Tractorcade: Investigating the Relationship Between Group Theory and the American Agriculture Movement's Attempt at Policy Change

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TRACTORCADE: INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GROUP THEORY AND THE AMERICAN AGRICULTURE MOVEMENT’S ATTEMPT AT POLICY CHANGE

By
Hanna Myers Metzler

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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DEDICATION

To my family, who have guided me and provided me with everything I could possibly need, not only through college, but through life. Thank you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Holland, Dr. Winburn, and Dr. Samonds, for encouraging me through this process. Dr. Holland, thank you for allowing me the freedom to bring this movement back to life while supporting me the entire time. To the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and Trent Lott Leadership Institute, my three years at Ole Miss have allowed me to grow as a student and a leader; for that, I am forever indebted.
ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to investigate the relationship between The American Agriculture Movement (AAM) and group theory, with a focus on AAM’s usage of Tractorcade as a tool to promote policy change. Gathering data through a myriad of sources - including existing literature, oral histories, newspaper articles, documents, and journal entries - this thesis analyzes AAM’s Tractorcade demonstration as a social movement aimed at influencing policy change. Utilizing Charles Tilly’s worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (WUNC) social movement framework, we find that although AAM employed strong unity and numbers, they failed in displaying substantial worthiness or commitment, ultimately leading to a lack of policy change. These findings can be further understood through group theory, which describes that strong relationships between interest groups and policy makers, as well as long-term interaction, are vital to the policy change process. In both of these areas AAM fell short in the long run.

Keywords: American Agriculture Movement, Tractorcade, Group Theory, Agriculture Policy, Social Movement, Washington, D.C.
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**Introduction**

“None of us realized what we were getting into. And none of us realized how hard it would be. Spirits were high and adrenalin was flowing. You know, we were going to change the world,” said Majorie Scheufler of Kansas, remembering the attitudes leading up to the Tractorcade ("Tractorcade Interviewees", 2012).

Among agriculture and food policy examined and studied over the past few decades, one piece of the puzzle is often overlooked: The American Agriculture Movement (AAM). Although quite brief in the grand scheme of things, this movement was highly influential in the 1970s and early 1980s as far as representing the specific interests of farmers across the country. Some of those specifically involved believe the movement was responsible for saving a vast number of small farms across America and shaping future farm policy to help promote the success of local farmers.

In February 1979, thousands of tractors lined Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. with one goal in mind: policy change. Farmers from across the country rolled into the nation’s Capitol with hopes of pushing their interests on a narrow-minded Congress. This unprecedented demonstration would come to be known as the 1979 Tractorcade. Inflation, low prices, and high costs caused intense suffering for American farmers in the years preceding the Tractorcade. Along with policy makers and political officials, the unique demonstration caught the attention of the American people as lines of tractors passed through small towns across America. The National Mall became the temporary home for these farmers and their daunting tractors for much longer than expected. This demonstration is known as the American Agriculture Movement’s Tractorcade.
The movement blocked traffic and caused disruption to the daily lives of D.C. residents, but the mission for farmers was steadfast. They traveled thousands of miles, moving at less than twenty miles per hour with high hopes for change, so they stayed for weeks with the last tractors finally departing D.C. in June. Unsurprisingly, the farmers’ agenda did not manifest from thin air. The group’s mission was bound by a common struggle that eventually fostered into a large-scale network called the American Agriculture Movement. In 1977, out of Campo, Colorado, a group of farmers began expressing their discontent with current agriculture policy. The legislation of the time was inefficient for agriculture producers and left farmers and their families economically depressed. At the onset of this movement, local AAM offices began popping up across the country, expanding the mission of the movement from local to national.
Chapter 1: Policy Background

In 1973, an omnibus farm bill was enacted through the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act. With this bill, President Richard Nixon and Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz hoped to strengthen market profits for farmers. When the bill was signed into action on August 10, 1973, President Nixon said, “the effect of this bill is to set up a new system of price guarantees for American farmers,” (West et al., 1974, p. 13). At this point in time, high demand for wheat and American goods alongside high inflation rates resulted in high commodity prices. This set the stage for the new commodity price targets and movement away from price parity in the 1973 Farm Bill. A major motive for these legislative changes was in order to increase agriculture exports and balance trade by expanding global markets (West et al., 1974, p. 313-328). Price parity was particularly important for farmers because it guaranteed fair prices on farm products and labor while still offering farmers the means for a comfortable livelihood.

As the agri-business climate changed over the next five years, the measures enacted within the 1973 Farm Bill were no longer as substantive in protecting farmers. Some of these changes include trends in supply and demand and slowed export rates in conjunction with an increasing United States population rate. These economic shifts induced low prices because commodity supply had increased without a significant growth in demand from global markets (West et al., 1974, pp. 313-328). Congress attempted to counteract these unforeseen economic realities in 1975 with H.R. 4296, “A bill to adjust target prices, loan and purchase levels on the 1975 crops of upland cotton, corn, wheat and soybeans, to provide price support for milk at 85 percent of parity with quarterly adjustments for the period ending March 31,
1976,” (Congress.gov, n.d.). Ultimately, this bill was vetoed by President Gerald Ford. Farmers were hoping for these discrepancies to be further corrected in the upcoming 1977 Farm Bill.

The 1977 Farm Bill is also known as the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977. Unintentionally, this bill made it practically impossible for farmers to produce for profit, making it more and more difficult to keep family farms in operation across the country. The major issue farmers wanted addressed in 1977 was price parity: the high costs farmers incurred relative to the price consumers paid for food products. The 1977 Farm Bill focused on food supply levels and exports, including policy such as income boundaries, price support floors, and production controls (Spitze, 1978, pp. 225-235). The bill aimed to support both producers and consumers, but the balance leaned in favor of consumers, leaving farmers more economically burdened than before the legislation was signed into law.

The growing usage of omnibus legislation for farm policy in the 1970s simultaneously led to the increased usage of economists to advise the writing of bills. This resulted in alternatives that addressed issues which were more focused on economic trends and consumption statistics, along with reliance on balanced future supply and demand. In effect, the economics of agriculture and food trends outweighed the actual interests of farmers (West et al., 1974, p. 313-328). Therefore, as Congress continued to pass legislation that ignored what farmers needed in order to promote productivity and profit, rural economic markets worsened across the country. As AAM’s website, aaminc.org, points out, “every time a farmer produced and sold a commodity, he or she went a little further in debt and lost a little more equity in their land and equipment.” These circumstances were leading to widespread loss of profit and functionality in small localities. If policy officials failed to protect local farming operations, entire communities
in rural America - that rely wholly on the money gained through agriculture - would lose their livelihood along with their income.

The American Agriculture Movement started in 1977 as a reactionary measure to the Farm Bill, a piece of legislation that continuously overshadowed and ignored the true wants and needs of American farmers. Even though farmers had been increasingly frustrated with farm policy for years, the 1977 legislation was the last straw, opening up the gates for farmers to start their own grassroots campaign. Farmers came to the realization they could no longer rely on lobbyists and public officials to speak on their behalf; they needed to do it themselves. The American Agriculture Movement’s primary goal from the beginning was to perform a crop production strike starting December 17, 1977 if their requests were not met by officials in Washington, D.C. before that date. However, this goal eventually shifted toward putting on a demonstration.

This thesis will examine the relationship between group theory and the American Agriculture Movement’s attempt at influencing policy change, with Tractorcade as its main catalyst. The primary research question for this exploration is: How can the relationship between group theory and the American Agriculture Movement explain the organization’s attempt at influencing policy change through the usage of Tractorcade? Further investigating the relationship between group theory and AAM will help explore how certain interest groups attempt to influence policy makers and legislation in their favor. Public policy is often the equilibrium found, resulting from group struggle so, through the lens of group theory, I can trace AAM’s development (Anyebe, 2018, p. 10). Moreover, using Charles Tilly’s social movement framework, I will examine the 1979 Tractorcade protest using four criteria: worthiness, unity,
numbers, and commitment. Tractorcade is vitally important to the overall outcomes of AAM’s mission, as it acted as the most pivotal catalyst for the movements’ overall strategy.

Chapter 2 will provide the reader a foundation of group theory. Chapter 3 will present the social movement framework and methodology approach utilized in this thesis. Chapter 4 will highlight the findings excavated using the social movement framework and group theory to understand Tractorcade. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion regarding Tractorcade’s impact on the AAM strategic goals and overall outcomes. Finally, chapter 6 will highlight limitations, broader perspectives and provide a conclusion.
Chapter 2: Group Theory

This analysis will approach the American Agriculture Movement (AAM) from the perspective of group theory. In this case, group theory can be defined by the influence of an organized group with a common political interest pushing for policy change. More specifically, influence can be defined as a “behavior outcome [reflecting] a change that would not have been there without the efforts of the influencer” (Smith, 1979, p. 234). As groups influence political outcomes, one of the most important variables is the relationship between group actors and legislative actors. Adam Anyebe (2012) in his overview of approaches to public policy states that “public policy is the equilibrium reached in this group struggle at any given moment, and it represents a balance which the contending factions or groups constantly strive to win in their favour” (p. 12). Kraft and Furlong in Public Policy agree that the continuous struggle for balance between groups results in policy alternatives (2020). Group theory suggests that interest groups and their agenda pushing is vital to the legislative process. The influencing group in discussion of this thesis is organized farmers from across the United States asking elected officials for fiscal policy improvement for farmers, specifically small family farms.

The introduction of group theory and the influence of interest groups on politics can be traced back to literature originating in 1788, when The Federalist Papers by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay were published. Group interest is embedded within the United States democracy. Regarding the American Agriculture Movement, the struggle was between a few powerful players - the political elite - and the interests of the minority group asking for change. This common relation of group theory to the analogy of a larger struggle was introduced in The Federalists Papers’ idea of factions - the modern day’s equivalent of interest
groups (Tichenor & Harris, 2005). This supports how important group theory and interest group influence has been on American politics since the foundation of the United States.

At the beginning of government formation, leaders saw these factions as problematic and representing “assertive selfishness” (Tichenor & Harris, 2005, p. 264). However, over time these attitudes have changed and government leaders have realized that interest groups are one of the largest political influencers and a pivotal tool in representation of the people’s wants. Without interest groups, government entities and citizens would likely be starkly disconnected. Interest groups allow representatives and constituents to be linked by a struggle for change. Interest groups are unique in that they do not have to move through the platform of political parties in order to have their agenda heard by government leaders. Furthermore, “it is clearly more effective for groups to interact directly with governmental administrators and congressional overseers than to have their preferences filtered through the parties, where policy outcomes are the product of compromise” (Tichenor, 2005, p. 265). Without successful interest groups, policy would likely reflect elite interests over the interests of the people they represent.

Today, interest groups are found in a myriad of forms and sizes, all reflecting a vast range of goals. Interest groups can begin as small as local, grassroots movements - much like the American Agriculture Movement. These types of movements seek concentrated, local policy change that directly affect day to day life. Interest groups can also become as large and influential as the American Medical Association, which represents the ideals of America’s doctors. Interest groups can cover public interests, private interests, labor interests, and most commonly - business and trade interests. Group theory and the formation of these interest groups
supports the constant interaction of these groups with policy makers in order to push legislation through Congress.

Group theorists find that interest groups are able to gain more leverage on their agenda if the group works to push their interests for an extended period of time. This can be explained by group theory’s relationship with the “iron triangle.” The iron triangle is the relationship shared between interest groups, bureaucratic agencies, and congressional committees. Those groups who can capitalize within this iron triangle are most likely to have their interests represented in government policy and legislation (Tichenor, 2005, p. 263). In their research, Kraft and Furlong refer to the iron triangle as an advocacy coalition, where different actors pursue policy outcomes together over time (2020). The power of the iron triangle, or advocacy coalition, demonstrates how interest groups that are equipped with money are able to professionally represent themselves and are more likely to penetrate the iron triangle, which leads to having their voices heard by policy makers.

In recent times, theorists have begun to move away from “iron triangles” and toward “issue networks.” Issue networks are more general and involve the interaction among competing interest groups, individuals, and agencies. Issue networks attempt to encompass all of the areas in which policy struggle can be had over competing interests, specific individuals, and groups (Tichenor, 2005, p. 263). Policy is what results from these struggles.

The usage of iron triangles and issue networks make sense under the pluralistic approach to politics in the United States. Pluralism in America is known as the “compromise of interests, pressure groups, and sections” (Drucker, 1948, p. 412). Pluralism, and this struggle between interest groups, is a uniquely American process and serves as the basic foundation of
how our government operates. All elected officials, agencies, interest groups, institutions, and governmental systems are tied together under the structure of American pluralism. Pluralism can be seen as perfect competition between these groups, struggling and negotiating until some type of equilibrium is reached (Drucker, 1948). Pluralism and group theory go hand in hand, as groups attempt to influence elected officials in government to represent their interests in the form of policy changes and new legislation.

With group theory in practice, interest group pressures are common and are typically successful within United States policy. Looking at historical trends, our political system is highly reactive to group demands, as interest groups act as the messenger between “public factions and political decision-makers” (Grossman, 2006, p. 121). When attempting to break down the success of individual interest groups, many different characteristics can affect the outcomes on the political playing field including good leadership (Garceau, 1958), plentiful resources (Anyebe, 2018), a positive reputation with decision makers, and continued interaction with policy makers for extended periods of time (Smith, 1979).

Firstly, good leadership is an ultimate factor influencing the establishment and success of a group pushing for policy change. Strong leaders are necessary in order to bind the group and group’s interests together from the beginning. Without a leader, a group will most likely fail to gain the momentum needed to push political agendas and drive change. In order for groups to make actual political change, they must mobilize the group’s agenda toward a specific goal. Additionally, policy officials must be convinced to recognize and validate the group’s wants and needs to begin the formulation of legislation. If a strong leader is not present to promote a policy vision, a consensus is unlikely to be met, making the possible success of the group slim.
In addition to good leadership, having abundant resources to help promote the group’s interests simplifies the policy advocacy process. As Anyebe (2018) states, “politics involves a lot of expenditure,” and those groups which have the means to spend are able to push their demand to the top of the agenda (p. 11). Having wealth within the group provides an ample amount of assets to help share and negotiate the group’s interest at the national level.

