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**A MARKET IN INFLUENCE?
A STUDY OF PERSONNEL, CLIENTELE,
METHODOLOGY AND EFFECTIVENESS
IN A LEADING UK GOVERNMENT
RELATIONS CONSULTANCY**

PETER MOORE

Brunel 
THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON

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Clientele, Methodology and Effectiveness
in a Leading U.K. Government Relations Consultancy**

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Peter Moore
October 1991

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. LOBBYING - A LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 The Growth of Political Consultancy	6
2.2 The Critique of Professional Lobbying	7
2.3 In Defence of Lobbying	8
2.4 The Industry Today	9
3. EVALUATING G.J.W.	
3.1 Personnel	12
3.2 Clientele	13
3.3 Methodology	15
3.4 Effectiveness	15
3.5 Limitations of the Study	15
4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF G.J.W. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS	
4.1 The Company as an Independent Concern	17
4.2 Expansion in the Late-1980s	19
5. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS	
5.1 PERSONNEL	21
5.1.1 Company Structure	21
5.1.2 The Background of Personnel	22
5.1.3 'Neutrality' Among Personnel	25
5.2 CLIENTELE	27
5.2.1 Client Types	27
5.2.2 Sectors in which Clients Operate	29
5.2.3 Policy Areas in Which Clients Operate	30

5.3	METHODOLOGY	32
5.3.1	Approaches to Lobbying	33
5.3.2	Specific Methods	34
5.3.3	How and Why Clients Combine Service Options	40
5.3.4	Methodology and Ethics	42
5.4	EFFECTIVENESS	45
5.4.1	Problems of Assessing 'Effective Lobbying'	46
5.4.2	The Value of <i>Parliamentary</i> Lobbying	47
5.4.3	Competence and Circumstance	49
6.	CONCLUSION	54
	POSTSCRIPT	57
	APPENDICES	58
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	61

1. INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary consultants, professional lobbyists, commercial lobbyists, government relations advisers, political consultants - all these terms have been used to describe a group of individuals and firms in an industry which, in its current proportions, represents a relatively recent addition to the British political system. Perhaps the most misleading of the descriptions applied to the industry are those involving the term 'parliamentary', as they imply involvement in a narrower range of activity than is actually the case. 'Public affairs consultancy' is one of the most fitting descriptions, though certainly not the shortest. For accuracy and brevity, the terms 'professional lobbying' and 'political consultancy' are used most often below.)

GJW Government Relations entered the field of political consultancy in 1980, its three founding partners having worked in the private offices of party leaders David Steel, James Callaghan and Edward Heath in the latter half of the 1970s. The company expanded considerably during its first decade, and is now one of the largest and most well known lobbying firms in the country, employing over sixty people on a full-time or consultancy basis, and with offices in London, Brussels, and, since 1990, Prague and Budapest. Some of the aspects of professional lobbying, as practised by GJW, which are examined below were first briefly explored in a report based on a work placement with the company between April and September 1988.¹ The questions asked in that report - 'who are lobbyists', 'who uses lobbyists', 'what do lobbyists do' and 'what is their impact' - resemble those asked by Grantham and Seymour-Ure in the chapter they contributed two years later to *Parliament and Pressure Politics*, edited by Michael Rush.² They remain, however, unanswered to a large extent, as these and other works are based on anecdotal evidence drawn from a variety of firms. As such, the intention of this study is to offer a more comprehensive examination of personnel, clientele, methodology and effectiveness, using detailed analysis of a single government relations consultancy.

The fact that such a broad range of questions need to be answered reflects the obscurity of the subject matter, at least in relation to other interests and cause groups in the political process. The confidentiality with which most lobbyists pursue their business - the implications of which are discussed below - inhibits the study of isolated aspects of their work; and such studies will in any case be of limited value as long as the part played by the industry as a whole is not placed in context. The position of GJW as a market leader means that this study should not only provide an insight into the structure and activity of firms of its type, but should also illuminate the role of the industry in general in the policy

process, and help us understand whether or not there indeed exists 'a market in influence'.

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- 1 P. Moore, *Work Placement Report 1988*, Department of Government, Brunel University.
 - 2 Rush (Ed), 1990, pp.45-84.

2. LOBBYING - A LITERATURE REVIEW

[The Oxford Dictionary states that to lobby is to "seek to influence (members of legislature)" or "solicit support of (influential person)". The process of lobbying in these terms simply involves the pursuit of influence by persuasion of those in power; and in modern political literature, pressure groups are seen as the main organisations through which such activity is transmitted. As such, professional lobbying has become incorporated into the academic debate surrounding pressure groups, though it remains a surprisingly small element of the discussion in view of three main factors. First, the industry is estimated to be worth some £10 million per year.¹ Second, it is not as 'new' as some works might suggest: Ian Greer and John Russell, two successful political consultants who have since gone their separate ways, first entered into partnership in 1969; and Samuel Finer recorded one public relations executive's self-assessment as "a consultant and adviser on parliamentary affairs to a number of trade associations and societies"² as early as 1958. Third, in recent years media have shown considerable interest in the activities and legitimacy of professional lobbyists. Observers of British politics have begun to pay increasing attention to lobbyists and their place in the policy process, mainly because of their considerable expansion in the 1980s; but the number of studies still compares poorly with those which exist on other groups.]

2.1 The Growth of Political Consultancy

Existing literature offers a number of complementary explanations for the rapid growth of the professional lobbying industry in recent years. Doig emphasizes the increasing "need for an informed voice or ear", as "insider interests are being challenged by newer, equally well-organised rivals, as in the case of the environmental or health lobbies".³ Furthermore, he argues that the Government's policies on privatisation, its rejection of corporatism in the 1980s and its commitment to projects like cable television and the Channel tunnel provided new opportunities for lobbyists.

Grantham and Seymour-Ure support Doig's views and elaborate upon them. On what they term as the 'demand' side, they point out the importance of the select committees established in 1979 as "an extra focus for lobbyists", along with the "pool of underemployed, already rather independent-minded back-benchers" which has existed since the 1983 general election. They also identify 'supply' side reasons for growth, from the extension of public relations skills into the area of government relations, to the numbers of 'political advisers' which proliferated in the 1970s, both areas providing people "well-suited by experience and aptitude for consultancy work".⁴

Other factors have of course been important in the expansion of the industry: Pagano, for example noted how the "growth [of consultancy] mirrors the spread and complexity of legislation, particularly with the EEC which can trip an industrial concern at any turn".⁵ Perhaps the most interesting interpretation, however, comes from lobbyists themselves. One journalist recorded of Gifford, Jeger and Weeks in 1983, that "underlying their ambition is a conviction that the nature of the British establishment has changed",⁶ a point reinforced more recently by lobbyist Charles Miller:

"The rise of lobbying consultancy has been inevitable - the result of the innate lack of empathy between government and the organisations dealing with it. People can no longer rely on the security of having been to the same school as the ministers they seek to persuade...As a cohesive establishment has withered, those who can forge links...between government and organisations needing to deal with it have become increasingly indispensable".⁷

2.2 The Critique of Professional Lobbying

The recent and rapid growth in the numbers of political consultants was first commented upon in media rather than academic circles. The disadvantage of this, however, is that journalists, in the search for good copy, see 'conspiracy' where none may exist. At the end of 1982 Tom James claimed to have 'traced' twenty companies offering political services, hinting at great clandestinity among these "hidden persuaders"⁸ - an unlikely prospect in view of the fact that all were commercial organisations who depended for their income upon some form of publicity. Margaret Pagano indicated the increasingly high-profile character of the industry in an article entitled *Not-so-hidden Persuaders* (1983). It described lobbyists as "streetfighters in the guise of professional persuaders" whose craft centred upon "persuasion by stealth", these being unhelpfully hyperbolic as well as contradictory statements.⁹ However, in their search for stories, it must be said that journalists were aided greatly by boastful publicity material which emanated from certain companies, fuelling fears about the 'buying' of influence. The most quoted example dates from 1982, when Labour MP Bob Cryer complained in the House of Commons that one such firm, Lloyd-Hughes Associates, claimed to have masterminded campaigns which had successfully changed Government policy using its contacts at the highest levels.¹⁰ Reservations about lobbying activity have been given substance by the fact that a number of MPs had 'research assistants' attached to them who were employees of professional lobbyists: at least three such cases were known about in 1982, a number which had risen to twenty by 1989.¹¹ These developments helped set the somewhat negative terms of debate surrounding the industry.

In the mid-1980s, Doig maintained a critical tone toward lobbyists expressing fears in successive journal articles that their growth had "adverse implications for the working of Westminster and should be reversed."¹² Former Labour MP Alf Dubs cited specific abuses - notably attempts to invite MPs to meetings at times which would have prevented them attending votes in the House of Commons - which have, he argues, "helped to give lobbying a doubtful reputation with resulting activity to bring the whole activity under some sort of control".¹³ Is there any evidence in existing literature, then, which can be seen to refute the poor reputation of the industry?

2.3 In Defence of Lobbying

It is of course possible that the criticisms outlined in 2.2 are based on either misunderstanding of, or lack of knowledge about the role of lobbyists. Alderman, in one of the earlier works of the decade to address the role of lobbyists, pointed out a fundamental problem faced by all would-be commentators on the subject:

"Because of the confidential nature of much of this [lobbying] work, it is impossible to form a comprehensive assessment of the political impact of parliamentary consultants".¹⁴

Lobbyists have argued that confidentiality is indeed as important to some private clients as it is to private individuals, and mount a general defence of their activity as complementary rather than detrimental to the democratic process. (Wyn Grant has noted that "one of the reasons why MPs are receptive to professional lobbyists is that they are overworked and poorly provided with research staff and facilities".¹⁵ There are thus gaps in the political system which are perhaps better filled by lobbyists than left vacant.) Alderman, while conceding that there are grounds for making more information publicly available about consultants, asserts faith in the propriety of the bulk of their activity. Similar faith was inherent in the comments of the Select Committee on Member's Interests in its review of the subject: it concluded in 1985,

"It is the right of any citizen to lobby his Member of Parliament, and if he considers that his case can be better advanced with professional assistance he has every right to avail himself of that assistance".¹⁶

Other arguments which defend the industry tend to be more negative in character. (Lobbyists themselves point out that abuses are relatively rare compared to, for example, the experience of the USA.) Alderman concludes that if their role does subvert the democratic process, "this can only be because politicians and civil servants allow themselves to become willing participants in the subversion process";¹⁷ and on their

superior political contacts tends to agree with one of his interviewees, that "differential access to professional lobbyists on account of the cost involved is indeed... 'the way of the world'".¹⁸ Jordan and Richardson argue that MPs themselves are often the most potent lobbyists, and make the important point that

"For no very clearly articulated reason, 'professional' lobbying seems to give rise to more unease than a cause or company putting forward its own case...It seems strange to defend lobbying only if the lobbyist promises not to be too skilled or influential".¹⁹

While such defences may be negative in character, they are perhaps helpful in keeping the industry in perspective, and illustrating that it is only one competitor among many in pluralist liberal democracies for whom the pursuit of influence is an important goal.

2.4 The Industry Today

The literature on political consultants, while often addressing the legitimacy of their activity, reflects the limited amount that is known about those working in the industry, their activities, clients and effectiveness. Even a standard definition of the role of a professional lobbyist is difficult to extract from existing literature. *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* asserts that their function is:

"to constantly monitor what legislation is intended for and what is actually going through both Houses of Parliament so that client organisations can seek to ensure that their views are presented in the best possible way to the decision-makers".²⁰

Such a definition clearly ignores the other areas to which lobbyists devote their attention, principally the bureaucracy and local government. Grantham and Seymour-Ure offer a more accurate, though scarcely more informative definition, stating that "political consultants are individuals or firms hired by clients for the purpose of influencing public policy, either directly or through the network in which policy is formulated, for the clients' benefit".²¹ More instructive is GJW's own description of its role to be found in the company's publicity material:

"Providing advice and guidance to commerce, industry and local government and other organisations on their relations with the Government of the day, the Civil Service, the major political parties, local authorities and the European Community".

Any such definitions, however, are inevitably of limited value - as argued below, a political consultancy is best defined by its range of activities and a realistic assessment of the interests it represents.

Equally open to debate is the number of firms currently operating as lobbyists. *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* identifies some thirty-five 'parliamentary consultants'²². Alf Dubs names eighteen 'specialist public affairs companies' and a further eighteen 'public relations companies offering a lobbying service',²³ 50% of which do not coincide with those listed in *Dod's*. Most recently, Richard Askwith reported the existence of "well over fifty companies working partly or exclusively in the field of lobbying".²⁴ However, these discrepancies can be accounted for largely by the ambiguous nature of the firms involved: in perhaps the most comprehensive study of political consultants to date, (Grantham and Seymour-Ure demonstrate how lobby firms can be divided into three distinct categories - independent companies, public affairs divisions of larger public relations companies, and subsidiaries of public relations or advertising companies.²⁵)

The work of Grantham and Seymour-Ure provides a useful interpretation of some of the themes associated with professional lobbying, but has a number of limitations. One shortcoming is that their study of the people involved in lobbying is based on examination of relatively few prominent individuals in the industry. Their discussion of clients is also limited by the fact that it is based on a survey of fifty organisations "which did not include individual firms or companies".²⁶ Moreover, they answer the question 'who uses lobbyists' by looking at the *estimated* proportions of a range of organisations employing lobbyists, rather than the more accurate method of examining the actual client-base of a lobbying operation. Their echo of Samuel Finer's thirty-year-old plea for "light, more light" while reflecting the undoubted problems of obtaining information about the activities of lobbyists, also indicates the relative lack of opinion which exists in relation to political consultants. A final (limitation of their study is its confinement to the role of consultants in relation to *Parliament*, as opposed to the other areas on which lobbyists may be seen concentrate their activity.) Perhaps for Cliff Grantham, himself a 'freelance political consultant' who was appointed to the civil service as a special adviser at the Home Office in February 1991, the picture of other consultants will become clearer as he finds himself an important focus for their attentions.

