

Interest groups

Law



Interest Groups: 15. 3. 2013 Globalization occurring at rapid speeds is having vast effects on the Canadian political system. The strong emergence and growing influence of interest groups, gained through institutionalization and immense monetary funding have proven to become a direct threat to political parties in the modern age. This essay will primarily discuss, “ Pressure Groups: Talking Chameleons” written by Paul Pross.

Following, the analysis of the article, “ Wilderness Politics in BC: The Business Dominated State and the Containment of Environmentalism” written by Jeremy Wilson. And finally, discuss and evaluate the vital contents of both articles in relation to other academic sources. Paul Pross identifies that modern governments in Canada have problems communicating with the public sector. Public debate was originally controlled by the government, however in the early 1970’s policymaking became more of a public process.

Governments could no longer insist on withholding valuable information, and the public insisted on increased transparency. Electronic media has proven to be a large contributor in the sense that it has created an environment encouraging public participation and the notion of making groups less dependent on bureaucracies. This resulting in a diffusion of power, granting more influence to the public sector. Prior to the emergence of these interest groups, political parties were the main vehicle enabling citizens to channel their concerns mainly by elections and enabling communication to and from the government.

Political parties alone would not suffice to account for the entire populations aggregated demands and thus governments continue to further support pressure groups to battle the constant problem of communication. Interest

<https://assignbuster.com/interest-groups-research-paper-samples/>

groups simply emerged as individuals acting together and attempting to influence public policy in the direction of their common interests. In some cases what originated as little organizations has now emerged into influential contributors to the policy making process. This raising concern that the Canadian democratic system is threatened by these emerging interests groups.

Pross emphasizes that unless interest groups have access to substantial resources, their influence will be insignificant in most cases. Another factor which causes for some interest groups to survive and other to fail in the political system is undergoing the process of institutionalization. Pross defines an institution as a sophisticated entity, in which members have structured relationships, and collectively attempt to achieve a common goal. As Philip Selznick says, " As the institutionalization progresses the enterprise... becomes peculiarly competent to do a particular type of work. The process of constant adaptation, and establishing connections to the government officials is of immense value in order for an interest group to partake in the policy process. The sub government processes the policy issues, it consists mainly of government agencies however interest groups and large corporations are also included to a certain extent. The degree of inclusion is debatable however the interest groups are guaranteed " a seat on the table" and thus consult with the government on a daily basis.

Ideally the interest groups gain influence in policy decision and thus for the benefit of the government can successfully accomplish the citizens aggregate demands. However as of 1993 party activists began to criticize the influence of interest groups since they were constantly winning

concessions over political parties. There was a large amount of party antipathy coming mostly from the government itself in the sense reducing direct funding to interest groups, and limiting advertising groups during election periods.

Kim Campell was a great contributor towards reducing the influence of interest groups, as she remarks, " Interest groups are no longer useful adjuncts to the political system, but a direct competition rival to political parties. " The notion of interest groups superseding political parties, and serving as the main channel to communicate with the government had become true. In this globalized world, Pross identifies the challenge between interest groups and political parties as inevitable. He metaphorically describes interest groups as " talking chameleon" this explains the superiority of interest groups to a certain extent.

Unlike political parties, interest groups and corporations, are not specifically interested in the occurrence of certain locations, they plant themselves in many places, furthermore they have the ability to draw funds from around the world. Another factor making the political party inferior is its longstanding values, territorial basis restricting it from expansion since political parties aim to accomplish control of legislative. Hence since the legislature is based on a territorial perimeter, the rest of the political party body must follow in this direction.

In contrast to some interest groups, political parties have not fully been able to achieve a system which incorporates the public into the policy making process. Pross questioned whether the fragmentation of the political parties endangers long-standing institutions, or if this merely is the politics of the <https://assignbuster.com/interest-groups-research-paper-samples/>

new age. Canada has witnessed the emergence of a new public philosophy “pluralism” started taking the place of the previous representative parliamentary democracy. Pluralism emphasizes the collaboration between government and interest groups.

