

Reduction of Party Conflict through Corporate Participation in Danish Law-Making*

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The paper focuses on the link between the two 'channels of political influence' that exist in most liberal democracies: the electoral-parliamentary channel with political parties as the crucial structures intermediating between citizens and decision-makers, and the organizational-corporate channel with interest groups as intermediating structures. Although the two avenues open to citizens' demands may often function as alternatives, they are not independent of each other. Thus, the involvement of organizational and institutional interests affects the level of partisan conflict in the law-making process. The main assumption is that if bills are drafted by the active participation of external actors, they are likely to be passed at a relatively low level of conflict in parliament. A number of specific hypotheses based on this assumption are tested on data pertaining to Government bills passed by the Danish parliament 1972–74. The hypotheses relate to different types of bill preparation, subsequent outside contacts to parliamentary committees indicating societal disagreement on bills, and different areas of public policy. While the evidence gives strong support to the hypotheses it also indicates limits to the influence of external actors. This suggests an important difference between the two channels: like the corporate channel the parliamentary channel is one of influence, but unlike the corporate channel, it is also one of national responsibility.

Legislative scholars express different views on the functions of parliaments (see, for example, Wheare 1968; Packerham 1970; Loewenberg 1971; Blondel 1973; Loewenberg & Patterson 1979; Mezey 1979) but few, if any, deny that parliaments are important institutions for peaceful resolution of conflicts in liberal democracies. Despite their numerous structural and functional differences Western type parliaments are, in one way or another, making or legitimizing decisions that relate to issues of political conflict. And legislative researchers analyze structures and processes

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of legislative conflict and cooperation, even if their approaches, methods, and vocabularies differ.

A number of articles published since the mid-1960's have analyzed the levels and dimensions of conflicts in the Danish parliament, the patterns of party cooperation and coalition formation, and the changes in these during the post-war period (Pedersen 1967a, b; Pedersen et al. 1971; Damgaard 1969, 1973, 1974; Damgaard & Rusk 1976). This type of research focuses mainly on the behaviour of cohesive legislative parties in the final divisions on bills and other proposals. It assumes that government formations and legislative decision-making are important political phenomena and thus represent research efforts along the 'electoral-parliamentary channel of influence' (Rokkan 1966) in the political system.

Except for some general work on the Danish parliament (Damgaard 1977, 1980; Damgaard et al. 1979) the most recent research on the law-making process in Denmark has focused on 'external' actors, such as organized and institutional interests that are known to play important roles in the policy-making process from initiation through to implementation of decisions (Damgaard & Eliassen 1978, 1979a, b). Like research on interest groups (Buksti & Johansen 1978) and on public boards and committees (Johansen & Kristensen 1978) it has concentrated on the 'organizational-corporate channel of influence' (Rokkan 1966).

In this paper we shall make a first attempt to link the two channels of influence in an empirical analysis. In Rokkan's terms the ultimate task would be to explain how votes count and how resources decide. The problem is, of course, how to *measure* the relative importance of these two channels: 'We have no common calculus for assessing the crucial interplay of organizational activity within the voter-party channel' (Heisler 1979: 290-91). While this is true, it is possible to construct some indicators of the impact of corporate political participation in legislative decision-making (Grimsbo 1974; Swahn 1980).

Our purpose is to analyze how the involvement of corporate organizational and institutional actors affects the level of conflict in the law-making process. According to widespread assumptions, the involvement of interest organizations and public institutions in the political process reduces the level of parliamentary conflict. The reasoning is that if bills have been drafted by the active participation of interest groups and other external actors they tend to be passed by parliament at a low level of conflict. Thus, corporate actors are assumed to influence the behaviour of parliamentary parties in the law-making process.

R. Alford and R. Friedland claim that: 'The political domination of

depoliticized agencies by specialized interest groups has meant that legislation is usually drafted with their active collaboration, thus reducing general partisan legislative conflict to reactive choices: passage, veto or marginal amendment' (Alford & Friedland 1975:454). Others are less categorical in describing the effect of corporate participation in public policy-making (e.g. Olsen 1978:33–44). The question could perhaps be formulated as to *what extent* and *how* the magnitude of resources associated with organizational and institutional participation in the corporate channel influences the level of partisan legislative conflict.

