12. Interest Groups

Courtesy of The American Legion

A POLITICAL interest is a desire to obtain some satisfaction from the government. Most interest groups are private organizations of people aimed at winning satisfaction for some collective desire. However, government agencies may also function as interest groups, in their efforts to persuade another organ of the government to perform some action advantageous to them. The effort to get the government to do what one wants can be

called "pressure." Consequently, interest groups are also termed pressure groups.

Pressure, despite its bad connotation, means only the attempts to convince government officials that an interest exists that they "should" satisfy. An interest is not necessarily evil or good as such. Everybody has interests, although not the same ones. If people want their property protected, and do not wish to pay for privately-employed custodians, they go to the government and ask for police protection to be paid for out of tax moneys.

Whether particular interests and their accompanying pressures are good or bad, therefore, depends on one's viewpoint. A *general* interest, or an interest that everyone has, is almost exclusively found among broad background issues such as "law and order," "honesty," or "humanitarianism in government." Such interests have their principal spokesmen in the general representative qualities that human beings of the same culture possess and carry with them when they enter public office. Conceivably one might say that national defense is a general interest; however, it is related to foreign affairs, and even in foreign relations the general interest is often only apparent. For instance, although it is true that most people's attachments with other people stop at the water's edge, a fair number consider the general interest to be an interest in the well-being of mankind. Again, some people believe that the use of force in world affairs is always a bad policy, whereas others consider it necessary from time to time. The fact is that many groups of opposing viewpoints are interested in foreign affairs, each one claiming that it represents the "general interest." Whatever the nature of an interest, its fulfillment is apt to be harmful or displeasing to some persons. Thus interests clash; and the efforts to realize these interests bring their advocates into unending struggle.

CHARACTER AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRESSURES

Individuals and interest

Individuals and small unorganized groups who seek fulfillment of their interest do so generally through means of direct personal contact with the governing official concerned. As weapons, these persons tend to rely upon their influential status in the community or their relationships with particular officials. Examples are legion. One consisted of the notorious so-called "five-percenters" of recent years, who were individuals who supposedly had access to national agency chiefs from whom they could obtain profitable business contracts with the government, and who charged five per cent of the total business they secured as their fee. The attempts of General Billy Mitchell in the 1920's to persuade other Army generals via public discussion that air power would be decisive in any future war also typified this sort of pressure. A wealthy roadhouse owner may telephone

National American Legion Office Building in Washington. Center of capital operations of one of the most influential of American civic associations, it houses the legislative, economic, and veterans rehabilitation staffs.

a sheriff, whom he has helped elect, to have a deputy give closer protection to the premises on Saturday night, when the "take" is large. A group of store proprietors all doing business near one unguarded street intersection may agree among themselves that the traffic congestion is bad for business; each may then write the chief of police urging installation of traffic signals at the intersection. Another campaign contributor may suggest to the district attorney's office that his son, who has just graduated from college, needs a job. A mother may telephone the school superintendent to complain about a teacher's methods of instruction. This sort of interest, and the unorganized means by which the individuals seek to have it satisfied, are the most common of all.

Pressures as a universal trait

Every day many thousands of instances of individual, unorganized pressures bombard the government throughout the land. Hence every form of government must have a way for coping with them. In an absolute monarchy, the king and his ministers receive countless petitions. (It should be recalled how the American colonists felt that they had poor access to the faraway royal court, and how the Constitution assures the right to petition for a redress of grievances.) In the Soviet Union, which strives to be a totally planned society, there are many planned (and controlled) ways of putting pressure upon the government. In addition to an elaborate apparatus of *soviets* (councils or assemblies), Soviet Russia has thousands of grievance committees; moreover, a giant government newspaper such as *Trud* (*Labor*), published for the workers, carries many selected "letters to the editor" making suggestions and complaining about difficulties and shortcomings in the national economy. In small and in great societies, in unorganized and in tightly organized societies, and in free and in despotic societies, there will always be pressure and some means for channeling the pressure into the government.

Role of interests in representative government

One outstanding function of representative government is to give a means for the channeling of pressure. The very origins of representative government reveal this fact. In the thirteenth century, various European kings were beset by difficult problems of finance and of administration; they needed the cooperation of the people, and sought some orderly way of obtaining it. The most imporant new elements of political and economic power of the day were the knights of the country areas and the merchants and artisans of the cities; they controlled much of the wealth and energies of the nation. Consequently, assemblies were formed to which they were invited, there to seek satisfaction of their interests and to be asked to aid the crown.

Practically every country in the world today has such an assembly, legislature, or parliament. Also, through elected or appointed delegates, the various interests of the nation are channeled to the government. Even

today the American Congress gives vent to a great many interests. Californians, Alabamans, Iowans, and New Yorkers, like the congressmen from all the other States, speak up for local needs. Representatives of working-class districts defend the position of labor; representatives from rural areas present the interests of farmers. Furthermore, the age-old function of kings and appointed officials in dealing with grievances, complaints, and demands continues. In America the President and the many Departments of the government are still the targets of numerous pressures.

However, modern society is especially busy and complicated. Pressures have mounted in number and intensity beyond the capacity of the legislative and executive branches to cope with them. One response of the political system was to develop political parties as subsidiary or auxiliary channels. If the banks of a river cannot contain its flood, the water will wash over the banks or create new channels in its inevitable course downstream. As will be described in a later chapter, the political party functions so as to gather in, arrange, and direct a portion of the pressure of interests.

But not even the parties could manage the flood of interests after the Industrial Revolution; new rains fell continuously over the period beginning about 1750 and extending up to the present day. Those rains are still falling. Thousands of new occupations, enterprises, and activities have developed; even more important, the vote was given to virtually all adults, and, with the vote, an invitation to bring one's problems to the government. The response of the political system to the fresh rains—and especially the response of the American system—was the creation of innumerable rivulets, called associations or pressure groups, that wind about seeking access to the main channel of law-making, or to the party channels, or that tumble down toward the direct determination of policies themselves.

