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MARTIN J. SMITH

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POST-INDUSTRIALISM, THATCHERISM AND POLICY NETWORKS

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Post-Industrialism, Thatcherism and Policy Networks

Most theories of pressure groups have been developed to analyse the behaviour and influence of groups in industrial society. Implicit, and sometimes explicit, in these theories are assumptions about which groups are likely to have power. It is generally assumed that industrial society leads to particular groups having advantages when it comes to influencing government. However, in recent years the factors which shape the influence of pressure groups have been changed. There has been important social change in Britain in the last twenty years and post-industrial and post fordist theorist argue that this change has major implications for the groups which have power in British society. This paper will examine the various theories of transition and extract the implications they contain for interest intermediation. However, it will argue that these theories exaggerate the impact that this social change will have on interest group/state relations. These theories contain a number of questionable assumptions about impact of change, and they underestimate the degree to which change is mediated by existing political arrangements and ideology. Shifts in the power of pressure groups will not directly reflect social change but will depend on the type of policy network that exists in a particular arena and the political goals and ideology of the government. The paper will demonstrate the impact of these factors by briefly examining a number of policy arenas in order to show that the impact of social change cannot be generalised. The paper will begin by looking at theories of pressure groups and industrial society.

PRESSURE GROUPS AND INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY.

Marxist, corporatist and pluralist theorists of the state are in relative agreement about the impact of industrial society on group/state relations. Marxists see capitalist society as being dominated by the struggle between labour and capital. Capital is clearly advantaged in this relationship due to its superior organisation, resources, control of information and critical position in the national and international economy (Miliband 1969). Capital gains further advantages through the nature of the state. The state is a capitalist state which is structurally biased in order to ensure the protection of the long term interests of capitalist (Poulantzas 1971). This is not to say that labour lacks power. The trade unions are able to extract real concessions from the state and employer (Coates 1983; Purdy 1976).

Corporatist believe that with the increasing complexity of industrial society institutional relationships develop between the state and the main economic actors whereby they are incorporated into the policy process. Harris argues that with increased concentration and cartelisation of industry and growing need for the state to intervene in the economy corporatist arrangements were developed between government and economic interests. For Middlemas (1979), the development of industrial society created the potential for conflict between capital and labour. These conflicts developed into political crises and so 'British governments stimulated institutional growth among bodies representing business and labour interests...'. Increasingly, close and complex relationships developed between these bodies and government. Consequently,

Under the double stimulus of government's needs and the changing economic and social conditions of their membership, what had once been institutions outside the formal constitution...became governing institutions, existing

thereafter as estates of the realm, committed to cooperation with the state... (Middlemas, 1979, p.372).

Even amongst pluralists, there is recognition that industrial society leads to the privileging of particular interests. Jordan and Richardson (1987, p.181) argue that the growing complexity of government in the modern world results in the establishment of increasingly structured relationships between the government and pressure groups. Richardson and Jordan (1979) believed that in the 1970s, 'Direct discussion between, the government, TUC and CBI have supplemented, if not supplanted, parliamentary discussion in key policy areas.' Neo-pluralists have gone even further by suggesting that industrial capitalism places business in such a privileged position that its interests are more or less automatically attended to by the state (Lindblom 1977).

Hence, there is a surprising consensus that the development of industrial society has led to the increased power of labour and capital as they developed institutionalised relationships with the state due to strategic position they both obtained in the economy. In addition, the increasing complexity of society has led to the state encouragement of pressure groups in close and stable relationship in order to provide legitimacy for policy and assistance with implementation. However, it is increasingly being claimed that Britain is moving towards a post industrial society and this affects the organised groups that have power. It is argued that many of the economic and professional groups which had developed institutional relations with government are now under threat as social and economic change reduces their economic importance, increases the sources of knowledge and consequently increases the number of power centres in society.

POST-INDUSTRIALISM, POST-FORDISM AND DISORGANISED CAPITAL

It is undoubtedly the case that Britain has gone through a number of major economic and social changes in the last thirty years. Until the 1950s Britain had a largely manufacturing economy and 60 per cent of the population were in the manual working class. In the 1950s manufacturing employed 35 per cent of the employed total and produced 30 per cent of the GDP (Harris 1988: 15). Manufacturing also tended to be mass production in large firms which were concentrated in certain areas (Meegan 1988; Lash and Urry 1986).