Thus, the level of partisan conflict in parliament, as defined below, is our dependent variable in the analysis. We shall formulate and test several hypotheses concerning the effect of external involvement at the preparatory stages of law-making on the level of legislative conflict. This will be done for a universe of passed Government bills with respect to different types of administrative preparation processes (section 2), subsequent external contacts to parliamentary committees indicating disagreement on bills (section 3), and different areas of public policy (section 4).

If the underlying assumption is valid, we will find a reduction in the level of legislative conflict if external actors participate at the administrative bill preparation stages regardless of contacts with parliamentary committees and policy area of bills. While the analysis in principle can be done for a number of countries, it is limited to the case of Denmark due to severe problems of data collection.

1. Interest Representation and Partisan Conflict

The level of conflict among political parties in parliament can be operationalized in various ways. For the present purpose we use a very simple indicator of agreement/disagreement among parliamentary parties. The level of conflict is measured as the proportion of bills on which at least one party (or the majority of a party's members in case of intra-party disagreement) voted 'no' or abstained at the final division on passed Government bills. Thus, if there is any sign of conflict among the parties, this will be caught by our fairly broad definition.

The analysis is based on the 191 'normal'¹ Government bills passed in the 1972/73 and 1973/74 legislative sessions. In the former session only 5 parties were represented in parliament and a minority Social Democratic Government was in office. In the latter no less than 10 parties were represented (cf. Sartori 1976: 147–151) and a minority Liberal Government was in office. The expansion of the party system increased the level

of party conflict from .37 to .79. However, when investigating the relationship between patterns of bill preparation and levels of party conflict, it is sensible to exclude two of the newly represented parties, viz. the Progress Party and the Communists. As documented elsewhere (Damgaard 1978: 98 f., 228–40), these two parties constituted the extreme right and left of the party system. Both are only marginally linked to the established organizational and administrative network, and both represent political ideologies markedly different from the remaining parties.² The exclusion of the two extremist parties reduces the level of conflict in the latter period to .56 which yields an average for the two sessions of .45.

Our data files contain information on the participation of external actors in all stages of the law-making process, including the preparatory commission and administrative consultation stages prior to the introduction of bills in parliament. 'External' actors refer to interest organizations, private and public institutions, corporations and other collective bodies in contradistinction to the 'internal' participation of parliamentary parties and of ministerial departments and agencies responsible for the laws in question. 31 per cent of the normal bills were prepared by commissions having external actors amongst their members, and 46 per cent were subject to administrative consultation procedures (see Damgaard and Eliassen 1978, for further information).

The general assumption that the use of commissions and consultation procedures reduces the level of partisan legislative conflict can be tested by contrasting the level of conflict for bills subjected to consultation or commission inquiry with the level of conflict for bills not prepared in these ways. If the assumption is correct, the highest level of conflict among parties in parliament characterizes the latter category of bills. Furthermore, we suspect that organized interests have a particularly strong impact on the level of conflict. We therefore expect to find an additional reduction of conflict if interest organizations are among the external actors participating at the two preparatory stages of law-making. Thus, the first two hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

H₁: The level of partisan legislative conflict is lower if bills have been subjected to either commission inquiry *or* administrative consultation than if these procedures have not been used.

H₂: The level of partisan legislative conflict is lowest if interest organizations have been involved at either the commission *or* the administrative consultation stage.

Table 1 provides data to test the two hypotheses. The evidence is somewhat mixed in the sense that both hypotheses receive support, but H₁

Table 1. The Level of Partisan Conflict in Divisions on Passed Government Bills in the Danish Parliament 1972-74, in Relation to Different Patterns of Bill Preparation (Per Cent of Bills not Supported by at Least One Party)

Commission			
No Commission	Without Interest Organization Representation	With Interest Organization Representation	Total
48 (N = 132)	37 (N = 27)	37 (N = 32)	45 (N = 191)

Administrative Consultation			
No Administrative Consultation	Not Including Interest Organizations	Including Interest Organizations	Total
47 (N = 104)	47 (N = 34)	41 (N = 53)	45 (N = 191)

only with regard to the impact of commissions on the level of partisan conflict, and H₂ only with regard to the consequences of an administrative consultation procedure. The level of conflict is indeed lower if there has been a commission inquiry, but there is no effect of interest organization representation. In the case of administrative consultation, the involvement of interest organizations reduces the level of conflict. Furthermore, the level of conflict varies over a fairly narrow range.

