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**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

**PATTERNS OF PROTEST:**

**Swedish farmers in times of cereal surplus crisis**

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in fulfilment of the requirements  
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## ABSTRACT

This is a study of protest as practice. Using Ortner's actor-centered approach and Bourdieu's theory of practice I analyze forms of protest observed during ethnographic fieldwork among cereal growing farmers in the south of Sweden from October 1986 to February 1988. Encompassed by the Swedish corporatist political system, at any given time during the 'cereal surplus crisis' in the mid to late 1980's farmers are engaged in oppositional activity to a number of restrictive policies. In the slice of policies presented in this study are offered three concrete examples of how human action in the form of farmers' protests might be considered in its structural context.

Acts of protest by farmers form a pattern the characteristics of which are partly constructed by the corporatist political system of Sweden and the individualistic nature of farming enterprises. The main ethnography concerns farmers' response to three policy measures introduced during fieldwork. The study reveals how specific patterns of farmers' protest are associated with the particular place in a policy's development from introduction to implementation. Through a series of case studies, three broad patterns of protest are shown to be linked to stages in a policy's career.

The location of a policy in its career has a bearing on the constellation of relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government, a factor which determines the form protest takes at grassroots level. The configuration undergoes shifts, from conflict in the embryonic stage of the policy's career, to hostility during the negotiation stage, to consensus in the implementation stage of the policy's life. At each stage, and thus with each constellation, farmers' acts of protest undergo corresponding shifts. Thus, resistance, which occurs at the implementation stage of policy, when the Farmers' Federation and Government have reached agreement on the implementation of the new Fallow 87 Program, is the most covert form of protest. The aim of resistance is to evade or manipulate the program. By contrast, defence is openly argumentative, the aim being to water down the final version of new policy. Defence occurs when the Farmers' Federation and Government are still in the process of negotiating the contents of new policy on agricultural inputs. Attack, finally, occurs at the embryonic stage of a policy proposing deregulation of the cereal market, when the Farmers' Federation and Government have not yet begun negotiation. Attack is the most vocal and public form of protest, the aim being to persuade Government to shelve new proposed policy altogether.

The political systems of numerous western industrialized nations are variants on corporatism, with its established procedures for regular and considerable input by interest organizations in the policy-making process. These countries tend to have planned agricultural economies, and one or more farmers' organizations to represent the interests of self-employed rural producers in policy development. The patterns of protest which emerge amongst farmers in the south of Sweden may be characteristic of this manner of organizing agricultural commodity production and farmer-State relations in late-capitalist societies.

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## NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

None of the personal names which appear in the text are real names, except for those of prominent leaders. The names of the two parishes mentioned are pseudonyms.

Whenever referring to *Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund*, *LRF*, I have used the English translation the National Farmers' Federation, the Farmers' Federation, or simply the Federation. I have also translated the names of frequently referred to Swedish bureaucratic structures into English. In some cases, I have used the translated acronyms throughout the text. The name of the regional newspaper, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, has been translated as the *South Swedish Daily* to make the text easier to read. The farmers' weekly *Land* has been left as is throughout the text as this name translates as 'land' in English. The names of commodity processing plants, banks, educational institutions, and so on have also been translated, again to make the text easier to read. However, I have referred to the Swedish labour movement by its Swedish acronym *LO* throughout the text, as this is less cumbersome than the Confederation of Blue Collar Workers' Trade Unions.

The following is a list of most of the institutions mentioned in the text.

### THE FARMERS' FEDERATION

- LRF - the Swedish National Farmers' Federation  
(*Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund*)
- the Provincial Federation of the Union Branch  
(*Skånes provinsförbund*)
- the Lund Zone of the Union Branch  
(*Lundatraktens ortsförbund*)
- the Local Divisions of the Union Branch  
(*Lokalföreningarna*)
- The Landmen  
(introduced as the Grain Growers' Cooperative)



(*Lantmännen*)

- the Districts of the Landmen  
(*Lantmännens försäljningsområden*)
- the Farmers' Medical Centre  
(*Lantbrukshälsan*)

## REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS

CAB - the (Malmöhus) County Agricultural Board  
(*Lantbruksnämnden i Malmöhus Län*)

CAS - the (Malmöhus) County Agricultural Society  
(*Malmöhus läns hushållningssällskap*)

SUAS - the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences  
(*Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet*)(Alnarp campus)

- the Sugar Factory  
(*Svenska Sockerfabriks AB*)
- the Weibulls Plant Breeding Institute  
(*W Weibull AB*)

## TRADE UNION CONFEDERATIONS

LO - the Swedish labour movement (*arbetarrörelsen*)  
(introduced as the Confederation of Blue Collar  
Workers) (*Landsorganisationen*)

TCO - the Confederation of Lower Grade White Collar  
Workers) (*Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation*)

SACO/SR - the Confederation of University-trained Workers  
(*Sveriges akademikers centralorganisation*)/the  
Confederation of Civil Servants  
(*Statstjänstemännens Riksförbund*)

## MINISTRIES

- the Ministry of Agriculture  
(*Jordbruksdepartementet*)
- the Ministry for the Environment (and Energy)  
(*Miljö (och energi) departementet*)

## COMMISSIONS

- the Grain Group  
(*Spannmålsgruppen*)
- the Intensity Group  
(*Intensitetsgruppen*)

## DELEGATION

- the Consumer Delegation  
(*Konsumentdelegationen*)

## NATIONAL BODIES

NAMB - the National Agricultural Marketing Board  
(*Statens jordbruksnämnd*)

NBA - the National Board of Agriculture  
(*Lantbruksstyrelsen*)

NCI - the National Chemicals Inspectorate  
(*Kemikalieinspektionen*)

NEPA - the National Environmental Protection Agency  
(*Statens naturvårdsverk*)

NEPB - the National Environmental Protection Board  
(*Statens naturvårdsnämnd*)

NFA - the National Food Administration  
(*Statens livsmedelsverk*)

- the National Energy Board  
(*Statens energiverk*)

SGTA - the Swedish Grain Trade Association  
(*Svensk spannmålshandel*)

**NEWSPAPERS**

- ATL  
(*Annonssblad till tidskrift for lantmän*)
- the Grain Store  
(*Magasinet*)
- Land  
(*Land*)
- the Landman  
(*Lantmannen*)
- the South Swedish Daily  
(*Sydsvenska Dagbladet*)

**POLITICAL PARTIES**

- the Centre Party  
(*Centerpartiet*)
- the Environmental Party  
(*Miljöpartiet*)
- the Liberal Party  
(*Folkpartiet*)
- the Moderate Party  
(*Moderaterna*)
- the Social Democratic Party  
(*Socialdemokratiska partiet*)

### NOTE ON CURRENCY

The Swedish currency is the Swedish Krona (SEK). Each Krona is worth 100 öre.

In July 1987, the official exchange rate was

\$1 Australian = 4.6 Swedish Kronor.

(Source: *The Australian* 1 July 1987)



# CHAPTER 1

## THE POLITICS OF AGRICULTURE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a study of a political community of Swedish farmers. My project is to illuminate the location of farmers in relation to the Swedish State and the wider society. This I do through an examination of processes of opposition, i.e. individual and collective acts of protest, which I demonstrate to be informed by the State system itself. The challenge of linking practice, actor and structure, as Marcus and Fischer (1986) so aptly have put it, is exactly "how to represent the embedding of richly described local cultural worlds in larger impersonal systems of political economy" (1986:77).

In this study, I integrate ethnographic work focused on form and content of political action with the political-economic and historic dimension of the system in which action occurs. I begin with a view of the macro system, introducing concepts such as corporatism, or the Swedish Model. This is followed by a brief history of significant political-economic developments up until my arrival in the field. By ethnographic enquiry, I then translate corporatism into cultural terms, grounding it in every day life (cf Marcus and Fischer 1986:82). In so doing I background the system, but without obscuring the fact that it is integrally constitutive of life within the bounded subject matter. The analysis which follows is an ethnographic account of the full range of farmers' protest activities against intervention by the Social Democratic Government in the agricultural commodity production process at a time when cereals were being produced in surplus quantity. Here I foreground the variety of micro level acts of opposition which the wider macro system encompasses. I demonstrate exactly how it is that political action is, as Marcus and Fischer (1986) have phrased it, "always in flux, in a perpetual historically sensitive state of resistance and accommodation to broader processes of influence" (1986:78). By taking account of the wider political economy in which farmers are situated, I avoid the static and

a-political presentations so characteristic of studies of rural communities in north-western Europe to date (cf Marcus and Fischer 1986:84).<sup>1</sup>

An examination of how farmers actively oppose specific interventionist policies and stated positions of the Social Democratic Government quickly reveals that this does not occur in the form of two adversaries confronting each other. Opposition rather is a result of the rise of broadly based conflict in response to various power configurations at national level. As Foucault (1977) suggests, such a counter-power springs from all the forces that are formed from the very constitution of an organized multiplicity in opposition to the power that wishes to dominate it (1977:219). The struggle against the dominating power occurs in a number of different sites for, as Foucault demonstrates, the dominating power is also multiple and ubiquitous. In Sweden, it may at times incorporate one's non-farming neighbours. Building on Foucault's conception of a counter-power, my thesis is that responses to the dominant power occur in particular patterns, which for the purposes of this study I label resistance, defence and attack. These clearly differentiated patterns of protest vis-a-vis Government intervention in the production of commodities constitute irreducible opposition to power relations.

My concern is to elucidate acts of protest in all their diverse forms, as I observed these during fieldwork. Calls for a more action-oriented anthropology have been heard since the 1960's (Ortner 1984). Like Ortner, I believe it important to examine practices of ordinary

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout my analysis, I will give the terms State and Government slightly different meanings. The State includes the institutions of the State, but excludes the established interest organizations, such as the Farmers' Federation and the labour movement. By Government I mean that small circle of politicians who occupy the most senior positions. The Minister of Agriculture and the Minister for the Environment play key roles here. By Government representative, official or public servant I mean any person in the State's employ. I will refer to the Swedish National Farmers' Federation in its overarching role as an interest, or peak, organization as the Farmers' Federation or the Federation. When talking about the Federation's constitutive associations, I will refer to these by their individual names (principally the Union Branch and The Landmen). When speaking of the farmers, I will use the terms farmer, grower, cereal grower, commodity producer, rural producer, and agriculturalist interchangeably. Finally, I will be referring to farmers' leaders, meaning their elected representatives, and to management, meaning those employed by the various farmer-owned cooperatives and private sector institutions which serve commodity producers.

living (1984:144,154). In her book on the Sherpas of Nepal, Ortner (1989) provides the most well-developed treatise of practice to date, defining it as concerned with "the relationship between the structures of society and culture on the one hand, and the nature of human action on the other" (1989:11). As my analysis of farmers' protest vis-a-vis the Swedish State is informed by Ortner's approach, I will elaborate here on the precise meaning Ortner attaches to the three key concepts practice, structure and actor.

For Ortner, practice is any form of human action or interaction so long as it is recognized that it reverberates with features of asymmetry, inequality and domination (1989:11-12). Building on that, she argues that practice more specifically is action considered in relation to structure (1989:12). Practice emerges from structure, it reproduces structure, and it has the capacity to transform structure. Therefore, human action considered apart from its structural contexts and its structural implications is not practice (1989:12). As we can see, Ortner's notion of practice is inextricably linked to a notion of structure. For her, structure is not an abstract ordering principle. Rather, she sees structure as both lived in, in the sense of being a public world of ordered forms, and embodied, in the sense of being an enduring framework of dispositions that are stamped on actors' beings (1989:13). Nevertheless, while structure is lived and enacted, it is also challenged, defended, renewed and changed (1989:196). Thus, while Ortner recognizes the actor as being heavily constrained by both internalized cultural parameters and external material and social limits (1989:14), she acknowledges that motive, will, interest and intention are important (1989:15).

Using Ortner's theoretical schema, I examine farmers as actors in the Swedish system. That is to say, I am concerned both with their location in this structure, and the ways in which structure is embodied in their protest activities. It must be kept in mind, however, that Ortner's theory of practice is derived from fieldwork in a non-capitalist society which lacks an important dimension found in all capitalist societies: the mass media.

In a piece inspired by Ortner's (1984) summary of theoretical developments in action-oriented anthropology since the 1960's, Hannerz (1986) argues that an examination of the mass media in culture is of some importance (1986:366) for the development of an understanding of actor and system. The mass media, in the traditional sense of press, radio and TV, as well as in the more extended meaning of the term, are indeed an important component of Swedish farmers' relations with the State as well as with non-farming members of society. I therefore follow Hannerz' advice and integrate into my analysis of practice, actor and structure some of the more pertinent ways in which farmers' drawing upon and using a range of mass media, which are in themselves part of and linked to the system, inform their practice of protest.

### **(1) Acts of protest as practice**

Bourdieu, in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), sees practice as "defined in relation to a system of objective potentialities, immediately inscribed in the present, things to do or not to do, to say or not to say, in relation to a forthcoming reality which ... puts itself forward with an urgency and a claim to existence excluding all deliberation" (1977:76). Like Ortner, he does not conceptualize practice as a mechanical reaction, but neither does he view it as a creative and completely free will (1977:73). In this study I build on Ortner's and Bourdieu's conceptualizations of practice by demonstrating how acts are deployed to meet new circumstances. Some acts incorporate old and established forms of protest, but with new elements added. Others are borrowed, and some are quite innovative. I see this kind of political action as emerging from structure in the form of short-term individually and collectively devised moves which are part of a larger project: to evade, challenge or block undesirable change. Throughout, I demonstrate that the broader parameters, if not all the smaller details, of political action are shaped by the Swedish system of governing.



I take acts of protest to be analytically central in a study of farmer-State relations and farmers' location in the wider society. An act of protest I define as a combination of behaviour, speech or non-verbal utterance which signals a significant difference of opinion. The most obvious example of a farmer engaging in oppositional activity would be when he says or does something which contradicts what the State would have him think and do: for example disputing the official rationale for a nationally negotiated program, and refusing to participate in it. Other acts of protest are more subtle and can range from the simple withholding of applause at the end of a Government official's speech, to systematic manipulation of the rules of programs already in place. Some forms of opposition require individuals to write letters of complaint, engage in consumer education, and arrange emergency visits to officials to seek support for farmers' counter-interpretations of the State's position. Other acts of protest, such as crisis meetings and demonstrations, involve large groups of people. Thus, acts of protest may range from short-term and easily executed individual actions to large-scale collective action demanding considerable prior organization. My thesis is that in the Swedish system, protest is an inevitable and ever-present feature of the everyday life of farmers. In this study I outline the systemic conditions under which three distinct patterns of resistance, defence and attack emerge.

## **(2) Location**

My project is a contribution to the body of anthropological literature on rural communities in north-western Europe. But unlike other studies in this genre, mine examines the relationship between local practices and national power configurations. To enable this, my approach departs from that used in conventional studies of rural populations in two important respects. Firstly, I am here concerned with an occupational group, farmers, which although internally diverse has a strong collective sense of being different from all other occupations. Secondly, I analyze a community of cereal growing farmers dispersed across a densely populated and heavily urbanized region who nevertheless from time to time perceive themselves as a political collectivity. The fact that an institutional

framework is in place, *Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund, LRF* (the Swedish National Farmers' Federation), an organization whose leaders mediate between farmers and State, provides another key to an understanding of the predictable, yet multi-faceted patterns of response of farmers to intervention in commodity production at farm level.

Few anthropologists have as yet explored the nature of farmers' protests in the western world in a specific locale and from a grassroots perspective. As Howard Newby, the English rural sociologist, commented in the early 1980's, "there is a dearth of studies which investigate political movements among full-time farmers in advanced capitalist societies" (Newby 1980:59). His summary is as valid today as it was ten years ago. More recently, the English rural anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1990) has lamented the paucity of studies which illuminate the response of ordinary citizens in late capitalist western societies to changes in agriculture, land use, and environment from a regional or local perspective (1990:219).

Nevertheless, a not inconsequential body of literature on regional agricultural politicking now exists in the French language. For a review of works on rural politics in France, see Boussard (1990).

I have encountered several problems in writing this ethnography. Firstly, anthropological literature in the English language on farmers' protests in the western countries is sparse indeed (but see Wildenbeest 1988). Secondly, ethnographic works on Sweden, by and large scattered and piecemeal (for a summary, see Gullestad 1989), have concentrated on urban settings to the exclusion of farming communities. Boholm's study of Swedish kinship (1983) remains the most comprehensive and well-argued piece of English language anthropological work available on contemporary Sweden. In contrast to the dearth of anthropological analyses of rural life, there is a plethora of works by political scientists, sociologists and ethnologists. The Swedish political system has been analyzed by numerous political scientists (see for example Heclo and Madsen 1987; Milner 1989;

Lewin 1989; Tilton 1990). An abundance of studies of various aspects of Swedish society have been conducted by sociologists (for a summary, see Allart 1989; also Himmelstrand and Svensson 1988). Finally, Swedish ethnologists have provided a number of studies often drawing on archival material and other second-hand data (some examples are Löfgren 1981; 1987; Frykman 1979; 1981). The political scientist Michele Micheletti is the only scholar to touch on the concerns of farmers in contemporary Sweden. This she does by analyzing the position of the Swedish National Farmers' Federation in national level politics (1987; 1990), the only organization with a mandate to mediate between rural producers and the Swedish State.

The lack of studies on protest and ethnography of Sweden forced me to turn elsewhere for an appropriate analytical starting point. Thus, I began to develop my line of argument in the course of examining the most recent literature on rural communities in the British Isles, written in the Cohen tradition (1982; 1986). This genre of studies, which emphasizes the symbolic expression of distinctiveness by members of small communities in modern nations (Cohen 1986:ix), contributes a great deal to an understanding of modern rural populations. But, although an important body of literature, it fails to give due consideration to an aspect which to me is a central feature of rural life: the many ways in which people in rural locations, particularly farmers, are constantly interacting with the State, indeed defining their interests in opposition to Government and its agencies. Through over-emphasis on local links in the establishment of community, boundary and identity, these studies of rural populations fail to consider the political dimension of the successful reproduction of farms, evident in institutionalized structures which link farmers with the national power base. Farmers, as is well known, stand in a very special relation to the late capitalist State, which invariably has legislated, as far as possible, to ensure self-sufficiency in basic foods (bread, milk, eggs, meat, and so on). People who work the land and tend the livestock play a key role in ensuring a steady supply of food to the population at large. But because farm production is extremely vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather, and agricultural commodity producers must in theory be ensured an income on a par with other workers

regardless of fluctuations in commodity output, the agricultural sector is subject to considerably more extensive regulation than other sectors of the economy. In practice this does not, however, mean that rural producers' incomes always exceed production costs. On the contrary, farm operators invariably work with extremely small margins. Farming, unlike manufacturing, is not in the first instance structured as a profit-making business. Hence, new agricultural policy can in one fell swoop wipe out hundreds of farm businesses, especially those of operators who carry high debts. It is therefore not surprising that farmers react to every new policy with caution and suspicion.

A review of the literature confirms that farmers' oppositional activities in late capitalist societies in north-Western Europe, the North American continent, Australia and New Zealand have not been addressed by rural anthropologists. Although Blok (1974) attempts to bring out the connections between local processes and the concentration of power at the national level in his study of peasant entrepreneurs in Sicily, this work does not deal with a community of farmers who enjoy representation of their interests through an organization legitimated by Government (such as the large farmers' organizations found in all late capitalist countries). Another work which analyzes farmers' protests is Apter and Sawa's (1984) study of Japanese farmers. This, however, is an analysis of a violent extra-parliamentary movement (which enjoys no State legitimation) mobilized specifically against the construction of the Narita International Airport in Tokyo.

As mentioned earlier, my study is of farmers whose interests are represented by the Swedish National Farmers' Federation. This is an organization which is fully incorporated into the national decision-making process. Farmers often speak of themselves as members of the farmers' movement, which they see as existing in opposition to that of the Swedish labour movement. Both movements can be seen as examples of what movement researchers sometimes refer to as old social movements: they have been legitimated by the State. (Micheletti (1991:145) in the Swedish context calls them "the established organizations".) In studies of protest vis-a-vis the dominant power structure, the labour

movement enjoys a long tradition of occupying centre stage. Mikkelsen (1992), an economic historian, provides a comparative study of the labour movement in Denmark, Norway and Sweden from 1848 to 1980. His work is a clear example of this tendency to equate labour with conflict. Although he devotes an entire chapter of his book to industrial conflict in Sweden spanning the years from 1903 to 1980, he focuses exclusively on strike action taken by the unions affiliated with the Swedish labour movement. There is no mention of farmers' protests (1992:79-168). This tendency of scholars to divest the farmers' political mobilization of significant importance in the shaping of policy recurs in the literature on the labour movement, employers and the state (see for example Fulcher's (1991) comparative study of these relations in Britain and Sweden), and other studies of class conflict (see for example Crouch and Pizzorno 1978). A recent study by Micheletti (1990b) of collective action taken by Swedish interest groups is the first to point up an ever-increasing articulation of heterogeneity, manifesting itself in the formation of small informal groups which articulate special interests different from those of the parent organization. In this study, Micheletti notes "the creation of guild-like groups by members of the Farmers' Federation" (1990b:257) as an example of grassroots mobilization, but the actual practice or execution of protest is not made a focus of analysis. This supports my observation that protest as practice tends to be seen as an activity in which blue collar workers engage. This is confirmed by the plethora of detailed studies of miners' protests vis-a-vis the larger structure in which they operate (for example Gaventa 1980). While *The People of Thurcroft* (1986), an English mining village, have been given the opportunity to provide a most illuminating oral account (as recorded by two professional writers) of their activities during the protracted miners' strike in 1985, and in particular the role of the mass media throughout the duration of the strike, no equivalent studies exist of farmers' protests in the west.

There are two problems in regard to seeking to draw parallels between miners' strikes and farmers' protest activities. The first is that strikes represent but one form of protest, and one in which farmers would rarely, if ever, engage (see Chapter 6 where I analyze the

structural constraints which prevented the farmers in this study from calling a strike). The full register of farmers' acts of protest is, I would venture, perhaps broader than that of miners. This is linked to a second difficulty encountered when trying to compare the political activities of farmers and miners (farming and mining in late capitalist societies usually lumped, along with fishing and forestry, under the general heading "primary industries"). As working adults, the income generating activities of miners are structured differently from those of farmers. The former are wage labourers, while the latter operate as self-employed business owners with much capital invested in the means of production (whether the land they cultivate is owned or tenanted). Furthermore, farmers carry full responsibility for both production and sale of commodities, the price of which the Farmers' Federation negotiates with Government. Finally, farmers' work is determined and guided by the agricultural cycle. All of these factors have a bearing on the form, content, timing and staging of their protest activities.

It is clear then that the single-minded focus on strikes and other similar large-scale and public manifestations of protest by students of the labour movement or wage workers (old social movements) is of limited assistance in the development of an analysis of farmers' protests. In this scenario, an obvious field of studies to turn to would be that of new social movements, so termed because they break with old politics and use unconventional means to attract attention to their causes (see for example Pakulski 1991). New social movement studies, however, tend to give far more weight to the agendas and aims of new movements than to the explication of the practice of protest by members of these movements (see for example Micheletti 1991:157-161). Nevertheless, from Micheletti's study (1991:161) of developments in Sweden, works such as Lowe et al's (1986) summary of the themes of countryside conflicts in England, and Newby's (1979) analysis of social change in rural England with special emphasis on environmentalism, we can at least deduce that the agendas of new social movements often impinge on farmers, even though we learn nothing of the political activities of registered owners of farm businesses in response to these developments.

Whether Government intervention in the production of agricultural commodities has come in response to concerns raised by members of environmental and consumer groups (see Chapter 5), as a result of developments on the world market for cereals (see Chapter 4), or in the bastions of the labour movement (see Chapter 6), the practice of protest by cereal growing farmers in the Swedish context falls into distinct patterns. To capture best these patterns, I have used the case study approach, albeit on a larger and more expanded scale than is customary for a social anthropologist. Gluckman (1968) pioneered what is known as 'situational analysis', a method which allowed him to consider small local events through which he was able to extrapolate the nature of the larger system. As Kapferer (1987) notes, this approach was later developed by other anthropologists: the presentation of case material in series, for example events engaging the same persons over a period of time, became commonplace. This form of data presentation requires that a series of connected social situations be set out with the same actors appearing from one situation to another (Garbett 1970:215). The approach I take in the three case studies of three different patterns of protest in Chapters 4-6 is based on Gluckman's method.

My approach differs from that of Gluckman, however, on a number of counts. Firstly, the politics I explore is that of region and nation, not neighbourhood and village. Secondly, I take the practice of protest as my principal analytical project. Thirdly, I analyze protest vis-a-vis specific policies, all of which however fall within a broader policy area (cf Rothstein 1988:243; 1987:308). It is by dealing with farmers' response to three different policies in the form of three case studies, that I am able to demonstrate how and why response to national political processes varies so greatly within a relatively brief period of time, yet as Bourdieu (1977) argues within a limited set of potentialities.

I develop my argument by looking first at the Swedish policy-making system. I note that policy-making aims to resolve issues through a consideration of various policy measures to effect some agreed upon change. Negotiation of policy measures then proceeds through

three distinct stages, the embryonic, negotiation and implementation stage, with each policy-measure following the same trajectory. I call this the career of a policy measure.

Integral to providing a background sketch of policy negotiations is a characterization of the Swedish policy-making style. Anton (1969) argues that Swedish policy-making is long, rational, thorough, open (in the sense of all interested parties being consulted) and consensual (1969:94). Richardson (1979) notes that any one policy area might be found to exhibit more than one policy style (1979:341), and cautions that Sweden is not a shining example of rationality in its policy-making (1979:353). Gustafsson and Richardson (1980) conclude that policy-making has become more difficult as Sweden has extended the right of varying degrees of participation to both new and old interest groups (1980:27). My own assessment is that agricultural policy-making as I observed it through the press in 1987 encompasses a variety of styles, some long and thorough, others short and badly planned. The farmers on the Lund Plain invariably described the policy-making process as "jerky", by which they meant that as soon as a decision had been tabled in Parliament, the Government or representatives of non-farming interests would be trying to undo it.

My argument is that each phase of the career of a policy measure will force a particular configuration of relations between leaders of the National Farmers' Federation and representatives of Government. Thus, I argue, while the Swedish Model in theory is one of compromise politics, it is only for a brief period in the implementation stage of new policy that relations between the Federation and Government can be said to be consensual. During the negotiation stage, by contrast, relations are invariably characterized by a great deal of hostility as the proposed measure is being developed. In the embryonic stage, finally, before the Federation and Government have begun formal negotiation, relations are particularly conflict-ridden, characterized by a poles apart stand.

To draw out the processes of farmers mobilizing the full range of protest activities, I have used a case study approach. The case studies illustrate how acts of protest are patterned



and each pattern shaped by where in its three-phase career a particular policy measure is located.

Each case study begins with a description of the particular state intervention, the location of the policy measure in the negotiation process, and the Farmers' Federation's and Government's relationship vis-a-vis it. This provides the background against which I then proceed to analyze the aims and corresponding patterns of protest which emerge. The first pattern I label resistance (vis-a-vis a policy measure in its implementation phase, a policy aiming to persuade farmers to take land out of production). The second pattern I call defence (vis-a-vis a policy being negotiated which it was hoped would effect a reduction in farmers' use of agricultural inputs). The third pattern I term attack (vis-a-vis a policy in its embryonic phase mooted deregulation of the cereal market). Each pattern, constituting a variety of acts, aims to achieve a particular end: to evade, to water down, or to block restrictive measures (see Table 1, p. 15).