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- 1 *The Observer Magazine*, 14th October 1990.
 - 2 Finer, 1969, p.57.
 - 3 Doig, *Parliamentary Affairs*, October 1986, p. 524.
 - 4 Rush (Ed), 1990, p.46-47.
 - 5 *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 July 1983.

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- 6 Martin Walker, *The Guardian*, December 1981.
7 *Contemporary Record*, Vol 2 No 1, Spring 1988.
8 *The Sunday Standard*, 12 December 1982.
9 *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 July 1983.
10 House of Commons Debates, 2 February 1982, Col 127. Cryer unsuccessfully introduced the Registration of Commercial Lobbying Interests Bill to register "those who seek to organise the lobbying of Parliament to try to influence the course of legislation or its application as their sole major commercial purpose".
11 *The Observer*, 9 April 1989.
12 Doig, *Parliamentary Affairs*, October 1986, p.534.
13 Dubs, 1988, p.193.
14 Alderman, 1984, p.72.
15 Grant, 1989, p.73.
16 House of Commons, 1985, p.iii.
17 Alderman, 1984, p.74.
18 Alderman, 1984, p.133.
19 Jordan and Richardson, 1987, p.264.
20 *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, 1990, p.732.
21 Rush (Ed), 1990, p.45.
22 *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, 1990, p.732.
23 Dubs, 1988, pp.217-219.
24 *The Observer Magazine*, 14th October 1990.
25 Rush (Ed), 1990, p.49 & p.57.
26 Rush (Ed), 1990, p.60.

3. EVALUATING G.J.W.

Before detailed examination of the various aspects of a professional lobbying operation is embarked upon, it is necessary to study the development of the organisation from its inception in 1980 to the present day (Chapter 4), using material from the company's records, press and other media sources. Examination of this period is designed to facilitate understanding not only of its specific case, but to illustrate the development of the industry of which it is a part. It is not immediately apparent in which order the other aspects of the study should be addressed - whether one should understand what a consultant does before examining who it is done for, for example - though it seems logical to discuss the personnel involved in lobbying first, followed by the interests they represent, the methods employed to represent them and the effectiveness of this representation. As the nature of the topics addressed vary considerably, different approaches are adopted for its components.

3.1 Personnel

This is in many ways the simplest aspect of the study, due to the relatively small number of people involved. Only those in the employ of GJW on a given date are considered - in this case 1st January 1991. As the gaps left by the departure of one employee are often filled by the appointment of another employee at a similar level and/or with similar areas of expertise, a study of personnel over a given period may have exaggerated the relative strengths of, for example, researchers, among whom turnover is higher, over executives.

Some of the information about those employed at an executive level by GJW was obtained from the company's own publicity material; other information and details about support staff were gathered through short personal interviews. Relevant details are used as a basis for analysis of the personnel structure of the company, the occupational backgrounds, and, where applicable, political affiliations of executive staff. The significance of the structural, socio-economic and political profile of the company are discussed and compared with the findings of other works. In appropriate cases findings are presented in tabular or graphic form, though employees in the company's Eastern European offices are omitted from these due to the problems of assessing their political or occupational backgrounds, in view of, for example, the marked difference between the role of civil servants in formerly Soviet-dominated Eastern bloc countries and Western liberal democracies. Furthermore, the relative youth of the company's operation there and the fact that its recruitment policy differs from that in Western Europe, would distort the picture of the *established* company structure and thus limit the study's value.

3.2 Clientele

In the sense that political consultancy is a service industry - and that GJW is one of the lobbying firms which chooses not to register with the Institute of Public Relations as its code of conduct requires members to declare details of their clients - the examination of the client-base of the organisation is particularly important. Unlike the analysis of personnel, a fuller picture of interest representation can be obtained by examination of all clients who employed the services of GJW over a full financial year - in this case April 1990-April 1991. This avoids, as far as possible, the omission of certain organisations who may be clients only for a short time, and encompasses all the components of a full parliamentary year, accounting for sessional variations in the nature of the company's business. Early attempts to identify every client of the company since 1980 came up against technical difficulties, and in any case an analysis covering ten years of the firm's operation would distort the picture of the industry as it stands today: looking at clients over the period of one year balances representativeness (of the sample) with relevance (the need to be as up-to-date as possible).

Clients are listed in tabular form (Appendix 1) though, as requested by the company, confidentiality is respected; and only those which have been acknowledged publicly are named in the accompanying text. Clients are classified according to membership of one of four groups:

- (i) *Companies*: small firms, public limited companies, corporations and multinational companies.
- (ii) *Trade/Professional Associations*: industrial and commercial associations, and professional regulatory bodies.
- (iii) *Public Bodies*: local authorities, quangos, public utility industries, and educational institutions.
- (iv) *Charity/Pressure Groups*: cause groups, housing associations, ideological or single issue lobbies.

Clients are also examined in terms of their role in either public, private or voluntary sectors. These classifications facilitate discussion of the patterns and sources of the firms business, and allow for a general assessment of interest representation within a commercial lobbying operation.

A further typology shows the areas of society and the economy in which the organisations employing GJW can be said to work. Clients are ordered into one of the following categories, according to the area of their primary activity:

- (i) *Agriculture/Food*: agricultural production, food and drinks manufacture and distribution.
- (ii) *Development/Construction*: property developers, development corporations, civil engineering and construction firms.
- (iii) *Engineering/Defence*: manufacturing, electrical and mechanical engineering, instrumentation, defence systems manufacturers.
- (iv) *Entertainment/Leisure*: tourism, catering, phonographic and sporting organisations.
- (v) *Environment*: waste management, conservation, water.
- (vi) *Finance*: banking, merchant banking, insurance, investment, financial services.
- (vii) *Health*: health provision, research and pressure groups.
- (viii) *Media*: publishing, broadcasting, news distribution, advertising and public relations.
- (ix) *Miscellaneous Manufacturing/Retail*: 'high-street' suppliers and distributors.
- (x) *Miscellaneous Services*: trade/export organisations, other services.
- (xi) *Pharmaceuticals/Chemicals*: research, development, production and distribution.
- (xii) *Social/Political/Cultural*: local government, education, arts, miscellaneous voluntary and pressure organisations.
- (xiii) *Transport*: air, road and rail services, vehicle hire.

The proportions of clients operating in each policy area are identified (Appendix 2), allowing discussion of why certain areas prove to be more fruitful ground for the lobbyist than others.

3.3 Methodology

In view of the general low level of insight into the activities of political consultants, an attempt is made not only to describe GJW's approach prosaically - which is nonetheless essential for basic understanding - but also to quantify the amounts of activity in certain areas, and the clients on whose behalf it is performed.

After an examination of lobbying techniques and the approach adopted by GJW, the main services offered by the company are described in detail, based on research of company literature, records and interviews with the relevant personnel. The people involved with the various accounts identified which areas of service were provided to each client. The ways in which clients combine service options, and the reasons for their doing so are then identified and discussed. In view of the concern which surrounds lobbying activity, the ethical and professional issues raised by the existence of the industry are addressed, using both published evidence from external sources and verbal evidence from within the company itself.

3.4 Effectiveness

For reasons described in depth in 5.4 it is impossible to set any definite criteria by which to judge the effectiveness of the organisation. In the case of decisions made, for example, in Cabinet over takeover bids which have been subject to vociferous lobbying, it may take thirty years for minutes to be released which may not even then reveal the impact of consultants activity. This, however, does not negate the need to address effectiveness as an issue. The study thus attempts to identify factors which may indicate that lobbying activity has positive effects, and phenomena which may be seen to detract from this proposition. Examples of the company's 'successes' and 'failures' are used to illustrate the section, details of individual case studies being obtained through interviews with individuals within the company, consultation of the company's internal records, and by reference to press, media, and other literary sources which have dealt with them.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

A study of this kind inevitably has limitations, some of which can be of minor significance, others of which are unavoidable, but must be recognised if they may affect the value of the study in particular areas. With regard to the former, the main difficulties encountered are associated with the classification of clients. For example, the company has acted for some time on behalf of what was once a public water

authority, but is now a private company. It is possible that a future Government of a different political persuasion might seek to return the company to public ownership: in this way the nature of the lobbyist's client-base would change while the clients remained the same. Similarly, one might expect clients described as pressure groups to be categorised as part of the voluntary sector. However, groups like the Shopping Hours Reform Council, while sharing some characteristics with other cause groups, are funded primarily by private firms, and exist to further commercial rather than social aims - as such, they are more accurately described as private sector concerns. These examples illustrate the fact that the validity of the classifications used is open to debate. Such problems, however, occur rarely, and as such should not detract from the study's overall value.

It is stated above that previous works on the activities of political consultants are based largely on anecdotal evidence. While this study offers a comprehensive analysis of the people and clients engaged in professional lobbying, an equally comprehensive picture of lobbying methods and their effectiveness would be difficult to construct. While methods are described in general terms, they can vary between individuals; and abuses of privilege may go undetected as they are well hidden by the privileged. With regard to the effectiveness of lobbying activity, the volume of cases and the complexity of the issues involved makes comprehensive analysis impossible. The result is that assessment of these aspects relies more heavily upon reference to anecdotal material, and greater attention to qualitative rather than quantitative assessment. To balance this, however, the widest possible range of examples is referred to within the confines of information and space.

Perhaps a more fundamental limitation of the study is that it addresses only one organisation among many companies and individuals operating in the same industry. Certainly, GJW is unrepresentative of other firms of its type by virtue of its size - only one other consultancy, Ian Greer Associates, is believed to compare with it. There are also variations between firms with regard to the type of people working in them, the methods they use and their impact; though these may well be exaggerated by the competitive claims of firms which undeniably share many characteristics. Furthermore, in the sense that GJW is both a market leader and is perceived as one of the more successful lobbyists, it provides a worthy subject for analysis for its own sake, as well as being a potential model for others who may try to emulate its success by imitation.

4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF G.J.W. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

4.1 The Company as an Independent Concern

"I was working in David Steel's office during the Lib-Lab Pact, at a time when the Liberals were in a real position to influence legislation, and it was remarkable that people in industry who were going to be affected by budgets and legislation did not come to us, did not try to use us, and did not understand how the political process then worked".¹

Andrew Gifford, Personal Assistant to Rt Hon David Steel MP, 1975-80.

"We're on the receiving end of a lot of lobbying and we all know how much better it could be done...What we want to do is help industry communicate their needs with Parliament when it comes to drawing up legislation."²

Jenny Jeger, Political Assistant to Rt Hon James Callaghan MP, 1976-80.

"It will be an American style-outfit aiming to positively influence the legislation process".³

Wilf Weeks, Head of Private Office of Rt Hon Edward Heath MP, 1976-80.

Such were the inspirations and intentions of GJW's founding partners as they set up their new enterprise in the early months of 1980. Some observers did not share the trio's faith in their ability to bring anything positive to the democratic process. For Patrick Bishop, their arrival signalled the beginnings of an unwelcome "influx of Capitol-Hill-style professional lobbyists to the corridors of Parliament".⁴ Francis Wheen told readers of the *New Statesman* that "coming...only weeks after Roy Jenkins's speech, I find this [the establishment of GJW] all faintly disturbing".⁵ The Dimpleby Lecture to which Wheen refers indeed presaged the departure from the Labour Party of a number of senior moderates to form the SDP, a development which, at least until the 1987 General Election threatened to 'break the mould' of British two-party politics; though those journalists who interpreted the formation of GJW as a 'celebration of centrism' had overstated the political nature of what was first and foremost a business venture.

The turn of the decade was a time of flux in British politics for the further reason that the Prime Minister who had barely settled in Downing Street had declared her commitment to 'conviction politics', and was promising to hasten the departure from the post-war consensus which had been under increasing pressure since the late 1970s. Subsequent events indicate that fears of British lobbying reaching American proportions may have been unfounded; but the new political and economic environment which emerged as the

1980s progressed undoubtedly had important implications for British lobbyists, as indicated by GJW's rapid growth during the period.

