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Power in the United State Today

In today’s United States, the wealthy individual, government elites and the interest groups that represent the interest of big corporations are on the top of the power pyramid. The two major political parties sever as a link between the interest groups and the government policymakers. The mass media that owned by private use their wide coverage influence the way how voters thinking on political issues and deliver biased information via political ads or news. The public of today’s United States lost their interest in politics while the organized interest groups increasingly put influence in the Washington DC to benefit themselves. This distribution of power is unjust in terms of freedom, equality and order.

The mass media serve as a powerful tool of interest and profit for their private owners. Since the new media and internet Service in the United states are owned by private. The priority of the mass media is to make profit or serve the interest for their owners. “In 2008, five corporations, Time warner, Disney, Murdoch’s news Corporation, Bertelsmann of Germany, and Viacom, control most of the media industry in the United States.” (Text Page 221). The media’s wide coverage determines what the public sees, reads and hears in their everyday life. To attract the population that not interested in the politic the media also use entertainment ways, polls and deep coverage to influence what the people think. “soft news refers to mass media programming that is primarily intended to entertain rather than provide news, but that also includes-as a by-product of the entertainment-information about politics and international events” (Kollman Page 613). The internet service is controlled by three major companies, they delivery different information to people that serves their interest. Under this circumstance, the voters in the United States do not get the necessary information because of the mass media are owned by the few tech giants thereby leaving the power those companies and the government elites who share the same interest with those companies.

While deliver selected information to the public, the news media often tend to favor one than others. The bias in the media servers the interest and political purpose of the dominant white wealthy population. They create stereo types or subjective information to the voters. In the film “Latino Beyond Reel”, one of the Latino actors have stated that “The media always present Latino male character as drug lord, dictator or hyperviolent. Latino female as prostitutes or mad women”. Those stereotypes that created by the media often leads to misunderstanding or prejudice toward certain ethnical group or race. On the aspect of political issues, the media also have clear bias towards different parties or political ideology. In the “Media Bias Chart” made by Vanessa Otero, the various media sources all have different level of bias toward left or right political views and those bias tend to serve the interest of the media.

Other than the biased media, the political advertisements also make a key influence on the voters. The political ads don’t work the way it should to inform the voters instead those political ads today confuse and obfuscate, making it more difficult for voters to translate their interests into policy. “While politicians can never hope to control completely either the content or slant of their free news coverage, they can turn to paid political advertisements over which they can exert complete control over the message.” (Text 215). The political parties today use short ads to catch the attention of their target voters and compete with their competitors. In the video “Top 10 Political Ads of 2016”, the political ads of the candidates of president election are mainly focused on arguing or disagree their competitor’s opinions to catch voter’s attention rather than deliver meaningful information to help voters make political decisions.

The more democratic a country is, the higher voting turnout. In a highly democratic society, the voters highly participate the voting process and make reasonable choice to elect their leaders. Unfortunately, the United States has the lowest voting turnout in the entire world. The public in the United States have low motivation to vote the voters are not necessarily informed than those non-voters. According to the data, only 50% of American are voting on president election, 20% in congressional and 5% in local elections. (Xerox Package Page 20). Because of the low level of interest in politics, the voters are usually not well informed about the candidate or the party that they vote for. “Making matter worse is the factor that many people acquire what little information they have from thirty-minute news summaries, thirty-second political advertisements, or eight-second sound bites.” (Kollman page 418). Decades of research showing that voters misunderstand the basic elements of democracy and they are swayed at election time by irrelevant information, which often result that they vote a leader against their own interests.

The elder, wealthy and educated population are the majority of the voters in the United States, but they are just not informed as the nonvoters. A recent study has found that over 90% of the voters have voted for the candidates that they know nothing about and when they don’t have enough information, they fall back on any biases to vote for their officials (Xerox page22). The reasoned political choice of voters is the base of a democratic society, if the voters are not capable of this then an effective government would just be an illusion. Also, as the elder population keep increasing, the old people are tending to vote more than the younger. The old voters favor the policies about medical care and social security and against more funding for public schools, which impact the life of those younger population that didn’t participate the voting process.

