PRESSURE GROUPS, POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN

Second Edition

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CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	vii
I INTRODUCTION: THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF PRESSURE GROUPS	I
What is a pressure group?	3
Social movements	5
Political parties	8
A working definition of a pressure group	9
Typologies of groups	13
A classification of group strategies	15
Pressure groups and democracy	23
2 PRESSURE GROUPS AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM	27
Pluralism	28
Policy networks and policy communities	34
Corporatism: yesterday's theory?	37
The liberal critique of pressure groups	39
3 HOW PRESSURE GROUPS INFLUENCE WHITEHALL AND THE POLITICAL AGENDA	47
Getting issues on the political agenda	49
Food additives: a case study of issue emergence	51
Influencing the executive branch of government	57
Policy implementation and enforcement	63

4	PARLIAMENT	66
	Ways of using Parliament	67
	Professional lobbyists	74
	Conclusions	78
5	EXERTING PRESSURE OUTSIDE WHITEHALL AND WESTMINSTER	80
	Pressure groups and the party system	80
	Pressure groups and the media	84
	Pressure groups and the courts	89
	Local government	91
6	PRESSURE GROUPS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION	98
	The decline of the national route?	100
	European-level pressure groups	104
	The targets of representation	110
	The leading role of big business	114
	European corporatism?	121
7	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRESSURE GROUPS	125
	Why measuring pressure-group influence is difficult	127
	A typology of factors affecting pressure-group effectiveness	130
	Conclusions	149
8	CONCLUSIONS: PRESSURE GROUPS AND DEMOCRACY	153
	The legacy of Thatcherism	155
	Labour in office?	157
	The case for pressure groups reviewed	159
	The limits to pressure-group power	164
	<i>References</i>	166
	<i>Index</i>	177

Preface

This book seeks to provide a general introduction to the role of pressure groups in British democracy for those relatively unfamiliar with the subject. Readers who wish to follow up the subject in more depth by reading some of the academic literature on pressure groups can refer to the list of references at the end of the book.

Since the first edition of this book was published, a considerable amount of important new work has been undertaken on pressure groups in Britain. Of particular significance has been the British Interest Groups Project at Aberdeen University coordinated by Grant Jordan and his colleagues (referred to hereafter in this book as ‘the Aberdeen group’), and the work on lobbying at the European Union level undertaken by Sonia Mazey of Cambridge University and Jeremy Richardson at Warwick University.

As well as making use of what is now an extensive literature on pressure groups, this book draws on interviews I have conducted over the years with pressure-group officials, politicians and civil servants. Some of this research has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and by the Nuffield Foundation.

I would like to express my appreciation to the series editor, John Benyon, for originally suggesting that I should write this book. The second edition was prepared while I was a Visitor at Nuffield College, Oxford. I would like to thank the Warden and Fellows of Nuffield College for inviting me to be a Visitor, and particularly

my sponsor, Vincent Wright. While I was there I had the opportunity of meeting Mancur Olson again. I do not agree with all his views, but I have always found his work stimulating. Not all academics who have accomplished so much are as open or approachable, or as willing to discuss their work with anyone, whatever their standing.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my uncle, Sidney Field, who sadly died before publication of the first edition. Conversations I heard as a child in his newsagent's shop in Plumstead, SE18 helped to stimulate my interest in politics, and gave me my first lessons in looking for the story behind the story in the day's newspapers.

I would like to thank Sophia Grant for her help with materials on the Motor Cycle Action Group. As always, special thanks are due to my wife, Maggie, who was writing up her own work on pressure groups at the same time as I was working on this second edition.

Wyn Grant
Oxford, June 1994