making may be turned. Again, not only the methods and degrees but also the objectives may be opposed by the Law. There is a distinction between the pressures which employ certain technique of unfair competition banned by the Law and pressures directed against the Law itself. For all types of pressures, it is obvious that the attitude of governmental agencies is of vast significance. Even for the category of pressures which do not clash directly with the Laws a generally favourable attitude on the part of the authority is an important limiting factor.

Relation between pressures and authoritarian control is the situation in which the extra-legal pressures proceed from the

authorities themselves. This situation is frequently evident under dictatorial government. Under democratic condition, however, the intermediate situation is found in which the Government and the officials cooperate actively with particular pressure groups. Sometimes, key groups are also represented in the policy making process. During the presidency of John F. Kennedy, an office for the special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Labour Affairs and a Director of Commercial Affairs and Business Activities were established, both to symbolise the stake of Labour and Business in American Foreign Policy and to serve the interests of these groups abroad.²³ A number of American groups, with Government assistance, have actively participated in international relief programmes in Nigeria as well as conducted official American programme abroad. In 1960 the American Institute for free Labour Development, a private non-profit Corporation conducted United States—Latin American Labour Programmes.

Another aspect of the situation is illustrated by cases where the authorities actively resist the pressure or where the pressures are directed against the authorities themselves. This can occur when mass pressure is directed against the prevailing system of authority. Such a case is illustrated by the nationalistic movement such as that represented by the 'Swaraj'.²⁴ It also appears as non-revolutionary when an unpopular tax proposal is withdrawn by the Government under indication of public resentment or when an unpopular Government under the Parliamentary system resign from office apart from any constitutional necessity.

All these factors reveal a quality inherent in some degree in all pressures. That is why, modern democratic countries give recognition to the legitimate demands of various groups for participation in the decision making process. Truly speaking, pressure groups represent important segments of the public. They have strong roots in local communities. Since, they are the first approximation to the national interest, they have a more spontaneous and detailed understanding of the picture.

Limitation

The Limitations of the pressure theory are also manifest in the writing of political philosophers. For a number of reasons pressure groups are an unsatisfactory substitute for political parties.²⁵ Firstly, all interests are not represented equally through pressure groups specially the under-privileged and non-economic interests. Secondly, the complexity of the current domestic and international problems demands a coherent and stable over all policy and this kind of policy cannot be achieved if every problem is tackled by a different coalition of special interests. Thirdly, since, every person, no less than every district, has variety of interests, the pressure group leader can speak no more accurately for all the members of his group than the elected representatives can for all his constituents. Fourthly, most important of all, pressure groups cannot be held accountable by the general public for the manner in which they use their power, because they do not win it through popular election.

In fact, pressure group activities are subject to a number of limitations.²⁶ V.O. Key mentions that the first limiting factor is the balancing of interests. This means that the demands of pressure groups are checked by the demands of other groups. Legislators and administrators are confronted by groups pushing in opposing directions. It becomes a state of affairs that permits Government to balance one off against the other. Secondly, another restraint built into the group system may be referred to overlapping membership.²⁷ The criss-crossing relationship and the conflicting claims of the members may immobilise a group on any question which may also blunt the sharpness of group demand. Thirdly, Regulation Lobby²⁸ means that the Congress in the U.S.A. has power to inquire into the activities of these seeking to influence legislation. The Lobbying organisation is required to submit periodic reports to the Congress. Fourthly, unorganised groups also serve as natural checks on pressure group government.²⁹ The unorganised or inarticulate group like the migratory farm worker whom Truman

calls the 'submerged political interest' also enjoys a kind of representation. This means that the unorganised cannot be ignored altogether. They may be aroused to counter-action if they are too flagrantly ignored. They may organise if they are too severely mistreated.

