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Pressure Group Power in the European Community

by Alan Butt Philip, Bath*

The renewed attention to the strengthening of the internal market of the European Community heralded by the Single European Act of 1986 is likely to produce a quantum leap in pressure group activity in Brussels, as business interests line up to exert their influence on the many harmonisation measures that are in the pipeline. How great an influence have European pressure groups exerted up till now? In what spheres has this influence been felt most strongly?

The pressure group that spans all the Member States of the European Community is usually a shadowy and rarefied entity. For a start there are almost no such groups which are open to individual members – a very rare exception being the European movement which seeks to advance the European idea in all existing and prospective members of the Community. These Community-wide pressure groups, the “Euro-groups”, rarely adopt a high public profile since their job is essentially to influence key decision-makers in the European Community by means of direct representation to officials rather than by sponsoring colourful promotions or noisy street demonstrations.

There are nearly 500 Euro-groups in established contact with the Community's institutions. The Commission periodically issues a “repertoire” or list of pressure groups which it has formally recognised and these numbered 439 in May 1980. In addition there are some unrecognised Euro-groups and other lobbies active in Brussels which do not seek a formal or permanent relationship with the Commission. Also, some national pressure groups and individual large corporations (in both the public and private sectors) have established representatives and sometimes offices in Brussels. Nor should we forget the need for the governments of third countries to be strongly represented in Brussels in order to safeguard and promote their countries' economic interests: their diplomatic style and status conceal the strongly commercial reasons for the representation of what are often rather small nations in Brussels. Finally there are also those charitable organisations involved in development work (such as War on Want) in the Third

World which act as a channel for Community funds to the developing countries. They too have an interest in and an influence upon Community policies and their implementation.

A striking example of how the official Commission repertoire understates the extent of regular contacts between the Commission and pressure groups or non-governmental organisations is provided by the transport industry. The Commission's “repertoire” listed in 1980 only six Euro-groups as having recognised status, yet enquiries made in the late 1970's to the directorate-general for transport (DG VII) produced a list of some 130 European and national bodies with whom the Commission was prepared to consult on particular and relevant issues in the transport field. This suggests that there must be thousands of national organisations and pressure groups with whom the twenty directorates-general of the Commission are occasionally in touch.

Nevertheless the recognised Euro-groups are the principal pressure groups which deal with the Community and they contain as a category all the known pressure groups whose specific function is to represent their members' interests to the Community *and* whose membership is confined to national pressure groups in the member states. These are the hard-core Euro-groups which have been called into existence by the presence of the European Community on their economic and social agenda.

The official “repertoire” of the Commission recognised 439 Euro-groups in 1980. Forty per cent of these Euro-groups were industrial employer interests (165); a third of the Euro-groups were connected with agriculture and food (148); and the remainder (126) were a variety of commercial, service industry, trade unions, consumer and environmental interests.

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Because the decisions taken by the Community are characteristically the result of long discussions in a multitude of national and European governmental institutions, the scope for pressure groups which seek to influence is very large. At every stage in the journey that proposals have to make through the Community institutions there are possibilities for affected interests to press their case before those who sit in judgment on those proposals.

The Commission is a relatively open bureaucracy in comparison with most Western European government administrations and access to the directorates-general handling issues that concern a particular pressure group is normally not too difficult to arrange. Because the Commission is the source of most of the proposals that the Community's institutions discuss and dissect it must figure near the top of any pressure group's list of people and places to lobby.

Once the Commission has put its name to a set of proposals and (typically) sent these off to the European Parliament, ECOSOC and the Council of Ministers for consideration, three more European institutions are available to be lobbied. The 518 Members of the European Parliament, directly elected to represent public opinion in their countries, will normally attend the monthly plenary sessions of the Parliament, now usually held in Strasbourg. They can also be found at meetings in Brussels of the Parliament's committees, of which they are members.

Similarly the members of the ECOSOC will convene monthly in Brussels to offer their comments on Commission proposals. They are nominated to sit for terms of four years by their national governments. Most of their work is done in "sections" of ECOSOC specialising in particular topics, such as External Relations or Social Questions. So once more there are opportunities for pressure groups to state their case to ECOSOC members individually and as a body.

The Council of Ministers is the most powerful single institution in the Community's structure yet it is the most difficult to permeate. Direct representations to the Council are not easy to arrange and may not be the most appropriate way of gaining the attention of Community Ministers and diplomats. A more indirect approach, by lobbying government departments in the national capitals for example, will usually produce better results.

