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Aged Interest Groups and Politics

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AGED INTEREST GROUPS

AND POLITICS

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INDEPENDENT STUDY 997.01

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The primary interest of this study is the analysis of the political ramifications of the rapid rise in political interest groups that represent the aged. The area of aging and politics has become of increasing importance due to the development of a number of trends in the environment. First, there is a persistent trend toward the increasing self-consciousness of the aged as a collective grouping. The aged population is increasingly realizing the homogeneity of interests that it shares with each other on the basis of age. There are a number of explanations for this increase in the aged's identification with their age group.

Arnold Rose[1] cites the forced isolation of the aged as the key factor behind the rise of an aged sub-culture. While the idea of an aged sub-culture is debateable, this forced isolation is definately an important factor in the rise of identification with the aged's own age group. Our society forces the aged out of the mainstream of lifes activities when a certain age is reached. Forced retirement, either through overt action or subtle pressures, is a common phenomenon in our society. This forced retirement takes away from the aged person his or her primary focus of interaction. That is his workrole and workmates. Retirement, in effect, isolates the aged person from interaction with the primary focus of most peoples lives. This isolation has increased the level of interaction among the aged, as interaction with the non-aged is forcible diminished. James Trela[2] has shown that the higher the level of interaction between the aged, the greater will be the identification with that age group. In effect, the aged have been forced to interact with each other, and this has precipitated the increase in their identification with their age group. As the aged interact with each other the homogeneity of their interests and needs is exposed.

Another factor which has enhanced the aged's identification with their age group, is the rise of the role of the federal government in the field of aging. The federal government offers a number of benefits to the aged on the basis of their age. To receive these benefits a person must identify with being aged to some degree. As the level of benefits has increased, and this has been the trend in the past decade, and as the welfare stigma has slowly been removed from these benefits, the identification with being aged has been more postively reenforced. This has lead to an increase in the aged's identification with their age and age group.

A second trend in the environment has been the increasing generalized support, by the non-aged, for the legitimate demands put forward in the name of the aged. The aged are being seen as a distinct social group by the non-aged as well as the aged. Organized labor has always championed programs which benefit the aged, and increasingly other groups are following suit. Such programs as Medicare and those entailed in the Older Americans Act, are examples of legislation that was passed into law due to the strong support of the non-aged. The aged are being preceived as a group which has unique needs and interests by the rest of society. This is not to say that the non-aged population is supporting the aged's claims out of empathy, rather many of the programs put forward in the name of the aged are aimed not at the present aged, but some future aged group. This type of support is becoming more frequent with the rise of early retirements, with the rise of the life expectancy rates, and with the increasing uncertainty of the effect of inflation on retirement income. This has all lead to an increase in the support of the aged's needs and demands by the non-aged.

A third trend in the environment is the continued growth of the aged

population both in absolute numbers, and in relation to other age-cohort groups. In 1900 there were approximately three million aged persons, and by 1970 this had grown to over twenty million aged[3]. The obvious ramifications of this absolute growth in the aged population is the increased demand for goods and services which are age related. In this country the majority of these goods and services are provided by the government, and have been since the depression. The reasons for this are too comples to go into in this study, let us just say that it is mainly due to the economic state of the majority of the aged. This increase in the needs and demands of the aged for those goods and services that are provided by the government, will put pressure on the government to increase its level of output. The trend is towards the rapid expansion of the number of aged in the next decade, and this will accelerate the demands put on the government. Conflict in the political system is sure to increase as the level of demands increases.

The other factor, that of relative growth in relation to other age-cohort groups, has even more important ramifications. In 1900 the aged made up just 4% of the population, but by 1970 this had increased to 10%[4]. In sheer numbers the aged will make up the largest minority group in this country by 1985. This is not to say that the aged will identify as a single grouping with a common cause in the future. The obstacles in front of the development of a gerontocracy are too many for this to occur. Rather what has occurred, and will continue to occur, is the fourth trend in the environment. This trend the one the study is centered areound, is the rise in the numbers and in the importance of aged political interest groups.

The analysis of social processes on the basis of groups has been a major,

recurring theme in the study of American politics. The group approach commands an important place in the study of politics, and it provides one method by which we can analyzes the ramifications of the trends in our environment with respect to aging and politics. The group approach suggests that society is fundamentally composed of groups, and thus the political processes can be analyzed as group processes. It is no surprise then that as the aged developed into a distinct social grouping, aged political groups began to develop. To fully analyze the development of these aged political interest groups it is necessary to look at what I will term the aged political movement. The aged political movement can be loosely defined as the process which has lead to the development of the aged into a collection of political groupings. This is the process by which the aged became politically aligned along age-lines. The key to the understanding of any political movement is in the analysis of the center of that movement. Those individuals and groups that make up the core of a movement are the focus of the values and activities of that movement. To understand the development of the aged political movement we must look at the individuals and groups which made up the age movement. By analyzing the changing characteristics and values of the core groups we can plot the path of the movement to its present situation. In this manner it is hoped that a better understanding of the present situation will be rendered.

The roots of the aged political movement can be found in the old-age pension movement of the 1920's. This was a movement of certain groups whose goal was the establishment of some form of governmental pension program, for the aged. There were two major groups which made up the pension movement in the 1920's. These two groups were the American Association of Labor Legislation, and the

American Association of Social Security. While there were a number of per-
ipheral groups, these two made up the core of the pension movement. Both of
these groups were caucus groups. A caucus group is a group whose major functions
are carried out by a small number of active members of a group. The group is
made up of just these small number of active members, and outside individuals
are recruited only for financial support. The AALL was interested in all
facets of labor oriented legislation with pensions just being one area of
interest. Its focus was aimed at the national level, in particular the members
of Congress. The AASS on the other hand was solely interested in the issue of
pensions, and its focus was aimed at the state level, In particular the AASS
was active in the state of New York, and aimed its activities at the members
of that states legislature.

The pension movement had very limited success in the 1920's, and its failure
rests in great part upon the nature of these two core groups. The AALL was
totally ineffective in influencing Congress on the pension issue. The AASS
was responsible for limited success in New York in establishing pension programs.
As was noted earlier these groups had very limited memberships. As long as
these groups could rally financial support from outside indiviuals, these
groups could carry out their functions. When the depression hit these groups
financialisupporters ceased to provide this support. Because both of these
groups had limited their realm of support, when the depression came they had
no alternative source to turn to. These groups had never attempted to mobilize
the members of the group they were trying to aid, the aged. When the depression
came, the aged began to feel the need for governmental programs that would
provide pensions, but they were not organized to voice their support. Prior
to the depression the common held belief was that the prudent person proveded

for his own retirement needs. Our country was only beginning to feel the
effects of the rapid change from an agrarian based society to an industrial
based society. Retirement was not a frequent occurance in an agrarian based
society as the skills developed over a lifetime of farming rarely became out-
dated. In the industrial society, the skills one possesses at any given time
are rendered outdated in a very short time due to technological advances. The
older worker, because he is thought to be too old to reeducate, is forced to
withdraw from the work force when his skills are outdated. The 1920's was a
time of a shift from infrequent retirements to frequent retirements. Coupled
with the demise of the rural extended family unit, the aged began to find them-
selves living without support from their jobs or their families. The depression
only helped to accent their needs. Just as the need for pension programs began
to be preceived by a large segment of the population, the groups which had
been actively proposing these programs were ceasing to function. Because these
groups never attempted to mobilize the aged, when the issue of pensions began
to become a salient issue these groups were in no position to capitalize on
the support of the aged.

The AASS had achieved some limited success by aiming their demands at a
narrower political arena then the AALL. By limiting their activities to the
state of New York, they were able to channel their energies more effectively.
What ever success the AASS achieved must be shared with the progressive minded
Governor of New York, Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt was interested in the
establishment of a pension program in his state, and worked with the AASS
in their efforts to achieve the development of a governmental pension program.
The AASS controlled much of the information that Roosevelt needed to devise a
pension program, and due to this a working relationship between the two grew.

Neither Roosevelt nor the AASS were successful in persuading the legislature to create a far reaching pension program, but the relationship that was established between the two was to be very important in the 1930's after the election to the presidency of Roosevelt.