Gifford Jeger and Weeks did not have an easy first year, and experienced their first failure in an unsuccessful bid to secure a breakfast television contract for *Good Morning TV*: Martin Walker claimed that "without the three of them to reinforce each other's morale, and without the support of their former bosses, they would probably have given up"⁶ in the early days. However, within eighteen months they were claiming credit for denting the Post Office mail-carrying monopoly in the interests of an air courier client, helping the Monteverdi orchestra avoid the payment of back-dated National Insurance Contributions, and winning a £920 million torpedo contract for GEC Marconi in preference to a cheaper American rival. After two years in business GJW were able to claim eight clients, most household names. By the end of 1984 the firm had annual billings approaching £500,000; and was reportedly "best known for bullying poor old Lord Cockfield into referring a bid for Sotheby's to the Monopolies Commission",⁷ a campaign during which the snobbery in City and Parliamentary circles that Sotheby's could hire such a firm was perhaps more surprising than the referral itself. Also within its first four years the team had been profiled in a number of daily newspapers, and had signed its first public sector client, the 'big six' metropolitan councils paying £4,000 a month for their support in the fight against abolition.⁸

GJW's involvement with Sotheby's undoubtedly enhanced the firm's reputation, so much so that it was approached by a number of public relations groups interested in an acquisition. However, Wilf Weeks asserted in December 1984 that his partnership's "main criteria" were "to stay independent and specialist", adding that soundings from Good Relations had been rejected for this reason.⁹ As the takeover bid became an increasingly common feature of the industrial landscape in the mid-1980s, the company was able to build on its earlier success by helping Westland fight off a European consortium, and through involvement in a number of other high profile bids: principally Guinness/Distillers, Dixons/Currys and GEC/Plessey. As the firm developed its ability to offer a wide range of services encompassing monitoring and research activities as well as work on specific campaigns, it evolved a public image to fit in with the 'enterprise culture' which had become the populist catchphrase of Thatcherism in its second term. This development was reflected in its attitude towards recruitment: in Andrew Gifford's words,

"We're looking for people with entrepreneurial ability, who get excited at the prospect of achieving something rather than looking at things as academic problems".¹⁰

4.2 Expansion in the Late-1980s

GJW itself fell victim to the takeover trend in May 1987, when advertising giant Lowe-Howard Spink & Bell made an offer that the company could not refuse: an initial payment of £1.8 million, with payments of up to £4.7 million to follow depending upon profitability - a considerable sum for an organisation with less than fifteen employees. However, the buyout, regarded by City analysts as a "very good deal"¹¹ for the buyers, included provisions for the continuing operational independence of the sellers, thus protecting GJW's much vaunted desire to develop its specialist services and retain maximum independence. When the takeover was finalised, the company had some forty clients, including British Sugar, VSEL, ISRO, Eurotunnel and the British Phonographic Industry. Its reputation continued to grow, particularly that of Gifford's as a specialist on takeovers, as indicated by Nestle's assertion that it hired GJW as a lobbyist in its attempt to acquire Rowntree "to make sure no one else gets them".¹²

GJW's continued growth was ensured at least in part by access to an increased client base which inclusion in Lowe Howard Spink & Bell offered. When the group disposed of the bulk of its public relations business in the Autumn of 1989, GJW was the only one of six companies in the division to remain with the parent (which changed its name to the Lowe Group). The disruption within the group, however, did not significantly affect the expansion of its subsidiary, whose client list by the end of 1990 included in excess of 100 names. This considerable growth showed signs of slowing only with the onset of recession in the late stages of 1990. The trend towards industrial concentration which characterised the 1980s had slowed towards the end of the decade, and with company budgets under increasing pressure, the prospects for a revival of the takeover/merger market were slight. Nevertheless, GJW's confidence was such that late in 1990 it opened offices in Prague and Budapest, planning to capitalise on the political, legal and commercial opportunities thrown up by the collapse of Soviet influence in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. Being the first and only UK consultancy of its kind to pursue such a policy, the company can with some justification describe itself as a market leader in the field of government relations as it enters its second decade.

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- 1 *The Guardian*, December 1981.
 - 2 *New Statesman*, 21 December 1979.
 - 3 *Evening Standard*, 14 December 1979.
 - 4 *The Observer*, 28 June 1981.
 - 5 *New Statesman*, 21 December 1979.
 - 6 *The Guardian*, December 1981.
 - 7 *Sunday Times*, 9 December 1984.
 - 8 *Liverpool Echo*, October 12 1983.

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- 9 *PR Week, 13 December 1984.*
 - 10 *Campaign, 27 February 1987.*
 - 11 *PR Week, May 1987.*
 - 12 *The Daily Telegraph, 13 May 1988.*

5. FINDINGS & INTERPRETATIONS

As a wide range of subjects are covered in the study, in the interests of fluency it was necessary to integrate statements of results with the interpretations of these results, rather than attempt to separate the two. In addition, some subjects can only be described prosaically, inevitably blurring the distinction between fact and comment.

5.1 PERSONNEL

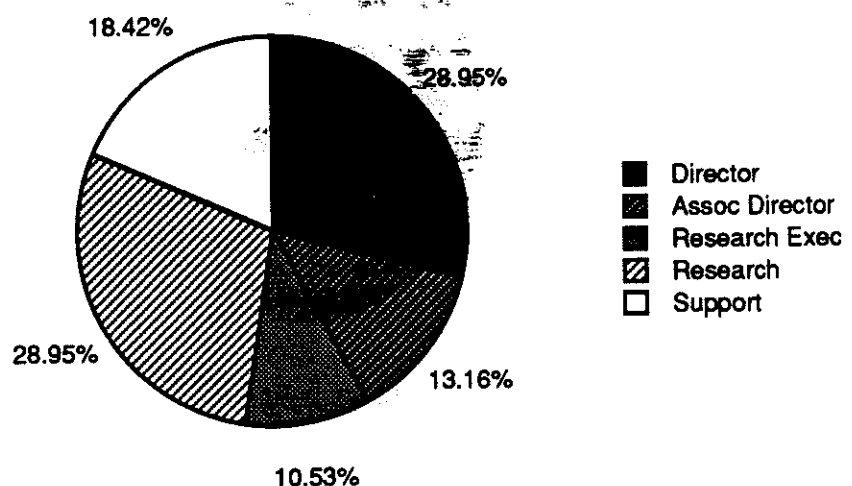
The study produced results with regard to personnel which can be divided into areas dealing with (i) the structure of the company (ii) the background of employees (iii) the political complexion of employees.

5.1.1 Company Structure

Figure 5.1 illustrates the basic personnel structure of the company's Western European operation. It reveals a higher number of executives¹ than might be found in many other small businesses; and a correspondingly small proportion of support (largely secretarial) staff.

Figure 5.1

G.J.W. EMPLOYEES BY POSITION WITHIN THE ORGANISATION



The low number of secretarial staff is indicative of the relative prosperity of the company in its early years, allowing for a high level of capital investment in computer hardware, enabling research staff to have their own equipment, and

reducing the need for secretarial support. The high proportion of Directors is perhaps best understood as a result of the attractive conditions of employment offered to recruits with established positions in other vocations.

Figure 5.1 refers only to GJW's full-time staff in the UK and Brussels offices - there are in addition twelve consultants who assist these offices, and a further six full-time executives and one consultant working in Eastern Europe. Of the former group, six deal with particular policy areas (namely agriculture, planning, health, environmental law, aviation and broadcasting), three assist in the company's monitoring activities, while three are available for general political feedback and parliamentary contact. The last group is made up of a Conservative MP, a Conservative Peer and a research assistant to Conservative MP Alan Amos.

5.1.2 The Background of Personnel

A recurring boast of GJW's brochures is the broad spread of experience in politics and administration which its staff can offer. Indeed, its employees can point to an impressive array of previous occupations (see table 5.1) In addition to its executive staff (seventeen based in London, three in Brussels), the company's London office houses a research unit, established in 1988, which now contains between ten and twelve employees at any one time, most of whom are still in their 20's, and almost half of whom are graduate trainees. The expansion into Eastern Europe involved the appointment of a former Secretary-General of the Liberal Party and Chief Executive of the SLD who had been involved with the establishment of a number of new political parties in the region, supported by a team of four in Czechoslovakia and three in Hungary. The former consist of a manager in the US oil industry, an information scientist, an industrial technician and a Czech civil servant; the latter of an economist, a lawyer with experience of international business management and a biologist who had worked as an aide to the Hungarian Alliance of Free Democrats. Such diversity is an important selling point in view of the high risks involved in the company's attempt to be first successful political consultancy operating in Eastern and Central Europe.

The breadth of occupational backgrounds from which the company's Western European consultants are drawn (shown proportionally in figure 5.2) is a reflection of the company's desire to develop specialist services across a range of policy areas. It also casts doubt on the image of lobbyists as political insiders abusing the channels of influence to which they have access. Having said this, the

G.J.W. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS EXECUTIVE PERSONNEL

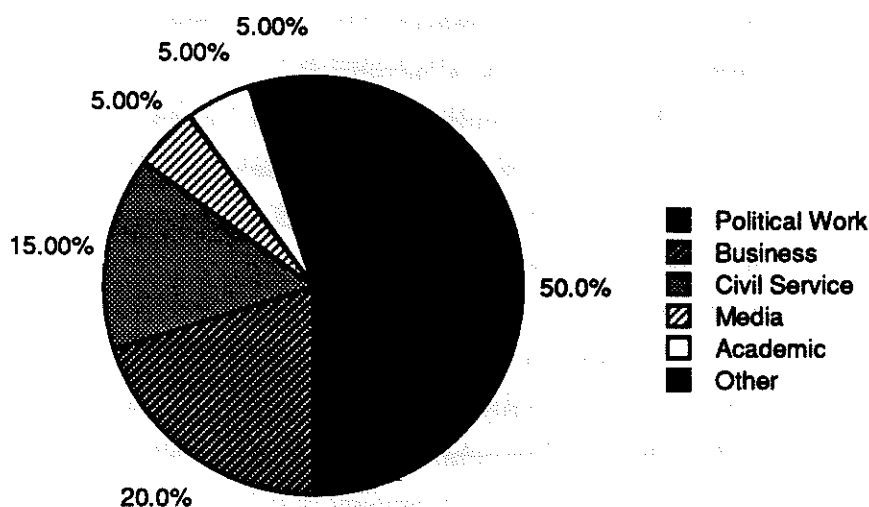
Table 5.1

NAME	POSITION	JOINED GW	PREVIOUS OCCUPATION
Andrew Gifford	Managing Director	1980	Personal Assistant: Rt Hon David Steel 1975-80.
Wilf Weeks	Managing Director	1980	Head of Private Office: Rt Hon Edward Heath 1976-80; Conservative Central Office.
Jenny Jeger	Director	1980	Political Assistant: Rt Hon James Callaghan 1976-80; Researcher: Hansard Society.
Nigel Clarke	Director	1985	Head Home Affairs & Political Sections: CRD; Researcher: CBI, Rt Hon Tom King.
Ann Dawson	Director	1986	Press Unit: US Embassy; CBI Party Unit; Press Officer: Liberal Party; Private Sec: Rt Hon David Steel.
Nic Gibbon	Director	1984	Pharmaceutical Industry Manager; Assistant: Sir Jack Stewart Clark MEP (Conservative).
Phillip Henderson	Director	1985	Parliamentary Affairs Consultant; Journalist.
Tony Hunt	Director	1984	Head of Home Affairs Section: Conservative Research Department.
Jay Radway	Director	1987	Republican Campaign Manager (US); miscellaneous corporate finance positions.
Stephen Stacey	Director	1987	Public Affairs Consultant; History & Politics Lecturer: Oxford & Brunel Universities
Clare Wenner	Director	1984	Principal: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
Stephen Bramall	Associate Director	1990	Private Secretary: Minister of State, Department of Transport
Patrick Brooks	Associate Director	1989	UK Permanent Representative to the EC; Commercial Attache: GB Embassy, Bangkok
Andrew Ellis	Associate Director	1990	Chief Executive: Social & Liberal Democrats; Secretary-General: Liberal Party
Jurgen Koch	Associate Director	1990	Internal Secretary: German Trade Union; Researcher to MEP; Development Consultant
Tony Page	Associate Director	1990	Local Government Officer: Labour Party; Investigator: Local Government Ombudsman
Paul Barnes	Research Executive	1989	Miscellaneous Business
Rory Chisholm	Research Executive	1988	With Nat West Bank, Wood Mackenzie (Stockbrokers), the British Council in Berlin
Henrietta Clarke	Research Executive	1988	Research Assistant to a number of MEPs and an MP; Sales: Multitone Electronics PLC
Adrian Veale	Research Executive	1989	Freelance Translator

prevalence of consultants whose pre-lobbying experience centres on civil service or political work is marked. The former are essential as, in Gifford's words, they are "able to put their arguments in a form that can be easily digested by both civil servants and politicians";² while the dominance of the latter can be seen as part of a general trend towards 'professionalization' in politics, itself a result of the specialisation in an increasingly complex society.

Figure 5.2

G.J.W. EXECUTIVES BY OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND



One important symptom of 'professionalisation', the rise of ideologically motivated career politicians, policy advisers and 'think tanks', has been most marked on the political right, as indicated by a Conservative Party advertisement in a careers journal in 1990 offering "comprehensive training, nationwide opportunities, exciting challenging work, long term career prospects and competitive salaries".³ The Institute of Economic Affairs, the Centre for Policy Studies and the No 10 Policy Unit all played a role in setting the Thatcherite agenda in the 1980s - but the left has also succumbed to the temptations of such groups, with the establishment of the Institute for Public Policy Research in 1988. These, however, are new names rather than a new development: the CBI (which as table 5.1 shows has housed a number of individuals now engaged in lobbying) and the Trade Unions have always performed political research functions; and ministerial special advisers were "established as a long-term and widespread phenomenon"⁴ as early as 1974. What is new about such individuals and organisations is the growth in their numbers, their proximity to decision-makers,

and the increasing career interchange between the worlds of policy advice and active politics. With the increased prominence of theoreticians and tacticians in politics, it is perhaps not surprising that a market has developed for an industry which specialises in the tactics of dealing with government. Both lobbyists and advisers are indeed 'policy entrepreneurs', providing not only suitable recruits for each others industries, but enterprising enough to make a career out of a somewhat abstract subject.

As politics becomes a more professionalized business, however, it does not necessarily become more meritocratic. Indeed, in the sense that 'merit' is most commonly judged by academic qualification - a poor arbiter as long as socio-economic inequalities remain stark - it can mean the opposite. It is fair to say that a certain amount of social advantage, and the access to a wide range of contacts which this often provides, in addition to mere knowledge of the political system, is important in gaining the ear of those in positions of power. GJW undoubtedly benefits from having 'well-connected' executives - two of its Directors are niece and nephew of, respectively, a Labour Peer and a current Cabinet Minister - but there are many more potentially useful connections enjoyed by the company simply by virtue of the social circles to which many of its employees have access. This is not necessarily a criticism of professional lobbying *per se* - while it may be unfair that private connections are often more potent in providing access to decision-makers than any amount of public lobbying, it is important to note that it is an injustice perpetuated throughout society, for which those in power, rather than those seeking to influence them, are to blame. However, certain *individual* lobbyists may indeed be considered to be part of a socio-economic elite which, in the sense that it is "largely self-recruiting and therefore to a marked degree socially cohesive",⁵ remains an important obstacle to a more meritocratic society. This has been reflected in the company's recruitment policy, which has traditionally seen the majority of appointments made on a highly personal basis.