In most of the post-war period there have been important changes in manufacturing. Between 1970 and 1986 manufacturing as a share of GDP has fallen from 34 per cent to 19.5 per cent whilst manufacturing share of exports has fallen from 11 per cent to 8 per cent of value (Maynard 1988). As a result (Allen 1988: 185):

Fewer people today ...work in giant industrial workplaces. Many of the larger factories have disappeared and along with them certainty... that a job means lifetime employment.

As well as a decline in manufacturing there has been a decline in the size of manufacturing units. There has been an increase in the number of enterprises employing under 100 employees from 78,676 in 1958 to 99,303 in 1981. There has also been a rapid increase in part-time and female employment (Allen 1988a: 100).

Throughout the twentieth century there has been a growth in service employment but for the first time in the 1960s more than 50 per cent of people were employed in the service sector and Britain's share of output of GDP by services reached 56 per cent in 1960-67 and 59 per cent in 68-63 (Elfring 1988: 33 and 109). In addition, there has been a marked change in

the type of services provided with an increase in social and producer services being greater than in distributive and personal services (Elfring 1988: 109).

This change has had a major impact on the occupational structure. The percentage employed in white collar work has increased from 7.6 per cent in 1861 to 41.7 per cent in 1975 (Pollard 1979: 21). There has been the rise of what Goldthorpe calls the service class and an increase in professional employment. Lash and Urry argue that the twentieth century has seen the growth of professional groups in new areas like the manufacturing sector with trained managers, computer specialists and engineers taking a central role in the management of companies.

There has also been a decline of regional economies with much greater economic growth in some regions rather than others (Massey 1988: 55) and there has been growth of particular sectors like new technology, consumer and financial services (Harris 1988: 12). Concurrently with decentralisation and size reduction, there has been a move towards greater internationalisation. There has been a growth in the volume of international finance and financial trading (Harris 1988: 12). This has occurred simultaneously with a growth in the size and number of multinational companies (Lash and Urry 1986). The British economy which was already open has become more so. It has become much less self contained and is now part of global processes of production with trade becoming multilateral rather than bilateral (Harris 1988: 24).

It is argued that these economic and social changes outlined have had an impact on interests and aspirations. With increased income, consumer preferences have moved away from necessities to luxuries and services (Elfring 1988). With the change in employment patterns people's concerns

have changed from production issues to consumption issues (Dunleavy and Husbands) and according to Inglehart (1977) this has led to the development of post material values which emphasize the quality of life rather than economic issues.

There are at least three main perspectives which try to evaluate the impact of these changes on society. Firstly, Bell sees societies going through a number of stages until it reaches a post-industrial society. Secondly, some marxists have suggested that industrial society has changed with the transition from a fordist economic base to a post-fordist economic base. Third, Lash and Urry have posited a transition from organised to disorganised capitalism.

All three theories agree on some aspects of the transition but differ on the implications of this social change. They accept that there has been a decline in manufacturing industry, a move to a more service based economy with the rise of a professional or service class (Bell 1976: 13-14; Murray 1988: 11-12; Lash and Urry 1987: 99) and that to a certain degree society has become more fractured and that the traditional class structure is changing.

Bell (1976: 14) identifies the United States as being closest to a post-industrial society with over 60 per cent being employed in the service sector. He also recognises that there is a change in the type of services provided. The existence of a large service sector is not new. In the 19th century there were a large number of domestic servants and a major business service sector has existed throughout the 20th century. He argues that in a post-industrial society it is health, education, research and government services which become dominant and it is here that most people are employed.

According to Bell (1980) the transition to post-industrial society is assisted by the development of information technology because in this new stage it is knowledge that becomes the axial principle of society. So we have seen in advanced societies a rapid increase in the role of information, with new technology and a major growth in knowledge (Steinfeld and Salvaggia: 2). For Foucault (1980), knowledge has become the main source of power in modern society because power is exercised through a 'functioning discourse'. In Foucault's schema those who control information have power, but many of the post-industrialists see information being spread more widely with the growth of information technology and telecommunications (Bell 1980: 96).