The weak support for the two hypotheses in Table 1 may be due to the fact that commission inquiry and administrative consultation are not only two distinct stages in the legislative process but to some extent also alternative or complementary procedures (Christensen & Egeberg 1979:252). The reduction of legislative conflict through participation of external actors is a function of the *involvement* of important societal interests and their *agreement* on proposals. If all important interests have been included, and if they all agree, Government and parliament are likely to pass the proposal. Thus, a Norwegian study shows that if *disagreement* exists in a commission there is a high probability that Government and parliament will attempt to change the commission's proposal (Grimsbo 1974:120). Furthermore, if all relevant societal interests have *not* been represented on a commission one would expect a higher probability of conflict in parliament than if all had been included.

While we do not have data on disagreement in commissions or on the views of the various actors we will argue that the use of *both* commission and administrative consultation procedures (concerning the same bill) indicates either disagreement among the interested actors or that all important actors were not represented in the commission. We presume that lack of agreement or inclusiveness at the commission stage produces a higher level of legislative conflict than will be the case if only one of the two preparatory procedures is used. The parallel argument can be made for organized interest representation in particular. This reasoning leads to the following two additional hypotheses:

H₁₂: The level of partisan legislative conflict is higher if both the commission and the administrative consultation procedure are used than if only one of the two is used.

H₂₂: The level of partisan legislative conflict is highest if interest organizations are involved at both the commission and consultation stages.

Table 2 gives strong support to hypothesis H₁₂. Administrative consultation reduces legislative conflict in the case of bills not based on a commission report. Similarly, bills prepared by the commission procedure and not subsequently subjected to administrative consultation are passed at a low level of legislative conflict. On the other hand, use of commission inquiry as well as administrative consultation yields a level of conflict almost as high as in the case where none of the two procedures is used. The strong interaction effect between the two variables had eroded this relationship in the first table.

Table 3 provides data to test H₂₂, the effect of interest organization participation in particular. The same pattern emerges. The overall highest level of conflict is indeed found if interest organizations are involved at both of the two preparatory stages. The level of conflict increases from 24 per cent (in the case of no administrative consultation after a commission inquiry that involves interest groups) to 40 per cent if a consultation procedure is used, and to 80 per cent if the consultation involves interest

Table 2. The Level of Partisan Conflict in Relation to Different Patterns of Bill Preparation.

	No Commission	Commission	Total
No Administrative Consultation	57 (N = 76)	21 (N = 28)	47 (N = 104)
Administrative Consultation	36 (N = 56)	52 (N = 31)	41 (N = 87)
Total	48	37	45

Table 3. The Level of Partisan Conflict and Interest Organization Involvement at the Bill Preparation Stages

		No Commission		
			Without Interest Organization Representation	With Interest Organization Representation
No Administrative Consultation		57 (N = 76)	18 (N = 11)	24 (N = 17)
	Not Including Interest Organizations	50 (N = 20)	50 (N = 4)	40 (N = 10)
Administrative Consultation	Including Interest Organizations	28 (N = 36)	50 (N = 12)	80 (N = 5)

groups. As is also visible in Table 3, the decisive factor in reducing conflict in the case of no commission inquiry is the consultation of interest groups. Finally, Table 3 indicates that if no administrative consultation occurs the important factor in reducing legislative conflict is the use of commission preparation, with or without interest representatives.

Tables 2 and 3 thus confirm the point that the two preparatory procedures may function as alternatives or substitutes for the purpose of reducing conflict. If no commission is set up, administrative consultation of interest groups reduces legislative conflict. If a commission has delivered a report on desirable legislation, the use of a subsequent administrative consultation procedure is a sign of disagreement among the affected organizations and institutions with a consequent increase of conflict among political parties at the parliamentary stage.

2. Contacts with Parliamentary Committees and Legislative Conflict

In analyzing the reduction of legislative conflict through the participation of external actors in the process of bill preparation we have tacitly assumed that there is some disagreement that must be reduced. But in some instances it could happen that no conflict exists, even within our universe of 'normal' legislation. Some proposals might be quite non-controversial

from the outset, and therefore passed as a matter of routine, perhaps without any external consultations. We found that conflict was highest in the case of no commission inquiry and no administrative consultations (Table 2), but nonetheless one could argue that this pattern of bill preparation will be used when no initial disagreements exist.