5.1.3 'Neutrality' Among Personnel

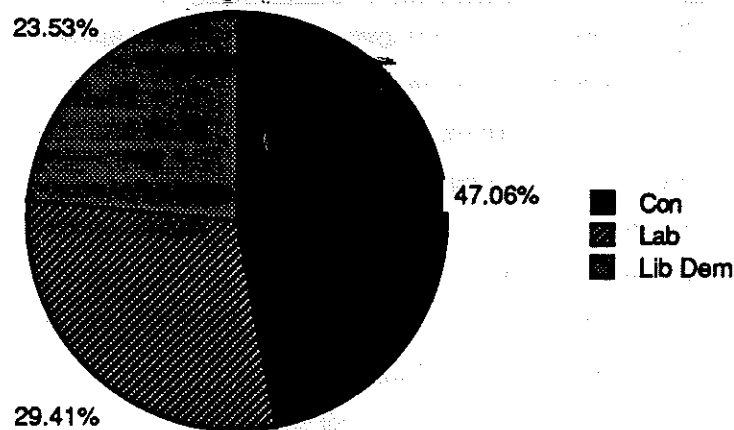
Many lobbying firms claim the ability to draw on contacts across the political spectrum. It is possible, however, that their claim is a marketing boast rather than an accurate reflection of multi-partism in the industry. Early newspaper articles concerning GJW made much of the company's "political ecumenicalism"⁶ and "cross-party political contacts",⁷ and this was indeed represented vividly by the backgrounds of the company's founding partners. However, while a high level of

political affiliation and activism among employees remains a feature of the organisation⁸, as it has grown its apparently perfect political balance has inevitably been distorted. This has taken the form of an increased prevalence of Conservatives (figure 5.3). It is perhaps significant for the future that the same pattern is more marked among research than executive staff at present; though this may be due to the fact that the former represent a smaller sample in which Conservatives are temporarily over-represented.

As well as indicating that those on the political right may be attracted by the entrepreneurial character of an industry which apparently rose with the 'enterprise culture' of the 1980s, the relative dominance of Conservative personnel can also be interpreted as evidence of reservations on the political left about the legitimacy of the industry as a whole. Nevertheless, the combined proportion of executive staff who are active Labour and (significantly in view of their national numbers) Liberal Democrat activists, is at 53%, significant enough to challenge Grantham and Seymour-Ure's assertion of consultants in general that "the majority of those who have been (or remain) active in party politics are Conservative".⁹

Figure 5.3

**G.J.W. EXECUTIVE STAFF BY
POLITICAL AFFILIATION**



In the sense that the government with whom the industry deals is a Conservative one, it is perhaps natural to expect Conservative predominance among personnel. With a general election anticipated in late 1991 or early 1992, the company recruited a former Labour Local Government Officer and adviser to the Shadow Environment Secretary in 1990 to improve relations with the party, implying that

the political complexion of lobbying organisations may change with that of the Government. This is not to say, however, that a change of Government would be conducive to the continued success of the industry - calls for regulation and registration of lobbyists are indeed strongest in the Labour Party.

5.2 CLIENTELE

No assessment of the role of professional lobbyists would be meaningful without discussion of the interests or causes they represent, yet it is precisely this area which is most neglected in existing literature, not least because of the confidentiality with which many firms treat their client lists. Most works refer to a number of high profile campaigns where the use of consultants has been public knowledge. However, this is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the sources and proportions of the business on which lobbyists rely. Based on analysis of organisations employing GJW during the 1990-91 financial year, these issues are addressed below, beginning with a study of the *type* of organisations which employ the services of a professional lobbyist, followed by examination of the *sector* of the economy in which they operate, and the *policy areas* which are the main focus of their activities.

5.2.1 Client Types

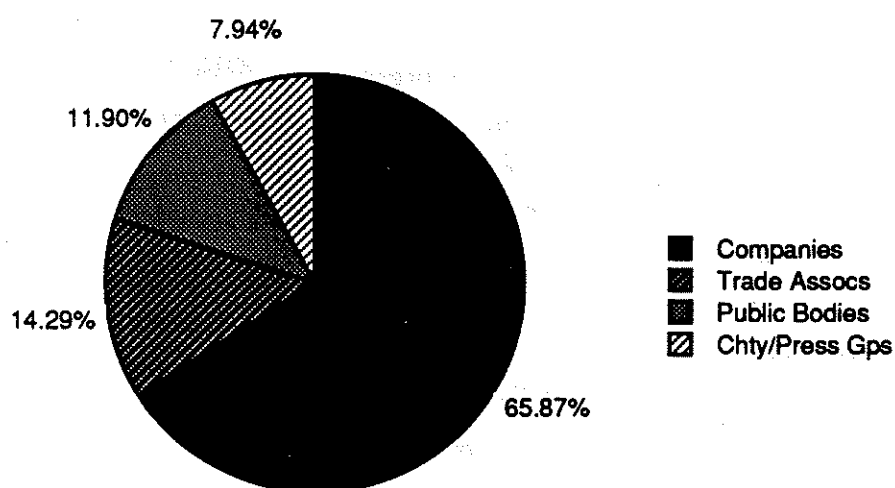
A total of 126 organisations were found to have employed the services of GJW Government Relations over the 1990-91 financial year. At least 80% of these were clients at any one time, considerably more than the fifty ascribed to the firm by Grantham and Seymour-Ure as recently as 1990.¹⁰ Figure 5.4 illustrates the overwhelming importance of individual firms in forming the company's client-base. This reliance is normally greater in financial terms, as a number of clients in the charity/pressure groups section are non-fee paying; though other pressure groups are capable of paying higher fees than most private sector clients.¹¹

The 'companies' category includes multinational concerns, such as Canadian-owned property developer Olympia & York, as well as firms whose operations are largely confined to the UK, such as British Sugar and shipbuilding and armaments manufacturer VSEL. The 'Trade Associations' category includes organisations representing specific industries, professional bodies such as the Law Society, and governing bodies such as the Football League. 'Public Bodies' encompasses local authorities (including Westminster City Council),

quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations like the Nature Conservancy Council, public utilities, a Further Education College, and an overseas body, the Hong Kong Legislative Council (OMELCO). A number of housing associations feature in the 'Charity/Pressure Groups' category, as do groups like the Haemophilia Society.

Figure 5.4

CLIENT ORGANISATIONS BY TYPE



The stress placed on the cross-party nature of the company implies that it is capable of representing a wide range of concerns. That it *can* represent them is evident by the fact that they are clients; that it *does* represent them in proportions which would do justice to the socio-economic interests (supposedly) represented by the political parties is certainly not the case. The absence of labour organisations and consumer groups is to a certain extent due to their ability to carry out their own lobbying activities: Trade Unions have sponsored MPs, for example, while groups like the Consumers Association can indeed boast over "twenty years experience of the detailed workings of the processes of Parliament".¹² However, the latter's efforts are directed largely at the few Private Member's Bills which stand a chance of becoming law; and it has been shown elsewhere that the attempt of the PLP's Trade Union Group "to act as the corporate agent of the unions in Parliament has not been very effective".¹³ Some such organisations would undoubtedly value the additional services of lobbyists, but are clearly excluded because of the costs involved, so much so that it is fair to challenge the pluralist assertion that as companies and cause groups can have their own payroll lobbyists, "the fact of for-hire lobbyists seems to be beside the point".¹⁴ Such comments indeed pay too little attention to the

advantages enjoyed by the business community in their relations with government: as Miliband argues,

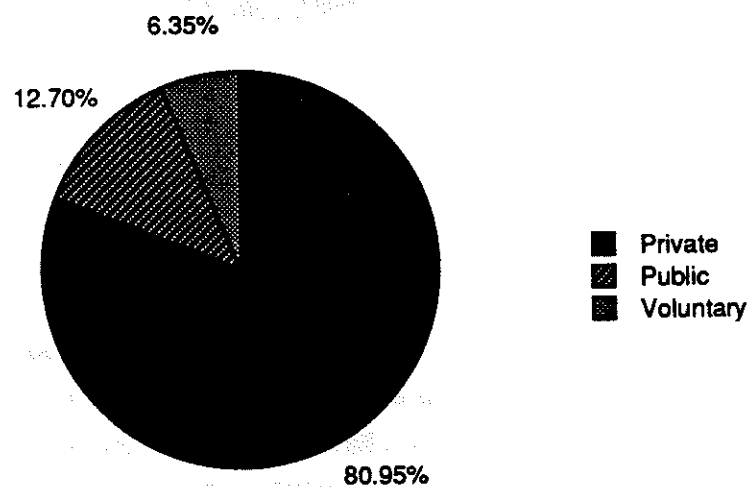
“What is wrong with pluralist-democratic theory is...its claim (very often its implicit assumption) that the major organised ‘interests’...compete on more or less equal terms, and that none of them is therefore able to achieve a decisive and permanent advantage in the process of competition. This is where ideology enters, and turns observation into myth”.¹⁵

5.2.2 Sectors in which Clients Operate

While the predominance of organisations in the private sector (figure 5.5) among clients is overwhelming, the fact that almost 13% operate in the public sector is significant. It indicates not only the flexibility of the lobbyist, but a perceived need among local authorities and quangos for assistance in presenting their respective cases to the institutions of central government.

Figure 5.5

CLIENT ORGANISATIONS BY SECTOR



In the case of local government, this can, in part, be attributed to the fact that councillors remain technically amateurs in the field of politics. Having said this, it is the professionals rather than the politicians in local government who usually deal with the lobbyists, and it is conceivable that the use of consultants is an indication of the poor state of relations between centre and periphery in contemporary British politics, a view supported by the fact that all four of GJW's local authority clients are Conservative controlled. Thus, if a market in influence

exists in the public sector, it may merely be filling a 'good-will' gap created by the alienation of local from central government, accelerated by the policy of the latter which has been described as "the most centralist since the Stuart monarchs of the 17th century".¹⁶

The proportion of clients operating in the voluntary sector is of further significance, in that the figure represents more than "merely a public relations exercise" on behalf of the lobbyist, as has been suggested elsewhere.¹⁷ Furthermore, it shows that the industry is capable of advocacy on behalf of less well-funded interests; and adds weight to the argument advanced by Alderman in his discussion of consultants:

"It is perhaps conceivable that a system, akin to the legal aid scheme or that provided by citizens' advice bureaux, might be instituted, by which poor pressure groups could receive subsidized advice and help from professional lobbyists, on the basis of a test of means. There are, after all, far worse ways of spending public money".¹⁸

In view of the fact that the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux has itself turned to GJW for consultancy services, this would clearly be an attractive proposal for many groups; and arguably should become a statutory requirement if the industry were to acquire professionally recognised status. Lobbyists would be foolish to resist such a proposal as it would give their industry not only a more even-handed image, but would provide a relatively stable source of income which could prove valuable in times of recession in the private sector.

5.2.3 Policy Areas In Which Clients Operate

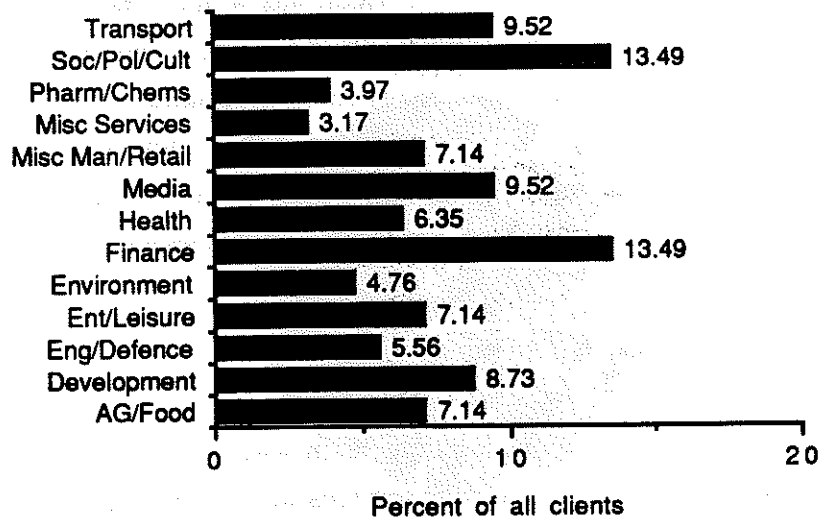
Figure 5.6 shows the socio-economic areas in which GJW's clients operate. It indicates that the company can offer services in a wide range of policy areas, either through its own full-time staff or with the help of specialist consultants. The proportions of client organisations operating in each area can be explained with reference to the following factors:

- (i) *Expertise*: clients are obviously attracted to firms with expertise in specific policy areas. For example, Andrew Gifford built a strong reputation in the mid-1980s as a specialist on takeovers, which provided GJW with not only lucrative contracts but valuable publicity and future business as many clients extend contracts after initial campaigns have been concluded. The

firm's latest publicity material includes a document describing its developing expertise in local government, planning and transport, based on the experience of three of its executives who have worked or served in local government and one whose experience comes from the Department of Transport. In addition to the transport clients shown in figure 5.6, this is a clear attraction for most organisations in the development category, and those in the social/political/cultural group who are concerned with local government (approximately 50%). Similarly, the presence of a former Principal at the Ministry of Agriculture helps account for the large proportion of clients involved in the sector. In the sense that a substantial amount of the firm's business comes to it, rather than vice-versa, in the words of one Director, "the client list comes to resemble the account-handlers in the same way that dogs are said to resemble their owners".