An interest group refer as a group of people that seeks to influence public policy based on a common interest or concern. “Clearly interest groups play several important roles in American politics. They shape policy outcomes through representation of their members, providing and avenue of participation, education, agenda setting and the monitoring of government programs.” (Text page 257). There are various interest groups in the United States today but the interest groups that backed up by wealthy, big corporations are the best organized and have huge influence of the government political decisions and policy making. Although there are over 35,000 interest groups in the nation and 90% of interest groups have political headquarters in the Washington DC, the most influenced interest groups are the interest groups are the one who represent big business and wealthy individuals. “Business groups account for approximately 20% of the organized interest groups in Washington. If one adds in lobbyists and law firms hired to represent business interests, business interests constitute up to 70 percent of all groups housed in the national capital” (Text page 258). Those interest groups that represent wealthy and big businesses have full time staff issue regular publishes, have clear economic self-interest. They are more organized to compare with other type of interest groups because they usually have smaller size and stronger financial support thus they can often provide their members reasonable amount of collective good or benefits.

Those interest groups in the capital mostly use four methods to gain influence over government policy, which are electioneering, lobbying, litigation and going public. The four methods that interest groups use to affect government policy making cause power to flow to the wealthy individual and the big corporations because they are better organized and able to afford the huge expense of those activities. In the United States all the candidates are asked to raise money by themselves through political campaign to stay in the office and the expense of political campaign keep become more expensive each year. This fact gives the interest groups a chance to make their influence by donating campaign money to the party and support candidates financially. The interest groups often hire lobbyist who is expert in certain field or have government connection to get connect with the politicians and provide them the newest information. “Lobbying often leads to the development of a close relationship between the interest group, the congressional committee involved in the policy area important to the group, and member of the bureaucratic department or agency responsible for the implementation of those policies.” (Text Page 274). In the video “Jack Abramoff: The lobbyist's playbook” the professional lobbyist Abramoff states that most member of the congress have involved lobbying and accept various type of benefits from the lobbyists that hired by interest groups, those congress members then vote or act in favor of the interest group.

The rest two methods that used by interest groups are litigation and going public. Litigation are often used by the nonelite groups by taking their case to the court. The interest group can either bring a suit itself or finance suits brought by other individuals or participate in the litigation process. “The result has been that many of the early victories of public interest groups have been overturned or muted by congress or other court decisions” (Text Page 279). Going public is type of outside lobbying. Interest group use the methods litigation and going public to mobilize selected citizen to contact or pressure the policymakers to win a favorable legislature. “Behind most telephone calls, letters, faxes, and emails to members of congress, behind marches down the Mall in Washington DC, and behind bus caravans to the Capitol, there are coordinating leaders, usually interest group leaders, mobilizing a select group of citizens to unite behind a common message” (Kollman Page 501). This outside lobbying often considered effective by the interest group leaders and received more attention than it should be from policymakers due to its influential in public. This method primary used by the interest groups with strong financial power and organization ability since it cost a lot to organize and lead big amount select citizens. “Precisely because outside lobbying is costly, and the strategies of interest group conditional on those costs offer clues to the underlying public salience groups are trying to communicate, outside lobbying can influence policymakers” (Kollman page 507).

The interest groups use those methods close relationship or pressure the policymakers to affect the policy making process and serve the interest of those interest groups. Interest groups using the methods electioneering and lobbying to build close relationship with the congress members and offer them many benefits to gain their votes. “Lobbyists try to influence the behavior of public officials. Because lobbyists tend to experts in the field, members of congress often turn to them for information” (Reader page 335). Such a close relationship makes the policymakers favors the interest groups rather than anybody else. “The unorganized, those without lobbyists on Capitol Hill, those who lack expertise, are largely on the list of uninvited.” (Text Page 275). In the video” The lobbyist's playbook “one congress member admits that he didn’t even care about the content of the bill that modified by the interest group when he was voting in favor of the lobbyist’s will. The interest group use litigation and going public to create an impression of huge public influence to pressure the policymakers in the Washington DC to reconsider or change their votes under the pressure of the public that organized by those groups.