Further distinctions of interest groups

The weight of interest groups can be felt at almost every stage in the making and enforcing of laws. Yet, like political parties, they have grown up outside the structure of the government; with few exceptions, they have no legal connection with the legislative, executive, or judicial organs. In the eyes of the law they are chiefly private agencies. They conduct various types of political activities, some groups more or less restricting themselves to one type of activity and others carrying on two or more types. Some attempt to promote the nomination of some candidates and to block that of others. Some campaign vigorously for the election of candidates they favor and against the election of the ones they oppose. Some seek to obtain the enactment of bills they think would be advantageous and prevent that of bills they believe would be disadvantageous. Some urge strict enforcement of laws they find helpful and lax enforcement of the ones they feel burdensome. Some constantly aim at swaying public opinion toward adopting their attitudes. Interest groups appear to have goals similar to those of political parties; however, to the extent that they

do, the emphases are different. For parties, candidates take first rank; for interest groups, principles. Parties seek to win elections; interest groups strive to win adoption of their policies.

NUMBER AND TYPES OF INTEREST GROUPS

Extent

Interest groups in the United States are extremely numerous. According to one estimate, there are upwards of 100,000 interest groups of an organized formal kind. They show great variations in size, wealth, and the influence they wield. They exist at the national, the State, and the local level of government. They seek to achieve their ends in many different ways. The great number of interest groups makes an exact and detailed system of classification quite difficult. Certain major functional tyes stand out: economic associations, comprising those in the three great fields of business, labor, and agriculture; organizations of professions; comparatively non-economic bodies such as the groupings of veterans and of national and racial minorities; and the adherents of plans for reforms. Finally, many agencies of government are themselves interest groups.

Types

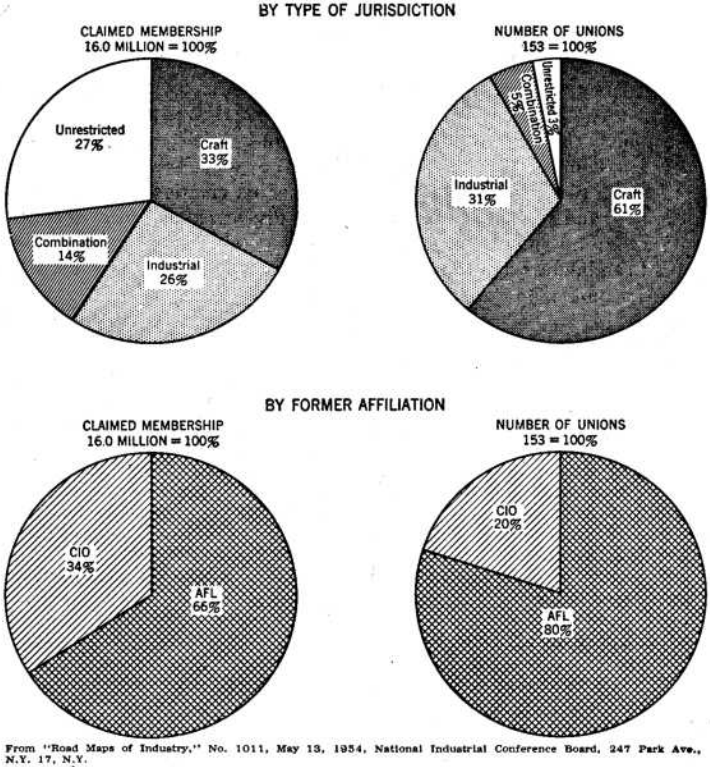
Business: Two great organizations attempt to state the attitudes of all American business: the United States Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). Each has a heterogeneous membership, that of the Chamber of Commerce being even more diversified than that of the NAM; in fact, the Chamber is more nearly a federation of numerous local business interest groups across the country. Too, many large business interests have erected their own national bodies, such as the Independent Petroleum Association, the National Association of Real Estate Boards (see Figure 24), and the American Bankers' Association. There are many comparable groups at the State level, such as the Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association. These organizations have a relatively small membership; they cannot, like certain other groupings, deliver large blocs of votes from their own numbers. In proportion to membership, however, they are the wealthiest type of grouping. They tend to promote those policies which appear most favorable to the business community; on many issues, however, they may be silent. This is especially true of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, whose members, owing to their diversity, may not agree on some public questions.

Labor: Until 1955 there were two great labor organizations: the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which then claimed over 10,000,000 members; and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), claiming over 5,000,000. Besides the AFL and the CIO there were many unions, such as the railroad brotherhoods, that were not affiliated with either major body. These so-called "unaffiliated" groups had a combined asserted membership of 2,500,000. In 1955, however, the officials of the AFL and the CIO agreed to merge the two bodies into a single giant group, the AFL-CIO.

The new union did not immediately embrace the unaffiliated unions, but additional mergers are still possible.

This new combination, like the AFL and CIO before it, has a federal structure. Its chief governing agency is the Convention, which meets every two years. There the delegates from all member unions have a number of votes in proportion to the size of their membership. Between meetings of the Convention, the Federation is managed by an Executive Council composed of twenty-nine members, ten from former CIO bodies and nineteen from former AFL organizations. In turn the Council delegates most of its work to an Executive Committee, made up of the President and the Secretary-Treasurer of the Federation, three Vice Presidents from unions formerly in the AFL, and three Vice Presidents from unions formerly in the CIO. Figure 23 gives the estimated membership of the new union and the proportions that come from the AFL and the CIO.

Labor groups follow tactics sometimes similar to, and sometimes con-



From "Road Maps of Industry," No. 1011, May 13, 1954, National Industrial Conference Board, 247 Park Ave., N.Y. 17, N.Y.

Figure 23. The AFL-CIO: Composition of the New Labor Federation.

siderably different from, those of business groups; and labor tactics have altered greatly since the founding of the AFL. Like business groups, labor unions maintain lobbies in Washington in profusion. Yet because labor groups unlike business groups count far more upon numbers than upon wealth, they are very active in election campaigns. Originally the AFL refused to become associated with any political party, and clung to the practice of rewarding its friends and punishing its enemies regardless of party. In fact, the AFL at first planned to rely almost entirely on traditional economic weapons such as the strike, the boosting of the union label, and the boycott of non-cooperating businesses. The CIO, by contrast, was rather steadfast to the Democratic Party, largely because it was indebted to that party for its very origins and also because since 1933 the party in the northern States has been quite favorable to labor unions. Too, the unskilled laborers who were the backbone of the CIO were more likely than the skilled artisans of the AFL to vote Democratic in any case. In 1952 for the first time the national leaders of both the CIO and the AFL supported a major party presidential candidate when they campaigned for Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic Party nominee.