Technically speaking, I should have presented the case studies of policy measures in order of their location in their respective careers, i.e. that measure which was in its embryonic phase first, and so on. However, this would have caused too much disruption to the narrative flow, which is loosely based on a chronology of responses which start out as rather low-key and veiled, and end with mass action in the streets.

The events described in case studies one and three were compressed into a relatively short time span (a few months in case one, a few weeks in case three). The events in case study two, by contrast, occurred over the full period of fieldwork and form the background onto which the other two responses were superimposed. Those events, occurring in a number of different arenas, numerous and extremely varied in form, were not obviously interlinked in the same way that events in case study one and three were. To mark out that the three case studies do not comprise a sequential narrative, I have written the vignettes in the

second case study in the present tense. This is also intended to give the reader a feeling of looking in as these events occur.

To close this section, I would like to make a final point. As mentioned above, policy-making in Sweden is characterized by the extraordinarily long periods of time passing between the appointment of commissions and the implementation of new policy (a year would be a relatively short period; several years is not unheard of). I was therefore not able to document the distinctive patterning of protest by following the long-term career of one policy only. At any given time the Swedish agricultural sector is subjected to a myriad of commissions and enquiries. In the Swedish context, farmers invariably engage in oppositional activity to several different policies simultaneously (see Appendix A).

For the above reasons, I chose to examine protest against the background of a slice of three different policies, each one as indicated above at a different stage in its career. The three policies were interlinked in that all intended to restrict the national output of cereal crops, a primary source of income for the farmers studied. In this slice can be seen patterns of protest broadly similar to those I would have observed following only one policy measure from its inception to its implementation. An examination of protest as practice must consider the complex reality in which cereal farmers in Sweden exist. Out of this slice of policies, of the constellations of Farmers' Federation and Government relations on the one hand, and corresponding patterns of protest on the other, emerge three concrete examples of how human action might be considered as the embodiment of structure.

Stage of Policy	Embryonic	Negotiation	Implementation
Policy proposed	Deregulation of cereal market	Reduction in use of agricultural inputs	Taking land out of production
Constellation of relations between Farmers' Federation and Government	Poles apart	Strained	Compromise
Federation's stand vis-a-vis policy	Against	Against, but working towards an acceptable compromise	For
Lund Plain farmers' stand vis-a-vis policy	Against	Against	Against
Farmers' response	Attack	Defence	Resistance
Aim of response	Persuade Government to shelve policy	Influence public opinion and policy-making process; water down final version of proposed policy	Undermine the intended effect of policy on individual farmers
Nature of protest activities	Mass protest in the public arena to attract press coverage	Public education in the form of collectively organized but individually executed acts of protest in multiple sites	Individual and uncoordinated acts of evasion and manipulation in a range of backstage arenas
Protest directed at	The <i>LO</i> and Social Democratic Government	Members of the non-farming public	No target specified
Characteristics of protest	Large-scale; few sites; vocal; use of metaphor to convey anger; official statements addressed to the <i>LO</i> and Government	Small-scale; numerous; individualistic; vocal; use of legitimate language; official statements addressed to the general public	Individualized and subversive; use of informal language; misinterpreting Government's rhetoric and inventing new interpretations; no official statements and no attempt to engage a wider audience
Regional newspaper coverage of protest	Coverage of demonstration and crisis meetings from farmers' and Federation's point of view	Reports on a diverse range of opinions, but heavily weighted in favour of groups and organizations opposed to agrochemicals and fertilizers	No reporting of evasion and manipulation of program; no acknowledgement of the effects of the program on individual farmers

**Table 1:** Career of policy, associated constellation of relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government, and corresponding pattern of protest.

## 2. CORPORATISM

The political system within which the Swedish National Farmers' Federation is located has been described by numerous scholars, including the Swedish political scientist Bo Rothstein (1992) as corporatist. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 2, the corporatist political structure is a system of decision-making which elicits a particular set of political, economic and social relations at the regional level: they transgress the 'local', creating a new social order in which individuals are grouped into collectivities according to 'interest' (Rothstein 1992:14). As I will show in Chapter 3, the system is dependent on a range of mass media to function effectively, to link all players. But most importantly for the purposes of this study, the political structure also engenders particular patterns of protest (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). Over the years, acts of protest have become a permanent feature of every-day life. Ever since the Swedish Farmers' Federation was granted official recognition by Government and Parliament as a legitimate negotiating party in the national-level decision-making process (see Rothstein 1992:232-252 for a brief history), the political activities of farmers at the grassroots level have been shaped in particular ways.

Although Rothstein acknowledges that "the notion of corporatism is 'an essentially contested' concept", referring to Grant (1985), he adds that "there seems to be a hard kernel of unanimity about which countries rank high on the corporatist top ten list". These are Austria, closely followed by Sweden and Norway, and then Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland and the Netherlands (Rothstein 1988:239). To define corporatism, Rothstein in an article (1987:296) and later in his book *Den korporativa staten* (1992:30), relied on Panitch (1980:173) who described the phenomenon thus:

a political structure within advanced capitalism which integrates organized socio economic producer groups through a system of representation and cooperative mutual interaction at the leadership level and mobilization and social control at the mass level.

Rothstein's work is a study of the emergence and development of corporatist bargaining, compromise or confrontation and implementation of public policy. A much more detailed treatment of the many and various loci in which corporatist relations can be observed in Sweden in the second half of the 1980's is offered in *Maktutredningen*, known in English as *A Study of Power*. The research on which this study is based was undertaken from 1985 to 1990 by a team of social scientists under the leadership of another eminent Swedish political scientist, Olof Petersson. Some twenty volumes resulted. In the summary report, Petersson (1991:38-39) defines corporatism simply as

the extent and character of the interplay between the state and the organizations.

Petersson describes the two-way relationship which obtains between the State and the organizations as one in which

the organizations are eager pressure groups vis-a-vis the state. The state employs the organizations to develop and implement its policies. There is a symbiosis between the state and the organizations which manifests itself in many ways.

Micheletti (1991:153) extends upon this definition, arguing that the most essential feature of corporatism is the ability of established interest organizations to

assume public responsibility for their actions. 'Public responsibility-taking' on the part of interest organizations signifies that they consider interests other than those of their members when they formulate their policy demands. In turn, this ability on their part guarantees them influence over public policy-making and implementation (1991:153).

The Swedish variant of corporatist decision-making is also known as the Swedish Model (see Elvander 1988; Lane 1991). But it is not simply a matter of place -- rather the idea has generally been that the Swedish Model has been more innovative or advanced than

others in resolving conflict between opposing interests. Lane (1991:1) defines the Swedish Model as one based on a

stable government operating with a bias towards consensus. It functions within a nexus of neo-corporatist institutions on the basis of a mixed economy which involves a pragmatic trade-off between capitalist and socialist values.

The three basic elements of the Swedish Model are compromise politics, social consensus and comprehensive social engineering (Lane 1991:1). I draw on these thoughts as a point of anthropological departure.

Farmers' interests in Sweden have over the years been represented by a number of organizations, but since 1971 by the National Farmers' Federation. Other occupational groups have been represented by confederations of trade unions (Rothstein 1992:159-178; Elder 1988). One consequence of a political system in which trade unions have merged into large confederations which compete with the farmers' union for the distribution of resources is that farmers, as an interest group, have become clearly separated, if not indeed polarized from other occupational groups. The interests of farmers as primary producers of commodities and those of other occupational groups as consumers of food products are more often than not placed in opposition to one another. This opposition is expressed in economic terms. Agricultural commodity producers desire a reasonable return on their labour, while the remainder of the country's population want cheap food. A further consequence of institutionalized opposition is the emergence of strategies deliberately deployed by farmers to protest against any interventionist measure which stands to erode their income.

Many decisions of Government are taken in consultation with important interest organizations, in particular where decisions stand to affect the conditions of production.

The Swedish economy has been described as a mixed economy. Dahmen (1982:108) states that

by a mixed economy we mean one that combines private capitalism and its market economy with state capitalism and its planned economy.

The main characteristic of the mixed economy is that

although the private-capitalist market plays a very large role ... there are many areas in which [the government] intervenes (1982:109).

Within this framework the agricultural sector comprises one of the most controlled of all. No other sector of the economy has been subject to as much regulation or planning as the agricultural sector. Rothstein (1992) acknowledges this in his statement that "the agricultural policy area is one which has commonly been held up as a type case of corporatism" (1992:232). The Government and the National Farmers Federation have since 1932 (1992:235-237) exercised joint control over the production and sale of agricultural commodities. I argue we must understand farmers' political activities as emerging out of this structure. Thus, acts of protest are shaped firstly by the fact that the Federation enjoys State legitimation, and secondly by the fact that the agricultural sector is a planned economy. To this must, of course, be added the individualized nature of farming: each rural producer operates as a self-employed operator of a business registered in his name, whether the fruits of his efforts emanate from land he owns or rents.

In exchange for a minimum guaranteed price and a guaranteed market for commodities, the system places a series of obligations on growers. Firstly, they have to care for the land they cultivate according to prescribed rules; this includes cultivating all land, keeping fields properly drained and using only certified seed and approved methods of production. In practical terms, this means they cannot let land fall into disuse. Nor can they neglect to keep weeds under control, or produce crops which do not meet minimum quality requirements.

Secondly, growers can only produce approved commodities. The national hectareage of all crops, as well as the total number and type of livestock to be raised or quantities of commodities derivative of farm animals to be produced, have been set by the Government with the Farmers' Federation. This also means that if there is oversupply in one sector, a market has to be found for the commodity; expansion into another sector is not an option.

Finally, growers cannot buy and sell land at whim. The sale and purchase of farm units is controlled by the County Agricultural Board, an arm of the Ministry of Agriculture (see Chapter 2) with prices set and paid according to a scale. Policy also stipulates that land for sale should be transferred to viable farm units only. This limits to whom one might sell, and also makes it difficult to acquire additional land.

In summary, the corporatist political system guarantees the Farmers' Federation a significant role in price and policy negotiations. At the same time, the system imposes a series of constraints on individual rural producers which they cannot escape. As all commodity producers are encompassed by the Farmers' Federation, with no one standing outside the system, policy agreed to by the Federation will affect all farmers. This feature of Swedish-style corporatism generates a strong sense of occupational community amongst farmers, which I take up in Chapter 2, and also informs their every-day acts of protest.

### **3. HISTORY**

The farmers conceive of the Farmers' Federation as "our organization", but also as a "movement". The farmers' movement, embodied by the Federation, emerged in its more formal sense some fifty-five years prior to fieldwork, during the Great Depression. In the movement's formative years in the 1930's and 1940's, the farmers' political activities centered largely on recruiting members, developing an ideology, finding modes of relating



to the political system, and formulating a political agenda. Some of the pressing issues in those days are reminiscent of the ones which predominated in the mid- to late 1980's: disposing of commodity surpluses (particularly cereals), imposing restrictions on imports of feed grains, and establishing grain growers' associations (*Skånes Provinsförbund av RLF 1972*). But although some of the issues are similar, new ones have now been added. Furthermore, by 1987 the Farmers' Federation was an experienced negotiator, always taking a hard line during policy negotiations to protect the interests of the by then dramatically reduced number of remaining farmers.

Peterson (1990:79-81; 84) has perhaps identified most cogently the source of current political tensions in relation to surpluses. He argues that these go back to the 1930's, when the Social Democratic Party and the Farmers' Party (now known as the Centre Party) formed a coalition. At that time, the Swedish labour movement, a wing of the Social Democratic Party, was in support of a liberalization of trade in food products as a way of bringing down food prices. The farmers, who had just then organized themselves into a rather militant protest group, were on the other hand struggling to keep up the price of agricultural commodities, so as not to fall behind wage earners, principally industrial workers. In the early 1930's, the Social Democratic Party and the Farmers' Party struck a deal that the farmers (who at the time represented some 39 per cent of the voters) would support the Social Democrats on new social policy, if the Social Democrats in return agreed to regulate, or control, food prices. As Peterson (1990:84) points out, the consequences of this trade-off have been inherent in each and every one of the ensuing national agricultural policy Acts of 1947, 1967, and 1977 (for a summary of the history of Swedish agricultural policy from 1930 to 1984, see *Jordbruks och livsmedelspolitik SOU 1984:86:69-92*).

When international market prices for cereals started to plummet in the 1970's, the continued production of a cereal surplus was questioned, especially as the burden of financing unprofitable exports had been laid entirely on the farmers themselves (Peterson

1990:85). Discussions on how to finance the growing deficit began in the mid-1970's (*Land* 17 January 1986:45). They stopped briefly in the late 1970's following the ruling Social Democrats' electoral defeat.

Except for a period of six years, or two election periods, from 1976 until 1982, when Sweden was ruled by a three-party bourgeois coalition (the Centre Party, the Liberals, and the Moderate Party), the Social Democrats had reigned supreme. When the Social Democratic Party resumed power following the election of 1982, Government representatives immediately commissioned an investigation into agricultural policy-making, which from then on would be considerably influenced by a consumer interest. Talks had by then considerably broadened to also include ways of protecting the environment and ensuring high quality of food (Micheletti 1990a:105). A nine-member strong Commission on Food Policy (*Livsmedelkommitten, LMK*) was appointed whose task was to study the situation of Swedish agriculture in a broader perspective than had previously been the case (Micheletti 1990a:103). In 1983, the Commission formulated a preliminary report (*1983 års livsmedelsutredning*), which was subsequently put before Parliament in 1984. A bill was eventually ratified in 1985.

The Food Policy Act of 1985 marks a new and expanded Social Democratic policy stand which considers the collective views of consumers of foodstuffs derivative of agricultural commodities to a greater degree than previously (Micheletti 1990a:105). Prior to this Act, the traditional goals of production had been three-fold. Firstly, Sweden should be self-sufficient in meat, pork, milk, eggs, and cereals and other crops in case of war or trade blockade. Secondly, Swedish farmers should enjoy a level of income on a par with other comparable groups. Thirdly, Swedish farm production should be efficient. As of 1985, two further goals were introduced, clearly indicative of a felt need to be responsive to the non-farming population: farming should consider the environment, and consumers should have access to high quality food stuffs at a reasonable price (*Jordbruks och livsmedelspolitik, SOU 1984:86:89-90*).

The Food Policy Commission's final report also confirmed that all arable land should remain in cultivation, a concession to consumers who did not wish to see the Swedish countryside revert to weeds and thickets, with continued production of cereals in surplus quantity, a concession to farmers. In consideration of the expense involved in exporting the surplus, the Commission also stipulated that although the Government would contribute forty per cent towards the cost of exporting the cereal surplus, the Farmers' Federation would be held responsible for the remaining sixty per cent of the cost. The Commission also stated that the agricultural sector would have to find a way of making adjustments so that Government assistance to finance exports could cease by 1990, and that a partial deregulation of the agricultural sector might be appropriate (*Jordbruks och livsmedelspolitik SOU 1984:86:23*). Those interest groups which had been invited to comment on the proposal to deregulate had been deeply divided on how this might be accomplished, and so this difficult matter had been allowed to rest. Nevertheless, as Micheletti (1990a) argues, a new agenda for agriculture had emerged in Sweden in the 1980's, spelling significant modification of the general mood of agricultural exceptionalism which had prevailed up until then.

A growing countervailing force to the Farmers' Federation had been in evidence since 1962. Consumers had in that year acquired the status of a legitimate party in the annual commodity and basic foodstuffs price negotiations. This is a pertinent example of Swedish-style corporatism, the incorporation of opposing interests in the policy-making process, and I will therefore elaborate on the form it took during fieldwork.

In 1987, these annual negotiations between the Consumer Delegation and the Farmers' Federation were held for the purpose of reviewing minimum commodity prices, the cost of processing commodities, permissible margins to be imposed by traders, and the maximum final shop price of basic foods. Commodity prices were based on production costs (but there were many other determinants). For example, the price to be paid for flour and

bread by consumers was set so as to stay within the permissible limits of inflation. This in turn affected the wage structure in the food processing industry, and profit margins of food retailers and wholesalers. Since the price of basic foods such as bread and milk was always being kept in check, any increases in the price paid for agricultural commodities would at best be modest, and an increase was by no means automatic.

The members of the Consumer Delegation were appointed by Government and approved by Parliament. They included representatives of all those groupings farmers generally consider the opposition: trade unionists, members of Parliament, representatives of Government, the food trade and food processing industries. In 1987, the Delegation had eleven members. The Delegation was chaired by a senior public servant, the Director General of the Aviation Administration (*Luftfartsverket*). The Ministry of Finance, the food processing industry, and food retailers and wholesales all had one representative each. One person represented the Cooperative Federation (*Kooperativa förbundet*), an organization which protects consumer interests. There were two Members of Parliament. Finally, the Delegation included four trade unionists: two from the *Landsorganisationen, LO* (the confederation of blue collar workers, with a membership of 2,275,000 in 1986), one from the *Tjänstemännens centralorganisation, TCO* (the confederation of lower-grade white collar workers, with 1,230,000 members), and one from the *Sveriges akademikers centralorganisation, SACO* (the confederation of university-trained workers), which had amalgamated with the *Statstjänstemännens Riksförbund, SR* (the confederation of civil servants); the *SACO/SR* had a total of 290,000 members)(*ATL* no 17 24 April 1987:8; Milner 1989:76).

The Farmers' Federation's Negotiation Delegation constituted the other party in the negotiations. Prior to commencement of deliberations, the framework within which compensation for costs were to be approved had already been established by Government. The figures had been derived from certain norm calculations (Peterson 1990:87). Once agreement had been reached between the Consumer Delegation and the Farmers'

Federation, it was put to the Government and then Parliament. On the basis of the final outcome of the deliberations, the State confirmed price levels twice a year, on 1 January and 1 July. In cases where the Consumer Delegation and the Farmers' Federation were unable to reach agreement, which had become increasingly common, the Government instructed the National Agricultural Market Board (*Statens jordbruksnämnd*) to step in as mediator. This occurred when the Farmers' Federation asked for a much higher price (arguing that this was necessary to compensate producers fully for production costs) than the Consumer Delegation would agree to (on the basis that consumers could not afford to pay a higher price).

Another example of corporatism has already been alluded to. I refer to the incorporation of new consumerist and environmentalist concerns into the Food Policy Act of 1985. We see then that both consumerists as well as more recently environmentalists had become a force to be reckoned with in Swedish agricultural circles. What this would mean to farmers was not entirely clear. There was no doubt, however, that production restrictions were being considered which would adversely affect their livelihood. It was not surprising that pressure group activities by the Farmers' Federation and individual producers had been particularly vocal in 1985, an election year, the same year in which the new food policy Act of 1985 with its many contradictions was adopted by Parliament. On 23 May 1985, for example, 20,000 farmers had congregated outside Parliament House in Stockholm to demonstrate against new policy. In view of pervasive dissatisfaction with the new Act, it had become all the more important that growers read every political message, and follow developments closely. By mid-1986 the farmers were avidly perusing newspaper columns and listening to radio bulletins in order to add to their already formidable stocks of knowledge of how policy might affect their own livelihoods.

It was during this time in a generally strained economic climate that I collected the ethnographic data on which this thesis builds. The time had been characterized by Government as one of "cereal surplus crisis". The crisis was to be resolved by means of

intervention in the cereal production process on individual farms. This scenario provided me with a unique opportunity to study how the cereal growing farmers on the Lund Plain responded to intervention. The overarching issue was how to reduce the national output of cereals. The means whereby this was to be accomplished would be announced in the form of a string of policy measures, all of which with a bearing on growers in the fieldwork area.

I spent fifteen months with the farmers on the Lund Plain. During this time, I observed the men, for there were no female farmers, in their day-to-day activities, and also attended meetings and other events with them away from the farm. Many hours were also devoted to interviews with officials in the regional agricultural economy, but this was primarily to obtain background information on the structure of commodity production, collection and processing. Finally, I read as much as possible of all the printed material available to farmers for it is on this which they draw in day-to-day conversation as well as in the formulation of political strategy.

Was my being Swedish born, raised and educated to twelfth grade in a region not far north of the Lund Plain important in being accepted into the occupational community of rural producers? This helped in two respects. Firstly, it provided the men with an immediate conception of where I hailed from. Secondly, it meant that we spoke the same language, even the same dialect. However, this hardly equipped me to understand the technical language of farmers and their ways of conceptualizing things, which took a full twelve months to master. Did my living in Australia, being enrolled at an Australian University, but doing fieldwork for a PhD on farmers on the Lund Plain assist in any way? In several respects this was the key to open many doors. I was a curiosity, an exotic person, but unhampered by the usual communication problems such a position commonly entails. My location in Adelaide provided an instant topic of conversation with strangers, many of whom had children who had travelled to Australia on backpacking holidays. Finally, farmers, their wives and others were able to make comparisons between the requirements

for a PhD at a foreign university and those of the nearby University of Lund. My major problem during fieldwork was being mistaken for a newspaper reporter, a category of person distrusted, deeply resented and often criticized by farmers.

#### 4. EVENTS AND CONTEXTS

At this early juncture, I would like to locate my study somewhat more precisely in time and space. In order to position the general framework for this study, it is necessary to provide some introductory material on Swedish geography and the political order, as well as certain key political events which preceded my fieldwork.

The location of my fieldwork area in fertile southern Sweden is significant because here I found a group of farmers highly politically aware, technologically advanced and blessed with superior soils and climatic conditions. Readers unfamiliar with Swedish geography I would ask to imagine the course of a twenty-four hour train journey. If one boards the train in Sweden's northernmost city Kiruna and travels non-stop in a southerly direction to the largest city, Malmö, in the far south (see Map 1 p. 29 ), then the first twenty-three hours of the journey would be spent passing through a countryside dominated by forests and lakes, while only the last hour would be spent travelling across the highly productive agricultural area known as the Skåne Plain. Skåne (sometimes referred to as Scania in English) is the southernmost of Sweden's twenty-four provinces. The total land area in Skåne covers more than one million hectares. While 345,000 hectares are forested (1.5 per cent of the total forested land in Sweden), a full 490,000 hectares are arable land (16.7 per cent of the total arable land in Sweden).

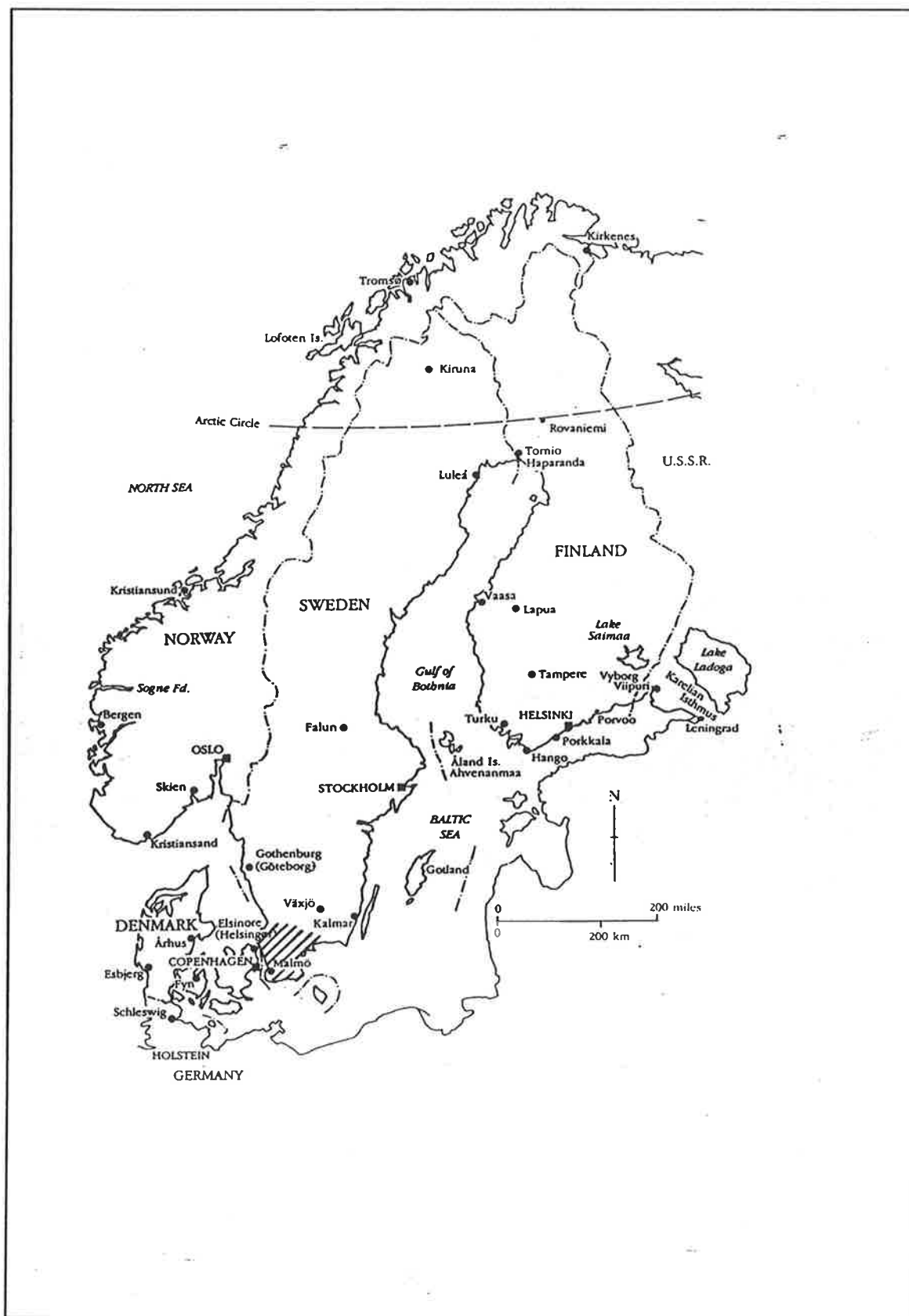
Bearing in mind that the distance from the far north of the country to the far south is some 1,600 kilometres as the crow flies, the growing period for crops in Skåne is a full 240 days and nights, as compared with only 140 in the north. The average rainfall is 600 millimetres per year. With an average yearly temperature of 8 degrees Centigrade, the climate in Skåne

is considerably milder than what one would find in central and northern Sweden. There are significant variations in soil type within Sweden. On the Lund Plain, where the bulk of fieldwork was conducted, a ten centimetre layer of sandy loam, carefully cultivated for a thousand years, provided conditions ideal for the production of crop yields well above average. In so far as climate and soil type are concerned, the Plain has a great deal more in common with Denmark, the north-European Continent, and eastern England, than with central and northern Sweden, Norway and Finland.

In Skåne, we find some 16,000 farmers out of a total population of 1.5 million; in fact 13 per cent of Sweden's farmers are Skånish. They produce twenty per cent of the combined total of commodities. This has resulted in the Skåne Plain being widely known as the 'breadbasket of Sweden'. For example, one third of all crops produced in Sweden are grown on Skånish soil, and one third of all pigs are raised on farms in Skåne. In addition, one fourth of the national food processing industry is based here. Skåne is in fact a giant food factory of considerable importance to the country as a whole.

The Skåne Plain, approximately 80 by 50 kilometres, is sandwiched between a string of cities and coastal marshland along the western seaboard facing the Öresund, and hills, forests and lakes along its eastern inland border. Most of the arable land is cropped, with only a few marginal areas set aside for grazing. When I arrived in the field, all arable land was under cultivation, a measure of its high level of productivity. The Plain is flat in some places, gently undulating in other areas, but rarely rises more than twenty metres above sea level. The natural vegetation on the Plain is deciduous woodland, in distinction to the conifers which predominate in eastern Skåne. Skylarks, starlings, swallows, magpies, crows and sparrows are commonly seen birds. Wildlife is limited to the occasional deer, rabbit, hare, pheasant and partridge.