Another important indicator of whether or not a group will be successful in influencing political change is related to the group's reputation with policy makers. If a group’s overall reputation is not positively accepted by legislators, it will prove difficult for their interests to become convincing to policy makers (Smith, 1979, p. 235). Simply, “the power of lobby is often complemented by the degree of visibility of the lobbyist. Persons that are well known and respected in society could easily influence decision makers to support their ideas in parliament” (Anyebe, 2018, p. 12). Group theory shows that interest groups need the support of important policy makers in order for legislation to pass successfully. In fact, “without their support, the group advocating change wins only 30 percent of the time” (Smith, 1979, p. 235). The more personal contact a particular group or its individual members have with legislators, the more likely their interests will be represented (Smith, 1979, p. 236). The better policy makers know individual representatives of an issue, the more likely they are to be persuaded to act in the group’s favor. Furthermore, the more frequent positive interactions that occur between interest groups and legislators will help contribute to building the positive rapport necessary for policy change. If groups are able to interact with legislators on a consistent basis, those policy makers are more likely to support their cause.
There are many limitations to group theory and its influence on policy change. One of the largest limitations of group theory is the size of the group. Large groups often have an easier time getting the attention of the people, the media, and therefore legislators. Large groups also usually have access to funding and resources. Therefore, they can pay professionals to lobby on behalf of their interests. On the other hand, if a group is too large, the agenda may not be as coherent, which can lead the group off track. As for smaller groups, their pursuit of change may not be as recognizable, but their interests are often more concentrated and easily understood by policy makers. Group theory shows how the success of an interest group is dependent on the relationship between many varying factors of the group, its members, its goals, and the surrounding environment.

Since the late 1800s and early 1900s, group theory has always been closely tied to agricultural interests on both the local and national levels. In the beginning, gaining the attention of policy actors in Washington, D.C. was difficult to accomplish by outsider groups such as farmers. Therefore, farm groups often resorted to violence - both in organized and unorganized manners - when their petitioning practices proved unsuccessful. For example, in the 1930s, a group called the Farm Holiday blocked highways into farmer’s markets, ruined farm products, and let cattle loose with the intention of reducing the available farm supply and therefore increasing prices (Ganzel, 2003). So, in place of violence, lobbying efforts increased as individuals and small groups began to use advocacy tactics to influence the party in power.

Over time, alliances and coalitions began to represent the interests of farmers on a larger scale such as the farmer-labor alliance known as the Farmers’ Union. In the 1900s, many of the rising organizations of the time sought to fight monopolization by corporate farms and
global trade. Pressure by these organizations in the early 1900s resulted in the formulation of the Farm Bureau, showing just how much group efforts by agri-business influenced the decisions of policy makers of the time (Mooney & Majka, 1995). These changes also resulted in the popularity of lobbying as a means of pushing the agriculture agenda on behalf of the farmers’ interests. However, this trend was confronted as economic decline ensued in the following years. Instead, farmers turned to protests, grassroots action, and holding tactics - usually including violence or force - in order to pursue policy change. These facts are especially relevant as the proportion of American farmers declined over the course of the 1900s.

Understanding the relationship between the American Agriculture Movement and group theory provides a foundation to develop a greater understanding of Tractorcade’s place within AAM’s overall attempt at influencing policy change. The farmers that founded, organized, and became members of AAM were not professional lobbyists, government agency employees, or committee members. Those who participated in the Tractorcade were everyday farmers, working to put food on the table and support themselves and their families. Despite whether or not the movement was successful in the long run, the mere ability of these farmers to come together and create a movement out of the most rural corners of this nation deserves to be recognized. These were not commercial factory farming executives. These farmers desperately needed change in order to keep their farms afloat - AAM’s story displays the original nature of group theory.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In William Gamson’s renowned *Strategy of Social Protest*, he defines a social protest group “as an excluded group seeking the mobilization of an immobilized constituency against an antagonist [lying] outside of its constituency” (Frey et al., 1992, p. 368). To take a deeper look into the effects of protests, this thesis will use the following framework in order to analyze the American Agriculture Movement’s Tractorcade demonstration in the winter of 1979. The four criteria which make up the framework include: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment, also known as WUNC.

Charles Tilly, American sociologist and political scientist, coined the term WUNC starting in 1994. WUNC is an acronym for four terms which Tilly believes can be used to determine the extent to which policy makers are likely to respond to a protest’s agenda. Wouters and Walgrave (2017) sought to test values of salience, position, and intended action by policy makers under the influence of a protest. Their study would test how the criteria within the WUNC framework affected each of the three variables in elected representatives.

Worthiness is related to the movement’s overall reputation and the actions of protestors themselves. Protestors who behave in a calm, peaceful manner are more likely to be respected by legislators, therefore are more likely to persuade opinions in their favor. To representatives, demonstrations which carry themselves in a professional manner are more likely to be “deserving” of legislators’ attention and action. Also under worthiness, it is the responsibility of the movement to prove to policy makers that the people they are representing on behalf of the protest deserve to be listened to and deserve to have their interests fought for. Worthiness should also inform policy makers of where the protestors are coming from and whose interests they are
representing. Wouters and Walgrave (2017) supported in their study that worthiness does have a significant effect on the opinions of policy makers, even despite the fact that representative’s opinions should be grounded in their party’s position. Specifically, protests that demonstrated worthiness fostered “sympathy and goodwill” within representatives (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 374).

Wouters and Walgrave (2017) touch on how Tilly states that, “movements [should] sacrifice the advantages of violent action and choose to behave non-violently to gain recognition as respectable players who should be listened to” (p. 367). Tilly’s stance on the success of nonviolent protests comes in contrast with the work done by Gamson’s social protest framework, which “emphasized the advantages of disruptive strategies” (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 367). Tilly’s framework shows that when violence takes place within social protests that are seeking policy change in their favor, it can often lead to “marginalization and even criminalization of protestors,” lessening the likelihood of representatives to respond to the demonstration’s wishes (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 367).

Unity can be defined as the extent to which the message is shared among protestors and movement participants. Wouters and Walgrave (2017) elaborate on Tilly’s interpretation of this characteristic by adding that this criteria can be conveyed through physical gestures including but not limited to “applauding, chanting, walking together” as well as uniform symbols, flags, colors (p. 367). It is obvious here that if a protest’s message is clear and concise, it is easier for representatives to understand, and therefore act on, the group’s wants. If a group’s message is difficult to interpret, it is likely that policy makers will not bother attempting to understand the changes the protest is seeking. Additionally, Wouters and Walgrave (2017) claim
that a unified message can also attest to the coherence of the group as a whole. This adds to politicians’ beliefs that the group is organized and concentrated; which can in turn vouch for the group's worthiness. Politicians often view highly organized groups as those which are easier to negotiate and make a deal with. Unity also proved to be an influential factor on the beliefs of representatives within the study, showing that there were negative attitudes associated with demonstrations that could not convey a clear, cohesive message (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 374).

The next piece of criteria within the WUNC framework is numbers. Simply, this component deals with the amount of participants in a protest group. Oftentimes, protest strength is inherently viewed by outsiders by the sheer number of people participating. Furthermore, the larger number of people a representative feels as though they are appealing to by supporting a protest, the more likely they are to take action on behalf of the group. Protests often only include a small portion of the people of which the group is representing; therefore, a large turnout shows the group as a whole is vast (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 368). Luckily, protest size is easy for representatives to notice and act upon. Unsurprisingly, high numbers of participants lead to effects on all three beliefs in the Wouters and Walgrave (2017) WUNC study (p. 374).

Finally, the last criteria of Tilly’s WUNC framework is commitment. Specifically, “committed protestors convince elected representatives that the activity is not simply a fad but that dissatisfaction is deeply rooted” (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 368). Committed protest participants will undoubtedly change their behavior in a way that is unsatisfactory to politicians if their demands are not met. This encourages policy makers to take action on the group’s behalf in order to avoid such consequences. Also, the more committed a protest is to their goals, the
more likely they are to take drastic measures in pursuit of their goals. Commitment can usually act as a parallel to how salient an issue is to the protesting group. However, protestors who may in fact be extremely committed to their cause may not have the ability to accurately convey their position to policy makers (p. 375). Therefore, it can be difficult for commitment in and of itself to affect representatives’ beliefs or attitudes despite the fact that it is important to the protest’s success as a whole. Commitment is also positively correlated to the extent of time a group continues to seek action by policy makers on behalf of their goals.

In general, Tilly’s WUNC framework contests that protests which can successfully and consistently demonstrate worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment, are more likely to succeed in gaining positive outcomes from policy makers. In the Wouters and Walgrave (2017) study, the research focused specifically on representatives’ opinions regarding the protest. Opinions are important when considering social movements because without elected representatives that hold positive opinions of a certain protest, it is virtually impossible for that group to make their desired changes on the political scale.

As far as the study done by Wouter and Walgrave (2017) on Tilly’s WUNC framework, the study was able to conclude that “the aggregate effect of all WUNC elements together is quite substantial” (p. 375). Therefore, a protest that is able to capitalize on all four of the WUNC factors, will become much more effective in swaying the opinions of policy makers in their favor. Due to the fact that support of policy makers often relies on the representative’s initial stance on the issue being protested, Wouters and Walgrave believe that protests acting on newer issues are more likely to positively persuade officials’ opinions. However, protests do stand as a
strong option when attempting to influence, persuade, or even change elected officials' predispositions.

Tilly believes “WUNC seems to mobilize the most basic democratic responsiveness among representatives” (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 376). It is important to look at how protests can influence a policy official's opinions. Opinions shape which initiatives a representative will support since “acting in line with what the public, or a specific segment of the public, wants is the most likely route to re-election (or so elected officials think)” (p. 367). On top of this, elected officials across the political spectrum and of all expertise levels were equally affected by the WUNC characteristics (p. 377).

The breakdown of the WUNC framework supports the fact that groups of people from weaker branches of society, with less access or funding for resources are more likely to rely on protest strategies in order to push their agendas (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 377). This makes sense because wealthy lobbyists or large interest organizations have direct and continuous access to legislators whenever they need. In the late 1970s, American farmers did not have direct access to reach policy makers in Washington, D.C., but they needed to have their voices heard in order to promote needed change in the agricultural sector.

Knowing elected officials would not listen to a small group of farmers asking for change, AAM used grassroots motivations and turned their movement into a nationally recognized protest, getting the attention of policy makers and the media alike. AAM needed a public demonstration in order to ensure their voices were being heard by leaders in Washington, D.C. As Wouters and Walgrave (2017) put it, “Protest can push representatives toward becoming
elite allies who, in turn, are a critical resource in the political arena” (p. 377). Using Tilly’s WUNC framework, this thesis will assess AAM’s Tractorcade protest in Washington, D.C.

A myriad of secondary data will be used for data collection in the process of evaluating the relationship between AAM, group theory, and policy change. The first tool that will be utilized is a literature review on existing scholarly articles. This literature will highlight the American Agriculture Movement, as well as agriculture policy before and after the Tractorcade. Then, archives of primary documents published during the time of Tractorcade will be analyzed. These archives will include newspaper articles - specifically from AAM’s periodical, American Agriculture News - as well as farmer’s voice recorded and video recorded accounts of the events.

The majority of the primary archives were gathered in 2012 by the Kinsley Library in Kinsley, Kansas. Joan Weaver interviewed, transcribed, and gathered documents, journal entries, and photographs from farmers out of Edwards County, Kansas who participated in the 1979 Tractorcade. The research and oral history was headed by Weaver, who granted me full usage permission. The Kansas Humanities Council 2012 Heritage Grant funded the “Tractorcade to D.C.” research project conducted by the Kinsley Library, which is now publicly accessible on the library’s website.

Weaver interviewed fourteen Tractorcade participants. Some traveled individually, while others traveled in pairs. Weaver guided the interview, starting by asking the interviewee to describe the state of their farm in the 1970s and how they got involved with AAM. Then, the discussion moved on to explaining the trip to Washington, D.C., events that took place while in Washington, D.C., what happened after the Tractorcade, and, finally, their attitudes regarding Tractorcade and AAM as a whole. Each interview lasts around one hour and is audio recorded,
fully transcribed, and accompanied by a short video covering a small portion of the interview; all together, creating a full oral history of each member’s personal Tractorcade experience. Thirteen out of the fourteen interviewees provided images, six provided additional documents, and one member, Beverly Anderson, provided scans of the diary she kept during the Tractorcade. The full project also includes exhibits, or brochures, covering different aspects of the Tractorcade such as AAM buttons, police interactions, lobbying, and a timeline of the Kansas cohort’s trip to Washington, D.C. All relevant documents, images, and newspaper articles will be accessible in the appendix.

These oral histories from AAM members who participated in the 1979 Tractorcade will provide context of the atmosphere and public opinion surrounding the demonstration from real-time perspectives. Using these oral histories allows for first-hand accounts of the movement and personal opinions concerning AAM’s influence on agriculture policy under the unique circumstances of the time. The research gathered from the oral histories will seek to provide a deeper understanding of Tractorcade’s place under each of the WUNC criteria.
Chapter 4: Findings

Starting as a grassroots movement out of Colorado, the American Agriculture Movement prioritizes the importance of each individual farmer and improving the state of a failing agriculture economy. Bud Bitner, George Bitner, Alvin Jenkins, Darrel Schroeder, Gene Schroeder, and Van Stafford spent countless hours in the late 1970s gathering, talking, and spreading the word about their new organization, the American Agriculture Movement (AAM). By 1977 and 1978, AAM had spread across the country, with local offices in various states, regions, and counties. Local leaders organized small rallies, parades, and regional conventions to spread the word about AAM’s mission of influencing agriculture policy to help family farmers.

American Agriculture News (AAN), a periodical produced out of Iredell, Texas and edited by Micki Nellis, sought to create a common voice for AAM and attempted to keep members informed, even those separated by thousands of miles. On February 28, 1978, a column printed in AAN from the AAM national headquarters aimed to reiterate the organization's mission to their members.

American Agriculture News (“From National Headquarters”, 1978, p. 3) listed the 5 demands they are seeking in the form of government policy.

1. 100% parity for all domestic and foreign used and, or, consumed agricultural products.

2. All agricultural products produced for national or international food reserve shall be contracted at 100% parity.
3. Creation of an entity of structure composed of agricultural producers to devise and approve policies that affect agriculture.

4. Imports of all agriculture products which are domestically produced must be stopped until 100 percent of parity is reached, thereafter imports must be limited to the amount that the American producers cannot supply.

5. All announcements pertaining to any agricultural producing cycle shall be made far enough in advance that the producer will have adequate time to make needed adjustments in his operation (p. 3) [see Appendix A2].