In recent years, as unions have gained power, wealth, prestige, and dignity, labor leaders have extended their activities to the promotion of legislation and have emulated business groups in their efforts to "educate" the public. The AFL-CIO carries on this work chiefly through its Committee on Political Education (COPE). The new Federation, speaking through the two leaders most responsible for its creation, George Meany of the AFL and Walter Reuther of the CIO, disavowed any plan to convert the new group into a third party. Pressure and election activity for favored candidates were to remain the tactics of labor. Said Meany, when the new combination was announced:

> As long as I have anything to say about it, the AFL will not tie itself to any political party. I don't believe in a labor class or a labor party along class lines such as the British Labor Party. I don't believe in it just as I don't think there should be a political party in this country along denominational lines.
>
> There will be increased political action by labor in 1956. But political action by organized labor doesn't mean we will tie ourselves to any party. There is talk that labor is going to join forces with the Democratic party. Well, I'm not going to tie the AFL to any party, any time, anywhere.
>
> That doesn't mean, of course, that we won't support more Democrats than Republicans because that probably will be just the way it works out. The facts are that more Democrats have favorable records from our point of view than Republicans.

Reuther spoke in agreement:

> Building third parties will get no one anywhere. Every try has failed miserably, not because the motives or the reasons or the morality behind it was wrong, but because we are dealing with a structure in America that does not lend itself to the creation of third party movements. . . .
>
> Basically what we are trying to do is work within the two-party system of America and bring about within that two-party system a fundamental

realignment of basic political forces so that political parties can become responsible. . . .

Agriculture: There are three national agricultural groups: the Patrons of Husbandry, or the Grange, with nearly 1,000,000 members; the American Farm Bureau Federation, with about 1,600,000 member families; and the Farmers' Union, with about 260,000 members. The greatest strength of the Grange is in the northeastern States; of the Farm Bureau Federation, in the midwestern and southern States; and of the Farmers' Union, in the Great Plains States.

These groups represent considerably different economic levels and different ideas of government. The programs of the Farm Bureau Federation sometimes resemble those of the NAM. For instance, on August 31, 1955, the AFBF filed testimony with the Senate Antitrust and Monopoly Subcommittee, asking that labor unions be made subject to the same antimonopoly laws as business concerns. On the other hand, the aims of the Farmers' Union occasionally are similar to the aims of the CIO. For example, it cooperated with the CIO in drafting and urging passing of full employment laws at the end of World War II.

There are many lesser groupings for the particular types of farming, such as the American Sugar Cane League. Occasionally this type of organization on a local scale may be extremely powerful, especially if it covers the leading pursuit of the region; for instance, during the 1870's and the 1880's the Wyoming Stock Growers' Association was the virtual government of Wyoming Territory.

Like labor unions, agricultural groups can rely upon number as a means of exerting pressure. It has already been noted that the farming areas are overrepresented with respect to their populations in both Congress and the State legislatures; therefore the work of farmers' organizations is more openly conducted than that of either business or labor groups. The agricultural groups have had so much influence in Congress that since the 1920's their interests have been upheld in each chamber by a bipartisan union of congressmen termed the Farm Bloc.

The Professions: Each major profession is represented by one or more national organizations, such as the American Bar Association, the American Medical Association, and the National Education Association. Similar bodies exist on the State level. The power of these groups is derived largely from their wealth and the social standing of the profession itself. Professional groups confine their activity almost entirely to the enactment and execution of laws regulating their particular interests. They are especially concerned with statutes fixing qualifications for admittance to the profession. Since the members of most professions are privately employed and are paid on a fee basis, their interest group can do little respecting their income. Public school teachers, by contrast, are employed by the public and receive salaries; hence the National Education Association emits a great deal of publicity favoring an increase in teachers' salaries. Sometimes the professional interest groups, or at least their leaders, will take a stand on issues not directly connected with the group itself.

Veterans: Beginning with the American Revolution, every major war in which the United States has fought has spawned one or more associations of veterans. The most important of these associations are the American Legion, largest of all; the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), next largest; the American Veterans Association (Amvets); and the American Veterans Committee (AVC). Presumably the chief goal of these organizations has been to preserve the sense of cameraderie attained on the battlefield. They have also been very much concerned with government treatment of the veteran. The defeat of President Grover Cleveland in 1888, after he had established a reputation for vetoing private military pension bills, was achieved largely by the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a group composed of Union veterans of the Civil War. The numerous benefits enacted by Congress after each of the two world wars were promoted by veterans' associations.

Veterans' organizations have been sponsors of other types of legislation. Understandably, they have urged a strong national defense system. In common with veterans' groups across the globe, they have been very nationalistic, and have been among the strongest supporters of internal security laws. Often these groups take a stand on broad economic issues. There is good evidence to show that the Order of the Cincinnati, composed of former officers in the American Revolution, was influential in securing ratification of the Constitution, since prosperous members of the Order expected to flourish under the proposed government and others were quite nationalistic. Most present-day veterans' organizations have tended to uphold economic policies similar to those of the NAM. The outstanding exception is the AVC, which frankly aligned itself with President Truman's Fair Deal program; in fact, the Communist Party made a determined but unsuccessful effort to capture the AVC, evoking a contest that almost destroyed the organization.

In seeking to bring pressure upon the government, the large veterans' groups have both numbers and wealth at their call. Supposedly these bodies do not affiliate with any one party, nor do they promote the election of particular candidates, but they do support candidates and bills that will aid veterans. The great exception to this rule was the GAR, which for many years was the cornerstone of the Republican Party. Veterans' organizations have direct ownership and control of two large periodicals: the *American Legion Magazine,* with a circulation of 2,750,000, fourteenth largest in the nation; and the *VFW Magazine,* with a circulation of more than 1,000,000.