Map 1: Scandinavia, with Skåne, the southernmost province of Sweden, shaded in. (Source: *Scandinavia*. Tony Griffiths, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1991.)

The Skåne Plain is more or less coterminous with Malmöhus County, the western of the two counties of the Province of Skåne. Fieldwork was conducted in the area surrounding Lund and skirting Malmö. The population density of Malmöhus County is 159 people per square kilometre (compared with 3 inhabitants per square kilometre in Sweden's northernmost Norrbotten County)(*Statistisk Årsbok 1993*). The area of fieldwork has by far the highest concentration of people within Malmöhus County. Out of a total population of 786,757 in the County (*Statistisk Årsbok 1993*), approximately 500,000 people, or 63 to 64 per cent, are distributed across Malmö (300,000), Lund (70,000), and the nearby centres and dormitories. The one thousand or so farmers in the fieldwork area were, in other words, clearly in the minority. The ramifications of this will become evident in Chapter 2.

The events I observed on the Lund Plain and elsewhere in Skåne and which I describe in the following chapters, took place at a significant juncture of Swedish agricultural politics. They occurred some time after the election of 1985, approximately midway to the election of 1988. It is important to know this because in Sweden, as elsewhere, the approach of the ruling party to various issues is often determined by the period of time that has lapsed since the last election and the length of time left until the next election in the fixed three-yearly election period cycle. Thus, the first year of the cycle is usually characterized by the formulation of strategies to fulfil election promises. In the second year, referred to in Swedish political circles as 'the middle year' (*mellanåret*), there is much hands-on work to demonstrate to voters that something is actually being done. In the third year this is followed by a show of positive results, as promises are made of more good things to come. This study is based on events which occurred from late 1986 to early 1988, roughly coinciding with the 'middle year' of the 1985-1988 election period. As I will show, it was a fifteen-month period in which the Government, often, but not necessarily in response to problems raised by Parliament, placed many controversial policy proposals of direct consequence to farmers on the political agenda.

Within this particular phase of the normal political cycle, my period in the field was influenced by several other significant events in Swedish political life, all of which had a direct bearing on the national leadership and the politics which it generated. Two stand out as of particular importance.

The first of these key events occurred in the late hours of 28 February 1986, seven months before I arrived in the field, when Prime Minister Olof Palme was gunned down while walking home from a night out at the cinema in central Stockholm. He had held the position of Prime Minister from 1969 until 1976 and, following a few years in opposition, from 1983 until his untimely death. While this represented a serious blow to the ruling Social Democratic Party, its leaders were determined not to let such an unprecedented act of violence weaken the party in any way (cf Walters 1987). On the contrary, extra effort had to be expended in order to continue to secure majority power in the next election which was scheduled for 1988.

A brief review of the Social Democrats in power reveals that the ruling Party was facing mounting obstacles. Elections in Sweden are as mentioned earlier held every three years, in the month of September. In September 1985, the Social Democrats once again had retained office (Sainsbury 1986) and continued to do so as long as the Party was able to rely on loyal support from the Communist Party. "Block politics" is a conspicuous feature of Swedish politics (Ruin 1982:148). The socialist block (*det socialistiska blocket*), i.e. the Social Democrats and the Communists, together held 178 of the 349 seats in Parliament, while the bourgeois block (*det borgerliga blocket*), which at the time included the Moderates, the Liberal Party and the Centre Party, all told accounted for 171 seats. By 1986, the Social Democrats were facing growing difficulties in mobilizing support for their policies (Walters 1987). These problems did not abate. The year 1987 was therefore an especially important 'middle year' in which the Social Democrats, now with many of its top people in new positions, paid particular heed to complaints by various non-farming constituencies about such problems as the agricultural sector's deficit, environmental

pollution, and the cost and quality of food and food stuffs. Palme's successor, Ingvar Carlsson, who had played an influential role in shaping the party's policies for the 1980's (Walters 1987) was thus faced with the task of fulfilling election promises made by his predecessor.<sup>2</sup> This in substantial part meant addressing the clearly burgeoning conflict of interests between those earning their livelihoods from agricultural production (a small minority) and those who consumed their products (the great majority). In consequence the timing of my fieldwork was especially appropriate for examining the structured relationship between State intervention and response by farmers.

The second notable event occurred only two months after the assassination of Prime Minister Palme, while the country was still recovering from the murder of its leader. This incident must be seen in light of the fact that the nuclear energy issue had been an extremely divisive one in Swedish politics (see Ruin 1982). I refer, of course, to the reactor meltdown and explosion at the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl north of Kiev in the Soviet Union on 26 April 1986. The fallout from Chernobyl, situated approximately 1200 kilometres to the south-east of Lund, drifted predominantly westward with the wind. Sweden was first to pick up signals revealing abnormally high levels of radiation on 28 April, and was also the nation worst affected by fallout. While only certain areas of Sweden, most notably in the north, were reported as having been contaminated by radioactive particles (*New Scientist*, 18 December 1986), the accident opened the eyes of many ordinary Swedish citizens to the dangers of unsafe nuclear power stations in neighbouring countries and the vulnerability of Sweden's land-based resources in the face of air-borne pollution. It certainly fuelled the anti-nuclear movement which in Sweden as elsewhere was a predecessor of the rapidly growing environmental movement. It also enabled the Farmers' Federation to voice a clear stand in favour of the development of alternative sources of energy, such as cereal crops to be grown for burning or ethanol production. It would seem likely that the accident at Chernobyl propelled the Social

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<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of the role of the Prime Minister in the Swedish Model, see Ruin (1991).

Democrats into intensifying their efforts to appear to confront environmental pollution. A further important consequence was that the constant measuring and checking of radiation levels by the authorities contributed to the politicization of illness, disease, toxicity and life-killing processes in humans, livestock, trees, plants and crops (cf Nohrstedt 1991). Sandman and Paden (1984) have noted a similar response following the breakdown at the nuclear facility at Three Mile Island near Harrisburg in Pennsylvania, USA in 1979, an event which in fact had convinced Olof Palme to hold a referendum in Sweden in 1980 on the future of nuclear power. In other words, the Chernobyl accident caused a general raising of concern for the environment amongst the population at large, many of whom would vote for the up and coming Environmental Party in the 1988 election.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to be definitive about the extent to which these two key events influenced the political debate at national level in the months following. Suffice it to say, that I arrived in the field seven months following Palme's assassination, and five months after the Chernobyl disaster, when these events were still fresh in the minds of every citizen.

Fieldwork began at the beginning of October 1986, on the very day the annual session of the Swedish Parliament commenced as well as another round of negotiations between the Farmers' Federation, other important interest groups, and the Government.

Upon my arrival, I became immediately aware of both large-scale and small-scale political activity, by members of old social movements as well as new movements. The labour movement, or more precisely the unions affiliated with the *LO* and the *TCO*, many of whom were public servants, had called a large-scale nationwide strike involving 17,000 workers demanding higher wages. In contrast to this, a highly vocal anti-nuclear power group representative of new social movements and consisting of only ten protesters had erected a temporary camp near Barsebäck, Sweden's southernmost nuclear power plant

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<sup>3</sup> See Bennulf and Holmberg (1990) for a treatment of the "green" breakthrough in Sweden.

located on the western seaside border of the Lund Plain, only twenty kilometres north of Malmö. These demonstrators wanted an immediate shut down of all nuclear power stations, as opposed to a gradual phase-out over a twenty-five year period, the outcome of the controversial 1980 referendum.<sup>4</sup>

I had come to the Lund Plain to study the political culture of the farmers in the region, or more precisely processes of opposition vis-a-vis the State and wider society. At first sight, to my great disappointment, there appeared to be no political activity at all amongst rural producers. As usual in the month of October, the mixed crop producers on the Lund Plain, as elsewhere on the Skåne Plain, were in the final stages of lifting and transporting sugarbeet. For those who did not grow this particular crop, harvesting was over. They had parked away their cereal harvesters for the season, cleaned out their dryers, and started ploughing some of their fields in preparation for the next season's crops. Notwithstanding this intense flow of demanding and arduous labour amongst commodity producers, I soon learned that as the quiet winter season approached, the annual round of meetings to discuss and debate the issues of the day would shortly resume (cf Lipset 1950 on Canada). The major topics of discussion that winter would be the various measures coming down to force a cut back in the production of cereals. These policies targeted the three key elements of agricultural production: land, production methods and the market itself.

The first policy (the response to which I analyze in Chapter 4) was one advocating that cereal growers voluntarily fallow ten per cent of their land. The second policy (the protest activities against which I analyze in Chapter 5) was in fact a policy package consisting of a series of measures, the first of which aimed to force a reduction in farmers' use of agrochemicals, the second of which banned the use of a common chemical, and the third of

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<sup>4</sup> Members of the same organization staged a demonstration at the Barsebäck nuclear power plant on 26 April 1987 to commemorate the death of the thirty-one Soviets who died in the Chernobyl accident, and again to make a statement against Swedish policy on nuclear power.

which aimed to force a reduction in the use of commercial fertilizer. The third policy (the outcry against which I analyze in Chapter 6) proposed deregulation of the cereal market of the agricultural economy.

Not only did each individual policy pose a threat to farm operators, taken together they spelled disaster. The questions on every grower's mind were: would he be able to survive the fall in income which these interventionist measures would inevitably bring? How would he make up for the loss? What would be the longer term impact on the lifestyle of his family and their life chances in the future?

The various forms of protest which emerged in this scenario are the central focus of my study.

I end this section with some concluding remarks to demonstrate that actors do transform the conditions of their own existence. My period in the field ended in February 1988, before the elections scheduled for September that year. The location of my study in historical time would not be complete unless some mention was made of the outcome of the 1988 election, and the one following in 1991. These heralded and confirmed the end of a long period of Social Democratic rule. In 1988, the Environmental Party won more than four per cent of the national vote. This was the minimum required (Ruin 1982:148) for entry into Parliament. The win caused a shift in the balance of power at national level. Nevertheless, the Social Democratic Party held on to its leadership position (Sainsbury 1989; Parkin 1989:197). Three years later, however, in the elections of 1991, the Social Democrats lost a significant number of votes forcing it into opposition (Sainsbury 1992). Not only that, but the Environmental Party also fell out of favour, failing to win the required number of votes to maintain its seats in Parliament. By late 1991, therefore, only three and a half years since my departure from the field, the national political scene, since 1932 dominated by the Social Democrats (except for six years from 1976-1982) and then

briefly punctuated by the Environmental Party, had changed dramatically. This was to have significant bearing on agricultural policy for the 1990's.

In summary, this study explores the practice of protest by farmers on the Lund Plain in Skåne. These growers operated as individual entrepreneurs or "businessmen" in a planned agricultural economy. The period had been characterized by the ruling Social Democratic Party as one of continued and varied 'crisis', and negotiations were in progress to resolve the many problems identified. Although my analysis is loosely informed by a pluralist perspective of social democratic political process, I focus in the main on the internal dynamics of the political activities of cereal growing farmers, how they entered into dialogue with the State, and negotiated relations with non-farming neighbours. I did not observe the inner workings of government linkage with other established interest groups in the region. Within my particular frame of reference, I show how the specific conditions which pertained between the Farmers' Federation and the Government at national level during the various stages of policy-making generated particular constellations of political response amongst farmers at regional level.

## **5. CONTENTS AND CHAPTERS**

In Chapter 2, I describe the ethnographic area and significant aspects of social relations of farmers who operate widely dispersed farms in a densely populated and highly industrialized area. The chapter locates the actors in their social milieu. A key point is that farmers are structurally separated from non-farming inhabitants of the region in which they live. Another point of importance is that although they are geographically distant from the national power base in Stockholm, they are linked to it through the structural framework provided by the Farmers' Federation, and the Ministry of Agriculture's regional arm, the County Agricultural Board.



Chapter 3 builds on the analysis of rural producers' location in relation to each other, as well as in the wider society and vis-a-vis the State, by laying bare the prevalence of indirect modes of communication in the political activities of cereal growers. The reliance on and use of various mass media as means of receiving and sending interpretations, of channelling communications, within farming ranks and to groups and institutions which stand in opposition to the Farmers' Federation, are key features of the politics of agricultural production.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 constitute case studies of the mobilization of different combinations of acts of protest against interventionist measures (targeting land, production methods and the market itself, respectively) in various stages of their careers. All the policy measures aimed to restrict the output of cereal crops.

Chapter 4 traces the response to calls by Government and the Farmers' Federation to take land out of production, a measure in its implementation stage. I argue that the low-key and quietly manipulative pattern of protest which was played out mainly in the private arena of the farm, and other locations well removed from the Union Branch of the Farmers' Federation, and which I call resistance, should be seen as a reflection of the last stage of policy-negotiation when compromise has been achieved between the Farmers' Federation and the Government. In this circumstance, to resist the Fallow Program, as the reform was known, was the only recourse available. To speak out publicly against the Program once it has been given its final seal of approval by Federation and Government would be incompatible with the corporatist decision-making process. The aim of resistance is to evade new policy.

In Chapter 5 the measure of focus is in fact a policy package which proposed restrictions on the use of agrochemicals and commercial fertilizer in the production of crops. These measures were in the negotiation stage of their career. The Farmers' Federation and Government were deeply divided on their content. I argue that defence as a pattern of

protest completely different from resistance should be seen as the most self-serving response during the long period of policy negotiation at national level. Throughout negotiations, the Federation continually challenged the Government's new position against agricultural inputs. Growers actively contested the assumptions on which Government was trying to build its new position that continued high intensity farming was harmful to the environment. The aim of defence is to water down individual clauses in proposed legislation before the final report is put to Parliament.

In Chapter 6, finally, I focus on a policy measure which aimed to deregulate the cereal market. I argue that attack as a third pattern of protest occurred in the embryonic stage of policy, when the Farmers' Federation and Government were still poles apart, and neither party had as yet formulated official positions. I explain the expression of anger and fury as reflective of the as yet undefined relationship between the Farmers' Federation and Government on this measure. The chapter explores the development of a vicious rhetoric to express opposition to the labour movement's involvement in agricultural politics through behind-the-scenes negotiation with Government. The aim of attack is to persuade Government to drop the policy altogether, before commissions have been appointed.

Attack, defence and resistance thus constitute three distinct patterns of protest deployed by farmers to influence the national policy-making process in their favour.

The staging of a demonstration by farmers in Skåne in late 1987 was the culmination of a rising crescendo of discontent. This had started to smoulder with the implementation of the Fallow Program negotiated with the Minister of Agriculture. It had been fuelled by the Minister for the Environment's string of policy measures which aimed to reduce the use of inputs. Hostility finally exploded into fury over the *LO*'s and the *TCO*'s proposal that the cereal market be deregulated. The demonstration confirmed the ever-present disjuncture between the farmers' own means and goals and those of the consumer, environmentalist and labour movements. As I will detail, these movements all had agendas which were seen

by the farmers as openly hostile to their immediate incomes and future livelihoods. The core activities of farmers centered on challenging Government's commitment to democratic ideals: a fair distribution of resources.

Finally, in Chapter 7 I summarize my findings that although protest as practice occurs in many forms, it is patterned in certain ways. The patterns are reflective of the system in which farmers, as actors, operate. By system I mean more specifically the shifting constellations of power relations between Government and Farmers' Federation as policy measures move along their trajectories, as well as the individualized nature of agricultural commodity production in which acts of protest occur. I elaborate on the ramifications of this on current understandings of the practice of protest amongst rural producers in western late capitalist societies.

## CHAPTER 2

### FARMING IN THE COMMUTERBELT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of the Swedish political system and the controlled agricultural economy were sketched in broad outline in Chapter 1. In that chapter, I drew heavily on the theoretical literature on corporatism by Swedish political scientists, but only as a point of anthropological departure. In this chapter, by contrast, I draw on two other bodies of literature. The first one comprises the rural community studies conducted in north-western Europe by Anglo-Saxon anthropologists. The second consists of the literature on networks.

The location of my study is the Lund Plain (known in Swedish as *Lundaslätt*). For the purposes of this study, I have defined as the Lund Plain that territory which falls within a ten-kilometer radius of Lund's city limits.<sup>1</sup> It is principally, but not exclusively, within this geographic context that I examine close up those features of farmers' extra-familial social relations which reflect their position in the broader political economy as sketched in Chapter 1.

To establish more precisely the context in which farmers, as actors, engage in protest activity on a day-to-day basis, I begin by locating growers in the general social geography on the Lund Plain, in which they constitute but a very small minority of the total population. I then examine indigenous views of community, and the process of community building, the importance of ego-centric networks, and some of the locations in which farmers meet up with other rural producers, i.e. activate the links in their agro-political

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<sup>1</sup> There are several other plains within the wider Skåne Plain, all of which growers see as geographically separate, although the boundaries between them are historically based rather than linked to any distinctive physical features. Going south and east, these are *Malmöslätten*, *Söderslätt*, and *Österlen*. Travelling north, they include *Landskronaslätt*, *Helsingborgsslätt*, *Kullabygden* and *Ängelholmsslätt*.

networks. I go on to discuss the importance of action sets, the actual process of connecting with others, and the incorporation of young farmers into the community of established producers. I end the chapter with a look at the social organization of the Lund Zone of the Union Branch of the Farmers' Federation from the farmers' point of view, thereby providing a window from which the reader can comprehend the social organization of protest as practice to be discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Throughout, I emphasize how various reforms, a distinctive system of governance, and the individualized nature of farming have generated particular forms of relating on the Lund Plain, amongst the farmers themselves, as well as between producers and consumers, in other words members of the non-farming population. (Relations between farmers and the State will be covered in Chapter 3). This is a phenomenon which has been overlooked by Swedish observers of the urban political economy. Previous anthropological studies of farming populations in north-western Europe have also failed to address it adequately (Arensberg and Kimball 1940; Rees 1951; Williams 1961, 1963; Nalson 1968; Gasson 1974; Verrips 1975; Newby et al 1978; Sinclair 1980; Ingold 1984; Abrahams 1984; Marsden 1984). Although Abrahams (1985) begins to touch on the impact of policies on a farming community in Finland, he does not make it a central focus of his study.

## **2. AGRICULTURALISTS IN THE MINORITY**

Sweden is an urban political economy with a small agricultural component embedded in it. One area in which the dominance of the urban over the 'rural' is particularly evident is in the region around Lund and Malmö. As will quickly become obvious in this study, farming on the Lund Plain is in no sense synonymous with life in a quiet and peaceful rural idyll, where kinship is the primary organizing principle, and life proceeds according to time honoured custom. Neither is the Lund Plain a remote rural backwater of the kind which up until the 1980's exerted such a strong pull on social anthropologists conducting fieldwork in rural north-western Europe (cf Cohen 1982; Fox 1982; Mewett 1982; Ennew 1980). Thus, the Plain is not a place where 'time has stood still', but rather one in which

change and transformation are commonplace. An ongoing process of rural depopulation, which has intensified following World War II, and the simultaneous construction of high density urban settlements on prime agricultural land, are indicators of a shift away from labour intensive to highly mechanized agricultural commodity production which has left, and continues to leave, indelible marks on the social landscape.

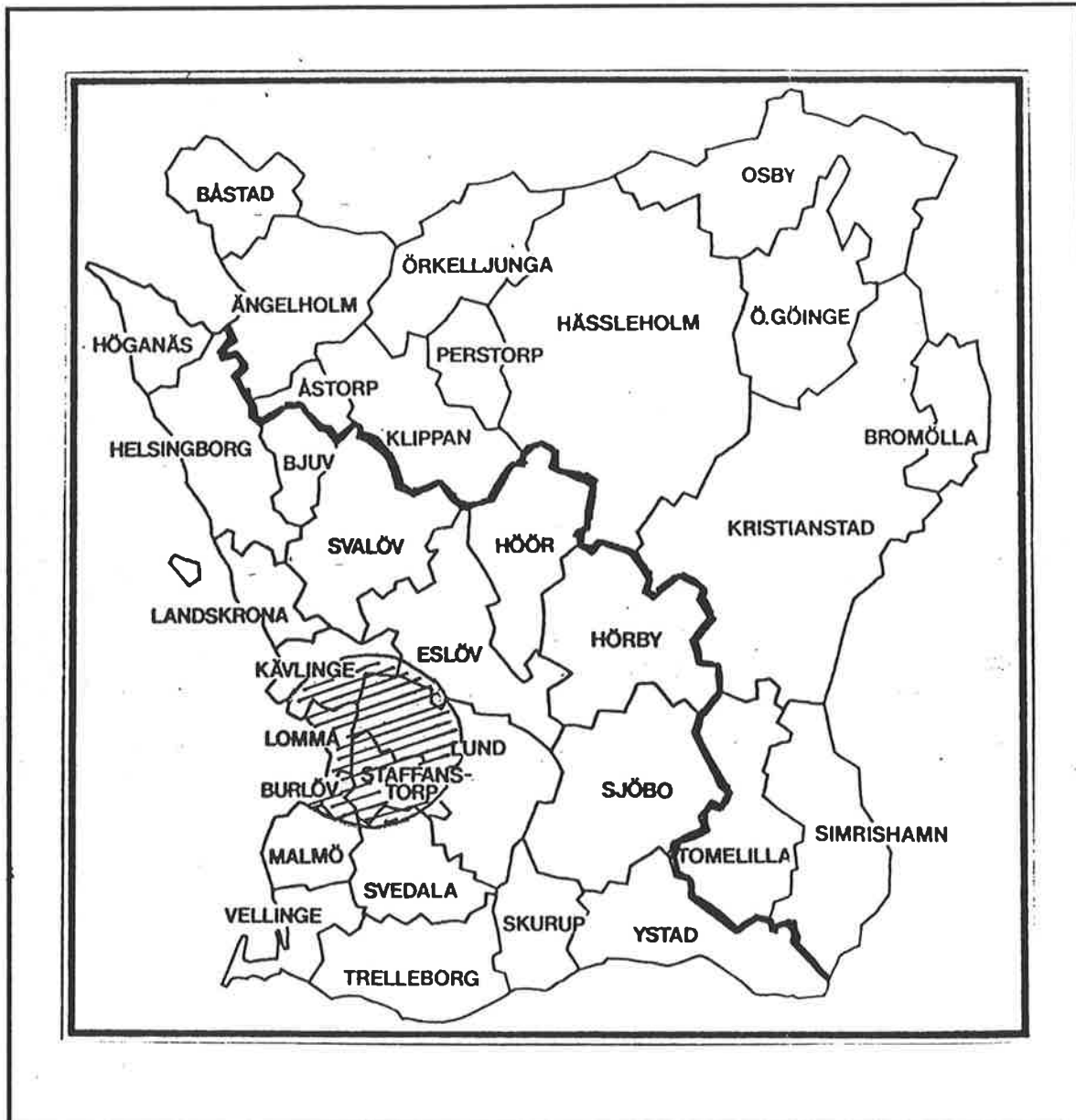
Residents on the Lund Plain are affected by two secular administrative entities, the smaller *kommun* (district or municipality), encompassed by the larger *län* (county). District Councils, based in two-storey, architecturally plain buildings all built in the same angular style as part of the national reform of local administration in the 1950's, handle a range of matters. These relate to child care, pre-school and after school care, schools, social welfare, public works, purchase, sale and maintenance of public buildings, planning and building housing developments, fire service, environment and health matters, and cultural and recreational activities. The twenty-three councils and council administrations within the boundaries of Malmöhus County (see Map 2, p.43) hold jurisdiction over the provision of communal services to the general population resident in the districts. Although significant proportions of farmed land are contained within the Districts, the councils have little, if any, say in agricultural matters.

The affairs of the Malmöhus County are divided between two separate authorities: the County Council (*länsstyrelsen*), which deals with matters such as police, social security, roads and transport, planning, public works, fire service and civil defence, and the Health and Education Commission (*landstinget*), which handles, as my rough translation indicates primarily health and education matters.<sup>2</sup> The total population of Malmöhus County is in the vicinity of 700-800,000. Malmö, the county seat, has a population of 250,00 to 300,000. The County Council's sprawling offices are located in Malmö (which is the third-largest city in Sweden). The council is headed by a Governor (*landshövding*) who resides

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<sup>2</sup> See Gustafsson (1991) for a treatment of local [sic] level government in Sweden

in Governor's house (*residenset*), an unpretentious building facing a central city square where official functions are held.<sup>3</sup>



Map 2: Skåne's 33 District Council areas with the boundary between Malmöhus County (to the west) and Kristianstad County (to the east) marked, and fieldwork area shaded in.

<sup>3</sup> The Governor's residence is not an ostentatious mansion surrounded by well-manicured grounds enclosed by a high fence.

Residents on the Lund Plain are also affected by their location in an administrative unit, the *församling* (parish), of the Swedish State Church (Lutheran). Parishes are small ecclesiastical entities which at the time of fieldwork still carried responsibility for the registration of births, deaths and marriages, and residential address of all parishioners. A plain one-storey brick hall stands next to the church, which is either a centuries old white washed construction with tall square steeples and stepped gables, or a more recent brick construction with pointed but unadorned steeples.

The five Districts on the Lund Plain vary considerably in size. For example, the Lund District alone covers an area (433 square kilometres) equal to the combined area of the other four Districts on the Lund Plain. District Centres, too, vary a great deal in terms of population and character. Lund (population 60-70,000), by Swedish standards a medium-sized and extremely cosmopolitan city, is the most populous Centre of the five on the Lund Plain. In addition to its permanent population, the city welcomes a sizeable transitory student body of around 23,000, a steady flow of overseas students and visiting academics from all corners of the globe, and a stream of tourists from Denmark and the European Continent. A 900-year old town, Lund offers a diversity of employment opportunities. The Health and Education Commission, the Tax Office, the University of Lund, numerous other institutions engaged in research and technological development, and the administrative offices of one of the Swedish Church's thirteen dioceses (*stift*), located next to an imposing Roman-style cathedral, are but a few examples. In the private sector, we find a range of lighter industry, the most well-known being TetraPak, the packaging materials factory which pioneered pyramid-shaped milk cartons.

The north-western half of the Lund District covers the entire eastern and parts of the northern Plain. The south-western half extends into the less fertile middle-region (*mellanbygden*) beyond the Plain, and I have therefore excluded it from my definition of the Lund Plain (see Map 3, p. 46).