Figure 5.6

**POLICY AREAS IN WHICH CLIENTS FUNCTION
(AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS)**



(ii) *Availability of resources*: the high proportions of clients operating in the financial and property development sectors can be taken as evidence of the economic power enjoyed by both industries, with considerable resources to devote to lobbying (and considerable vested interests to protect). Most successful lobbyists, GJW included, also represent companies with tobacco, alcohol and/or defence interests, stable sources of business in a world where smoking, drinking and war continue to yield huge profits, a proportion of which are made available for the betterment of increasingly strained

'government relations'. Ten of GJW's 1990-91 clients feature in the FT-SE 100 Index - it can be assumed that the great majority of the remaining 90 employ one of the other professional lobbyists operating in and around Whitehall and Westminster.

(iii) *Legislative trends*: while clients were examined over a full financial year, to avoid as far as possible any variations in Parliamentary sessional business, inevitably some major pieces of legislation may take longer than anticipated by the party managers. This was the case with the Broadcasting Bill, which in part explains for the relative strength of the media group among GJW's clients for 1990-91. The annual consideration of the Finance Bill can similarly be seen to account for the consistently high proportion of organisations involved with financial services among clients.

One Director has stated that the main reason some clients have retained GJW is simply to stop their competitors hiring them when a particular piece of legislation has been anticipated. As such, the industry can be seen to develop a momentum of its own, as clients are won through reputation as much as performance. Grantham and Seymour-Ure wrote in 1990, "though few companies claim to specialize in particular sectors of policy...certain patterns are discernable...GJW has regularly been hired by companies involved in takeover bids".¹⁹ This was indeed true in the mid/late 1980s; though it was based largely on the clients attracted by one senior partner in the firm, who, while having recognised talents in an area which provided an over-representative portion of the company's income, was only one of some 15-30 employees during the period. Of the clients employing GJW in 1990-91 very few were in fact engaged in takeovers - it is thus not strictly true that the patterns of business of lobbying companies follow their public reputations.

5.3 METHODOLOGY

In view of the general lack of knowledge about lobbying methods, and the suspicion surrounding the activities of some lobbyists, a study of methodology is important to illuminate not only the ways in which political consultants work, but to decide whether or not there is any basis for the criticisms levelled at them. The study of methodology below is divided into four sections: the first involves a discussion of lobbying styles, and is followed by examination of the specific services offered by the company, their usage by different types of client, and their implications for the political process in general. Any

unreferenced quotations are taken from the company's publicity material or internal documents.

5.3.1 Approaches to Lobbying

The close relationship enjoyed by political consultants and the advertising industry has left the former open to charges that they offer little more than specialised public relations. This accusation has exposed two distinct schools of thought in the industry. One, expounded chiefly by Charles Miller, holds that an understanding of the nature of power in British political institutions, notably the civil service, is more important than glossy public campaigning. In his words,

"Dealing with it [Government] is a science - understanding its power balances and the way its policy-making processes work - coupled with the art of advocacy and negotiation".²⁰

Miller's critical view of the "lightweight element" of public relations-style lobbying, which he has asserted is "professionally bankrupt"²¹, is not, however, shared throughout the industry - one firm, Political Communications, states in its publicity material that "we remain convinced that general public relations skills are required to tackle the majority of client problems"²². It is of course possible that the debate has more to do with competitive professionalism than variations in actual activity²³ - most operations offer variations of the services outlined below. Having said this, lobbying techniques are indeed an important issue within an industry where some relish the prospect of professional recognition, while others are happy to practice as amateurs, to avoid the regulation which might well come with recognition.

According to Stephen Aris, "of all the British firms, GJW is the one most closely modelled on American practice".²⁴ Indeed, prior to setting up the company, Gifford had approached Jim Fitzpatrick, a senior partner in one of Washington DC's largest law firms, through whom US lobbyists often operate, to, in Fitzpatrick's words "get a birds-eye view of how an American law firm would proceed to create a lobbying entity".²⁵ Gifford himself stressed in 1987 the similarities between the tasks he pursued and those of a lawyer:

"A lot of the advice we give relates to a clause in a bill or a government directive, where we find that the only route is to change the law. We also do a lot of work...on planning and local

government, where we are essentially sorting out a brief and helping to get a case together, just like some law firms that specialise in planning advice".²⁶

However, such comments may reflect a strong desire for professional recognition as much as a full picture of the company's activity. GJW is clearly aware of the value of influencing the political environment in its broadest sense which inevitably involves some form of PR, as indicated by its emphasis on "the promotion of outside activities which will have an impact on the political process". The company's hire of a box at the nearby Oval cricket ground is further recognition of the value of good PR, and not merely an example of executive indulgence. Clearly the role of the lobbyist - or at least of those firms which have proven to be successful - can combine aspects of the work of advocacy and public relations in their dealings with government.

5.3.2 Specific Methods

While discussion of specific methods is not usually included in contracts between consultant and client, and are described only briefly in any proposals which may precipitate a contract, accounts can be said to feature any combination of three service options:

(i) *Monitoring*: referred to as "parliamentary monitoring" in GJW's early publications, today the term "parliamentary" has been dropped in recognition of the increasing number of sources which the company needs to follow to satisfy clients. Nevertheless, a substantial amount of work in this area is still concerned with the monitoring of legislation. For example, a number of clients with transport and property interests are interested in the Jubilee Line extension Bill: GJW's role involves not only monitoring its progress, but alerting clients of other developments, such as petitions which may be put down by opponents of the Bill to delay its passage. Monitoring may also take place on a national and international level: on behalf of a British water company, GJW reports on European legislation and initiatives in the industry as well as British legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act. Other sources to be monitored include "Hansard...media and journals, papers from pressure groups and government publications of all types".

The above activities are complemented by the provision of one or more subject reviews. *The Westminster Review* is a weekly summary of business in both

Houses of Parliament, including schedules for debates, select committees, details of previous debates and recent publications. *The European Review* is produced monthly, summarizing EC news, forthcoming activities and European legislation. A number of specialist reviews on, for example, transport or environmental issues, are also produced to cater for the needs of certain clients. A typical fee for monitoring services of this kind is £1,000 per month.

Many organisations have their own 'in-house' units capable of performing monitoring functions, but others, even those with their own government relations departments, find it more efficient and cost-effective to employ the services of firms like GJW. The work involved is relatively uncontroversial; though concerns have been expressed about the activities of people inside Parliament employed by lobbying firms to assist in their monitoring activities - these are discussed below in 5.3.4.

(ii) *Consultancy*: this element is an important but not widely-recognised part of the professional lobbying process, with attention being inevitably focussed on more high-profile lobbying campaigns. Consultancy usually involves the setting of "an agenda for a long-term plan designed to maintain political contacts and provide information on subjects which may, at some stage, involve legislative change" and includes "a contact building programme with relevant people in government and administration". Once Parliamentarians have been identified as 'friendly' to a particular case, they can be briefed on topics for debate, and provided with co-ordinated sets of model questions and Early Day Motions for tabling in both Houses. The process also involves attempts to establish links with civil servants and local government officers who may have responsibility for a relevant policy area. The firm arranges meetings between these and the client, the latter being advised on how to present cases to different public officials, how to prepare for and conduct meetings to the best effect.

The programmes outlined above are supported by a wide range of research functions, performed by an eleven-strong unit within which individuals are given responsibility for specific clients and/or subject areas. Details of the policy and financial interests, political and occupational backgrounds of a wide range of politicians and public officials are researched for clients, as are the the historic development of policies, trends of thought in policy-making bodies, the work and views of political advisers (including ministerial special advisers), parliamentary

and committee procedures. Consultancy services of this kind attract monthly fees of between £3,000 and £5,000.

(iii) *Lobbying*: GJW's publicity material summarizes what is the most lucrative and controversial element of its work:

"Lobbying involves an intense campaign to promote or defend a point of view or commercial decision. It is a more pronounced form of political persuasion which will involve briefings, presentations and literature directed at key people".

A lobbying campaign is thus in some ways a concentrated version of the consultancy process; though the personnel involved, on behalf of both consultant and client, tend to be more senior and fees correspondingly higher - £3,000 per month is a low figure, and monthly fees as large as £50,000 are not unusual for higher-profile campaigns. There are also important methodological differences, not least the fact that lobbying at this level often aims to "influence legislative change in a particular area" or bring about specific changes in public policy which might not otherwise occur, rather than simply improve the political profile of the client. This may involve an attempt to win a Government contract in favour of a client, an effort to ensure the referral of a takeover bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, or conversely prevent a referral. Alternatively, a campaign may aim to amend legislation which may be seen as detrimental to clients, promote legislation which may further their commercial interests, or alter the pace of public policy.

Table 5.2 illustrates the types of campaign with which the company has been involved. There is clearly great variation in the issues which prompt lobbying campaigns, and the methods adopted to pursue them vary accordingly. It is thus impossible to describe in detail every lobbying account which the company has pursued in the 1990-91 financial year; and the company's desire to maintain confidentiality would make this difficult even if space allowed. However, the following case studies from previous years give a useful insight into the firm's activity:

Table 5.2

EXAMPLES OF LOBBYING CAMPAIGNS IN WHICH G.J.W. HAS BEEN INVOLVED

DATE	CLIENT	AIM OF CAMPAIGN	OUTCOME
1981	Marconi	Win £920 MoD contract for torpedo system	Successful
1982	Chartered Consolidated	Bid for mining equipment manufacturers Anderson Strathclyde	Successful
1983	Sotheby's	Secure referral of bid by Cogan and Swid to MMC	Successful
1983	Metropolitan Councils	Prevent abolition of Metropolitan Councils	Unsuccessful
1984	British Phonographic Industry	Impose levy on blank audio-cassette tapes	Unsuccessful
1985	Channel Tunnel Group	Win contract to build cross-Channel link	Successful
1986	Shopping Hours Reform Council	Liberalise Sunday Trading legislation	Unsuccessful
1986	Westland Helicopters	Fight off European Consortium	Successful
1988	Scottish & Newcastle Breweries	Secure referral of bid by Elders IXL to MMC	Successful
1988	AWD/Bedford Trucks	Win MoD military vehicle contract	Unsuccessful
1988	Nestle	Prevent referral of bid for Rowntree of York to MMC	Successful
1988	Guinness	Defend company in DTT probe into its £2.5m bid for Disillers	-
1989	O.M.E.L.C.O.	Improve GB citizenship rights for Hong Kong people before return to Chinese rule	-
1989-90	Haemophilia Society	Improve settlement for HIV victims contaminated by NHS	Successful
1990	Bristol Development Corporation	Obtain funding for new spine road as part of urban regeneration programme	Successful
1990	Westminster City Council	Increasing Government grants to limit impact of poll tax	Successful
1990	East Sussex County Council	Bring forward upgrading of rail links in time for opening of Channel Tunnel	Ongoing
1990-91	Association for Free Kuwait	Maintain momentum for military action and raise support for Kuwaiti regime	Ongoing

The Contract to Build the Channel Tunnel

In 1985 a Government White Paper accepted the principle that an Anglo-French Channel 'fixed-link' should be constructed, though insisted that such a link should be funded by the private sector. Four main options for the form of the link were developed by private consortia, one of which was a rail tunnel proposed by the Channel Tunnel Group (subsequently named Eurotunnel). The group sought the services of GJW in its desire to win the inevitable 'beauty contest' which had become characteristic of many procurement and competitive tendering projects as the 1980s progressed. Initial lobbying efforts revolved around the provision of briefs to all those involved in the decision, exploring technological, environmental, safety and cost aspects of the scheme. On the political side, attention was paid to developing and explaining the case for the rail link not only to MPs in Kent who had already registered their fears about its environmental implications, but also Members in the depressed areas of the North and Scotland. The latter were fearful that the proposed link would stimulate the already prosperous South East at the expense of their constituents, and GJW arranged meetings between them and Eurotunnel, giving the latter the opportunity to argue why this would not necessarily be the case. In the civil service, relevant officials in the Departments of Transport, Environment and the Treasury were contacted, meetings arranged and the clients briefed on how best to present their case. Additional attention was focussed on the fire service, necessitated by the formation of a group by ferry companies, port authorities and trade unions whose purpose was to 'rubbish' the scheme in defence of the existing cross-channel travel arrangements. It focussed on the safety problems that a tunnel would encounter, a criticism countered by GJW's research into the relative safety records of road, sea and rail transport. In a further development, an All-Party Channel Tunnel Group was established with one of GJW's Directors as its Administrative Secretary. It had held some thirty meetings in Parliament by the start of 1986,²⁷ and was able to co-ordinate the tabling of Parliamentary Questions, Early Day Motions and the recruitment of further support for the rail option. In these ways the lobbyists showed the need to be flexible in targeting the institutions to be lobbied, and innovatory in the methods employed to further their case.

The Nestle Bid for Rowntree

Due to its weakness in the confectionery markets of the UK, Canada and Scandinavia, the Swiss corporation Nestle sought the acquisition in May 1988 of an established British confectionery market leader, Rowntree. Through its merchant bankers, County Nat West, Nestle approached GJW to assist in the

preparation and presentation of its bid. Within hours of agreeing to work for the Swiss company, GJW had to reject advances from Rowntree, a fact which was not reported in the press. Andrew Gifford headed the GJW team, assisted by one other senior Director and a research assistant. Gifford was one of between six and twelve people - along with senior figures in the Nestle corporation, its merchant bank, the Lowe Group's Financial PR Division and Dewe Rogerson (Nestle's PR adviser) - who attended meetings to discuss all aspects of the bid before it was launched. This high-powered combination was matched by GJW's fee of £50,000 per month. The subsequent campaign was conducted with excessive secrecy, Nestle, Rowntree and Suchard, the company which "set the Rowntree takeover rolling with a dawn raid"²⁸, referred to in communication between the 'predator' and its advisers as Mozart, Verdi and Stravinsky respectively.