Marxist theories concerned with the transition from fordism to post-fordism focus on changes in the economic base and the impact these have on production and politics. Britain and other advanced capitalist societies are increasingly characterised by diversity, differentiation and fragmentation, rather than homogeneity, standardisation and the economies and organisation of scale that were the features of mass society. Fordism was a system where products were standardised allowing mass production which was subject to scientific management (Murray 1988: 8). Changes in international markets with the development of multinational companies and the industrialisation of many under developed countries combined with recession has forced the advanced industrial nations to change their production techniques (Lipietz 1987).

Post-Fordism is 'a new form of intensive regime of accumulation which will provide the basis for a new long wave of capitalism.' (Bonefield 1987: 114). This involves the increased use of new technology in production and storekeeping so there is increased flexibility and economy of scope. As a

result there is also flexibility in manufacturing with the production of a much wider range of products, smaller production runs and increased changes in design and the workforce is divided between a skilled core which is multi-skilled, highly paid and permanent and a peripheral unskilled workforce which is temporary and lowly paid (Murray 1988: 11). As a consequence the power of unions is considerably reduced, often to that of a company union (Foster and Wolfson; Bonefield 1987: 115-117).

Jessop *et al* (1988) warn that the concept of post-fordism has to be treated with care. They believe that fordism can be applied only to a few areas. Although there is increased flexibility, this exists in a limited number of sectors and it is not clear that it is the basis for a new period of sustained growth (Jessop *et al* 1988: 128-129). Furthermore, Jessop (1988) rejects the view that there can be a single path of transition from fordism to post-fordism.

For Jessop *et al* (1988: 129), post-fordism is a useful 'heuristic device to uncover some powerful trends in society'. In the case of Britain the Thatcher Government is accentuating the divisions between the core and periphery in order to change the balance of power so that the economy can be restructured: 'Thatcherism has an explicit strategy to restructure the British economy as part of a reinvigorated, post-fordist international capitalism' (Jessop *et al*, 1988: 135). Thatcherism has produced (or at least encouraged) the move to post-fordism rather than post fordism resulting in Thatcherism.

Lash and Urry (1987) have analysed the trends identified by post-industrialists and post-fordists, and argue that capitalism is moving from being organised to disorganised. From their perspective, in the past there were a number of regional economies based on particular products. This has

been replaced by the increased geographical mobility of firms; the increased ability of firms to subdivide; a tendency towards decentralisation in industry, employment and the population (Lash and Urry 1987: 99-103). With this move there has been a decline in manual employment increased self employment and an expansion of the service class. Like the post-fordists they recognise the increasing difficulty that even multinationals have in controlling the level of demand because of the break up of the 'mass markets for standardised products' (Lash and Urry 1987: 198).

What then are the likely implications of these changes for the power of groups in relation to the state? There is widespread agreement that it will mean the decline of the power of trade unions. Bell (1976) suggest that the changes will create severe recruitment problems for trade unions in the future. Many Marxists see this as a change in the role of the working class. No longer is it the advanced guard but one of many groups whose impact on the political system will depend on its ability to build alliances with other groups (Gorz 1982; Hobsbawn 1979). For Gorz (1982) and Touraine (1976) it is the new social movements that have become the motors of change in post-industrial society.

There is also agreement between Bell and Lash and Urry that these changes will increase the power of professional groups. Lash and Urry (1987: 162) claim that the service class has a dominant position in the social division of labour which result in superior work and market situations. For Bell (1976: 125), in post-industrial society it is the production and control of theoretical knowledge that is crucial and so: 'Instead of the industrial worker, we see the dominance of the professional and technical class...'

Professional workers will increasingly become the largest group and come to dominate the key posts in society.

There is, however, controversy over the impact that information technology will have on the distribution of power. Mora and Minc argue that it 'will foster decentralisation of administrative structures and promote the competitiveness of small and midsize business, thereby moderating power relationships.' (Qtd in Steinfeld and Salvaggio 1989: 7) It can thus lead to wider distribution of information and even participatory democracy (Steinfeld and Salvaggio 1989: 24). Others argue that it leads to the centralisation of power as more information can be stored in an inaccessible manner; it erodes national sovereignty through the existence of transnational telecommunications and the cost of information technology means that its use has generally been restricted to the powerful (Traber 1986; Street 1988).