All these conditions necessitated the management of protest and state action. Interest group and the pressure groups are not to be condemned but controlled. Towards the end of the 18th century, James Madison, one of the fathers of the American Constitution, said that 'the regulation of these various and conflicting interests forms the principal task of modern legislation.'³⁰ V.O. Key also advocated that a major pre-occupation of government is the policing of conflict interests.³¹ The U.S. Government passed the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act in 1946. It requires any person or organisation soliciting or receiving money to be used 'principally to aid', or 'the principal purpose' of which person or organisation is to aid, the passage or defeat of legislation before Congress, to register with the clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives.³²

Thus, the Pressure Groups and the Government exercise influence over one another. They are dependent upon one another for satisfaction of complementary and conflicting interests.

Study of Pressure Groups in Assam

A study of our political culture involves two things. Firstly, the study of actual performance which includes emphasis on institutional structure, legal system, constitutions etc. Secondly, there are innumerable variables like attitudes, beliefs, values, skills etc., that is current in the entire population; this constitutes the psychological dimensions of our political culture. These variables are irreconcilable and often lead to conflict and fragmentation. Regional groups and nationalities like the Assamese, the Marathas and the Akalis have special attitudes, belief and propensities which make regionalism or local loyalties very

strong. Such entities may be called 'Sub-culture' which dominates over others. All of them require political socialisation which means transmission of ideas to political power through political participation. There may be conflicts in the process of political culture or transmission of values due to caste, community, language, religion, individual liberty etc. Political behaviour is thus influenced by a lot of factors. The study of pressure groups is, therefore, very important in our country.

B. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Asam Sahitya Sabha

According to the constitution of the Asam Sahitya Sabha, it has a number of aims and objectives—to promote all round development of Assamese language and literature, to refrain from discussion of political matters, development of Assamese literature by revising the Assamese Dictionary and Grammar and make it upto date encouraging the research in and study the ancient Assamese literature such as old puthis, Buranjies, Bargeet, Folklore and Proverbs, Publication and encouragement of works on Assamese literature, to assist in the publication of useful works by authors who cannot afford to do so themselves, preparation of gramophone records of bonafide ancient Assamese tunes, granting scholarships, reward and prizes for encouraging the study and culture of Music and Arts, Publication of a periodical organ of the Sabha, to carry on propaganda work for the spread of the study and Research in the Assamese language and literature among the general public.³³

Thus, we can see that since all organisations have particular aims and objectives, the Asam Sahitya Sabha has also definite, well-defined aims and objects peculiar to its own interests. All these objects are centered on one principle namely progress of Assamese language, literature and culture by all means which clearly laid units of organisation. It has specially excluded the discussion of:

1. Political matters,
2. Communal and
3. Party politics.

All Assam Students' Union

The aims and objectives of the All Assam Students' Union are of very important considerations. Because, although in their earlier attempts, student groups aimed at the improvement of Assamese language and literature, yet in course of time, they came to be inspired by great many ideals and aspirations.

To begin with, the original student associations like the 'Tea Club', 'Asamiya Chatrar Sahitya Sabha' and the Asamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha—all of them shared a common objective or purpose. The rest of conflict was the 'backwardness of the Assamese language.' The discontent was generated because the Assamese language was under a shade, having been dropped in 1836³⁴ from its position as a medium of administration as well as education in schools started by the new British rulers. Therefore, the earlier organisations stood primarily for the growth of the mother-tongue to maturity and how it might reach the heights of other rich and prosperous languages of the world as also to see how it might attain a state of strength.

However, the Assam Chatra Sanmilian had a broader outlook than the previous organisations. Its aims and objectives were:

1. To give facility to the student community of Assam,
2. to develop literary culture of the students and
3. to help the students develop physical, mental and intellectual capacities besides imparting instruction in schools and college.³⁵

The Assam Chatra Sunmilian resolved to refrain from having political discussions. However, Sri Padmanath Gohain Barua,

in his Presidential speech, critically discussed the rule and advocated the discussion of political matters by the students. The Presidents of the 13th and 14th sessions namely Tarun Phukan and Krisna Kanta Handique also supported the contention that students may rightfully participate in political activity.

