Pressure Politics in Industrial Societies

Also by Alan R. Ball

Modern Politics and Government (3rd edition)

British Political Parties

Pressure Politics in Industrial Societies

A comparative introduction

Alan R. Ball and Frances Millard

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Preface

Attempting a study of pressure group activity is a daunting task; to attempt a comparative study of pressure group activity presents even more difficulties. Students of politics do not agree as to what constitutes a pressure group; they offer a wide variety of schemes for the classification of pressure groups; they differ on whether pressure groups can be found in all political systems; and they inevitably offer contrasting approaches to the conceptualisation of the significance of pressure groups.

This text aims to offer a broad approach to the study of group activity by examining a range of different types of pressure groups, namely business groups and bureaucratic groups, trade unions, farmers, environmentalists, churches and the military. At the same time it attempts to place these groups' strategies and significance in the framework of a broad comparison between liberal democratic political systems and the socialist democracies of Eastern Europe. The case studies have been chosen to provide a reasonably representative cross-section of pressure group activity. Business and labour are commonly presented as the most important pressure groups, while farmers in liberal democratic states are also viewed as a particularly significant type of political grouping. The environmentalists provide a good example of what are often termed attitude or promotional groups in contrast to the former three. The churches and the military are often neglected as political actors in industrial states, though they have received considerable attention in regard to the so-called Third World countries. This alone

warrants their selection, while at the same time they extend the range of examples to a second type of promotional group and an administrative group respectively.

The comparative approach, while weakening the detail that would be possible in a more narrowly focused study, has a number of advantages. Although comparative analysis is frequent, it rarely attempts to cross the gulf between different types of political system. We have attempted to widen the comparisons and contrasts by including a number of examples which appear, at least on the surface, to be wholly different from one another. This in turn highlights the similarities within and between the two categories. Inevitably the examples here too must be selective. In the liberal democratic category we have emphasised the United States, Britain, France and West Germany. For the socialist states we have dealt mainly with the USSR and its East European allies; Albania and Yugoslavia are not absent, but references to these two states, so different in many ways from the other European socialist countries, are largely excluded.

We begin by introducing students to two important areas of pressure group analysis. Firstly, students are offered a broad outline of the four principal contrasting approaches to the distribution of political power: pluralist, elitist, corporatist and ruling class approaches are examined with particular reference to their arguments about the nature and role of pressure groups. We look at differences within each approach and we look at the ways in which each approach has been variously applied to the two types of political system, liberal democratic and socialist. With this introduction, students can then move into the realm of naming, classifying and identifying the strategies common to pressure groups as well as the restraints that operate upon them. Although we do assume some basic grasp of the political institutions of the two types of state, this remains an introductory textbook, and we make frequent reference to the wider political contexts in which groups operate. We have used self-ascribed labels, i.e. those most widely applied from within these countries themselves, to try to circumvent discussion about whether the liberal democratic states are really 'democratic' or whether

the socialist states really are 'socialist'. However, we certainly hope to provide some fuel for such arguments.

In the case studies which follow the two introductory chapters the approach is largely empirical. By themselves, case studies cannot present a comprehensive picture of the variety of pressure group activity in any single political system. Collectively we hope they will allow the student a greater grasp of some of the broad similarities and differences that can be observed, and will encourage more specialised study of the policy processes of modern industrial states.

We have not always agreed with one another in the process of this work's genesis and development, and we do not always agree now. We hope that the inevitable compromises do not prove too patchy or too shallow. Our friend and colleague, Fergus Carr, has helped to arbitrate some of the disputes, and we thank him for his patience and his assistance. We also thank our son Adam, who proved more than tolerant in the face of extended bouts of parental neglect; he also helped enormously in dealing with the vagaries of the computer.

Alan R. Ball
Frances Millard

To Alison, Michael, Peter and Adam