National and Racial Minorities: Most American interest groups are paralleled to some extent in the industrialized countries of western Europe; but the organizations of national and racial minorities are more prominent in the United States than in any other country in the world. Their existence and importance in the United States are due to the fact that the New World was colonized by successive waves of immigrants from many nations, and that a large racial minority consists primarily of descendants of chattel slaves. Hence there are a vast number of associations for mem-

bers of virtually every nationality and racial group that has emigrated to the United States. Many of these associations seem to be confined to small areas; however, there is a major country-wide organization of Negroes, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Only a small proportion of any national or racial grouping in America is organized into a formal interest body. The appeal of national clubs is principally for the first generation, who are most uncertain of the new life and most attached to the old. In the second generation and thereafter the cohesion of the national group disintegrates until one finds few enthusiasts left to organize around "old country" sentiments. The only kind of political event that henceforth excites them to antagonism is some "slur" or "injustice" aimed at their origins or onetime homeland.

In their tactics these organizations, like other interest groups, try to appear as representative of all people in whose name they operate. Only in a few legislative districts do the people they claim to speak for constitute a sizable fraction of the population. Hence national and racial organizations may be effective in some campaigns for nominations and elections to State legislatures and to the national House of Representatives. Yet in these very constituencies they are most likely to be split into opposing factions, one Republican and the other Democratic.

The influx of immigrants has also led to the rise of many "nativist" groups, or groups opposed to national and racial minorities. Considered by many to be a sort of "lunatic fringe" of American politics, these groups include such bodies as the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, and the Know-Nothing Party. Their principal aims have been to limit the political and economic lives of the national and racial minorities already in the country and to prevent further immigration by these peoples. Whereas these groups may speak at length of such goals as "national homogeneity" and "racial purity," actually they have often had the powerful economic motive of wanting to exclude laborers from Europe, Asia, or even the southern States, who would work for lower wages and thus "deprive" Americans or merely northerners of jobs. In 1954, to protest against the Supreme Court decision regarding racial segregation in southern schools, there emerged in the South an organization calling itself the National Association for the Advancement of White People.

Most of these groups operate at the local rather than at the national level, since feeling against minority groups can be more readily aroused at the community level. Even a supposedly national body such as the Know-Nothing Party was most successful in elections for local candidates. The Ku Klux Klan during the 1920's succeeded in dominating the government of at least one northern State, Indiana. This same group, which was hostile to Catholics as well as foreigners and Negroes, did have an important effect upon national politics, for it helped to block the nomination of Alfred E. Smith as Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1924, and was one of the elements contributing to his defeat in the election of 1928.

Reform Adherents: The groupings of reform adherents include the advocates of many types of policies and candidates. In a sense, all interest

groups might be concerned with "reform." But custom has reserved the use of the "reform group" label for the miscellaneous associations that have been organized for "non-selfish" purposes. These groups include such bodies as "good government" leagues, voters' societies, and taxpayers' associations; religious agencies such as the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.; prohibition groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union; and a host of others.

Ostensibly these groups, more than any other sort, are aiming at a certain intangible goal called "the general welfare." However, many have rather clearly discernible ulterior motives. For example, a taxpayers' association may have as its overt goal the reduction of taxes; but to achieve this goal the group may demand large reductions in important governmental services such as the public school. It may then appear that the group actually consists not of persons chiefly concerned with reducing taxes but of individuals opposed to the public school administration who are using the argument of high taxes to camouflage their real intentions. Reform groups operate at all governmental levels; usually they are small bodies concerned with local issues. They support candidates for office and seek to win public confidence in their aims. Probably the most effective reform group in American history was the Anti-Saloon League, which showed tremendous power over both voters and officeholders, and which helped greatly in the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment.

Government Agencies and Interests: Another type of interest group is to be found in the organs of government itself. Because of the vast expansion of its machinery, government contains a huge number of agencies each of which has many interests; and government officials attached to these agencies seek by a variety of means to have these interests satisfied. Today all the larger agencies have established offices and employed representatives for stating their cases before Congress, the President, and the public. Agencies vie with one another for the support of Congress. One outstanding instance of this sort of competition in the past decade has been that among the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, for larger shares of the total defense appropriations. Another is the struggle between the Reclamation Service of the Interior Department and the Army Engineers Corps in the field of conservation and public power development.

Agencies must take care, of course, in attempting to influence legislation. They are targets for hostile criticism as much as private lobbies are. For example, in June, 1950, a *Washington Times-Herald* article declared: "For many weeks, it was learned, Secretary Acheson and a corps of assistant secretaries have been endeavoring to soften up Congress by inviting groups of Senators and Representatives to drink and make merry in one of the capital's show places." In August, 1950, Jack K. McFall, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations of the State Department, had to write a lengthy explanation of the proceedings for a congressional committee on lobbying, showing that the expenses of the gatherings had been privately contributed by State Department officials and stating that the object was to exchange views and foster better working relations.

Catching the ear of the President and his closest advisers is not easy, considering the many demands bombarding them. Hence an agency that has officials who are intimates of the men about the President can regard itself as fortunate. One of the reasons for expanding the powers and personnel of the Bureau of the Budget in recent years was to fend off agency interests that had been coming directly to the President with various proposals and plans. (Another reason, even more important, was to prevent agencies from going directly to congressmen without receiving presidential approval of their proposals. In short, the President and his advisers wanted agency "lobbying" to change its direction and then wanted it taken care of before it reached the President's desk.)

Nor do the agencies neglect the public. Despite laws prohibiting spending public money for influencing legislation, they find means for communicating their wants to the public and to private interest groups which then bring pressure upon the organs of government. Two examples will suffice here. The first comes from the indignant lips of Congressman Clarence J. Brown at a hearing on lobbying:

> The Customs Service had asked for an increase in their appropriations and the House Appropriations Committee, upon investigation, found that they had given Customs an increase, I think, of 25 per cent the year before. The Committee refused to give a further appropriation increase because of evidence of waste and extravagance, but within 24 hours after the Congress, or the House, refused to grant any further money to the Customs Service, a great propaganda campaign was put on throughout this country and it was traced directly to the head of the Customs Service, to force Congress to give the Service the appropriation requested. The whole nefarious scheme was exposed, and upon protest by Congress the Secretary of the Treasury finally relieved from duty the head of that agency. . . .