Unfortunately, there is no way to sort bills out according to the existence/non-existence of initial societal disagreement. However, we can test for signs of societal conflicts at the parliamentary committee stage between the preparatory stages and the final division. Any organization, group, corporation, or individual can present views to the standing, specialized committee handling a given bill in parliament, and all such contacts with a committee from the outside will be listed in the committee's official report to the floor. Although we expect the level of partisan conflict to be lowest in the case of no external contacts with parliamentary committees, because external contacts indicate that some disagreements have not been ironed out at the previous stages, we expect H₁ to hold regardless of such contacts. In the same vein we presume that H₂ is valid in both cases, although the effects of interest groups at the commission and consultation stages may be strongest with respect to bills that are not targets for outside contacts with parliamentary committees. We shall therefore test the following hypotheses:

H₁₂: The level of partisan legislative conflict is lower if bills have been subjected to either commission inquiry *or* administrative consultation than if these procedures have not been used (= H₁) whether contacts with parliamentary committees take place or not.

Table 4. The Level of Partisan Conflict in Relation to Different Patterns of Bill Preparation and Contacts/No Contacts with Parliamentary Committees.

	No Contacts with Parliamentary Committees		Contacts with Parliamentary Committees	
	No Commission	Commission	No Commission	Commission
No Administrative Consultation	37 (N = 30)	29 (N = 10)	70 (N = 46)	59 (N = 19)
Administrative Consultation	35 (n = 23)	28 (N = 5)	36 (N = 33)	48 (N = 26)
Total	36	28	56	54

H23: The level of partisan legislative conflict is lowest if interest organizations have been involved at either the commission *or* the administrative consultation stages (= H2) whether contacts with parliamentary committees take place or not.

Table 4 shows in the first place that the expected overall level of partisan conflict is lower if bills have not caused reactions in the form of contacts with parliamentary committees (28 versus 54 per cent). Second, the hypothesized relationships between commission or consultation procedures on the one hand, and the level of conflict on the other (H12) are found to exist. The effect is strong in all cases except the one of no contacts with parliamentary committees where administrative consultation only reduces the level of conflict from .37 to .35 (if there has been no commission inquiry). Thus, there is no tendency toward a stronger conflict reduction effect of external participation in bill preparation in cases of no contact with parliamentary committees. Furthermore, in case of contacts with parliamentary committees the conflict reduction effect of commission inquiry and administrative consultation is stronger than for all bills under consideration (cf. Table 2).

For bills causing contacts with parliamentary committees, the combined effect of the two preparation procedures is an *increase* in the level of

Table 5. The Level of Partisan Conflict, Interest Organization Involvement at the Bill Preparation Stages, and Contacts/No Contacts with Parliamentary Committees

		No Contacts with Parl. Comm.		Contacts with Parliamentary Committees	
		No Com- mission	No Com- mission	Commission	
				Without In- terest Or- ganizations	With Inter- est Orga- nizations
No Administra- tive Consult- ation		37 (N = 30)	70 (N = 46)	33 (N = 6)	33 (N = 12)
	Not Including Interest Org.	63 (N = 8)	42 (N = 12)	50 (N = 4)	50 (N = 8)
Administra- tive Con- sultation	Including Interest Org.	20 (N = 15)	33 (N = 21)	67 (N = 9)	80 (N = 5)

conflict. In the case of no contacts with parliamentary committees, however, the interaction effect of the two preparation procedures actually *reduces* the level of legislative conflict to zero.

Turning to the impact of interest organizations (H₂₃), Table 5 shows that the hypothesis is confirmed in the case of contacts with parliamentary committees when we are looking at the consequences of interest representation in administrative consultation procedures, but in the case of commission, interest organization representation has no further impact. If commission and remiss are used, and if interest organizations are involved at one or both stages, the level of conflict increases substantially. The highest level (80 per cent) is found where interest organizations are represented at both preparatory stages.

In cases of no contacts with parliamentary committees, the commission inquiry reduces the level of conflict to zero and thus pre-empts any additional reduction effect by interest organizations. However, the conflict reduction effect of interest organizations at the administrative consultation stage is substantial (63 per cent without interest groups versus 20 per cent with interest groups). Thus, hypothesis H₂₃ is supported in both cases for administrative consultation procedures.