Finally, the implications for capital are complex. Post-industrialism/post-fordism should favour multinational capital whilst disfavouring national capital which is unable to adapt to the increased demands of the market and flexibility in production. It should also result in less power for manufacturing capital verses service capital. At the same time it might redress the balance of power between capital and the consumer as the demands the consumer can make become more complex, more intelligent and more competitive. People's prime economic category will change from producer to consumer and so their main political interests will be as consumers rather than producers. This greater complexity and diversity of interest should also weaken the power of the state due to the inability to make the types of corporatist arrangements indicative of the

past because peak organisation will have even less legitimacy and less control than they did in the past.

Before considering whether such changes have occurred or are likely to occur it is necessary to consider some of the problems with the models outlined. It is clear that both post-industrialism and post-fordism suffer from a degree of teleology in that they see society moving to a predefined stage. In particular Bell outlines the path that societies follow from pre-industrial, industrial to post-industrial. As Kumar points out although there have been changes in society, it is far from clear that they indicate a move to a new social order. He maintains that the expansion of services has occurred since the beginning of industrialisation and that Britain is the only society where industrial workers have at any time constituted the majority of the population (Kumar 1978: 201-202). Rather than the service sector being the power house of a new professional class work in the services is 'on the whole less skilled, lower paid, less unionised and less secure than in manufacturing.' Moreover, in recent years many of the areas where Bell saw the major expansion, education, health and government, have contracted whilst the services which Bell saw as part of industrial society, like banking and commercial law, have expanded. Even when there has been growth in health and education, it has tended to be at the lower end of the occupational scale (Kumar 1978: 216).

Gershuny also disputes the extent of growth in services. He argues that the consumption of services has actually fallen whilst the proportion employed in manufacturing has stayed within three per cent of its 1841 value. Although there has been an increase in service employment this does not mean more services are consumed, rather these services are concerned

with the manufacture of goods (Gershuny 1978: 60-70). There is also a lack of evidence that the benefits of a post-industrial society that Bell outlines like less work, more leisure, increased information and greater participation are occurring (Hamelink 1986)

The post-fordist model is also problematic. Firstly, in the version outlined by Agleitte (1979) it is functionalist and deterministic (Bonefield 1987). It suggests that a crisis in fordism leads to changes in the economic base which transforms the economic and political organisations of a society. Hirst (1989: 322) reminds us that it is a mistake to think that: 'the features of the production system can be used to characterise the wider society.' Secondly, the evidence to support the development of post-fordist production in Britain is patchy to say the least. The notion that there the dual labour force is a new feature of production is highly questionable. It is clear that women and ethnic groups have always provided a flexible, part-time low paid and temporary labour force and this group has grown in recent years whilst most men are still employed in full time permanent work (McInnes 1987: 117 Pollert 1988).

In addition there has been resistance to flexible techniques by workers and management in Britain. Where new technologies have been introduced they have done so as part of a fordist strategy (Lane 1988: 159). According to Lane (1988: 160) 'the Taylorist thrust has intensified and employment conditions have significantly deteriorated.' The introduction of flexible production is very uneven some sectors like fast food are just adopting Fordism (Gamble 1989), others have never been fordist, and never will, (Jessop *et al*) and it is unclear what impact the changing of production techniques in a car factory in Sunderland should have on the

rest of society. Features of what might be seen as a post-industrial/post-fordist lifestyle may in fact be the result of the intensification of fordism. Shops like Marks and Spencers now produce a wide range of ready to serve exotic food and sandwiches intended for the professional who does not have the time to cook but likes good food. That there is an increased range of these foods at an affordable price is because fordist techniques are being increasingly applied to the production of quality food. In the production of sandwiches Marks and Spencer is constantly trying to improve production so that less and less has to be done by hand. The post-fordists have a tendency to see the processes as mutually exclusive when in fact:

'Post-Fordism is better seen as one ideal-typical model or strategy of production and regulation, copresent with others in a complex historical ensemble, than as a valid totalising description of an emerging social formation here and now. (Rustin 1989: 308)

Although Jessop *et al* try to avoid these errors in their approach to post-fordism by accepting its mediation through the political, in doing so they create new problems. They suggest that the Thatcher Government bear a great deal of responsibility for the rate of change in the economy by introducing measures that have hastened the introduction of post-fordist techniques. In doing so they seem to ascribe Thatcherism a greater degree of strategy, coherence and economic awareness than could really be the case (particularly in the light of Nigel Lawson's resignation). Jessop suggests that Thatcherism is a strategy aimed at ensuring the transition to post-fordism which will divide society and then ensure Conservative victory. However, more often than not, the Conservative Government has followed contradictory goals intended solely to ensure economic growth and electoral victory (Bulpitt, Riddell).