Another example of agency relations with the public aimed at promoting the program of the agency is partially described in the following newspaper article (excerpted):

> (From the *Washington Post*, Washington, Wednesday, May 5, 1948)
>
> HEALTH ASSEMBLY IS ACCLAIMED AS TOP SUCCESS AT ITS CLOSING
>
> (By Mary Spargo, *Post* reporter)
>
> The National Health Assembly ended 4 days of intensive sessions here yesterday with the acclaim of both medical and public delegates as the most successful event of its kind in the history of the United States.
>
> The assembly was called by Federal Security Administrator Oscar Ewing in response to President Truman's request to outline a 10-year program for the health and welfare of this country.
>
> It was financed, Ewing told a press conference yesterday, through $45,000 in contributions from private medical and charitable foundations.
>
> The 800 delegates comprised a cross section of American life and interests. Attending were leading authorities in all fields of health and representatives of a vast number of labor, farm, consumer, cooperative, parent-teacher, and other organizations.
>
> Representatives of the public and medical authorities evidenced complete unanimity in favoring United States participation in the World Health Organization. Although the conference could not pass resolutions on pend-

ing legislation because some Government funds were involved in its operation, delegates left no doubt of their sentiments.

The unanimous report of WHO, it is believed, has helped to bring about the recent decision to get the blocked measure to the House floor.

The National Health Assembly failed to find any agreement on national compulsory health insurance, for which President Truman reiterated his support in an address to the delegates.

Labor and some farm groups favored such a step, but the American Medical Association maintained its determined opposition.

Nevertheless, even in this field, the most controversial before the delegates, there was substantial progress made that pleased both sides.

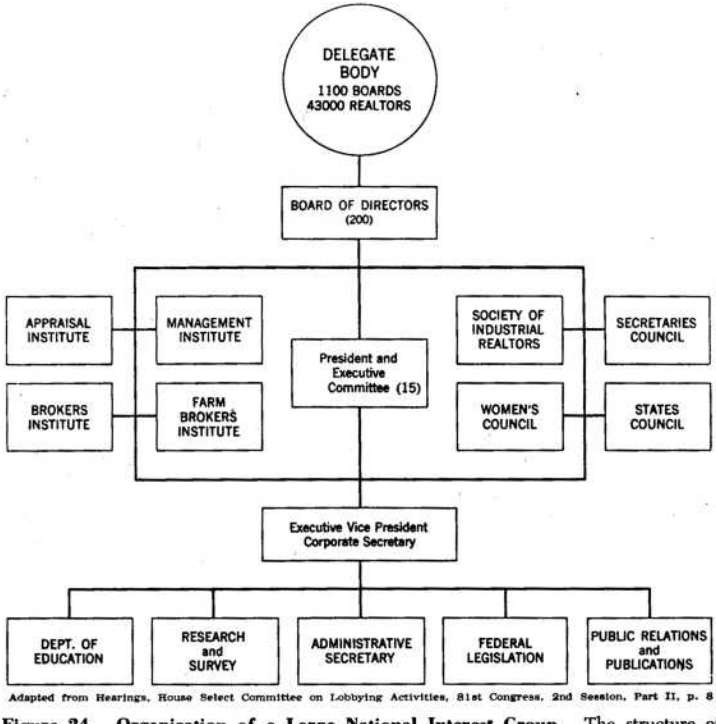
State and Local Government Interests: A final type of interest may be mentioned. The State and local governments have a large interest in national legislation. National grants-in-aid concern both States and cities. National taxes affect both State and local tax policy. Many other happenings on Capitol Hill and in the White House influence States and localities. Therefore governors, mayors, and other local officials are frequently in touch with Washington. In addition there are special groups, the most notable of which are the Council of State Governments and the Conference of Mayors, that steadily observe and gather information on pertinent national affairs, and from time to time advise national officeholders about subjects upon which the States or cities have already made their policy decisions. Members of Congress themselves, being elected from specific localities, have an important part in the satisfaction of local interests. Indeed, their continuance in office ordinarily depends upon this satisfaction, since the local interests have aided their election largely in order to have their wants fulfilled.

THE STRUCTURE OF PRIVATE INTEREST GROUPS

The organization of private interest groups shows wide variations from one group to another. Some groups have a highly centralized structure; others may be quite decentralized. For example, as drawn in Figure 24, the National Association of Real Estate Boards is a federated group of 1100 member boards; it also organizes Institutes and Councils to which individual members may belong. It is a most complicated structure. In each State there is also a central council. This type of structure was adopted not merely to imitate the government of the United States, but also to facilitate dealing with the two major levels of the American government, the national and the State authorities. Some interest groups are akin to holding companies, in that they are the parent bodies for numerous subsidiaries whose goal may be even more precise than that of the parent organization; too, by this means an organization may hope to conceal the actual inspiration for a particular campaign. The Communist Party (which is not nearly so much a "party" in the American sense as it is an interest group, since it aims not at winning elections but at spreading propaganda and policies) is the arch-practitioner of the holding-company device. It has put forth shoots with a variety of sheltering foliage, such as an organi-

zation to recruit youth, the now defunct American Youth for Democracy; protective bodies like the International Labor Defense; and many single-purpose associations like the Harry Bridges Defense Committee. Among holding-company groups there often appears another institution reminiscent of high finance and great industry, the interlocking directorate; for the same person may be a member of the board of directors of twenty or thirty organizations.

Whatever the peculiarities of its structure, an interest group furnishes a sort of "little government" for its members. They owe it an allegiance that presumably is secondary to their loyalty to the United States, although on occasion, and for some persons, the interest group has seemed prior to the national government. In most cases, the group does have a set of rules or laws, with a disciplinary agency to punish violators. This agency is usually not very strong. However, in the case of certain economically



Adapted from Hearings, House Select Committee on Lobbying Activities, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, Part II, p. 8

Figure 24. Organization of a Large National Interest Group. The structure of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, an important interest and pressure group. Note three different kinds of structure are involved: popular representation through the Delegate Body and (though not pictured) within the separate institutes and councils; functional representation of different kinds of realtors; and federal representation in the State councils. On the bottom level, one sees the executive branch of the NAREB.

oriented groups, such as labor unions and retailers' associations, the agency may be quite ruthless in employing its power of expulsion, which, in the instance of the closed shop, can be a sentence to the loss of a lifetime skill and career. The group also has conventions, or conferences, which ideally are policy-framing bodies where the rules are adopted; and it has a board of directors, or a comparable agency, to execute the rules.