After his election in 1932, Roosevelt approached the primary leaders of both the AASS and the AALL, and persuaded them to come and work with him in the development of a comprehensive nationwide pension program. This program was to become known as social security. What Roosevelt did in fact was to co-opt the leadership of the pension movement. In this manner Roosevelt was able to control the expansion of conflict on the pension issue. By co-opting the leaders of the two major groups in the pension movement, he was able to limit the spread of the pension movement. Cobb & Elder[5] define three crucial dimensions to a conflict situation, the scope, the intensity, and the visibility. Scope refers to the number of persons and groups who align themselves in a conflict situation. Roosevelt was able to limit the scope of conflict around the pension issue by co-opting the leaders of the groups which could align themselves against his proposals. Without effective leadership these groups were no longer able to function effectively in the political system. Thus there was little opposition to the development of Roosevelt's social security program. The second dimension, intensity, relates to the degree of commitment of the contending parties to incompatible positions. By bringing the leaders of a possible opposition into the government, Roosevelt was able to get these leaders committed to his program. They were not longer just intensely interested in the establishment of a pension program, but were intensely interested in the pension program they were helping the President develop. The third dimension, visibility, relates to the awareness of persons and groups to conflict, and its possible consequences. Because visibility is a

function of both scope and intensity, Roosevelt was also able to limit the

visibility of the conflict around the pension issue. By creating the Council

on Economic Security, which was to deal with the development of the social

security program, Roosevelt was able to provide symbolic assurances that

something was being done to aid the aged as their needs became more and more

desperate.

The effectiveness of the Roosevelt administration in controlling the conflict

on the pension issue can be illustrated by looking at the course of development

of the social security program. Roosevelt created the Council on Economic

Security in 1933, in 1935 the Social Security Act was passed, but it did not

go into effect until 1939. In other words, during the depression when the

needs of the aged were most desperate, the federal government did not do

anything to alleviate these needs. The time was ripe for the rise of the

aged political movement, but this never really took place. By offering

symbolic assurances, Roosevelt was able to control the spread of conflict

around the development of social security.

The aged political movement did show some activity at this time. There

were a number of aged related movements in the depression years, the most

important of these being the Townsend Movement. The basis of the Townsend

Movement was the establishment of a guaranteed monthly income for the aged

if they stayed out of the labor market[6]. The Townsend Movement saw for the

first time a large number of the aged actively participating in politics on

the basis of age. The movement was based mainly on the emotional appeal of

its leader, Francis Townsend. The Townsend Movement was able to get isolated

movement adherents elected to various governmental offices, but by and large

it failed to gain any substantive benefits for the aged. One reason for this

is that a movement based on emotional appeal is difficult to sustain. This

movement lack^ed a sound level of organization, and when no substantive benefits

were received by its members, the emotional appeal lost it's power. A second

reason for its failure was the lack of financial resources of the aged. It

takes a great deal of financial support to be able to exert significant influence

at the national level, and the movement lack^ed this support. A third reason

for the movements failure was the power of the Roosevelt administration in

combatting the movement. What the adherents of the movement wanted done, and

what the Roosevelt administration was attempting to do in its social security

program were quite similar. What the Townsend movement attempted to do was

accelerate the implementation of the program. Because Roosevelt did not want

his time table upset, he waged a successful symbolic war against the movement.

By having the movement leaders identified as socialist sympathizers, and by

having Francis Townsend forced to involve himself in a ill-advised third

party campaign for the presidency, the Roosevelt administration was able to

limit the effectiveness of the movement. When the adherents of the movement

saw that their plan was not going to be considered by the government, the

movement fell apart. Roosevelt had succeeded in defining the scope of the

social security issue to fit his needs and his time table.

The Social Security program went into effect in the early 1940's. The

purpose of the program was to provide protection to the worker as a matter

of right in his retirement. The first few years of the program showed how

poorly the program was designed to achieve this purpose. As late as 1950

twenty million workers were not elgible for coverage under the Old Age and

Survivors Insurance provision of the Act. Those who failed to be elgible

under OASI, had to seek benefits under another provision of the Act, Old Age

Assistance. OAA benefits were considered to be welfare in nature, and an

embarassing test had to be past before elgibility was granted. The level

of benefits under OAA was significantly lower then under OASI. Though these

defeciencies were evident in the early 1940's, no changes occurred in the Act

until 1950. There were a number of reasons for this, the most important being

the advent of the second world war. In the wartime atmosphere all domestic

programs were given second class consideration. This is not to say that

there were not significant events taking place in the aged political movement

in the 1940's, for changes were taking place that would be extremely important

in the next two decades.

One of these changes was the support of organized labor for an expansion of

the Social Security Act. In the early 1940's, both the AFL and the CIO came

out in support of the expansion of the Act to cover all workers. These labor

organizations had not come out in support of the soical security program in the

1930's because they feared the effect it would have on their members private

pension programs. When these fears proved unfounded, organized labor came out

in support of a massive expansion of the Act which was floundering in its first

years of implementation. Unfortunately for the aged, organized labor did not

pursue this course, but turned it's interest towards more pressing labor

problems caused by the end of the war. The only other major force pushing

for the expansion of the social security coverage was the Social Security

Administration. They naturally wanted to see an expansion in the program

for that would increase their power. The SSA was unable in the 1940's to

mobilize any support by the aged behind an expansion of the program, and thus

the program stayed relatively undhanged for the first ten years of its existence.

Though the national level did not see significant political action by the

aged in the 1940's, there was an important event taking place at the state level in California. This was the McClain Movement, and old-age pension movement[7]. This movement was founded by George McClain, a shrewd politician who saw the potential in organizing the aged. His Citizens Committee for Old Age Pensions effectively organized the aged of California, and used their political resources to make great strides in that state's pension program coverages. This movement was similar to the Townsend Movement in a number of respects. It was based on the emotional appeal of its leader, and it was based on the participation of the aged themselves. While it was similar in these two respects, it was in the differences that show why one was successful and the other a failure. The McClain Movement limited itself to the narrower state level, and because of the large number of aged in that state, it was able to raise sufficent financial resources. When McClain attempted to move the movement to the national level it experienced the same fate as the Townsend Movement, and for the same reasons. Though the financial resources were sufficent for success at the state level, they were not nearly sufficent enough for a national effort. The important fact that came out of the McClain movement was not the benefits it gained, but the seed of aged political activity that was planted. This seed was to lay dormant for a decade, but was to burst forward into aged political activity in the 1960's.

The 1950's was a time of little activity in the aged political movement, but there were some events that were going to have profound effects on the aged political movement in the next decade. The concept which was going to be known as Medicare was originated in the Truman administration in 1951. Truman wanted a national health insurance program which would provide coverage to everyone, but the political climate of the 50's was not favorable for such a program.

National health insurance was not a new concept, it was discussed by the
Roosevelt administration as far back as 1935. What Truman did was pick the
aged as the target group for Medicare coverage because he thought they would
appear as a sympathetic group. It was his hope that a program which just
covered the aged would be easier to pass then one with total coverage, and
that once a limited program was passed it would be expanded over time. It
is much easier to get a program expanded, than it is to get a new program
established, and Truman felt that choosing the aged as the target group would
be an effect way to get the program underway. Unfortunately, the aged were not
seen as a sympathetic group by those opposed to a national health insurance
program. Not only that, but the aged themselves were not mobilized in support
of the program. Even with the scope of the program narrowed to cover just the
aged, little progress was made in the area of national health insurance in the
1950's.

Two other events in the 1950's that had an effect on the aged political
movement were the increase in the number of welfare agencies that dealt with
an aged clientele, and the increase in the number of senior citizens centers.
The increase in the number of senior citizens centers increased the level of
interaction among the aged. As was noted earlier, the increase in interaction
among the aged increases the level of awareness of the aged to the homogeneity
of interests shared among the aged. These centers also served as the first step
toward organizing the aged into political groups. This is not to say that these
centers were actively organizing the aged into political groups, but rather the
mechanism for this step was provided by senior citizen centers. The increase in
the number of welfare agencies that dealt with an aging clientele heightened the
awareness of these agencies officials to the sorry state of the aged's economic

situation. The needs of the aged began to become more visible as these agencies attempted to alleviate the problems the aged faced, through their soliciatation of funds for increased programs.

The 1960's saw the rise of aged groups in the aged political movement for the first time. Prior to this, the aged political movement consisted of non-aged groups, both private and public, which attempted to achieve something for the aged by political action, but not with the aged. The Townsend and McClain movements were exceptions to this, but they were showcases for the effectiveness of the opposition to the demands of the aged at the national level. The 1960's saw for the first time the rise of groups who were made up of the aged, and sought the goals of the aged. The first step in this development was the creation of the Senior Citizens for Kennedy. The Senior Citizens for Kennedy was an attempt by a small number of aged groups based in California, to organize the aged in support of John Kennedy. What these groups attempted to do was mobilize the aged to vote in bloc for their candidate. They were ineffective in doing this, as an anlysis of the vote after the election showed that the aged voted in their tradtional manner. What the Senior Citizens for Kennedy succeeded in doing was to get a large number of the aged actively participating in campaigning for their candidate throughout the country. Senior Citizens for Kennedy groups developed throughout the country, and the aged members actively participated in campaigning for John Kennedy. For the first time it was realized that the aged could be mobilized into political activity, and this did not escape the eye of the Kennedy people. They realized that the aged were a source of support which should be cultivated and catered too, and this is what that administration attempted to do in the early 1960's. More importantly, the aged themselves realized the benefits possible through group activity in the political

arena. With the administration acknowledging the political potential of the aged, and the aged themselves recognizing their own political potential, an important advancement in the aged political movement had taken place. The political education that these active aged received in their campaign efforts would prove invaluable as they attempted to organize into aged political groups.

