

AS Politics

Unit 1 Booklet 2: Pressure Groups

<image><image><image>

Powerpoints Handouts

www.alevelpolitics.com





Definition

An association that may be formal or informal, whose purpose is to further the interests of a specific section of society or to promote a particular cause by influencing government, business, the public or all three.





Classification by aim 1. Sectional (e.g. UNISON, BMA, CBI) 2. Cause or Promotional (e.g. RSPB, NSPCC, UKUNCUT)

Classification by status

- Classification by status
 3. Insider
 * Core insider e.g. BMA
 * Specialist insider e.g. WWF
 * Peripheral insider e.g. The Dogs Trust
 4. Outsider
 * Potential insiders
 * Outsiders by necessity
 * Ideological outsiders







Methods

Research and assess the following methods with examples of pressure groups

•Traditional methods: Petitions, public demonstrations and letter writing

- · Influencing the legislative process directly
- Legal action
 Working through a political party

Direct action



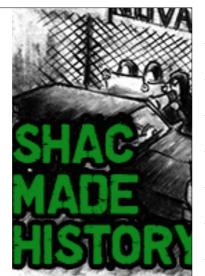


Methods Focus **Direct Action**

 Direct action can sometimes cross the line into illegality SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) crossed this line
 Leaderless resistance and direct action

Involved in firebombing and blackmail

Members jailed
 in August 2014 they closed down due to government crackdown



Methods Focus Social Media

 Many New Pressure Groups employ the power of so
to convey their message They often do this because conventional media is either too expensive or closed to them

UKuncut is a good example
 Organised 'flash mobs' via Twitter and Facebook

Disparate group who come together for a cause

· Attracted mainstream media as a result

Attracted mainstream media as a result
 One such flash mob at Fortnum and Mason's cost the 300-year-old store 55,4581 worth of business and received prominent coverage in mainstream media.
 UK Uncut protestors were later found guilty of aggravated trespass when they appeared before Westminister Magistrates' Court in November. However, in sentencing all involved to conditional discharges, District Judge Michael Snow expressed sympathy with their actions – telling them they were united by a "commo sense of decency" and adding, "history often vindicates those involved in such acts".







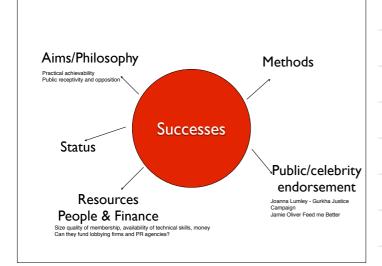
Success

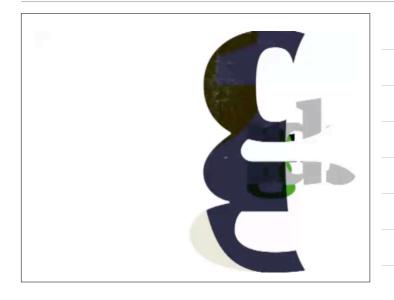
 Success is hard to measure, some pressure groups like some insider groups don't publish successes

 Outsider groups and some that are involved in direct action tend to exaggerate their successes and hide failures

 However we can sometimes determine success by looking at to what extent a pressure group achieves its aims











Access Points?

Accessing policy-makers can often be difficult
 Meeting MPs and those in positions of influence may be tricky

Devolution has allowed for more access points in the system

 However pressure groups recently employed seasoned 'lobbyists' to access government

 This has caused a number of questions about 'corruption' and the requirement for money that subverts democracy

• The professional lobbying industry has been rapidly growing since the mid-1990s and in 2007 was estimated to be worth $\Omega_{1.9}$ billion, employing 14,000 people.

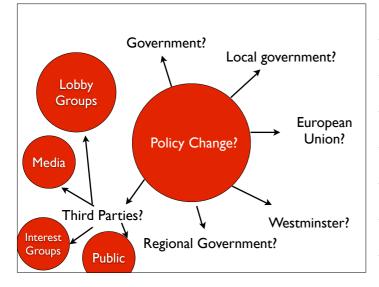
The report also suggested that some MPs are approached over 100 times a week by lobbyists.

 Current levels of lobbying are causing concern as is the revolving door which allow individuals to move rapidly between legislative and commercial roles in the same sectors creating potential conflict of interests.

 There is presently no formal or mandatory registration process for lobbyists and consequently there are many selfemployed or freelance workers who consider themselves to be lobbyists of some sort.

 In 2008, supporters of the anti-aviation lobby group Plane Stupid managed to get onto the roof of the Palace of Westminster and dropped a banner reading 'BAA HQ'.







Lobby Groups

 Bell Potinger represent Quadrilla a Fracking company -Anti fracking campaigners argue it misrepresents fracking
 Bell Pottinger, has been exposed in an undercover sting bragging about its access to the heart of government, even claiming that they had got Cameron to talk to the Chinese premier on behalf of a client.

 Corporate firms use lobbying groups to access policy makers - pressure groups dont have such access

The NSPCC uses firm Portland

RSPCA uses MHP Communications
 Cancer Research UK









Difference between pressure groups and political parties?

•Do not seek power

civil disobedience

•Usually have a narrow range of issues

•Do not have to be accountable •Some pressure groups may act illegally or promote



Arguments for Pressure Groups and Democracy

Allows government to be aware of public opinion
 Governments use PG's expertise
 Allows wider participation in politics
 Provides a vent for frustrations
 Diverse range of views are heard through

PG's Monitor government, highlight problems, hold government to account

Contributes to Pluralism



Are pressure groups good for democracy ?

Pluralism

- The pluralist model of democracy emphasises popular participation in politics between elections not just during elections.
- In such a democracy no single group can dominate politics because for every force exerted by one group there is an equal and opposite force exerted by another group.

Arguments against Pressure Groups and Democracy

- Radical methods (direct action) may harm the cause
- Only represent minority views
- Some PG's represent interests of rich
- (money) so have unequal influence
- Unelected no mandate to influence
- government policy
- Party donations 'buy' influenceIncreases the power and influence of the
- media
- Elitism
- Internally undemocratic