The first task for GJW was to advise the Swiss on the issues which were likely to be thrown up by their bid, the role of Parliament in the affair and the Government's merger policy. Meanwhile, the research being prepared at GJW aimed to give its client an important head start when the bid was announced - undoubtedly, as Peter Riddell wrote, "Nestle started with the advantage of having the bidder's initiative"²⁹ but Rowntree was roundly criticized, not least by its own local MPs for "being slow off the mark in the political arena, leaving the early behind-the-scenes running to Nestle"³⁰ GJW prepared arguments for both the initial campaign (to oppose the referral of the bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission) and for any subsequent campaign which may have been necessary should a referral be granted. Once the bid had become public knowledge, MPs whose constituencies contained Rowntree plants were identified and provided with briefs on the financial prospects and the relative marketing, research and development skills of both companies. These briefs reassured MPs that the employment prospects for their constituents would not be affected by the acquisition, and might in fact be improved by it, due to Nestle's access to markets in continental Europe, and stressed the advantages of, in the ad-speak of one document, "hitching the Verdi wagon to the Mozart locomotive". The regional offices of the Department of Trade and Industry also became an important focus due to their sensitivity to employment issues in the North of England where many Rowntree plants were located. The most important institution after the Government, however, as far as the eventual decision on whether or not to refer the bid was concerned, was the Office of Fair Trading. GJW thus assisted in the preparation of a forty-page submission to the Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Gordon Borrie, reiterating the Nestle case, and asserting that the combined market

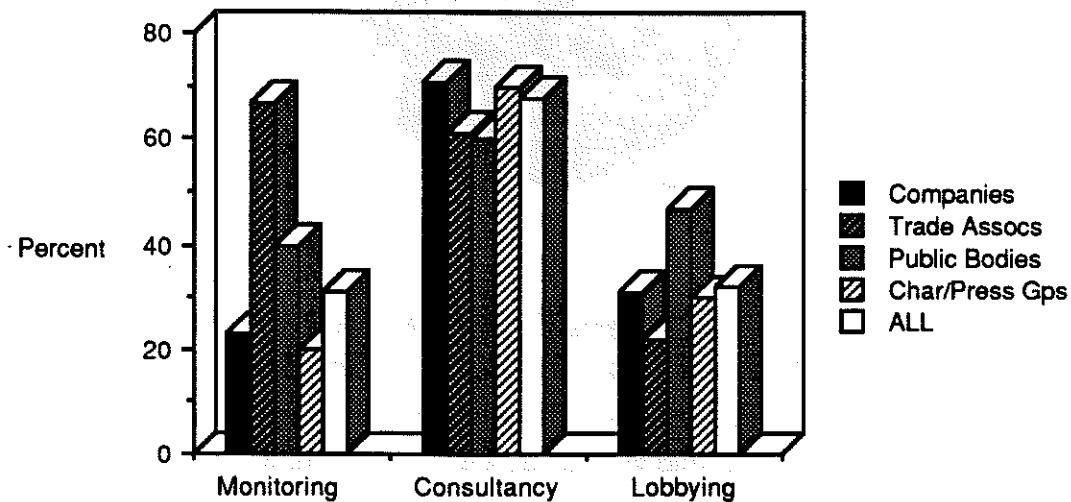
share of the merged companies would be 24% - comfortably short of the proportion which might have led to the bid being blocked as monopolistic.

5.3.3 How and Why Clients Combine Service Options

Figure 5.7 shows that just over 30% of GJW's contracts in the 1990-91 financial year included a monitoring element,³¹ a similar proportion a lobbying component, and almost 70% a consultancy arrangement. The importance of the latter to the company's business is reflected throughout all client types - no less than 60% of any one group receiving consultancy. Greater fluctuations, however, can be observed between client groups as far as the other service options are concerned. The low proportions of companies and charity/pressure groups using monitoring facilities can be explained by the fact that organisations in these categories are best equipped to pursue their own monitoring activities: many of the former have government relations units, and the latter Parliamentary/Press Relations Officers. The high proportion of trade/professional associations seeking monitoring services is less easy to explain; though they presumably lack the in-house ability to provide such services, or find out-of-house provision more cost-effective.

Figure 5.7

PERCENTAGES OF CLIENT GROUPS USING EACH SERVICE OPTION



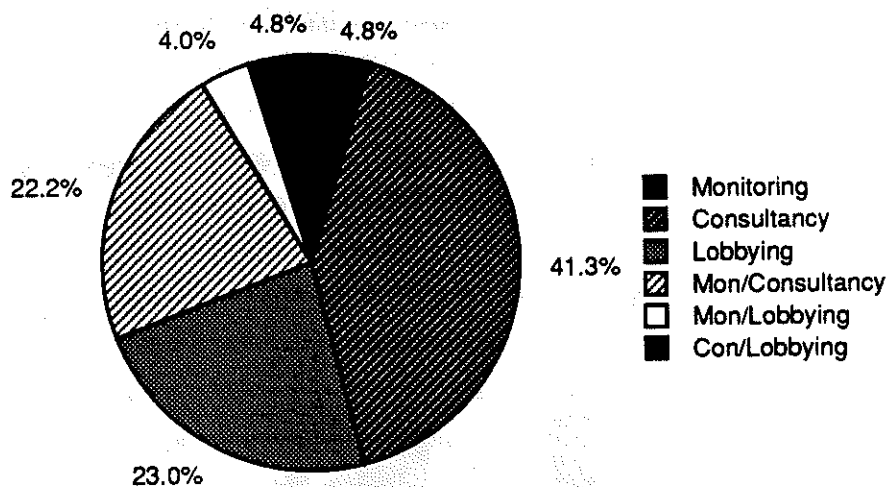
It is significant that the proportion of trade/professional associations pursuing lobbying campaigns is considerably lower than for other client types. This may

be because "government feels happier dealing with representative groups...rather than a single, self-interested party",³² thus reducing their need to lobby. It also indicates that much of the activity of consultants is directed not towards the principles but the details of public policies, which are more likely to concern individual firms, cause groups or public bodies. The higher percentage of the latter which pursue lobbying campaigns can be explained by the fact that local authorities within the category are often concerned with specific planning problems which require more concerted action than a consultancy programme.

Figure 5.8 shows that the most common single form of account is that offering a consultancy service alone. It also indicates the complementary nature of monitoring and consultancy services for a significant proportion of clients. Less common are combinations of lobbying campaigns with either monitoring or consultancy services, though this has more to do with economy on the part of the client than any lack of tactical value of the combination.

Figure 5.8

COMBINATION OF SERVICE OPTIONS



It must of course be recognised that, in terms of the company's financial well-being, the importance of the lobbying element of its work is underestimated by figures 5.7 and 5.8; though it not possible to show the actual proportions of the company's income generated by each service in view of the confidential treatment of individual contracts. Furthermore, the importance of monitoring and consultancy to the company's workload, if not its income, has been shown above, suggesting that it is wrong to view consultants as pro-active lobbyists alone,

particularly in view of the possibility that the effectiveness of the lobbying element is open to question (see 5.4).

5.3.4 Methodology and Ethics

An important development in the Eurotunnel project described in 5.3.2 was the establishment of the All-Party Channel Tunnel Group. One Director at GJW was keen to play down the role of the group, but has acknowledged its usefulness in disseminating information, arranging trips and acting as a forum for interested parties. However, it is true that the firm suffered some embarrassment in the light of comments made on a radio programme just before the group was set up, by one of the its founding partners:

“All-Party Committees shouldn’t be serviced by anyone who is an outside person...because quite often they have been set up by a lobbying company, which won’t allow other organisations to come along to meetings because they happen to be a rival organisation in the same area”.³³

This argument was repeated in evidence to the Select Committee on Member’s Interests inquiry into lobbying; and it illustrates the ethical dilemma faced by consultants seeking to balance legitimate activity with success.

The ferocity of some campaigns in which lobbyists are seen as ‘lapel-grabbing’ persuaders, have also caused controversy. GJW, among others, emphasizes its position as an ‘intermediary’ in the process, and stresses the imperative that the client presents the case in hand, not the lobbyist. Indeed, the better firms will have briefed clients well enough before meetings for them to make representations unassisted; and while consultants often attend meetings, it is usually in a supportive capacity only. A good deal more activity is uncontroversial in that it involves administrative tasks such as the arrangement of formal meetings; and while informal meetings and drinks parties commonly occur, one critical journalist has admitted that “surprisingly little of their time is spent on champagne lunches”.³⁴ Moreover, few professions, including journalism, function without ‘junkets’, free trips and alcohol-related activities, which in any case yield, according to one MP, “more burps and boozy ramblings...than influence”.³⁵

GJW is one of a number of lobbying firms which are known to accept ‘success’ fees, a form of payment forbidden by the code of conduct of the Public Relations Consultants Association as unethical. The PRCA feels that companies chasing

payment by results may adopt illegitimate methods; though in the sense that the economic future of lobbyists and PR companies alike depends ultimately on their ability to produce results which benefit their clients, the organisation's concern appears to be at best naive and at worst an example of disingenuous 'self-regulation'. Perhaps a more substantial criticism involves the secrecy with which lobbyists pursue their business. Margaret Pagano claimed of lobbyists activity in 1983 that "most work - probably over 80% - is carried out behind closed doors";³⁶ though how this figure was arrived at we are offered no explanation. Indeed, such comments have little value in view of the fact that few organisations, from private companies to trade unions, carry out their business with open doors; and lobbyists are quick to point out the right of clients to confidential treatment of often sensitive business details. However, one clear disadvantage of secrecy, not least from the point of view of clients, is that it allows companies to pursue, unnoticed, activities which may involve conflicts of interest. It is feasible, for example, that the interests of the local authorities on whose behalf the company acts, could conflict with the aims of its clients engaged in property development or waste management. Furthermore, firms in these and other sectors might indeed be uncomfortable about employing the same agency as one or more of their competitors. Such conflicts may occur only occasionally, but lobbyists would be naive to expect professional recognition for their work as long as unprofessional behaviour continues, and is allowed to continue as unnecessary secrecy adds fuel to the flames of conspiracy theory.

Ethical issues are also raised by the fact that lobbyists pay much attention to the supposedly 'neutral' offices of civil and public servants: as Alderman has noted, when pressure groups of any form become adopted into the governing process, "the function of Parliament is merely to give its stamp of approval to legislation agreed between ministers, civil servants and pressure groups".³⁷ However, it is worth recalling Finer's comment that "if civil servants...claimed to be merely the servants of the government in power, with no mandate to co-operate with the lobby, its rule...would be a rigid and stupid bureaucracy".³⁸ Neither is lobbying of civil servants a new development, or something which has accompanied the growth of professional lobbying alone - Jennings wrote of the consultation process in 1939,

"as soon as a Bill is published representations are made by all the interests affected, unless their concurrence has already been obtained. These representations are considered by the appropriate

officials and, if necessary, deputations are received by a senior official...The first and most effective step for any interest is thus to convince the department".³⁹

Furthermore, one does not have to subscribe to elite theory to reject the idea that the bureaucracy is a 'neutral' and innocent entity. Indeed, it often has its own objectives and, according to Andrew Gifford, is prepared to use lobbyists to achieve them: "it is not uncommon for civil servants to encourage industry and trade bodies to lobby politically for the policy they are trying to defend".⁴⁰

Perhaps more controversial than the relationships between lobbyists and public officials are the methods employed with regard to Parliament. One Director at GJW has described as "very easy" the process by which MPs identified as 'friendly' can be relied upon to table Parliamentary Questions or put down Early Day Motions; though rejects the suggestion that there is a 'going rate' for written questions of £200.⁴¹ Neither is the fact that Parliamentarians can be relied upon to support certain causes necessarily an undesirable feature. MPs are not usually asked to act on an issue unless they have a record of interest in it; and some value the lobbyist's ability to, for example, co-ordinate Parliamentary questions. As well as allowing questioners to extract comprehensive information, such activity may in fact save public money, as uncoordinated questions often require lengthy and expensive research to yield results of questionable value. While efficiency may be improved, however, the implications for representative democracy may not be as positive. Peter Riddell argues "lobbyists do have a role...for instance, how to organise and balance the signatories of an Early Day Motion"⁴²; but if questions and EDMs are 'organised' and 'balanced' according to the interests of pressure (largely business) groups, rather than the wishes of their constituents, lobbyists are arguably encouraging MPs to neglect their constitutional duties.)

Perhaps the most controversial area of lobbying activity in relation to Parliament, however, concerns the payment of people inside either House by consultants. GJW currently retains an MP's research assistant, Conservative MP Keith Hampson (Con, Leeds North West) and a Conservative Peer. All are available for consultation on general political developments, parliamentary 'gossip' and certain other services: they have access to documents in the House of Commons Library which may be difficult to obtain elsewhere, can book meeting rooms, obtain tickets for debates and offer advice on Parliamentarians. Hampson has recorded his association with GJW in successive Register's of Member's Interests; and has often declared an interest when GJW's relationship with certain firms might be

seen to conflict with, for example, his responsibilities as a member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. However, no such declarations are required where parliamentary questions are concerned, and abuses can be seen to have occurred in this area: MPs retained by consultancies have been known to table questions on behalf of clients about subjects in which they have no constituency or other genuine interest. This type of activity is indefensible, but it may also be counter-productive, encouraging mistrust which may in turn lead to greater regulation. Indeed, there is a debate within the company as to the value of consultancy arrangements with MPs and Peers, especially in view of the considerable amounts which such relationships cost.