The concept of an aged political interest group needs to be explained. The concept is actually comprised of three notions, a group, an interest group, and an aged interest group. David Trumans[9] classification of groups is helpful in defining the group. Truman distinguishes groups into four different types. These are the categoric group, the potential group, the interaction group, and the institution group. The categoric group is one where the members of the group share at least one common characteristic. An example would be the total population of the aged who share the characteristic of age. The potential group is one where the members share at least one common characteristic and at least one common attitude. An example would be all of the aged population who voted for John Kennedy. A interaction group is one where the members share at least one characteristic, one attitude, and interact among each other. An example would be the members of a senior citizens center who voted for John Kennedy. The final type, the institution group, is one which has a high level of stability, uniformity, formality, generality, and has a formal organization. This is the type of group which is the focus of this study.

The second notion is that of an interest group. For the purposes of this study, the definition of an interest group is a group that seeks to implement its goals by activity directed toward the political system. An aged interest group is one thats goals are those of the aged. By aged it is meant the interests are related to retirement or later life. To recap, an aged interest group is

a group which has a high degree of stability, uniformity, formality, generality, and has a formal organization. This group seeks to implement its goals through activity aimed at the political system, and its goals are those associated with retirement and later life.

The aged didn't immediately develop powerful interest groups now that their activity levels and awareness had increased. It takes more than desire and willingness to develop into a powerful interest. The number of the aged who were active in the early part of the 1960's were small in comparison to the total number of aged. To develop groups with the characteristics previously cited, it takes a high level of financial resources, organizational skill, and dynamic leadership. In the 1960's the aged interest groups were in their formative years in developing these necessary resources.

To understand how these aged interest groups developed into powerful groups in the 1970's, a look at their development in the 1960's is insightful. Robert Binstock[10] and Henry Pratt[11], both have conducted studies of this development of aged interest groups. Binstock in his study which was conducted in 1972 found that ten aged interest groups had devloped to the point where by 1971 they dominated the aging policy system at the national level. Pratt conducted his study in 1974, and his findings substantiate Binstocks findings. The ten aged interest groups that these two men found dominate in the aging policy system are the major focus of this study also. Four of these ten aged interest groups are trade associations. These are the American Association of Nursing Homes, the American Association of Homes for the Aging, the National Council of Health Care Services, and the National Association of State Units on Aging. These four trade associations are all rather small,(NASUA has fifty members), and their functions are extremely narrow. The three nursing home associations

were formed not as political action groups, but rather as informational

coordinators. With the rapid proliferation of nursing homes in the 1950-

60's, and with the increasing involvement of the federal government in the

regulation of these homes, it was necessary for this homes to band together

to exchange information and expertise on how to handle the ever growing

problems involved in running a nursing home. These homes were especially

interest in dealing with the increasing level of interference by the federal

government. The three nursing home associations developed to meet these needs.

These associations provided their members advice, did research, and other

non-political functions. They developed into political interest groups when

the rise in the level of governmental interference kept increasing. As the

associations developed financial resources, organizational skills, and

leadership expertise, they began to exert influence in the political system.

In a like manner the NASUA formed to provide a conduit of information to each

of the states concerning the programs available to the states. As the state

units increased their level of interaction with federal and state government

officials, their political functions. These trade associations represent the

business interests in the aging field, and their scope of interest is for the

most part extremely narrow.

One of the ten groups is a professional association, the American Gerontological

Association. The AGS grew out of the expansion of academic interest in the

field of aging that occurred in the latter part of the 1950's. Like most

professional associations it formed for reasons other then lobbying. The

AGS formed originally to provide a means by which those in the fledgling field

of geriatrics could exchange ideas and research findings with others in the

field. Through the publication of a journal, the association was able to induce

those active in the field to join its association. When the federal government began to show interest in the field of aging, it was to the AGS that it turned to secure the information in the field that was necessary for it to develop programs for the aged. The AGS became active in the political system as the number of research grants offered by the government increased, and a reciprocal relationship between the association and the government was established.

Two of the ten interest groups cited by Binstock and Pratt are confederations of specialists in the field of welfare for the aged. These two groups are the National Council on the Aging, and the National Caucus of Black Aged. The NCBA is a group which formed in the mid-1960's as a product of the civil rights movement of that time. It was formed as a political action group whose function was to dramatize the particular plight of the black aged. Its membership is comprised of public and private welfare agency professionals who deal with the black aged. The NCOA is also comprised of public and private welfare agency professionals, and was formed in the early 1950's. Its original function was to provide a national resource for planning, information, consultation, and publications devoted to the aged. Its central focus of interest revolves around the senior citizens center, and its affiliated group, the National Institute of Senior Centers has a membership of over five thousand senior citizens centers. With the passage of Title 5 of the Older Americans Act (which provides funds for senior citizens centers) the NCOA became active in the political system in an effort to garner a share of these funds for their members.

The final three aged interest groups that Binstock and Pratt alluded to are mass-membership organizations. These three are the National Council of Senior Citizens, the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, and the

National Retired Teachers Association (and its affiliated group the American
Association of Retired Persons). The NCSC originated as a political interest
group which owes its beginning to the efforts of the AFL-CIO and the Democratic
National Party. The Democratic National Party viewed the efforts of the
Senior Citizens for Kennedy as significant evidence of the political potential
of the organized aged. Together with organized labor, they wished to organize
an aged interest group which could rally the aged around the Medicare issue.
The NCSC has developed from a small group with a single focus of interest,
into an extremely large organization interested in all aspects of aging. It is
virtually an arm of organized labor, and it provides its members with the fruits
of its political activities.

The NARFE as its name suggests is a group composed of retired federal
employees. Federal employees, whether retired or not, have always been ahead
of other groups in organizing for political activity. The NARFE is no different
as it was formed in 1921. Its purpose in forming was to provide retirement
benefits for federal employees, which it has done since the 1920's when it
successfully lobbied for a federal employees pension program. Like the NCSC,
the NARFE was formed for political action, but unlike the NCSC it has limited
its activities to attaining benefits for its members.

The final group, the NRTA-AARP was originally formed as a means of securing
material benefits for retired teachers through private enterprises. Specifically
the NRTA was formed to provided retired teachers with inexpensive insurance
programs through group coverages. When interest in this type of insurance
programs expanded outside of the teaching profession, the AARP was formed to
provided this insurance coverage to all of the aged. Though not politically
active in the very beginning of its existence, these two groups have increased

their levels of political activity as their membership has grown. These

two groups have always attempted to achieve gains for their memberships

through the private sector as opposed to the public sector, but with the

increase of the level of involvement of the federal government in the field

of aging, they have assumed a more political role.

These ten groups, though some were formed in the 1950's or earlier, did not

begin to grow until the 1960's. The major impetus to the growth of these

groups was the growth of the federal governments role in the field of aging.

The expansion of the role of the federal government in the field of aging

provided an atmosphere that was conducive to the development of aged interest

groups. President Kennedy, much more then any other previous president, en-

couraged and rewarded group involvement in national policy making. His principle

was called "participatory democracy", Theodore Lowi called it "interest group

liberalism"[12]. In interest group liberalism, interest groups are encouraged

not only to become involved in the formulation of law, but also in the imple-

mentation of law. With interest group liberalism principles being appled

throughout the government, it was natural for the application to spread to the

relatively new field of aging. Both the Kennedy and the Johnson administrations

came to view the aged organizations as the deserved spokesman for the aged

population, and encouraged them to become active in the determination and the

application of aging policies. Lowi designed a working model of interest

group liberalism consisting of three basic assumptions made by governmental

officials. First, organized interest are homogeneous, and easy to define.

Thus the spokesman for that group speaks for all in that group and all who are

like the members of that group. Second, organized interests are found in all

aspects of our society. Thus the pluralists view that where there is an interest

a group will be created. Third, the role of the government is one of assuring access to the machinery of government to these groups, especially the most effectively organized. By applying these principles, the Kennedy and Johnson administration not only provided an atmosphere conducive to the development of aged interest groups, but it also determined which groups would become stable and established, and which would not. This is done when the officials of government recognizes certain groups as having a right to represent the interests of their members an those like them in our society, and at the same time failing to recognize similar groups. Only a limited number of groups can gain access to the machinery of government because of its finite nature. Lowi says that the best organized groups will gain the attention of the officials of government, while those groups which are not well organized will be ignored. Once a group has gained access to the government it will entrench itself in the political system, and those groups which were not recognized will never be able to dislodge them. In this manner, once the government recognizes a group, it is automatically ignoring other groups.