Moreover, Jessop *et al* are inconsistent in saying which comes first the chicken or the egg. Although at one point (p.128) fordism can only be applied in certain sectors, they later identify a fordist economic base (p.138). Whilst the economic is always mediated by the political it is unclear whether the political is causing the change, responding to the change, trying to change the economic system or trying to ensure electoral support. Whilst the degree of flexible production is unclear (p.129), the Conservatives are pioneering the transition to post-fordism and 'has convinced much of the privileged core that its material interests are best secured through policies of popular capitalism...' (148). Why then is there so little support for privatisation and why with these major social changes is Conservative support so fragile, winning only 33% of the electorate and now behind in the polls? The Conservatives did not win in 1987 because of a core periphery division but because the economy was booming and the opposition was divided.

Undoubtedly, the post-industrialists/fordists identify important changes in British economy and society. It would also seem correct to assume that these changes will have an impact on the influence of particular groups within society. Firstly, the growth of an international service economy changes the problems that policy makers face and the possible solutions. Economic development might no longer depend on regional aid to ailing industries but attempts to make the economy competitive on the world market by concentrating on certain specialisms. Secondly, the aspirations and interests of individual workers changes as their role as producers declines. With this transformation, their fundamental political axis could be as consumers and not in the workplace. The pursuing of consumption issues requires alternative forms of political articulation to those of

production issues. Thirdly, the resources and importance of groups changes with the transformation of the economy. Groups will have resources if they have a strategic place in the economy. The rise of the service sector and the internationalisation of the economy changes which groups are central and therefore have the most economic power. Fourthly, the growth of professions will mean that there are more groups which have the resources to influence government. Their impact might increase as the importance of manual workers declines. Fifth, these changes have implications for the power of the state. According to Luhmann, the growth of new interests, new groups and information society has increased the complexity and diversity of society. This makes society more difficult to control, direct or even to reach a consensus as a basis of legitimate action. Consequently the state is less able to implement policies because it has less influence over non-state groups. Further, the increased internationalisation of the economy means that the options available to the state have become much less.

There has been important social change in Britain in recent years and post-industrialist and post-fordist theory would appear to suggest that this will have an impact on the distribution of power. However, in suggesting that social change will result in changes in the power of particular groups, post-industrialists/post-fordists ignore the extent to which the political context will limit or vary the impact that these changes have on state/group relations. Social and political change do not take place in a vacuum. They take place within existing political structures which affect the impact that change has on group intermediations. There are two factors in particular which will affect the impact of social change: Thatcherism and the existing policy networks.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT.

The relations that groups have with the state are not just the result of social and economic factors but they depend on the perception that the government has of particular groups and the structure of the relationship that the group has with the state. The social democratic consensus which existed in Britain for thirty years from 1945 also had implications for the power of groups. Keynesianism with its mix of increased expenditure, government intervention and full employment resulted in an increased role for the state and therefore increased contacts with pressure groups particularly in the welfare and social services and the economy. Many groups developed an important political role through institutionalised relationships which provided stability, legitimacy and assistance in implementation. Moreover, Crosland argues that the consequence of full employment was to increase the power of the unions in relation to business. Panitch, from a marxist perspective, concurs with this view, arguing that corporatism was the result of the need to emasculate the power of Labour in the face of its increased power as a consequence of full employment.

Thatcherism, in challenging the post-war consensus has challenged the social democratic view of pressure groups and their role in the policy process. Mrs Thatcher and her Government have been influenced by new right thinkers which see pressure groups as malign forces which distort the political and economic market, reduce individual liberty, overstretch the resources of government and result in reduced economic performance (Barry 1987; Brittan 1975; Hayek 1979; Olson 1982). One of the Conservative's main platforms in the 1979 general election was a rejection of the corporatism which they argued had developed in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s. On many occasions the Prime Minister has declared her distrust of

organised interests and even rejected the concept of society. She has stated her belief in extending the area of individual rights and the range of individual choice.