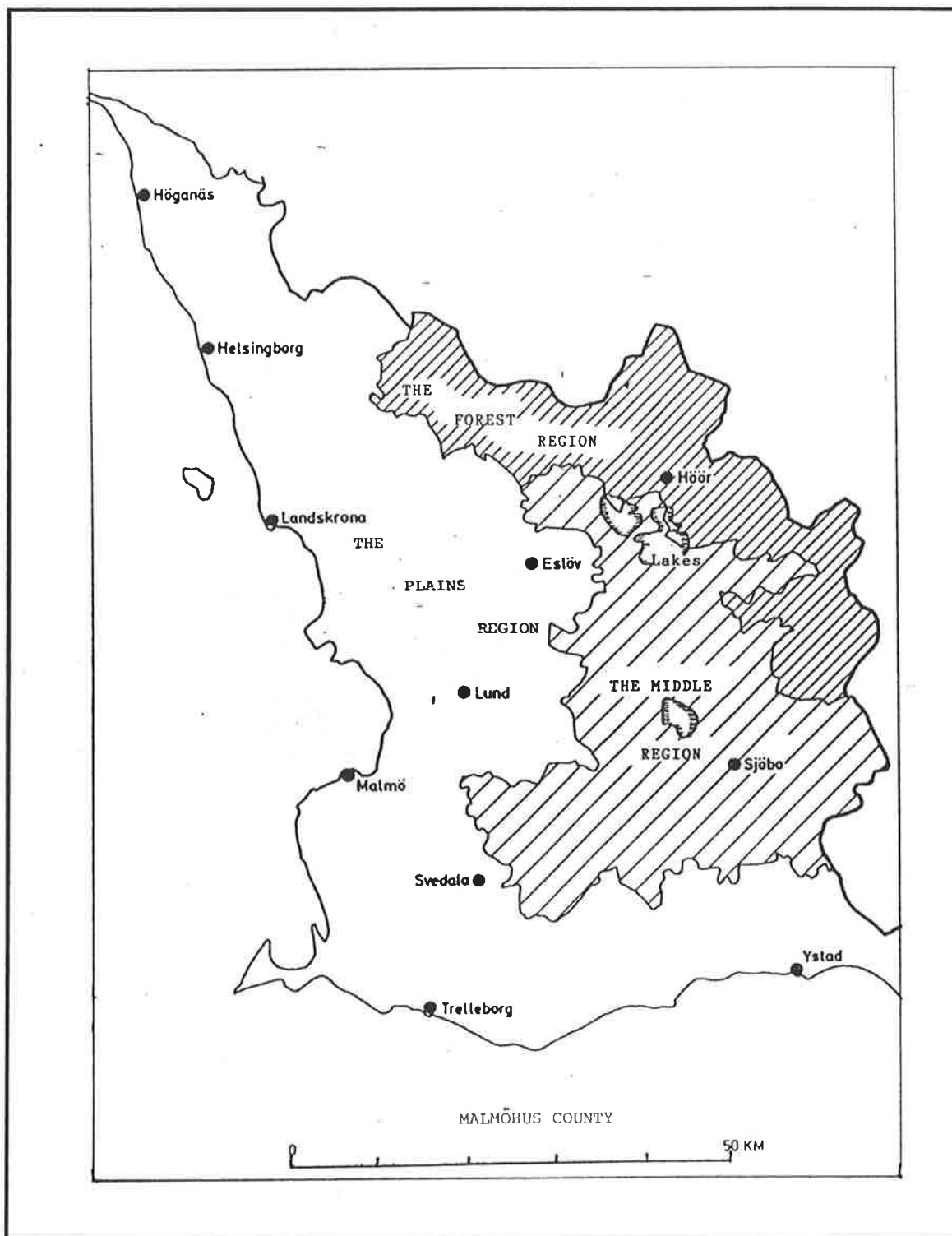
That area of the Lund Plain not covered by the north-western half of the Lund District falls under the jurisdiction of four other District Councils. Travelling anti-clockwise from the north-west, the next largest District is that of Kävlinge (population 21,248), which covers the rest of the northern part of the Lund Plain, but which also extends well beyond the Plain to the north. In the Kävlinge District Centre, located ten kilometres north of Lund, is located the largest slaughterhouse in southern Sweden, a meat processing factory and meat research institute, as well as a collection depot, dryer and silo for cereal crops. This settlement has over the past one hundred years grown from an insignificant stop on the railway line connecting Malmö and Lund with Helsingborg to the north, to an important agricultural commodity collection and processing center.

To the south of the Kävlinge District, in the western part of the Lund Plain, lie the Lomma (population 16,817) and Burlöv (population 14,871) Districts. The relatively smaller Centers of Lomma and Burlöv have assumed all the characteristics of suburbs, located as they are on the northern fringe of Malmö. In comparison with the substantial areas of agricultural land within the boundaries of the Lund and Kävlinge Districts, little farmed land now remains in the Districts of Lomma and Burlöv, where large tracts have been converted into housing developments, shopping centres, golf courses, highways and motorways.

The fifth District is that of Staffanstorp (population 17,436) which takes in the southern area of the Plain. In contrast to urbanized Lomma and Burlöv, Staffanstorp consists predominantly of farmed land. The Staffanstorp District Centre is still expanding, having grown from a small hamlet in the early 1950's into a modern commuter settlement in the 1980's.<sup>4</sup> A variety of industry, such as a food processing factory, a freezing works, an ice cream factory, and a farm machinery testing institute employ men and women from throughout the region.

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<sup>4</sup> For a history of this development, see *Staffanstorps kommun* (1976).



Map 3: Malmöhus County

(Source: *Jordbruket i Malmöhus län: Ekonomi och utvecklingsvägar*. Lantbruksnämnden i Malmöhus län 1971.)

The settlement pattern described above repeats itself from District to District. The majority of the population live in the District Centre. There are in addition in each District a number of smaller commuter settlements and church villages. The former are characterized by an absence of an industrial base and a limited availability of consumer services. The latter offer no services at all, and are but a cluster of houses.

The Lund Plain covers an area approximately 500-600 square kilometres large. The city of Lund, the four other smaller District Centres, the ten or so commuter dormitories, and the scores of church villages are home to a motley collection of residents who occupy a variety of housing, ranging from multi-storey blocks of flats, to two-storey apartment buildings and one-storey row houses. It is a relatively small number of people who live in detached medium-sized family homes surrounded by gardens, or in now commonplace sub-divided farmsteads. With the exception of converted farmsteads, almost all dwellings are concentrated in some type of urban configuration: District Council centres, which range in size from that of a city or town as in the case of Malmö and Lund, to much smaller centres of around 15,000 such as Kävlinge and Staffanstorp, to even smaller dormitories of around 2,000-5,000, to tiny hamlets of but a few hundred. By contrast, and by law, all farm families live on the farm. In cases where a farmer operates two or more units, the family lives on the primary unit.

### **3. COMMUNITY**

My reason for describing the settlement pattern in some detail is to contrast the high density settlements of wage and salary earners with the relative isolation of farms and farm families in the area. My point is that the settlement pattern reflects an ever-widening divide between rural producers and other residents, brought about as a result of processes of industrialization, and other reforms. Although a few farmsteads often are still located in the church village, the majority are scattered throughout the parish, and therefore in most cases some distance from the closest neighbour. The growers who operate the farms

cultivate all that land which has not yet been encroached upon by urban agglomerations, roads, railways, golf courses, industrial sites, housing developments, and so on. Farmsteads located near the city limits of Lund, any of the District Centres or commuter settlements, or in a church village, are always exposed to the risk of being completely surrounded by new housing developments, a fate which has forced many farm families to sell rather than face expropriation.<sup>5</sup> The boundaries which separate the urban fringe constructions from the farmed land are clearly visible. Others are more symbolic, expressed in every day language, and as we will see later, through acts of protest.

To farmers, church villages are still important symbolic vestiges of 'the rural community' (*bygemenskapen*) as older people remember it. I was once invited to a farmers' study group the subject of which was the history of Skåne. During the course of one evening, many of those attending recalled the local council on which their fathers had served up until the early 1950's in the days when the parish and *kommun* were coterminous, when religious and secular matters were dealt with at this very local level. They pointed out to me the now converted houses where the village shop had been, tradesmen or craftsmen had worked, and the elderly had been cared for (cf Newby's (1979:157) description of the 'occupational community'). Nowadays, all dwellings are inhabited by couples who commute daily to and from work in the cities and District Centres throughout the Province. Nevertheless, to farmers and their families in 1987, church villages still constituted important points of reference. They were the remnants of settlements which until the end of World War II had been thriving centres of agricultural, political, educational and religious activity, similar one might imagine to 'the rural community' so often described by social anthropologists working on the fringe of north-western Europe. But following a string of reforms closely linked with a society-wide post-War

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<sup>5</sup> The sale and purchase of farms and agricultural land was under the supervision and control of the County Agricultural Board when fieldwork commenced. Some of the rules regulating the sale and purchase of farmed land were lifted in July 1987, but I was not in the field long enough to be able to observe how this would affect land transfer patterns.

transformation of the Swedish political economy, these church villages had completely lost their village-like character.<sup>6</sup>

As indicated in Chapter 1, this is not a study of a 'rural community' such as the ones found on the fringe of the industrialized political economy (cf Cohen 1982:6). Rather, it is an ethnography of a confederation of farmers widely dispersed across the social landscape of an intensely urbanized region in which they are heavily outnumbered by wage and salary earners. In this context, we can expect farmers to conceptualize community differently from more remote rural populations for whom community often means a territorially bounded village held together by close ties of kinship. This study is of a community of agricultural commodity producers united against the national power base which, of recent, also incorporates non-farmers as representatives of the broad spectrum of consumers of foodstuffs.

As far back as the mid-1970's, Cohen (1977) argued the need for a political ethnography of everyday life. He saw the political as pervading and characterizing all spheres of social process (1977:183). Building on Cohen's notion of politics as being "the processes involved in the unequal distribution of valued social resources" (1977:183), I develop a notion of community which reflects farmers' engagement in oppositional activity not vis-a-vis a local power base but the Swedish State for the purpose of challenging Government's redistributive policies.

It is this continual engagement in political protest vis-a-vis the national power base which is also at the core of strained relations between farmers and non-agriculturalists. In this scheme of things, there is little room for warm and friendly relations with non-farmers.

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<sup>6</sup> Aronsson (1992) has studied local councils in three rural parishes in the province immediately north of Skåne from 1680 to 1850. Pred (1986) offers an exhaustive account of the transformation of rural society in south-western Skåne during the period 1750-1850. The Process of land consolidation has been dealt with extensively by Dahl (1941; 1961) and Mörner (1977). Löfgren has examined family and household among Scandinavian peasantry (1974), and the emergence of agrarian capitalism (1980)

Upon settling in a church village not far from Lund, I had been immediately struck by the absence of village-based 'community', in that village as well as others similar to it. All my questions in the early days of fieldwork confirmed that farmers did not have much to do with village residents, and conversely that residents themselves in the main did not behave much differently towards their neighbours than people who lived in the same section of a large apartment block in Malmö. In other words, they acknowledged the others' presence, but did not necessarily include them in their own social worlds.

Social arrangements on the Plain are clearly different from the old-style rural village Newby (1979) has described as an 'occupational community', whose population comprised farm workers, blacksmiths, wheelrights, and millers, all of whom dependent on agriculture for a living (1979:157). Social arrangements also do not fit Cohen's (1986) notion of community, which he claims to be characterized by the fact that "in rural England, rural populations will go to great lengths to contrive and manipulate their boundaries of identity and diversity" (Cohen 1986:ix). For this to occur, community must be territorially based; indeed, Cohen sets out to discover how inhabitants symbolically construct their community as different from other communities.

In my area of fieldwork, the church villages do not constitute 'occupational communities' as described by Newby (1979), nor territorially bounded, discrete entities as the ones Cohen and others have described. Nevertheless, I argue that despite being dispersed over vast tracts of land, farmers, no matter where their farm units are located, do form an occupational community. That this is the case is evidenced for example by the fact that in some circumstances they refer to each other as occupational brothers (*yrkesbröder*). Another way in which growers use language to construct symbolically community is by referring to anyone who is not a farmer, or as they often say a producer, as a consumer. The notion of insider-outsider is most clearly expressed in speech. Taking a broader perspective, farmers share a language and associated conceptualizations infused with political, economic, biological, chemical, mechanical and climatological terminology.

Long and complex meanings are expressed in highly abbreviated form, making this everyday form of speech almost unintelligible to a non-farmer.

Farmers' wives explained to me that the reason they did not attend any of the events which drew their husbands (except for Local Division gatherings) was because they did not, as one woman put it, "understand the language spoken there". As I will demonstrate in later chapters, the everyday language used at Local Division events is, to use Bourdieu's (1982) terminology, rather more ordinary, colloquial, familiar and loose, than the legitimate language spoken especially by leaders and speakers at larger gatherings. The latter kind of language is characterized, as Bourdieu puts it, by being well chosen, elevated, lofty, dignified and distinguished (1982:60). The language used by speakers and leaders as mediators between ordinary farmers and Government is heavily laden with technical and political terms, facts and figures, diagrams and graphs. Here, ordinary growers are subjected to "the delegated authority necessary to engage in a universal process of durable inculcation in matters of language (Bourdieu 1982:61).<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, it was not until I had spent twelve months in the field that I began to feel familiar with the growers' way of communicating their everyday experience. Those months were spent listening to ordinary farmers, Union Branch leaders, management of the various agricultural cooperatives, officials at the advisory services, and invited speakers, as well as reading farmers' journals and daily newspapers.

Individuals who did not farm for a living had no reason to try to understand the language through which the complexities of modern farming, including the political process, were

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<sup>7</sup> The Farmers' Federation organizes courses every winter at its SÅnga-Såby College near Stockholm for farmers in leadership positions. Although these are billed as courses which teach cooperative ideology, I argue that the SÅnga-Såby College is the formal institution through which legitimate language is taught. A mastery of this language is vital for anyone who aspires to a higher level leadership position. All major interest organizations in Sweden run their own educational institutions with courses available to all members.

conveyed. From my encounters with non-farming members of the public, it was evident non-agriculturalists lacked knowledge of the complicated sets of rules and regulations which governed farming as a business, as well as the ways in which farmers are linked to the State. This further deepened the divide between producers and consumers, with the latter unable to grasp growers', or the Farmers' Federation's reactions to particular policy measures.

The boundaries of the occupational community of farmers were rooted in their economic interest in the land. Those for whom the land was merely a visual enjoyment, non-farmers, remained outside the boundaries. Farmers' wives often fell somewhere in between, closer to their husbands in their identification with the land as the family's primary source of income, but rarely to the point of completely mastering the language through which membership in the occupational community was expressed.

It was evident to me that for growers, community had little to do with where they lived. They explained that to them community was something they experienced when meeting up with other farmer members of associations of which they were themselves members (the importance of associations will be elaborated on below, as well as in Section 5). Thus, growers told me that it was in the public halls and rooms where these associations held their meetings that they experienced a sense of community, what they called *gemenskap* (cf *gemeinschaft*). This occurred especially when the men sat down for the customary cup of coffee half-way through proceedings, which represented the peak of connecting with other growers. Meeting up with others and chatting at meetings confirmed that they were part of something larger than the family or extended kin group, in other words a group whose members shared a common occupation, and therefore stood in a similar relationship not only to the State, but also to the population at large. This explained why growers saw themselves in terms of belonging to (cf Cohen 1982) associations, rather than places.



Associational membership was an established part of life in the commuter-belt, with many associations acting as communication channels between individuals in the region and Government. Invariably, working adults were members of one or more associations. Amongst farm families where this custom was firmly entrenched, both husband and wife derived part of his or her public identity from the mix of associations to which he or she belonged. This became evident to me through the manner in which the farmers and their wives identified other farming couples in the parish to me when I first arrived in the field. As soon as the person's name had been mentioned, the associations of which he or she were members, and a reference to the position held, would be offered. In Nörrarp parish, for example, Per and Viveka were introduced to me in the following terms by other members of the farming community:

"Per is the Chairman of the Local Division [of the Union Branch], and also the Chairman of *Skytteföreningen* (the Shooting Association). Viveka is a member of the Board of Skanek, the [cooperatively owned] slaughterhouse".

Another farming couple, Karl and Britt, were introduced as follows:

"Karl is the Secretary of the Local Division. Britt is active in *Centerns Kvinnoförbund* (the women's auxiliary of the Centre Party)".

A third couple, Olle and Astrid, were similarly introduced to me:

"Olle is the Treasurer of the Local Division. He and his wife are both involved in *Torna Härad Hembygdsförening* (the Torna Härad Home District Association)".

This manner of introducing other farming couples confirmed that individuals derived a considerable part of their social identity from the associations of which they were members. I once asked a farmers' wife with whom I had only just become acquainted how she and her husband spent their time when not working. She replied by giving me a run-down of the associations of which they were members, stating with pride the positions

they had achieved in each one, as well as explaining the amount of paper and organizational work, as well as time spent away from home, required by such activity.

All the events and activities constitutive of what the growers refer to as 'association life' (*föreningslivet*), an important component of political life, were planned so as not to encroach too much on another important component of everyday life, 'family life' (*familjelivet*). Generally speaking, meetings were only held during the working week (Monday through Friday), sometimes in the daytime, more often in the evening, but never on Friday nights. Typically, Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, were set aside for family and friends. This was in addition to certain holidays such as Christmas, Easter and Whitsun which were strictly and entirely reserved for family get-togethers.

Associational activity amongst rural producers was particularly prominent in autumn, winter and spring, while no meetings were held in summer. For growers, the pattern of meetings was directly related to the political cycle at national level. Thus, in summer, when Parliament is in recess, associations held no meetings. This provided the opportunity for families to spend time with close and more distant kin. During the remainder of the year, however, when Parliament was sitting, growers were required to keep themselves informed of political developments in Stockholm, and plan strategies in response. This encouraged them to attend meetings and there engage in community building during that time when the Farmers' Federation and Government are involved in policy negotiation.<sup>8</sup>

The farmers' pattern of engaging in social relations with other farmers at meetings was also linked to the agricultural cycle. Thus, association-based activity was most intense from October to mid-March, during which time the weather conditions put a halt to the great majority of outdoors work associated with arable farming. As we shall see in later

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<sup>8</sup> Parliament sits from October to early June, with short breaks over Christmas and Easter.

chapters, this "quiet time" in the commodity production cycle coincided with the peak of national negotiations between the Farmers' Federation and Government. Throughout the agricultural cycle, there were only two shorter periods, each lasting several weeks, when farmers found it difficult or impossible to get together: firstly in April-May during spring sowing, spraying and fertilizing, and secondly in August - September - October during autumn harvesting of crops. We see, then, how the individualized nature of farming and the agricultural cycle, set against the national cycle of policy making, imposes a predictable pattern of meetings and associated social activity. Clearly, then, community building is an important activity which, in being fitted around family and work obligations, does not engage family and work relations.

To summarize: Whereas prior to 1950 farmers were in the majority, nowadays they constitute a minority relative to wage and salary earners. In the wake of industrialization, the previously dispersed settlement pattern on the Skåne Plain has been progressively converted into high density urban configurations to accommodate the growing numbers of non-farmers. As the State has assumed more control over the agricultural sector, all matters relating to farming have been transferred out of the local context and into the hands of officials at county level, who have also been given a monitoring function (euphemized as advisory service). The production of agricultural commodities has taken on the qualities of delivering a public service to be performed only by those who are able to meet the exacting requirements imposed not only by Government but in the 1980's also by consumerist demands. Thus, rural producers, as registered owners of their farm businesses, are responsible for, indeed required to, follow all the rules and regulations in place, and to keep themselves informed of any change in policy. In all respects, farming as an income-generating activity has become a distinct sector in the regional economy, and this is confirmed by the separate agricultural policy negotiation procedures at national level outlined in Chapter 1.

That farming is a separate endeavour can also be seen in the removal of farmers' concerns from the general administrative order. For example, at District Council level there was in 1987 only one unit which dealt with matters agricultural. The Environment and Health and Protection Unit (*Miljö och hälsoskydds nämnden*) monitored the spraying of crops, and granted farmers permission to burn stubble following harvest. The rules and regulations governing such common farming activities had, however, been negotiated by the Farmers' Federation and Government at national level, as had every other policy under which farming was undertaken.

The majority of matters relating to the administration of new programs and policies affecting commodity production fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture's County Agricultural Board (*Malmöhus lantbruksnämnd*) in Malmö, a specialized unit responsible to County Council but located some distance away from its main offices. It fell on this arm of the Ministry of Agriculture to monitor rather extensively all registered farmers cultivating land in the County (this included the annual collection of statistical data from farmers of the exact quantities of commodities they had produced).

We see then that although farmers are considered to be self-employed, they operate within parameters as set by Government in negotiation with the Farmers' Federation and Government. The individualized nature of farming, coupled with the constraints imposed by the national policy-making process, has encouraged community building amongst rural commodity producers. In this, all other members of the population are excluded, including farmers' wives. Thus, although in some cases farmers' wives do attend Union Branch meetings and other events at Local Division level, they are rarely seen at producers' association meetings. Not surprisingly, wives' participation in the various protest activities

I will analyze in later chapters was muted, circumscribed by the marginal role ascribed to them in the system within which crop-based commodity production takes place.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. AGRO-POLITICAL NETWORKS

I now turn to an analysis of the importance of networks in the building of community amongst widely dispersed farmers. Barnes (1954) defines a network as "a social field without boundaries" (1954:43), the extent of which depends on the age of the individual. On the Lund Plain growers' total networks (counting kin, all persons on whom they are dependent for goods and services in general, and so on) include, I would estimate, hundreds of individuals. To narrow things down, I rely on Barnes' useful distinction between total and partial network (1969:72-74), the latter being an extract of the former (1969:57). Thus, in this study I am concerned only with a portion of growers' total network. I term this subset their agro-political networks. In an analysis of farmer-State relations and forms of protest, this is the most relevant aspect of farmers' total networks.

A growers' agro-political network consists of those individuals with whom he shares information about the politics of agriculture at national level, farming in general, and strategies to deal with interventionist measures. Newby (1979) has described similar types of farmers' networks in the arable farming regions of eastern England as "tightly interlocking and rather inward-looking", adding that "the horizons of most farmers are definitely local rather than cosmopolitan" (1979:99). In contrast to Newby, I found that many growers on the Lund Plain are constantly seeking to understand the larger processes at work. Although some bachelor farmers refuse to join any gathering larger than the small and intimate meetings held in the Local Division of the Union Branch, most farmers are willing to travel quite some distance so as to always top up their stocks of knowledge

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<sup>9</sup> Some farmers' wives did attend meetings directly related to the production of milk, pork, poultry and eggs, reflective of their more prominent involvement in labour intensive livestock husbandry than in highly mechanized crop production.

about the national policy-making process through the sharing of information with growers from further afield. Through attendance at meetings and events arranged sporadically by the Union Branch and the various agricultural cooperatives, all of which fall under the umbrella of the Farmers' Federation, or the farmers' cooperative movement, as well as by a small number of private sector institutions, growers establish and maintain wide-ranging social networks. Through the links so forged, they are able to access the steady flow of information which passes from individual to individual in the context of meeting halls. Here, they are also able to co-ordinate their political actions to achieve particular goals.

The typical agro-political network of a grower comprises, firstly, other farmers. Sometimes referred to as brothers by occupation, these men can be members of his nuclear family, such as a father, son, or brother, or relatives by marriage, for example a father-in-law, son-in-law or brother-in-law, or blood relatives such as cousins. Often, a grower includes in his network old friends, now farmers by profession, from primary and secondary school, agricultural college, military service, and student days at the University of Agricultural Sciences. But most frequently, the men in his network are simply other farmers. The common denominator is farming, and thus by extension a particular relationship to the State and members of the non-farming public.

With other farmers, a grower shares information about meetings he has been to, what has been said by whom, stories in the newspapers, how he plans to deal with changes as they start to impinge on his farm business, and the best political strategies to deploy. In short, the subject is invariably agro-political developments and how to respond to them.

## **5. THE UNION BRANCH AND THE LANDMEN**

The Swedish Farmers' Federation is not one organization but a complex of independent political and economic associations which are inter-linked. As the Lund Plain farmers are first and foremost producers of agricultural commodities, every grower is a member of a

producers' association for each commodity produced. Crops are grown on what Newbury terms the "intensive rotational mixed commodity system" (1980:186-187) common throughout north-western Europe. On the Lund Plain, growers usually rotate four different crops, but sometimes farmers will grow as many as six or seven. This depends on the size of the farm. Many farmers also fatten livestock on a large scale (principally pigs). Some combine rearing and fattening in one continuous operation. Large-scale poultry rearing and egg production are also common. A small number of farmers still keep dairy herds. Each grower produces a mix of on the average five different commodities. This will require him to be a member of five different producers' associations. Cereal growing farmers, for example, join the grain growers' association, known as The Landmen. Membership entitles them to enter into contract with The Landmen to produce a particular variety and grade of crop on a specified area of land. In return, The Landmen undertakes to purchase the total quantity of crop harvested on the land area agreed upon, and to market and distribute the commodity.

The Landmen is run by a Board of farmers which includes also senior management. Staff are employed to carry out the day-to-day work of receiving, grading, storing, drying, and delivering commodities to their destination, and all the administrative work associated with it. Structurally, all producers' associations, The Landmen included, come under the Economic Branch of the Farmers' Federation.

Membership in the producers' associations, referred to in Swedish as economic associations (*ekonomisk förening*), is mandatory. These associations are farmer run. As no farmer would have sufficient time to participate as a board member or other capacity in the running of all the associations of which he is a member, he usually chooses an area of specific interest (for example, cereals, or sugarbeet) in which to make a contribution to discussions and associated lobby activity (relating to all aspects of the growing, collection, processing and pricing of that commodity).

As producers in a controlled market, the farmers are constantly engaged in relations with the State. The system recognizes a second dimension of farmer-State relations, which it distinguishes from the economic dimension: a political dimension. Although structurally separate, the two dimensions are of course interlinked. In addition to being members of producers' associations, farmers are also members of their local association of the Union Branch of the Farmers' Federation (the political dimension is denoted in Swedish by the term non-profit (*ideell*) association). The Local Division (*lokalörening*) of the Union Branch is the domain in which lobby activities in the formal sense of the word are planned and executed. Membership in the Union Branch in 1987 was voluntary. At a minimum, a fee paying member of the Union Branch would try to attend the Annual Meeting of his local division. Although only around one-fourth of all paying members regularly participated in the Local Divisions' activities and events, everyone was involved in some form of protest vis-a-vis the State simply by virtue of being a farmer and in the overall scheme therefore by definition occupying a position in opposition to non-farming members of the population.

## 6. ACTION SETS

The organizational structure of the Union Branch and The Landmen at regional level provides a framework within which farmers as self-employed entrepreneurs are able to engage in meaningful social relations outside the context of their highly individualized work. This they can do either as an ordinary member holding no position of responsibility, or as a member of one or more boards or committees, or what Barnes (1969:72-74) and Boissevain (1974:186-191) refer to as action sets. Barnes defines an action set as different from the network in that "the latter [network] persists through time [while] the former [action sets] are temporary, but drawn from the network" (Barnes 1969:69).

I characterize action sets by the fact that they are task-oriented and have a leader. They can be large or small, temporary or permanent. Thus, I take issue with Barnes' (1954)



notion that all action sets are temporary. On the Lund Plain, some action sets such as boards (*styrelser*) are permanent. Others, for example work parties (*arbetsgrupper*), come into being to accomplish a particular task; upon completion of the task, they are then disbanded (an example is given in Chapter 3). Unlike Barnes I also make a distinction between those action sets which require participants to have a deep understanding of the political process, as opposed to those which require of their members a great deal of knowledge about the leadership potential of farmers, especially for permanent action sets. Committees which put forward nominees for election to various positions (*valberedningskommitteer*) are examples of the latter. In this study I am only concerned with action sets with a political focus, whether an annual meeting with board members and elected representatives, a group meeting to discuss the ramifications of a particular policy initiative, several thousand farmers attending a rally, or two growers in a Local Division getting together to formulate a letter to a Government representative (see Chapter 6 for an analysis of several action sets in motion).

In comparison to interactions between ordinary growers, the content of discussions between ordinary farmers and leaders of action sets are more focussed on pressure group activity. From leaders of action sets, a grower is able to ascertain details such as the stand of the action set, for example a board, on various issues. Those who occupy positions as full members of a board are considered a particularly useful source of information. Within the Union Branch, for example, there are numerous action sets: the Board at Local Division, Zone and Provincial level are the most prominent. When large scale strategies are called for, members of these boards or action sets are charged with the mobilization of ordinary members (see Chapter 6 for an analysis of how this occurs). Within The Landmen at District level, there is the Office Council, chaired by a producer.