Coupled with this conducive atmosphere, there were a number of factors which precipitated the rise of the aged interest groups. One of these factors was the development of bureaucratization in the level of organization of these groups. By this, it is meant that these groups attempted and succeeded in developing a high level of organization with a division of labor, a hierachical authority structure, and formal rules and procedures. These elements aided in stabilizing the organizations, and allowing them to become more efficent in the pursuit of their goals. Another factor aiding the development of these groups was the nature of their financial postions. As was noted earlier, the majority of these groups were organized to offer their members information, expertise,

research technology, or in the case of the NRTA-AARP, cheap insurance. They were not dependent on success in the political arena as a means of satisfying their membership. As was noted earlier, the Townsend Movement fell apart when its members realized that their efforts were not going to be rewarded by the adoption of Townsend's plan. The groups of the 1960's did not have to relie on political benefits for continuation of their existence,(At least those groups which continued to exist.) The political functions of these groups developed as a secondary purpose, or as Mancur Olson stated as a "by-product".[13] Olsons by-product theory states that a common characteristic of large groups which have significant political functions is that these groups were formed for other purposes. The lobbying function is a by-product or consequences of the development of these groups into well developed organizations because of the non-collective benefits it offers to its members. Because these groups are able to develop into organized groups with financially stable resources, they can turn to lobbying activities as a secondary pursuit. As Olson points out, if a groups sole purpose is to obtain collective benefits through political action which can be enjoyed without having to be a member, then these groups would not have a large membership for the rational man would not join when he can receive the same benefits from non-membership. It is only those groups which offer incentives for membership, non-collective benefits, which will be able to develop to the point where they can engage in political activity.

All three of these factors, bureaucratization, the nature of financial resources, and an atmosphere conducive to the rise in importance of aged groups were responsible for the rise to dominance of certain aged interest groups in the aging policy system. Though this rise began in the early part of the 1960's, it was a number of years before these groups were able to exert

influence on the aging policy system.

These groups were beginning to rise as politically active groups in the early 1960's, but their legitimacy as having a rightful part in the determination of aged policy was far from recognized. In the early 1960's there were two significant pieces of legislation that affected the aged, the Medicare program and the Older Americans Act. Of these two, only the NCSC was involved in any way in the debate over Medicare, and their influence was slight, and the Older Americans Act was only slightly influenced by the efforts of aged interest groups. The Medicare program was far and away the publicized of the two pieces of legislation, but it is the Older Americans Act that had the most impact on the development of aged interest groups. Prior to the Older Americans Act, there was just the Office of Aging as the sole executive bureau which dealt exclusively with the aged. The Office of Aging was under the jurisidiction of the commissioner of welfare, in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. This was a rather obscure postion for an agency with the potential of eighteen million clients. Not only was the Office of Aging outside of the main focus of HEW but it was linked with a welfare connotation. What the Older Americans Act did, was create a new agency in HEW, the Administration on Aging. The importance of the creation of this new agency is basically threefold. First the AOA was set up as a new agency directly underneath the jurisdiction of the Secretary of HEW. This put the agency near the center of focus of HEW, which heightened the visibility of the agency both in HEW and outside of the department. Second, the creation of AOA removed the field of aging from the welfare area. This helped to give some legitimacy to the claims of the aged that their needs and interests covered a broader range of issues then just welfare oriented issues. This was important to the expansion of the governments role in the field of

aging in directions never before considered. Third, the creation of the AOA

affected a change in the political environment. When a new agency is created

it is necessary for it to accommodate itself in the political environment. At

the time of AOA's creation, the aged interest groups were an up an coming

force in the field of aging. In fact a number of these groups had banded

together in an effort to influence the Congress in their deliberation on the

Older Americans Act. While their influence was not a major factor in the

final decision making process at that time, it did impress some of the decision

makers, not the least of which were the new agency's administrators. The AOA

sought out these interest groups which had made an effort on their behalf, in

in an effort to establish a clientele and accommodate themselves in the political

arena.

Two factors which effect the level of influence an interest group will have

in the decision making process are, the attitudes of the public officials, and

the site of the decision making process. When the AOA took a positive attitude

to some of the aged interest groups, the influence of those groups increased.

We noted earlier that governmental officials accept some groups as having a

right to take part in the decision making process, and by this acceptance

other groups are excluded. When the AOA accepted some aged interest groups

they at the same time were excluding other groups, and the groups that they

did accept were able to establish themselves in the decision making process

at the expense of other aged groups. The major site of the aging decision

making process was the AOA after the passage of the Older Americans Act. The

level of influence that those aged interest groups that were accepted by the

administrators of AOA was heightened by this fact, also. The influence of

certain aged interest groups was high because of the acceptance of the AOA

of these groups right to participate in the decision making process, and also

because the AOA was the dominant site in the aging decision making process.

The aged interest groups which were gaining influence in the AOA were the

trade and professional associations, and not the mass-membership organizations.

The reason for this was due to a change that was ocurring in the policy making

impetus in the aging field. Prior to the creation of the AOA, the impetus

for initiative in the aging field had come from the Congress. The Congress

was responsible for the development and expansion of the social security

program after its inception; was responsible for the creation and enactment

of the Medicare program; and was the driving force behind the development of

the Older Americans Act. With the creation of the AOA, the impetus of initiative

shifted from the legislative branch to the executive branch. As the executive

branch began to take the initiative in generating ideas and proposals in the

aging field, it became more powerful in the decision making process. The

Older Americans Act aided in this shift in impetus away from the Congress.

The Older Americans Act was essentially a complete delegation of power to the

AOA, and other executive agencies, to define the changes in the scope of the

field of aging as they best saw fit. In other words, the Congress delegated

to the executive agencies the power to define the nature of the Older Americans

Act, as long as they stayed within some broad guidelines. Those aged interest

groups which had narrow and well define scopes of interest would be the groups

that the AOA would turn to, in their efforts to create aging policies. These

groups were the trade and professional associations who had very narrow policy

focuses, and not the mass-membership organizations whose focuses were large.

In theory, Congress sets clear regulations, standards, and guidelines in

its legislation for the bureaucracy to use in administering programs. In

practice the clarity and specificity of these elements varies greatly. In the case of the Older Americans Act, the Congress provided extremely broad standards and guidelines for the AOA to follow. In effect it was delegating its law making powers to the AOA, as if to tell them to make the law as they saw fit. This broad delegation of power was granted because the programs entailed in the Older Americans Act were new and without precedent. The bodies in Congress which were responsible for creating legislation in the aging field, were attempting to expand the scope of the aging policy system through the passage of this Act. There was little pressure on these bodies to provide specific proposals, so the Older Americans Act was a progessive, but broad and general legislative proposal. The AOA, which was to administer the majority of the programs in the Act, had to seek out an aging clientele which could help it specify the various programs in the Act. The aged trade and professional associations, with their narrow and well defined scope of interests, were the ideal clientele for the AOA's purpose.

The aged mass-membership organizations were not as effective in influencing the executive decision makers in the aging policy system. These organizations had not as yet established a clear mandate for their political activities. This was mainly due to the heterogeneous nature of their memberships. What actions they did take in the political arena were usually limited in scope and low in their level of intensity. At the same time these mass-membership organizations were growing rapidly, (the NCSC had grown 250% from 1965-70). With the growth in membership, these groups were able to develop highly sophisticated organizational structures, and were in the process of recruiting politically oriented leaders. In the period from 1965-68, these organizations amassed large levels of political resources. (Dahl lists examples of political

resources as money, information, expertise, numerical strength, status, etc.).

It wasn't until 1968 that these mass-membership organizations used their resources

in an attempt to influence decisions being made in the aging policy system.

In 1968, the Congress authorized a resolution which provided for the convening

of a White House Conference on Aging in 1971. The pressure for the passage of

this resolution came partially from these mass-membership organizations, and

partially from a group of liberal Democratic Senators and Congressman. Both

of these parties were highly critical of the AOA, and the manner that the

agency carried out its functions. The mass-membership organizations were

critical because they were excluded from the decision making process in the

AOA. The Senators and Congressman were critical becuse, as members of aging

committees, they were supposed to have a say in the running of the AOA. To

their distress they found that the Older Americans Act had gave this agency

a high degree of discretionary powers over the programs it administered. Both

of these parties hoped that a White House Conference would provide a forum

by which the deficiencies in the AOA's handling of its functions would be

exposed. In this manner, they hoped to rally support behind their postions,

and wrest some of the AOA's powers from it.