Ideally members of private groups exchange ideas and negotiate with government civil servants. The second article written by Jeremy Wilson focuses on how the British Columbian governments responds in regard to the so called environmentalist movement starting 1975 to 1989. The timber and paper industry is of vast importance to the economy of British Columbia. Most of the timber is Crown owned, and distributed to companies under long contracts, these licenses are easily renewable. Hence environmentalist protest against this established hierarchy.

They argue in favor of tenure alternations and demand more caution regarding the protection of British Colombia’s wildlife. Environmentalists demand the forest areas to be protected and transformed into parks however corporations claim this is unwise use of the land. The article Global Spin by Sharon Beder analyzes the notion of anti-environmentalism. As mentioned in Wilsons article Beder, “ reveals the deceptive and unethical underpinnings of the “ wise use” movement, industry front groups, contrarian think tanks, multinational public relation firms, and media establishments. regulations. As Wilson had mentioned, the interest groups were arguing against the single use of areas, as they promoted multiple use which further legitimized their corporate use of forrest areas. These concerns are very problematic for the forest corporations as an alternation of the tenure regulations would directly alter the value of the commodity and thus damage the economy as a whole.

Timber companies, began to heavily lobby against these proposed suggestions, using their extensive wealth to battle environmentalists' claims.

These forest corporations, have extensive resources, a continuing organizational structure consisting of established professionals familiar to the governmental processes to represent their aggregate demands. According to R. V. Smith " Forest tenures and timber supply and the commitments by which those tenures are held are the fundamental asset by which potential investors or lenders judge the viability of a company. " It became clear that the security of timber was the priority for forest corporations.

Thus the conservative stance of forest corporations claimed that the environmentalists were putting at risk a " system that has long legitimized a profitable traffic in rights to Crown resources. " Hence as could be expected the corporations heavily campaigned against the emerging environmental movement by adopting a hardline attitude; one sign of retreat will automatically result in further demands. Environmentalist movement pursuing redistributive politics in British Columbia challenged the establishment.

These new groups want a share of the pie which was a strictly closed community consisting of; " Ministry of Forests (MOF), cabinet committee having ultimate responsibility for resolving land use disputes and the 10 or 12 major forest companies that hold tenure rights to over 60% of BC's forest lands. This challenge resulted in minor alternations and corporations are no longer unchallenged, however this is a prime example in parallel the <https://assignbuster.com/interest-groups-research-paper-samples/>

previously mentioned quote by Selznick; “ in order for pressure groups to carry out their functions they need to become peculiarly competent. The institutionalized pressure groups have immense power which are difficult to challenge, especially in the Forest industry of British Columbia. Hence the challenges of the environmentalist were everything but a paradigm shift. It appears that policy makers are under severe constraints from policies adopted by previous governments. There are deep rooted problems beginning with the fact that the process concerning resource management being a closed matter to the public. Furthermore provincial legislators playing no role in decision-making process, thus the power is held in the hands of cabinet ministers and other officials.

Environmentalists groups like the Western Canada Wilderness Committee began to adopt the approach of a “ moral call out” appealing on an emotional level to the citizens’ regard the environment. In addition their arguments mainly suggested that tourism would decrease as lumbering prevails. Even though the citizens are now collectively assisting as a bureaucracy they have no virtual political power in the decision making process. Most of the environmentalist movements is funded out of members dues, or paid individually. None of the groups considered in the article has sufficient funds to support media advertising campaigns, or maintain a full time lobbyist in Victoria. ” Quite similar to the analysis of Pross, Wilson clearly defines that money plays a large role in the power dynamics between governments, corporations and environmentalists. Another key factor to note is that since the 1982 adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, interest groups have resorted to utilizing the process of litigation.

Litigation under the charter is now partially funded by the government, in programs such as the " Court Challenges Program. The answer is not as simple according to Paul Pross; In the optimal case interest groups offer access to the political decisions, which were originally, influenced by elites, hence establishing a new social order. However in 1992 there was a fair degree of constitutional discussion, questioning whether or not to fully include women Aboriginal groups and other minority groups into policy making process. At first many were for the groups inclusion, however others feared that the re-ordering of social power portrayed by the Charlottetown accord.