As mentioned earlier, Barnes (1954:43) defines networks as a social field without boundaries. Within this field first and second order network zones (Boissevain 1974) can be distinguished. Boissevain defines first order network zones in the following terms:

"Each person can be viewed as a star from which lines radiate to points [other people], some of which are connected to each other. These form [a person's] first order or primary network zone" (1974:24). But, as Boissevain has shown, the persons in this zone, with whom the individual has direct contact, are also in touch with others with whom he can come into indirect contact via members of his primary network zone. These friends-of-friends form his second order zone. To Boissevain's schema I will add a third order network zone. Each farmer is connected, through the mediation of the press, to the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister for the Environment, leaders of the labour movement, leaders of the Farmers' Federation, as well as the general public, in particular environmentalists and consumerists.

Some growers include a considerably larger number of individuals in their first order network zones than others. Disputing Barnes' notion (1954:43) that the extent of a person's network will depend on his age, I argue that farmers who participate in many action sets, and who hold several leadership positions, tend to have far more extensive first order network zones than those who do not. The following two examples illustrate how the variability in overlap with other growers' networks and extensiveness is related to membership in action sets rather than age.

Gunnar Fransson, in his late 30's, considered a young farmer, is an example of a man who is a member of a large number of action sets, and therefore has an extensive network. As Chairman of his Local Division of the Union Branch, Gunnar was the leader of an action set comprising himself, the Secretary and Treasurer. As Chairman, he was also in immediate contact with all growers in his Division (approximately fifteen), as well as with members of the board (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) in the neighbouring Division which had been amalgamated with Sederby. As leader of Sederby, one of the Lund Zone's twenty-three Local Divisions, he was also in direct contact with the Chairman of the Lund Zone of the Union Branch. Gunnar, as a politically involved farmer, attended the Annual Meeting at Zone level as well as Provincial level, where he had the opportunity to come

into contact with yet more growers in his first order zone, but some of these being men he saw less frequently, sometimes only once a year.

Gunnar was a member of several producers' associations, through which he was able to link up with a great many more farmers. It was his choice to participate actively in the affairs of the grain growers' association. Thus, he was Vice Chairman of the Office Council of The Dalby Landmen which included twelve farmers in total who met at regular intervals throughout the year. As Vice Chairman, he attended the members' meeting held in March, which put him in touch with other growers in the District. He also held a position as deputy *fullmäktige* (a literal translation of which is 'person possessing full powers'), or deputy elected representative, along with thirteen other farmers in his District, who deputised for the fourteen men who held full positions as *fullmäktige*. In this capacity, he and the person he deputised for attended the Annual Meeting in May in Malmö, where elected representatives from Skåne voted on decisions to be taken for The Skånish Landmen as a whole. Gunnar also attended all of the usual events arranged by The Dalby Landmen for members in general and so got to meet all those growers who similarly responded to these invitations.

But Gunnar, like all growers, grew several crops in addition to cereals. He therefore also interacted with the Chairman of the Beet Growers' Association in his area, the Chairman of the Potato Growers' Association, and so on, and would occasionally attend the Annual Meetings of these associations. Finally, Gunnar was a member of *Försöksringarna* (the Research Rings) whose members met sporadically to review the results of various commercial fertilizer experiments. This was a national organization with equivalents in Denmark, Norway and Finland. Through this organization Gunnar, and his wife, engaged in social relations with farm couples throughout Scandinavia, some of whom they billeted in their home whenever meetings were held in Skåne. Gunnar did not need to rely on a second order network zone. In fact, he always displayed a remarkable lack of interest in second-hand information preferring instead to go direct to the source.

Aside from extensiveness, relations have a qualitative dimension. The principal characteristic of Gunnar Fransson's agro-political network was its "close-knit nature. Bott (1957) describes close-knit networks as those in which there are "many relationships among composite units" (Bott 1957:59). Another characteristic of Fransson's network was its reciprocal nature -- there was an equal exchange of information between actors. Finally, social relations in Fransson's network were marked by regularity of contact, of particularly high frequency in winter (cf Mitchell 1969:29).

Gunnar Fransson is an example of an unusually politically active farmer. There were other growers who by contrast had first order network zones as restricted as his were extensive. They relied more heavily on their second order networks to find out what was going on, with information passed from leaders to friends to themselves. This was often true for bachelors and retired farmers, especially if they had never held or had abandoned their leadership positions. However, there were many retired growers, who once had held prominent leadership positions, who continued to maintain extensive first order network zones. Leadership, therefore, was the primary crucible, not age.

The following is an example of a farmer in his early sixties, Anders Göransson, whose first order network zone was remarkably restricted. Although not yet retired, he had for a number of reasons distanced himself from the other growers in his Local Division over a period of years. Nominally still a member of his Local Division, he did not attend meetings. He refused to speak with the Chairman of the Local Division, and had minimal contact with other members. Nor did he attend the meetings arranged by any of the producers' associations of which he was a member. And he was not a member of any other farmers' organization. He had, in fact, sold all his machinery and contracted out the work to a farmer in the district, one of the few growers with whom he was in direct contact. However, Anders' son Stefan was also a farmer, operating a unit in a parish to the south of Lund. Anders relied on Stefan, whom he saw daily, to fill him in on 'the talk'

(*snacket*), as he would occasionally attend meetings although he did not hold any leadership positions. Anders in fact also came to depend on me for information about what was being discussed at meetings. Anders' agro-political network was loose-knit (Bott 1957:59) in the sense that he engaged in few relations amongst composite groups, and uni-directional in that there was an unequal exchange of information, he being dependent on others like his son Stefan and myself for information on what leaders or speakers had said, but unable to reciprocate in kind.

These two examples represent two extremes, the polar opposites of the agro-political networks of one grower who was a member of numerous action sets (who happened to be in the early stage of his life as the registered owner of a farm business), and another who did not participate in any action sets at all (who was only a couple of years from retirement as a farmer).<sup>10</sup> The extensiveness of most growers' first-order network zones falls somewhere in between these two extremes. Third order network zones are characterized by their uniformity. They are identical for everyone, in that each grower has equal access to the press which mediates these relations. For me, this was the easiest network to gain access to.

For the first three months of fieldwork, in the course of spending much time with Anders Göransson, I gradually came to realize that the first-order zone of his network included only one or two farmers. Göransson was marginal to the occupational community of farmers and I could not rely on him to introduce me into it. It was not until I had come to know several growers more closely, that I was able to fully appreciate how the flow of communication operated between ego and others in his agropolitical network. My first

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted, however, that Anders Göransson chose to devote considerable time to the causes of the Lions Club, where he held a position as a member of the board, as well as to a bridge club and a golf club. Through membership in the latter two, Göransson and his wife maintained an extensive network of social relations with individuals from various non-farming backgrounds. Thus, Göransson in fact counted a large number of people in his first-order network zone, but as none of them were farmers, they cannot be considered part of his agro-political network.

encounter with growers with extensive networks occurred in January 1987. The occasion was the Annual Meeting of the Norrarp Local Division, as it turned out a lavish celebration of the 55th anniversary of the Division. I was the guest of honour. I ended my speech to the assembled farmers and their wives by expressing the hope that I be able to join them for as many meetings as possible, hoping in this way also to meet other farmers, and so be able to observe the exchange of information and the planning and execution of acts of protest in operation. From that point on, I was informed of just about every gathering as the growers learned of them. After a while, as I became attuned to how the meetings were advertised, I no longer had to rely on their goodwill. Notification of meetings always came by mail; occasionally they were advertised in the newspaper as well. Although I did not have access to anyone's private mail, I was frequently present when Anders Göransson checked the letters, notices of meetings, accounts, newspapers and agricultural journals which arrived in the mail. He would usually hand me whatever notices of meetings he had received but did not intend to go to himself. Once I had moved to Sederby, I was automatically included in Gunnar Fransson's network. I attended several gatherings held in his home, and also travelled with him to farmers' meetings further afield.

## 7. CONNECTING

First order network zones are characterized by people connecting with one another (in Swedish expressed in terms of making contact, *få kontakt*). Connections are made at meetings and other events. Some of the larger meetings, open to anyone who is a rural producer, may attract anywhere from fifty to 250 individuals. Other meetings, restricted to board or committee members, may count only from a few to ten or so producers. Most of my time in the field was spent at the larger meetings open to farmers generally. Some of these meetings lasted an afternoon, others an evening, and a few almost an entire day. Also included in the first order network zone of a grower are the speakers who are often invited to meetings.

The men travelled to meetings by car, journeying between ten to thirty minutes, often car-pooling with neighbouring growers. In the early days, I made my way to meetings on my own, but later I often joined a grower or group of neighbours in their car, listening as they talked of meetings they had attended in the last week, and speculated on what would be covered at the one they were now going to. It was by accompanying one such small group of men, that I was in a particularly good position to observe how one of them, Lennart Turesson, went about linking up with other growers, once we had arrived at the meeting hall.

From the moment of our arrival in the parking lot outside the hall hired for that particular gathering around one o'clock on a frosty day in mid-winter, Lennart lost no time as he set out to connect with or make contact with as many other growers as possible. On this occasion, Lennart and his companions had arrived half an hour early, as one of the others, in his capacity as a member of a board of a completely different group, had some important matters to discuss with another board member he knew would also be present at this particular but unrelated meeting. Lennart immediately took the opportunity to meet up with a couple of other growers he had recognized in the car park as they stepped out of the car they had arrived in. After shaking hands and exchanging greetings, they walked together towards the hall talking. Farmers were arriving in a steady stream of cars. Inside the hall, Lennart hung his jacket in the coatroom and prepared to meet up with some more people. Thus, he began mingling with the other men, shaking hands with each and every one, and exchanging comments with all those he knew. Prior to being seated, Lennart went looking for one specific person he wanted to sit next to during the proceedings, as he had some particular news to catch up with. Once seated and the speeches begun, there would be no opportunity to move around. It was therefore important to choose one's partner carefully.

No matter what the event, a lengthy coffee break is always scheduled half-way through what is referred to as the *program*. The break provides the next opportunity to mingle and

meet up with individuals in one's network. Just prior to the *kaffepaus* at the meeting I attended with Lennart, I noticed how he carefully scanned the hall for familiar faces. Having finished what he wanted to discuss with what growers sometimes jokingly referred to as their "bench partner" (*bänkkamrat*, pupils sitting next to one another in a school classroom), in the short space between getting up from his seat and moving into the coffee drinking area, he had "switched partners". He had approached yet another friend and suggested they sit next to each other during the coffee break. The person he had been sitting next to during the first series of speeches similarly went off in search of someone else to sit with during the break. Together Lennart and his new friend walked into the adjoining room, talking. Here, they found a table with spare seats. They joined a group of three other men, unknown to them, already seated at the table, and I occupied the remaining chair. From this vantage point I was able to observe what happens during coffee drinking.

Most meeting halls frequented by the growers have an attached restaurant facility. Arrangements are always made with the licensee beforehand to provide coffee, and if it is going to be an all-day meeting lunch as well. The tables usually seat six people. Once seated, growers do not move around the tables. At the beginning of *kaffe*, large stainless steel thermoses holding piping hot, very black, filtered coffee are brought out. Platters overflowing with sweetbreads and biscuits appear on the tables. Gradually, those around the table start to chat with one another, exchanging comments on a range of subjects. The conversation is usually only tangentially related to the topic under discussion at the meeting, tending to focus instead on matters of relevance to the particular point in the crop production phase. Coffee is never limited to one cup, and as information sharing gets underway, there will invariably be a refill, sometimes two or three. Drinking coffee is the highlight of all meetings, the only time when conversations stray far and wide from the subject at hand (see Boholm (1983:171) for an analysis of the social meaning of 'coffee' in the domain of 'family life', in the specific context of kinship gatherings). During coffee, ties are renewed, new links established, information exchanged, concerns aired. Even for



those growers around the table who may never have met before, it is easy enough to start up, or join in, a more general conversation and thus "become enmeshed in a matrix of personal linkages" (Mars and Altman 1988:272).

Drinking coffee together is an acknowledgement that one shares the values of the group. It is an opportunity to reaffirm that one belongs to the group, the association, and supports what the association aims to accomplish. The generation of a sense of *gemenskap* is heightened by the simultaneous operation of a principle of exclusion. Individuals who do not farm for a living are not included. This extends to speakers. The exclusion of non-agriculturalists is most evident at Union Branch meetings which only draw farmers. As a rule, Government representatives are never invited to these meetings. This ensures they remain relegated to growers' third order network zones.

This is in contrast to gatherings arranged by The Landmen or private sector institutions involved in the production of commodities. Here, Government officials may at times be featured speakers. They are brought into the first order network zone of growers, but only in their capacity as speaker. In this context, therefore, the exclusion/inclusion principle can be seen in operation more readily. By marking out the *kaffepaus* as the farmers' domain, the flow of information so crucial to community building can proceed unhampered, even with Government officials present. Thus, speakers representing the Government's point of view are not invited to join a group of ordinary farmers in their coffee drinking ritual. Whoever is responsible for hosting the speaker will recognize this and is most likely to arrange for the speaker to have his or her cup of coffee at a separate table with the host. By excluding Government officials from the tables of ordinary growers one avoids any potential for confrontation arising out of a representative of the opposition sitting down with a group which in most matters of import is hostile to Government. Management exercises a great deal of care when outsiders are brought into growers' first order network zones. Often, leaders acting as hosts to speakers representing the Government will "allow [them] to leave" straight after their speech, to be sent on their way with a polite "we

understand you have a busy schedule". The obligations which are implied in drinking coffee seated at a small table of six commodity producers simply cannot be met by a person who represents the national power base and therefore holds views diametrically opposed to those of farmers.

In this sense, the connections made in the first order network zones were akin to participation in a 'closed' cultural system, an exclusive farmers' club. Members of the club were bound by a sense of common occupation and identity, and ideology or value orientation, which served to clearly define their role and position in society at large as one in opposition to Government and non-farming constituencies. Nowhere was this expressed more clearly than in the language the farmers shared, an idiom which was only partially understood by those on the community's periphery.

Farmers' agro-political networks, first order network zones, incorporated other growers and speakers. But producers also included in their first order network zones a diversity of other individuals in the region. These were people they did not connect with at meetings, but during business activity. They were recruited from the various activity fields of farming. Boissevain (1974) defines activity fields as the different areas in which individuals undertake activities, for example at work, in their kinship group, as part of a religious group, and so on. He makes the point that people in urban situations are in touch with certain persons in only one of the many roles they play as worker, father, sportsman, etc. (1974:29-30). In complex societies, a person knows different sets of people in each activity field in which he plays a role (1974:30). Applying Boissevain's concept activity field to farmers, we can say that a grower is not only a producer, but also a bank customer, and a consumer of farm, legal and financial advice. Furthermore, as a producer, he plays a different role depending on the commodity in question, whether cereal and oilseed crops, sugarbeet, potatoes, pigs, or green peas. The sets of individuals with whom he interacts in all these activity fields constitute different sets of people, each set possessing resources of crucial importance in the business of commodity production.

The drawing on resources by farmers from support staff, such as managers of cooperatives, advisors at The Landmen, the County Agricultural Society, the County Agricultural Board, bank officers, legal advisors and accountants, was qualitatively different from connecting with other farmers. The people I have listed above were sought out for advice on strategies to reduce production costs when the price of inputs were going up and commodity prices going down. Relations with these first order contacts were further characterized by their single-stranded, simplex nature; the people involved played only one role, were linked in only one way (Boissevain 1974:30), as provider and recipient of service. Relations were unilateral (Boissevain 1974:26), the direction of the flow of information one-way (Mitchell 1969:25). They were "business like". Much of the advice passed on occurred in mediated, i.e. not face-to-face, form, over the telephone, through brochures, instructions, letters and other written material sent in the mail.

Details, information and advice were received by growers in the typical farm office, a room furnished with a large writing desk, shelves and filing cabinets, a telephone, and increasingly an answering machine, as well as a calculator, typewriter and radio. This was the "headquarters" of any farm business. The amount of printed material which accumulated in this room over a period of a year was evidence of the crucial importance of mediated communications, a subject to which I turn in the following chapter, where I also demonstrate how individuals in growers' third order network zones are brought into their everyday life.

## **8. INCORPORATION OF YOUNG FARMERS INTO THE COMMUNITY**

Associations, whether economic or non-profit, are run by practising farmers. This web of associations provides rural producers with an opportunity to interact with other agriculturalists, and also an avenue by which young farmers are brought into the community. Young farmers would often start out by joining the Young Farmers'

Association (a non-profit association, one might call it a "junior union"), also affiliated with the Farmers' Federation, before transferring their membership to the Union. Once a member of the Union, they would at first attend the 'study circles' (*studiecirkel*) arranged by the Local Division every winter. When young farmers had established a pattern of regular attendance, they would be encouraged to come along to ordinary meetings. They might then be elected into a relatively undemanding position. At the same time, young farmers would usually continue to attend events arranged by the Young Farmers' Association, until they reached their mid-30's when they were no longer eligible for membership. Upon becoming an established grower (signalled by the registration of the farm business being transferred from his father's name into his own) and assuming he was handling his responsibilities properly, he would take on increasingly demanding positions, gradually moving up the hierarchy of leadership positions. He might, for example, graduate from being a lowly 'contact' or 'information person' to becoming a deputy board member, all the while learning the language of the community. From there, the step to becoming a full member of the board of lower status was not big. Eventually, he might reach a higher position as treasurer, secretary, or deputy chairman, to finally be voted chairman. As a full member of the board, he would be expected to attend the two board meetings held each year. Members who occupied less responsible positions were not expected to attend board meetings, but were encouraged to join the study circles, and other events arranged by the Division, such as outings (*utflykter*) or 'study visits' (*studiebesök*), picnics and so on.

Once having attended a few meetings, farmers adept in the use of legitimate language and knowledgeable about the political process became sought after individuals. When they had had sufficient exposure to the political process from the grassroots, and acquired the art of convincingly articulating interpretations counter to those of the State, their names would usually be put forward for election to a position at the Zone level of the Union Branch. If they performed well, and did not abandon office because of family and farm commitments,

they were likely to advance to positions on the Provincial Board, the highest level of the Union Branch in Skåne.

The progression up the hierarchy was similar in the producers' associations. A farmer who wanted to make a career beyond a position on the board of his Local Division of the Union Branch, would however usually have to make a choice as to whether to do so within the Union or to devote himself to the more specialized concerns of a producers' association. But whichever avenue he chose, the amount of prestige which accrued to those holding "positions of confidence" (*förtroendeposter*) was considerable. Such men became valued as important sources of information amongst ordinary growers, crucial links in their networks. The local union association and the producers' associations filled an especially pronounced function in linking farmers, and keeping them up to date on the latest developments. Not surprisingly then the political function of the Union, as well as The Landmen, the cereal producers' association, will play an increasingly notable part in the analysis.

## 9. THE LUND ZONE

I began this chapter by locating farmers as a minority on the Lund Plain, seen from the perspective of an outsider. In this last section of the chapter, I look at the social organization of the Lund Zone of the Union Branch from growers' perspective.

The Lund Zone in 1987 was not coterminous with any of the general administrative boundaries, such as District Council boundaries, but roughly took in all of the Lund Plain (as well as some of the middle region beyond the Plain). The Lund Zone was a larger intermediate unit (*ortsförbund*), situated between the Local Divisions and the Provincial Federation.

The Local Division is the grassroots unit of the Union Branch. By and large, the boundaries of Divisions are coterminous with those of the parish, although in some cases two or more parishes have been amalgamated to form one Local Division. In 1987, the total number of members in Divisions in Skåne ranged from 13 to 285.

There were fourteen Zones in Skåne, comprising anywhere from 8 to 31 Local Divisions. The largest unit of the Union Branch in Skåne, the boundaries of which are coterminous with those of the Province, is the Provincial Federation of the Union Branch in Skåne (*LRFs provinsförbund*) which in 1987 incorporated a total of 271 Local Divisions. During fieldwork, I interacted most intensively with growers in two of the Local Divisions of the Lund Zone.

For the first eight months of fieldwork, I was based in Norrarp parish, coterminous with the Norrarp Local Division, where I lived in one of the five farmsteads which remained in the church village. Five operational farms are located in a circle around the church (I lived in one of these farmsteads), while the remaining twenty-five or so farms, which range in size from thirty to sixty-five hectares, are dispersed across the parish.

Each farm consists of a brick farm house, garden, and out-buildings of stone, wood or brick. The house faces the farm buildings which are always grouped around a square or rectangular yard. The back of the house looks onto a flower garden, and sometimes a copse. The farmstead is surrounded by fields which run all the way up to the back of the buildings and garden. As one farmer once put it to me, tongue in cheek: "We cultivate everything all the way up to the front doorstep" (*vi odlar ända upp på trappan*). Seen from a distance, the farmsteads, sheltered by tall deciduous trees, look like small islands in an expanse of cultivated land.

In the general administrative order, the parish of Norrarp is one of a total of thirteen parishes in the Kävlinge Council District. In the farmers' scheme of things, Norrarp is one

of the twenty-three Local Divisions in the Lund Zone. The total number of residents in the parish in December 1985 was 2,664. Around thirty families farmed the land. The Norrarp Union Branch counted forty-six members, categorized as follows. Fifteen were 'farmers with land' (registered farm business operators), fourteen 'farmers without land' (sons who had not yet taken over, or retired farmers), eleven 'persons with land' (individuals who had inherited land but who did not farm the land themselves) and six 'persons without land' (spouses who did not own land). The Union Branch's Annual Report of 1986 showed that of all the arable land in Norrarp parish in 1985, 99 per cent was owned or cultivated by individuals who were Union members. Virtually all of the cultivated land in Norrarp was sown to cereals, sugarbeet, oilseeds, potatoes and green peas.

Along with most other similar church villages on the Plain, Norrarp too had lost its function as a centre of activity following structural and administrative reorganization in the wake of World War II. Families now shopped for groceries in the supermarkets in nearby commuter settlements, Kävlinge or Lund, where they also went on the many other errands which were part of every-day living. All families owned one or two cars, crucial for living and working in the commuterbelt.<sup>11</sup>

In Norrarp, a core group of ten or so farmers participated actively in the affairs of the Local Division. The men met at regular intervals at one another's homes to discuss agricultural issues. In this Division wives frequently participated in general social events arranged by the board of the Division. The men, of course, also attended Union meetings further afield, as well as meetings arranged by the producers' associations of which they were members. All those meetings which drew farmers from the wider District were held in public halls, rooms and auditoriums in various locations throughout the Plain.

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<sup>11</sup> I, too, had to secure transportation. Without my 1974 Volvo sedan with an extra set of snow tires for winter driving I would not have been able to participate fully in the lives of working adults.

The following is an example of a Local Division meeting, which illustrates one setting in which individual networks cross over, and how farmers here engage in a mixture of business and social activity. In Norrarp, Local Division meetings were held in the living room, with coffee taken either in the dining room or *salen* (which translates roughly as 'the parlour' or 'drawing room'). Typically, a day or two before the meeting, the hosting farmer's wife would have prepared rolls, biscuits and a cake. The first and last stages of any meeting would be rather formal. But the middle stage approximately half way through proceedings was characterized by a great deal of informality. As the assembled group seated themselves around the dining table for coffee, the formal tone maintained by the Chairman would be abandoned. This was a welcome opportunity to share the latest news of meetings they had been to, as well as more personal information about family events, people who were ill, and so on.

There were many other arenas in which farmers met. From October to March, they would attend study circles and organize the important Local Division Annual Meeting. But as soon as the Annual Meeting had been held, and that year's motions voted on in late January, the men gradually shifted their attention towards the wider Zone. The major subject of conversation became the motions written by farmers in the Zone's other twenty-two Divisions. The elected representative travelled to the Zone level Annual Meeting in March, and the Provincial Annual Meeting in early April, the latter always held in Citizens Hall in Eslöv where voting on motions was a particularly important activity.

Although a small group of farmers in Norrarp tended to meet regularly, the majority of men maintained links with totally separate sets of producers. Nevertheless, all those resident in the Local Division were always sent invitations to gatherings organized by the Division's board, and therefore knew in broad outline what was being discussed at these meetings. Non-attendance at these particular events was therefore not equivalent to political inactivity.



Many farmers preferred to meet up with other farmers in the producers' associations, which also fulfilled an important function as social arenas. Formal written invitations to meetings and events were issued to every grower in the association's District. In contrast to the small meetings arranged by the Local Division of the Union Branch, these much larger gatherings were arranged by management. All farmers in Norrarp were members of The Landmen, the grain growers' association. They transported their crops to the Landmen's major depot in Kävlinge, four kilometres away. The Landmen's Kävlinge District incorporated some 500 cereal growers. The cooperative was a major supplier of seed, agrochemicals and fertilizer. The silo and dryer, warehouse, shop and office were particularly busy in late summer and early autumn. When growers had matters to attend to at The Landmen, they would frequently have the opportunity to snatch up bits of information from the staff or other growers who also happened to come and go, but most of their communications with The Landmen were conducted by mail or telephone.

As soon as I had gained access to individual farmers' networks in Norrarp, I immediately started to follow the growers' example and travel wide and far to attend the full range of meetings held throughout the Plain, the contexts in which the men activated links with other farmers in their networks. It had by then become obvious that I would learn a great deal more about grassroots agricultural politics, if rather than attach myself to only one or two men for the purposes of observing their individual networks in action, I placed myself in situations where the networks of individual growers overlapped, in other words in locations where many individuals exchanged information with one another within a short period of time.

Later, I decided to also spend time in another parish, so as to gain maximum exposure to grassroots politicking. Eight months into fieldwork, I left Norrarp for the parish of Sederby, coterminous with the Sederby Local Division of the Union Branch. Although Sederby is located ten kilometres south of Lund, a considerable distance by local standards, I continued to maintain links with Norrarp. My move occurred in the middle of

summer, during the maturation phase of the crops, when most of the working population were on holiday, Parliament was in recess for three months, the growers were anxiously watching over their crops, and there was virtually no political activity. I moved into a cottage (decades ago the parish workhouse) next door to the only remaining operational farmstead in the church village itself. I remained in Sederby until the completion of fieldwork in February 1988.

Although the Sederby parish was sufficiently removed from Norrarp to cut me off from the growers in that Division on a day-to-day basis, this proved to be of relatively little consequence. Significantly, both the Norrarp and Sederby Local Divisions came under the jurisdiction of the Lund Zone of the Union Branch. Even after my move, therefore, I continued to run into farmers from Norrarp at various gatherings, which confirmed the maintenance of extensive networks.<sup>12</sup>

Sederby is located in the south of the Lund Plain, ten kilometres from Lund. There is no commuter settlement in the parish. The population of Sederby Parish is therefore substantially smaller than that of Norrarp, in 1986 only 287. The residents of the parish are dispersed across the Sederby church village and three smaller hamlets. The Sederby Local Division has in fact been amalgamated with a neighbouring Division as a result of a declining number of farmers. There were forty farmers in the amalgamated Local Division, and a total of sixty members. Thirty-two were farmers with operations registered in their names, eight were farmers-to-be or retired farmers, fourteen were absentee-owners who had rented their land to neighbouring farmers, and six were spouses of the latter. The Provincial Federation's Annual Report of 1986 confirmed that of all the arable land in this Division, seventy-six per cent was cultivated by Union members. The remainder of the

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<sup>12</sup> The Lund Zone had a total membership of 1,628 (1,176 of whom were registered farmers, sons in training, and retired farmers), a substantial pool of rural producers to draw upon. The total arable land area in the Zone comprised 45,145 hectares.

land consisted of one property which was farmed by an agricultural college, and another which was rented from the City of Malmö and farmed by a company.