With the election of President Nixon in 1968, the atmosphere in the executive

branch became decidedly more hostile to the interests of the aged. In his

first year in office, Nixon proposed an across the broad reduction in the

appropriation levels in the majority of the programs for the aged. Even

those well established relationships between the AOA and the aged trade and

professional associations were threatened by this action. The aged mass-

membership organizations were identified by the Nixon administration as being

liberal in orientation, and anti-Nixon in disposition. Not only was the Nixon

administration hostile to the interests of the aged, it was hostile to the
idea of a White House Conference on Aging being a forum for the expression of
the views of liberal aged groups and their Democratic friends in Congress. The
The administration was fearful that the conference would prove embarassing to
a President who had campaigned as a spokesman for the silent majority, which
is made up in great part by the aged. The administration moved quickly to
prevent this from happening. The conference planning committee attempted to
devise a conference in which the vocal and active aged interest groups would
be excluded from participation. By stacking the conference in their favor,
the administration hoped to create a symbolic showcase which would cast the
administration in a favorable light. It was at this juncture that the aged
mass-membership organizations with the help of the predominately Democratic
members of the aging committees, began to exert their political muscle in an
effort to thwart the administrations plans.

There are basically three ways that a group can use its political resources
to influence a decision maker. One way is through persuasion. Persuasion is
the influencing of a decision maker without adding anything new to the situation.
A group can communicate their needs or desires to a decision maker, or they can
use the media to the same effect. The use of persuaion is best when the decision
maker is neutral on an issue. The second way that political resources can be
used is through inducements. This is the influencing of a decision maker
through the addition of new advantages to the situation. A group can offer
the decision maker money, support, services, or any other such benefits. The
use of inducements is best when the decision maker is only slightly biased on
an issue. The third way that political resources can be used to influence a
decision maker is through constraints. This is the addition of new disadvantages

to the situation. A group can threaten to withdraw its support, demonstrate, or even resort to violence. The use of constraints is best only when the decision maker is heavily biased against that groups stance on an issue. The aged interest groups used all three of these techniques in their effort to influence the decision making process revolving around the conference. The aged interest groups attempted to persuade the Nixon administration that it should allow these groups representation at the conference. The groups used the media to voice their grievances concerning the design of the conference, and they used friendly members of Congress in the same manner. These groups attempted to induce the Nixon administration to allow it representation by offering to provide support for the conference by aiding in the designing of its format. Neither persuasion nor inducements were effective in influencing the Nixon administration, so the aged interest groups resorted to constraints in their efforts to influence the administration. These groups threatened to boycott the conference, and also threatened to set up a conference of their own. The prospect of this appeared to the administration as being potentially more embarassing, then would letting these groups participate. In this manner these groups were able to stop the Nixon administration from conducting a conference which would have excluded them from participation.

The 1971 White House Conference on Aging was a significant event in the rise to predominance of aged interest groups in the aging policy system. Prior to the conference, the political activities of the aged interest groups were for the most part narrow in scope and low in visibility. The aged population as a whole was unaware of the political roles these groups were playing. The essence of the policy matters that these groups had previously been involved in were what Lowi termed distributive policies. The nature of distributive policy

is the decentralized distribution of the federal largesse, to a seemingly
unlimited number of individuals and groups. The recipients of these sub-
sidies do not compete with each other, but rather they seek to accommodate
each other by establishing a stable relationship with a governmental source.
Because of the low level of conflict, distributive policies normally have a
low level of visibility. The aged trade associations, such as the American
Nursing Home Association, are politically active in distributive policy
matters that touch only on their narrow area of interest. Few of the aged
are aware of the existence of these trade associations, and even fewer are
aware of these associations political activities. As for the mass-membership
organizations, they are more visible to the aged population, but their political
activities are not. These organizations enjoyed relatively large memberships,
but this was due to the non-collective benefits that they offered to their
members. The AARP had grown to over one million members by 1970, but this
was due to the inexpensive insurance plans that it offered to its members,
and not to any benefits it offered its members through political activity.
The WHCOA changed this by providing the aged interest groups with a high
level of visibility, concerning their political activities.

After the power struggle concerning the format of the WHCOA was settled
in favor of the aged interest groups, the conference became a forum for
aged interest group involvement. One third of the delegates to the conference
were members of an aged interest group, in particular a member of a mass-
membership organization. These delegates, with their groups leaders providing
planning, information, organization, and expertise, were able to dominate the
proceedings. The other delegates, who lacked the skills and resources of
the aged interest group members, had to adhere to the views and goals that

were expounded by the aged interest groups.

The significance of the conference was in the impact it had on both the internal aspects of the groups, and the external aspects of the political environment. Externally, the conference was responsible for increasing the awareness of the Nixon administration to the power and influence of the aged interest groups. Power is a concept that has been defined in numerous ways, in fact too numerous for there to be any consensus on what political power really entails. The definition used here is that political power involves the capacity of one individual or group to affect the behavior of others. The basis of political power is the possession of political resources. These have been defined as including money, information, numerical strength, status, expertise, and so on. A resource must not only be possessed, but the possessor must be able to determine the use of the resource. In other words, he must be able to bring his resources to bear in interaction with others. A resource may be used directly to influence a decision, or it can be exchanged for other resources. What the Nixon administration perceived in these aged interest groups was their high level of political resources, and their ability to use these resources effectively in the political arena. In a speech given at the conference, Nixon pledged to increase the appropriation levels of the programs administered by the AOA, a pledge he kept. All of his previous actions had been aimed at reducing these appropriation levels. The conference was also responsible for increasing the awareness of the officials of AOA to the power and influence of the aged interest groups, in particular the mass-membership organizations. This agency had previously ignored these mass-membership organizations because of the broad nature of their political demands and goals. This awareness on the part of the executive branch created a situation

were the access to the policy makers was greatly increased to the leaders of these aged interest groups. The awareness of the Congress, especially the members of the aging committees, was also increased, but the goal of these aged interest groups was for the most part aimed at the executive branch. These groups wanted to influence changes in administrative policy, not in progressive legislative reforms. These groups realized that the major power in the aging policy system was the executive agencies, and not the legislative committees. This was due to the Congressional tendency of delegating powers to the executive agencies.

The conference was also responsible for increasing the awareness of the aged population as a whole to the existence of these aged interest groups. Not only were these groups recognized for their non-collective benefits, but they were recognized for the collective benefits they could provide through their political actions. The officials of government were beginning to perceive of these groups as the legitimate spokesmen for the whole aged population. At the same time the aged population was beginning to perceive of these groups as the legitimate spokesmen for their interests. There is no way of knowing what effect this legitimazation had on the growth of these organizations, but the NCSC had grown from five hundred thousand members in 1970, to nearly three million members in 1973. Much of this growth must be attributed to the non-collective benefits these groups offer their members, but some must also be attributed to the visibility afforded these groups by the 1971 WHCOA.

The importance of this visibility can be illustrated when related to Cobb & Elders discussion on relevent publics. They note that there are essentially four types of publics involved in a conflict situation. Two of these publics are specific in nature, and two of them are general. The first of the specific

publics is the identification group. This group is defined as a public who is the most sensative to a groups actions and the possible consequences of those actions. This publics involvement centers around the affiliation with a specific group, and are most easily mobilized into action. The second of the specific publics is the attention group. This group is defined as a public who are sensative to issues, and their involvement revolves around the issues involved in the conflict. This public is easily mobilized if the right issue is present. In relation to the aging policy system, we can surmise that the specific publics were involved in the policy discussions since the inception of the aged interest groups. The importance of the visibility afforded by the WHCOA is the affect it had on the mass publics.

The first type of mass public is the attentive public. This public is defined as those more informed and more interested stratum of society. This public is made up of those people who are aware of many issues, and may be motivated into action if the saliency of an issue is high enough. The second type of mass public is the general public. This is the segment of the population which is uninformed, uninterested, and inactive. They are the most difficult segment of the population to mobilize. If the criteria for being considered part of the attentive public is awareness and interest in a variety of issues, the trend since the conference has been for the attentive public of the aged to grow. The combined membership of the NRTA-AARP and the NCSC is approximately twelve million aged persons, out of a population of nearly twenty million aged persons.[14] This means that nearly 60% of the aged are a member of one of these groups. One of the functions of these groups is to provide to their members information on the groups activities through some form of in house publication. Through membership in these groups, the aged

population has been shifting from a general public to an attentive public,
and this has a direct ramification on the political powers of these groups.
One kind of political resource is numerical strength, but this resource is
of little use unless that strength can be mobilized into action. By providing
its members with information concerning the issues that effect them, these
groups are able to mobilize their memberships into supporting their groups
political activities. All this had lead to an expansion of the aging policy
system, and the expansion of the role of the aged interest groups in this
system.

