

5

Political Processes and Tobacco Control

“Allowing the tobacco manufacturers to promote tobacco use now, given the evidence, is like allowing the promotion and sale of rats at the height of the bubonic plague, had officials of the time known the source of the plague.” (Mahood 1997)

“In the United States, action beyond words was possible because the authoritative actors were partly independent of the elected public officials...While the Canadian system appeared to facilitate higher level consideration of the problem, and even possibly broader investigation, government response in Canada has not been markedly quick or effective.” (Friedman 1975: 155)

“One of Canada’s leading antismoking campaigners, Mr. Garfield Mahood of the Canadian Non-Smokers’ Rights Association, says governments only deliver reforms ‘when pummelled into submission by health agencies, professionals and the media.’” (*Irish Times*, May 30, 2001)

Introduction

This chapter considers the evidence for several of the theories which might explain tobacco-control policy in Canada and the United States. Which theory or combination of theories can provide a superior explanation of policy over both time and space, in Canada and the United States over a period of more than a third of a century? Some theories may be better at explaining similarities while others contribute more to explaining differences. The six examined here are (1) agenda setting, (2) interest groups/social movements, (3) ideology/parties/elections, (4) political institutions, (5) political culture, and (6) policy typologies. Chapter Six focuses solely on lesson drawing. The major question involving this theory is this: does it offer additional explanatory power not provided by other theories?