In order to ensure policy makers became aware of their demands, AAM planned on implementing a strike where all farmers would refuse to sell or produce any more agricultural products, along with refusing to buy any agricultural equipment or supplies. With a disastrous 1977 Farm Bill, in 1978 AAM was worried about how prices would be raised in the coming Farm Bill. This fear was only exasperated by the fact that President Carter and Secretary of Agriculture Robert Bergland did not prioritize the desires of farmers or the demands from AAM.

The American Agriculture Movement began as a reactionary measure to the 1973 Farm Bill which “created fencerow-to-fencerow production following a period of high farm prices,” so “as supply increased, demand decreased and prices dragged… this was exaggerated because inflation in the general economy was pushing up both annual costs of production and interest rates” (Brown, 1985, p. 229). Small farmers across the country were looking for these issues to be addressed year after year by the annual Farm Bill, but they were not.
Farmers could not wait any longer for changes in agriculture; their farms and livelihoods were on the line. Specifically, “the American farmer has been beset with factors that affect his operation over which he has no control: embargos, price controls, inflation, depressed prices, and unusual weather conditions. These combinations have eroded the farmers’ equity” (Thomas, 1978, p. 7) [See Appendix A3]. So, AAM members decided to take issues into their own hands and request changes first hand from policy makers. “Specifically, AAM demanded 100 percent parity on all farm products and immediate limitations on all meat and livestock imports. If federal action was not forthcoming on these items by spring planting time, AAM urged farmers to stay out of the fields” (Browne, 1983, p. 23). AAM sought to do their first large-scale planting strike in the spring of 1978.

Parity was the most important aspect of the movement to the farmers. However, the definition of parity was often misconstrued in the late 1970s, leaving AAM to further explain their wishes. In the February 28, 1978 issue of AAN, parity is defined as, “The quality or condition of being equal or equivalent; a like state or degree,” then further explaining it as, “When a company grants an increase in wages to cover the rise in cost of living, that worker has parity: When a labor union fights for an increase in wage and fringe benefits to bring earning power in line with the cost of living, the struggle is for parity” (Karner, 1978, p. 3) [See Appendix A2].

At the time of this issue's release, AAM leadership believed that their fight for parity at the national level brought negative attention to the organization since “misinformed stories say farmers are striking for guaranteed profits” (Karner, 1978, p. 3). However, this was not the intent of AAM’s quest for parity, as “all farmers want is parity for what is consumed and exported…”
Equality: they want to be equivalent with the rest of the economy. They believe what they have to sell should have equal buying power” (p. 3). Farmers wanted to make a living, be able to support themselves, and continue harvesting on the farms which had been in many families for generations. Without change at the national level, small family farms across the country were at risk of bankruptcy. Individual farmers needed the ability to gain attention from national leaders and federal policy makers immediately. AAM decided the most efficient way to make this happen would be to take their interests directly to Washington, D.C.; therefore, the American Agriculture Movement’s Tractorcade was born.

On February 5, 1979, around 8,000 tractors, farm vehicles, and trucks sped into the nation’s Capitol at a swift 15 miles per hour. Coming from all over the country, these farmers and their families came with one goal in mind: policy change. However, after the 1979 demonstration, the early to mid 1980s brought on some of the most intense hardships for farmers. As will be elaborated on in Chapter 5, interest rates boomed to as high as 21% with simultaneous record production numbers, exponentially decreasing the price of farm commodities, forcing farms across the country to stop production, file for bankruptcy, or sell their land all together. By 1984, farm debt in the United States had doubled from what it was in 1978, reaching an egregious $215 billion (“Taking”, 2016). So, what went wrong in 1979? How did thousands of farmers on Capitol Hill all pushing for positive policy change only lead to worsening conditions for farmers in the following years? Using the worthiness, unity, numbers, commitment criteria described by the WUNC framework, I will examine the policy protest that took place on the National Mall throughout February 1979.
The Lead Up

In the months prior to the Tractorcade in February 1979, local branches of AAM spent countless hours gathering smaller groups to rally, meeting with local policy makers, and spread the word about the organization's mission. Members of AAM desperately needed to prove their demands were necessary, important, and feasible. As Charles Tilly would put it, AAM needed to prove their worthiness to policy makers, as well as grab media attention in order to have their demands heard across the country.

A group of farmers out of Kansas began to spread the word about AAM in the fall of 1977. At that time, the gatherings consisted of small meetings among local farmers, mostly chatting about shared hardships and how to inflict change. In September of 1977, after hearing about a farm strike on the radio, Darrell Miller attended his first AAM meeting. Thinking back on the meeting Miller says, “that was about the dumbest thing I’d heard of for a while, I didn’t pay much attention to it, but as the weeks went by, there kept being more things in the paper about it.” Eventually, “the southwest part of Kansas really got involved in a hurry. This was strictly a word of mouth operation.” Miller remembers that by mid 1978, “the whole emphasis was on going to Washington, D.C. and putting together a major lobbying organization and trying to improve upon the Farm Bill that was already going to be in place” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012).

As the popularity of AAM continued to increase throughout the first few months of 1978, legislative leaders began attempting to combat negative claims made by the movement and smooth tensions concerning upcoming legislation. In February 1978, Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland addressed farmers who questioned him regarding the impact of 100% parity on
agriculture products. According to AAN, Bergland mistakenly said that parity “would cause severe recession or inflation and be bad for the big banks,” more specifically, the Manhattan Bank (“Bergland”, 1978, p. 1) [See Appendix A1]. Bergland’s response only certified to members of AAM that policy leaders were more concerned with elitist opinions and personal interests over the degrading financial conditions for farmers.

National leaders continued to deflect the wishes of AAM on February 24, 1978, when Bud Bitner, representing AAM, met with Farm Bureau President, Allan Grant. In the meeting, Grant claimed “if the government got totally involved in farming the way American Agriculture suggests, that everyone would lose their farms,” as well as saying, “that raising the price would hurt our export trade.” Bitner countered Grant’s argument by pointing out “that wheat prices paid to the American farmer are below his cost of production, causing the farmer to have to use up part of his equity in his farm each year he produced” (“Bergland”, 1978, p. 1). Meeting after meeting demonstrated the failure by local leaders to truly take farmers’ interests into consideration. By early 1978, it became evident to AAM leaders that the organization would need to take drastic measures to make sure their voices would be heard by legislators.

By February 1978, the numbers in membership and participation in AAM were steadily on the rise. AAN published that “the American Agriculture Movement has done more to focus attention on the problems of American agriculture than all the other agriculture movements in the past one hundred years. It has captured the attention of the American people from coast to coast and border to border” (Thomas, 1978, p. 3) [See Appendix A3]. However, AAM leadership began to realize that for many of the farmers involved, their small farms could not afford to risk
to halt production, as the movement was asking. Therefore, throughout 1978, AAM began to shift their attention from encouraging a strike to a more plausible tactic.

Leadership within AAM had been making numerous trips to Washington, D.C. in order to negotiate with members of Congress, share their concerns, and offer policy alternatives, as well as push AAM’s overall message to legislators. On top of this, larger groups of farmers associated with AAM had made multiple trips to D.C. to rally and gather in support of 100 percent parity for farmers. Jefferis Mead and his wife, Zelma - farmers from Kansas - took on a large responsibility of the AAM strike office in Edwards County throughout 1978. Mead and other members of AAM from Edwards County participated in local Tractorcades, such as the one which took place on the way to Macksville, Kansas, then proceeded to an AAM rally in Pratt, Kansas. Kansas farmers also traveled multiple times to offices in Lewis, Kansas throughout January and February 1978 (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012). In the beginning of March, Mead flew to Washington, D.C. to help with the Flexible Parity Bill introduced by Kansas Senator Bob Dole, which passed in the Senate Agriculture Committee on March 15, 1978 with a vote of 16-1. This bill would “provide a guaranteed established flexible price in the Farm Bill” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012).

In the end, the bill could not get past the House - yet another dead end. All of these efforts by local offices still proved to be unsuccessful in moving any meaningful legislation by the fall of 1978. AAM needed to make a change in their lobbying efforts. They needed to show national political leadership they were serious about making a change - that they would take serious measures to ensure their demands would be heard.
On March 28, 1978, AAN published a memo from National Headquarters, ending with this call to action: “The farmers have finally found a voice - their own. No longer depending on others to present their case to Congress, they have gone to Washington under the banner of American Agriculture, and, as individual producers, are being listened to. They have destroyed the myth that farmers cannot unite, and with the strength that has made them the pillars of a free nation, they will succeed in preserving the family farm system in America” (Thomas, 1978, p. 3) [See Appendix A3]. As 1978 edged on, AAM began a word of mouth operation to recruit farmers to pack their tractors, trucks, trailers and make the trek to Washington, D.C. in the dead of winter.

Mr. and Mrs. Mead continued to work intently with the Tractorcade local office in Kansas throughout the year of 1978 to gather support for the trip. The family began preparing their tractors for their travel to D.C. on December 28, 1978. With the help of Marjorie Scheufler and Darrel Miller, Mrs. Mead produced a letter requesting participation, support, and donations for the demonstration, sent out on January 2, 1979 [See Appendix A8].

The Trip

The first tractors left for Washington, D.C. on January 15, 1979 from Texas and Colorado. As AAN published on January 23, 1979, “tractor lights winked, engines roared, and the cold night air was filled with the sights, sounds and smells of the beginning of the 1979 tractorcade to Washington” (“And They’re Off?”, 1979, p. 1) [See Appendix A5.1-A5.2]. The group of farmers from Kansas took their tractors and vehicles and gathered in Topeka on January 18, 1979, then headed from there to Washington, D.C. Jean Titus and her husband, Jim Titus, were one of the many couples making the trip to D.C. from Kansas. Jean made sure to mention that “once you joined the Tractorcade, you didn’t stop or get off or take off to the side or
anything. You stayed in line and it went like that clear up there to D.C.,” (*Tractorcade Interviewees*, 2012). As more tractors joined the movement along the road, they just filed in behind, never splitting apart or breaking the line.

Jack Wolfe, one farmer with the Kansas cohort, had an unfortunate accident with this tractor, causing him to turn around on the first day of the trip. Although he was able to eventually meet the group in D.C., he felt so passionate about the Tractorcade that when he got in a wreck with his trailer, he was overcome with emotions. Lester Derley remembers that “he got in that front seat, and he just cried. He wanted to be on that Tractorcade so bad.” Wolfe had spent weeks preparing to travel to D.C., and he wanted his tractor to be a part of the movement.

Although the journey from Kansas was long, and sometimes dangerous, the notion of using tractors as the mode of transportation was an integral part of the Tractorcade itself. Mead says choosing to drive tractors to Washington, D.C. was a very intentional move on the part of AAM. They knew driving them so slowly on the interstate would cause back up and irritation - getting people’s attention. Zelma Mead described how “when we was going down the highway, cars on the side would stop and watch all the tractors go by. They had read about us and heard about it in the news, and they wanted to see what this was” (*Tractorcade Interviewees*, 2012).

As best as Darrel Miller can remember, five or six hundred tractors and trailers left Topeka, Kansas, heading toward Washington, D.C. The tractors covered 100 miles a day, sometimes even more, staying in the furthest right-hand lane. Once the Kansas group arrived at the Missouri border, the governor stopped them from taking Highway I-70, turning the tractors off-track down Highway 50. During the trip down Highway 50, Miller’s group received copious amounts of support from the locals. Miller remembers “they were letting kids out of school,
people were standing on overpasses, kids were waving flags… it was just an awesome sight” (“Tractorcade Interviewees”, 2012).

All together, Miller describes three separate routes, each making their way to Washington. A southern group from Texas, who traveled across to Atlanta, then up to D.C. Miller’s group out of Kansas and Colorado. Finally, a northern group composed of farmers from South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska. Marjorie Scheufler and her husband also made the trip to D.C. Marjorie distinctly remembers the difficult elements along the trip, mentioning how their group from Kansas, detoured through Missouri, had the longest trip as well as the worst weather. They were late to the gathering point, in Fredericksburg, by two days.

Arriving at the Capitol

Eventually though, the Kansas group made it. Lester Derley has vivid memories of the first few days arriving in Maryland and Washington, D.C. Many of the farmers from Kansas camped just outside of D.C. on the night before the Tractorcade officially moved into the Capitol. Some stayed at the Cherry Hill Camp site and others stayed at a parking site on Frostburg State College campus. Derley explains that on the first day of trying to move onto the National Mall, his group of tractors were stopped at a fork in the road. “We were there all that afternoon and night trying to negotiate. The police wouldn’t let us leave that area where we were on the street” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012). This detour was taking place while a majority of tractors from other routes had already made it into the National Mall.

Beverely Snyder, from Kansas, was the only woman who drove her tractor all the way to D.C. without any help from a man; She kept a detailed journal of her experiences during the Tractorcade [See Appendix A9]. Synder’s convoy moved into D.C. on Monday, February 5th.
The convoy moved at a “snail’s pace” in order to keep the group together as a unit. On the day of arrival, one farmer from Snyder’s group was arrested by law enforcement due to a misunderstanding with an officer. By the afternoon of February 5th, tractors were everywhere, filling downtown.

As the thousands of tractors moved into the Capitol, local law enforcement took drastic measures to prevent disruption, which was ultimately inevitable. Law enforcement ushered the tractors onto the National Mall, where they would quickly become surrounded.

Recounting his experience in 1979, Miller (“Tractorcade Interviewees”, 2012) stated:

I couldn’t really put a handle on how many [tractors] there were, but it was big… well, I mean, it stretched basically from the reflecting pool at the foot of the Capitol clear down to 14th Street… the idea was to have this big rally up on the Capitol steps… so everyone parked their stuff on the inside of the Mall. The Metropolitan Police and the D.C. Capitol police started bringing in every trash truck and every piece of equipment they could find and started parking it bumper to bumper. They basically impounded everybody that was in there.

Miller also mentioned that some tractors were able to park in front of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) building. Eventually, a rally was able to take place on the Capitol steps around 2 o’clock on February 5th. On the 6th, Snyder made a trip to the Skyline Inn office, where AAM national headquarters worked out of during the stay in D.C. There were farmers manning phones, meeting each other, and reflecting on the events of the previous day.
During the first few days on Capitol Hill, farmers encountered violence with law enforcement, and vise versa. Police officers equipped themselves with riot gear, and a select few farmers took extreme measures during their entry into the city. Jean Titus remembers that a couple of farmers brought a thresher, which is a cotton picking machine, with a bale of cotton, and lit the vehicle on fire. Jean believes they used this as a tactic to get attention and bring awareness to AAM’s cause, albeit an unnecessary one. Snyder documents hearing true reports of tear gas being used by law enforcement. A farmer from Missouri used the blade on his tractor to move three police cars and some motorcycles, causing the police to crack the tractor’s window and drag the man out.