The WHCOA had important affects on the internal environments of these
groups also. The success these groups experienced at the conference raised
the confidence of those groups leaders in the use of political action to gain
their ends. This confidence led these groups to expand their political roles
in the aging policy system. In effect, the groups began to perceive themselves
as being the legitimate spokesman for the aged population.

The WHCOA not only generated an increase in the visibility of the aged
interest groups, but it also generated a lot of visibility for the proposals
that came out of the conference. The major purpose of this conference was
after all, to provide a vehicle for the aged to interact among each other and
collectively voice their needs, dsires, and demands to the attentive government.
The fact that the aged interest groups dominated the proceedings did not change
the purpose of the conference. The proposals that came out of the conference
were still the important output of the whole affair.

The delegates to the conference were far from unanimous on each and every
proposal that came out of that conference, There was a great deal of bargaining
and compromise among the delegates on the sensative issues, but at the end the

delegates were able to present a united front. The following is a list of the major proposals that came out of the 1971 White House Conference on Aging, and are grouped by their area of impact.

PROPOSALS FROM THE 1971 WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING[15]

1) Proposals relating to income maintenance.

    a. A minimum income adequacy level.

    b. A liberalization of the retirement test requirements for social security.

    c. A remission of property tax rates for the aged.

    d. The establishment of a House Special Committee on Aging.

    e. The establishment of a National Health Security Program.

    f. A recommemdation for shifting social security payment sources to the general revenue fund.

2) Proposals related to health.

    a. The development of a coordinated health service delivery system.

    b. The expansion of Medicare coverages.

    c. The establishment of a National Health Center for Aging.

    d. The development of a national health education program for the aged.

3) Proposals related to employement and retirement.

    a. The earmarking of Department of Labor manpower funds for the aged.

    b. The enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation relating to age.

    c. The expansion of public service employement to include the aged.

    d. The adoption of flexible retirement age policy.

    e. An immediate increase in social security benefits of 25%.

    f. The establishment of an Office of Aging which would be placed directly within the executive office of the President.

4) Proposals relating to nutrition.

a. The establishment of consumer education programs for the aged.

b. The establishment of strict standards for food and nutrition services.

c. The establishment of yearly funding for research in nutrition.

5) Proposals relating to transportation.

a. The establishment of transportation subsidies for the aged.

b. The revision of the highway trust fund to emphasis mass transit need.

6) Proposals relating to universal services.

a. The establishment of aged consumer protection legislation.

b. The establishment of legal services for the aged.

c. The reform and expansion of the food stamp and commodities programs.

d. Improvement of Title II of the Social Security Act.

These are the major proposals that came out of the conference in 1971. As noted above, the conference was dominated by the aged interest groups, and the proposals that came out of the conference reflect the views of these aged groups. Many of these proposals are requests to the Congress to act. By comparing these proposals with the actions that the Congress does take, we may be able to determine the level of influence of the aged interest groups in the aging policy system. The process for this analysis will be to look at the legislative bills which were introduced in each house; to look at the committee hearings of the key bills; and finally, to follow the course of the bills through these hearings, and either to enactment into law or to the dead bill hopper. Because we are not privy to the behind scenes goings-ons between the Congressmen and interest group leaders, we will have to make do with the appearances at hearings, and the success of the bills, as indicitive of the level of influence of the aging interest groups. The bills are from the 1972-74 legislative sessions.

The following is a list of the major legislative bills proposed from
1972-74, that relate to proposals from the 1971 WHCOA. The action taken
by both houses up to 1974 on each bill is provided.

1) Bills relating to income maintenance.[16]

   a. 20% Social Security Increase. (Mills-Church Amendment) Passed into
   law in 1972

   b. 1972 Social Security Amendment. Passed into law 1972

   c. 20% Increase in Railroad Annuities. Passed by both houses, vetoed by
   President, overridden. Passed into law 1972

   d. Tax Credit for Property Taxes for Aged. (Amendment to Revenue Act)
   Deleted in conference committee

2) Bills relating to health maintenance.

   a. Health Security Act. Died in House Ways and Means Committee.

   b. Health Maintenance Organization and Resource Development Act. Passed
   by the Senate in 1972, died in House Interstate and Foriegn Commerce
   Committee.

   c. Public Health Service Act Extension. Passed into law 1973

3) Bills relating to nutrition.

   a. Nutrition Programs for the Aged. Passed into law 1973

4) Bills relating to transportation.

   a. The Emergency Commuter Relief Act. Died in Senate Committee on Banking,
   Housing, and Urban Affairs in 1973

   b. Reduced Airline Fares for Youths and Senior Citizens. Died in the
   Aviation Subcommittee of Senate Committee on Commerce in 1974

   Social Services for the Aged. Died in Senate Finance Committee in 1973

5) Bills relating to universal services.

   a. Social Services to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled. Passed into law in
   1973

   b. Limitations on Social Services Regulations. Died in Senate Finance
   Committee in 1974

6) Bills relating to retirement and employement.

    a. <u>Middle-Aged and Older Workers Training Act</u>. Passed by the Senate, but deleted in conference committee, 1973

    b. <u>Older Workers Conservation Corp. Act</u>. Passed into law 1972

    c. <u>Older Americans Home Repair Assistance Act</u>. Died in Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.

    d. <u>Age Discrimination in Employement Act Amendment</u>. Defeated in vote of both houses.

By comparing the proposals which came out of the WHCOA with the legislative bills that were generated from 1972-74, we can see that a number of the proposals found themselves on the policy agenda. That is to say that they passed from the systemic agenda to the institutional agenda. The systemic agenda is defined as consisting of all the issues commonly perceived by the members of a political environment as warranting public attention. The institutional agenda is defined as consisting of all those issues which the public officials give serious attention to. The WHCOA was responsible in large part for providing the impetus which brought these proposals from the systemic agenda to the institutional agenda.

Institutional agenda items can be seperated into two types, old items and new items. It is suggested that old items will find their way onto the institutional agenda easier then will new items. This is presumabley due to the familiarity of the old items. The proposals that came out of the WHCOA consisted of some old items, but the majority of the items were new. (At least new to the institutional agenda). The proposals that did reach the institutional agenda were both old and new in nature. To better understand why some of these proposals reached the institutional agenda while others did not, it is necessary to understand the scope of the aging policy system.

Prior to the 1960's which saw the passage of Medicare and the Older Americans Act, there was only one dimension to the aged policy system. This dimension was social security, and the rest of the policies that affected the aged could be found in the social welfare policy system. A working definition of what a policy system is, is provided for us by David Easton[17]. Easton provides a definition of what a political system is, and a policy system is basically a subsystem of the larger political system. He said that a political system is composed of those identifible and interelated institutions, groups, individuals, and activities in a society that make authoritarian decisions that are binding on society. A policy system is essentially a subsystem of the larger political system, and has the same characteristics except for the scope of its focus. In our case the aged policy system is those institutions, groups, individuals, and activities which are identifible and interelated, and those focus is on the needs and demands of the aged. By using the systems approach it is assumed that we can differentiate between this policy system and the rest of the political system. What must be done, is boundaries must be draw that seperate this policy system from the rest of the political system. These boundaries are drawn around stable relationships between the actors in the aged policy arena.

The aged policy system from the late 1930's to the 1960's contained just the social security dimension. After the passage of Medicare, this dimension was enlarged from income maintenance to income and health maintenace. This dimension was and still is the dominant area in the aged policy system. With the passage the passage of the Older Americans Act in 1965, the aged policy system expanded greatly. In a study done by Dale Vinyard in 1974, he outlined the aged policy system in the following manner:

AGED POLICY SYSTEM[18]

1) The income and health maintenace subsytem

    a. The focus of the subsystem

        1. Social Security

        2. Medicare

        3. Supplemental Security Income

    b. The actors in the subsystem

        1. The House Ways and Means Committee

        2. The House Commerce Committee

        3. The House Health Committee

        4. The Senate Finance Committee

        5. The Senate Special Committee on Aging

        6. The Social Security Administration

        7. The Commission on Aging

        8. The National Council of Senior Citizens

        9. The American Association of Retired Persons

2) The universal services subsystem

    a. The focus of the subsystem

        1. All of the general governmental services relating to the aged

    b. The actors in the subsystem

        1. The Senate Special Committee on Aging

        2. The Subcommittee on Aging of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee

        3. The House Appropriations Committee

        4. The Administration on Aging

        5. Action

6. The American Association of Retired Persons

7. The National Council on the Aging, The National Caucus on the Black Aged, The Gerontological Society, the National Association of State Units on Aging, The American Association of Home for the Aged, (all of the aged groups active at the national level, in their specific narrow field of interest)

3) The older workers manpower subsystem

    a. The focus of the subsystem

        1. The need to train abled bodied workers over fifty

        2. The need to protect the rights of workers over fifty

    b. The actors in the subsystem

        1. The Department of Labor

        2. The General Subcommittee on Labor of the House Education and Labor Committee

        3. The Senate Appropriations Committee

        4. The Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare

        5. National Council of Senior Citizens

        6. The National Retired Teachers Association

        7. The National Farmers Union

        8. The National Association of State Units on Aging

Vinyard sees the aged policy system as having expanded into three distinct subsystems. The original social security dimension has expanded to include both the Medicare and Social Security programs. All of the programs in this subsystem are handled by one federal agency, the Social Security Administration. The second subsystem, universal services, was created by the Older Americans Act in 1965. The major federal agency involved in this subsystem is the Administration on Aging, which was created by the Act. The third subsystem, the manpower area, is the product of both the anti-retirement sentiment trends in our society, and the inflationary trends in our economy. The major federal

agency involved in this subsystem is the Department of Labor.