The main findings of this section may be summarized in the following way: contacts with parliamentary committees, as signs of outside involvement and disagreement on bills, tend to *increase* the overall level of legislative conflict. However, if one of the two preparatory procedures is used, the level of conflict is reduced substantially also in the case of contacts with parliamentary committees. On the other hand, both contacts with parliamentary committees and the combined use of commissions and administrative consultation tend to increase partisan conflict in parliament. When there are signs of disagreement among affected interests in society concerning proposed legislation, party conflict is still significant. If there are no such signs, however, the use of commission inquiry reduces the level of conflict to zero.

3. Interest Representation, Policy Area, and Legislative Conflict

Previous research has shown that the level of partisan conflict varies substantially over policy areas (Damgaard 1973; Damgaard & Rusk 1976) and that the content and scope of bills affect the level and structure of external participation in the legislative process (Damgaard & Eliassen 1978, 1979a, b). We therefore know that the bills under study are charac-

terized by different degrees of legislative conflict and varying levels of external actor involvement. However, our present purpose is not to study such variations but to see whether the hypothesized reduction of legislative conflict through participation of external actors in the process of bill preparation is valid for all areas of public policy.

Public policies may be categorized in a number of ways. While the conflict reduction hypotheses should stand the test regardless of the particular classification selected, our rather small universe of bills compels us to define a few fairly broad areas of public policy. We therefore follow J. Grønnegård Christensen who claims that ministries, or subdivisions of ministries, can be grouped into four main functional categories: A) General regulation, B) Direction and coordination of public administration, C) Business regulation, and D) Direction and production of public services (Christensen 1978). By implication we assume that the same

Table 6. The Level of Partisan Conflict in Relation to Different Patterns of Bill Preparation, Interest Organization Participation, and Policy Area.

Policy Area	No Commission		Commission		Total	
		Without Interest Organizations		With Interest Organizations		
General Regulation	61 (N = 44)	22 (N = 9)	29	40 (N = 5)	53 (N = 53)	
Business Regulation	57 (N = 37)	25 (N = 4)	25	25 (N = 12)	47 (N = 53)	
Public Services	30 (N = 37)	54 (N = 13)	48	43 (N = 14)	38 (N = 64)	

Policy Area	No Administrative Consultation		Administrative Consultation		Total	
	Consultation	Not Including Interest Organizations		Including Interest Organizations		
General Regulation	63 (N = 35)	20 (N = 5)	39	44 (N = 18)	53 (N = 58)	
Business Regulation	50 (N = 28)	50 (N = 12)	44	39 (N = 13)	47 (N = 53)	
Public Services	29 (N = 31)	62 (N = 13)	46	35 (N = 20)	38 (N = 64)	

holds true for most legislation proposed by the various ministers.³ However, because the number of bills in category B is too small for the present purpose, we end up with only three areas of public policy: 1. General regulation,⁴ 2. Private business regulation,⁵ and 3. Direction and production of public services.⁶ According to earlier research findings we expect to find a low level of party conflict in the public services area and a high level in the business regulation area. The general regulation area is not predictable in terms of party conflict because it entails both a high-conflict component (taxation) and a low-conflict component (justice). As indicated above, however, we hypothesize that the conflict reduction mechanisms work in all areas:

H₁₄: The level of partisan legislative conflict is lower if bills have been subjected to either commission inquiry *or* administrative consultation than if these procedures have not been used (= H₁) in each of the three policy areas.

H₂₄: The level of partisan legislative conflict is lowest if interest organizations have been involved at either the commission *or* the administrative consultation stage (= H₂) in each of the three policy areas.

Table 6 provides data to test the two hypotheses. First, one notes the substantial differences in the overall levels of legislative conflict. As expected we find the lowest level in the public services area (38 per cent), whereas the two other areas are slightly below 50 per cent (business regulation) and slightly above 50 per cent (general regulation) in terms of legislative conflict.

Second, H₁₄ receives support for the areas of general regulation and business regulation where the impact of commission inquiry and administrative consultation is roughly of the same magnitude. However, the hypothesis is *not* confirmed for the public services area. In fact, it is quite surprising to find a *completely opposite* effect of commissions and consultations in this area: the level of conflict actually increases if a commission or consultation procedure has been used. This remarkable finding is the first major deviance from our initial assumption and the question is how it can be explained.

