

SUMMARIES

On the sources of policy and the initiation of policy processes

By Lauri Karvonen

The starting point of this article is the observation that the first phases of the policy-making process, the formulation of general problems and the initiation of specific policy processes, have received relatively little attention from the part of political scientists both in the general theoretical perspective and as regards concrete empirical knowledge of policy-making in specific countries such as Finland. The aim of the article is on one hand to examine a few of the theoretical contributions connected with the subject; on the other hand, we want to discuss empirical developments which in the light of this examination seem to play an important role in policy initiation in post-war Finland.

The term »Agenda-Building», originating from an article by Cobb and Elder, constitutes the conceptual frame of reference for the theoretical discussion. Although heuristically useful, the twin concepts of an institutional and a systemic arena developed by the authors are found too general and vague to be of direct empirical relevance. A later (1976) article published by Cobb et alia, does, however, have also an empirical ambition as concrete hypotheses on the occurrence of different types of policy initiation in different political systems are presented. These hypotheses aim, however, at discovering differences between general types of polities rather than explaining how specific policies are initiated, which means that their relevance for our empirical focus is rather limited. The models presented by the authors are, in addition, beset with other weaknesses as well. We find, for instance, that the distinction between an outside initiative model (popular demands) and a mobilization model (initiatives by the political leaders) is a somewhat naive way of looking at the political process: popular demands can very seldom be regarded as isolated from impulses from the governing elites. Furthermore, the

inside access model, depicting policy processes which are initiated inside the authoritative decision system and carried out without entrance into the systemic arena (public debate, general awareness etc.), seems also rather unsatisfactory from our point of view. Although it in quite a commendable way emphasizes the importance of access to the central decision making functions and implies differences between different »in-groups» in this respect, it does not say anything about the concrete nature of this access. The crucial question of what in fact constitutes access receives no attentions in the article in question.

Due to the reasons mentioned above the direct connection between the theoretical and the empirical part of our article is more conceptual than substantial. In agreement with the authors examined we argue that it is important to distinguish between different arenas of decision-making from which policies can originate; unlike them we argue that it is more meaningful to distinguish between arenas horizontally (elites A, B, and C) than to do this vertically (political leaders, bureaucrats and the public) — this is especially true of highly developed and organized polities such as Finland. Consequently, the aim of the empirical part of the article is to point out and discuss arenas on the national level of policy making in post-war Finland.

Three such arenas emerge in our discussion. The first of them, the national administration as an arena for policy initiation, is a result of both the activation of the administration (administration as an independent actor in politics) and the growing complexity of administrative decision making (planning, prognostication, centralization). The second one, the corporative arena, is seen as a consequence of the widening scope of incomes policy created in cooperation between the labor market parties and the state; a very visible indication of this development is the corporativization of state committees and also the growing corpo-

rative participation in different parts of the national administration. The last arena, the presidential one, can be seen as a result of the primacy of foreign policy, conducted by the president, in Finnish politics; in conjunction with a relatively weak and fragmented party system, the high degree of linkage be-

tween domestic and foreign policy and the strong personal leadership of president Kekkonen this orientation has created an influential network of informal policy initiation which has come to encompass a broad spectrum of issue areas.

Convergent vs. conflicting interests in processes of armaments acquisition:

A case study of two Finnish decisions on the procurement of military aircraft in 1976

by Vilho Harle

In 1976 the Finnish Government decided to replace the Finnish air force's Fouga Magister jet trainers with advanced British HS Hawk jet trainers and its Saab Safir primary trainers with indigenous Leko-70s. The jet trainer decision process was discussed widely, also at the international level, because of the generous compensation offers made to Finland. The author suggests that the decisions cannot be explained by referring to the external environment of Finnish foreign policy. Therefore, a more general framework is suggested consisting of arguments and findings presented in the literature of the Military-Industrial

Complex. The author criticizes the theory of the military-industrial complex for the assumption that the complex segments exercise their influence in a coordinated and mutually-supportive way to achieve and maintain optimal levels of military expenditure. This view is not supported by various earlier findings, which show that different actors have a different impact on the acquisition process and that the actors pursue their own rather than common interests. This also holds true in the Finnish case: the decisions were made either against the interests of the Finnish aircraft industry or at the direct responsibility of the Finnish Government, and were not based on common interests. Air force interests conflicted with those of the industry, and the role of the Government was to decide which interests were taken into consideration. The author hesitates to generalize his findings to other countries, but suggests that research be carried out along the same lines in other countries.