While the Sederby church village has met a fate similar to that of most other church villages on the Lund Plain, it feels in some ways more 'rural' than Norrarp. For example, the single-lane road which runs through Sederby has been relieved of heavy traffic which now by-passes the village on a major highway parallel with it. In other respects, Sederby is less 'rural'. For example, only one operative farmstead remains in the village proper. As in Norrarp, the centuries' old whitewashed church, this one with tall narrow stepped gables, marks the symbolic centre of the parish. Unlike Norrarp, there is no vicarage or parish hall.

There are some fifteen homes in Sederby, only one of which is a farmstead. The owner of this farm was Gunnar Fransson. In his late thirties, Fransson was Local Division chairman of the Union, as well as a member of the board which handled the affairs of The Landmen in his District.

The land use pattern in Sederby was very similar to that in Norrarp, with the exception of a rather large piece of non-productive land in the church village itself. This had belonged to a plant nursery whose owner had gone out of business. The farmer mentioned above had recently purchased these twenty-two hectares, and was slowly clearing the land of some remaining ornamental bushes and young trees while waiting for approval from the County Agricultural Board to turn the land into a golf course.

The Sederby Parish is one of twelve in the Staffanstorp Council District area. The farmers in Sederby, all of whom produced cereals, as well as the other commonly grown crops, were members of the Dalby District of The Landmen which counted around 600 members. The silo, dryer and warehouse, and shop and office complex, are located in the expanding dormitory Dalby in the neighbouring Lund District. As was true for farmers in Norrarp,

this was a place the Sederby farmers visited only intermittently, for example to pick up supplies in winter, or drop off harvested crops in autumn. Nevertheless, The Landmen was an important social arena for both Sederby and Norrarp farmers in another respect: the management, in conjunction with the board of farmers, arranged several informational, educational and social events throughout the year. Each event served as an opportunity for producers to activate links with other farmers in their individual networks. A particularly well-attended function was the annually occurring *temadag* (literally 'theme day') to which a series of speakers had been invited to give talks on various aspects of crop growing. The Kävlinge Landmen's *temadag* held in late January 1987 allowed me to observe how growers draw on each other, as well as speakers, for political information (see Chapter 5 for an analysis of how farmers use these kinds of gatherings as forums in which to voice positions critical of those taken by Government). Over a period of two months in spring, there would be a series of fortnightly *fältvandringar*, or 'field walks', lasting approximately an hour each. During walks, growers inspected the progress of crops and monitored crop disease on different farms, always under the tutelage of an advisor or other 'expert' on correct crop management. In autumn, a post-harvest dinner-dance was held, to which wives were also invited. Having received a special invitation from the Dalby management to this event in autumn 1987, I went as the guest of the Vice Chairman of The Landmen's Board, Gunnar Fransson. The theme days and field walks arranged by The Landmen were particularly good opportunities for growers to discuss the latest agro-political news in a structured, but essentially informal, setting, and so prepare themselves for what was ahead.

Other events occurred rather more regularly, but were restricted to a select few men. The Dalby Landmen, like the Kävlinge Landmen, was run by a Board of twelve cereal producers (*försäljnings-områdesstyrelsen*). In Kävlinge the hierarchy was more complex, with an additional advisory council of ten farmers (*kontorssamrådet*) without decision-making power. These men met at regular intervals throughout the year. As a result of

their ready access to a steady flow of information, they often acted as communication channels for other farmers.<sup>13</sup>

Each farmer on the Lund Plain, whether based in Sederby, Norrarp, or any of the other Local Divisions, was an actor in his own ego-centric network. As a rural producer, he was part of a community, the members of which all activated the links in their networks in similar ways and contexts. The men were automatically part of a loose-knit confederation of widely dispersed growers all of whom stood in the same relationship to the State.

To summarize: the Swedish system of corporatism, in which the Farmers' Federation is often pitted against other interest groups representing non-farming interests, and the individualized nature of farming, with each grower being a self-employed producer of commodities, results in a distinctive configuration of social relations on the Lund Plain. Thus, farmers deliberately seek out other producers with whom they mobilize resources for the expressed purpose of protesting against Government policy measures, including reduced commodity prices. That growers are wary of establishing relations with adults in non-farming occupations, even though these in some cases may live virtually on their doorstep, is also in no small measure the result of mass media coverage of new demands made by a general public critical of what it believes is a negative impact of farming methods on the geography, as well as the quality of food (see Chapter 5). Both the debate on environmental degradation and food quality, consistently, but in the opinion of all farmers erroneously, linked by Government to the cereal surplus problem, had made it all the more important for growers to protest against national agro-political developments. To stay informed of the direction of on-going negotiations between the national Farmers' Federation and the Government, it was crucial for producers to network. This practice

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<sup>13</sup> The Landmen was founded as a cooperative by farmers in 1904. In 1987, growers were still part-owners, holding deferred individual shares. Having put up an initial fee to become members of the cooperative, they received a share in proportion to the total value they bought and sold for, and rebates based on annual turn-over. Individual stakes were kept invested in The Landmen until retirement. Farmers' stakes constituted 8-9 per cent of this cooperative's capital.

extends to reading the newspapers and agricultural journals, listening to the news on the radio and so on (see Chapter 3), whereby links in their third order network zones were activated. Details gleaned through these channels were then cross-checked with other growers at farmers' gatherings in various meeting halls, rooms and auditoriums and strategies planned accordingly.<sup>14</sup>

## 10. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have outlined the nature of the occupational community of farmers, the importance of building networks, and the contexts in which networks overlap, links are activated and a sense of community is experienced. I have detailed the significance of associations, particularly the Union Branch and The Landmen, to growers on the Lund Plain and the diverse ways in which these enable farmers to form a coherent and influential pressure group through participation in action sets. I have also examined the actual process of connecting with other farmers, and the incorporation of young farmers into the community. Finally, I have outlined the social organization of the Lund Zone of the Union Branch, which covers all of the Lund Plain. Although I have described in some detail two of the Local Divisions on the Plain, this has been primarily for the purpose of providing the reader with a generalized picture of social organization at this level, for purposes of background. Some of my analysis is grounded in these two Divisions, but most of the acts of protest I analyze occur in other sites throughout the Plain, with one event taking place in a city seventy kilometres away.

Having provided the political and social structure in which growers meet and talk about policy measures, and plan and enact protest activities, I will now address the importance of the written word, and indirect modes of communication generally, for these are the principal means through which growers and the State engage in dialogue.

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<sup>14</sup> Halls and rooms are rented through District Council offices.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **MEDIATED ENCOUNTERS**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Mass media, as Rosengren (1988:520) points out, are integral to the Swedish political system. In this chapter, I examine the central role played by newspapers in communicating agricultural policy at various stages of negotiation to a readership of farmers, but also go a step further by demonstrating how growers use the press to dispute policy, or aspects of policy. Further, I elucidate on the centrality of the written word in general for farmers on the Lund Plain, for whom both reading and writing are commonplace activities inextricably intertwined with acts of protest.

The Lund Plain is geographically well removed from both the National Farmers' Federation's Headquarters and Government, both of which are based in Stockholm, some 800 kilometers to the north-east. Thus, two matters require some explanation. The first is by which means the growers kept themselves abreast of how Government and the Farmers' Federation proposed to resolve the cereal surplus crisis situation. The second is by which avenues they opposed policy measures, whether these had the support of the Farmers' Federation or not. In this chapter, then, I add another layer to my analysis of actor and practice in the Swedish corporatist system, as suggested by Hannerz (1986), by summarizing farmers' use of a wide range of mass media in their expression of protest. This represents a further strand of farmer-State relations. More detailed and contextualized examples of how protest is expressed through the written word are then provided in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Gurevitch and Blumler (1977) conceive of mass media as communication processes forming a system within a system (1977:286), and suggest a way in which the mass media as a system of communication can be linked to the broader political system. As they point

out, "all political systems generate principles derived from tenets of their political cultures, for regulating the political role of the mass media" (1977:282). Which means are deployed by the mass media in Sweden to articulate new policy, convey differences of opinion, portray conflict, legitimate authority? The question can be most effectively addressed by recognizing two dimensions. Firstly, as Gurevitch and Blumler suggest, the press predominates over broadcasting organizations (1977:285). TV and radio tend to be situated nearer the subordination pole of the autonomy-subordination continuum than the press. Secondly, as Gurevitch and Blumler also suggest, an analysis of the role of the press in interpreting new policy must distinguish between the mainstream press linked to political parties, and the specialist press linked to interest organizations, pressure groups and the like (1977:286). One question I pose in this chapter is how farmer-State relations are portrayed in both the mainstream and farming press.

Whereas in Chapter 2 I outlined the key characteristics of farmers' networks, in this chapter I am concerned with the content of discussion in these networks. The predominating feature of conversations is their agro-political focus. The subjects around which all conversations revolved in 1987 were without fail related to the cereal surplus issue and its impingement on growers in the form of a string of new policy measures designed to restrict the output of cereal crops by individual producers.

The concept medium, or mass medium, in itself expresses an important aspect of power relations in modern society, namely the mediated, or indirect, nature of relations between a body with decision-making power and the masses which stand to be affected by decisions. Here, I look first at the range of media through which indirect relations of power were exercised, and secondly at the media used by farmers in exercising counter-power. The first category of mass media conduits includes mass media in the commonly accepted sociological sense (press, radio and TV; see Hadenius and Weibull 1989), channels through which Government communicates new and proposed policy. As Hannerz (1986) indicates, however, mass media in modern complex societies are inclusive of more than



these avenues. There are amongst the farmers on the Lund Plain many other modes of communication whereby the relations which interest me are constituted. They include written materials such as journals, mass mailings, brochures, and pamphlets sent to growers by the Farmers' Federation, the Union Branch, The Landmen and the County Agricultural Board. A second category of conduits include those media used by the growers themselves to communicate with the Farmers' Federation, the CAB, Government, and non-farming constituencies: motions, letters of complaint, letters of protest, letters to the editor, letters to the op ed page, newspaper advertisements, and telephone calls. Interpretations of the content of these written materials and phone calls, in whichever direction the information contained therein is flowing, are shared and passed on from farmer to farmer in the various contexts in which they meet.

Written materials containing the voice of the Government and Farmers' Federation fulfill two important functions for farmers. Firstly they give growers clues as to the position taken by Government and Federation on various policy measures. Secondly they enable growers to plan their lobby activities.

Written materials containing the stated counter-positions of farmers are important in forging strong links amongst the political community of farmers, and special groups, action-sets, are often formed to enable the formulation and channelling of such statements. Here it should be noted that growers are not passive recipients of media messages, and that they actively use various means to get their oppositional views before leaders of the Farmers' Federation and representatives of Government.

In this chapter, I will first look at those indirect communication channels on which growers depend to receive information, which they subsequently circulate and trade with members of their networks. In the second half of the chapter, I examine by which means producers channel their own counter-interpretations to groups and institutions on the other side of the political fence. The chapter provides an overview, rather than detailed ethnography.

Extended ethnographic examples of how growers use various mass media in their protest activities are provided in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. In each case study, I build on my argument by demonstrating that the patterning of farmers' protests, including exploitation of the press as an important means through which to get vital political messages in front of the general public, is linked to the location of individual policy measures in their respective careers.

## **2. COMMUNICATION AMONGST FARMERS**

### **(1) The regional newspaper**

In this chapter I argue that in the domain of agricultural politics, the printed word holds a prominent position over fleeting broadcasts and short and infrequent television clips. As Bertrand and Urabayen (1985:25) have pointed out, in Europe radio and TV are a public service, usually a monopoly owned and operated by the State. This is certainly true for Sweden (Hadenius and Weibull 1989, Chapter 7:172-199, on radio and TV in Sweden). State control in Sweden means that broadcasting is centralized in the national capital. Local radio and TV exist, but are quite undeveloped (Hadenius and Weibull 1989:185-198). In Sweden, national TV and radio deal with the broad range of political issues, devoting relatively little attention to minority policy areas such as agriculture. This is why it was primarily to the press that growers on the Lund Plain turned for information about the agricultural policy-making process. While listening to the radio and watching TV were indeed common practices too, they were not the principal avenues through which producers kept themselves informed of occurrences in the Ministry of Agriculture or the Ministry for the Environment.

On the Lund Plain, much printed material in addition to the daily press was in circulation on an on-going basis. The farmers' weekly, and various brochures and pamphlets including the Farmers' Federation's annual report, to name but a few, continually reaffirmed that the world market for wheat was in a bad state indeed. All messages related that although

Sweden would only export around 1.4 million tonnes of grain in 1986, cereal exports were no longer bringing in revenue due to world market prices being lower than domestic prices. Rather, every tonne sold for export was incurring an expense at the rate of 1 Krona per kilo.

Publications were available at a small cost, or free of charge, which ensured an easy spread of this kind of information. Copies of one glossy fifty-page long brochure, for example, titled *The Economic Situation of the Agricultural Sector 1987* (*Lantbrukets ekonomiska läge 1987*), were on hand at no cost in a stand on bank counters (it was published by *Svenska sparbanksföreningen*, the Swedish Savings Banks Association). Readers learned from this brochure that the total production of cereals around the globe had dramatically increased, that an ever-growing number of third world countries had become self-sufficient in this particular commodity, and that the world's major exporting countries were locked in competition over the remaining markets. An eight-page long pamphlet titled *Agricultural Information* (*Lantbruksinformation*) (published by the National Board of Agriculture) was sent in the mail by the Malmöhus County Agricultural Board to all registered farmers in the County. This pamphlet explained that changing conditions on the world market had brought about a drop in cereal prices from a high of well above two Kronor per kilo in 1973-1974, to an all time low of substantially less than one Krona per kilo in 1985-1986 (*Lantbruksinformation*, 15, 1986:4, Table 2).

Newspapers, weeklies, brochures and pamphlets were vital conduits for the dissemination of the Government's construction, agreed to by the Farmers' Federation, of farmers' cereal surplus production as having reached a state of crisis. As it is beyond the scope of this study to provide detailed content analyses of all written materials I came across, I will concentrate more specifically in this and the next section on the press. Newspapers were particularly rife with interpretations of policy measures to deal with crisis.

Some measure of the political potency of the written word in the area of my fieldwork is

indicated by the fact that the greater Malmö region, which incorporates Lund and the Lund Plain, is served by no fewer than three morning newspapers. *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* (which I will refer to throughout by its less cumbersome direct translation, the *South Swedish Daily*) is the largest.<sup>1</sup> With a circulation in 1975 of 115,200 on weekdays, and 147,900 on Sundays (Gustafsson and Hadenius 1976, Appendix), figures which had not changed dramatically by 1987 (*SDS koncernen Årsredovisning* 1990), the *South Swedish Daily* occupies centre stage in the interpretation of farming politics.

Amongst Swedes, there is general agreement that to stay informed of political developments one has to read at least one newspaper regularly,<sup>2</sup> but it is not uncommon for adults to read two daily papers. This belief is also held by growers on the Lund Plain who are avid newspaper readers. By reading the paper, farmers learn of political developments which stand to affect them, for the political process at national level is the predominant subject of daily papers (cf Miller and Asp 1985:257). Up-to-date awareness of proposed policy and policy change is of particular importance to self-employed rural producers who believe their livelihood to be constantly under threat (cf Cobb and Elder 1981).

The *South Swedish Daily* is a morning paper issued seven days a week. Generally speaking, the *South Swedish Daily* represents a broadly liberal, anti-socialist perspective. However, there are many issue areas on which the three so called bourgeois political parties, which include the Moderate Party, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party, have conflicting opinions. This is often reflected on the *Daily's* pages. For example, the *Daily* took a pro-nuclear stance as advocated by the Moderate Party, being highly critical of the Centre Party's anti-nuclear power stance (see editorial 30 May 1987).

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<sup>1</sup> The other two newspapers are *Skånska Dagbladet* and *Arbetet*.

<sup>2</sup> According to Hadenius and Weibull (1989:285-287) approximately 80 per cent of households in the Malmö region subscribe to a morning newspaper.

Another matter of concern was what Government had labelled as pollution of the environment, water specifically (the growers' response to which I examine in Chapter 5). In 1987, the *South Swedish Daily* supported the Social Democratic Government's new policy proposals to protect the environment, accusing the Farmers' Federation's previous leaders of refusing to discuss what it termed the agricultural sector's problem areas. In the 30 May 1987 issue of the *Daily*, for example, the editor opined that "without a doubt more environmentally friendly and less intensive farming methods could have been a reality some time ago, if the *LRF* had been genuinely interested in this". Editorial comments of this kind were frequent subjects of discussion amongst farmers when they sat down for coffee and a chat at meetings.

Nevertheless, the *South Swedish Daily* is crucial to the Lund Plain growers for a number of reasons. Most obviously, it is a source of information on regional, national and international developments. In relation to agriculture, the *Daily* is always first out with reports on the agricultural policy-making process in general (cf Cobb and Elder 1981). The *Daily* also reports on the annual commodity price negotiations. It was through the *Daily* that growers first learned that the outcome of the price deliberations between the Farmers' Federation and the Consumer Delegation in autumn 1986 had been a substantial cereal price drop. In addition, throughout 1987 the *Daily* reported on all the other measures under consideration to force a reduction of cereal output.

The mechanics of translation, interpretation and dramatization of agro-political news in the general press is a study yet to be undertaken (a few studies have been conducted on media representations of labour union lobbying and conflict; see for example Morley 1976; Seaton 1982; Windschuttle 1985). I will here comment but briefly on how the *South Swedish Daily* presented agricultural news. The following is an illustration of how newspaper coverage of individual policy measures, like patterns of protest by farmers (as we shall see in Chapters 4, 5 and 6), takes as its point of departure the location of the policy in its career as discussed in Chapter 1. The *Daily's* interpretation of political

bargaining was a commentary on relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government on policy-measures at any given time in each individual measure's career. As mentioned in Chapter 1, each policy proceeds from its inception through a protracted negotiation phase to an implementation stage. Reflecting this progression of policy negotiation, the *South Swedish Daily's* representation of farmer-State relations can be broadly categorized into three styles: cosy, conflictual, and poles apart. Each style is used at the appropriate point in the policy-making process.

In Chapter 1, I explained that this ethnography is a study of farmers' protests vis-a-vis a slice of three different policy measures instituted to resolve the cereal surplus crisis, each measure in a different stage of its career. Confirming its linkage to the wider political system in which it operates, the *South Swedish Daily* deployed the poles apart style in the embryonic stage of the measure to deregulate the cereal growing sector (to be discussed in Chapter 6), before commissions had been appointed and terms of reference laid down, in other words when the Government's position had yet to be publicly stated. At this stage, and especially when public protest occurred involving those growers who stood to be directly affected by the measure being proposed, coverage was weighted in favour of the Farmers' Federation. During the first two weeks of protest, the *Daily's* interpretations included lengthy press releases stating the Farmers' Federation's objections to the policy, but no reports on the Government's position (as none had been officially announced).

In contrast, the *South Swedish Daily* deployed a conflictual style of reporting during the policy-making stage of proposals regarding the environment and food quality (the subject of Chapter 5). At this stage, the Government and the Farmers' Federation had not yet come to any agreement on the final formulation of measures. In contrast with the embryonic stage, a wide range of opinions received coverage, both those of Government, the Farmers' Federation, and numerous other groups who had been invited to comment on the proposals. Support of Government proposed policy was expressed by representatives of other constituencies, and Government, in terms of the measures proposed being

necessary to protect and save the environment from further degradation. The Farmers' Federation signalled opposition to proposed policy by always referring to the proposed measures as intended to force a reduction in the intensity with which commodities were produced, without thought to giving farmers financial compensation for reduced crop yields. The *Daily's* coverage of policy-negotiations included liberal sprinklings of quotations from documents, statements and speeches produced by the various organizations involved in the negotiations, rather than any explicit descriptions of how differences of opinion might have been nipped out in behind closed doors meetings. Rather, it was through idiosyncratic selection of words, phrases and lines of reasoning that the *Daily* conveyed whose position was being articulated in the debate on what farmers should be required to do for the protection of the environment.

At the implementation stage of new reform, such as the Fallow Program (the subject of Chapter 4), when Government and the Farmers' Federation had reached a compromise, the *South Swedish Daily* deployed a cosy style of reporting. At this stage, the only phase in the career of a policy in which relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government can be said to be consensual, the *Daily's* interpretations of farmer-State relations took on a high degree of uniformity to indicate support of the agreement reached as usual only after lengthy negotiations. The dominant construction was given the most space, with only minor criticisms allowed in throw-away editorial comments. There was no attempt at what is sometimes referred to as balanced reporting (see Ekecrantz 1988 for a content analysis of news in Sweden). Despite widespread resistance to the Fallow Program on the Skåne Plain, the *Daily* never in its coverage of the implementation of the Program acknowledged that growers on the Lund Plain were avoiding and manipulating the Program on a large scale. Thus, despite describing itself as 'independent liberal', the *Daily* remained firmly linked to and constrained by the dominant power structure.

Through this limited examination of how the presentation of agro-political news about policy development mirrors the negotiation process itself, we can see how the relationship

between the privately-owned press as exemplified by the *South Swedish Daily* and the Swedish corporatist State manifests itself. Thus, despite an ownership structure independent of that of the State, the *South Swedish Daily* employs reporting styles which reflect the corporatist policy-making process. Predictably, this produces a shifting media discourse as the policy measures move through the contested realm (Gamson et al 1992:383). It means that once a compromise has been achieved between Government and Farmers' Federation on a particular policy measure, the *Daily* stops publishing the full range of views on the pros and cons of the policy. From then on, the Government's and Farmers' Federation's negotiated position takes centre stage.

What then of the relationship between the *South Swedish Daily's* coverage of agro-political news and farmers who read the news? In reading the *Daily* the growers as a collectivity come to share a media-defined reality which not only reflects the corporatist policy-making process, but in so doing also provides ready-made formats for perception (Altheide 1985:7). However, as I demonstrate in later chapters, the news is never uncontested. Within the conceptual framework provided by the *South Swedish Daily*, the farmers challenge the *Daily's* interpretations, actively decoding political messages, and thereby entering as agents in constructing meaning (Gamson 1992:374). Thus, farmers invariably contradict, challenge and criticize interpretations of proposed policy measures presented in the *Daily* whenever they reflect the Government's new position. The construction of their own meanings is an integral part of every-day expressions of growers' protests as practice.

Throughout negotiations, the views of the Farmers' Federation, as expressed by the national Chairman of the Federation as a whole, and the provincial Chairman of the Union Branch in Skåne, are given prominent coverage by the *South Swedish Daily*.<sup>3</sup> A final point to be made, therefore, is that although the *Daily* ceases to engage in so called balanced

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<sup>3</sup> I do not here attempt an analysis of the formal relationship between the Union Branch in Skåne and the *South Swedish Daily*. For an analysis of a variety of unions' formal relationships with the press in England, see Glasgow University Media Group (1976), Chapter 6.



reporting once all the details in regard to a new policy have been finalized, it does act as a key conduit for the transmission of counter-interpretations by the Farmers' Federation up until the point of compromise being reached between the Federation and Government on the policy measure in question. Throughout this process, the opinions of distantly located leaders of the Farmers' Federation become known to farmers on the Plain through the *Daily*. Statements by Arne Lyngge, the Chairman of the Provincial Federation of the Union Branch in Skåne, or Union Branch press releases authorized by him, are compulsory readings. So are statements by Bo Dockered, the national Chairman of the Farmers Federation. Direct quotations by these leaders contain important clues as to the stand of the Farmers' Federation on specific policy measures at any given time. They also reveal whether the Provincial Federation and the national leadership are in agreement on measures, and on which points they might disagree. In quoting leaders of the Farmers' Federation on their stand in relation to specific policy measures, the *South Swedish Daily* links growers on the Lund Plain with their leaders through the written word. For this reason, I consider distantly located leaders to be part of every farmers' third order network zone.

## **(2) The farmers' weekly**

Although the Farmers' Federation, whether at national or Provincial level, regularly succeeds in getting its preferred meanings, at least in abbreviated form, featured prominently in the *South Swedish Daily* during the policy negotiation process, growers do not restrict their intake of information about a developing policy to this source. As mentioned above, rural producers are particularly concerned to deepen their political knowledge of where the Farmers' Federation stands on all measures beyond the comparatively superficial coverage offered by the *Daily*. Rarely do they engage in acts of protest in opposition to Government and non-farming constituencies of the population without being armed with all available background information. Of particular importance are points leaders of the Farmers' Federation have already had to concede, and conversely

formulations the Federation is still determined to retain.

In addition to the mainstream press (see Kurian 1982), there is in Sweden a large parallel press (cf Gryspeerdt 1985:171). The farming press acts as a sounding board for rural producers in their formulation of positions which run counter to those taken by Government, and on many an occasion the Farmers' Federation as well. The great majority of the large interest organizations in Sweden, the Farmers' Federation included, issue their own journals to keep members informed of where they stand vis-a-vis Government. Of the Swedish sub-category 'serious journals' (which I take to refer to literature published by profit and non-profit organizations, and with a prominently featured political orientation), those published by interest organizations such as the major trade union confederations account for approximately 45 per cent (Hadenius and Weibull 1989:129). There are in Sweden around 100 union journals, 35 per cent of which are published by the *LO*, 35 per cent by the *TCO* and 23 per cent by the *SACO/SR* (1989:131). Considering the relatively small number of Farmers' Federation members (approximately 100,000, in comparison with the several million members of the *LO*, *TCO*, and *SACO/SR*), significant resources are devoted to this type of communication. This is indexed by the fact that for some time, the Farmers' Federation has had a sizeable newspaper and journal publishing division, which from 1985 to 1987 employed no less than 150 staff (*Lantbruksåret* 1985:36, 1986:37, 1987:34). In those years, the annual turnover of the division increased from 148 million Kronor in 1985, to 159 million Kronor in 1986, to 167 million Kronor in 1987, indicating a steady increase in the flow of information. Of special relevance to cereal growers in Sweden are two weekly tabloid-sized newspapers, *Land* and *Annonssblad till Tidskrift för Landtmän*, known by its acronym *ATL*, and a glossy journal, *Lantmannen* (*The Landman*), issued twenty-two times a year.

The most important of these three publications for growers on the Lund Plain is Section 2 of the weekly paper *Land*. While Section 1, *Konsumentdelen*, is aimed at consumers, principally women (circulation 426,101 in 1985), Section 2, *Land Lantbruk*, is aimed at

active farmers (circulation 208,007 in 1985). *Land Lantbruk* enjoys the largest circulation of Western European farmers' weeklies (*Lantbruksåret 1988:34*). As a matter of convenience, I will from here on refer to *Land Lantbruk* simply as *Land*.

*Land* was established in 1971, the same year in which the two previously existing farmers' organizations merged into what has since been known as the Farmers' Federation (see Chapter 1). Through *Land*, the Federation communicates important agricultural news to its members. *Land's* editorial policy states that reporters are independent of the Federation's elected representatives and officers (*Land* no 3, 17 January 1986). A decision taken in 1971 had also confirmed that through *Land*, individual farmers would be guaranteed the opportunity to communicate with the various associations which fall under the umbrella of the Farmers' Federation. The participation of readers would be encouraged (cf Gryspeerdt 1985:172). Furthermore, editorial policy should reflect local member opinions, and the views expressed by editors and writers would be independent of those of the leadership of the organization. Although a variety of opinions can indeed be found on the pages of *Land*, nonetheless, and as one might anticipate, the majority support the collective interests of various producer groups. *Land's* coverage spans as large a number of current issues as possible of relevance to the broad spectrum of farmers nationwide.

