

Interest groups and policy

and that, as a result, the Department of External Affairs was led to consult much more extensively with other government departments and with the corporate sector. More was involved in this consultation than a search for expert advice. Many of the government departments that began to play a greater role, and in particular, Industry, Trade and Commerce and Energy, Mines and Resources, had had long, close and intimate links with the sectors of the economy that paralleled their portfolios. These sectors were the departments' "clients" and the departments were their spokesmen within government. The literature on Canadian interest groups is unanimous that the relationship between these groups and these departments is, to quote Robert Presthus, in his *Elite Accommodation in Canadian Politics*, "continuous, functionally specific and crucial."

This intimate relationship could not be set aside by these departments when they became involved in the discussion of international economic questions. "It would be unthinkable," one official of Energy, Mines and Resources said to me in an interview, "to take a position at an international conference affecting an industry without close prior consultation with it." That quickly became the pattern. Industry representatives, sometimes from Canadian firms and sometimes from foreign multinationals, were regularly consulted on industry-specific and on more general international economic issues. Often these representatives would accompany the Canadian delegation to the international negotiations, as for example did a senior official of Noranda to the negotiations about an international copper agreement and an official of INCO to many meetings of the Law of the Sea Conferences. "Every statement we made," said one official who had been a Canadian representative at one of these major negotiating conferences, "was talked through beforehand with the industry representatives."

Structures were also developed to permit systematic confidential consultations on wider issues that were generally of concern to the business community. In 1973 the Canadian Business Group on Multilateral Trade Negotiations, a small high level working party, was created on the instigation of government to work closely with the officials who were developing the Canadian positions for the 1975 GATT meetings. Some five years ago, under direct stimulus from the Department of External Affairs, the Canadian Business and Industry International Advisory Committee (CBIAC) was established. This was no mean accomplishment. That the government should desire an authoritative organization of business and industry with which it could consult was itself a reason for some caution amongst already existing organizations which feared they might lose some of the access to government which they then enjoyed. To overcome this, CBIAC was, in effect, established by six of these organizations, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Council, International Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Committee of the Pacific Basin Economic Council, the Canadian Association for Latin America and the Canadian Export Association, each of them equally represented in CBIAC itself. Moreover the numerous committees and steering groups of CBIAC were each initially the particular responsibility of one or other of these six participating organizations.

These committees or groups cover all the obvious areas of international policy which are of interest to business and industry — to list but a third of them, environ-

ment, trade, energy and raw materials, investment disputes, multinational enterprises, development aid and international investments. Each committee strives to meet regularly with the senior government officials who deal with the issues that are its concern. In addition, the full CBIAC meets several times a year with senior government officials. Together these meetings constitute an elaborate and systematic network of interaction, all the more impressive as it is in addition to the vast network of ad hoc individual business pressure group contacts with government officials and the intimate top-level interaction between senior political leaders and the leaders of the business community.

2. From internationally-oriented public interest groups

The irritation which Denis Stairs reported in official attitudes to interest groups is most likely to be felt toward the groups which advocate a greater responsiveness to what I earlier called cosmopolitan values. One External Affairs document, a policy paper originally prepared for the education of Flora Macdonald and later made public, expressed delicately but clearly its sense of their irrelevance:

Current Canadian public attitudes toward the Third World tend to down-play its economic importance to Canada Many Canadian attitudes date back to the early postwar period when Canada was a leader in establishing new cooperative mechanisms such as the World Bank, the Colombo Plan and the UN specialized agencies. We saw the Third World as an area of poverty which stirred our national humanitarian conscience

What many Canadians have not fully appreciated today is just how much the Third World has changed in the past twenty-five years This tends to conceal the dramatic economic changes that have occurred and . . . the opportunities offered to Canada for economic partnership.

It is, however, not so much that the Third World has changed as that the official attitudes have grown less responsive to cosmopolitan values. The poor are still there, but External Affairs is now emphasizing instead the economic opportunities for Canada in the middle-income countries. Yet the government cannot entirely ignore the articulate domestic groups which criticize the increasingly narrow economic focus of Canadian policies towards the Third World or which call for a major Canadian role in regard to nuclear disarmament. Some of these groups are themselves too respectable and too substantial to be given no hearing. Others have an undeniable expertise which it is, even politically, perhaps unwise to ignore. And in any case a Department of External Affairs and a Liberal government that have inherited the traditions of Pearsonian internationalism will not want it to appear that well-informed and morally-sensitive, concerned Canadians are substantially in opposition to their policies.

Five types of consultation

In this situation there has been a surprisingly wide range of techniques which the government and the Department have used to manage their relations with these critics. These techniques lack entirely the "continuous, intimate and crucial" qualities of government's consultations with business and industry. They are instead part of a careful