

# Farmer protest poorly received

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Protesting farmers won little encouragement yesterday from congressional and administration leaders for their demands for a major boost in crop price supports.

One disgruntled group disrupted a farm organization office and others drove a parade of tractors through late morning traffic while leaders of the American Agriculture Movement were conferring for the first time with Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland.

Later, another group of spokesmen for the loosely organized AAM met with Chairman Tom Foley, D-Wash., of the House Agriculture Committee.

Bergland reiterated his refusal to consider raising farm price supports to 90 percent of parity, which would have the effect of raising the price farmers receive for corn, wheat and other crops by an estimated two-thirds.

Bergland said he did not plan any changes in the present price support system for at least two years.

Foley, a spokesman said, told the AAM delegation he did not think this Congress would pass a bill directing Bergland to pay 90 percent parity.

Foley told them he believed many urban members — the majority of Congress — are greatly concerned about inflation and food prices and were not prepared to take any action on raising parity.

The chairman added it was his personal opinion farmers needed more incentives to participate in federal farm programs.

Farm movement leader Lee Scheufler said after the session Foley "is still not supportive of any action by his committee on 90 percent of parity."

The farmers planned a tractorcade today around the Federal Reserve offices to underline their discontent with current high interest rates.

During yesterday's demonstration, a small group of farmers had forced their way into the American Farm Bureau Federation, the nation's largest farm organization.

Bureau officials charged they threw plants out of windows, plastered farm movement bumper stickers on the walls and ground out their cigars in the carpets.

The group left before police arrived. No arrests were reported.

About 230 tractors joined a late-morning parade from the farmers' "Tractortown" encampment on the Mall, moving two abreast down Pennsylvania Avenue past the farm bureau building and then on to the Department of Agriculture.

Spokesmen for the American Agriculture Movement accused the farm bureau of representing "the processors and middlemen" and opposing the 90 percent parity the AAM demonstrators are lobbying for on Capitol Hill.

In Chicago, AFBF president Allen Grant said, "The problems of farmers aren't going to be solved by wrecking crews that take the law into their own hands. The problems of agriculture need

our best minds and not our worst emotions."

The tractorcade, through melting snow and slush from the city's first major snowstorm of the season Wednesday, disrupted some downtown traffic. Under agreement with city and National Park police, the tractors stay off the streets during rush hours.

Bergland, who has not gone to his Agriculture Department office since the farmers arrived in the city Monday, met with five AAM leaders at the Executive Office Building close to the White House.

He said the meeting was "relaxed and friendly" although the farmers' spokesmen disagreed with his opposition to 90 percent parity as the base for crop price supports.

Bergland said "there are good people in considerable trouble," but the farmers want a fundamental change "which we're not prepared to support yet."

He added he would not support any changes until farm policy comes under review in two years.

The secretary said if he had to do it again he would repeat his words which angered farmers and farm state congressmen: that some of the AAM protesters were driven by "just old-fashioned greed."

Other farm spokesmen were on Capitol Hill, attending committee hearings on the farm budget and lobbying members for higher crop supports.



Tractors stand in line on Pennsylvania Avenue as farmers met with representatives of the American Farm Bureau

Federation and Department of Agriculture officials in Washington, D.C., yesterday.

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