Grant (1989: 10) has pointed out that the Government sees corporatism as one of the main causes of Britain's economic decline. As a consequence the Government has embarked on attack on what it sees as corporate and other intermediate institutions. Trade unions have faced a long term attack, the sponsorship divisions of the departments have been abolished, the NEDC has been downgraded (Grant 1989: 12-14) and other tripartite institutions like MSC and wages boards have been abolished or threatened with abolition. The government through privatisation, education and health reforms has attempted to depoliticise certain policy areas by returning them to the market. Thatcher has also tried to change the power of particular groups in society and not always in the way that post theorists predict. For instance Bell believed that post-industrial society would result in increased power of professionals whilst the Conservative government has challenged the power of a number of professional groups.

Nevertheless, the impact of both Thatcherism and social change has been limited by the type of policy network that exists in a particular arena. It is being increasingly accepted that the type of relationship that exists between the state and interest groups can vary greatly from policy sector to policy sector (Rhodes 1988; Jordan and Richardson 1987; Wilks and Wright 1988). In certain policy sectors the relationship is relatively open with many decision making centres and numerous groups moving in and out of the policy process (Hecl 1976). In others there is a closed policy community with a single decision making centre, a limited number of stable pressure groups, a shared view of policy-making and the exclusion of the public,

other pressure groups and even Parliament (Rhodes 1988). Within these ideal types a whole range of possibilities exist.

In a situation where there is a policy community, the relationship between the groups and officials has existed over a long period of time, often there is a broad consensus on policy options, the groups are involved in detailed policy making and there are institutional means of excluding 'outsider' groups. It might be reasonable to expect that with social and political change these relationships will change. The development of a closed policy community is to some extent the result of the government perceiving particular groups as politically, socially and economically important. In industrial society certain groups are perceived as being politically and economically important and these groups tend to develop institutionalised relationships with Government.

However, policy communities have the ability to survive social and political change. A group might become less politically and socially important but policy-makers can decide to continue its privileged position in the policy process despite the political rhetoric. Or the government could decide to change policy but because of the existence of the community be unable to control the implementation of that change. This has occurred to some extent with local government where the central government relies on local authorities to implement change (Rhodes 1989).

Therefore, the impact of post industrialism and Thatcherism on state/group relations depends on the extent to which the existing policy communities can be changed. Often this is very difficult either because the community has resources that the government needs, the groups are useful for implementation or the existence of the community is outside

government control (Smith 1989). Life is much easier for policy makers if they have an established policy community in which expectations are stable and therefore often at the departmental level it is expedient to continue well established policy communities (Jordan and Richardson 1982).

The implication of this approach is that the impact of social change on pressure groups cannot be generally stated. Whether the influence of groups changes will vary from policy sector to policy sector. What we can say is that where there is an issue network or looser community the effect of social and political change is likely to be greater than where there is a closed policy community. In a policy community, unless the government is prepared to face the political cost of challenging community old relationships are likely to continue despite external pressure for change. The next section will briefly examine a number of policy areas to demonstrate how political and social change have been mediated by variations in policy networks.

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE ON VARIOUS POLICY NETWORKS

An examination of various policy networks in different policy areas demonstrates that the impact of Thatcherism and social change varies according to the political will, the strength of the pressure groups, and the type of pressure networks that exist. The impact that social change has on state/pressure group relations will be mediated by the existing political network.

Industrial relations has lacked a well developed policy community but faced a high degree of political will in favour of change, an ideology that aims at reducing the role of trade, and social change which adversely

affects the position of unions. The combination of all these factors has apparently succeeded in greatly changing the relationship between the state and the unions. A closed community between unions and government has never really developed in Britain. Trade unions have always mistrusted government, particularly Conservative governments, and to that extent they have wanted to restrict their dealings to the economic realm with employers. As a result of this mistrust, a consensus on industrial relations policy has failed to develop and so there has been conflict over incomes policy and the need to reduce trade union power. Moreover, the peak organisations of labour (the TUC but also national unions) have had great difficulty in disciplining their members and power has tended to be at the shopfloor level rather than with national leadership (Coates 1989). This has reduced the degree to which unions have been useful to government. Finally, there has always been a high degree of conflict between employers, unions and government over industrial relations policy (Grant and Marsh 1977) and so it has never been possible to depoliticise industrial relations policy. In other words, the precondition for a closed policy community have never existed and a long term stable and consensual relationship between the state and unions has not come into existence.