Some farmers stayed for a few days, others for weeks. Tensions were high at the beginning, with many locals ignorant of AAM’s purpose disrupting everyday life on Capitol Hill. Marjorie Scheufler remembers one instance while lobbying in D.C., “We were walking down the street, and of course the boys had their AAM hats on. Some city guy said some snide remark about farmers. And you know how big Alvin is, Alvin turned around and just decked that guy! Smacked him and knocked him down” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012). However, as the days went on, the farmers began forming connections with both locals and police officers. Miller said many of the farmers became friends with local law enforcement and highway patrolmen over the course of the trip to Washington, D.C. Miller even mentioned, “it was amazing how so many of these kids had grown up on a farm and couldn’t stay there because there wasn’t nothing to take over for the family.” Additionally, while AAM was in Washington, D.C., over 20 inches of snow disabled the city on February 18, 1979. “All of the sudden [the farmers] went from being the enemy to being their friends because nobody could do anything and farmers were hauling
doctors and nurses to hospitals with tractors. They even took these big ones with the blades out to the national airport and had them cleaning off runways” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012). Miller mentioned how these few days of helping people “redeemed” the farmers’ reputation with the locals. After this, many families would stop by the National Mall, find a farmer or two, and invite them over to their home for a Sunday dinner. Furthermore, at the time of the Tractorcade, the Red Cross “ran dangerously low on blood supplies” due to the bad weather; farmers even helped the Red Cross by donating blood” (“Farmers”, 1979, p. 1) [See Appendix A6]. Once the locals realized the farmer’s movement was founded on good intentions, many were genuinely interested to learn more about AAM, their demonstrations, and their overall goals.

As the farmers got settled on the National Mall, they even used their time to sightsee and act as tourists around the Capitol. Jean Titus mentioned since the tractors were trapped within the National Mall, they couldn’t get out and no one else could get in. The farmers practically had free run of the government buildings within the mall, such as the Smithsonian and other museums.

Most importantly, AAM made quick use of their time in the Capitol, attending meetings and lobbying for legislation. By Wednesday, February 7, 1979, many farmers were meeting with members of Congress, Senators and USDA representatives. In her journal, Snyder mentioned that overall spirits were high and attitudes were positive. Marjorie and Ed Scheufler stayed in D.C. for three weeks. Marjorie stated that “we were down on the Hill every day… It was important that there were numbers of us. We didn’t care who the Congressman was, if we could go in and lay a piece of literature on their desk and say that we were there. We wanted them to know the presence of the farmers in Washington D.C.,” Jeff Mead was able to meet with
Senator Bob Dole in his office during the Tractorcade. Lester Derley joined a group who sat in the visitor’s balcony in the House of Representatives, as well as visiting numerous Senatorial offices. Derley made sure to mention that he did not do any of the talking, instead left that up to the AAM members who took on the bulk of lobbying responsibilities. Jack Wolfe, another farmer from Kansas, attended one meeting with the Secretary of Agriculture, of which he remembers that “all us old Tractorcade boys were there. There was standing room only” (*Tractorcade Interviewees*, 2012).

Also according to Snyder’s journal, on February 6, 1979, Kansas Senator Nancy Kassebaum held a conference in the Dirksen Building with farmers who filled the entire room, of course with standing room only. “Kassebaum began by explaining she would not co-sponsor legislation to increase the loan rate to 90% of parity. Her reason was that this legislation would never pass, so it would be dishonest to co-sponsor it, but she would vote for it if it came up for a vote.” Miller said that of course, during the Tractorcade, legislation was constantly being introduced in hearings and committees, with farmers providing testimony. Unfortunately, giving the perspective of the farmer did not seem to be enough. “We were going in there and testifying… we had some sharp guys. We put together a lot of good stuff, but we found out real quick that it went in one ear and out the other one” (*Tractorcade Interviewees*, 2012).

As the weeks passed, law enforcement was ready to move the tractors out of the National Mall one way or another. Miller said “by this time, the guys had been up there a long time… that was their program. ‘I want to drive. I want to go up there. I want to do my thing, but when I get there, I don’t know what to do.’ They weren’t big on going out and talking and lobbying, and that’s what they wanted everyone doing, but a lot of them weren’t cut out for that,
you know. So, they were ready to go home anyway” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012). farmers left D.C. after three to four days, many stayed for two to three weeks, and the final tractors left the National Mall by June 1979.

The Aftermath

After returning home from D.C., the group from Kansas reflected on their journey with the Tractorcade. Overall, most of the families were proud of their efforts with AAM and had a positive outlook on the time spent in D.C., but almost everyone was aware their efforts had little effect on legislation surrounding their goals. Both Jeff and Zelma Mead said the demonstration was successful in bringing attention to their cause, even though there were not tangible results. Jeff saying “I would like to think that surely it did some good,” and Zelma following up with, “I think it brought attention to the problem more.” Zelma realized that lobbying for policy was more complex than just asking for change, concerning members of Congress, stating: “You know, their hands were probably just as tied as they are now,” Jeff followed up saying, “But, I’m glad we worked at it,” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012).

Lester Derley and his wife Beverly did not stay active with AAM after the Tractorcade, Lester even stated that “American Ag, as far as I can remember, kind of dissolved after a few years.” On top of this, the Derleys eventually had to sell their farm in 1986 and instead merge business with a neighbor. Derley remembers that interest rates on loans for irrigation were between 18 and 21 percent, saying “you couldn’t keep things going with that. We got overextended.” Derley remembers that a lot of small farms went out of business due to the circumstances in the 1980s when small farmers were sunk by high interest rates and low prices.
Jack Wolfe, who wrecked his tractor at the very beginning of the trip, was not convinced that the Tractorcade was a complete success - in the sense of changing prices and policy for farmers. He stated that it was more of “an educational thing. We got to know our Congressmen and Senators and so on, but I don’t suppose in dollars and cents it done any good.” However, on the positive side, Wolfe mentioned how AAM caused him to pay attention to the policy and economics surrounding his farming operation for the first time, saying, “I didn’t take no interest in politics until this came along” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012).

Marjorie Scheufler and her husband Ed were very invested in AAM and the Tractorcade in 1979. Marjorie says, “It was something I really, really believed in… I’m not sure how much good we did in changing any laws, but I think we changed perceptions. We had speakers that were so articulate, men that wrote books afterwards. Educated men.” Marjorie was also proud of WIFE, Women Interested in Farm Economics, an organization born out of AAM support. Marjorie explains how WIFE was very active throughout Kansas, and even thinks there is still a convention held by the organization today [See Appendix A10].

Concerning the long-term effects of AAM, Majorie believes that “people are more aware of agriculture. They don’t think their milk comes from the grocery store so much anymore. There was a lot of education going on for the public. The one thing we got a lot of local publicity when we came into a town, but nationally, we became very disenchanted because nationally, the news was managed. There was no national news that said there were 8,000 farm tractors coming into Washington D.C.” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012). Along the trip to D.C., Tractorcade participants would stop to pick up local newspapers hoping to see word of their demonstration.
traveling across the country. Most of the time there was nothing, which was surprising and somewhat off-putting to AAM members.

On top of this, Marjorie remembers how in the 1980s many farms no longer had the means to support entire families. Men had to go find a job at night, and women had to go to town and find jobs to help pay the bills. In 1984 and 1985, farm conditions were so devastating that Marjorie and Ed were preparing to lose their farm. “Ed and I took advantage of going in for mental health evaluations and what that could do to help us to figure out what we were going to do to live” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012). Family farms throughout the nation were not prepared for conditions to worsen in the 1980s, especially after all of the work AAM put in to influence policy and legislation in the late 1970s.

Just as the other families, the Tituses did not stay active with AAM after the Tractorcade. Jean does not remember Kansas farmers remaining active with AAM in general. Likewise, Jean does not believe the demonstrations made an impact on parity or farm prices, saying, “it might have brought a few people like Senators and the like’s attention to it, but they weren’t interested particularly in whether the farmer made a living or not.” Speaking on behalf of her late husband, Jean knows Jim was proud they made the trip to D.C. “He thought it would make an improvement. I’ve no doubt it helped, but we didn’t get parity. But that was kind of asking for quite a bit, I guess.” In hindsight, many of the Tractorcade participants realized asking for 100 parity might have been too far of a stretch, but they wished more could have been done to help farmers.

Jean also touched on the attitudes regarding the Tractorcade, both immediately afterwards and even today. She believes there was widespread discouragement after the
Tractorcade took place. Farmers were disappointed because, “they thought it would really help, and when we went, you couldn’t find a paper along the way very often that there would be an article in there about what was going on. Today, if you say something about the Tractorcade or AAM, they don’t know what you’re even talking about.” (Tractorcade Interviewees, 2012). Jean finds it astounding that a fleet of 8,000 tractors and thousands more farmers, stationed at the nation’s Capitol for weeks, is not more commonplace knowledge as a social movement. The lack of new legislation which met AAM’s stipulations could be part of the reason for the 1979 Tractorcade being lost in agriculture policy and economic history.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Concluding AAM and their utilization of Tractorcade as a failure due to organizational or administrative issues would not give the event enough credit for its success as a demonstration of farmer’s hardships. AAM was able to successfully gather in order to voice the farmer’s opinions, but was unable to comprehensively create a social movement that forced new policy introduction and implementation. Revisiting Charles Tilly’s social movement framework, the four WUNC components - worthiness, unity, numbers, commitment - as well as using group theory outlook, it is possible to expose gaps in AAM’s overall execution before, during, and after the Tractorcade. These perspectives will provide a deeper understanding as to why the Tractorcade was unable to reach its full potential as a social movement ending with policy change. This chapter will also touch on the overall outcomes of the Tractorcade as well as take a look at the economic conditions faced by farmers at the onset of the 1980s.

Tractorcade as WUNC Criteria

WORTHINESS

As farmers with no political, lobbying, or legislative backgrounds, gathering from all ends of the country, confirming worthiness proved to be a tall hurdle for AAM to overcome. As described in Chapter 3, worthiness in terms of Charles Tilly’s WUNC framework, can be defined as the actions and demeanor of the protesters. Additionally, “by behaving in a worthy fashion, protesters signal to politicians that they are good citizens and that the protest’s claim is supported by a segment of the public that deserves to get what it wants because it behaves in an appropriate manner” (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 367). Demonstrating peaceful behavior in order to gain respect from legislators was a difficult task to accomplish for select members of AAM, especially
during the first days arriving in Washington, D.C. As mentioned, some farmers used desperate tactics upon their entry into the Capitol. These tactics caused damage to vehicles and Capitol grounds, sometimes with violence ensuing. Immediately, the reputation of AAM and their mission with the Tractorcade was tainted by unnecessary aggression.

Hostility between the farmers and locals only involved a small proportion of participants and almost completely faded as AAM’s stay elongated. However, a peaceful entry into downtown would have expanded the chances of policy makers taking the demands of AAM more seriously. Instead, AAM leaders had to spend their first encounters with legislators confirming the seriousness of their mission and demands. Moreover, much of AAM’s dissatisfaction relied on the assumption that policy makers and big business were to blame for the current conditions. Specifically, “‘corporates’ increasingly were portrayed as having ruined that economy through their monopolistic handling of agricultural products” (Dinse & Browne, 1985, p. 232). This attitude against leaders created a rift in the relationships between many farmers and policy makers as they attempted to work together.

For many members of Congress, farmers were not the typical demographic to show up in Washington, D.C. and negotiate for themselves. Only a small percentage of the farmers in Washington, D.C. were able to speak on behalf of the group, properly articulating their demands to legislators. This was an impediment to AAM’s lobbying efforts since groups are more likely to “succeed in pushing its agenda through the parliament when it has strong bargaining skills… Persons that are well known and respected in society could easily influence decision makers to support their ideas in parliament” (Anyebe, 2018, p. 12). The compounding effect of violence at the onset of the demonstration along with AAM’s use of amateur negotiators did not instill an
atmosphere of trust or professionalism between AAM and policy makers, hindering the policy making process from day one.

Not only did the majority of AAM members refrain from speaking up in meetings and hearings, many policy makers were unsure of how to receive the demands of AAM. This is especially true of members of Congress representing states or districts less involved in the agriculture sector. These members were not as aware of the conditions farmers were protesting against and were unfamiliar with 100% parity on farm commodities; therefore, they were less inclined to take the demands of AAM seriously. Even Kansas Senator Bob Dole, who seemed to be on the side of the farmers from the very beginning by traveling to Kansas to participate in local tractorcades and agreeing to speak with farmers at various local hearings, eventually took a more elitist perspective on the Tractorcade. According to Marjorie Scheufler, at one gathering of midwest farmers in Topeka, Kansas, Senator Dole told the farmers to go home and let him handle the legislation (“Tractorcade Interviewees”, 2012). Senator Dole no longer believed that AAM members were equipped with the tools necessary to lobby for themselves; that is when many Kansas farmers stopped voting for him.

Another factor that worked against the farmer’s worthiness was their goals. AAM specifically wanted “100% parity for all domestic and foreign used and, or, consumed agricultural products.” To AAM, this seemed like a reasonable demand, but elected representatives were aware that such legislation would never pass in Congress. For most members of Congress, their main concern is supporting their constituency, who mostly acts as consumers. Accomplishing 100% parity on farm commodities for farmers would inevitably drive up the costs of goods for consumers, angering constituents. Not to mention, increasing the cost of
farm commodities would ultimately hurt the number of goods being exported from the US - a trade market which was booming during the 1970s. This made it extremely difficult for legislators to sponsor a parity bill, which would possibly risk their legislative reputation. One-hundred percent parity was a non-negotiable and was the centerpiece of AAM and Tractorcade, so they lobbied for parity as an all-or-nothing alternative. This likely made it troublesome for policy makers to concoct a bill that both satisfied AAM’s demands and would feasibly pass in the House and Senate. This gridlock on policy and the innocent ignorance of some members made AAM’s mission difficult for legislators to denote AAM as worthy of their attention, let alone outright support.