When the Council has finally reached agreement on a proposal, and this takes the form of a directive, decision or regulation having the force of Community law to back it, there may on occasion be scope for a pressure group

to challenge the legal validity of that decision. This can be done by taking a case to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg and calling upon the Community institutions to account for their actions there. The manufacturers of isoglucose, for example, took this route in 1977 and succeeded in overturning a Council of Ministers' decision to impose a levy on isoglucose because the Council had failed to seek the opinion of the European Parliament on this matter.

After the Community has made its decisions on policy there are often opportunities for Euro-groups to influence policy development and implementation through the many advisory committees that the Community has established, notably in the field of agriculture. Pressure groups generally will also keep a keen eye on the activities of the EC's management committees making day-to-day decisions. They can and do make representations to the Commission and national governments about the substance of those decisions.

Interdependence

The European Commission and European pressure groups need and feed off one another. The Euro-groups, and often national pressure groups too, need to obtain information from the Commission about its current policies and operations, and its future plans. Pressure groups seek access to the Commission as a mark of recognition, thus adding to their own legitimation with the interests they try to represent; and through access and the opening of bilateral relations the Euro-groups in particular hope to influence the attitudes and behaviour of Commission officials whose work touches on their own field of concern. In fact, because the Commission remains a relatively open bureaucracy at all times, pressure groups often rely upon it to provide information about events in other European Community institutions, especially where their activities are secret or shielded from the public view. The Commission is of course intimately involved with most Community developments and is thus the best source of instant information about the rules of the political game in the Community and the state of play on any particular subject.

The Commission for its part both wants and needs contact with the many and various interest groups in Europe. It too needs information about the variety of positions and aspirations of Euro-groups and national pressure groups, as well as factual information which may be slow in arriving from national governmental sources. Such information will often be essential material upon which to construct proposals and policies

which will have a Community application. In presenting its ideas for such policies, the Commission will usually hope to attract support from the Euro-groups in particular, knowing that any proposals that are opposed by affected interest groups are far less likely to survive the scrutiny of the Council of Ministers. In some cases, the Commission expects more tangible support from affected interests because these interests may also be closely involved in subsequent implementation of the very same proposals. For example, a large proportion of the Community's aid programme for the less developed countries is channelled through non-governmental organisations, such as War on Want or Oxfam, which are also involved in lobbying the Commission for more aid for these same countries.

Furthering European Integration

Wider objectives also govern the Commission's friendly stance towards pressure groups in general. The Commission is anxious to assert the identity of the European Community below the level of national governments, which are its principal interlocutors in the EC decision-making process. The Commission wants to extend its own and the Community's influence over national policies where this is consonant with the overall aim of furthering European integration. That indeed is the role assigned to the Commission in the Treaty of Rome, which has been adhered to by all the EC member states.

The Commission believes that it must make national interest groups aware of the scope and relevance of the Community dimension to their own specific needs and problems if the closer union of European nations envisaged in the Rome Treaty is ever to be attained. By drawing more interests into the Community net, a process sometimes referred to by the French word "engrenage", the Commission hopes to build a stronger European Community. The Commission has indeed on many occasions called into existence Euro-groups, federating what otherwise would have been disparate and divergent national interests into a single group of interests at the European level which would, it is hoped, come up with a single viewpoint for their sector. An important example of this phenomenon was the creation of "Eurofer" in the mid-1970's in order that the Commission could have a dialogue with the big steel interests so as to jointly work out an acceptable policy on steel rationalisation at a time when the market for steel products was collapsing.

The Commission will as a matter of policy always prefer to talk to a Euro-group with an agreed viewpoint

rather than have to discuss the same topics separately with national pressure groups. This not only saves the Commission time, but it places much of the burden of trying to reconcile differing national interests upon the individual members of each Euro-group rather than on the Commission itself.

In addition, pressure groups and the Commission may find it is mutually beneficial at times to by-pass the national government level and to try to settle or re-open at the Community level issues on which national governments are not prepared to give ground. This tactic has paid off handsomely over time for the savings banks in Europe in their determination to secure equal rights and privileges alongside the traditional clearing and commercial banks.

Enforcement and Evasion

The Community does not have its own police force to see that Community rules are respected in the member states; but the Commission is responsible for seeing that Community decisions and principles are enforced. In most circumstances the Community, and its agent the Commission, must rely upon national governments and national law enforcement agencies to see that Community policies take effect.

