

**ADMINISTRATION OF THE LOBBY  
REGISTRATION PROVISION OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE REORGANIZATION ACT OF  
1946, AN ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCE  
DURING THE EIGHTIETH CONGRESS**

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Administration of the Lobby Registration Provision of the Legislative reorganization act of 1946,  
an analysis of experience during the eightieth congress by W. Brooke Graves

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**W. BROOKE GRAVES**

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BY

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## PREFACE

The House Select Committee on Lobbying Activities, created pursuant to House Resolution 298 of the Eighty-first Congress, was authorized and directed by the House of Representatives to investigate "all lobbying activities," including activities of agencies of the Federal Government, "intended to influence, encourage, promote, or retard legislation."

Shortly after the committee was appointed by the Speaker and before it actually began its work, our attention was called to the existence of a limited-edition comprehensive report made by the Library of Congress on the Administration of the Regulation of Lobbying Act based on experience during the Eightieth Congress.

Although the House Select Committee on Lobbying Activities does not at this time and prior to full investigation and hearings endorse any of the views or conclusions expressed in this Library of Congress study of the problem we are now investigating, our committee feels that this report can be useful both to us and to all Members of Congress, and for that reason we have arranged to have it made more generally available in this form.

FRANK BUCHANAN,  
*Chairman, House Select Committee on Lobbying Activities*

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## CHAPTER I

### LOBBYING ACTIVITY DURING THE EIGHTIETH CONGRESS

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Washington is literally deluged with lobbyists. There are dozens of them, scores of them, hundreds of them. The statement that has often been made, that there are as many lobbyists as there are Congressmen, is a gross understatement of fact. There are, actually, not twice as many but three times as many lobbyists who registered during 1947 and 1948 as there were Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives combined. It is true that some who registered would probably not be obliged to do so under any reasonable interpretation of the law; but, on the other hand, it is clearly evident that there were many organizations which should have registered that did not. Registrations during the first session of the Eightieth Congress totaled 973, while by the end of the second session the total had risen to approximately 1,500.

The presence of an ever-increasing number of paid representatives of special-interest groups of every conceivable kind has been a matter of concern to Members of Congress and to students of American Government for years. As far back as 1913, President Wilson is reported to have said that lobbyists in Washington were so thick that you couldn't throw a brick without hitting one. The movement for the registration of lobbyists began in the States many years ago. In 1905 under the leadership of the elder Robert M. La Follette, the State of Wisconsin adopted the first Lobby Registration Act. Numerous others have been adopted in other States in the intervening years, during which several proposals were made for congressional action along the same lines.<sup>1</sup> While serious consideration was given to some of these proposals, none of them received approval until the Lobby Registration Act was incorporated as title III of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. It is interesting to observe that Robert M. La Follette, Jr., sponsor of this measure on the Senate side (with A. S. Mike Monroney on the House side), thus succeeded in incorporating into the Federal law a provision similar to that enacted in his home State under the leadership of his father some 40 years before. If the new act accomplished nothing more than to bring into the open some portion of the operations of this horde of representatives of special interests, it would certainly have justified its existence.

From these introductory observations, it is clear that the basic problem is not of recent origin, nor for that matter is it localized in

<sup>1</sup> For a good summary of this legislative history, see Zeller, Belle, *The Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act*, *American Political Science Review*, April 1948, pp. 259-271.

any one place.<sup>2</sup> The right of citizens or of representatives of organized groups of citizens to confer with their elected representatives, discussing current problems and expressing their views thereon, is a basic right guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, article I of the Bill of Rights of which provides that "Congress shall make no law \* \* \* prohibiting \* \* \* the right of the people \* \* \* to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Such discussion, however, is a vastly different thing from putting pressure upon representatives, "turning on the heat," so to speak, to compel them under penalty of the loss of their political lives to support measures designed to protect the interests, or confer special benefits upon the members, of some powerful and well-organized minority.

It is the purpose of this study to present a fairly broad and comprehensive picture of the operation of the new lobby-registration law during the first 2 years of its existence. This period coincides with the life of the Eightieth Congress. There are a good many legal problems which inevitably accompany enactments of this character, whether at the State or the Federal level. It is important, furthermore, to determine as accurately as possible how the law actually operated, what defects that operation reveals, and, upon the basis of that evidence, to suggest ways and means of improving and strengthening the law for the future.

#### DETERMINING EXTENT OF COMPLIANCE

The first major problem, the one with which this chapter is primarily concerned, is that of determining the extent of compliance. The attempt to provide any satisfactory answer to this question requires consideration of a number of other questions of methodology and procedure, as, for instance, the question as to what constitutes a pressure group. In the absence of any generally accepted definition of this term, the author has proceeded upon the basis of his own belief that it includes any organization of citizens, large or small, that was organized to promote, or that may on occasion find it desirable to promote, its own interests by attempting to influence legislation. This may be done either through paid representatives or by voluntary workers. Obviously, the number of such organizations is legion; while excellent lists of them have been compiled in the past, no up-to-date list suitable for use in connection with the present study was available.

It has been necessary, therefore, to build up a new list, making use of such previous lists and information from other sources as are available. The nature of these sources and the procedure followed in the construction of this list are set forth here in some detail because

<sup>1</sup>"United States lobbies active at sessions of UN," reports the New York Times, October 31, 1943, in a story from Paris, which runs in part as follows:

"Through their own corps of special representatives at the United Nations General Assembly meeting here, several million United States farmers, union members, professional workers, and men and women engaged in scores of other fields are maintaining a watchful lobby that helps shape the official United States position.

"These agents—numbering about 65—represent about 125 organizations, such as the Farm Bureau Federation, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the Lions International, and the Federal Council of Churches. They send home full reports weekly and semi-weekly.

"From their own press headquarters in the Rococo Hotel d'Orleans, which also is the headquarters of the United States delegation, they do more than send reports, however. As spokesmen for vast blocks of persons in the United States, they play an active role in the regular conferences of delegation chiefs.