UNITY

Gathering as one was never an issue for AAM during the Tractorcade. Unity was always at the forefront of their operation, and leadership knew it was the only way they would be able to invoke change. AAM understood that if all of their members could not stand together as one, they would not be able to persuade legislators to stand up for their case. Throughout 1978, organization leaders pleaded for their members to come together in order to promote the demands of AAM. In the February 28, 1978 issue of AAN, a message on a potential strike from national headquarters read: “We need commitments at home! Now is not the time to decide whether or not to plant on the basis of what your neighbor plans to do. Now is the time to stand UNITED… Producers united together will have to find a solution and carry out its implementation” (Thomas, 1978, p. 3) [See Appendix A3]. It only took a few more months after this issue was printed for AAM to realize the best chance in being heard would be to unite and travel to Washington, D.C. together.
In order to ensure that each subset of tractors, coming from different regions of the country would arrive in Washington D.C. at the same time, AAM leadership used a map with toothpicks, measured to scale of 100 miles on the map, and did the math to see when each caravan should leave their departure point. This ensured all the tractors would roll into Washington D.C. at relatively the same time. Moreover, even as the farmers moved into the city, they made sure to stay together as groups, being careful not to become separated by traffic stops, law enforcement, or civilian vehicles. Thousands of tractors lined the city, and this spectacle made a statement: Everyone was aware AAM had arrived and wanted to know why the farmers had come to Washington, D.C.

Many of the tactics AAM used to prove their unity to policy makers were visual. The most important visual tool used was their tractors, as well as other farm vehicles and machinery. Using the tractors as the mode of transportation immediately sent a message to legislators and the public that farmers had come together from various states, and were seeking the same goals. Another visual tactic AAM used was plastering their name and message on members and vehicles. Many members took the liberty to attach signs and slogans to their tractors for the trip to D.C. Additionally, once the farmers arrived at the Capitol, they made sure to come dressed in their typical attire, such as overalls, along with their AAM hats as they roamed the National Mall and attended meetings with members of Congress. Even leadership encouraged farmers to use their AAM hats as a persuasion, or possibly intimidation, technique, saying, “We have to tell [we’ve arrived] by our presence - wearing strike caps” (Nellis, 1978, p. 1) [See Appendix A4]. Due to this, no one in D.C. had to second guess which organization individuals belonged to or which message they were promoting.
Most importantly, AAM’s overall goal was extremely concise and unified from the very beginning: they wanted 100% parity. Everyone who was a member of AAM or participated in the Tractorcade knew that 100% parity was the movement’s main goal. They plastered “100% Parity for Farmers!” all over their tractors, put it on buttons, and spread the phrase through word of mouth. The idea of 100% parity for farmers and the American Agriculture Movement as a whole undoubtedly went hand in hand, especially during their stay in Washington, D.C.

NUMBERS

The large number of farmers participating in the Tractorcade is one of the main reasons AAM and Tractorcade itself was able to gain so much attention as they arrived simultaneously in Washington, D.C. Having vast engagement in the form of participants - in this case, tractors and farmers - allows for policy makers to become instantly aware of AAM upon their arrival. The Tractorcade was composed of over 8,000 tractors from all over the country. AAM’s presence in Washington, D.C. could not be ignored by locals, law enforcement, or elected officials. Without the extent of participation by AAM members in the Tractorcade, the presence of AAM participants in D.C. would not have been as important or influential to policy makers at the time.

Additionally, since there were so many farmers in town to spread the word about “100% parity” and AAM’s demands, they were able to have face-to-face interactions with members of Congress in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, along with leaders on government agencies, committees, and other agriculture related organizations. The scope of AAM’s presence while their members were in D.C. is what put them on the policy map.

Prior to shifting attention to the Tractorcade demonstration, AAM was focused on implementing a great farm strike. For this option to be carried out, they needed to access local
strike offices in farm communities all over the United States. By 1978, AAM had spread to 40 different states with upwards of 1,100 local offices. Once AAM started planning for a nationwide tractorcade, these “strike offices” focused their attention on gathering participants for the tractorcade, collecting money, and preparing for the trip. Eventually, the numerous strike offices became AAM’s implementation tool to continue spreading the word about the organization’s mission to help improve the economic conditions for farmers.

COMMITMENT

The issue AAM faced with this component of the social movement framework was the long-term commitment to the cause. Unfortunately, long-term commitment is exactly what AAM needed for any true change to occur. The commitment specifically to the Tractorcade by participants was intense and steadfast. They traveled cross-country in order to rally despite the long distance, bad weather conditions, traffic obstacles, and money constraints. Members were intently determined to have their voices heard by policy makers, up-close and in person.

On the other hand, for the large demands AAM was asking for, a couple-week lobbying stint in D.C. was not enough time to follow through with implementation of their goals through legislation. Although many groups of farmers stayed for two to three weeks, many farmers began heading home starting on February 8, 1979, just three days after arriving. As many of the Kansas farmers were able to attest to, after individuals began to arrive home after the Tractorcade, their involvement with AAM dwindled shortly thereafter. Most of the Kansas farmers never attended AAM meetings or gatherings ever again.

Most farmers do not have significant disposable income or free time to dedicate themselves to an uprising with consistent lobbying, especially during the financial conditions of
the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the farming environment, a quick fix is better than a long term approach. Specifically, “farmers can be organized around a plan or idea, but their continued commitment is unlikely” (Browne, 1985, p. 231). In the case of AAM, the lofty goals of the movement required long-term, intensive commitment to the cause by its members. The drastic drop-off of participation post-Tractorcade made it extremely difficult for AAM to maintain their credibility with national agriculture and legislative leaders.

As member participation continued to decrease throughout 1979, AAM could no longer focus on pushing for legislative changes, as they needed to turn their attention toward keeping the American Agriculture Movement alive. Woefully, by June 1979, AAM “estimated that between 60 and 90 percent of their state local offices were totally inactive” (Browne, 1985, p. 277). On the other hand, one positive that came out of the demonstration was the creation of a single AAM office with one paid lobbyist to take over the work in Washington, D.C. Although there was a loose power structure, they elected Marvin Meek from Texas as the National Chair in 1979 (Browne, 1985, p. 228). The organization as a whole attempted to stay active throughout 1980 by planning smaller demonstrations and continued issuing of American Agricultural News. However, their motives were never recaptured by public representatives or new legislative initiatives. Failure of long-term commitment by members of AAM, even those who were fiercely involved during the Tractorcade, led to the eventual demise of AAM as a comprehensive organization at the beginning of the 1980s.

**Group Theory and Tractorcade**

Taking a look back at Chapter 2, group theory can explain the shortcomings of AAM and their usage of Tractorcade to influence policy change. It is well known that, according to group
theory, the strength of the relationship between interest groups - such as the American Agriculture Movement - and policy makers is what determines the extent of influence said group will have on policy outcomes. As stated on page 3, interest groups are able to gain more leverage on their agenda if the group works to push their interests for an extended period of time. AAM most vigorously pushed their agenda through Tractorcade only in the first weeks, as many farmers and their accompanying vehicles departed the National Mall after just three days.

Although many of the farmers had accounts of building relationships with D.C. locals and law enforcement officers, many of the farmers participating in the Tractorcade were unable to truly foster meaningful relationships with politicians. Those important policy makers were busy holding hearings and committee meetings to sort out the chaos caused by the demonstration, not out shaking hands or holding conversations with the average farmer on the National Mall. The majority of the Tractorcade participants did not feel knowledgeable enough to speak on behalf of the movement to various policy makers, instead just contributed by showing up to meetings and adding to the number of farmers present.

Group theory says extensive interaction with the iron triangle - a network including interest groups, bureaucratic agencies, and congressional committees - is vital to legislative success on the part of the interest group. During their time in D.C., AAM had brief correspondence with those involved in the agriculture iron triangle, including the Senate Committee on Agriculture, leaders within the USDA, and United States Secretary of Agriculture, Bob Bergland. AAM members were able to fill rooms and make their presence known to policy makers, but the majority of farmers lacked meaningful exchanges that would put further emphasis on the policy changes they wanted. As with the commitment criteria under Tilly’s
WUNC framework, long term commitment is essential for strengthening the iron triangle. As members of AAM left D.C. and went back to their normal lives as farmers, AAM subsided as a strong interest group, dismantling the possibility of forming a strong iron triangle. Due to the lack of lobbying and legislative experience on AAM’s end, they desperately needed knowledge and full support from agricultural agencies and committees; this support they ultimately failed to receive.

Another major factor that hindered the success of AAM was elite theory taking precedence over group theory. In this case, elite theory can be defined as the argument that “U.S. policy making is dominated by individuals who have substantial economic resources,” as well as those with “social status or institutional position—such as the occupancy of key managerial roles in corporations, or top-level positions in political parties, in the executive, legislative, or judicial branches of government, or in the highest ranks of the military” (Gilen & Page, 2014, p. 566). During the time of AAM, the uprising of large-scale agriculture and factory farming was beginning to undermine the work of small farmers, pushing them out of business. These large corporations have copious amounts of economic power, as well as the support of leaders within government institutions who support farm corporations as a tool for cheaper, more efficient production.

Moreover, these corporations have strong ties to policy makers; therefore, they would have substantial pull on the types of legislation introduced in Congress. Elite theory also suggests that there is a strong “unity through common backgrounds,” (Gilen & Page, 2014, p. 566). Historically, policy makers favor the demands of *economic* elites - those who have strong holdings in the market - over small business owners and the consumer. This further explains why
leaders in government are more apt to listen to professional lobbyists and corporation leaders over the demands of a common farmer, like those who participated in the Tractorcade.

Elite theory even took hold within the AAM organization itself. One of AAM’s main talking points was that their organization consists completely of everyday farmers. However, as AAM grew, certain farmers inevitably rose up the ranks, acquiring leadership positions. These so-called ‘elites’ within the organization had the most leverage, as they were the members talking directly to policy makers and spending the most time in Washington, D.C. Even though nationwide participation drastically declined following the Tractorcade, an AAM lobbying office was established in D.C. and the organization’s leaders were able to continue lobbying on the Hill, attend hearings, and talk with legislators, while the rest of the members had to return home and do all they could to keep their farms in business (Dinse & Brown, 1985, p. 227). This separation between members created a disconnect across the organization, contributing to decreasing membership rates.

Breaking the 1979 Tractorcade down by the social movement framework’s criteria and aspects of group theory lets us understand the demonstration’s shortcomings; shortcomings that ultimately caused AAM to fall short of their policy goals. The American Agriculture Movement was never able to bring ‘100% parity for farmers’ to fruition. Instead, Tractorcade participants dispersed from the National Mall and put their tractors back to work on small family farms across the country. After traveling for thousands of miles and having their voices heard by top policy makers, the last thing AAM expected was for conditions to worsen after the Tractorcade. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened. The beginning of the 1980’s brought the onset of
arguably the worst agricultural economic conditions farmers would have to face for decades, only further damaging any lasting impression left on policy makers by AAM.

Policy Outcomes

Despite the struggles faced by workers during the Great Depression, the 1980s, specifically 1981 through 1986, led to the worst financial crisis faced by farmers up until that point. Many family farms across the country were forced to file for bankruptcy, sell their farms, or merge with neighbors in order to keep their business afloat. These struggles changed the landscape of rural communities and changed the farming industry indefinitely.

The crisis that took place in the 1980s resulted heavily from the increasingly unstable economic conditions in the United States throughout the 1970s. This era of economic instability is often remembered as “stagflation,” a period where high inflation rates and high unemployment existed in the market simultaneously. As for the agricultural economy, since the market for food exports was thriving, Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz encouraged farmers in 1971 to farm “fence row to fence row” with hopes of increasing production and export numbers (“American Agriculture Political”, n.d.). Farmers were exceedingly encouraged to invest in their farms since, “various price support and supply control programs were used to stabilize and maintain the prices of selected agricultural commodities at artificially high levels” (Barnett, 2000, p. 369). Furthermore, farm services were incentivizing farmers to take loans for land by offering interest rates below the market rate. Markets were simultaneously opening and encouraging the widespread, international exporting of U.S. agricultural products. Due to these incentives, U.S. exports in grain and wheat products more than doubled in the first half of the 1970s. The high rate of returns led to even further investments in farm capital. However as commodity prices
leveled off by the end of the 1970s, “many agricultural producers who owned land found their wealth was increasing dramatically, while at the same time they were experiencing cash-flow difficulties,” (Barnett, 2000, p. 372). These unstable financial conditions created the perfect recipe for a disastrous agricultural economy as the 1980s rolled around.

Contradictory fiscal policy in the 1980s between the administration and the Federal Reserve caused commodity prices to drastically fall by 1986. This was due to major losses in the export market, leading to a decrease in “average net farm income in real terms for the five-year period 1980-84,” which was, “35 percent less than for the period 1975-79” (Barnett, 2000, p. 375). Farms were going bankrupt across the country, and the Farm Credit System was losing billions of dollars. Families with generations of farm capital were losing everything they had, but farmers were not the only party suffering. Schools, churches, and small businesses in many rural communities also carried the burden of the farm crisis.

Due to federal funding for farmers mandated by the Food Security Act of 1985 and a decreasing inflation rate, financial conditions for farmers steadily improved toward the end of the 1980s (Barnett, 2000, p. 377). The prolonged economic difficulties farmers had to endure throughout the 1970s and 1980s unveils an unstable agricultural infrastructure that holds American farmers perpetually at-risk. The issues farmers inevitably faced in the 1980s were too deep-rooted to be solved by a two week long social movement campaign such as the Tractorcade. Even if AAM was able to have their demands - 100% parity - achieved with new policy, they would not have escaped the underlying issues that caused prolonged economic distress in the agriculture sector at the end of the twentieth century.
Despite the fact that AAM was not able to have the majority of their policy demands met, some positive outcomes did arise from the Tractorcade. As Marjorie Scheufler mentioned, Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE) stemmed from the work many farmers’ wives accomplished leading up to the Tractorcade. WIFE’s mission is to “[improve] profitability in production agriculture through education, cooperative efforts, and building networks” (WIFE, n.d.). WIFE, which began in Nebraska, arrived in Lewis, Kansas, in March 1978 and had strong Kansas involvement throughout the beginning of the 1980s, even as participation in AAM declined. WIFE is now a national organization which holds annual conventions, legislative conferences in Washington, D.C., and funds scholarships. During the Tractorcade, involvement in WIFE boomed as many women passed out buttons, met with policy makers, and helped organize lobbying events during AAM’s time in D.C. These women took this initiative home after the Tractorcade, recruiting more members and staying active in the organization [See Appendix A10].