In many instances the Commission is wholly reliant upon individuals, companies, national or European pressure groups to draw its attention to dubious arrangements or clear infringements of Community policy. Frequently the Commission will then take up the case with the member state in question or take the matter itself to the European Court of Justice. In some areas – such as the operation of the competition policy – the Commission itself can adjudicate cases and demand satisfaction and/or penalties.

An interesting example of how the Commission can be impeded in enforcing Community rules occurred in the course of the famous "lamb war" between Britain and France in 1979-80. When the French government imposed a levy on all lamb imports from the UK and Ireland, none of the French importers directly affected exercised their rights to challenge the legality under Community rules of their government's decision – possibly because they feared reprisals. It was left to the Commission amid protests from other governments to pursue the case. Because this was a very public issue the Commission had enough evidence to do so, but this example leaves open the question as to how many other less contested cases there are where infringements of Community rules are tolerated because individuals or companies are reluctant to take their own government to

court and the Commission therefore does not know what is happening away from Brussels.

Thus in 1978, in relation to the installation of tachographs in commercial vehicles, the British Civic Trust encouraged the Commission to take the British government to court for non-compliance with the relevant EEC regulation. On trade agreements with non-EC countries, trade representatives and companies have often to ask the Commission to take retaliatory action on behalf of the Community to ensure that the terms of existing trade agreements (which often grant trade concessions to third countries in return for access to non-EC markets) are adhered to. Sometimes it is other governments that protest to the Commission about a member state's actions; official Danish protests led to the Commission outlawing the British government's Temporary Employment Subsidy in the late 1970's. Thus the Commission primarily reacts to information received rather than acting independently in order to find out what is the state of play on the ground.

There are occasions however when the Community's intentions are thwarted, either deliberately or by mistake. When the Community acting on a Commission suggestion decided suddenly in 1977 to impose a levy on the sugar substitute, isoglucose, it neglected to seek the opinion of the European Parliament on the matter. The isoglucose manufacturers quickly banded together and took the case to the European Court of Justice, and in 1980 the levy on isoglucose was declared illegal. When the Community then reimposed an isoglucose levy, using the correct procedures, it was able to do so without challenge. What this case also showed was how mistaken the isoglucose manufacturers had been not to form their own Euro-group in the early 1970's and thus try to exert some collective influence on the Community's decision early on.

A more intangible difficulty may arise out of the different national traditions of law enforcement. The British often claim that their administration is more conscientious in enforcing their laws than is the case in some other member states. Depending upon available resources, the administration will apply the legal rules laid down whatever their origins. In other countries, such as France and Italy, it is claimed that there is more of a tradition of selective application of national laws according to what is expedient at any one time. If such claims are true then a bigger Community burden would be placed on some countries than on others, and a certain amount of irresponsible decision-making would be encouraged if some member states believed that they need never actually apply the measures they had

agreed to. Recent research in this field suggests that there is some evidence for such claims, with countries like Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom having a rather "clean" record. But the intensity of local pressure group activity is often also a factor in persuading member states to postpone implementation of inconvenient EC laws.

Significant Examples of Euro-groups at Work

Nevertheless the Euro-groups can play a significant role in the Community's policy development and implementation, as illustrated by the following examples drawn from four policy sectors. The common agricultural policy would not have taken its present shape nor have been agreed so speedily (by 1968) if it had not been for the alliance between the Commission and dozens of farming Euro-groups which the Commission stimulated into existence. Agricultural commissioner Mansholt went out of his way to draw together the main farming organisations at national level into European umbrella groups and to impress upon them the value of reaching a common position. Mansholt's deals with the farming Euro-groups, and especially with COPA, enabled the Commission and Europe's farmers to present a united front, when the Council of Ministers came to discuss Mansholt's agricultural proposals. Despite misgivings on the part of some member states about some of the resulting changes to their agricultural policy, the original six EC partners did not feel they could overturn the complex common agricultural policy plans which Mansholt had so patiently and skilfully negotiated with the farmers, knowing how difficult it was to reach any kind of agreement with them.

In the 1980's, the power of the agricultural lobby and especially of COPA came to be challenged by the Commission and others who were alarmed at the continued scale of overproduction, rising surpluses and the open-ended cost of financing the common agricultural policy. The political support behind the status quo at member state level proved very strong and it has taken seven years of crisis and argument to change the course of the common agricultural policy.

