

## Preface

The findings reported in this study directly challenge prevailing assumptions both in- and outside the scholarly community about the regularity of business involvement in agenda building and policymaking as well as the ability of business to influence government decisions concerning pollution control and natural resource management. This outcome was unexpected. When I first began working on this book more than three years ago, I anticipated finding that American corporations are regularly involved in environmental agenda building and policymaking and that they exert a great deal of influence over government decision making. Like many, I accepted the conventional wisdom that business frequently opposes proposals that will improve environmental quality in order to protect its profits. After all, reports in the media nearly always place the blame for the defeat of environmental initiatives on the undue influence of business. As an environmentalist myself, I have been quite disappointed in the lack of progress the United States has made, especially recently, in the areas of pollution control and natural resource conservation. Most policy analysts attribute this lack of progress to the ability of corporate America to block or dilute critical federal legislation and to the inability of environmental groups to compete in the policymaking process. Thus, when I told my colleagues and students that I was writing a book analyzing the extent to which business influences environmental policy,

nearly all of them responded: “Why bother? We already know that corporations usually get their way in debates over environmental issues.”

Of course, good social scientists are supposed to remain objective and not allow their biases and prior expectations to influence their theory and methodology. In order to accumulate knowledge, we must make a strong effort to remain neutral in the way we carry out our research. Once the data are collected, we are obligated to share the findings—regardless what they say—with the scholarly community. I was determined to adhere to these principles and conduct a fair and balanced assessment of the role of business interests in environmental and natural resource policymaking.

As the data show, business interests do not participate in environmental policy debates at a high rate, and when they do, they have mixed success in influencing policy outcomes. These results generally hold when one examines agenda building in Congress, agency rulemaking, and, to some extent, the courts. Analyses of salient conflicts involving pollution control and natural resources also tend to bear this out. Business interests, instead, appear to select strategically the controversies in which they become involved and how much money they spend on lobbying activities of various kinds. A major conclusion of my work is that agenda building within the environmental policy domain is a highly complex process and cannot be explained by a single theory. This and other surprising related findings are the subject of this book.

Many people provided important assistance throughout my research. Fred Gordon, a graduate student research assistant, collected and coded all the congressional bills related to environmental and natural resource issues considered between 1970 and 2000. He worked many long hours hunting down possible data sources and making certain that the information was accurately coded and entered. Denise McCain-Tharnstrom, also a graduate student research assistant, was instrumental in obtaining data on cases involving environmental issues in the federal courts of appeals. In addition, she collected information on some of the case studies. Both Fred and Denise read draft chapters and provided me with valuable comments. Those in government, business, and the environmental community who agreed to speak to me (often in confidence) concerning the case studies and other issues related to this research provided vital information and valuable insights.

I am grateful to those who helped me collect and interpret the data for my analysis of the influence of business interests over the contents of proposed rules by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and Forest Service. Allison Rogers and Lou Taylor at EPA headquarters in Washington DC helped me obtain most of the public comments on the EPA rules examined in this study. I also want to thank Jody Sutton, Patte Widdifield, and especially Gabrielle Renshaw of the Content Analysis Team, Service Center, in Salt Lake City, Utah, for providing me with the data and information on the public comments concerning the proposed rules by the FWS and the Forest Service that are analyzed in this book. Given the enormous number of public comments on these rules, I could not have conducted this portion of the analysis without their assistance. Grants from the James H. Zumberge Faculty Research and Innovation Fund at the University of Southern California (USC) and from the John Randolph and Dora Haynes Foundation funded the research reported in this study.

Several colleagues played a major role in helping me shape the research questions, select the data sources and case studies, and interpret the findings. I benefited from a conference call arranged by Daniel Mazmanian in August 2002 about my work. He, Monty Hempel, Michael Kraft, and Daniel Press participated. It was Dan Press who argued for the importance of studying whether business usually gets what it wants in environmental policy. In addition, Mike Kraft provided excellent advice and guidance in the final selection of the case studies examined in this volume, and Dan Mazmanian read early drafts of my beginning chapters and provided many useful suggestions. Ann Crigler pointed me toward important work in the political science and communications literature on issue framing. Finally, I want to thank all the faculty and students I interacted with while I was a visiting professor at the Donald Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, University of California, Santa Barbara, during the 2001–2002 academic year. They provided me with constructive feedback on various aspects of my research.

I am indebted to several individuals for reading the entire manuscript or certain key chapters in their areas. Frank Baumgartner, Jeffrey Berry, Helen Ingram, Mike Kraft, and Evan Ringquist read the entire manuscript and offered enormously helpful recommendations for improving the work. Mark Smith was particularly generous with his time,

fielding questions about specific details regarding the methodology he used in his outstanding and provocative book, *American Business and Political Power*. He also was kind enough to take time out from his own book project and read and comment on Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 8. Marissa Martino Golden provided good suggestions on collecting and analyzing data on rulemaking from the EPA, FWS, and Forest Service. Robert O'Brien provided excellent advice and guidance on methodology and data analysis. Cheryl Stewart, a USC graduate student, read drafts of the first three chapters and contributed several valuable ideas. Finally, I appreciate the effort of Amanda Moran at Stanford University Press to ensure that the review process went smoothly. The peer reviews solicited by the Press contained many good ideas for improving the manuscript. In the end, of course, I assume full responsibility for any errors in my work.

In addition, I want to thank all of the students who have enrolled in my undergraduate course and graduate seminar on environmental policy over the years. Their interpretation of the literature and their views about the policymaking process helped shape my own thinking and approach to the subject matter examined in this volume. I hope that they and others enjoy reading my book as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Cindy Pamela Gadye, MD, to whom this book is dedicated, for her continuous encouragement throughout the research and writing phases of the study. She was kind enough to sacrifice many weekends and some nights so that I could finish the book. I do not think I could have completed this book without her consistent and strong support. I am deeply indebted to her.

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