The above paragraph hints at the possibility that some of the criticism aimed at lobbying firms is misdirected: while the fears of MPs like Bob Cryer, who has consistently urged regulation of their activities, are certainly genuine, the same cannot be said for other members who are quite happy to see attention focussed on lobbying firms to avoid closer inspection of their own activities. GJW points out that it spends approximately £25,000 *per annum* on HMSO documents; though other companies are known to receive documents, presumably to a similar value, through retained MPs to whom they are available free of charge. Moreover, with over 150 MPs (the great majority Conservative) sharing some 500 consultancies or advisory positions with outside interests⁴³ (the great majority remunerated), there are grounds for believing that if there is a 'market in influence', it operates far nearer the centre of Parliament than the peripheral offices of professional lobbying firms. Furthermore, the point should be made that even if influence can be successfully 'bought' it has to be 'on sale' in the first place from politicians and civil servants - it is they who ultimately have the constitutional and occupational responsibility to remain incorruptible, and only they who can ensure that if inducements of any form are offered, they are not accepted.

5.4 EFFECTIVENESS

GJW has been complemented for an "impressive knack of being on the winning side",⁴⁴ but has not always acted on behalf of successful parties, as indicated in table 5.2. The table, however, refers to the outcomes of the issues in question rather than the effectiveness of the lobbying accompanying them. This hints at some of the problems faced when trying to assess effectiveness, problems which need to be addressed before the various ways in which lobbying may or may not be effective are described.

5.4.1 Problems of Assessing 'Effective Lobbying'

The controversies surrounding the activities of political consultants may be numerous; but it is possible that the quantity of controversy is unjustified in that it is not matched by the actual impact of their activity. [Grantham and Seymour-Ure identify the main problem: "as there are no comprehensive data available on their successes...one has to rely on anecdotal material".⁴⁴] This should perhaps be amended to point out that the collection of 'comprehensive data' would indeed be impossible, due in part to technical obstacles to its collection, but also to the conceptual problems associated with defining 'success'. For example, while it may be easy to identify the winning side in a takeover bid referral battle, it is probable that both winner and loser have employed lobbyists - a situation in which one is inevitably associated with success. It is also true that more complex issues, such as those involving the clauses in a piece of legislation, can have multi-dimensional outcomes, making the identification of 'success' even more difficult.] Some observers have even suggested that

"their [lobbyists] pretensions amount to little more than the boasts of the most notorious con-man in modern British politics, Maundy Gregory who, in the Lloyd-George era, persuaded the gullible he could secure them honours".⁴⁵

Such comments have little basis in fact; but even [Andrew Gifford, whose company boasted of many successes in its early years, has been quoted as saying "I think it is difficult to prove that political lobbying has swayed decisions substantially".⁴⁶] While proof may be elusive, however, this does not mean that lobbying *per se* can be dismissed as ineffective. If a particular campaign does not achieve its primary aim, it is not necessarily a total failure: GJW argue that clients can learn a great deal about governmental and political processes through simple involvement in a campaign.)

Some commentators have mistakenly assumed that as the payments made to lobbyists are often large, it follows that value for money is returned in the form of influence. This is not necessarily the case) - fees are higher in certain lobbying campaigns because of the personnel involved and the accompanying workload, rather than because success is guaranteed. According to one of Director at GJW the consciousness-raising campaign conducted by GJW on behalf of the GEC-Nimrod project in the early 1980s was both extensive and effective, a strong 'buy-British' lobby being cultivated; but the Nimrod system itself was the problem. In

addition to being late and expensive, it continuously failed to reach the satisfactory technical standards. These factors sealed the fate of Nimrod, which was passed over in favour of AWACS; and they demonstrate how no amount of money financing well-directed lobbying can 'sell' a product or case which is fundamentally flawed.

Other campaigns are characterised by the achievement of limited measures of success. On behalf of the Haemophilia Society, GJW waged an apparently effective campaign, and one which the Society certainly believed to have been beneficial, to improve the terms of the settlement offered to haemophiliacs with the HIV-virus contaminated by NHS blood products. The result of the initially high-profile but later more subtle lobbying activity was undeniably a very good cash settlement, but not the acceptance of legal liability by the Government and subsequent no-fault compensation which was the initial aim of the Society. On behalf of this and other clients, GJW can be said to have encouraged a 'softly, softly' approach: assisted by their 'expert' assessment of what is or is not an attainable or 'realistic' goal, lobbyists can arguably control the agenda for their clients and modify the aims of any campaign embarked upon. In such instances, the achievement of a 'successful' outcome is clearly a simpler prospect; and the reputation of the lobbyists can supersede their actual impact.)

5.4.2 The Value of *Parliamentary* Lobbying

An important debate, not least within the industry itself, surrounds the attention accorded to Parliament by lobbying firms. Austin Mitchell MP, writing in 1988, summarised one side of the argument:

"Lobbying is the foreplay of power. It is wasted on the Commons. We have no power...The essential reality of Government by party is that the executive controls the legislature, not vice versa. Parliament is a rubber stamp in its hand. Mrs Thatcher drives a steamroller, our job is to heckle it".⁴⁷

(Another MP has complained that "lobbyists don't understand the basis of the whipping system and the motivation of MPs".⁴⁸) (Some activity may indeed be futile in that it is based on misunderstandings of the nature of power relations in the political system; and Foster is surely right to argue that "to seek to overturn by lobbying an established government (or departmental) policy is almost certainly hopeless",⁴⁹) as the high-profile, popular but ultimately unsuccessful campaign

against the abolition of the metropolitan councils demonstrated. However, it is precisely for this reason that most lobbying campaigns are *not* directed at the tenets of Government policy: as Michael Rush has stated,

“Governments will quite often give way on detail while stoutly resisting any dilution of the ideological principle. And it is detail which is frequently the concern of outside interests”.⁵⁰

One campaign in which GJW has been involved can be seen to illustrate its belief in detail as a legitimate focus for lobbying attention. The Optical Appliances Act 1984 required that all spectacles be sold under prescription only, and on behalf of a client which manufactured reading glasses, GJW sought to impress upon the relevant authorities the view, supported by strong medical evidence, that its products should be “recognised in law for what they are: magnifying glasses in a frame”. This constituted no threat to the general thrust of Government health policy, the case was sound, and the law amended with important commercial implications for the client.

In 1983 the Labour MP Tam Dalyell expressed his unease at “the extent to which even Opposition front benches of both political parties rely on the expert briefs of representatives of pressure groups”⁵¹. Worrying this may be; though it arguably says more about the lack of facilities available to elected politicians in Britain compared to, say, their American counterparts, than about pressure group activity. By virtue of their superior resources, professional lobbyists are able to devote much attention to research; and many MPs value the detailed briefs which consultants can provide: according to one lobbyist, “even members who are hostile to lobbying will file away a good lobby briefing”.⁵² The advantage of this is that the lobbyists can enjoy something akin to the civil servants power of information; the disadvantage is that only the wealthier pressure groups can afford to pay for such services, and the information fed to MPs is in danger of being ‘one-sided’. A possible remedy is suggested eloquently by Austin Mitchell:

“With proper staffs and research backing we would be in a better position to evaluate the competing claims of the lobbyists...With proper salaries we would be immune to influence and not forced into the sordid grubbing which now goes on. With a proper opportunity to influence legislation and decision built into the system...we would be giving pressure groups an opportunity to make representations and exert influence and enhancing our own role and importance: deliberating not dependent”.⁵³

In terms of the impact of lobbyists, this implies that they can be effective in filling an information and, in some senses, power vacuum - a development which if not desirable is inevitable, and for which the system of Government rather than the lobbying industry is ultimately responsible.

5.4.3 Competence and Circumstance

As stated in 5.4.2, many Parliamentarians value the research which lobbyists have the resources to provide; though it should be noted that only work of high quality is valued.⁵⁴ In the words of an official of the Industry and Parliament Trust, an organisation devoted to improving understanding between the two institutions,

"There is a thirst for information...but whether you are a private citizen or a huge corporation, it should be well presented, directed to the right people and at the right time".⁵⁵

(Indeed, if lobbying activity is to have any chance of success, the timing and direction of any interventions are vital. Advice on timing is important not only in regard to the progress of legislation, but also at the policy formulation and drafting stage. Knowing *who* to contact is equally important, and junior civil servants are often more useful contacts than Departmental or even Ministerial leaders: in the words of one Director at GJW, herself a former civil servant,

"It takes a knowledge of the pressure points...It requires the ability to play institutions against each other. When they are looking for information, they will listen to the first comers".⁵⁶

(This hints at the possibility that competent lobbyists operating according to these principles can be effective without having to produce evidence of policy 'U-turns' or major amendments to prove their impact. GJW has often alerted clients to problems foreseen in, for example, parliamentary papers or even on the political 'grapevine', enabling them to inform the relevant authority of any negative implications. Assuming that this can lead to the withdrawal of potentially harmful proposals before they become public issues, the effective, and often positive, intervention of the lobbyist may go unobserved. Furthermore, there is little doubt that many of the less glamorous monitoring and consultancy activities are effective in keeping clients informed and helping them build political and civil service contacts, which may in time prove to be valuable beyond their immediate appearance, though again, immeasurable. The 50% of organisations employing

GJW who have been clients for over five years would presumably not renew their contracts if they did not believe that the company's services were worthwhile.

Referring to the high-profile takeover bid by Nestle in 1988, Peter Riddell has argued that "the role of Parliamentary lobbying in the Rowntree case was marginal",⁵⁷ citing the OFT's belief that a takeover would not significantly affect domestic competition, and the initial inclinations of the Government as the crucial factors in the case. This marginality was further demonstrated, he argued, by the fact that Rowntree had also employed lobbyists. While his case is strong, however, it possibly underestimates the usefulness of well-directed and planned lobbying. GJW's research enabled Nestle to fight an effective rearguard action against Rowntree's arguments on jobs and reciprocity, and may be taken to show that, while the employment of lobbyists by no means guarantees success, non-employment, or in Rowntree's case slow appointment of political advisers, can contribute to the failure of a case or cause. Furthermore, Riddell ignores the possibility that a backbench rebellion against ministerial tolerance of the takeover may have been averted by lobbying: the danger of such a rebellion was hinted at by the 150 signatories attracted by an Early Day motion supporting a referral. Over half of these were Conservatives, "most from the North of England who fear[ed] their seats may be at risk";⁵⁸ GJW's stress on Nestle plans for expansion may indeed have settled the fears of both these and civil servants in regional offices that a takeover might exacerbate unemployment in the affected regions. In view of backbench support for Rowntree, Riddell argued before the bid was allowed to proceed that "the main result of the lobbying is to leave ministers in no doubt that, as usual in the Commons, the balance of opinion lies with the defence of existing interests".⁵⁹ It is perhaps an indication of the effectiveness of lobbying - when part of a campaign encompassing financial, public relations, and political consultancy - that the status quo was in fact altered, at least more smoothly than might otherwise have occurred. This hints at a further important consideration - the sheer number of agencies, organisations and individuals who are involved in modern commercial and other decisions. It may well be the case that lobbyists can be associated with successes, or indeed failures, which may not be of their making. As Andrew Gifford has commented,

"Cases are often won by default, when the other side hasn't done very well. Some companies could take more care with their merchant banks".⁶⁰

Competence, or relative competence, can of course be compounded or superseded by circumstantial factors. "An awful lot of it is luck", conceded Jenny Jeger in 1984: "that's why we say in our contracts that we can't guarantee results".⁶¹ The point was illustrated by Charles Miller four years later in reference to another campaign in which GJW was involved:

"the fortunes of the current campaign by manufacturers of recording tape - to resist record industry pressure on government to impose a tape levy as compensation against unauthorized copyright breach - have changed with each new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry...If the visibility or irritation factor of an issue keeps it before ministers rather than just officials, reshuffles can crucially affect their future".⁶²

Similarly, the contentious decisions that characterised the mid-1980s may have been exacerbated by different policies of successive (and numerous) Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry. More recently, one consultant who worked with the Haemophilia Society believes firmly that lobbying conducted on its behalf was effective. While the campaign certainly benefitted from the co-ordination and tactical advice which the lobbyists offered, however, even he concedes that the process was greatly accelerated by what can only be described as a large measure of good fortune, in that resolution of the haemophilia issue was chosen as a symbolic concession to public opinion by the new Prime Minister who had come to office in November 1990. As changes in political leadership can alter the prospects of a campaign, so can changes of issue prominence: Eurotunnel were helped enormously in their defence of the safety aspects of their project by media and public reaction to the Zeebrugge tragedy, which saw concern shift away from the tunnel and toward the ferries. Examples of apparently successful lobbying can not, however, be attributed to 'luck' alone - consultants must be competent in pursuing a case in the right place and at the right time before circumstantial factors even have a chance of giving it the edge. Some are thus more effective than others due to their superior understanding of the policy process; though the ubiquity of lobbyists is itself a circumstantial factor which overstates the impact of the industry as a whole.

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- 1 'Executives' refers to Directors who make up the company Board, Associate Directors and research Executives.
 - 2 *Financial Decisions*, January 1986, p.67.
 - 3 *Graduate Opportunities*, Newpoint Publishing, 1990 Edition.
 - 4 Miller, 1987, p.13.
 - 5 Miliband, 1984, p.42.
 - 6 *InterCity*, November/December 1986, p.15.

