

## AAM Senter On The Hill 12-14-2019

On this day in 1977, AAM called a National Strike for farmers. Thousands of family farmers driving their tractors descended on State Capitals across America. I was one of those farmers headed into Austin Texas not knowing what we would find but determined to stand up for our family farms. A light freezing rain was falling and our flags flying from our tractors froze stiff, but we were proud because thousands from across Texas showed up to be heard. When we drove up Congress Avenue, it was awesome, to see the Texas Capital dome in the distance with a sea of tractors with flashing lights as far as the eye could see. There to greet us was the Governor of Texas along with countless members of the legislature. To hear them praise farmers and voice support for what we were doing gave hope that we could and would make a difference. Little did we know that thousands of farmers across America were also driving to their State Capitals. AAM had truly spread like a prairie fire across America and farmers in every state were standing up to be heard. You must remember that we didn't have cell phones or computers or even fax machines back then, only phone lines and mail to communicate. I've often said if we had had cell phones and computers, we would have been dangerous. Despite that, estimates were that as many as 1.5 million farmers were active as farm protests spread nationwide. President Jimmy Carter in a White House Press Conference said that his sister and nephew both drove tractors to Georgia's Capital as a part of AAM. A month later 50,000 farmers traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby Congress for Parity Prices and to label all imports as to the Country of Origin. Protests continued throughout 1978 with a bridge blockade in McAllen, Texas to protest imported agriculture products from Mexico which were labeled Product of Texas, There 400 farmers were teargassed, clubbed and jailed. Within 3 days thousands of farmers from across the country descended upon the jail where Texas Attorney General Hill, negotiated the release of the farmers without fines or charges. AAM found out that the company bringing in the imports in was owned by the Mayor of McAllen. 1979 was the Tractorcade to Washington, D.C. where 10's of thousands of tractors invaded our Nations Capital. I believe that AAM's Tractorcade to Washington, D.C. was the last great American protest that will ever be held there because of security concerns. It is a part of American history and I'm proud I was a part of it, and it changed all our lives that participated. There are thousands of stories of local farmers getting together to support a fair deal for family farmers. From holding Penny Auctions to stop foreclosure sales to blockading ports importing agriculture products and supporting our labor friends during some of their strikes. AAM has established an AAM Archive in conjunction with Texas Tech University's Southwest Collections. You can go online and search American Agriculture Movement. AAM is working to save and collect both Oral Histories as well as clippings and pictures so they will be protected and kept for future generations to see and hear. So today, thank a family farmer and rancher for the food you eat and the clothes you wear as we head into this Christmas Season.

On a closing note, I want to remind you that there's still time to make plans to attend AAM's annual meeting in Lubbock, Texas January 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. If you are just deciding to go please

drop AAM an email so we can better plan for the number attending, send to [aam.sect19@gmail.com](mailto:aam.sect19@gmail.com) and you can pay the registration there.

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