One piece of legislation that AAM was particularly proud of was H.R. 2727, the *Meat Import Act of 1979*, which set limits on the amount of meat and veal which can be imported to the United States while helping protect prices for American meat producers. H.R. 2727 passed the House on November 14, 1979 and passed in the Senate on December 18, 1979. This piece of legislation which AAM worked hard to support, gave AAM leaders a glimpse of hope in the face of worsening policy alternatives (“*AAM Tastes Sweet Victory of Success*”, 1979, p. 1) [See Appendix A7].

As many of the Kansas farmers touched on, Tractorcade participants were still proud of the work they accomplished during the demonstration regardless of the policy outcomes.
Participating in the Tractorcade allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of the legislative process, helping them understand the reasoning behind why agriculture conditions were unstable. Seeing negotiations take place in D.C. equipped farmers with the tools they needed to go back home and continue to advocate for the agriculture community in any way they could. Witnessing first hand what it takes to move policy on the national scale encouraged the farmers to stay actively informed on politics regarding the agricultural economy.

The major positive outcome resulting from AAM’s 1979 Tractorcade was the attention it brought to the deteriorating farming conditions. The grassroots uprising organized by AAM during a time with minimal communication options, to the extent to which AAM was able to gather, was unprecedented. These farmers were fighting for their livelihoods and were willing to go to extreme lengths in hopes of change. Even though legislators were widely unable to meet AAM’s demands, they took time to hear the farmers' concerns and listen to their personal stories of struggle. For an organization like AAM, the defining factor is going to be an attention-grabbing demonstration like Tractorcade. Groups such as these, “of course, will not always win, but, properly mobilized and activated, they can cause definite and observable responses in nearly all related political circles” (Browne, 1983, p. 32). Weeks of meetings, conferences, and committee hearings resulted from the impact of the Tractorcade. Additionally, the demonstration kept farmers and agriculture needs on the forefront of legislators’ minds, as the administration scrambled to solve the myriad of economic issues entrenching the agriculture sector in the 1980s. Moreover, the vast majority of the public, who act solely as consumers of farm products, was ignorant of the issues facing producers in the 1970s prior to the Tractorcade. As thousands of
tractors passed through towns across the country, agricultural hardships were brought to light and the farmers received wide public support for their cause.
Chapter 6: Expansion and Broader Perspectives

The Current State of Farm Policy

Unfortunately in the case of small farmers, it pays to be big. As the population grows and the demand for efficient, cheap commodity production continues to increase, the economic playing field favors industrial, large-scale farming. These institutions are able to foster financial incentives and the means to create connections with agencies and legislators - as explained by the Iron Triangle and group theory. The 2017 Census of Agriculture showed that the number of farms as well as the amount of land in the U.S. used for farming has continued to decline over the years, respectively decreasing by 2-3 percent from 2012 to 2017 (Daniels, 2019). In conjunction with that data, the USDA Economic Research Service reports that “large-scale family farms make up about 3 percent of farms but 44 percent of the value of production,” (2021). This shows that the current farm system favors large-scale, technologically advanced farming which allows for more product to be produced on less land.

The Farm Bill, which received much attention by AAM in the 1970s, continues to be renewed. New amendments which attempt to address economic and production concerns as they arise are introduced every four years. As always, the trade-offs between the needs of producers and the wants of consumers complicate the policy making process when it comes to agriculture. The current Farm Bill, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 covers funding for fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2023. The majority of funding is focused on welfare programs, specifically Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), to which 73% of funding in the Farm Bill is designated. Moreover, the rest of the funding is thinly distributed between commodities, crop insurance, and conservation efforts. The 2018 Farm Bill provides further
evidence on how policy makers focus primarily on the wellbeing of consumers, even when dealing with legislation sought to “improve agriculture.”

On the other hand, policy makers have begun to understand the high risk environment farmers produce within. In the 2014 Farm Bill, the federal government included programs which sought to support farmers and protect them from price loss and commodity risk, specifically Agriculture Risk Coverage-County (ARC-CO) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC). Together, the two programs seek to diminish revenue risk in the agriculture industry (Motamed, 2018). Although legislators have attempted to support agriculture producers, the system is imperfect.

Social Movements on a Broader Scale

Much like the situation faced by the 1979 Tractorcade, modern day social movements and protests struggle to have their demands met with actual policy implementation. The gap between what AAM demonstrators wished to accomplish and the extent to which policy makers moved new legislation is not an uncommon situation among social movements. The outcomes from AAM’s Tractorcade were simple: the demonstration led to increased attention and education of others concerning the issue at hand. As we have moved into the 21st century, gathering widespread attention is as easy as ever. With highly involved news and the widespread use of social media, even small protests can have profound effects on attitudes and public support regarding salient issues in American politics.

Social protests have become an increasingly used tool by activist groups and organizations in order to bring awareness to an issue. Protests such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), March for Our Lives, Pride, Right to Life, as well as protests concerning reproductive rights, and women’s rights have become repeatedly familiar scenes documented on American
soil. Following the death of George Floyd in May 2020, the BLM protests took center stage as some of the most influential and widespread protests in American history (Heaney, 2020). Throughout the summer of 2020, BLM protests sprouted across the entire country, with participants by the hundreds of thousands. Protestors joined from a wide range of backgrounds, ethnicities, and social statuses. BLM activists and their mission were at the forefront of mass media for months on end.

With endless communication options and attention-grabbing media coverage, it is easier than ever to enlist a social movement as a tool for policy change. However, as supported throughout this thesis, protests and social movements often fail to see legislation all the way through Congress, never passing into law. Heaney (2020), in his article placing social movements at the center of modern American politics, still recognizes that “a more realistic option may be for existing political actors to find better ways to pursue their goals within the existing constitutional framework.” Transitioning from the street protests to the policy arena, BLM movement has created and endorsed countless pieces of legislation, including the BREATHE Act. Most of these initiatives are introduced but never acted on, or never introduced in Congress at all. Social movements today have no issue gathering public support, but much like AAM, often face setbacks when seeking to bring their demands to fruition through policy implementation.

Limitations

With the bulk of the research for this thesis coming from secondary source documents, such as interviews with Tractorcade participants and archives of the American Agriculture News, the main limitation deals with the lack of primary sources. Most AAM members were middle-
aged during the participation in the Tractorcade; Therefore, most participants are no longer alive or are unable to share their experiences. Since the Kinsley Library oral histories were documented in 2012, that database provides a copious amount of research which would not have been possible to gather today.

Additionally, this thesis only documents personal experiences from farmers out of Kansas, despite the fact that farmers traveled from all parts of the country, and certainly faced different obstacles during their travels. There are a few reasons for this choice. Mainly, as mentioned previously, many Tractorcade participants are difficult to get in contact with, no longer alive, or unavailable to share their stories. Furthermore, the main focus of this thesis looks at Tractorcade while in Washington, D.C. during the demonstration, where all participants were gathered together, mostly experiencing the same events at the same time. This thesis also utilizes a literature review on AAM and Tractorcade in order to take into account the broader experiences felt by all of those who were a part of the social movement.
Conclusion

Investigating the relationship between group theory and the American Agriculture Movement provides a way to understand AAM’s attempt to use Tractorcade as a means to promote police change. Additionally, using Charles Tilly’s worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment criteria to evaluate Tractorcade allows for a comprehensive assessment of the trials and tribulations faced during the movement in the winter of 1979. The unwavering ability of disconnected farmers from across the country to gather as one in face of adversity shows the power of social movements to allow for common struggles and common goals to join individuals together.

AAM was successful in gathering a myriad of participants, all eager to take political matters into their own hands for the first time in their farming careers. Convoys from all corners of the United States stuck together, traveling hundreds of miles to their final destination on Capitol Hill. Their unity was obvious. The sight of their tractors in the middle of Washington, D.C. strung them tightly together while “Farmer’s for 100% parity” was simultaneously plastered on vehicles, hats, buttons, and voiced to policy makers. Their demands were clear and consistently articulated to any legislator that would listen.

Although the movement was able to network, negotiate, and encourage change in Washington D.C. for farmers, shortly after the popularity of the movement ended, the AAM’s presence in policy making continued to decline over years following the 1979 Tractorcade. This has lead to the almost complete desolation of AAM today. Despite the extraordinary measures Tractorcade participants took that winter, the farmers’ commitment to the AAM as a whole faltered as they realized their demands were unlikely to be followed through with legislation.
Farmers ultimately returned home in order to carry out duties as usual on small farms across the nation, hoping conditions would improve if they could keep their farms from going under. Nevertheless, these farmers had a newfound understanding of the legislative process, which equipped them with the tools they needed to make educated decisions regarding the welfare of their farms and the livelihoods of their families and communities.
Bergland Says Parity Would Be Bad for Chase Manhattan Bank

Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland told farmers in Lincoln, Nebraska, that growing them 68 percent parity for agricultural products would mean twice the number of farmers. "I'm not suggesting that Chase Manhattan Bank is particularly interested in that," Bergland apparently continued, "but I do think it's a very important thing to be done." He told the U.S. bishops that the Senate Agriculture hearings, and while the delegates work in Washington, "We need commitments at home," comes the word from the National Headquarters of American Agriculture.

American Agriculture News Officially Endorsed by Delegates

American Agriculture Delegates in Washington, D.C., officially endorsed the American Agriculture News Thursday night, February 25. The editor, Milton Smith, from Biglerville, Pennsylvania, personally appeared before the delegates to answer questions, after an introduction by Fred Landere, Austin office. The delegates voted unanimously to officially endorse the newspaper, the American Agriculture News.

80% Favor Farmers

The survey conducted by the National Farmers Union on January 17 and 18, 1976, found that 80 percent of the farmers sampled favored increased parity in the 1976 farm income. Farmers believe that parity payments will continue to increase, and they look forward to a better future for agriculture.

AFL-CIO Supports Agriculture

The AFL-CIO, in an official policy statement, called on the Senate to support the parity increase for agricultural products. The statement said: "We need parity for farmers, and we need it now. Farmers have worked hard to ensure that the parity increase is not a temporary measure, but a permanent part of our economic policy.

What Happened to Bergland in Amarillo?

Report From Hereford

From Texas State Headquarters, farmers were told that the Office of Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland was not present at a meeting with local and state ACS officials and representatives of the American Agriculture Movement in Amarillo on Tuesday, February 25. The farmers were told that Bergland had left the state and would not return until the crisis had been resolved.

Continued on page 2
CARRYING THE COMPETITION further. Currently parity of wheat is a little more than $2 a bushel. Parity is 40 percent which means cash price is around $2.40 a bushel. If wheat was selling for parity, there are some farmers who would go broke, and they have the right to do so. That’s the free, competitive enterprise system at work.

At best, this explanation of parity is simplistic. What we try to do is put in proper perspective the word ‘parity’ and show readers no matter what just the economics area you occupy, you’re dealing with parity. The state of being equal. When you ask the basis for a crop, when you ask for money for what you have to sell, you in fact are asking for 100 percent parity.

Farm machinery makers are bitterly aware of this fact. Sales of farm tools are way down; and a bad year is predicted for 1978. Why? Farmers had 64 percent parity do not have the money to spend. It appears farm machinery makers are going to operate below parity. They have alternatives. Cut back on the number of machines built; increase the price of these that are left; merge with another company. Or that’s the way our system works.

AMERICAN AGRICULTURE has entered a new era. It’s significant that the leaders of American Agriculture, the group who started the present movement are young, bright, hard-working farmers, restless, in management and learned in economics. They know they have the same alternatives as the makers of farm tools. Cut back on production; refuse to sell; refuse to buy. Marge on or quit. Parity is not an agriculture we would choose. It Deserves it!
From National Headquarters...

By Keith Thomas
National Media Coordinator

The American public, possibly for the first time in modern history, is facing a growing critical state of the national agriculture industry. This awareness was brought about by one of the most successful grass roots movements in history, the American Agriculture Movement.

Initiated by Baca County, Colorado farmer Bob Bergland on September 14, 1977, the group called for a nationwide agricultural strike to bring demands for 100% parity on all agricultural products of the past. No movement ever had a less suspicious beginning. Working not to organize, have elected officers or membership dues, located hundreds of miles from any major media center with little or no political support, and relying only on locally donated funds, the movement was destined never to progress beyond its own county for all that.

But resorting to methods that would make a far left extremist blush, the "Farmers for Free Crops" group, as the small group was able to muster itself after a few days, the Baca Countians had opened the gates of the stockyards and in those days, they were able to rally some ten thousand farmers to rally and attend a meeting with the National Agricultural Council in Denver.

In the weeks that followed, hundreds of meetings in rural areas, and "Tractor tours" were held throughout the United States. In March, only a short seven months after AAM had installed its first telephone, the group was holding meetings in Washington, D.C. The movement, according to the National House-Senate Agriculture Committee, had reached a point where it was affecting the world food market.

The Administration, Congress, and the leadership of established farm organizations appeared unanimous in stating, "The American Agriculture Movement is the greatest threat to national welfare in the history of the United States."

The reason why AAM was able to explode so far so fast was simple: unable to receive prices that would let farmers cover their costs, over the last three years, farmers and ranchers lost a net of dollars from livestock and farm income, with a loss of over $1.7 billion in 1974, $1.2 billion in 1975, and $1.3 billion in 1976, it was obvious that the farmers had to do something to protect their income.

The demands of American Agriculture are contained in five basic points:

1. 100% parity for all domestically used farm and agricultural products.
2. 100% parity for all foreign exports equal to foreign production.
3. All agricultural products produced for home and institutional use shall be reserved for those produced at home.
4. 100% parity for all farm and agricultural products, as set forth in the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Energy Act of 1977.
5. Meat and livestock imports must be limited until parity prices are reached.

The "crop of AAM's demands is the concept of 100% parity on all farm and agricultural products. The word "parity" seems to be a misnomer, as it implies that any farmer who would be "on par" with the rest of the American economy. The farm income rose 58% from 1973 to 1977. Our production costs rose 65% during the same period. The wheat farmers share in the price of a load of wheat that was $5 in 1976 and $7 in 1977. The cotton farmers share in the price of a load of cotton that was $30 in 1976 and $50 in 1977. The corn farmers share in the price of a load of corn that was $10 in 1976 and $15 in 1977. The meat farmers share in the price of a load of meat that was $5 in 1976 and $10 in 1977.

