

# village view

by Andrea Leonard

If you often have the feeling you've lost whatever control of government you might have been taught to believe you were entitled to exercise, you're probably right.

While your right to vote for the person you believe will do the best job for you in the Oval Office, on the Hill, or under the Golden Dome rearing behind Boston Common, or even over at Town Hall, remains inviolate, once elected, your candidate seems to become deaf to your pleas and blind to your needs.

There's a reason for it, of course; not only must that person attempt to become familiar with every aspect of each problem at hand, he or she is manipulated and maneuvered by other people, each of whom has his personal axe to grind, and each of whom has a constituency of his own to please in order to win re-election, and each of whom, including the person you helped to elect, is fair game for the lobbyist.

The lobbyists' names are far from household words, but their influences are felt in every American kitchen, school, shop, office, business, and street. These so-called "legislative agents" wield more power and are more familiar with issues and politics than most, if not all, members of the House and Senate, whether state or federal.

From the Secretary of State's division of Public Records a count indicates there are roughly 284 private interest groups in Massachusetts employing 397 lobbyists, 32 of whom are women.

The most heavily represented employer groups are: casualty and life insurance with 38; gas, oil and utilities, 27; medical and health, 27; public and private employees, 25; and bank and finance, 24.

Numbers are apt to be meaningless and misleading; real estate interests are represented by only two associations; each shares the same two lobbyists, but realtors are a significant influence on Beacon Hill.

How do lobbyists function? And how can they be countered when their interests conflict, as they often do, with public interest?

Members of the legislature and the administration describe a hierarchy of effectiveness among lobbyists. In other words, some are better at their jobs than others.

Among the most influential are Tom Jones, who represents Mass. Electric & Gas Association and three other accounts; David Harrison, representing the Greater Boston Real

Estate Board, the Mass. Association of Realtors, and four more; Dusty Alward, who works for the Professional Firefighters; Billy Malloy, whose dozen accounts include the State Police Association and the Savings Bank Association; and Walter Muther, who works for the Associated Industries of Massachusetts.

The lobbyists considered to be nearly as effective are William Coyne, whose accounts include Savings Banks Association, Mass. Candy and Tobacco Distributors, and Taunton Greyhound Association; Kinney O'Rourke, representing Boston Gas Co., and the two realty groups; Tony Scalli, working for Mass. Soft Drinks Association, the Mass. Sheriffs and County Commissioners, and five others; and Bob Capeless whose four accounts include Mass. Electric & Gas and Aetna Life Insurance Company.

Each of these better known lobbyists represents many of the more significant sectors of the state's economy. They use most, if not all, of the following "operating techniques".

The first is building personal relationships with the House and Senate leadership. The successful lobbyist is a person who can and does develop close ties with the people at the top of the political pile.

The second is control of contributions: one state representative indicated money-giving is "necessary, but hardly sufficient. Some lobbyists give, others don't." The Professional Firefighters Association, for example, gives \$1000 each to the Committees to Re-Elect a Democratic House and Senate.

State Police cough up \$100-\$300 to selected representatives and senators. Realtors have been known to meet financial needs at appropriate times.

Developing networks is a third. Every legislator interviewed confirmed the best mobilizer is Alward. He gets people to the State House and into electoral districts at primary time in noticeable numbers. Also effective is Joyce, who from time to time activates his utility industry chief executive officers and top technical staff networks.

Effective lobbyists do favors for legislators and provide information to them. Favors (the fourth operating tool) range from finding work for people legislators want employed to speeding up services for consumers (the phone company, for instance, will make quicker hook-ups on request). On occasion some lobbyists act as though they were legislative committee staffers, if not actual members.

Although lobbyists representing private interests rarely admit it, their causes often conflict with public interest. What chance do public interest lobbyists and activists have to compete against them? When a strong industry group gears up for a major assault on the legislature, it will generally prevail.

We've seen this time and time again. The lobbyists are a good example. The people want it; the Mass. Wholesalers of Malt Beverages and the Soft Drinks Association don't. Do the people get what they want? Not on your life. At least, not yet.

But the public interest can prevail. It is occasionally possible to politicize and publicize an issue and make it bigger than the lobbyists' influence. This has happened to auto insurance rates and hospital cost control.

The public interest can also be served when the privates fight among themselves. Often, when this happens, there is no clear public interest, such as when dog race tracks fight horse race tracks over racing dates, or big banks challenge little banks over branching policy.

And the privates can be beaten when the publics band together, and when an issue can be localized so that even powerful legislators think twice about doing something local voters object to.

Does it pay to be a lobbyist? Quite well. A file is kept in the Secretary of State's office of each lobbyist (each is required by law to register this information), their employers, and what each is paid for the services provided.

From January to June, 1978, one lobbyist collected the following fees, plus expenses:

- \$ 3,000- State Police Association
- 7,800- Savings Banks Association
- 2,000- Raytheon Company
- 3,000- Mass. Medical Society
- 5,000- Mass. Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons
- 16,000- Mass. Motor Truck Association
- 4,000- Mass. Wholesalers of Malt Beverages
- 1,500- Associated General Contractors
- 2,000- Mass. Society of Certified Public Accountants
- no fee- Mutual Savings Central Fund
- 10,000- Greylock Association
- 5,000- New England Harness Raceway

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\$59,300 Total

Not bad for the first six months of the year.

It's naive to believe money and power and favors can't buy a legislator's vote. As long as people put personal greed ahead of the public good, money, power and favors will be exchanged to benefit the wealthy, the powerful, and those in a position to confer favors.

Is everyone greedy? I hate to, but begin to, believe it.

Lobbying, of course, is perfectly legal. Perhaps we ought to address the question: Should it be?