- 7 *The Guardian*, December 1981.
- 8 GJW's 19 executive-level staff include a Labour Councillor, two former Conservative Councillors one of whom was the youngest town mayor in the country, a former prospective European and Westminster Parliamentary candidate (Conservative), and former US Republican Congressional candidate.
- 9 Rush (Ed), 1990, p.59.
- 10 Rush (Ed), 1990, p.58.
- 11 GJW's income from the Association for Free Kuwait reportedly averaged £122,000 per month between July and December 1990 (*Private Eye*, 14 December 1990).
- 12 David Tench, *The House Magazine*, 4 July 1988, p.18.
- 13 W. D. Muller, *The Kept Men?*, Harvester Press 1977, quoted by Alderman, 1984, p.56.
- 14 Jordan & Richardson, 1987, p.264.
- 15 Miliband, 1984, p.131.
- 16 V. Bogdanor, quoted by Dunleavy, Gamble and Peele, 1990, p.141.
- 17 P. Moore, *Work Placement Report*, 1988, Dept of Government, Brunel University, p.9
- 18 Alderman, 1984, p.133.
- 19 Rush (Ed), 1990, p.62-3.
- 20 Miller, 1987, p.ix.
- 21 *Contemporary Record*, Vol 2 No 1, p.14.
- 22 Quoted in Rush (Ed), 1990, p.65.
- 23 Miller's own firm, Public Policy Consultants, conducted Rowntree's high-profile, PR-orientated defence against the Nestle takeover bid in 1988, and has been criticised by Andrew Gifford among others for concentrating "far too much on Parliament and far too little on the Civil Service and ministers" (*Management Today*, August 1988, p.38).
- 24 *InterCity*, November/December 1986, p.15.
- 25 *The World Tonight*, BBC Radio 4, 7 August 1989.
- 26 *Campaign*, 27 February 1987.
- 27 Doig, *Parliamentary Affairs*, October 1986, p.518.
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6. CONCLUSIONS

(In discussion of professional lobbying, care should be taken to keep the role of the industry in British politics in perspective. Indeed, it would be wrong to assume that it is at a stage of development approaching anything near that of its U.S. counterpart, in which some 23,000 registered individuals¹ generate the equivalent of £10 billion² income. Examples of political corruption and impropriety are also less common in the British system. However, it can be argued that such examples are limited in relation to Parliament only because it lacks power: as Austin Mitchell argues.)

“British politics are pathetic rather than corrupt, messy rather than bribable. Yet it is surely wrong that the safeguards should be that our MPs aren't bought because none of them are worth buying; that no one should want to bribe us to use our power for them because we don't have any; and that big money can't play a part because we think so small”.³

The situation may change as the European dimension in British politics assumes increasing importance, a development which offers no guarantee that the industry will not grow to transatlantic proportions.

In pursuit of success, it must be recognised that some lobbying activity oversteps the bounds of propriety if not legality. Grantham and Seymour-Ure argue that “consultants are involved with new or growing kinds of activity to which the traditional principles about legitimate forms of influence have to be applied, with resultant almost inevitable differences of opinion”.⁴ Apart from ignoring the possibility that ‘traditional principles’ about legitimacy are worth defending, their comments offer little comfort to those clients who may lose out when conflicts of interest occur, and those constituents who find their agendas being neglected at the expense of those set by lobbyists. Not only are such abuses unprofessional, but they exaggerate the already manifest shortcomings of Parliament as an assembly of constituency representatives. It was reported in an article in April 1991 entitled *MPs plan a major shake-up to curb lobby companies*, that the Select Committee on Members' Interests was to “recommend a voluntary register...to allay public fears that lobbyists operate too much behind the scenes and wield undue political influence”.⁵ While voluntary registration would hardly constitute a “major shake-up”, it would at least recognise the need for some form of control, and acknowledge the persuasive argument that “if the public has the right to lobby MPs, then the public has a right to know who is paid what by whom and for what purpose”.⁶ It should be noted, however, that unless a register recorded not only the names of those engaged in lobbying, but also their clients, the amounts spent and on which areas, it could simply turn a

previously 'anonymous' empire into an overt one, resembling the Register of Member's Interests which "can not and is not intended to stop corruption".⁷

It is ironic that one of the main arguments put forward by pluralist writers in defence of group politics, and by professional lobbyists in self-defence, was first and most eloquently expressed by Finer, the father of the 'conspiracy' theory of pressure groups:

"They are best appreciated by considering British government without them. Suppose the parties and civil servants simply refused to have any contact with the Lobby? Suppose the party simply claimed that it was the 'will of the people' with a mandate for doing all it had promised? Its rule would be a rigid and ignorant tyranny....In the age of bigness and technology, the Lobby tempers the system. It does so by promoting this continuous interchange between governors and governed".⁸

There are indeed many cases where political consultants can have a positive input to the policy process, and the value of their educative work for a wide range of interests is beyond doubt. In the words of one lobbyist,

"Public affairs consultancy is flourishing precisely because it provides business - and other sectors - with the information and intelligence they need if they are to understand the political atmosphere in which they live and breathe - in brief, because it forms a communications bridge between business and politics".⁹

There is clearly a market for their activity, and it is surprising not that it exists at all, but that it has only recently grown to proportions worthy of discussion. Having said this, the 1980s provided many new opportunities for the industry which, combined with increasing professionalisation in the political environment generally, has made the employment of lobbyists as common as that of public relations, legal and financial advisers in both low-level government relations and high-profile lobbying campaigns. In terms of their effectiveness, Grant is right to argue that "there is always an element of 'emperor's clothes' about the work of professional lobbyists";¹⁰ but as shown above, firms like GJW admit that they can not guarantee results, and pursue a great many activities whose effectiveness depends on the competence with which they are performed rather than the amount of money changing hands. Many senior lobbyists undoubtedly benefit from political experience and social advantage which may put them in proximity to the political and administrative elite in society; but this does not give them automatic influence within that elite. The market in influence is thus imperfect in that the lobbyists price, while rising with the demand for power, does not always yield the supply of influence sought by the client; and even if it were to function perfectly, it is to the offices of those in a position to sell power, rather than those seeking to buy it, that the critical eye

should turn. This said, the use of lobbyists continues to be limited by and large to wealthier pressure groups by virtue of the cost involved: (while it may be difficult to show that a market in *influence* exists, there is undeniably a market in *access*). This is not something for which lobbyists can be criticised, and is perhaps best understood as only a small part of a phenomena described by Miliband as “the pervasive and permanent pressure upon governments and the state generated by the private control of concentrated industrial, commercial and financial resources”.¹¹ In the sense that professional lobbyists rely on their share of these resources for survival, they are, far from being brokers, merely commodities in an influence trade where economic might continues to be the main arbiter of political power.

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- 1 Smith, 1989, p.39.
 - 2 *The World Tonight*, BBC Radio 4, 7 August 1989.
 - 3 *The House Magazine*, 22 October 1990.
 - 4 Rush (Ed), 1990, p.79.
 - 5 *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 April 1991.
 - 6 Doig, *Parliamentary Affairs*, October 1986, p.533.
 - 7 Radice, Vallance and Willis, 1987, p.115.
 - 8 Finer, 1969, p.113.
 - 9 Peter Bradley (Good Relations), *Financial Weekly*, 14 August 1986.
 - 10 Grant, 1989, p.73.
 - 11 Miliband, 1984, p. 132.

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POSTSCRIPT

In September 1991 the Select Committee on Members' Interests made public its Third Report into Parliamentary Lobbying. Its conclusion was as follows:

"We recommend to the House that it should take a decision in principle to establish a Register of 'Professional Lobbyists'. Should the House take this decision it would then be for this Committee or its successor to frame, in consultation with interested parties, the form and content of a Register and a code of conduct to place before the House for its approval."

*Third Report from the Select Committee on Members' Interests
Session 1990-91 HC586.*

APPENDIX 1

TYPE	SECTOR	AREA	WORK
1. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Finance	MC
2. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Pharmaceuticals/Chemicals	MC
1. Company	Private	Agriculture/Food	CL
3. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Media	M
2. Company	Private	Transport	ML
3. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	MC
1. Public Body	Public	Socio/Political/Cultural	MC
1. Pressure Group	Voluntary	Socio/Political/Cultural	CL
4. Company	Private	Engineering/Defence	C
5. Company	Private	Finance	C
6. Company	Private	Health	L
7. Company	Private	Agriculture/Food	CL
2. Public Body	Public	Development/Construction	L
4. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Entertainment/Leisure	MC
5. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Entertainment/Leisure	MC
8. Company	Private	Agriculture/Food	CL
3. Public Body	Public	Entertainment/Leisure	MC
9. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	L
4. Public Body	Public	Socio/Political/Cultural	L
10. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	C
5. Public Body	Public	Media	C
2. Charity	Voluntary	Socio/Political/Cultural	M
6. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Agriculture/Food	L
3. Charity	Voluntary	Socio/Political/Cultural	C
11. Company	Private	Media	MC
12. Company	Private	Finance	C
13. Company	Private	Misc Services	MC
7. Trade/Professional Assn	Public	Socio/Political/Cultural	MC
14. Company	Private	Finance	C
15. Company	Private	Development/Construction	C
4. Charity	Voluntary	Socio/Political/Cultural	MC
8. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Miscellaneous Services	L
16. Company	Private	Development/Construction	C
9. Trade Association	Private	Environment	MC
17. Company	Private	Finance	C
18. Company	Private	Agriculture/Food	C
19. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	L
20. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	MC
21. Company	Private	Transport	C
22. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	C
6. Public Body	Public	Socio/Political/Cultural	L
23. Company	Private	Finance	C
24. Company	Private	Development/Construction	L
25. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	C
26. Company	Private	Entertainment/Leisure	L
27. Company	Private	Transport	L
28. Company	Private	Transport	MC
10. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Entertainment/Leisure	MC
29. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	MC

30. Company	Private	Engineering/Defence	L
31. Company	Private	Environment	C
11. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Health	C
32. Company	Private	Development/Construction	C
33. Company	Private	Finance	C
34. Company	Private	Development/Construction	L
35. Company	Private	Pharmaceuticals/Chemicals	L
5. Charity	Voluntary	Health	L
7. Public Body	Public	Socio/Political/Cultural	L
36. Company	Private	Development/Construction	C
37. Company	Private	Finance	C
12. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Media	M
13. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Media	M
14. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Media	M
15. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Entertainment/Leisure	M C
38. Company	Private	Development/Construction	C
39. Company	Private	Pharmaceuticals/Chemicals	C
6. Charity	Voluntary	Health	C
16. Trade/Professional Assn	Public	Misc Services	L
40. Company	Private	Finance	C
41. Company	Private	Finance	C
42. Company	Private	Engineering/Defence	L
8. Public Body	Public	Socio/Political/Cultural	C
9. Public Body	Public	Transport	M C
10. Public Body	Public	Transport	M C
11. Public Body	Public	Transport	M C
43. Company	Private	Media	C L
44. Company	Private	Entertainment/Leisure	L
17. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Misc Services	C
45. Company	Private	Agriculture/Food	C
46. Company	Private	Entertainment/Leisure	C
47. Company	Private	Agriculture/Food	L
48. Company	Private	Finance	C
7. Pressure Group	Voluntary	Socio/Political/Cultural	C
12. Public Body	Public	Environment	M C
49. Company	Private	Engineering/Defence	C
50. Company	Private	Development/Construction	M C
13. Public Body	Public	Socio/Political/Cultural	L
51. Company	Private	Health	L
8. Charity	Voluntary	Socio/Political/Cultural	C
52. Company	Private	Media	C
53. Company	Private	Media	C
54. Company	Private	Pharmaceuticals	M
55. Company	Private	Entertainment/Leisure	C
56. Company	Private	Health	L
57. Company	Private	Media	M C
58. Company	Private	Media	M C
59. Company	Private	Banking/Finance	C
60. Company	Private	Transport	M L
61. Company	Private	Transport	M L
62. Company	Private	Environment	C
14. Public Body	Public	Socio/Political/Cultural	L
63. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	L

64. Company	Private	Environment	MC
65. Company	Private	Health	L
9. Pressure Group	Private	Socio/Political/Cultural	L
66. Company	Private	Engineering/Defence	C
67. Company	Private	Pharmaceuticals/Chemicals	C
68. Company	Private	Development/Construction	C
69. Company	Private	Finance	C
70. Company	Private	Finance	C
71. Company	Private	Transport	L
72. Company	Private	Finance	C
73. Company	Private	Transport	C
10. Pressure Group	Private	Socio/Political/Cultural	C
74. Company	Private	Misc Manuf/Retail	ML
75. Company	Private	Finance	ML
76. Company	Private	Development/Construction	C
18. Trade/Professional Assn	Private	Finance	C
77. Company	Private	Transport	L
78. Company	Private	Health	C
79. Company	Private	Media	C
80. Company	Private	Engineering/Defence	MC
81. Company	Private	Environment	MC
82. Company	Private	Engineering/Defence	MC
15. Public Body	Public	Socio/Political/Cultural	CL
83. Company	Private	Agriculture/Food	C

APPENDIX 2

	Companies	Trade/Prof Assocs	Public Bodies	Charity/Pre- ssure Gps	ALL CLIENTS
Agriculture, Food & Drink	8	1	0	0	9
Development & Construction	10	0	1	0	11
Engineering & Defence	7	0	0	0	7
Entertainment & Leisure	4	4	1	0	9
Environment	4	1	1	0	6
Finance	15	2	0	0	17
Health	5	1	0	2	8
Media	7	4	1	0	12
Misc Manufacturing & Retail	9	0	0	0	9
Misc Services	1	3	0	0	4
Pharmaceutical & Chemical	4	1	0	0	5
Social, Political & Cultural	0	1	8	8	17
Transport	9	0	3	0	12
ALL	83	18	15	10	126

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