

The influence of business groups on government decisions assignment



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“ The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent” (p. 336), this statement is written by E. E Schattschneider. This debate surrounds the extreme amount of power or influence business groups have on government. For most of us who pay attention to government issues, it is obvious that the business elites basically make all the decisions concerning society when they only count as the minority in our society.

Their rules, laws, and ways of thinking are usually implemented on the other members of our society. Business groups have first opportunity in making demands and decisions, although author of the Canadian Politics text book Rand Dyck says we are all given equal opportunity in decision making (p. 137), this is not true because the higher you are on the hierarchy the better chance you have of voicing out your opinion and issues. As an example, most decisions we see our government make today are catered more towards the rich or business owners.

Business groups do have privileged access to government in lots of uncountable ways like being given closer attention, they have knowledge of politics that is needed by the state, and they have unlimited resources because of their social network with politicians. The other side of the debate argues that thousands of business groups go broke each year, that consumers and business groups do have equal amount of influence on government, and that both business groups and the public must “ compete” in the marketplace of ideas and values, (Stanbury, p. 359).

The YES side of the debate is more persuasive and believable than the opposite side of the argument. According to William D. Coleman's article, "Charles Lindblom says that 'business persons are, in fact, public officials,'" (p. 339). I agree with this statement because business men and women are the ones usually seen holding government offices or positions, it seems like the regular everyday people are not given equal opportunity to be public officials. The first article Do Business Groups Have Privileged Access to Government? written by William D.

Coleman who defines business as public corporations companies, partnerships, or individually owned firms that are out to make profit for their owners from the sales of goods, services or exploitation of workers. Business groups are then defined as individual firms and the interests association the firm groups belong to. We live in a capitalistic society and market economy. Also we have a liberal democratic political system. Coleman refers to and agrees with Marx' theory, that with the combination of economic and political system there would be lots of annoyed working class individuals in our society.

Another reason why business groups have privileged access to government is because they are responsible for the growth of society's economy because they decide what will or will not be produced for consumers. Business groups also decide on how to invest capital, as in spending it on luxury goods, purchasing new equipment or expanding their business or factory.

Coleman's article also talks about the four dimensions that prove how business groups have more access to government than any other group in society.

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Firstly, “ business groups are listened to more attentively than other groups; business groups possess more resources than other social groups; the knowledge of business groups are needed for the making of public policy; and business interests are more easily mobilized than those of other interests,” (p. 339). He gives examples; one regarding the permit of building a hydro electric dam in a remote area. The Aboriginals did not want the dam in their location because it would involve the relocation of one of the villages, would disrupt hunting practices, and would lead to death of many fishes which is a staple food (Coleman, p. 39). On the other hand, business groups supported the building of the dam because they would only benefit from it and their argument was that it would create jobs for many people for several years, guess who won? The the business groups were able to succeed with their plan. The second example is the Canadian Dairy Commission in Canada’s Dairy Supply Management System, they have more than enough associates active on the national level while Consumers’ Association only hires someone part-time to cover the dairy policy area.

Coleman also believes that social construction is the distinction between an apparent general interest and apparent social interest. The voice of the public is not heard because there is one association representing consumers in Canada (The Consumers’ Association of Canada); this is because they find it difficult to employ certain amount of people to put into operation all the policy areas it is concerned with. In the end, the Consumers’ Association of Canada only hires someone part time to cover the dairy policy; it does not hire anyone in many other policy areas, (Coleman, p. 341).

In this situation the business groups can afford to pay as many workers as they want or need because they have the money to do so. According to Coleman, business interests in Canada have over 600 associations active at the national level, with several hundred more at the provincial and local levels, (p. 341). In short, mobilizing members and developing basic knowledge of the government do require permanent staffs and some kind of bureaucracy. Although business groups are more privileged because of their close ties with the government that does not mean that they always get their way.

They sometimes lose, but fewer than they win. W. T. Stanbury's debate is in no way similar to that of Professor Coleman's article. Stanbury argues that Canadian firms spend more effort in trying to influence public policy and that consumers determine which businesses would succeed or fail. He starts off by given definitions of Economic Power – Ability to command scarce economic resources on a large scale. Dyck (2008) says economic power influences politics. Stanbury also gives key concepts like Political Power and other terminologies that have nothing to do with his side of the debate.