The agricultural lobby has been greatly helped by its close connections developed at national level with national ministries of agriculture (traditionally somewhat independent fiefdoms) and by its permanent contacts with EC institutions, including heavy representation on advisory committees. By contrast the food industry, wholesalers, retailers and consumer interests have appeared to be weak, divided, marginalised and poorly led. It has taken cost pressures together with the

assertion of the hegemony of finance ministries over agriculture ministries at member state level to re-balance the policy. The producer lobby had been too successful and could not face sacrificing gains built up over many decades.

In the field of harmonising banking law, the Commission published proposals in 1972 which would have imposed a highly formalised single regulatory system of supervision upon all EC banks. The British bankers found these ideas most objectionable, and other bankers were not keen on them. The commercial banks' Euro-group, the *Fédération Bancaire*, persuaded the Commission after eighteen months to scrap these plans and to proceed with banking law harmonisation on a step-by-step basis, and at a pace which the bankers themselves could partly control through a newly-created advisory committee.

The Community would probably not have been able to enforce its policies on the steel industry, especially following the declaration of a "manifest crisis" in the industry late in 1980, without the presence of a strong Euro-group in the form of Eurofer. The Commission's agreement made with Eurofer has formed the foundation of EC initiatives to help the steel industry recover from recession, and restructure itself since 1977. Up to the mid-1970's the Commission discussed steel policy with a variety of producer representatives and formal groupings. They embraced a multiplicity of steel interests, large and small producers, and found it very difficult to reach a common position which they could present to the Commission. Senior officials in the Commission therefore encouraged the formation of a small separate group of large EC steel producers, which became Eurofer, thus establishing a reliable interlocutor with whom the Commission could negotiate and

implement steel plans, though these have met with resistance from national governments such as the Federal Republic of Germany. Because the Commission and Eurofer have come up with agreed plans to assist recovery of the European steel industry, the reservations of some national governments have often been overruled. It is indeed difficult to imagine the Simonet and Davignon plans being adopted, let alone enforced, without the consent of the main steel producers. So the formation of Eurofer and the close relations between it and the Commission had effectively changed the nature of the Community's steel policy.

The Photocopier Industry

Another contemporary example of significant Euro-group pressure is to be found in the photocopier industry. In 1985, the few remaining European manufacturers of photocopiers led by Rank Xerox and Olivetti were so alarmed at Japanese penetration of the photocopier market (which was estimated to have reached 85%) that they decided to try to fight back using the laws of the European Community in their defence.

First the photocopier manufacturers formed themselves into a Euro-group with the acronym CECOM. They marshalled and pooled their evidence and then they went to see the Commission to complain about the pricing of Japanese photocopiers on the European market. Japanese prices, they claimed, were not reflecting the full costs of their production and were in effect pitched to buy a growing market share, destroying the European competition at the same time. After some months the Commission upheld the European manufacturers' case and decided to impose a compensatory levy on all photocopiers imported from Japan.

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This example shows how the formation of a Euro-group was a vital stage in securing a hearing and prompt action for the European manufacturers. Only by joining together in such a group could the manufacturers assemble the range and depth of evidence for their case to be dealt with quickly. By making a joint approach to Brussels, they increased their credibility by arguing from a common position instead of appearing as individual companies each trying to protect its private commercial interest.

The influence of European pressure groups, although frequently deplored by public figures and private individuals, has been shown to be pervasive and multi-faceted. Yet it is hard to quantify. We know that lobbying continues at the national and Community levels but because there are so many centres of power in the Community – each national government having the potential capacity to block agreement on an issue, as well as some of the Community's own institutions – it is only in rare cases that the impact of the lobby is directly attributable or able to be measured. What has also been shown is that the well-organised Euro-groups do not let up their lobbying. They are prepared to take their case all over Europe and to persist in pressing their points whether the Community takes a few weeks or fifteen years to come to a decision. No Euro-group that does not command the skills and resources to campaign over a long timescale is likely to achieve success in its own terms.

Euro-groups and European Integration

Most Euro-groups see their role as essentially informing themselves of EC developments of interest to their members and of seeking to inform and to influence the Community's institutions. Only a minority of Euro-groups are constitutionally bound to further European integration, although COPA and the ETUC fall into this select category. The Commission has historically encouraged the formation of Euro-groups partly in the belief that contacts and discussions within such umbrella organisations would encourage a commitment to the Community and to the European ideal. There does not seem to be any particular evidence to confirm or to refute this belief. It is just as common to find Euro-groups trying to keep the Community out of their sector as attempting to interest the Community in their sectoral problems. It is more often left to bodies such as the European Movement, which enjoy considerable support from the business community, to make the case for European union. The Euro-groups must be concerned with practical and detailed policy questions in order to justify their existence to their members.