In accordance with our previous reasoning (section 2) a possible explanation may be the interaction effect of commission inquiry and administrative consultation. The interaction effect of these two independent variables may be so strong that it even reverses the individual effects on the level of legislative conflict!

Table 7 clearly confirms this assumption. The conflict-increasing effect of commission inquiry or administrative consultation procedures in the

Table 7. The Level of Partisan Conflict in Relation to Different Patterns of Bill Preparation and Policy Area.

		No Com- mission	Commission	Total
General Regulation	No Administrative Consultation	67 (N = 33)	0 (N = 2)	63
	Administrative Consultation	46 (N = 11)	33 (N = 12)	39
Business Regulation	No Administrative Consultation	71 (N = 17)	18 (N = 11)	50
	Administrative Consultation	45 (N = 20)	40 (N = 5)	44
Public Services	No Administrative Consultation	35 (N = 17)	21 (N = 14)	29
	Administrative Consultation	25 (N = 20)	77 (N = 13)	46

public services area *does not hold* if one looks at the bivariate relation between commission and consultation. Table 7 shows a tendency toward *reduction* of conflict in the public services area if only one of the two preparatory procedures has been used, although it is weaker than the similar tendencies in the other areas. In the case of no commission report, administrative consultation reduces the level of conflict from .35 to .25. In the case of a commission report and no subsequent administrative consultation, the level of conflict is .21. Furthermore, the conflict increasing effect of using both preparatory procedures is much stronger in the public services area than the similar effects in the general regulation and business regulation areas. The conclusion is then that H₁₄ is confirmed if the *interaction effect* of the complementary procedures is taken into account.

Turning to the impact of interest organization participation, Table 6 gives some support to H₂₄, but in two of the six cases the level of conflict is actually higher if organizations participate (commission stage in business regulation area, administrative consultation in the general regulation area). However, it is quite interesting to find a slight reduction of conflict when interest organizations participate at one of the two preparatory stages in the public services area.

Table 8. The Level of Partisan Conflict in Relation to Different Patterns of Bill Preparation, Interest Organization Participation, and Policy Area.

			No Commission	Commission	
				Without Interest Organizations	With Interest Organizations
General Regulation	No Administrative consultation		67 (N = 33)	0 (N = 2)	—*
	Administrative Consultation	Not Including Interest Org.	0 (N = 2)	—	33 (N = 3)
		Including Interest Org.	56 (N = 9)	29 (N = 7)	50 (N = 2)
Business Regulation	No Administrative Consultation		71 (N = 17)	25 (N = 4)	14 (N = 7)
	Administrative Consultation	Not Including Interest Org.	67 (N = 9)	—	0 (N = 3)
		Including Interest Org.	27 (N = 11)	—	100 (N = 2)
Public Services	No Administrative Consultation		35 (N = 17)	20 (N = 5)	22 (N = 9)
	Administrative Consultation	Not Including Interest Org.	60 (N = 5)	50 (N = 4)	75 (N = 4)
		Including Interest Org.	13 (N = 15)	100 (N = 4)	100 (N = 1)

* No bills in this cell.

As Table 8 shows, the additional conflict-reducing effect of interest organization participation (H₂₄) is in most cases confirmed. The lowest level of partisan conflict is found when interest organizations have participated at one stage. The two exceptions are commission participation in the public services area and general regulation in the case of administrative consultation. The conflict-increasing effect of interest organization participation at both stages is found within all three areas of public policy. Table 8 also shows that the public services area conforms completely with our hypothesis (H₂₄).

4. Conclusion

In the opening section we referred to the two 'channels' through which political influence is exerted and interests are guarded. In the electoral-

parliamentary channel, political parties are the crucial structures intermediating between citizens and decision-makers while interest groups perform a similar function in the 'organizational-corporate' channel. Although these avenues open to citizens' demands may often function as alternatives, they are not independent of each other. Our purpose was to indicate one of the ways in which they are related by analyzing law-making data. The analysis thereby also suggests one possible way of looking at legislative activities in a broader-than-usual societal context. The findings clearly demonstrate that the procedures adopted by Government and parliament are intimately linked up with external societal interests.