It is remarkable that before independence, the student organisations of Assam were developed in nationalistic line, They were affiliated to the political parties. After independence, however, a feeling was developed among the students to organise students more on non-party lines. The Assam Students' Association which came into existence in September 1959 was organised on non-partisan, non-political and democratic foundation. It came to stand by the larger and collective interests of the student community, endeavoured to solve the problems common to the students of Assam as well as to promote the spirit of culture, literature, sports etc. Even this association could not satisfy the aspiration of all classes of students. On the other hand, because of its participation in Refinery Movement and Language Movement it was branded as partisan and politically motivated.³⁶ Therefore, there was mounting pressure for the organisation of a student union whereby the students of all classes irrespective of language, religion, hills or plains could take a common platform.

Thus, was organised, the All Assam Students' Union in 1967, with a more clarified position with regard to its non-political and non-partisan objective.³⁷ It gave a much greater emphasis on the aims and objects of the organisation. To begin with:

1. It is not affiliated to any political party,
2. to develop and deepen a sense of respect for Assam and its people,
3. to involve the students in the movement against all sorts of exploitation on the Assamese people,

4. to encourage the students in progress through socialism,
5. to preserve the independent and integrity of the motherland,
6. to protect and maintain the interests of the indigenous people of Assam,
7. to carry on movements against illiteracy and indifference in educational set up and establish equal rights of education for all students,
8. to facilitate development of social, political and cultural consciousness,
9. to discourage narrow communalism and social ills based on caste community and religion, and
10. to establish friendly relations with the student organisations of other states in view of national solidarity etc.

In fact, the association was organised of students who resolved in strong determination to attain social, economic, political justice, freedom of expression, ideas, truth, self-respect, equality in all respects, national integration and fraternity.³⁸

From the above, we can say that the association was broad based. Its outlook was extensive, touching not only the literary, educational and cultural aspect but also economic, social and political life of the people. As such, it came to be involved in many types of issues concerning the people of Assam.

Assam College Teachers' Association

Every human organisation persists with a view to fulfill certain conditions or objectives for which demands are in existence. These demands are either not fulfilled by anybody or scant attention has been paid for their redress. Therefore, there is the need for organised effort. For instance, the ACTA was organised because there were common interests of the college teachers which were yet to be fulfilled. As a matter of fact, the association has come to exist with a number of aims and objectives.³⁹ To mention them specifically are:

1. to strive for and contribute towards allround improvement of education in the state in general and of collegiate education in particular;
2. to adopt such means and take such measures as are considered necessary for the development of a healthy, progressive and creative cultural life in the state in particular and in the country in general;
3. to promote national integration and national ideals and to defend fundamental rights and human values;
4. to safeguard and improve the conditions of service and status of teachers;
5. to render necessary help to the distressed member/members of the association and his/their family/families;
6. to establish friendly relations and co-operation with other teachers' association, inside and outside the state;
7. to promote study and research in educational and other allied problems with special reference to the conditions of the North Eastern Region;
8. to focus the educational and other allied problems of the North-Eastern Region by publishing books, journals, bulletins etc. through survey and field study;
9. to initiate and assist schemes for securing solutions to educational and other allied problems locally or nationally;
10. to exchange information and ideas with parents, students and other persons interested in all round development of education and other allied matters;
11. to take such other steps as may be deemed necessary for the furtherance of the aforesaid objects.

From the above, it can be said that the organisers considered it expedient to devote for the causes of education and promotion of cultural, social, and economic welfare of the members

and to foster mutual goodwill and understanding among teachers in general and college teachers in particular. Improvement of education in general and the collegiate education in particular forms the first and foremost part of the objectives. It has no political motives to perform. The constitution clearly excludes any political aims or objectives. It has nothing to do with party politics. On the other hand, it is specially motivated for furthering the cause of Education as well as the non-Government college teachers.

Indian National Trade Union Congress (Assam)

The INTUC (Assam) was organised with a view to fulfill a number of aims and objectives.⁴⁰ As the Constitution lays down, they are mainly to:

1. (a) Establish an order of society which is free from hindrance in the way of all round development of its individual members, which foster the growth of human personality in all its aspects and goes to the utmost limit in progressively eliminating social, political or economic exploitation and inequality, the profit motive in the economic activities and organisation of society and the anti-social concentration of power in any form;
- (b) To place Industry under National ownership and control in suitable form in order to realise the aforesaid objective in the quickest time;
- (c) To organise society in such a manner as to ensure full employment and the best utilisation of its manpower and other resources;
- (d) To secure increasing association of the workers in the administration of Industry and other full participation in its control;
- (e) To promote generally the social, civil and political interests of the working class.