In addition the Conservative government had a clear, widely held and popular policy for reforming industrial relations. The government wanted to reduce their political and economic power and end what it saw as the corporatist relationship that has existed between the state and the unions. To that end it quickly broke off relations between the Government and the unions at the macro-level and greatly reduced the degree of contact at the departmental level. To limit the role of unions in politics a wide range of legislation was introduced in order to make it more difficult for unions

to take effective strike action. The government also targeted particular unions like the NUM to demonstrate its resolve and strengthen to the whole of the labour movement.

Moreover, the unions have been particularly hard hit by the decline in manufacturing, the growth of services and high levels of unemployment. The 1970s and 1980s has seen a decline in the number of manual workers and a corresponding decline in the number of trade union members. Union members became less supportive of their leadership with a large number voting Conservative and supporting trade union legislation.

So with a combination of social change, strong political will and the lack of a closed community the power of unions has declined greatly in the 1980s. The unions have almost lost all political influence on the government, rarely being consulted on economic or even industrial relations policy. In addition through much of the eighties the number of strikes declined and the union movement suffered some notable defeats.

Yet in even the clearest example of the post-industrial predictions coming to fruition there are a number of qualifications. It is questionable that the unions did in fact have much political influence in the past (Taylor 1981, Marsh and King 1985; Coates 1980) and in that respect the Conservative government has just confirmed the political weakness of the trade union movement. Even if the Conservatives have reduced the political position of the unions, an unforeseen consequence of their actions has been to increase the economic power of certain unions in a period of economic growth. The Thatcher Government has returned industrial relations to the market and therefore the success of the unions depends on their strength in the market place. With skill shortages the market position has allowed some unions to demand and get large pay

increases. Conservative legislation has made it much more difficult for unions to strike. Consequently, union leaders are only likely to call a ballot and a strike when they are sure of the membership's support. The requirement of a ballot also increases the legitimacy of the strike. Many of the recent strikes have been effective because of increased resolve on part of the membership and increased public support because of the legitimacy of grievances and the obvious support provided by a ballot. Finally, although relations between unions and government at national level have changed greatly, MacInnes (1987) has found that in terms of relations between employers and unions at the shopfloor level things are much the same and so union influence has not been greatly reduced at the workplace (see also Milward and Stevens 1986 and Marsh and Rhodes 1989).

Even with these qualifications the position of trade unions can be seen as the paradigm case of social and political change combining with weak institutional organisation to change the power of an interest group. At the other extreme we have the example of NFU/Ministry of Agriculture relations. Here we have a case where farmers have declined greatly in economic, social and political importance but their relationship with government and the subsequent benefits that brings have remained. Farmers have for a long time been social and economically unimportant. Agriculture now employs about four per cent of the workforce. As farmers have declined in number their political importance has reduced with fewer and fewer constituencies being agricultural (Crewe and Payne 1971). In terms of food production the important political issue is less and less what farmers can produce and how much they get for it and increasingly how much it costs, its quality and the environmental impact of its production. Post-material values are imposing themselves on food production.

In addition to this social change, the Thatcherite ideology would appear to be very opposed to the privileged position of the farmers and the level of state subsidies that agriculture receives. Since the 1970s the Right has criticised the Common Agricultural Policy and even called for a free market in agriculture (Body 1982, Howarth 1985). The Government has persistently demanded the reform of European agricultural policy through restrictions on output and cuts in prices (Smith 1990).

Despite this social and political pressure, the close relationship between the farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture has continued as a very close and closed community. Policy-making has now moved to the European level but it still involves solely agricultural ministers, EC officials in the agricultural directorate and farmers' organisations. Despite the raising of new issues, environmental and consumers groups continue to have little impact on agricultural policy. The government has been unable to change the agricultural policy community, partly because the community is now centred in Brussels and so national change is not really possible and partly because the community has adopted a strategy of damage limitation and so admitted to the need for some change in order to prevent new groups having access. As a result although there has been some change in policy, the interests of farmers still have primacy and the old policy community makes the decisions over what change there will be.