Our basic assumption was that if bills are drafted by the active participation of external actors (through commissions or administrative consultations) they are likely to be passed at a relatively low level of conflict in parliament. Our hypotheses receive unequivocal support if *either* a commission inquiry *or* an administrative consultation has been employed. This conclusion is valid for all three policy areas, and whether bills have caused external contacts to parliamentary committees during the deliberation stage or not. On the other hand, if both preparatory procedures are used and if there are contacts to parliamentary committees, the level of partisan conflict increases. But if there are no contacts to parliamentary committees the combined effect of the two procedures reduces the level of conflict to zero.

Participation of interest organizations leads to an additional reduction of conflict in a similar pattern. If *either* a commission inquiry *or* an administrative consultation has been employed, interest representation leads to a further reduction of legislative conflict (except in the case of no contacts with parliamentary committees where a commission report reduces the level to zero whether interest organizations are represented or not). On the other hand, if both preparatory procedures have been used, participation of interest organizations at one of the stages, and particularly at both, increases the level of conflict substantially (if there are contracts with parliamentary committees).

The analysis has emphasized conflict-reduction effects of external actor participation in the legislative process. This should not be taken to imply that all conflicts can be reduced or solved to the satisfaction of all political parties and interest groups. There are some limits to the influence of external actors and some constraints on the voting behaviour of parliamentary parties.

Earlier studies show that external actors, including interest organizations, are rarely incorporated in the preparation of financial legislation, or

laws increasing government revenue (Damgaard & Eliassen 1978: 304–308), and, as previously mentioned, party conflict is known to be high in such matters. Perhaps this points to the dilemma of parties and parliament in a modern welfare state: while political parties attempt to accommodate the demands of interest groups in the law-making process they may at the same time create an economic necessity for tax increases and other austerity measures that nobody likes. The two channels are thus also related in another way: like the corporate channel the parliamentary channel is one of influence, but unlike the corporate channel it is also one of national responsibility.

NOTES

- 1 The 'normal' laws do not include naturalization laws, laws applying only to Greenland or to the Faroe Islands, laws postponing amendments otherwise planned, laws adjusting existing legislation as a consequence of other bills passed or of European Community decisions (cf. Damgaard & Eliassen 1978:293).
- 2 The five parties represented in 1972/73 were: Socialist People's Party, Social Democrats, Radical Liberals, Liberals, and Conservatives. In 1973 three new centrist parties (Christian People's Party, Center-Democrats, Justice Party) obtained representation in addition to the two extremist parties.
- 3 See Damgaard & Eliassen 1979a for further information on the underlying classification criteria.
- 4 Legislation proposed by the ministers of finance, justice, and the environment.
- 5 Legislation proposed by the ministers of labour, trade and industry, agriculture, fisheries, and housing.
- 6 Legislation proposed by the ministers of the interior (health), social welfare, culture, church, defence, education, and public works (transport and communication).

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laws increasing government revenue (Damgaard & Eliassen 1978: 304–308), and, as previously mentioned, party conflict is known to be high in such matters. Perhaps this points to the dilemma of parties and parliament in a modern welfare state: while political parties attempt to accommodate the demands of interest groups in the law-making process they may at the same time create an economic necessity for tax increases and other austerity measures that nobody likes. The two channels are thus also related in another way: like the corporate channel the parliamentary channel is one of influence, but unlike the corporate channel it is also one of national responsibility.

NOTES

- 1 The 'normal' laws do not include naturalization laws, laws applying only to Greenland or to the Faroe Islands, laws postponing amendments otherwise planned, laws adjusting existing legislation as a consequence of other bills passed or of European Community decisions (cf. Damgaard & Eliassen 1978:293).
- 2 The five parties represented in 1972/73 were: Socialist People's Party, Social Democrats, Radical Liberals, Liberals, and Conservatives. In 1973 three new centrist parties (Christian People's Party, Center-Democrats, Justice Party) obtained representation in addition to the two extremist parties.
- 3 See Damgaard & Eliassen 1979a for further information on the underlying classification criteria.
- 4 Legislation proposed by the ministers of finance, justice, and the environment.
- 5 Legislation proposed by the ministers of labour, trade and industry, agriculture, fisheries, and housing.
- 6 Legislation proposed by the ministers of the interior (health), social welfare, culture, church, defence, education, and public works (transport and communication).

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