In an editorial on March 27, U.S. News and World Report noted, "AAM must be something wrong with a system in which the price of the products is set at a level below the cost of production. While everybody else seems to be making money, the farmers have been the only people in the food supply chain with no control over how much they will pay for work.

There is no question that Americans today are better fed, at less cost, than any time in history. In 1933, it required a dollar for each person to buy food. In 1977, it required only 50 cents for each person. In 1934, it required about $5 for each person for food for each person. In 1977, it required about $2 for each person for food for each person. In 1934, it required about $5 for each person for food for each person.

Loaned the least farmers have been the only ones to benefit from this increase in productivity, farmers have no realistic price protection available to them. In the 1975 farm law, as the recently adjusted parity prices for 1976 crops show, the wheat price is $2.99 a bushel, $1.57 a bushel for corn, and $1.44 a pound for soybeans.

As you know, the President's action on the wheat and corn price supports was taken to the House of Representatives in a few days. The Resolution would express to the Secretary that it is the sense of the Congress that the Secretary should promptly raise price supports to 90 percent of parity. Secretaries and other members of the House Agriculture Committee have written to the President expressing this viewpoint.

Associated with a copy of the resolution for your signature, I would urge you to send your signed Resolution to the President. If you want to sponsor the Resolution, please contact Sara Segler of my staff at 235-1211.

Sincerely,
Bob Bergland

At some Delete hearings in Washington during the previous years, a congresswoman made an eloquent plea for the return of the American farmer to the farm. "The farmer is the backbone of our society," she said. "He is the one who produces our food, our clothes, and our fuel. He is the one who keeps the country running."

She was right. The farmer is the backbone of our society. But in recent years, farmers have been the only ones to benefit from this increase in productivity. Farmers have no realistic price protection available to them. In the 1975 farm law, the recently adjusted parity prices for 1976 crops show, the wheat price is $2.99 a bushel, $1.57 a bushel for corn, and $1.44 a pound for soybeans.

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Page 2 American Agriculture News March 28, 1978

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American Agriculture
Communication Link of Rural America

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It's Our Move

by Micki Nellis

American Agriculture voted at the last National Meeting that 100% of parity was the number one priority.

Realizing that the Nolan Bill will not be passed this year, American Agriculture decided to push for a joint resolution mandating the Secretary of Agriculture to raise loan rates to 90% of parity.

The joint resolution has been introduced in both the House and the Senate.

The ball is in our court.

People from Washington have told us that American Agriculture made a lot of changes when they went to Washington this past winter. We know they don't want us back.

But the word is being spread around Washington by Carter and Bergland that farm income is up sharply and that farmers are happy.

Congress will believe that unless we tell them it is not so.

We have to tell them by our presence - wearing strike caps.

We have to take the offensive again to get the joint resolution through this year.

Congress thinks they have finished their work for the year, and are coasting, waiting for the recess.

We have to make them so uncomfortable they will get off their duffs and pass our bill.

The permanent Washington crew is getting discouraged. They can see it is imperative we go to Washington again - NOW. If we get action this year.

As Wayne Peterson put it, "We have a choice - stay home and go broke, or get up here to Washington - NOW." (He also used a little stronger language.)

Wayne said he pictured agriculture as having a very dirty house - one that's not paid for. There are many rooms to clean, but first you have to buy the house - with parity pricing. No use to clean the rooms first if you can't buy the house.

We don't have a future in agriculture unless we get parity. We are cleaning house for someone else if we aren't going to be around in a few years.

Let's buy the house for ourselves, then clean it up to suit ourselves.

Get to Washington NOW.

It's our move and the checkers are in Washington D.C.

15% of Food Price Goes to Cover Dishonesty

A store consultant said as much as 15% of a supermarket's price goes to cover the cost of dishonesty.

Robert L. Aspinall, president of Aspinall Management Engineering, says employee theft is a bigger problem than shoplifting. Employee theft wastes over $7 billion on theft and unattended overtime.

"In our uncertain economy, losses stemming from employee dishonesty and waste are having a greater impact on the consumer than inflation," Aspinall said.

Jaspan said the figures do not cover such factors as over-inflation, kickbacks, inventory manipulation, price juggling, damage to stock, and unattended overtime.

From: "How to Manage Your Money" by R. E. M. and "The Omaha World Herald, 8/14/78"

Bergland Threatens Cattlemen With Consumer Backlash if They Don't Rebuild Herds

Secretary Bob Bergland warned cattlemen to start rebuilding their breeding herds soon, or they may face a severe consumer backlash.

Bergland is apparently disturbed by USDA findings that cattleman have continued to liquidate cattle herds, and that beef output will drop even lower in the next few years. Cattlemen are slaughtering cows and putting heifers in fields.

Bergland said unless beef producers start rebuilding their herds, they are inviting price disaster.

Ag Secretary Bob Bergland warned cattlemen to start rebuilding their breeding herds soon, or they may face a severe consumer backlash.

Bergland threatened that consumers would react unfavorably, and that consumers have more political influence than cattleman.

A USDA spokesman hinted that Bergland was referring obliquely to the possibility of presidential price controls or action to bring in more imported beef.

Editors Note: Question? What can the president do that he hasn't already done. The import doors, for all practical purposes, are wide open. Other countries do not have the beef to send.

Question. When does a shortage drive prices down?

Question. What if the consumers do get angry. There will be no cattlemen for them to be angry with? Only factory workers, unemployed, welfare recipients, etc. no cattlemen.

Question. Who does Bergland think he is kidding?
And They’re Off!

TOP: Gerald McCathern, National Wagonmaster, gives the high sign as he climbs into his cab on January 15 at Bushland, Texas, and the 1979 tractorcade heads for Washington D.C.

BOTTOM: Gerald leads 210 tractors and support vehicles who began on route 2 onto the service road of I-40.

LEFT: And they made it onto the Interstate!

Long before daylight on January 15 tractor lights winked, engines roared, and the cold night air was filled with the sights, sounds and smells of the beginning of the 1979 tractorcade to Washington.

TV newsmen interviewed farmers, camera lights illuminated the night, newspaper reporters scribbled on notepads, and nervous policemen and highway patrolmen stood by anxiously.

Shortly before 8 a.m., hours before the 96th Congress convened, Gerald McCathern, national wagonmaster, climbed into his tractor at Bushland, Texas, and led farmers and ranchers out onto the interstate.

History was made on January 15, 1979. America’s first national tractorcade to Washington D.C. had begun.

continued page 2
Parity Inc. of Oklahoma Makes Debut

Parity of Oklahoma, Inc., which makes its debut at the Oklahoma City International Trade Club meeting was chartered by wheat and other commodity growers on November 18, 1978. Its president is Mr. Jack Black, a director of Perkins and his Board of Directors is composed of Lee Lengom, Marion, Ray Depp, Hooker, Arnold Janzen, Meno, Jack Chabaud, Carney, and Harry Myers, Tulsawas. For the first time in the history of agriculture in Oklahoma, Parity of Oklahoma makes its debut in the state today.

If the Tractors Passed You Up, Head Out And Catch 'em.

Don't Be Ashamed To Be Right!

Tractorcade Heads For Washington

continued from 1

History was made on January 19, 1979. Farmers and ranchers found the courage to demonstrate to the world that they would no longer allow their farms to be taken from them by governmental policies which are destroying rural America.

History was made on January 15, 50 years ago, in 1929, when another great voice for justice was born—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And all across the nation, men, women and children set out on the 18 day journey to Washington, D.C. in tractors, pickups, and campers, carrying bed and board with them.

210 tractors and support vehicles left Amarillo, Texas. 110 tractors and support vehicles left Atlanta, Texas. 4 tractors and 4 support vehicles left Bismarck, North Dakota in 25-degree weather. The Montana tractor broke down and was to be repaired and the others continued.

On January 14, 35 tractors and 50 support vehicles were reported in Wakeeny, Kansas. Tractors from North Platte, Nebraska and Mitchell, South Dakota, were being readied to start on January 4.

A喽 to the buzzard in the north, the North and South Dakota groups were considering dropping south to join the Nebraska route.

On Day 3 of the Tractorcade, Route 1 had 100 vehicles and were at Canton, Texas. Route 2 had 150 vehicles stretching 20 miles and were at Okemah, Oklahoma.

Route 3 had 100 vehicles and were at Salina, Kansas. Roads were icy and travel slow.

Route 4 had left North Platte, Nebraska but had not reported in.

Route 5 and 6 were stopping at Laverne, Missouri waiting for all the tractors to arrive. Then they planned to drop down South to join route 4 because of extreme cold and snow.

Bergland Admits Grain Reserve Will Be Used To Depress Prices

In an interview published in the January 8 News & World Report, Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland admitted that the grain reserve would be used to hold down prices, despite denials made to farmers when he first took to the road to "sell" the grain reserve.

"US News & World Report asked 'What is your department doing to restrain prices?'" Bergland answered.

"We've done several things — the most important of which has been the establishment of a national grain reserve. We are able to work with other countries for a price of $1.25 for Food in 1979."

Senate Ag Committee Learns Foreigners Are Buying Farms Large

The Senate Agriculture committee has discovered that foreigners "are buying up great swaths of America's farmland with devalued dollars, purchasing enough to fill all of Rhode Island in just one 18 month period."

The committee discovered that foreigners bought 286,543 acres during the 18 months ending June 30. This was 2.25% of all the farmland sold. This figure does not include land already owned by foreigners before the survey was begun.

Two economists said foreigners with errand dollars had an incentive to trade them for real property.

Foreign purchases in the last 18 months broken down by acres per state are: Oregon, 12,700; Texas, 9,200; Georgia, 57,900; Louisiana, 54,000; Arkansas, 42,900; Florida, 42,800; Colorado, 37,000; Mississippi, 31,300; Montana, 32,000; Missouri, 26,900; California, 24,000.

Also South Carolina, 23,800; Illinois, 21,000; Tennessee, 21,500; Kansas, 19,400; Nebraska, 17,300; Virginia, 17,100; North Carolina, 15,800; Minnesota, 14,100; Utah, 4,000.

Purchases in the above states accounted for 99% of the American farmland bought by foreigners in the 18 month period.

Tentative stopover points and dates for the 6 tractorcades are as follows:

Route 1 - IDA Ahlbre

Leaving Attille, TX Platte, Nebraska Weatherford, TX, Fort Worth, TX, Mineral, TX, Shreveport, LA, Monroe, LA, Jackson, MS, Meridian, MS, Tupelo, AL, Birmingham, AL, Heflin, AL, Atlanta, GA, Lavaze, GA, Greenville, SC, Charlotte, NC, Greensboro, NC, South Boston, VA, Richmond VA and Washington D.C.

Route 2 - Amarillo

Route 2 leaving Amarillo, TX January 12, then camping at Sayre, OK, Elk City, OK, Oklahoma, OK, Fort Smith, AR, Memphis, TN, Lexington, TN, Nashville, TN, Oak Ridge, TN, Green ville, TN, Wilshire, VA, Roanoke, VA, Pattersonburg, VA, then Washington D.C.

Route 3 - Topka

Route 3 leaving Wakeeny, Kansas January 11, then camping at Kansas City, KS, Topka, KS, Kansas City, KS, Booneville, MO, St. Louis, MO, Marshall, IL, Indianapolis, IL, Dayton, OH, Columbus, OH, Indianapolis, IN where they join Route 3 to join Route 4 to Washington D.C.

Route 4 - North Platte

Route 4 leaving North Platte, Neb., January 17, then camping at Grand Island, NE, Nebraska, Lincoln, NE, Omaha, NE, Lincoln, IA, Melbourne, IA, Davenport, IA, Palatine, Il, Indianapolis, IN where they join Route 3 to join Route 4 to Washington D.C.

Route 5 - Mitchell, SD

Route 5 leaving Mitchell, SD the morning of the 17th.

Route 6 - Fargo, ND

Leaving Fargo, ND the morning of the 17th.

Michigan Route

Leaving January 22 from Clarks Mill, Mich. To Battle Creek, Fort Wayne, IN, and Indianapolis, IN, where they will join routes 4, 5, and 6.

Tractors will not travel on Sundays.

Notice to Subscribers! If you change addresses, please send us your old and new addresses. If you don't, we have to go through our indexes to find your address card. Thank you.
Canadian Farmers Join AAM in Washington

Eight Canadian farmers joined AAM in Washington to support the activities. The Canadians feel that the major exporting countries of the world must get together and form some sort of compact to protect agricultural producers and balance the budgets.

The Canadians presented the American Agriculture Movement the national flag of Canada, and American farmers responded by presenting the Canadians with the official American Agriculture Movement flag.

The Canadian Agriculture Movement is supporting a grain withholding action to begin on March 1 and continue for a minimum of 30 days. AAM is considering similar action.

Elroy Korus, Canada, gave an inspiring speech on the need for cooperation of all farmers, regardless of nationality. Three things are dear to every farmer, in Korus's words, "My freedom, my country, my farm." That is what we are all working to save, he said. The Canadian farmer is being forced into the "Big Truck" syndrome of putting up higher and higher production by using more and more resources when prices decline, and soil and moisture resources are wasted in the process.

The Canadian farmers are coming to realize that their power and the power of any farmer lies in production.

USDA Admits Farm Income Will Drop in 79

Saying "it will be difficult for 1979 net farm income to match levels achieved in 1978," the USDA forecasts farm income in 1979 will drop, perhaps as low as $23 billion, compared to $38.1 billion in 1978. This compares to 1977's $20.1 billion.

It should be noted that these figures include the amount a farmer is allowed (or supposed to have earned) from living in his house and eating out of his garden.

Economists further predict that cash receipts for livestock producers will increase, but will not keep up with inflation in the cost of production and cost of living.

Farmers Rescue Washington After 20" Snow

Washington was virtually shut down after almost 20" of snow fell Tuesday night, February 18. The city was paralyzed, with snow plows being barely able to move.

Farmers, who had been condemned by the Washington Post for "rushing up the maf," were called upon to transport doctors and nurses to and from hospitals, help the fire trucks, and pull out stranded motorists. Each farmer was accompanied by a policeman in his tractor.

The blood bank ran low on blood, and farmers responded by giving blood.

A blood mobile was set up at the USDA building. The Red Cross ran dangerously low on blood supplies. Their normal collection of 700 pints per day has been reduced to 100 pints per day by the bad weather. Farmers donated of blood may well have saved lives.

On the mail, the snowplows used to burried the tractors were pressed into service. The very people who were captured by the snowplows hours before worked shoulder to shoulder with the plows to clear the streets. Officially, the AAM tractors were not allowed to remove snow. But unofficially, the tractors could not seem to raise their blades, said in the process of traveling about, removed snow.