A situation where political goals and ideology, policy communities and social change have all clashed is in the area of the professions. Post-industrial theorists argue that the transition to an information society increases the power of groups which have control over information and are in professional occupations. These groups, like doctors and lawyers, have long tended to have closed policy communities because their monopoly of

knowledge has meant that the Government is dependent on them for the development and implementation of policy. However, the Government's belief in the free markets has led it to challenge professional groups in order to break their monopolies. So the Government has tried to end the barristers monopoly in the crown court and introduce extra market criteria in the health service. The power of the professions and the governments political will has led to long-term conflict in both areas. Both sides have been forced to compromise but the government has not as yet succeeded in its goals.

Finally an area where both the government and social change have been operating in the same direction is the role of the consumer. Increased wealth, changing occupations and new interests has led to a situation where people are becoming more concerned in expressing their interests as consumers rather than producers. The Government's strategy of privatisation and non-intervention has meant that often these interests are expressed through the market rather than through political parties, pressure groups or the state. Now complaints about telephones, gas or electricity are not political problems but economic problems to be expressed through share prices or by falls in demand. This form of action has also been seen in the area of the environment and food quality. The introduction of new 'green' products by producers and retailers is on the whole not the response of group pressure or government regulation but due to market pressure. Producers have recognised the demand for green products and so made them available. Likewise with food labelling and health. Companies have introduced increased labelling not because the government demanded it but because the companies recognised the market for healthy food. These new demands are a result of new post-material

interests. They are expressed in this form because the Government wants to reduce its role and depoliticise many policy areas.

This has several consequences. Firstly, it reduces the role of pressure groups - action is individual through the market, rather than collective through the state. Secondly, it removes citizenship from those who lack market power. If groups are less likely to express grievances those who do not have the ability to influence the market will lose the ability to influence the market. Thirdly, it reduces, from the government's point of view, the problem of overload. The Government can now deny responsibility for many of these policy areas. Energy policy is the responsibility of the energy industry, industrial relations is the responsibility of employers and unions, food policy is the responsibility of producers and consumers. This reduces the complexity for government but increases complexity for society as the organisation of grievances becomes almost impossible except in the sense of aggregated market preferences.

This depoliticisation of certain areas also has consequences for the power of capital. Changes in the economy have increased the importance of international capital and made national economies much more open. This has increased the power of multinational companies and particularly international financial institutions but even here with the increased size, complexity and wealth of the world economy the impact of one multinational company is but the flap of a butterfly's wing. The consequences for national capital and national manufacturing capital are even greater. Their options and therefore power are reduced as they have to compete on a world market without the protection of their own government. So we see the case of Nestle having more influence than Rowntree and Ford more than Jaguar and the state fails to protect. Moreover, this power is not zero

sum as the multinationals increase their power vis-a-vis national power and the state; it declines vis-a-vis each other and the consumer as competition for increasingly saturated markets increases.

CONCLUSION

Post-industrialist/fordist theorists argue that social change in Britain has had important political consequences. It would appear that they would expect the power of groups to change. However, these changes do not occur in isolation and the existing institutional structures have the ability to prevent social and political change affecting existing policy communities to some extent. If relations are to change it is usually the result of a combination of factors. The clearest example of change is the trade unions but even in this case there is not a simple diminution of power but a change in the type of power and the unions which have it. In other areas there is much less change - as in the case of the farmers. Whilst it would appear that consumers have become more powerful this is not through pressure groups but through the market and this results in weaker consumers losing out. Moreover, it is not a zero-sum situation. Consumers have to face greater internationalisation and concentration of capital and whilst that might help some consumers some times it will not mean more power for all consumers.

It is clear then that it is very difficult to make any general statements about the impact of social and political change on pressure group power. What is required is more detailed research into particular policy areas. This paper has tried to outline a research agenda and demonstrate that there are problems with the post-industrialist/fordist theory and that the impact of any social change has to be placed within the context of

political change and the organisation of policy-making. The impact of these changes cannot be predetermined. Whether there is change and the form that change will take varies according to various factors; the degree of political will; the policy network; the resources of the groups involved and the ideology of the policy-makers. These factors will vary from policy area to policy area and across states.

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