Various legislative bodies dominate the three subsystems of the aged policy system. The dominant force in the Senate in all of the subsystems is the Senate Special Committee on Aging. This committee was formed in 1958, and has been the major legislative initiator in the Senate for policies effecting the aged since its creation. The committee established itself in the aging policy system by leading the fight over Medicare. The members of this committee make up nearly 50% of the membership of the other Senate committee whose focus of interest is the aged, the Subcommittee on Aging of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee. In this manner the members of the Special Committee comprise nearly all of the Senators whose focus in any way is connected with the aged. The only other Senate committee which deals in the aging policy system is the Finance Committee. Because of the tax nature of the Social Security program, this committee has jurisdiction over that program.

In the House the situation is not so clearcut, as there are many different committees involved in each subsystem. The reason for this is that there is not a committee whose sole interest is in the aged. (In 1975 the House created a Select Committee on Aging. A select committee has fact finding and oversight duties, but does not have legislative authority. Due to this it is questionable if this select committee will be able to assume a dominant role in the aged policy system. The committee chairman of those commitees which historically have dealt with the aged, are not likely to surrender any of their powers to this new committee. For this reason, this new committee is not considered as a major force in the aged policy system at the present time.) The dominant force in the income and health maintenance subsystem is the Ways and Means Committee. Because both Social Security and Medicare are designated as tax

programs, the Ways and Means Committee has jurisdiction on those programs. Input from the House Health Committee and the House Commerce Committee is provided in the debates over these programs, but the dominant force remains the Ways and Means Committee.

In the universal services subsystem the House Education and Labor Committee is the dominant force. Somewhere back in history this committee was granted jurisdiction over aged policy problems related to services provided by the government. The major function of this group is the oversight of the AOA. Since the AOA is the federal agency which administers the majority of the programs in the universal services subsystem, this committee is responsible for the oversight of the majority of the policy matters in the subsystem. There are a multitude of other committees which deal with select policies that affect the aged. There are aged policies in housing, transportation, welfare, agriculture, nutrition, and many other areas. The various committees that have jurisdiction in these areas have an impact on the aged policy system, but the dominant force remains the House Education and Labor Committee.

In the manpower subsystem, the Subcommittee on Labor of the Education and Labor Committee is the dominant force. This subcommittee has jurisdiction over labor related problems in the House. Since the subcommittee is a part of the committee which had jurisdiction over the universal services subsystem, there is in the House a degree of concentration of jurisdiction over aged policy matters. This concentration is what was also found in the Senate, and indicates that a limited number of Congressional actors are involved in the aged policy system.

Due to constituency differences in the two houses, and because of structural differences, the Senate has always been more favorable to the needs and demands

of the aged. In the Senate their are committees whose sole focus is on the aged. Senators who are members of these committees can, if they wish, try to establish a power base by specializing in the aged policy system. The clientele they are serving in this role is just the aged, and their focus will be intensified because of this. The federal agencies they deal with serve just the aged, and strong relationships will be developed over time. In the House, the Committees that deal with aged policy matters have focuses which deal with other matters also. The Education and Labor Committee deals mainly with policy matters which are concerned with education and labor. The narrow focus that is found in the Senate is not present in the House, and because of this the impetus for specialization by a member of the House in the field of aging is not as rewarding. Thus there is not as likely to be specific House members who dominate the aging policy system, as is found in the Senate. Because of this, the Senate is more likely to give favorable approval to the needs and demands in the aged policy system.

On a broader scale, the differences in constituencies between the two houses also has an effect on how each body looks at the aged policy system. The aged are found mainly in rural areas and in the core areas of the larger cities. A Senator will have as part of his constituency the aged in both of this areas. A Representative who does not have a rural constituency or a constituency from the core areas of the larger cities, will probably have a small number of aged persons in his district. The voice of the aged pop- ulation will carry more weight in the Senate, then it does in the House, because of the similarities each Senator shares in the distribution of the aged in his constituency.

The aged interest groups that are involved in the aged policy system are

for the most part concentrated in specific subsystems. In the income and
health maintenance subsystem the National Council of Senior Citizens is the
dominant aged interest group. NCSC first got involved in this subsystem
when it was created. The AFL-CIO and the Democratic party were responsible
for aiding in the formation of this group, because they wanted an active
aged group established which would rally the aged behind the Medicare issue.
The contacts and relationships that this group established during the years
of debate over Medicare has helped entrench the NCSC in this subsystem. The
American Association of Retired Persons is also involved in this subsystem,
but their role is more as an advisor then that of an activist group. Due
to the effects of both Social Security and Medicare on their members, the
AARP does feel compelled to get involved in policy matters concerning these
two programs. Because their membership numbers nine million, the AARP is
listened to by the official policy makers. These two aged interest groups
are the only ones whose membership is broadly enough based for them to be
able to take an active role in such a broad policy subsystem.

In the universal services subsystem all of the aged interest groups which
have sufficent resources to get themselves heard, are active. As was noted
earlier, this subsystem is dominated by the Administration on Aging. The
aged trade and professional associations have long been active in affecting
policy decisions in their specific areas of interest. These groups have
succeeded in getting themselves accepted as middlemen between the federal
government and the aged population. The policies that dominate the sub-
system are distributive polices which have a low level of conflict. One
particular group, the National Association of States Units on Aging, has
found itself the beneficiary of a major administrative policy shift which

ocurred in the early 1970's. This policy shift was the preference of the

Nixon administration for a decentralized decision making structure. Such

programs as revenue sharing, which made the federal government little more

than a conduit for tax revenue, created a situation where funds for aged

programs are passed down to the states to decide their distribution. The

NASUA was the aged interest group with the easiest access to the state

decision makers, and in this manner found itself responsible for influ-

encing the distribution of a major share of the funding in the aged policy

system. This group has succeeded in getting itself accepted as a quasi-

governmental agency,

In the manpower subsystem this pattern continues. The NCSC plays a very

dominant role, but that is to be expected considering the relationship it

has with organized labor. The contacts in the Department of Labor that

such a relationship affords the group allows it to dominate the subsystem.

The National Retired Teachers Association is also active in this subsystem.

The nature of its membership, teachers who as a group are interested in the

rights of workers over fifty, allows for this groups involvement in the man-

power subsystem. A curious participant is the National Farmers Union, who

is responsible for the Green Thumb and Green Light programs. This program

is aimed at providing jobs for the aged farmer.

The majority of the policies in this subsystem are also distributive policies.

There are a broad range of labor related policies being decided, and the

visibility of the final decisions is low. The aged interest groups which

have gained access to the decision making process in this subsystem do not

compete with each other, but attempt to accommodate each other. Though the

NCSC dominates, other groups are allowed to participate in limited areas.

If we now go back and look at the comparison between the proposals of the WHCOA and the legislative bills generated between 1972-74, an obviously incomplete picture is presented. Though a number of these proposals found themselves on the institutional agenda, only six were enacted into law. In the three subsystems it would appear that only in the income and health maintenance subsystem was there any success. In the other two subsystems there was only one proposed bill apiece, that was enacted into law. If we analyze these two successful bills, we see that even successes could not be considered victories. The nutrition bill, while comprehensive in nature, received no funding its first year, and in the next two years the level of funding was so low that the bill was substantially curtailed in its functions. The other successful bill, the conservation corp., was a program which was provided with no funding by the federal governement except start up costs. The program was supposed to be conducted by the states, and the federal government was only supposed to get it started. The picture we get from the comparision and further analysis would assume that the aged interest groups are without influence in the services and manpower subsystems of the aged policy system. The truth is that in these two subsystems, the influence of the aged interest groups cannot be measured by looking at the output of the Congress. The reason for this is the nature of the policies that are dominant in these subsystems. The policies in these two subsystems are distributive policies, as has been noted previously. The essence of the distributive policy is its decentralized distribution of the federal largesse to a seemingly unlimited number of groups and individuals. The recepients do not compete with each other, nor are they particularily aware of the other groups involved in the system. Due to this lack of conflict, the

visibility of the distributive policy transactions is extremely low. The

dominant actors in distributive policy areas for subgovernments. A sub-

government is defined as the pattern of interaction of the actors in making

policy decisions in a special area of public policy. These subgovernments

are made up of the federal agency which is involved, the congressional

committee or subcommittee which has jurisdiction, and the interest groups

whose area of interest is involve. J. Leiper Freeman states that these

subgovernments came into being because of what he termed "creeping pluralism".[19]

This he explains is our cultural heritage which accents the individual and

group self-seeking, and has been carried over into the public sector. The

Congress and the executive branch mirror this heritage, and have encouraged

the proliferation of these subgovernments. Kennedy's "participatory democracy"

is and example of this encouragement, and the result is interest group

liberalism. The subgovernments interact in semi-autonomous environments

because of the specialized nature of the policies being decided, and because

of the diffused power bases of the actors involved.. The policy decisions

in these subgovernments involve extensive resolutions of the issues at hand,

so that the issues rarely escalate upwards for consideration by the higher

levels of both the legislative and executive branches.