In their institutional aspects, the Euro-groups often echo the dilemmas expressed inside the Council of Ministers now that unanimity is so frequently demanded. The kinds of compromise position behind which the Euro-group can unite may be vague and fragile. Such compromises are worth little if those who dissent can try to undermine them by lobbying their own national governments. Nevertheless the cross-fertilisation of ideas that occurs when national pressure group representatives meet in a Euro-group context probably has an educative effect upon those taking part, and almost certainly contributes to a greater European consciousness and awareness of the possibilities that the Community could open up among an élite group of national opinion-formers. To that extent there is some merit in trusting to "engrenage" as a means of furthering European integration.

Euro-groups and Community Decision-making

Traditional Commission policy has asserted that the Euro-groups must be encouraged as the officially recognised channels of communication with European interest groups, thus avoiding unnecessary contacts with national pressure groups.

Clearly the Commission needs to talk to pressure groups both before it intervenes in an area of policy and as policies develop. It needs to understand the policy context and the problems, and the objectives of those over whom it is presiding. Such information rarely comes in adequate or rapid form from national governments directly. In this sense, the Euro-groups must be helpful to the process of Community decision-making. If they make others, who are MEPs or ECOSOC members, also aware of the difficulties or merits of particular policies, this too must be counted a benefit – since it is rare for any clear European public opinion to be expressed on detailed issues which elected or nominated representatives can then assess. If the Community is accountable to anyone outside the Community's own institutions, it is accountable to pressure groups rather than to the public at large. Some such accountability is probably to be preferred to none at all.

The political problem that arises however is substantial. Not all of the interests affected by Community policies are organised into national pressure groups or Euro-groups. Some of these may be able to rectify such weakness, but most such interests do not have the organisation or the resources to do so. Their views are then unlikely to be represented along the decision-making chain and it may then be wrongly

assumed that these interests are acquiescent or that their views do not matter. Some Euro-groups representing general interests, such as consumers or environmentalists, have grown up in the last decade to challenge the established sectional and economic interests. The Commission has tried hard to include them into the decision-making process. But the task facing such general interest Euro-groups is dauntingly large, and the resources such groups can command are pitifully small by comparison. They therefore concentrate on certain key issues, and let most others pass them by, to the advantage of narrower business interests.

Some of the remedies to this situation lie in the hands of the Community's own institutions. Secrecy of operation and lack of accountability are two of the principal supporting pillars of the European Community's neo-corporatist structure. The Council of Ministers could give far more information to the press, the public and to the European Parliament about its agenda, the options it has considered, and the course of its discussions. The European Parliament too could do more to lift the veil on the workings of Euro-groups and other interest groups vis-à-vis the Community. MEPs could be required to register their own interests and consultancies, and the Parliament's committees could delve in greater depth into the rationale behind particular proposals and encourage representations from pressure groups to be scrutinised in public. The European Parliament could also insist that the 300 advisory, management and other committees set up by the Community are made more accountable to it. In these ways the one Community institution with a direct mandate from the public at large could seek to extend the accountability of key actors in Community decision-making and to establish some control over their activities.

Limited Success

It would, however, be a mistake to infer from the previous discussion that the Euro-groups are monolithic, sinister and omnipotent organisations that shape the whole fabric of the European Community. In reality they are more often to be viewed as fragmented, ill-assorted, inadequately financed and staffed, and ineffective bodies. But where Euro-groups command the confidence of their members and are well led and well financed, they must be counted as major actors in the Community's decision-making game: the Community's experience of agricultural policy since the 1960's bears eloquent testimony to this. Nevertheless, it is often national pressure groups in the national capitals

that prove to be the secret weapons of the Euro-groups – both in infusing the debate within the Council of Ministers with arguments and information passed to national civil servants and, on occasion, in persuading a national government to block progress on a measure or to veto it.

Some Euro-groups, such as COPA or the Savings Bank group (GCECEE) clearly make a great impact on the Commission and other Community institutions by sustained research, network-building and outright lobbying. But other Euro-groups lead a half life, seeking fragile unity and self-justifications. Those Euro-groups who set their sights on collecting sensitive information and passing it up or down the line, do more often than not succeed in achieving their limited objectives. But Euro-groups whose aim is to foster European integration alongside the direct interests of their members will often be disappointed as to the former, if not also to the latter.

