

A

This text from an incisive commentator on British politics and society, Anthony Sampson, uses many words and expressions which are useful when talking or writing about politics.

**B**ehind the public debates of parliament, the hidden pressures on government influence **legislation**<sup>1</sup> much more than speeches. Growing numbers of **Members of Parliament (MPs)** are themselves well-paid to represent commercial or special interests, sometimes more assiduously than their own **constituents**<sup>2</sup>. But the most powerful **lobbies**<sup>3</sup>, like the big **corporations**<sup>4</sup> or the **Institute of Directors**<sup>5</sup>, do not bother much about Members: they can go straight to **ministers**<sup>6</sup> and **civil servants**<sup>7</sup>. [...] **Lobbyists**<sup>8</sup> reach their annual climax when the **Chancellor of the Exchequer**<sup>9</sup> is preparing his **annual budget**<sup>10</sup> and receives **petitions**<sup>11</sup> from business interests pressing for **tax concessions**<sup>12</sup>.



- <sup>1</sup> law-making (person = a **legislator**; verb = **legislate**)
- <sup>2</sup> people who elected one MP (as a group = **constituency**)
- <sup>3</sup> interest groups who try to influence MPs (verb = **lobby**)
- <sup>4</sup> large companies (adjective = **corporate**)
- <sup>5</sup> organisation of top business people
- <sup>6</sup> MPs with top responsibilities, e.g. for health, education
- <sup>7</sup> people employed in government departments (the Civil Service)
- <sup>8</sup> people who lobby (see note 3)
- <sup>9</sup> finance minister (in the UK)
- <sup>10</sup> yearly financial plan (of tax rates, etc.)
- <sup>11</sup> formal requests often signed by lots of people
- <sup>12</sup> reductions in taxes (verb = **concede**)

B

In this text Anthony Sampson looks at the relative strengths of different types of lobbyists.

The interests of **producers**<sup>1</sup> – **centralised**<sup>2</sup>, **close-knit**<sup>3</sup> and **well-funded**<sup>4</sup> – inevitably win over the **consumers**<sup>5</sup>, who are scattered and **fragmented**<sup>6</sup>, and the most powerful pressures of all, like the road-and-car lobby, change the face of the country through backstairs pressures which are concealed from any public debate. Gradually non-commercial lobbies have also become much better organised, like **Friends of the Earth**<sup>7</sup> or the **Child Poverty Action Group**<sup>8</sup>, some

with hundreds of thousands of **paid-up members**<sup>9</sup>. Others relentlessly lobby Members of Parliament with mass-produced letters and **deputations**<sup>10</sup> to intimidate and encircle them. [...] They have done much to **counter**<sup>11</sup> big-business pressures with the help of effective publicity; but they cannot take account of **grievances**<sup>12</sup> of the individual, who can only **appeal to**<sup>13</sup> his own Member of Parliament.

- <sup>1</sup> manufacturers; a person or business that makes something (note words from same root – **product**, **productive**, **mass-produced**, etc.)
- <sup>2</sup> concentrated in one central organisation (noun = **centralisation**)
- <sup>3</sup> with close ties to each other
- <sup>4</sup> with plenty of financial support
- <sup>5</sup> people who use/buy products
- <sup>6</sup> separate; not centralised
- <sup>7</sup> large environmental organisation
- <sup>8</sup> large organisation helping children
- <sup>9</sup> people who have paid their membership fees, i.e. committed members
- <sup>10</sup> people sent to speak for a group
- <sup>11</sup> oppose
- <sup>12</sup> complaints about unfair treatment
- <sup>13</sup> request support from

## Exercises

### 46.1 Are these statements about the texts true or false?

- 1 Parliamentary debates are the main influence on legislation.
- 2 Some MPs do more for big business than for their constituents.
- 3 The most powerful business organisations approach ministers directly.
- 4 Business is influential partly because it is well-organised and has money.
- 5 The public is well-informed about all the different lobbies.
- 6 Non-commercial organisations are getting better at influencing MPs.
- 7 The individual can do nothing if he or she has a grievance.

### 46.2 Read the texts opposite and find three examples of:

- 1 nouns denoting people (Text A)
- 2 adjectives that can be used to describe social organisations (Text B)
- 3 verbs that can have a strong political association (Text B)

### 46.3 Find words from the texts formed from the same roots as the words in the box.

1 commerce	3 constituency	5 consumption	7 legislate
2 mass-produced	4 petitioner	6 pressurise	8 representative

### 46.4 Now match the words in the box in 46.3 to their meanings below.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 person standing for the interests of a group | 5 area represented by one MP                  |
| 2 person signing a formal request              | 6 to try to force someone to do something     |
| 3 made in large quantities                     | 7 amount purchased, used or eaten             |
| 4 to make laws                                 | 8 all the activities associated with business |

### 46.5 Explain the meanings of these words from the texts and put them in a typical phrase.

Text A: influence assiduously a climax press for

Text B: close-knit backstairs relentlessly intimidate encircle

### 46.6 Which word from A or B also has the meaning in *italics* and fits the gap in the sentence?

EXAMPLE *polite* His behaviour was .....*civil*....., but not particularly friendly.

- 1 *place where customers stand to buy things in a shop or drinks in a bar.*  
Customers are requested to queue at the other end of the .....
- 2 *the entrance hall of a house/building* Let's meet in the hotel ..... at 8 p.m.
- 3 *be attractive to someone* That kind of music doesn't ..... to me at all.
- 4 *vicar* Jo married a ..... and had lots of work to do helping in his parish.
- 5 *not criminal* Divorce cases are heard in ..... courts.
- 6 *round piece in a game* Each player takes it in turn to move his or her ..... around the board.

### 46.7 Answer these questions about politics in your own country.

- 1 What processes lead to legislation in your country?
- 2 What is the role of debate in government in your country?
- 3 How powerful are (a) big-business and (b) non-commercial lobbies in your country?

FOLLOW UP

Find more political vocabulary by visiting these websites: [www.number-10.gov.uk](http://www.number-10.gov.uk) for the UK and [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov) or [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) for the US.

