

STUDY THEME 1B – DECISION MAKING IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Question

Critically examine the view that pressure groups are a threat to democracy. (15 marks)

Response

In this essay I intend to critically examine the view that pressure groups are a threat to democracy. The argument against this view is called the pluralist view. This view is simply that for modern democracies to be democratic there must be more involvement from the people affected i.e. a vote at a general election every 5 years isn't enough to show the true opinions and isn't a good enough voice for the people, in this sense they believe pressure groups are indeed very good for democracy.

Pressure groups have the ability to allow minority groups to speak out and be heard. For example in 2001, lorry drivers among others protested against fuel prices, as this is a minority group voting would have been ineffective where as here they protested, and were successful.

Insider pressure groups are also good for democracy in that they are often consulted by government at the early stages of the policy making process when they have expertise or good knowledge in the field, for example the BMA will be consulted at the early stages of policy to do with the NHS. They can provide valuable assistance to policy makers, ensuring they can make legislation which is the product of consultation with experts and compromise.

Pressure groups also make government more open in the sense that these policies which have been made in conjunction with experts are more likely to be effective and respected by the public.

On the other hand the view that pressure groups are bad for democracy also has a fair argument. Pressure groups in themselves aren't the most democratic in the sense that their methods of choosing a leader aren't always very effective. For example a leader may not be voted for it may just be the most vocal member who is picked out of convenience.

Pressure groups allow minority groups to implement change in radical ways this is not democratic.

Many pressure groups represent privileged people in society, for example the BMA represents doctors and other people in the medical profession, typically wealthy people, and their views won't be the same as less advantaged people.

Many pressure groups can't always get all the collective views of their members and sometimes the views put across are that of the leader, this is not democratic because not the full group is involved.

In conclusion I believe pressure groups are in fact good for democracy because they are one of the few ways in which people can have their say all year round.

Commentary

This response features development, exemplification and balanced comment. However the exemplification is thin, with the same group (BMA) featuring both positively and negatively. The development of the Pluralist view and the points about consultation and making government more open are well made. However the development of the view that pressure groups are a threat to democracy, although credit-worthy, lacks precision and exemplification. It is not clear which minority group the candidate had in mind with the reference "*implement change in radical ways this is not democratic*". This is a basic B pass.

Mark 9/15