The aboriginal women groups attempted to achieve redistribution of power and saw this as an opportunity to partake in the constitutional debate. Unfortunately people developed a radical bias which primarily associated fragmentation process to the attempts of this group, even though they were following the footsteps of more " established interest, " In fact the gross part of the debate is dominated by the institutionalized groups a majority of these specifically representing business interests.

The political process has become very diffuse, it has become difficult to differentiate between individual and public interests, and there have been cases of interest groups especially corporations establishing themselves by institutionalizing and extensive lobbying, and are thus dominating in certain policy processes. A consensus is established than overall interest groups are an effective method of getting to the public, however some groups have extensively developed into structures, giving them superiority and priority over other interests.

This in Canada has led to a sharp decline of the political party and a increase of interest groups. Wilson in his article describes a sheer decrease in motivation of the environmentalist, since their continuous attempts had little effect on public policy. Furthermore the structuring of Wilderness politics has put nominated preservation candidates into the foreground placing environmentalists at a disadvantage. This structure ignored the environmentalists' claims to a small portion of the remaining wilderness, and furthermore creates the illusion that they are greedy. We gave them South Moresby, now they want Stein. " In summary of both articles and additional sources, it can be said that main themes continue to re-occur. Initially interest groups were a great access tool for governments, to communicate with the public sector, however after the diffusion of powers in Canada, some interest groups have attained extensive powers. These groups have achieved this by undergoing the process of institutionalization at rapid speeds differentiating themselves in terms of influence compared to environmentalist groups for instance.

The corporations are now so established and reluctant to give into any environmentalist's demands. In addition interest groups typically establish ongoing relationships with the departments of government corresponding to their interest, this is also known as " elite accommodation" has become very common in Canadian politics. The only solution which remains for environmentalist groups is to rise and attain power by; developing a cohesive inter group structure, institutionalizing and possibly merging with other interest groups to broaden the monetary funding established through increased membership.

Environmentalists can thus employ professional lawyers and other personnel to lobby on their behalf. The future entails many possibilities; on one hand the environmentalists' groups could successfully expand their influence to eventually restructuring forest land use policy and thus would demonstrate how interest groups are not necessarily monopolistic and how there is room at the table for newcomers. However, the problem of the economy remains; one could pose the question of how a decrease in the revenue caused by enforced regulations by environmentalists would be compensated to British Columbia economy as a whole? ----- [1]. Paul Pross, *Pressure Groups: Talking Chameleons*. (Nelson, 1995): pp. 263s. [2]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 263. [3]. Political demands of individual persons and corporations. [4]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 252. [5]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 257. [6]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 259. [7]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 260. [8]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 264. [9]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 265. [10]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 69. [11]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 269. [12]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 270. [13]. Hugh H. Thorburn, *Interest Groups and Public Policy in Canada*. (Queen's Law Journal, 1988) pp. 447. [14]. Jeremy Wilson, *Wilderness Politics in BC*. (Missisagua, Ontario, 1989): pp. 142. [15]. Jeremy Wilson, *op cit.*, pp. 143. [16]. Beder, Sharon. *Global spin: the corporate assault on environmentalism*. *Alternatives Journal* 25. 4 (Fall 1999): pp. 42. [17]. Jeremy Wilson, *op cit.*, pp. 143. [18].

Jeremy Wilson, *op cit.*, pp. 143. [19]. Paul Pross, *op cit.*, pp. 260. [20]. Jeremy Wilson, *op cit.*, pp. 147. [21]. Jeremy Wilson, *op cit.*, pp. 151. [22]. Morton – Allen. *Feminists and the Courts: Measuring success in Interest Group Litigation in Canada*. (Canadian Journal of Political Science, 2001) pp.

55. [23]. Jeremy Wilson, op cit. , pp. 167. [24]. Jeremy Wilson, op cit. , pp. 167. [25]. Hugh H. Thorburn, Interest Groups and Polic Policy in Canada. (Queen's law journal. 1988) pp. 445.