

Sources of Political Power of Corporations and the Upper Class

Systemic Power: forms of political dominance or political advantage that operate more or less spontaneously, without any coordinated effort among corporate elites or the upper class to dictate policy or decisions.

- **Business confidence:** the dependence of government revenues and legitimacy on high rates of investment by those who own and control the productive wealth of society — this precludes policies that threaten investor confidence (i.e., profits).
- **Ideological hegemony:** widely shared beliefs and values that undermine collective strategies for improving social welfare and achieving greater equality — e.g., competitive individualism, the sanctity of private property, consumerism, belief in equality of opportunity, quest for upward mobility.

Positional Power: ability to dictate or influence the process by which persons are selected to occupy formal positions of governmental authority.

- **Elected positions:** importance of campaign contributions from corporations and wealthy individuals for the process of candidate selection, nomination, and election.
- **Appointed positions:** grooming of candidates and mobilization of networks of social connections to influence appointment of persons to executive and judicial offices.

Decisional Power: ability to dictate or influence specific governmental actions and policy decisions.

- **Policy formation process:** financing of and control over the network of foundations, think tanks, and policy formation organizations that identify problems, forge elite consensus, and formulate public policy.
- **Special interest process:** lobbying activities (mainly behind closed doors) over the formulation and enforcement (or non-enforcement) of legislation and executive or judicial decisions.
- **Public opinion process:** ability to create public support (or at least confusion, division, or acquiescence) for policies that favor big business and the wealthy — control over the mass media, advertising, education, financing of “grassroots” political campaigns.