The most noteworthy fact about interest groups, and the trait that almost all hold in common, is the great power of the executive or administrative branch of this "little government." In interest groups there is almost invariably a ruling clique or elite which dominates the conventions and which usually serves officially as the administrative branch. Frequently, unless the rules of the organization prohibit it, the same officers are elected year after year with little opposition; when they decide to step down they often in effect name their successors, as Dan Tobin, retiring President of the AFL Teamsters' Union, chose Dave Beck as new President. Election by the convention is ordinarily a formality. Likewise, policy-framing by the convention may also be a formality, since it may do no more than endorse policy recommendations that issue from the leadership. The leadership has several means for throttling any opposition that does arise. It may resort only to simple parliamentary devices at the convention; at the other extreme, where controls over employment exist, the administration may deprive its antagonists of their livelihood by expelling them from the group.

The consequence of this type of rule is that the leadership, which represents the interest group to the public, may express policies quite dissonant with those of the majority of the members. Once entrenched in office, the leaders may acquire a set of goals and values totally different from those of the members out of power; they may be more concerned with the influence and prestige of the organization than with the welfare of its members. However, in many cases, by a process akin to self-hypnosis, leaders are convinced that their interests are genuinely those of the group members despite the obvious fact that they are not.

The degree to which group leaders may fail to reflect the members' views was shown in the 1950 senatorial election in Ohio when, despite violent opposition by labor leaders, Senator Robert A. Taft, a Republican, carried this highly industrialized and unionized State by an unexampled majority. Two points should at once be conceded respecting this election: (1) the Democratic candidate was extremely weak, for all the Democrats who would have made strong candidates shied away from competing with Taft since defeat might have ended their elective political careers; and (2) without the opposition of union leaders, Taft's majority might have been even greater. As another illustration, the strong support that many midwestern farmers gave to Harry Truman in 1948 was also in contrast to the coldness or antagonism to him found among most prominent leaders of farm organizations. In the long run, group leaders are actually trying to form the opinions of their members, and they become significant agents in the framing of public opinion.

THE ARENAS OF INTEREST GROUP STRUGGLE

Where do interest groups clash? Every contest must have an arena; the contests among interests occur in several parts of the political process: in (1) elections; (2) legislation; (3) administration; and (4) public debate.

Elections

Interest groups find it important to have sympathetic public officials; hence some of them strive to influence elections in their favor. It is at this juncture that these groups attempt to secure adoption of their beliefs by one or both major parties. They press party leaders to incorporate the policies of the group into the party platform. Of course, there are many competing groups with contradictory policies; since on the national level no party leader wishes to alienate any important group, the party platform is likely to contain a diluted version of the policies of several powerful groups. By contrast, in a smaller area, such as a constituency for the House of Representatives, where one interest may predominate over all others, each party may submit a platform especially sensitive to that interest. In the election process itself, groups active at this stage in the political process may try to obtain first the nomination, then the election, of desirable candidates. In these endeavors, depending upon their nature the groups may resort to numbers, wealth (within the limits of the law), or both.

Legislation

Perhaps the most notable work of interest groups takes place in the legislative arena; it is here that they carry on their lobbying activities. By lobbying is meant simply the attempt to influence officials by personal relationships. The success or failure of a lobbying campaign depends at first perhaps most heavily upon the access that a group has to the legislative official whose favor is most essential for the realization of group aims. Access is easier after a group has aided the election of a legislator. Access also depends upon the personality and skill of the lobbyist himself. Lobbyists are usually drawn from the ranks of lawyers, journalists, and former legislators; indeed, the roster of group representatives to Congress normally includes the names of several former Senators and Representatives. In 1956, according to the *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* (p. 326), thirteen former Senators and eighty-three former Representatives had registered as lobbyists.

It is at the standing committee stage in the legislative process, that is, the stage at which one of the standing or permanent committees (into which a legislature divides itself to conduct its business) examines a proposed law, that the lobbyist is apt to be most conspicuous. The importance of the standing committee stage for lobbying may perhaps be attributed to the fact that this is the most critical stage in congressional handling of a bill; as will be seen in a later chapter. standing committees of Congress

are the actual policy-framing bodies of the United States government. Furthermore, it is at this stage that the most coherent and pertinent discussion respecting a bill occurs. There are also other stages that lend themselves to his needs. For example, he may even take a hand in drafting a piece of legislation for friendly congressmen. Also when a bill is being debated in either house, it may be the subject of some influence for or against its passage. Presumably all private citizens are barred from the floor of both chambers; however, any former congressman is authorized to go on the floor, a privilege that helps to explain the desirability of ex-congressmen as legislative representatives. (It would be instructive to know what proportion of such privileged visits come from interested parties.)

The very number of stages in the American legislative process is a great advantage to many lobbyists, especially those representing business groups. As will be shown in a later chapter, the principal goal of the lobbyist may be not promotion but interception of legislation; each stage for this reason lends itself to the blocking of proposed laws since all the lobbyist need do is assure inaction. Today forthright bribery seems to be quite rare, for legislators at least on the national level tend to be comparatively honest men and also because there are many means for subduing legislators' objections without violating laws. A legislator who is a lawyer can be promised, and actually be given, company business; since income tax returns are confidential, there is no way of stating whether many congressmen today are counsellors for business organizations. Sometimes legislators are given the opportunity to purchase shares of corporation stock at prices far below market quotations; other legislators may be assured lucrative jobs when they leave office. Lobbyists may inspire a torrent of letters from constituents to their Senators and Representatives. Sheerly coincidental agreement may bring the lobbyist his triumph: the lobbyist may represent an interest with which the legislator has identified himself. The multiplicity of tasks engaging the lobbyist may be seen from the following letter:

American Enterprise Association [AEA]
4 East Forty-First Street
New York,
January 26, 1949

Mr. Sinclair Weeks
1014 Statler Building, Boston, Mass.

Dear Senator: To inform you of happenings and opinions on certain matters occurring since Monday, 17th of January, I am setting down those things in which you may be interested, in chronological order.

Monday. Lunched with Clarence Brown on the Hill. He is much interested in proposed unofficial advisory group from Congress for activities of AEA in Washington. Mutually decided to go slow and pick most congenial, helpful, and potential leaders of various groups in both parties. Will help in selection and formation from both parties. Discussed federal aid to medical care. Interested in getting AEA Reporter as soon as possible. Thinks new bill analysis good improvement.