2. (a) To secure an effective and complete organisation of all categories of workers including agricultural labour;
 - (b) To guide and co-ordinate the activities of the affiliated organisations;
 - (c) To assist in formation of trade Unions;
 - (d) To promote the organisation of workers of each industry on a nation-wide basis;
 - (e) To assist in the formation of regional or District Branches of Federations.
3. (a) To secure speedy improvement of conditions of work and life and of the status of the workers in industry and society;
 - (b) To obtain for the workers various measures of social security including the adequate provision in respect of accidents, maternity, sickness, old age and unemployment;
 - (c) To secure a living wage for every work in normal employment and to bring about a progressive improvement in the workers standard of life;
 - (d) To regulate hours and other conditions of work in keeping with the requirements of the workers in the matter of health, recreation and cultural development;
 - (e) To secure suitable legislative enactments for ameliorating the conditions of the workers and to ensure the proper enforcement of legislation for the protection and uplift of labour.
4. (a) To establish just industrial relations;
 - (b) To secure redress of grievances, without stoppage of work by means of negotiation and conciliation and failing these, by arbitration or adjudication;

- (c) Where adjudication is not applied and settlement of dispute by arbitration is not available for the redress of grievance to facilitate recourse, on the part of the workmen, to other legitimate methods including strikes or any suitable form of Satyagraha;
- (d) To make the necessary arrangement for the efficient conduct and satisfactory and speedy conclusion of authorised strike or Satyagrahas;
- 5. (a) To foster the spirit of solidarity, service, brotherhood, co-operation and mutual help amongst the workers;
- (b) To develop in the workers a sense of responsibilities towards industry and the community.
- (c) To raise the workers' standard of efficiency and discipline.

From the above, it can be said that the INTUC aimed at securing the social, political and economic improvement of the working class, settlement of disputes through negotiations and arbitration, increase production, national ownership and control of industries etc. All this means the creation of a disciplined working force with moderation as the keynote. It is not militant in its approach of securing the special interests of the workers. On the other hand, it gives preference to the contribution to the nation's economic growth. They have to subordinate their immediate wage gains and similar considerations to the development of the country. They rely heavily on Government machinery.

All pressure groups have doctrines or policy objectives of their own. An organisation can come into existence only with definite aims, objectives and programmes of action. In fact, objectives represents hitherto neglected aspects of the Assamese society. They can be termed as more definite claims for action which otherwise go unnoticed. Group activity is determined by

the policy objectives. These objectives are laid down in the respective constitutions of the groups.

The pressure groups in Assam are agreed with regard to certain basic programmes. The Sabha, the AASU, the ACTA and the INTUC aims at the advancement of their respective special interests and attitude. They all have short term as well as long term objectives. The progress of culture seems to be the one common objective of the groups. All of them advocate national integration, spirit of solidarity and brotherhood.

However, they vary at many points. To begin with, they do not have the same kinds of aims and objectives, nor do they have the same measure of them. The INTUC aims to achieve a much bigger courses of action than the other organisations. It has a wider programme of action which envisages not only the upliftment of the workers but also the establishment of a just and socialistic economic order in the country. The INTUC gives much emphasis to national interests. For instance it advocates national ownership and control of industry. National growth and increase in production seems to be of prior consideration. Therefore, it supports settlement of disputes without stoppage of work. Such a clause naturally develops the worker's sense of responsibility towards the community at large.

Again, the objectives of the INTUC specifically mentions the various methods of redress of their grievances. Although, it legalises strikes and Satyagrahas yet it gives emphasis on other methods like negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or adjudication failing which it can take recourse to methods of direct action. However, the rest of the groups do not specifically cover, as their objective, any of the technique.

Thus, unlike other organisations, the programme of the INTUC is very much wide and elaborate. These objectives clearly indicates the courses of action.

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