AAM ladies, not having the usual lobbying activities to do on the Hill, volunteered to cook or clean in area hospitals.

The Prince George's County, Maryland, fire department had 8 tractors helping their fire trucks, then requested 12 more. The fire department provided fuel, lodging, food and dry clothing to the tractor drivers who helped.

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AAM Tastes Sweet Victory of Success

American Agriculture members in Washington for the delegate meeting November 14 saw two years of effort bear fruit as they sat in the House gallery and watched the counter-cyclical beef import bill pass easily by a vote of about 365-99.

The Benson bill, the complement in the Senate, is also expected to pass easily.

American Agriculture members lobbied their congressmen during the day and met at night. The English Bill, due to come up in the Senate December 5, shows great possibility of being strengthened considerably.

Marvin Meek, Texas, was elected Chairman of the national American Agriculture Movement, Inc. Harvey Gardner, Oklahoma, was elected vice-chairman. Delos McKnight, Arkansas, was elected secretary, and Tom Benson, Minnesota, was elected Treasurer.

American Agriculture delegates were working hard and getting a lot done, according to reports at press time midway through the 3-day national meeting.

Bill Holmberg, DOE, explained the 4c tax exemption on gasohol compared to the proposed 40c per gallon tax credit to producers.

The long-awaited explanation of FEFOP was explained by the Legislative Committee.

FEFOP stands for Farmers for Economic Freedom of the People. AAM intends to endorse no presidential candidates, but to force them all to address the economic issues, not only for agriculture but the nation. The committee explained that the economic crisis that faced agriculture two years ago is the same economic crisis now facing the entire nation.

The Legislative committee recommended that AAM work with all people who are facing economic disparity, such as blue collar workers, white collar workers and the elderly, and together demand economic freedom.

The Committee recommended that AAM be active in the primaries, and, remembering past campaign promises, force candidates to talk about agriculture realistically.

The delegate meeting was still in progress at press time. Full details will be reported next week.
Letter requesting donations for Tractorcade to Washington, D.C.

January 2, 1979

How would you like to get $4.66 per bushel for wheat, $3.41 per cwt. for corn, $5.63 per cwt. for milo, for next year? Do you realize the increased deficiency payment on what you received was a direct result of lobbying by AAM?

These prices are possible if the 1977 Farm Act is implemented to its fullest. The above prices are 90% of parity. The Secretary of Agriculture has the power to give all agriculture producers these prices by the stroke of a pen. It was written into the 1977 Farm Act that the Secretary of Agriculture could raise the Commodity loan rates to 90% of parity at any time he deems necessary.

Once before in our nations history, agriculture producers were guaranteed a floor price for their commodities by similar legislation. This 10 year period was from 1942 thru 1952. Even though our country was at war, we were able to maintain economic stability.

History has proven that economic balance in our nation will never be attained by deficit spending. Only earned income stimulates our economy. Unfortunately, we have a government which does not act, they only react to the most current crisis.

We know that Agriculture is currently in a CRISIS. The Washington D.C. tractorcade will call attention to this.

In the past year we have had 32 county residents go to Washington D.C. at their own expense. Now we need help with sending tractors to Washington D.C. The estimated cost per tractor could run as high as $2,000.00 including the return haul.

In order to make plans for our tractorcade, the American Agriculture office in Lewis needs to have the following information:

Can You:
- Take a tractor to Washington D.C.?
- Take a support vehicle?
- Take a service truck?
- Take a camper or motor home for self and others?
- Take a trailer to haul tractors back?
- Take a portable generator?
- Donate fuel?
- Donate money to help others to take a tractor?
- Help with the chores of someone who can go?

Within the next week some of your neighbors will call on you, asking for your support.

AMERICAN AGRICULTURE MOVEMENT
Box 166
Lewis, Kansas 67552

I WONDERED WHY SOMEBODY DIDN'T DO SOMETHING ABOUT AGRICULTURE AND THEN I REALIZED THAT I WAS SOMEBODY!
Page one of Beverly Snyder’s Tractorcade Diary, documenting her journey from January 18, 1979 through February 8, 1979.
LEADERS IN THE KANSAS STATE W.I.F.E. ORGANIZATION

APRIL 12, 1978 W.I.F.E. STATE ORGANIZATION ELECTION
2nd VP Nancy Spiegel, 1st VP Mildred Van Nahmen, President Gloria Crites, Recording Sec. Tere Stapleton

Chapter 89, Organized March 8, 1978, Lewis, KS

W.I.F.E. members: Tere Stapleton, Zelma Mead, and Beverly Snyder

Chapter 89, State Convention August 25, 1979 W.I.F.E.

ABOVE: Marjorie Schottler presenting some of the entertainment

ABOVE: Newly elected officers: Recording Secretary Nancy Spiegel, Treasurer Nuralee Matheek, President Peggy Arnesman, and 2nd V.P. Sherry Gissel

BELOW: Gloria Crites receiving gift from Peggy Arnesman.

MEMBERSHIP IN CHAPTER 89—JUNE, 1980

Lewis
Levona Fisher
Judy McKinney
Valorie McKinney
Zelma Mead
Karen Miller
Beverly Snyder
Dosca Wolfe

Kimsey
Peggy Arnesman
Rita Cain
Christy Fronchak
Irene Katz
Debbie Laufman
Mary Ellen Schimick
Edna Schimick
Mildred Van Nahmen

Belpre
Maggie Schmucker
Claude Stapleton
Diane Stapleton
Tere Stapleton

Haviland
Bertha Welch


APPENDIX B
PHOTOS AND DOCUMENTS

Courtesy of Kinsley Library, Tractorcade to D.C. Exhibit

AAM members gathering during the Tractorcade in Washington, D.C. in February 1979
By Judi McKinney

Not long after the AAM started, lots of slogans began to become popular. Bev and Rocky Snyder wanted to be involved so we decided to finance the trips by making buttons. We could sell them for $1.00, so we purchased 1000 and a machine to make them. The buttons cost us 25¢ to make, and we split 75¢. It soon became apparent that everyone wanted a button to wear. My kitchen table became our assembly line. We could do 125 to 175 in an hour depending on how many mistakes we made.

Whenever one of us went on a tractorcade or to a AAM meeting or W.I.F.E. meeting, we took buttons. Rocky Snyder, Bob McKinney and Rob McKinney made trips to Hutchinson, Topeka, Great Bend, Larned, Greensburg, and Kinsley on tractors or driving a service truck. The buttons paid for the gas for the tractor and/or service truck.

When it was time to go to Washington, D.C., Bev wanted to go. We got busy and made 500 buttons. She was going to give some away and sell some. Little did we know that the buttons would be such a big success. She called Rocky from the road and said, “I need more buttons.” Rocky called me and said he’d be up with the kids because we needed to make buttons. Thank goodness, I had ordered another 1000 buttons. But how were we going to get them to Bev? We found someone who was going to meet up with the tractorcade in St. Louis, so I sent 1000.

When the tractors were on the Mall in Washington, D.C., Peggy Arensman went several times. The first time she went, I sent 3000 buttons with her. When she went to get on the airplane, they searched her bag. Some of the buttons weren’t fastened on the back. Security made her sit down and go through the bag and pin all that weren’t fastened. The next time we made sure they were all fastened before we sent them with her.

**B-J Buttons** made 10,000 buttons during the American Ag Movement. They paid for Bev staying in D.C. and gas for tractors and trucks on tractorcades. One of our buttons is in the Smithsonian Institute in the AAM display.

**“I took the bucket of buttons and sold 477. A lot of people – all tense and anxious, many looking tired.”**

Tractorcade diary of Beverly Snyder Anderson, February 3, 1979, Frederick, Maryland

**“The UAW convention was in DC. We got to talking to those guys in the hotel, and they said, “We want someone to come down in the morning and address our group.” Bud Bitner went and told them what we were up to. When he got done, the president of the UAW looked at Karen and said, “This lady has a lot of caps and a lot of buttons that she is selling, and I want everybody in here not to leave until they are gone!”**

Darrell Miller
Tractorcade Greenville, Illinois Jan. 25, 1979

[Image of tractor with a sign saying 'Supports the American Farmer']

[Image of a line of motor homes in the snow]
LEWIS STRIKE OFFICE FIGHTING FOR PARITY

Farmers could no longer make a living on the family farm. They were heavily in debt with double digit interest, exports were suffering because of the economy, energy costs were high, land prices were plummeting, and there was an ongoing drought.

March 29, 1978  Bank meeting at the grade school in Albert, KS. Keith Schelius was the speaker. “Lewis A.A.M. in full force attendance!”

1- Rocky Snyder  2- Darrell Miller  3- Mark Scheufler  4- Larry Matlack?  5- Jeff Mead  6- Jerry Stapleton  7- Lester Derley  8- Beverly Snyder

For a brief time there were AAM strike offices in Kinsley and Offerle, but when the Lewis office opened in January, 1979, it became the hub for Edwards County farmers. It was located in a small office in the Golden Manor Restaurant building on Main Street with its entrance in the back on the west side. It was open 6 days a week and was staffed with volunteers who kept the coffer pot full, answered the phone, disseminated information, worked on fund raising, organized activities and encouraged (or harassed) the politicians.

Edwards County farmers chartered a bus to attend the Tractorcade in Topeka on December 10, 1977.
“We just wanted to tell our story”
“How do we make you understand we are fighting for the life and land we love!”

Unknown, Noralee Matousek, Gloria Crane, Peggy Arensman, Sheryl Giessel, Nancy Spiegel, 3 unknown, and Mary Hodgkinson meeting with Governor John Carlin to create a W.I.F.E Day.

Paul Chase (Bird City, KS), Bill Nicholas (Johnson, KS), Mildred VanNahman (Kinsley), Congressman James Jeffries of the 2nd Congressional District, Karen and Darek Miller

ABOVE: Alvin Jenkins of Campo Colorado was one of AAM’s four founders and leading activist.

BELOW: Senators Nancy Kassebaum and Bob Dole

Father Andy Gottschalk, Catholic Priest from Schoenchen, KS and serving in Eastern Colorado was popular speaker and AAM supporter.

Gerald McCaughen, Texas farmer, rancher and AAM activist who authored Gentle Rebel: The Story of the Farm Protest of 1977 thru 1982 and From the White House to the Hoosegow

US Congressmen Keith Sebelius and Dan Glickman in hearings

Jerome Kimmel (Hereford, TX), Bud Blimey (Walsh, CO), and Gene Schroeder (Campos, CO) testifying at hearing.

AAM testifying at a USDA hearing with Bob Bergland, the Secretary of Agriculture on February 21, 1978 in Wichita.

Bill Wilkerson (Manter, KS) and others telling their stories

Unknown, Noralee Matousek, Gloria Crane, Peggy Arensman, Sheryl Giessel, Nancy Spiegel, 3 unknown, and Mary Hodgkinson meeting with Governor John Carlin to create a W.I.F.E Day.
“The Missouri leader (Marvin Oerke, Butler, MO) lowered his blade and didn’t stop until he had 3 police cars and some cycles piled up. By then the cops had broken his tractor window and dragged him out. Another driver had a mace can in his cab after he bumped some cycles. He is in the hospital in critical condition. Others were clubbed after harassing cops.” Beverly Snyder Diary

“One thing that the D.C. police did that was really funny was they tried to scare the farmers with their mounted police. These farmers aren’t afraid of those horses. They know those horses aren’t going to kick them. They might push them around, but if you take a hotshot, the horse will move. So, they put the horses up real quick when the farmers got the hot-shots out.” Mary Ellen Schinstock

“Daryl Chenoweth (Haviland, KS) bumped a motorcycle cop who drove out right in front of him, then slammed on the brakes. After about 15 minutes, drivers became impatient. Daryl was in the police car along with an officer. Another officer, a lady, was doing the writing.” Beverly Snyder

“Daryl Chenoweth bumped a motorcycle cop who drove out right in front of him, then slammed on the brakes. After about 15 minutes, drivers became impatient. Daryl was in the police car along with an officer. Another officer, a lady, was doing the writing.” Beverly Snyder

“When we got up that morning, they had men up on the Capitol with guns. After they did the parade, they had the tractors down there all barricaded in (with buses, trucks, and other city vehicles) so they couldn’t get out.” Jean Titus

“There was this huge 20’ show and all a sudden we went from being the enemy to being their friends because nobody could do anything, and the farmers were hauling doctors and nurses to hospitals with tractors. They even took these big ones with the blades out to the national airport and had them cleaning off runways. They were donating blood and the farm women were cooking meals in places. After that the farmers redeemed themselves a little bit.” Darrel Miller

“Beverly Snyder Diary

“When the cops had broken his tractor window and dragged him out. Another driver had a mace can in his cab after he bumped some cycles. He is in the hospital in critical condition. Others were clubbed after harassing cops.” Beverly Snyder

“One thing that the D.C. police did that was really funny was they tried to scare the farmers with their mounted police. These farmers aren’t afraid of those horses. They know those horses aren’t going to kick them. They might push them around, but if you take a hotshot, the horse will move. So, they put the horses up real quick when the farmers got the hot-shots out.” Mary Ellen Schinstock

“When we got up that morning, they had men up on the Capitol with guns. After they did the parade, they had the tractors down there all barricaded in (with buses, trucks, and other city vehicles) so they couldn’t get out.” Jean Titus

“There was this huge 20’ show and all a sudden we went from being the enemy to being their friends because nobody could do anything, and the farmers were hauling doctors and nurses to hospitals with tractors. They even took these big ones with the blades out to the national airport and had them cleaning off runways. They were donating blood and the farm women were cooking meals in places. After that the farmers redeemed themselves a little bit.” Darrel Miller

“A LITTLE RURAL MISCHIEF AND FARMER HUMOR...

...a threshing machine over the White House wall...

...burning a cotton bale or spare tractor or two...

...and keeping the police chasing Missouri goats.

Don Bergner’s (Pratt) tractor was used for Mercy Missions

Police in full riot gear on all the Capitol steps and roof

“Ed & Marj Scheufler with police

Farmers rounded the Mall in the spring

“When you get back there in Washington, D.C., the Mall was operated by the Park Police. Then you had the Capitol Hill Police. Then you had the Washington, D.C. Metro. But we got to be friends with a lot of those guys.” Darrel Miller

Karen Miller and Deputy Chief of Police Robert Kinst


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