Office appointment with Gene Cox. Told me to disregard letter re McCarthy recommendation, which I showed you, for reasons which I sus-

pected and explained to you. Offered strong help for AEA operations in his group; stated our Washington activities, as now set up and proposed, can be very important. Much pleased with new bill analysis and feel AEA Reporter will be most valuable. Volunteered assistance is [sic] obtaining new finances; will take immediate steps with Guaranty Trust, New York group, who have asked how and where they can help.

Office appointment with Dan Reed. Very pleased with new bill analysis. Called Gordon Grand, minority clerk, Ways and Means Committee, into conference and told him of valuable AEA assistance, including proposed AEA Reporter. Grand offered help in getting new bills quickly to AEA for timely analysis. Got copy of foreign trade bill 1 hour off the press, which was sent at once to our lawyers—analysis ready Monday or Tuesday this week. Reed for advisory group idea with good suggestion that groups be called in separate party groups; first, starting with majority party, then brought together when deemed necessary by recommendation of members —rather than AEA. Reed disturbed by let-down attitude of some Republican Members and feels need for strong leadership to inspire and guide minority.

Reed commented on futility of some operations in which industry is active, so far as aid to Congress is concerned. Particularly mentioned NAM literature, which he stated, for the most part, went into the waste basket.

Office appointment with Roy Woodruff. Most appreciative of new AEA bill analysis and Reporter, strongly in favor of unofficial advisory group; feels as does Reed, that minority Members are low in spirit and need vigorous leadership.

Call from AEA office reporting request from Donald Jackson of California for 25 extra copies bill analysis of S. 246, aid to education; is personally mimeographing 350 extra copies to go to constituents. Highly complimentary re analysis and new form. (This 2 hours after first delivery of bill.)

Called on Joe Martin and in his absence talked with Jim Milne. Particularly dejected atmosphere as to future. Impressed with new set-up of bill analysis and potentialities of AEA Reporter, offered all help possible.

Tuesday. Attended Truman-Barkley Club dinner, at table with Mr. and Mrs. Elias, editor Winston-Salem newspaper, Secretary of the Army and Mrs. Royall, and Mr. and Mrs. Joe Blythe, treasurer of the National Democratic Committee. Met many Democratic committee and congressional members through Judge Alan T. Goldsborough's daughter-in-law, who is secretary to treasurer of National Democratic Committee.

Met with lawyers to discuss slight changes in bill analysis, also general program aiming to cover all important legislation but not pad with unimportant bills just to make a showing of volume.

Lunch and extended meeting with Les Arends at his request. Very pleased with new bill analysis and heartily agreeable to signing letter which he asked us to draft, to accompany bill analysis to new members and nonusers, explaining use and value of AEA assistance. Considerable favorable discussion of suggested AEA unofficial advisory committee of Members of Congress. Offered assistance with both Republicans and certain Democrats. Arends also perturbed by discouraging attitude of some Members. Expressed feeling that AEA has opportunity to do a big job in field of coalition on objective source material. Much interested in possibilities of AEA Reporter.

Appointment with Coordinator of Information Cecil Dixon and Assistant Felix Sklagen. Offered our continuing assistance, which was gratefully received. New bill analyses favorably commented upon as was China section of AEA Reporter, other sections looked forward to with interest.

Long telephone conversations with Charlie Abbott and later with Dwight

Eckerman (editing AEA Reporter). Abbott's requirements that writers sign articles and that Eckerman be listed as executive editor were readily agreed to, were in fact under serious consideration. Suggested changes in tax section to be further considered. Suggested amplifications to medical-care article not wholly concurred in by Eckerman and myself because of fear it would extend subject into realm of our economic study. Believe changes made will satisfy Abbott. Publication has been delayed a week; is going to printers Wednesday, January 26. Wrote letter to accompany first issue, stating care being taken to make this publication as objective, nonpartisan, and constructive help, as are other AEA materials.

Wednesday. Return appointment with Les Arends. Letter to all House Republicans approved and AEA office notified to proceed with typing. Arends will talk with Percy Priest, Tennessee, to request his similar action with House Democrats.

Luncheon with Jim Reinhold, assistant to president of Santa Fe Railroad, and Ed Carr, president, National Homebuilders Association; both interested in AEA and expected contribution. Santa Fe we hope for $2,000. Carr trying to get group of large builders at $500 apiece.

Further edited material for Reporter.

Thursday. Filled with inauguration activities and meeting with number of prominent Democrats. Finished off at inaugural ball with a 2 a.m. talk with Senator Brewster of Maine. He asked if you still went along with Dewey. Replied that I couldn't answer as to whether you ever had or not. Also asked if you intended to back up Taft. Again stated that I would not answer for you. Brewster expressed himself as believing that industry was going to get just what is deserved for not backing Taft and Taft-Hartley bill before elections.

Friday. Long session with Gwinn, New York, who is crusading against Federal housing. Had asked AEA last year for assistance but wanted strictly slanted material which we could not afford to publish. Has started personal drive for funds to set up research organization and to supply material he wants. Nicholas Noyes received an appeal and wrote me asking if duplication of activities was involved. Gwinn disturbed that his letter for funds has been so misinterpreted and is writing me a letter, with permission to use, explaining need for AEA continuance and different purpose of his efforts.

So ended an arduous week.

Sincerely,

Guy E. Wyatt[1]

Administration

Administration has provided an arena for lobbying whose importance has risen in recent years. At one time it was believed that if the group was successful in dealing with the legislature it had won its battle. Today, however, groups assume that they must pay attention to the administration of laws as well as to their enactment. The present conviction is the result principally of the fact that administrative agencies today far more than in the past have policy-making functions.

One important phase of lobbying in the administration concerns influence over executive appointments. It may be noted at this point that here is

[1] 81st Congress, 2d Session. House Report No. 3233. American Enterprise Association. *Report* of the House Select Committee on Lobbying Activities. House of Representatives. Eighty-First Congress, Second Session. Created Pursuant to H. Res. 298. United States Government Printing Office, Washington: 1950. Pp. 39–41.

virtually the only place at which interest groups attempt to sway the judicial branch of the government. Any other action to deal with the judiciary (save, naturally, in the legitimate role of an attorney pleading his case before the bar) would probably fall into the category of a serious felony known as tampering with justice. Groups do try to prevent the naming to the bench of persons known to them as foes of their interests. Also, lobbyists try to persuade the President or other appointing officials to name Cabinet members and other administrators favorable to their groups. Lobbyists also seek to obtain principles of law enforcement that will redound to their advantage. Again, in the case of business interests, it sometimes suffices to procure non-observance or non-enforcement of certain undesirable statutes. Finally, just as they are for legislators, lobbyists may be important sources of information for administrators.