It follows that *Land* devotes relatively little attention to specifically regional interests which might be in opposition to the national collective interest of specific producer groups, whatever that might be on any given measure, at any particular time. In several important respects, therefore, *Land* reinforces the corporatist ideology, in which regional differences are played down or ignored. Regional agro-politics on the Lund or wider Skåne Plain as I observed it clearly has a different focus from that in less heavily populated and industrialized regions, of which the eastern part of Skåne with its comparatively speaking

less productive soils, might be an example.<sup>4</sup> On the Plain, protest is specifically concerned with matters which touch farmers using intensive farming methods in cultivating highly fertile land in a heavily urbanized region populated by increasingly environmentally and food quality conscious consumers of both landscape and foodstuffs. The specific concerns which touch rural producers in this region, in contrast to most other regions in Sweden (which of course also include the steady encroachment of urban agglomerations onto land which has been farmed for hundreds of years and therefore has special meaning to growers) are not provided an outlet through *Land*. This would not be consonant with the role played by the Farmers' Federation's stated aim, which is to represent all Swedish farmers in negotiations with Government. The inevitable consequence of the Federation's position as sole representative of Swedish farmers' interests is that producers in some regions cannot be favoured over others. The framing of agro-political concerns on the Lund Plain is always tempered by this fact, for growers here as elsewhere in Sweden are encompassed by the National Farmers' Federation whether they like it or not.

As stated above, the position taken by producers in the fertile south of Sweden on various policies is often quite the opposite of that taken by farmers elsewhere in the country. In the winter of 1986-1987, for example, a stream of letters to the editor by farmers throughout Sweden were published on the advantages and disadvantages of the following program (see Chapter 4). Many of these letters, although critical of the Program, acknowledged the need to reduce the national cereal output and urged farmers, especially those cultivating land in the high-yielding south, to sign up for the Program. Not one of the letters came from Plains farmers demanding the Program be abandoned. Thus, *Land* plays a second crucial role in that it enables the Lund Plain growers to compare their own political position on policy-measures with that of farmers in other regions; but *Land* does

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<sup>4</sup> Although I did not mix regularly with farmers in eastern Skåne, I met a few who confirmed this impression. I also spent two weeks in sparsely populated Norrbotten County, the northern-most of Sweden's 24 counties, where I was made aware of the existence of a regional agro-politics with an entirely different focus to that in Malmöhus County.

not welcome wholesale criticism of policy programs already agreed to by the Farmers' Federation.

In addition to linking growers on the Plain with those in other regions of Sweden and so inadvertently highlighting differences between regions, *Land* also links farmers on the Lund Plain to national leaders. This enables producers to follow and indirectly participate in leader's engagement in the corporatist policy-making process, where the positions advanced on behalf of Sweden's farmers must ideally reflect majority opinion at grassroots level. It is for this reason that *Land* publishes detailed reports on the motions passed at annual meetings in Union Branch zones throughout the country, as well as those motions which are finally passed by the national assembly in late June every year. Motions are held to reflect conclusively the collective opinion of farmers throughout Sweden. On the Lund Plain, growers often challenge collective opinion with statements such as "I never supported that idea ...", their way of legitimating non-participation in a course of action which the collectivity of farmers has decided is appropriate.

Participation in the policy-making process revolves precisely around advancing the collective views of growers on the Plain, whether these views be in opposition to those of the Federation or not, for the purpose of supporting policies in their favour, and blocking policies to their disadvantage.

During the implementation of the Fallow Program, growers were constrained in their public expression, the public arena here extending to both the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land*, of dislike of the Fallow Program by the fact that the Farmers' Federation and Government had already agreed to this measure. Reflecting the political process, during the implementation phase of the Fallow Program *Land* published no letters by farmers on the Plain against the Program. Rather, a series of letters by and interviews with the national Chairman Bo Dockered confirmed that the Farmers' Federation supported the Program wholeheartedly. Reports also covered the Provincial Chairman Lynges's proposal

to make the Fallow Program compulsory, which again served to confirm that on this measure the Federation and Government were unanimous, although minor details in relation to the successful implementation of the Program were still being worked out. *Land* did not, of course, publish any reports on how producers on the Lund Plain were actively protesting against the Program by sidelining it. Nevertheless, by reading reports in *Land* on post-implementation developments in relation to the Fallow Program, thus engaging themselves in the policy-making process at national level, growers on the Lund Plain were able to develop an appropriate and effective response which significantly modified the Program during implementation (see Chapter 4 for a detailed analysis).

Another example of how growers participated in the policy-making process from a distance, and through *Land*, was through their reading of *Land's* coverage of proposed policies to reduce the use of agricultural inputs in the production of crops (see Chapter 5). Coverage of these policy proposals was notable for an absence of any acknowledgement by the Farmers' Federation that the cereal surplus had caused environmental degradation and that legislated controls were necessary, the Government's key justification for the new policies. This signalled clearly to reading farmers on the Lund Plain that the Farmers' Federation took a position counter to that of Government on these proposed measures, which were still under negotiation and therefore not yet writ in stone. Several articles in *Land* confirmed the Federation's position, for example one featuring Bjarne Lembke, a grower known as a proponent of intensive methods of crop production. Lembke figured in a two-page article on recent developments in the production of crops, using intensive methods of farming, on the Plain. As their own collective position coincided with that of the Federation on the matter of agricultural inputs, farmers on the Plain developed an array of acts of protest, including letters to the press, which were deployed in support of the Federation's stand but in opposition to Government and non-farming constituencies (see Chapter 5 for a detailed analysis).

To a lesser yet notable degree, *Land* also acts as an arena in which representatives of the

opposition are invited to express their views on issues. In 1987, for example, there were interviews with individuals representing consumer interests, with the Minister of Agriculture, and the Chairman of the *LO*. Such interviews were invariably accompanied by large photographs which served to give face to senior Government officials and representatives of non-farming interests.

The final point I would like to make in this context is that the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land* enable growers on the Lund Plain collectively to identify their interests in the land as distinct from that of non-farming members of the public (a point to be more fully developed in Chapter 5), as well as farmers located away from the Plain. As we saw in Chapter 2, the farmers who are the focus of this study, constitute an occupational community which experiences a sense of community in contexts such as meetings in which opposition to the national power base is expressed through language. One of the most important distinguishing features between growers and other members of the population is that for commodity producers, land represents a major source of income. For non-farming members of the region's population, on the other hand, land is but a source of recreation and pleasure (cf Newby 1979).

One way in which growers on the Plain distinguish themselves from farmers in other regions is by their production methods, i.e. the consistent use of a higher level than usual of agricultural inputs.

Growers on the Lund Plain can therefore be seen as a minority group in a two-fold sense. Firstly, they cultivate land in a region which, in comparison with other farming regions in Sweden, is endowed with the most favourable climate and the best soils. Both are factors which have made this area particularly well-suited to high intensity cereal production farming. Producers on the Plain are in a league on their own, quite apart from farmers based beyond the Skåne Plain where as a general rule cereal yields are not as high, and the crops produced are of lower quality. Secondly, rural producers on the Lund Plain are

heavily outnumbered by non-farming members of the public. For many wage and salary earners, high intensity farming has in recent years become tantamount to wholesale destruction of the environment.<sup>5</sup> These two factors combined heighten farmers' sense of themselves a minority group. Producers on the Plain constitute a select group of highly productive cereal growing farmers. They are located in a region in which consumerist and environmentalist concerns about the effect of intensive agriculture on the environment and food quality have been given increasing legitimacy at the expense of their own. Recent attempts by Government to introduce new environmental protection legislation have reinforced the polarization of rural producers and urban-based consumers (as indicated in Chapter 2). The situation serves to highlight the crucial importance of the continued maintenance of extensive agropolitical networks. Community-building serves not only to protect growers' interests vis-a-vis the State, and non-farming members of the population, but also to safeguard their special concerns in relation to those of the vast majority of farmers not based on the fertile Plain. However, protest is invariably directed either at Government or non-farming constituencies, and never at other farmers.

### **(3) Motions and letters**

As we have seen, growers receive a daily and weekly flow of interpretations of agricultural news through the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land*, on the basis of which they formulate positions counter to those of Government, and in some cases the Farmers' Federation as well. I now turn to an examination of the two principal ways in which farmers channel their own dissenting opinions upwards. It is here that we can most clearly see how farmers' use of various media not generally included in sociologists' more restrictive definition of mass media (press, radio, TV) are an integral part of their protest activities.

In 1987, lodging motions addressed to the Union Branch was the most widely accepted

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<sup>5</sup> See Hansen 1991 for a treatment of the role of the media in the development of environmental issues for public and political concern.



formal avenue through which to propose change. Views were advanced which either contradicted those currently being espoused by Government, or proposed ways of improving conditions for producers. A good deal of time and energy was devoted to the writing of motions in winter and early spring, in the lead up to the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Federation. In December and January, prior to the Local Division Annual Meetings, farmers talked incessantly about how best to formulate their ideas for change, so as to maximize their chance of widespread acceptance. In 1987, Local Divisions in the Lund Zone submitted fifteen motions to the Provincial Board (two of which were submitted by Sederby; Norrarp did not submit any motions in 1987). At this stage, the Fallow Program was already a fact. One Division complained, in the form of a motion, that if individual farmers were being asked to fallow land, why not also demand that the Hvilan Agricultural college some kilometres south of Lund be required to fallow land. Another Division demanded in a motion that if farmers were to be required to sow fallowed land to a cover crop of non-commercial value, then they should be compensated for the cost of seed. These motions were penned against a background of ongoing negotiations regarding agrochemicals. Thus, a third Division stated in its motion that imported foods should be subjected to the same sorts of restrictions in regard to chemicals as those produced by Swedish farmers. Reflecting growers' concerns that consumers were not spending enough on food, a fourth Division suggested that so as to increase the demand for foodstuffs, food products should be advertised more effectively, for example in video-taped commercials to be shown on those foreign channels which were already broadcasting on the Swedish cable-TV network.

The penning of motions was a key political practice not so much to challenge the direction of negotiations at national level as to convey regionally-based dissatisfaction. A major limitation of motions was that the opinions expressed therein had to appeal to the broad spectrum of farmers, including all those in the middle and forest regions which make up the entire eastern part of Skåne. Motions could not be obviously concerned with minority production interests. One motion proved to gain broad support indeed. The farmer who

had written it argued that in view of the general crisis faced by all farmers, compounded by the press' vilification of producers as destroying the environment (a more detailed analysis of which is provided in Chapter 5), the subject of positive thinking and creative problem-solving should be incorporated into the Farmers' Federation's annual program of courses and conferences for its members. The implication of his suggestion was that farmers around the country were being squeezed to breaking point, and that the collectivity should prepare itself mentally for the struggle which lay ahead.

Every motion was vetted firstly by one's neighbours in the Local Division, secondly by growers' representatives in the Zone, and thirdly by both the Board and assembly at the level of the Provincial Federation. Motions therefore had to be skilfully worded and deal with concerns common to as many farmers as possible. It was only after motions had passed the final test at the Provincial Annual Meeting (one of the few to pass this hurdle was the motion concerning positive thinking), where representatives of farmers from both the Plains and forest region held the right to vote, that motions were sent to Stockholm.

Another method of expressing opposition was to write a letter. Sometimes these letters were phrased in terms of suggestions, merely asking the Federation to look into particular matters and reporting back on its findings, for example whether there was any scientific evidence that a particular chemical was harmful to humans or livestock. At other times, they were formal letters of complaint (*skrivelse*) in which the writer, or often small group of writers, openly disagreed with a particular policy amendment, for example the proposal by the Provincial Federation that the Fallow Program be made compulsory. To add weight to such letters, farmers sometimes travelled to Stockholm to discuss their reservations with key leaders of the Farmers' Federation. This approach was frequently used to express minority interests. An example occurred at the time when the Provincial Chairman was advocating that the Fallow Program be made compulsory (see Chapter 4), when several tenant farmers (who represent a minority group amongst the mainstream of owner-operators), who would have suffered the worst financial consequences by such a tightening

up of the Program, travelled to Stockholm to lodge a formal complaint against this proposal.

To summarize, a significant aspect of the content of discussions farmers engage in with other producers who are part of their networks is the taking in of information and the development of positions of opposition to proposals not to their liking. Following from the mediated nature of relations with the Farmers' Federation and Government, writing therefore becomes a common avenue whereby alternative interpretations, concerns, and disagreement is expressed.

### **3. COMMUNICATING WITH THE OPPOSITION**

In this second half of the chapter, I examine how growers used the written word to reach those groups, institutions and interest organizations which were constitutive of the opposition.

#### **(1) The general public**

The national Farmers' Federation invests a great deal of funds in public opinion formation.<sup>6</sup> Members of the non-farming public, consumers, the embodiment of the market for which farmers produced, had to be convinced. As consumers were becoming increasingly critical of current farming methods, it was not unusual to hear leaders discuss how they might "get consumers on our side".

One avenue through which the Federation communicates with the general public is through the Consumer Section of *Land*. A predominant and recurring feature is recipes for the preparation of a range of dishes using ingredients such as flour, eggs, milk, cream, cheese,

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<sup>6</sup> See Asp (1980) for an analysis of how a group of protesters managed to convince authorities to abandon the planned construction of a multi-storey car park by drawing the public's attention to the plans via the mass media.

sugar, oil, meat, pork, chicken, and potatoes. Many other channels are used to show consumers how products derivative of agricultural commodities can be used to prepare tasty and wholesome meals. Pamphlets strategically placed in supermarkets which describe the differences between products in a particular line are one avenue. A mill owned by the Federation had, as an example of this, produced a several page long brochure listing and differentiating all the various types of flour available. Also readily available in supermarkets were recipe leaflets. A popular one provided instructions on how to make several different kinds of home-baked breads, not available in the supermarkets.

Growers took a great deal of pride in the commodities they produced, resenting generalized criticism from consumers that current farming methods resulted in less than acceptable end products. Against this rather new development, growers wanted to mount a grassroots counter propaganda (to be analyzed in some detail in Chapter 5).

Surveys by Petersson, Westholm and Blomberg (1989:209, Table 6.13) have confirmed that Swedish farmers more strongly than other interest groups believe they "have the ability to influence" (*att påverka*) the policy-making process. This phrase, often used by the farmers amongst themselves, is the Swedish equivalent of pulling weight, lobbying, or exerting political pressure. The expression "we must influence" (either the policy-making process, or the formation of public opinion) always implies a call for growers to unite in the expression of opposition against a proposed policy measure. During fieldwork I heard the expression used with some frequency in relation to negotiations of a string of new policy measures which Government claimed would protect the environment and improve the quality of foodstuffs. Opposition to Government was expressed by farmers on the Lund Plain, as well as leaders of the Farmers' Federation, in terms of the disastrous cumulative effect the proposals would have on crop yields and the factors by which the quality of crops were measured. Every growers' income was calculated on the yardsticks of yield and quality.

At the time of fieldwork, there were as yet no formally established avenues through which growers on the Plain could confront a public critical of current methods of producing commodities. Nevertheless, some growers were successful in gaining access to the *South Swedish Daily* for the purpose of defending agricultural production methods. The following are some examples (a more comprehensive ethnographic case study is provided in Chapter 5).

One avenue was to write a discussion piece (referred to in Swedish as 'debate article'), sometimes known as an open tribune (Gryspeerdt 1985:169) for publication on the equivalent to the op ed page (which is not necessarily anywhere near the editorial page). In September 1987, the farmer Bjarne Lembke succeeded in having such a letter published in the *South Swedish Daily* (accompanied by a small photograph of himself). In the piece, he criticized consumers for being ignorant of why the production of mechanized crops such as cereals, oilseeds, sugarbeet, legumes, and potatoes was intensive and reliant on agrochemicals. He argued that Swedish farmers had adjusted themselves to a modern society and international developments, and that if they had not done so, the agricultural sector would have gone out of existence. The reason why farmers had agreed to modern farming methods was simply because consumers would never have found it acceptable to pay double the price for food.

On the matter of food quality, he argued that contrary to consumers' totally unsubstantiated claims, Swedish foodstuffs were of the best quality ever. A change-over to small-scale extensive production offered no guarantee of better quality. On the contrary, valuable quality assurance would be lost if chemicals were banned, and farmers' production levels were made dependent on weather and pests (*South Swedish Daily* 7 September 1987).

Several other farmers succeeded in having similarly long and detailed letters published in

the *South Swedish Daily* during the course of fieldwork (a further example is offered in Chapter 5).

Another way of advancing views which ran counter to the Government's stated position was through interviews by newspaper reporters. Lars-Göran Persson, for example, was a grower in the Höganäs District who had been visited at his home by a reporter from the *South Swedish Daily*. The reason for the interview was that Persson had been the leader of a group, an action-set, which tried, but failed, to stop the unloading of a ship carrying imported rye sprayed with a chemical banned in Sweden only a few months earlier (see Chapter 5 for an analysis of the unexpected policy change which provoked this response). This he, and a small group of other farmers, had attempted to do in Helsingborg harbour in early November 1987. A photograph of Persson kneeling by a bag of cereals, scooping up two handfuls of kernels, accompanied the article. Persson wasted no time in pointing out the inconsistency in Government first banning a chemical used by growers to ensure quality crops, only to then order imports to cover the shortfall when the crops failed for lack of proper spraying. He was quoted as saying that farmers would not give up until the Government fully understood that they had to be allowed to operate on the same conditions as farmers in other countries who were exporting their commodities to Sweden (*South Swedish Daily* 11 November 1987).

An altogether different approach was that which attempted to go one step further, using the *South Swedish Daily* to establish a face-to-face dialogue with consumers. For example, a group of five growers who also raised pigs bought advertising space (cf Gryspeerdt 1985:169 as an example of the kind of interactivity found in the press but absent in radio and TV) in the *South Swedish Daily* on 9 May 1987. This was in response to complaints by consumers that factory-style conditions resulted in sick and 'unhappy' livestock, and therefore poor quality pork. The headline of the advertisement read "The truth about our pigs". The ad, which included photos of the farmers as well as of a "happy-looking" piglet (signalled by the fact that its ears were in an up-right position),

detailed what the men fed their animals and described the pigs' living conditions. The message ended with a reassurance to consumers that everything was done to ensure the animals did not get sick, but if this nevertheless happened, then proper treatment was administered. Readers were invited to make an appointment by telephone to come out and see for themselves. Whether anyone did in fact take up this invitation, I do not know. In this context, however, it should be noted that organized visits to farms by school children were commonplace. In 1987, the Union Branch of the Farmers' Federation also arranged an Open Farm Day for the population at large (see Chapter 5 where I discuss this event in more detail).

The *South Swedish Daily* was particularly suitable for interactivity (see Rogers and Balle 1985:13) between the Lund Plain's rural producers and consumers of foodstuffs derivative of agricultural commodities. This was in contrast to TV and radio which excluded non-experts from providing counter-interpretations to the position taken by Government. All of the writings which farmers managed to get into the pages of the *Daily* not only served to engage consumers on the growers' terms, but through the invariable presence of photographs also gave farmers a public face. In Chapter 5, I will further elaborate on the use of indirect and direct forms of communication in trying to win the public over on both consumerist and environmentalist matters, which were inextricably linked.

## **(2) The Public Sector and Government**

The Provincial Federation of the Union Branch in Skåne often engages the public sector in the region via the written word. Every year, letters commenting on proposals (or requesting information) are directed to the County Council (*länsstyrelsen*), the Health and Education Commission (*landstinget*), and the County Agricultural Board, CAB (*lantbruksnämnden*) in both the Malmöhus and neighbouring Kristianstad Counties.

In 1987, the Provincial Federation liaised regularly with the Malmöhus County

Agricultural Board, an arm of the Ministry of Agriculture. The CAB also regularly received phone calls, yet another form of indirect communication -- although two-way -- from ordinary growers complaining about matters of administrative or advisory nature. The Director of the CAB would sometimes be asked to submit a comment to agricultural policy proposals. Such statements by the CAB would often be based on intimate knowledge of regional concerns and therefore invariably run counter to the Government's position on the matter in question. This was indicative of the frequency and intensity of mediated interaction between the Provincial Federation of the Union Branch and ordinary growers, and the CAB's offices in Malmö. The CAB, as everyone knew, was entirely dependent on growers' compliance for the successful implementation of new policy, especially those of a voluntary or advisory nature.

On some matters, specifically those under the jurisdiction of the County and District Councils (for example the need for land for road construction, industrial sites, and expansion of District centres and cities) the task of responding to proposals is often delegated to the appropriate Zone Board. A case in point occurred in March 1987. The twelve members of the board of the Lund Zone of the Union Branch, an important action-set, met at the Norra Ugglarp meeting hall to discuss the final version of a two-page letter to the Lund District. This carefully worded and well-researched document was to be sent to the City Architect of Lund in response to an invitation to comment on a proposal to build a new suburb on the northern rim of Lund. No less than 750 hectares of land, equivalent to fifteen farms at fifty hectares each, was required for the development. The letter rejected the proposal on three counts. The main argument, a full one page long, stated that ecologically the area could not absorb the increased volume of water which would flow into streams and rivers if the development went ahead. It was hoped this line of reasoning would resonate with generalized concerns about water pollution by non-farmers at this particular time in the negotiating of stricter environmental pollution controls at national level. So as not to detract too much from what at the time constituted the only politically acceptable argument which could be advanced against the development going



ahead, the other two points were covered in two short paragraphs tacked on at the end of the letter. In the first paragraph, it was pointed out that new roads and the increased flow of traffic which would follow would further hamper the growers' transporting of sugarbeet from farm to factory in autumn. Finally, the Board emphasized that it was important to "manage good arable land". The land which the planners wanted for the development was of the highest quality, and so had the best potential for producing food products of good quality. This resource, the letter concluded, would continue to be of great value for generations to come. It should not be destroyed.

There were many other examples of how growers engaged public servants indirectly in order to advance their own agendas. Characteristic of such communication was the reliance on letters. Whether public servants at County level, the Minister of Agriculture, or the Prime Minister, letters of protest always played a prominent role. This was part and parcel of the political process, and indeed a key characteristic of the farmer-State dialogue. I will return to this in more detail in Chapter 6.

### **(3) The labour movement**

Mediated communications are also common in counter-attacks on the labour movement. In Chapter 6, I will elaborate in detail on acts of protest vis-a-vis the *LO* and the *TCO* when these two trade union confederations were found to have engaged in secret negotiations with Government as to deregulation of the cereal market. Here, I am concerned mainly to summarize the various methods used when the Federation and farmers were forced to protect their area of jurisdiction in policy-making from unwanted interference by the *LO* and the *TCO*. The avenues used included ordinary letters of complaint to the leaders of both trade union confederations, and open letters of protest written for publication in the newspapers, but also protest meetings and demonstrations staged to ensure points of disagreement were reported on in the press in the strongest language possible.

An all-out retaliation on the labour movement occurred in the embryonic stage of a policy proposal to deregulate the cereal market (the case study in Chapter 6 offers a comprehensive analysis). Throughout, farmers relied exclusively on mediated communications, with the *South Swedish Daily* playing a key role. The *Daily* sided with the Farmers' Federation, supporting its leaders' and members' reasons for attack. Thus, coverage generally supported farmers in advancing their cause. For example, in reporting on the ensuing protest meetings and demonstrations directed against the *LO* and the *TCO* in autumn 1987, the *Daily* used as sub-headings in its articles words and phrases taken directly from the growers' rhetoric, such as "stab in the back" and "off-handedness" (against farmers). Other phrases used by the *Daily* included "breakdown", "active resistance" and "budding revolution".

During the Farmers' Federation's attack on the *LO* and the *TCO* following discovery of the policy measure the two union confederations had proposed to Government without the knowledge of the Federation, many articles in the *South Swedish Daily* were worded to show support for farmers. The *Daily* explained that the Federation interpreted the proposal as a stab in the back. Up until that point it was the Farmers' Federation which had been negotiating with Ministries and agricultural authorities about appropriate measures to reduce the national production of cereal surplus, not the *LO* and the *TCO*. In this way the *Daily* indicated support of the Farmers' Federation's right to protect its jurisdiction.

The *South Swedish Daily's* coverage of the introduction of the proposed policy to deregulate, which was in its embryonic stage, and the farmers' response to this policy proposal, is reflective of the poles apart style of reporting described in Section 2 above. This kind of reporting can only be deployed when Government has not yet declared an official position vis-a-vis a particular policy. Thus, a week later, when seventeen crisis meetings were being held throughout Skåne to discuss how to get Government to take the

proposed policy off the agenda once and for all, the *South Swedish Daily* used every possible device to convey farmers' anger. The *Daily* described the mood of one crisis meeting as indignant, and a meeting hall at Håslöv as having filled with some 250 farmers to the point where there was not enough room for everyone to sit (*South Swedish Daily* 6 November 1987).

In another article, the *Daily* described the mood in farming circles as militant. The reporter wrote that it was quite clear that the farmers were prepared for a battle. He explained that protest activities were to be stepped up at national level, and that in the countryside they were now emerging spontaneously. The Federation was acting with the speed of lightning and had put in place a counter attack before Government had been able to publicize the draft proposal which was the basis for the attack (*South Swedish Daily* 6 November 1987).

Describing the farmers' reactions to the *LO's* and the *TCO's* joint proposal, the *South Swedish Daily* reported that the two union organizations' attitude towards the agricultural sector had infuriated the farmers in Skåne, and that Arne Lyngé had described the proposal as persecution of a minority group (*South Swedish Daily* 7 November 1987).

These images of unrest and uproar were precisely what growers wanted at that particular time, which coincided with the annual grain price negotiations. The subsequent staging of a demonstration was a calculated exploitation of the press, a flamboyant act of protest selected in the knowledge that there was no official Government position to report on, as none had been officially publicized, and that farmers would therefore command centre stage. Hence, the *South Swedish Daily* was able to report on the demonstration against the *LO's* and the *TCO's* draft policy from the point of view of the demonstrators themselves. I will return to farmers' protests in the embryonic stage of policy in more detail in Chapter 6.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have examined some of the ways in which indirect modes of communication are deployed by growers on the Lund Plain. It is through the press in particular that interpretations of the policy negotiation process are received (with TV and radio playing minor roles). Similarly, it is through the written word that the Lund Plain farmers' collective political voice is directed at the Farmers' Federation, Government, and non-farming constituencies.

In the first section of the chapter, I detailed the flow of news amongst farmers. I explained that growers read the regional newspaper the *South Swedish Daily* as active decoders of political messages authored by Government and the Farmers' Federation, and mediated by the general press. I also pointed to the importance of the farmers' weekly *Land* in providing in-depth coverage of proposed policies, as well as in linking rural producers nationwide. In the expression of opposition to policy from grassroots level by farmers on the Lund Plain, the writing of motions and letters directed to national leaders of the Farmers' Federation is an important activity whereby their concerns are advanced.

In the second section of the chapter, I showed how the Lund Plain growers through various writings reach groups and institutions which constitute the opposition: Government and non-farmers. Consumers, for example, representing a new force in the policy-making process, are addressed primarily through discussion pieces or open tribunes, letters and advertisements in the newspaper. Public servants and Government representatives are engaged principally through criticism of proposals and letters of complaint. The *LO* and the *TCO*, finally, are taken to task through letters of protest to leaders of these two trade union confederations, and the staging of mass events in the public arena, during which the Union Branch and farmers also rely on newspaper reporters to convey the farmers' conceptualizations of reasons for protest.