In the current system, the interest groups that represent the wealthy and big businesses are benefited. By using the interest groups, the wealthy and the big businesses influence the policymakers to pass or defeat the law based on their interest. The government elites are also benefit from the current system by get their information and campaign fund from the interest groups that they work with. And at certain point the interest of the interest group also become the interest of the congress members and the bureaucrats. “The relationship is referred to as iron because other than the three major players, everyone else is left out” (Text Page269).

The system doesn’t provide an equality environment in the society. The people who joined the interest groups have more opportunities to get a better health care or other collective good, their voice have more opportunities to be heard by the policymakers. For those poor and people who outside interest groups, their needs are ignored by the policymakers because they don’t have influence or own a powerful media as the interest groups do. “This kind of organizations that are the focus of this study are expected to further the interests of their members. Labor unions are expected to strive for higher wages and better working conditions for their members” (Kollman page 7). The poor, and minorities are not able to make their influence on political and economic while the mass media is controlled by the dominant white male population. “Yet, those doors are still partially closed to the vast majority of this nation’s poor, women and minorities. The punitive direction of social service and welfare programs is demeaning, discriminatory in application, and ineffective in raising people out of their poverty………In addition, the plight of the poor is far too often neglected by those very same organizations claiming to represent all members of their targeted groups” (Text page 514). Gender also play a important role in this system, women are not guaranteed the same right as male do and often trapped by gender stereotypes toward them. “Although women’s numeric representation is not quite as grave today, a striking gender imbalance persists.” (Kollman page 586)

The system has provided more economic freedom than individuals freedom. The companies and business owners can put in influence on the policymaking process by various ways and their property is protected by the constitution. The individual on other hands don’t have as much freedom as those companies do. The freedom of individual is limited by the state that they live and other factors like gender and race. In the case of “Lawrence vs Texas” (Kollman page 366), the two adults were originally fined $200 based on the Texas law rather than their right of privacy. Although female have long been working side by side with their male partners, their freedom of pursing certain positions (such as political elections) and goals are still restricted by the biases and stereotypes. “Our findings strongly suggest that traditional gender role socialization continues to perpetuate a culture in which women remain unaccustomed to entering the electoral arena” (Kollman page 597). Individuals in the system also losing their freedom under the influence of the marketing and push of large consumption from the food industry. As represent in the video “Feeding Frenzy” the public are affected by the advertisements and marketing from the food industry in daily life. The public are not really have the freedom of choice when the food industry use continuous marketing in all aspect of our life to push us toward the large consumption of food.

The system has provided certain order and stability but not efficiency because of the intervening of interest groups and the fact that politicians must fundraise for themselves to stay in the office. In an efficiency government system, the laws are carefully examined before pass or defeat and most likely would not be repealed in short term. However, in the case Rostenkowski incident, under the influence of interest group AARP, 240 members of the house switched their votes from supporting catastrophic coverage in June 1988 to supporting repeal of catastrophic coverage in only sixteen months period (Kollman page 513). The fact of candidates must fundraise themselves as well created an inefficiency system. In the video “Congressional fundraising”, the congressmen and women admit that they must divide their fundraise goals to daily basis, average spend 2/3 of their time in congress do the fundraising and roughly 4 hours a day to make phones calls in particularly designed party building to make numerous phone calls to raise money for themselves or their party members. Under such intense fundraising activity, it is not hard to understand that why today’s system is inefficiency while our congressman and woman have to spend significant amount of time to raise funds in order to keep their position in the office. The system still maintained the basic order of social and economy by limit the activities of interest groups. The stability of the system is temporary while the poor-rich gap continues increasing and interest groups start to influence the basic need of the public like the decreasing of public education funds and student loan.

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