Public opinion

Most interest groups take great pains to cultivate public opinion. In doing so, they disseminate what they term "facts" and what their opponents denounce as "propaganda." The arguments of interest groups are seldom deliberately false; those who utter false statements on behalf of interest groups are often fully convinced that the statements are true. In fact, not many interest group assertions are false; the spokesmen for these groups do not wish to discredit themselves before the public. Interest group utterances, then, usually comprise carefully chosen facts to buttress their own position. Hence groups may be said to rely upon indoctrination, a practice that has been defined as the presentation of the facts of only one side in a dispute under the pretext of recounting both sides. Groups may be clear of malice even regarding indoctrination, since they may believe that they are submitting an impartial recital.

Efforts to influence public opinion may be either short- or long-range. The short-range undertaking is much less costly but of course is related to only one issue or body of issues. A paid advertisement entered into a newspaper by a local teachers' association pleading for enactment of a bond issue to erect new schools represents one type of short-range project. Long-range projects demand far greater funds and are devoted not so much to specific issues as to extended political, economic, and social questions. As an illustration, the Association of American Railroads has sponsored a lengthy series of institutional advertisements extolling the American economic system in general and depicting the advantages of railroads over other modes of transportation in particular.

REGULATION OF INTEREST GROUPS

Today the federal government, and about three-fourths of the State governments, have enacted laws to regulate interest groups. The principal aim of these regulatory statutes is not to bar the operations of interest groups but to publicize their attempts to influence legislation and legislators. The federal Regulation of Lobbying Act was passed as one section of the

Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. It provides two chief requirements: (1) lobbyists must register with Congress; and (2) lobbyists must report all contributions over $500 and all expenditures over $10. These data are a matter of public record. Table 4 indicates what groups made the largest expenditures during 1955.

TABLE 4. THE TWELVE LOBBIES REPORTING THE LARGEST EXPENDITURES IN 1955[1]

National Association of Electric Companies	$114,836
American Federation of Labor	114,090
American Farm Bureau Federation	113,610
Congress of Industrial Organizations	111,788
Association of American Railroads	104,806
Southern States Industrial Council	100,245
United States Cuban Sugar Council	99,275
National Association of Real Estate Boards	93,802[2]
American Legion	91,794
National Federation of Post Office Clerks	90,552
General Gas Committee	87,710
Friends Committee on National Legislation	86,221

[1] *CQ Weekly Report 1956*, p. 137.
[2] Nine months' expenditures.

One other type of control over interest groups is the requirement that administrative officials, before they enter office, divest themselves of financial ties with organizations that might receive government contracts. During the first month of President Eisenhower's administration, the Secretary of Defense-designate, C. E. Wilson, President of the General Motors Corporation, was faced with the difficult choice of either selling his enormous holdings of General Motors stock, or else withdrawing from candidacy. He chose to sell the securities.

Another example of the efforts made to restrict the pressure of interest groups upon administrative officers is the law that forbids any person who has been employed by any government agency to act as "counsel, attorney, or agent for prosecuting any claims against the United States," for any firm with which he had dealings while employed by the government, within two years of his leaving government service. The intention here is to block attempts of private corporations to secure favorable treatment by offers of remunerative employment.

THE EFFECTS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

It is difficult to make an accurate computation of the effect of interest groups. Comparable problems arise when one tries to calculate whether the Soviet army could have expelled the German army without American Lend-Lease materiel, or whether the American colonists could have won the Revolution without the aid of France. Similarly, it is difficult to assert when the fate of legislation or administration, or the formulation of public opinion, has unquestionably been the consequence of interest

group activity. One study of ninety laws enacted between the Civil War and World War II concludes that only a handful might be attributed to interest groups. From these findings one might decide that interest groups and their lobbyists have little effect upon Congress. However, such a conclusion would neglect one of the most important functions of lobbyists—the prevention of legislation. Analysis of bills that have failed of enactment might reveal a far greater role for interest groups in this regard, since many of the best-financed lobbies are much more concerned with blocking laws than with promoting them.

Both legislators and administrators are prone to be cautious in dealing with interest groups. They are loath to give much credit to obviously inspired letter-writing campaigns, especially when the letters may be mimeographed, requiring no more than the sender's signature. Congressmen appear far more likely to heed a single letter or telephone call, particularly one from a person or group that assisted in the congressman's election. Congressmen are also wary of the claims that interest group spokesmen may make for the power of the organization behind them; any individual can obtain an impressive letterhead. Legislators also bear in mind that not all persons sharing a given interest will be members of an organized group; only a minority of industrialists belong to the NAM, and only one quarter of all American workers are affiliated with a labor union.

It is also noteworthy that lobbyists do not devote much time or money to attempts to convert unquestioned opponents. They give most of their attention to their adherents, or to any waverers whom they might win to their side. When the lobbyists turn to influencing public opinion, they direct their institutional advertisements again to those who are already susceptible to their message. Hence in the large—and many instances of corruption or near-corruption aside—interest groups and lobbyists have two significant effects upon the governing process: (1) They make many legislators, many administrators, and part of the public aware of a set of facts or attitudes that might otherwise not be forcefully revealed; they furnish the United States with a sort of functional representation. (2) They strengthen the morale of their public and private supporters to continue steadfastly the fight for their point of view.

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

1. Give two examples of individual pressures that you would consider "good" and two that you regard as "bad." Explain how you distinguish between the two types of pressure.
2. Name and identify in two sentences a prominent interest group that represents some part of: (*a*) labor; (*b*) business; (*c*) farmers; (*d*) a profession; (*e*) veterans; and (*f*) Negroes.
3. Describe how a government agency often functions as a pressure group.
4. State one method by which interest organizations operate in the area of: (*a*) elections; (*b*) legislative proceedings; (*c*) administration; and (*d*) public debate.
5. Summarize the functions of interest groups in American government today.