Future Developments

The history of the development of the Euro-groups suggests that we should not expect much increase in the numbers of such groups in the future, especially as the Commission and the European Parliament are now willing to discuss issues with national pressure groups on an occasional basis. Some new Euro-groups will probably be formed mainly as promotional or "cause" groups, as the recent arrival of animal welfare Euro-groups illustrates. Other groups – representing pensioners and the aged – are also beginning to surface.

Meanwhile the Euro-groups and national pressure groups are seeking to extend the range of their contacts beyond the Commission. They show a growing appreciation of the value of making representations to ECOSOC and the European Parliament, and to scrutiny committees of the national parliaments, where these exist. The most notable example of the latter is the 100-strong House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities.

There is clearly much scope for national pressure groups and individual corporate interests to get a hearing in the Community's decision-making processes, provided time and money are available. There are many occasions when a national pressure group needs to invoke help from the Community on a one-off basis. Commission officials will normally find time to meet such a group, but if an extended campaign is needed as well then some groups or large companies may set up their own office and listening-post in

Brussels. But many who have tried this tactic have not found it especially productive. It could well be that professional consultancies specialising in lobbying the Community will expand to meet this particular need.

The Euro-groups themselves face internal organisational problems in accommodating the requirements of new national members arriving on the scene from Spain and Portugal, as a result of the third enlargement of the Community in 1986. But consensus-building and decision-making will almost certainly be slower as a result of the addition of two new countries with different languages, traditions and levels of economic development to blend into the Community framework.

Enlargement could thus serve to make the Euro-groups more diffuse and lacking in coherence and effectiveness, unless more decisions can be taken on the basis of majority votes: once more the Euro-groups will probably mirror the problems of the Community's own institutions. The Euro-groups are only likely to become stronger organisations if the Community itself develops stronger common policies, which will then need constant monitoring and discussion in Brussels. Some existing policy areas may well be given greater emphasis in the 1980's and 1990's which would also lead to a similar result. More determined efforts to remove non-tariff barriers to trade, to develop the freedom to provide services across national frontiers, to enforce the competition policy, and to further industrial collaboration in research and development or the new technologies would all lead to rather more Euro-group and national pressure group involvement on the Community scene. The present lop-sided development of the Euro-groups, showing strength in agriculture and a few industrial sectors, is a commentary on how the Community itself has developed since the 1950's. Any change in the pace and direction of the Community will set in motion a compensating reaction among Europe's pressure groups, and the signs are that this can be expected in the near future.

Conclusions

This review of the power of pressure groups in the European Community has highlighted the dominance of economic, and especially business, interest groups at the European Community level. There is a corresponding imbalance of countervailing pressures from other Euro-groups representing the wider public interest – such as consumers, workers, or environmentalists.

The decision-making process in Brussels attaches a high value to existing policy agreements – the “acquis

communautaire” which is won with such difficulty, is even harder to revise or dismantle. The weight of the past in this respect is overwhelming and works to the benefit of those Euro-groups, such as COPA in the agricultural sector, which got in first.

Pressure groups at the national as well as at Community level are a vital and necessary means of articulating public and interested opinion about EC affairs in the absence of a stronger voice from the European Parliament or the scrutiny committees of the national parliaments.

The considerable secrecy surrounding, and lack of public attention paid to, EC decision-making provides greater scope for the Council of Ministers and the Commission to grant favours to well-established pressure groups, and makes it difficult for those not on the inside track to find out what is going on in the decision-making process.

Clearly, pressure groups which are well resourced have many advantages over others which either do not operate all the time at the EC level or which have no corporate sponsors. The latter can often concentrate their resources on a narrow range of policy or a very select list of legislative proposals. Broader interests, such as the consumer groups, have a much wider range of policy to monitor and influence without commensurate resources.

Pressure groups play a crucial part in the successful implementation of Community policies. Their consent and cooperation at the national government level, as well as at EC levels, is often essential for the application of EC decisions to be effective. It is also frequently pressure groups which alert the Commission to possible breaches of Community rules, thus acting as the eyes and ears of the Community interest. Of course, such actions will not be motivated by philanthropy alone.

Finally, the renewed attention to the strengthening of the internal market of the European Community heralded by the Single European Act (1986) is likely to produce a quantum leap in pressure group activity in Brussels, as business interests line up to exert their influence on the many harmonisation measures that are in the pipeline. In the past there has often been a noticeable gap between business enthusiasm for securing a genuinely single market in the Community in theory and business resistance to detailed Commission proposals aimed at realising these objectives in practice. It remains to be seen whether the renewed commitment to a strengthened internal market among the main economic and political actors of the Community is more than skin-deep.