Since the policy issues involved in the universal services subsystem and

the manpower subsystem are distributive policies, the visibility of the

policy decision making process is not apparent above the subgovernment level.

The only way to determine the level of influence of the aged interest groups

involved in these decisions, would be to extensively analyze the subgovernment

interactions. This unfortumately is too extensive a process for consdieration

in this study, and thus assumptions based on appearances must be made. The

continued viability of certain aged interest groups indicates that these groups do exert influence in the aged policy system. The studies done by others indicate that a limited number of groups are truly dominant in the aged policy system. The expansion of the aged policy system indicates that some influence from non-governmental groups is present. All of the groups that Binstock and Pratt listed continue to be viable, and no doubt there are other groups active in the policy system also. The important thing is that this policy decision making is occurring at such a low level that the true extent of the influence of these groups is not readily apparent. One way that this can be illustrated is by comparing the activity levels in the universal services and manpower subsystems, to the activity levels in the income and health maintenance subsystem. The policies in this subsystem are mainly redistributive policy matters.

A redistributive policy is characterized by the reallocation of resources among classes. In other words, some one gains and some one loses. Thus there is a high level of conflict present in redistributive policies, and thus a high level of visibility is present in redistributive policy decision making. The major actors involved in a redistributive policy will be the executive branch at the presidential level, the upper levels of Congressional leaders, and the representatives of peak associations. A peak association is defined as a group which purports to represent a larger interest then just their immediate groups. The NCSC and the AARP can be considered peak assoc-iations because of the size and diversity of their memberships.

Of the legislative bills proposed in this subsystem from 1972-74, three were finally enacted into law. The success of the bill concerned with rail-road annuities can be attributed to the powerful railroad lobby, and not to

any of the aged interest groups we are concerned with in this study. The

other two bills were enormously significant pieces of legislation, and were

successful in great part because of the influence of the aged interest groups

involved. The Mills-Church amendment raised the Social Security tax rate,

wage base, authorized an automatic cost of living increase, and provided

an immediate 20% increase in the level of benefits. The Social Security

Amendment provided an increase in social security recepients earnings

limitations, and increase in the level of benefits for widows and widowers.

These are extremely progrssive reforms in the program, and both bills were

passed in the same year. These bills are mirror images of the proposals

that came out of the WHCOA just a year prior to their enactment. There is

not reason to believe that the impetus for these bills was not the WHCOA

and the aged interest groups involved.

A significant factor about these two bills is not that they passed, though

that also is significant, but the timing of the passage of the bills is an

important element. These two bills were passed one year after the show of

strength by the aged interest groups at the WHCOA, and in the midst of a

period of fiscal conservatism by the Nixon administration. The proposals

which came out of the conference, and were finally enacted into law, were not

new proposals. These proposals had been brought up repeatedly in the 1960's,

but they were not successful in that era. This is unusual because the political

climate of the 1960's was only of fiscal liberalism in comparision to that

of the early 1970's. The success of the bills in this unfavorable climate

suggests that a new political force was present in the policy system, and this

new force was the aged interest groups. The success of these two costly and

inflationary bills must be attributed in great part to the aged interest groups.

The exact impact that the aged interest groups had on the passage of these two bills is difficult to determine. There were a number of other factors that played a role in the determination of these bills. First, 1972 was a election year, and both the Congress and the President tend to look upon this type of legislation more favorably in an election year. Second, these bills were sponsored by influential leaders in both Houses of Congress. This normally has a favorable impact on a bills fate. These factors were no doubt important in the determination of these bills, but the level of changes and reforms in the bills are just too large for these to be the only factors. Because of the impetus provided by the WHCOA, changes in the Social Security program would be expected. It would also be expected that the sponsers of these changes would be the heads of committees had jurisdiction over these matters. (In an election year especially.) It would be expected that these changes would have an easier time in Congress because it was an election year. What is not expected is the level of changes in the final bills. The Nixon administration recommended an increase of 5% in the level of benefits, and the aged interest groups wanted a 25% increase. It would be expected that an increase around 10% would have been satifactory for most everyone involve. Incremental change is the trademark of the governmental process. The final increase was 20%, which is a remarkably large increase even considering the circumstances. It is for this reason that the NCSC and AARP must be considered as influential in the determination of these two bills.

It is important to note that the sponsors of the 20% increase, Frank Church and Wilbur Mills, were the chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging and the House Ways and Means Committee, respectively. These two committees had long standing relationships with the NCSC, and it is quite possible that

these relationships played a major role in the decision making process that

surrounded this bill and its companion bill. Influencing the leadership of

Congress is important because of the steamrolling effect this had on the rest

of the members of Congress. One tactic that the NCSC used to aid this process,

was to print the names of those members of Congress who were against the bills

in their monthly publication. With a readership of over three million, this

is an effective tactic in an election year.

The overall picture of the aged policy system is one where the aged interest

groups enjoy a high level of involvement. The nature of this involvement

depends upon the nature of the policy involved, and the scope of the interest.

The involvement of the mass-membership groups is much more visible, and they

undoubtable exert a high degree of influence. These groups have broad scopes

of interest, and involve themselves in areas that are marked by a high level

of conflict. While this is true, the majority of the policy issues in the

aged policy system are narrow in scope and distributive in nature. The

activities of the majority of the aged interest groups is invisible to the

aged population. An aged trade association, such as the American Nursing

Home Association, is highly active in the aged policy system, but only in a

very narrow area. This association and others like it, have succeeded in

getting themselves accepted as middlemen between the federal government and

the aged population. Though there interests are narrow, these groups are

influential in deciding matters that affect the aged population. This brings

up the question of representation of these groups and the aged population.

If these groups activities are not aware to the majority of the aged population,

are these groups the true representatives of that population? And if they are

not the true representatives of the aged population, then do they have a right

decide public policy matters that affect that population?

The past decade has seen the expansion of the aged policy system in a number of directions previously unknown. There is no reason to believe that this expansion will not continue. With the continued growth in the aged population the needs and demands of the aged will increase, and this will trigger future growth in the system. The past decade has seen the expansion of the aged policy system into such areas as nutrition, education, housing, transportation, and many more. While there has been an expansion into these areas, the effectiveness of the governmental effort in these areas is another matter. The aged population has 60% of its members living below the poverty level at the present time. Though the government has expand to meet the needs of the aged, the effectiveness of the programs has not been very high. The aged interest groups have only been actively involved in the aged policy system for a decade, so the future effect these groups will have on alleviating the needs of the aged is speculation for the most part.

The aged are not only growing in absolute numbers, but also are growing in relation to other age-cohort groups. For this reason, it is resonable to speculate that the aged will exert more and more influence on the total political system in the future. This could very well mean that the aged interest groups will be exerting more and more influence in place of the aged population. Bernice Neugarten describes what she believes will be the aged group of the future. This is those persons 55-75 years old, who are relatively affluent, relatively well educated, free from the responsibilities of family and work, and skilled in political activity.[20] If this were true, the aged would appear to be the group of the future which will dominate the political system. Unfortunately, there is little fact to support this glowing

description of the future aged. There is good reason to believe that the aged interest groups which are dominant now, will continue to dominate in the future. Those groups which have succeeded in getting themselves accepted as middlemen between the federal government, and the aged population, have established strong relationships within their subgovernmental unit. These groups have become indispensible to the governmental actors they interact with, and this has created the situation where these groups are firmly entrenched in the policy system. These groups have become institutionalized into the system, and exert influence to limit access to other groups which attempt to enter the policy system. The future will depend upon other groups ability to accumulate sufficent resources to mount a challenge to the present power structure in the aged policy system. At the present these groups appear to be effectively limiting the access to the machinery of government in the aged policy system.

FOOTNOTES

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