He also says that policy-making is a complex process so not everyone would have the ability to make these decisions. In 1990 both politicians and business leaders were seen as more concerned with the money than the general public, Stanbury says this is not surprising because of their roles and responsibilities. In June 1989, less than 50 percent of the public said that the government is more favorable to businesses than the public, this amount increased to 75 percent in September 1989.

Big businesses are increasing as harvesters of wealth; this statement is by Gregg and Posner 1990: 54. He says most Canadians would agree with the statement that people who run corporations do not really care about common persons like us, (p. 357). Most people believe business groups do not put their country's interests before their own company or personal interest. Believes the access is not important, it is the "outcomes" that matters. He also believes that both groups have to persuade the government before getting their ways.

Before reading this debate that business groups have more access to government than normal persons like me I was more on the No side because all through my six years in Canada I have always thought the Canadian government is all for the poor, but since the last two years that conservative has been in power I feel like they do not pay enough attention to the unfortunates. Also after listening to my professor in his lectures and other peoples' opinion during politics discussions I realized that the government decisions are not really for the public, but for business groups.

After reading the debates, Stanbury's argument sounds too complicated. Of course most of us need to persuade others or need to be persuaded before getting and giving something. Like Stanbury says, I agree that both groups have to persuade the government, but the business groups has less persuasion to do because they are in the same circle with politicians. Like Coleman said, business groups and politicians are friends, they have same social groups and education and in reality you would rather favor your friend than a stranger. So, business groups do not have to work as hard as the public to get their way.

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Stanbury says “ what matters is not access, but outcomes. ” How can the outcome matter when the point of the debate is about the access business people have on government. One has to be able to get access to something before an outcome can be produced. To me it seems like most of Stanbury’s arguments are thrown in as extras. In my opinion, both sides debated the case well, but both arguments have its strengths and weaknesses, but Stanbury’s weaknesses are too obvious. Stanbury is right that Coleman could have shown a little more outside research like statistics.

For example, Coleman could have shown statistics of the percentage of people that refused the building of the hydro electric dam. I would give Stanbury credits for given enough statistics and referencing news articles, but most of this information did not really back up his point. For example, In 1990s Stanbury says business groups’ negotiate with all manner of entities in their firms. Businesses do have to make the situation seem like a negotiation, so they are not seen by the public as the bad and greedy people that they really are.

Coleman’s paper is very clear, understanding, and easy to read unlike Stanbury’s paper. The second debate has no focus, it moves back and forth supporting the business groups and supporting the general public. He is suppose to address information that contradicts his arguments, but not to the extent of losing the focus of his argument. If I did not know his side of the argument I would think he is criticizing the business groups for being more privileged than others. The central argument of Coleman’s debate is logically consistent, but Stanbury’s argument is somewhat off topic.

He changed his heading to Assessing the Political Power of Business Interests to be a little broader and I believe the reason for this is because he knows there is not enough evidence or information to support his no side of the argument. Even after making his article broader did not make his debate better. Overall, Composure of both debates is strong. Both authors presented each side of the arguments with confidence and compassion, although one happens to be better than the other. I do support and agree with both debates because both writers have good style of writing, their diction and pick of words are very interesting.

Both debates are very well written, but I fall more on Coleman's side because I agree and believe that business groups have more access to government. In conclusion, business groups are more privileged because they have social network with politicians, knowledge of business is necessary in making public policy, and business groups possess more resources than any other social group. Coleman also uses lots of evidence to support his argument and he is very persuasive in his writing. One group is always going to be " One Step Ahead," in our society.

Hopefully someday, everyone will be given an equal amount of opportunity in government issues; but for now we just have to flow with the program, until someone decides to speak out to make a difference for the leaders of tomorrow in Canadian society. References Coleman, W. D. Do Business Groups Have Privileged Access to Government? Issue Seventeen. Dyck, R. (2006). Canadian Politics: Concise Fourth Edition. Nelson Education Ltd. Toronto, Ontario. Stanbury, W. T. Assessing the Political Power of Business Interests. Issue Seventeen.
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