We have seen that the Lund Plain growers engage in numerous pressure group activities reliant on varied modes of indirect communication. Reading and writing are practices which reflect the political system in which they take place, a democracy by representation.

This chapter has merely served to introduce the notion that mediated encounters are central to growers' protest activities. In the three case studies which follow, the mediated nature of farmer-State and farmer-consumer relations will become increasingly clear. In each case study, I will contextualize farmers' use of and reliance on various mass media in their everyday practice of protest.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PATTERNS OF PROTEST I: RESISTANCE**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In this and the following two chapters I present detailed interpretations of agro-politics in action in the form of three case studies. Focussing specifically on the Lund Plain growers' response to a complex of policy measures, the purpose of which was to reduce the national production of cereals and to resolve the cereal surplus crisis, I examine close up the varied nature of protest. The purpose of each case study is to demonstrate how the location of policy in its career determines the pattern of protest at grassroots level.

At this point, however, I now shift my focus from the location of the policy measure in its career to the resulting constellation of the relationship between the Farmers' Federation and Government vis-a-vis the policy at that moment in its career. In so doing I have reached the conclusion that the case studies are best presented in the reverse order in which policies proceed.

Presenting the three case studies of protest in an order which moves from farmers' response to a situation of compromise between Federation and Government (in the policy implementation stage), to one of no official position at all (in the embryonic stage), means that I begin with an examination of small, subversive and manipulative acts which have no backing by the Union Branch, and end with large-scale public acts which have the full support of, and are indeed arranged by, the Union Branch. The major reason for presenting the material in this sequence is that it makes it easier to follow the progression of events on the Lund Plain, which starts out in a low key in autumn 1986, only to escalate rather dramatically until it reaches its peak in autumn 1987.

In this first case study, therefore, I examine the pattern of protest on the Lund Plain in a

situation where the Farmers' Federation and Government had agreed to the introduction of a new and rather controversial program after some considerable negotiation. The program involved fallowing of land usually sown to cereals so as to reduce the surplus production of this crop. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate the form protest took against the program whereby land was to be set aside, which I will refer to as the Fallow '87 Program, or Fallow Program (its Swedish name was *Träda 87*). Principally, close relations between Farmers' Federation and Government forced farmers to protest against the Program in sites away from the Union Branch, as well as in a manner not deployed in the other two scenarios where relations were in one instance hostile and in the other not yet officially defined.

Acts of resistance vis-a-vis the Fallow Program can be distinguished from the other two patterns of defence and attack to be analyzed in Chapters 5 and 6 by the arenas in which they were played out, as well as their content. What I refer to as resistance is a response characterized by its hidden and unofficial nature.

Firstly, growers refrained from expressing resistance in the context of Union Branch meetings and events. This was so because protest against the Fallow Program was not sanctioned by the Provincial Federation of the Union Branch's leadership. Instead, expressions of resistance were played out in exchanges with managers, advisors and salesmen at The Landmen, in the private sphere of the farm, in telephone calls with advisors at the CAB, in conversations with other farmers, and at an event arranged by the Weibulls Plant Breeding Institution, a private sector company concerned with the production of cereal seed.

Secondly, the content of acts of resistance was shaped in such a way that it was immediately clear that resistance had no official standing. Thus, sentiments in opposition to the idea of fallowing land were never articulated as a firm opposition to Government or Farmers' Federation, nor in terms of a coherent statement against fallowing as such. No

formal full length speech was ever made in which the Fallow Program was denounced or even criticized, and its immediate abandonment demanded. The target of resistance was never spelled out (although in effect it was the Government and Farmers' Federation who suffered the consequences). There was no attempt to officially engage a wider audience on a broad front in favour of growers against the Fallow Program. There were no statements to the press, no letters of complaint to Government officials, and certainly no marches or demonstrations in the public arena to elicit sympathy and support. Rather, resistance was expressed firstly by not participating in the Fallow Program, secondly in everyday conversations, for example through oppositional lines of reasoning and the attribution of personal meaning to official categories and thirdly, by signing up for the Program but exploiting it to one's own advantage.

The acts of resistance I describe in this chapter are similar to what Scott (1985) refers to as peasant resistance in Malaysia. Such acts, he writes, "stop well short of outright collective defiance: footdragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, feigned ignorance ...". These are actions which, as Scott points out, "require little or no coordination or planning, make use of implicit understandings and informal networks, represent a form of individual self-help, and avoid any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority" (1985:xvi). Comprised of many "individual acts of foot dragging and evasion ... [resistance] make[s] an utter shambles of the policies dreamed up by [peasants'] would-be superiors in the capital" (1985:xvii). As Scott puts it, "everyday forms of resistance make no headlines. ... This quiet and anonymous welter of peasant action is confined to the backstage of village life" (1985:xvii).

Scott's characterization of resistance amongst peasants in Malaysia is similar to the response by growers on the Lund Plain to the Fallow Program in its implementation stage. This is so in that when relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government at national level are corporatist, each body incorporating the views of the other to such a degree that it is no longer possible to tell them apart, they most resemble power relations



in Scott's Malaysia where presumably peasants have little or no say in national negotiations. However, as I have already indicated above, farmers' protests in Sweden are much more varied than what Scott found in Malaysia; this as I mentioned in Chapter 1 is due to the incorporation of the Farmers' Federation, and by extension all farmers, into the policy negotiation process. In Sweden, therefore, farmers are in constant dialogue with Government and State agencies, often but not necessarily as mediated by the Federation, as they closely follow policies through their individual careers.

In this chapter I am only concerned with Swedish-style resistance, by which I mean response to a policy which has already been agreed to by the Farmers' Federation and Government, and therefore has at least nominally been subjected to prior discussion and voting by farmers in the Union Branch of the Federation. In this context, resistance is the cumulative effect of multiple ways of evading or manipulating restrictive policy to one's own advantage. This includes reading and talking about policies, rejecting the Farmers' Federation's and Government's position, justifying non-participation, signalling indifference to Government officials, as well as active exploitation of the Program in place. That such acts are political is evidenced by the fact that they have considerable impact on policy negotiators at national level, who are forced to modify the new Program as time passes.

Before analyzing in detail how action and speech were combined in various contexts to signal resistance, I present a synopsis of the Fallow Program.

## **2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FALLOW PROGRAM**

The Fallow Program was a radical measure never before tried. The terms of the Program had been negotiated by the Grain Group (*Spannmålsgruppen*), a commission appointed by Government on which both the Farmers' Federation and the Government (the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance) had representation. The stated purpose of fallowing land was to reduce the surplus production of cereals. This, it was said, would lead to a smaller

quantity of grain being sold on export. This in turn would reverse the growing deficit in the national grain budget. When the Program was first launched in September 1986, the goal was to set aside 100,000 hectares of land. Targeted for this Program were 11,600 grain growing farmers in the seventeen counties of southern and central Sweden. Producers were invited to sign a one-year contract to fallow ten per cent of their arable land in exchange for compensation payments based on how much a crop on the set aside field would normally yield. (Payments would range from 150 Kronor in the lowest yielding districts, to 2,400 Kronor per hectare in the highest yielding districts such as the most fertile areas of the Lund Plain.) Participation was voluntary. Everyone was urged to fallow a minimum of five hectares, but at least ten per cent of land. Of Skåne's 16,000 farmers, 5,400 producers were eligible (the eligibility criteria excluded growers whose arable land area sown to grain had been less than fifteen hectares in 1985). On the Lund Plain, virtually every full-time grower qualified for the program.

The Fallow Program was promoted by the Swedish Grain Trade Association, SGTA (*Svensk Spannmålshandel*), the national body in charge of exports and imports of cereals, and the party with whom growers would enter into contract to set aside land. In the selling and implementation of the Program on the Lund Plain, the SGTA relied heavily on the Malmöhus County Agricultural Board, which mailed out the contracts and explanatory material, and the Provincial Federation of the Union Branch, whose leaders were responsible for convincing Plains farmers to sign up. In autumn 1986, the Union Branch arranged information meetings to explain the Program requirements. At this time, growers were also bombarded with advertisements and articles in *Land*, an eight-page limited issue magazine titled The Grain Store (*Magasinet*), produced by an advertising agency for the SGTA, and brochures, letters, and mimeographed cost benefit analyses from Union Branch Headquarters in Höör and the CAB, all extolling the benefits of signing up for the Program.

### 3. SELLING THE PROGRAM

Ortner (1989) argues that "it is essential to interpret the impact of [state domination and capitalism] from the perspective of the culture on the receiving end of the impact" (1989:83). That interest in the Fallow Program was dismal on the Lund Plain, and indeed the Skåne Plain as a whole, became evident as soon as the registration period started in the form of a poor return rate of signed contracts. By the initial closing date on the 30 September 1986, the number of hectares signed up was so low that the application deadline for all seventeen counties was extended by a month.

As Ortner has put it, "anthropologists must use the cultural frames and structural contradictions of the local society as a kind of lens through which to view the practices and policies of the larger system, because it is these cultural frames and structural contradictions that mediate both the meaning and the impact of the larger political and economic forces in question ... start at level of local society, thereby making it as much a cause as an effect of the larger historic dynamic" (1989:83).

In autumn 1986, it was announced by Government and Farmers' Federation that the total area to be set aside would have to be increased from 100,000 to 200,000 hectares, as prices on the world market had continued to drop.

In its 24 October 1986 issue, *Land* reported that in the seventeen counties targeted, 51,000 hectares had been signed up, or 1.9 per cent of the total arable land area. This was well short of 100,000 hectares, and nowhere near 200,000 hectares. A total of 5,352 farmers had registered. By this time, it had become quite clear that growers on the Lund Plain were not interested in fallowing. To encourage a larger number of growers to sign up, the application deadline was moved for the third time, to the end of January 1987. In the event, this did not significantly improve the participation rate on the Plain.

In this scenario, Arne Lyngé, the Provincial Chairman of the Union Branch, came to play a key role as mediator of the national Farmers' Federation's and Government's position. As the direct link between farmers in the Province and leaders at national level, he was pushing for as many producers as possible to register for the Program. Featuring prominently in both the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land*, Lyngé made it amply clear what was expected of growers: that they participate voluntarily. When his pleadings failed to have an impact, he was forced to take action to signal that as fallowing was a collectively arrived at agreement everyone had an obligation to sign up. Thus, in the face of large-scale resistance, Lyngé proposed an amendment to make the Fallow Program obligatory. As leader of the Union Branch in Skåne, he formulated a statement to the national Board of the Farmers' Federation in which he, on behalf of the Provincial Board, demanded the Program be made compulsory.

Large-scale resistance to fallowing amongst growers on the Plain placed Lyngé, as leader of farmers in both the Plain and forest regions of Skåne, in an especially difficult position. He was himself part of a wide network which stretched far beyond the Province. As member of numerous boards, some consisting of leaders of other regions of the Union Branch, he was criticized for not putting enough pressure on cereal growing farmers on the Plain in his area of jurisdiction to do what the collectivity had agreed to, namely to fallow land. His proposal that the Program be made compulsory thus emerged out of the fact that he was part of many action sets which brought him in contact with other middle-level leaders, and also that he was the direct link with the National Farmers' Federation, which backed the Fallow Program.

Lyngé's suggestion that the Program be made compulsory soon became a major topic of conversation amongst farmers on the Plain. Lyngé's proposal prompted the formation of several action sets which generated a number of acts of protest. Such sets consisted of groups of growers who did not fall into the broad category of well-established owner-operator with an average production output, and who were prepared to condemn Lyngé's

proposal. A delegation of tenant farmers, for example, travelled to Stockholm to formally object to Lynges proposal, on the grounds that already being burdened with substantial annual tenancy fees, they could simply not afford to be forced to reduce their output of cereal crops. Cereal growers who produced on a well-above average scale also objected strongly to compulsion on the grounds that they had high capital costs. Some of these men, who were members of the Board of The Landmen in their District, took the matter up with Landmen management who was represented on the Board. It was not long before The Swedish Landmen had successfully negotiated a deal with the national office of the Union Branch in Stockholm whereby The Skånish Landmen would be able to offer the category of growers with above-average hectares contracts to grow fodder peas as an acceptable 'alternative' to fallowing land. Lynges was forced to accept this amendment, even though it would prove to make it all the more difficult for him to generate sufficient support for the Fallow Program in Skåne.

I was not able to observe any of these processes myself (the networking involved), as I had only just then arrived in the field. It became clear to me, however, that characteristic of these acts of resistance was that they sidelined Arne Lynges and the Union Branch. Resistance entailed first and foremost going behind the back of leaders of the Union. Lynges had been party to negotiating the Fallow Program simply by supporting it during its negotiation phase, and was therefore constrained by the National Federation's and Government's agreement to implement the Program. Resistance by ordinary growers, in this circumstance, could only be expressed using unconventional means.

These early manifestations of networks in action, the emergence of action sets to actively resist the Fallow Program, received no mention at all in the *South Swedish Daily*, and only brief mention in *Land*. This was characteristic of the cosy style of reporting (see Chapter 3), used by the *Daily* when the Farmers' Federation and Government had reached agreement on the implementation of a program, and *Land's* custom of not devoting too much attention to regional agro-politics. These reporting styles were part of and reflective

of the political process. The effect of grassroots resistance on the internal politics of the Farmers' Federation on the Plain, and of politics on resisting growers, did not make the headlines. It was not until I started to get to know growers and speak to them in face-to-face situations, that I became aware of how widespread resistance to the Program was on the Plain, and how this was informing everyday speech and behaviour.

In so far as Lynge's way of dealing with this was concerned, I, like all growers, had to rely on the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land* to bring distantly located key figures into growers' third order network zones. Thus we learned that the national Board of the Farmers' Federation, to which Lynge was directly linked by virtue of his position as head of the Province, had duly considered the feasibility of Lynge's proposal, and that the matter of compulsory fallowing had subsequently been discussed with other members of the Government-appointed Grain Group in Stockholm, the commission which had negotiated the terms of the Fallow Program.

It soon became evident in further reports in the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land* that members of the Grain Group were divided on whether the Fallow Program should remain voluntary as advocated by the Government's representatives, or be made compulsory as the Farmers' Federation now argued to ensure the success of the Program.

Throughout the several months when the matter of whether fallowing should remain voluntary or be made compulsory was under discussion in Farmers' Federation and Government circles at national level, Lynge took every opportunity to sell the Fallow Program in Skåne. This he did in press releases to and interviews with the *South Swedish Daily* even when those statements were not directly related to the Fallow Program. In addition to arguing for compulsion, he also began to state that the land area set aside would have to be increased from ten to fifteen per cent per farmer.

In spring 1987, Lynge made one important personal appearance in Skåne. At the

Provincial level Annual Meeting in April 1987, which he chaired, and which was the most important event in the Union Branch's annual cycle of meetings, he again showed support for the Fallow Program. He also announced in his opening speech to the several hundred delegates present from each of the 271 Local Divisions in the Province (one of the largest permanent action sets, approximately fifty per cent of whom were Plains farmers) that as many as 300,000-400,000 hectares of land now needed to be set aside, as opposed to the 100,000 hectares originally envisaged. He urged everyone to fallow land:

We have adjusted production, firstly within the livestock sector, the production of cattle and pigs is almost in balance. The next surplus area is grain, and to an extent oilseeds. We have a surplus of 3-400,000 hectares of arable land. While waiting for solutions, we must fallow. The *LRF* proposes compulsory fallowing on fifteen per cent of the arable land of each farm, less land sown to grass for grazing. Those who don't participate will have to pay for the cost of exporting the surplus. This crisis is internationally anchored.

Lynge, as the highest ranking Union leader in Skåne, was under obligation to follow the national line on fallowing. As leader of the Union Branch and thus formally linked to the national Farmers' Federation and Government on this policy measure, it was his job to ensure a high level of participation on the Plain. An important aspect of this process was to get a motion passed in favour of compulsory fallowing. Through some deft manoeuvring, made easier by the fact that the National Federation supported the idea, Lynge managed to get the motion in favour of compulsory fallowing passed at the Provincial Annual Meeting. Although this confirmed that he wielded considerable formal power, it did not guarantee an improved participation rate on the Plain.

As I demonstrate below, Lynge was faced with considerable opposition to both voluntary and compulsory fallowing by management at The Landmen in the Plains Districts who sought to protect the financial interests of share-holding cereal growers (the very same people Lynge was trying to persuade to fallow). This became evident at the Annual Meeting. But Lynge would not openly criticize The Landmen for having negotiated a

compromise which suited many growers on the Plain, whereby they could grow fodder peas as an acceptable 'alternative' to leaving land fallow. This was so because The Landmen was a constitutive part of the Farmers' Federation at Provincial level, and Lyngé was always careful not to highlight tensions between the Union Branch and The Landmen. Later in his opening address, Lyngé referred to the new option being presented to cereal growing farmers as a result of negotiations by The Landmen, but only briefly:

We would like to be self-sufficient in protein crops. We import too much protein, which is like leasing the equivalent amount of land abroad. Grow peas this year if possible. The Landmen have not yet filled their quota. We need to produce more protein feed, as we are importing too much.

It was quite obvious from the way in which he sandwiched this statement in between many other much more forcefully presented exhortations to fallow land, that this was not a turn of events he supported unreservedly, simply because it gave large farmers a way out of fallowing. Thus the Fallow Program in fact highlighted tensions and rifts amongst farmers in Skåne. The Program brought to the fore differences in soil fertility between Sweden's low-yielding north and high-yielding south, and in Skåne between the Plain in the west and the forest region in the east. These differences in the productive capacity of the land were the key factors which provoked broad-based resistance against the Fallow Program to become especially pronounced on the Plain. As we will see below, Lyngé's attempts to persuade Plains farmers to fallow were doomed to fail.

After the closing date of registration for the Fallow Program, and throughout spring until May when the crop sowing, fertilizing and spraying season came to an end, I was able to observe first hand acts of protest deployed vis-a-vis the Fallow Program. These acts were all shaped by the fact that the Program had been agreed to by the Farmers' Federation and Government, and was actively promoted by Lyngé, through the press, in personally signed mass mailings, and in his speech at the Provincial Annual Meeting. Principally, this meant that protest could not be articulated in any context normally associated with the Union



Branch, the usual arena in which acts of protest were planned and executed. This explained why there was so little talk about the Fallow Program at Union Branch meetings, relative to for example the policy measures still under negotiation in regard to agricultural inputs (see Chapter 5). Where then did acts of protest vis-a-vis the Fallow Program occur, and what form did they take?

#### **4. FORMS OF RESISTANCE**

I now translate the corporate system into more fully human terms (Marcus and Fischer 1986:92), looking at how linguistic (and non-verbal) interaction bears the traces of the constellation of power relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government at the implementation stage of policy.

In this section, I look at the forms resistance took in five different contexts in late winter and spring: firstly, through an examination of the subtle articulation of positions counter to fallowing in the context of The Landmen; secondly, through an examination of response at the level of the farm; thirdly, through an examination of exploitation at the level of interaction with the CAB; fourthly, through an examination of how growers talked about non-participation when connecting with farmers in their networks; and fifthly, through an examination of growers' collective non-verbal action in the presence of a Government official when, as the invited speaker at an event arranged by a private sector institution, he was advancing the Government's and Farmers' Federation's line, encouraging growers to participate in the Fallow Program.

##### **(1) Talking**

As I have stated earlier, resistance is not just the final act of protest; it includes reading, thinking, and talking, in other words all the work that goes into the formulation of a counter position, as well as the sharing of these understandings with others in one's network. The individuals in one's network thereby become important sources of ideas for

how best to state counter positions, as well as recipients of such formulations. The more people one talks to, the more formulations one becomes aware of. In this respect, cereal growers on the Plain are particularly well placed. By virtue of all being shareholders in The Landmen, an institution which explicitly fosters a climate in which the exchange of ideas between producers is accorded high priority, growers are able to meet regularly with numerous cereal producers who become incorporated into their networks.

The sphere of The Landmen's activities is quite distinct from that of the Union Branch. The cooperative has its own area of undisputed authority and standing regulations which guide its current work. For one, The Landmen is referred to as an *ekonomisk* (or profit-making) association (unlike the Union Branch which is an *ideell*, or non-profit, association). Structurally, The Landmen, concerned with all production-related matters, is differently organized from the Union Branch. For example, while there is only one Union Branch office, namely its Headquarters in Höör in central Skåne, some distance away from the Lund Plain (which growers would telephone rather than visit), there are eight major Landmen collection depots, as well as in each district a number of smaller branch offices providing a limited range of services to shareholders/producers.

The Kävlinge and Dalby Districts of The Landmen play a vital role in the production of crops on the Lund Plain. Because of the way in which The Landmen is structured, and its economic orientation, growers are in much more frequent contact with staff, advisors and management at the Kävlinge and Dalby Landmen than they are with the Provincial Chairman of the Union Branch. The former are employed by The Landmen and are permanently based in the office, shop and supply store. The latter, who is a farmer without a permanent room at Union Branch Headquarters, travels to Stockholm and other places frequently to attend meetings, conferences and so on and was in fact known as notoriously difficult to get a hold of by telephone. As mentioned in Chapter 3, communications between the Lund Plain growers and Lyngø occurred most frequently in the form of interaction mediated by the press. By contrast, interaction with employees at the Kävlinge

and Dalby Landmen was either face-to-face, or mediated by telephone calls, letters, brochures, pamphlets, and the nationally circulated magazine *Lantmannen*, but never by the newspapers.

As we shall see, in encounters with staff, advisors and management employed by Kävlinge and Dalby Landmen many opportunities arose for growers to articulate positions counter to that of Government, the national Farmers' Federation, and the Provincial Union Branch in regard to what they should do with their land.

The formulation of counter positions was in no small part aided and legitimized by the fact that Lennart Englesson, Chairman of the Skånish Landmen, was actively contesting the Farmers' Federation's and Government's position. This he did with the support of farmers on The Landmen's District Boards along with management of The Landmen in the Plains Districts, such as those in the Kävlinge and Dalby Districts.

Each grower was simultaneously a member of the Union (and even if not a fee-paying member, still subject to the policies agreed to by the Farmers' Federation and Government), and a share-holder of The Landmen in his district. Being members of two associations which in this instance were articulating different goals, farmers on the Lund Plain were subjected to two competing rhetorics. Lyngge, on the one hand, was urging them to restrict output, to give up a bit of income in the immediate short-term, on the promise that at some unspecified point in the future alternative crops, appropriate production techniques, and new markets would have been developed as substitutes for what had been temporarily lost by cutting back on cereal crops. Advisors at The Landmen, on the other hand, were at the same time telling growers how to maximize their returns in the face of falling cereal prices. Management had no interest in large numbers of growers participating in a program which would mean less business for the cooperative. The provisioning of advice and inputs to growers was geared to ensure the production of high quantity and quality crops to enable The Landmen to fill its quotas. Furthermore,

management of The Landmen was bound by the rules of the cooperative to safeguard the continued viability of the cooperative as a business undertaking. Throughout the implementation phase of the Fallow Program, therefore, management, advisors and other staff at The Landmen were, if not directly then indirectly, helping growers subvert the Fallow Program rather systematically. The growers had no interest in losing money by fallowing land, which if sown to a crop would net much more than the Fallow Program compensation payments offered. In the face of this, Lynge found himself fighting a losing battle.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, each cereal grower in the Kävlinge and Dalby Districts includes in his agro-political network management and advisors at The Landmen. Each time he spoke to the general manager, the financial manager or an advisor, an opportunity presented itself for the formulation and trading of a position counter to that of the Farmers' Federation and Government. I was once present when a grower handed in a signed contract to the receptionist at the front desk, showing his intention to produce a cereal crop on a specified land area. The manager, who recognized the grower as he was temporarily popping out of his office to use the photocopier, jokingly said to him "Aren't you going to fallow?" This comment was prompted by an awareness of the messages flowing from Lynge to all farmers in the Province, but also reflective of the potentially damaging consequences of the Fallow Program on The Landmen.

Other instances occurred in more structured exchanges with advisors, who interact with individual growers at farm level, when growers were discussing the pros and cons of varieties and inputs to use. Advisors are employed by The Landmen to assist growers to achieve maximum individual profit on cereals and related crops within the parameters of annually negotiated price agreements. The advisor being a key person in every grower's network (whether he turned to those at The Landmen or subscribed to the private advisory service), this resulted in a situation where the advisor would inform his 'client' of the most profitable strategies to counteract the effect of falling prices (such as growing fodder

peas). By default, advisors would be advising growers on the Lund Plain against fallowing. As growers are all linked through cross-cutting networks, they were able to trade this information without difficulty, at meetings, over the telephone, in chance encounters at the bank, petrol station, agricultural shows and so on.

The Kävlinge and Dalby Landmen are run by a Board of seven to ten farmers, on which the general manager and financial manager are also included. The Board meets regularly throughout the year. From management at The Landmen, Board members learned that these men did not perceive a generalized 'cereal surplus'. Rather, management worked with multiple categories of specific types of cereals, varieties, and grades. Each Landmen district is responsible for the production of a predetermined quota of the various cereals, including wheat. Simply by making available contracts, The Landmen encouraged growers to sign up. The general manager did not want to end up with left over contracts, as had happened in one Landmen District in a lower-yielding region of central Sweden. Here, so many farmers had signed up for the Fallow Program that management in that District had been unable to fill its quota of seed growing contracts. This was to be avoided at all costs.

To signal to growers that it was business as usual at The Landmen, written materials in the form of pamphlets and brochures were sent out regularly. Through such mediated encounters with The Landmen, in the form of reading brochures and leaflets on the various types, varieties and grades of cereals available, it became obvious to farmers and myself that the situation was not nearly as cut and dried as the Provincial Chairman of the Union Branch would have it. It was not just a matter of growing cereals on a smaller area of land, and thereby reducing the national cereal surplus. Certainly, some varieties of wheat were grown in surplus quantities for export on the general international market where prices were rapidly falling. Oats were also produced in surplus, but this crop was sold quite profitably to a specialized market, the American trotting and race horse industry. Other cereal crops were being produced in just the right quantity to satisfy demand: rye and barley were produced in sufficient quantities to satisfy domestic demand assuming an

average harvest. I would contend that it was in fact commonly known amongst all growers who read this material that the undifferentiated cereal surplus postulated by Lyngge, the CAB, the national Farmers' Federation, and the Government always referred to wheat, but that growers and management at The Landmen used this short-hand framing of the problem for their own purposes to dispute the existence of a surplus.

Nevertheless, there was never any out-right denouncement of the Fallow Program by employees at The Landmen, only a quiet determination to ignore the Program. In this process, a final factor was brought into play, namely the uncompromising nature of both the agricultural cycle and the business cycle. Thus, it was said, the timing of the implementation of the Fallow Program was all wrong, making it impossible for growers to sign up. There was not enough lead time. The signing-up period came too late for growers to seriously consider the Program for the autumn 1986, as well as spring 1987 sowing period. Growers had ordered their supplies of seed, agrochemicals and fertilizers and in some cases already paid for them, on the basis of plans made to cultivate all of their land, not just a portion of it. So, when the registration period for the Fallow Program opened in September 1986, preparation and planning was already well under way for all crops to be sown that autumn and in spring 1987, and in some instances even autumn 1987. Neither the growers, nor management at The Landmen, could reverse a process which was already under way, where money had already changed hands for inputs. This was used as a reason for not participating in the Fallow Program.

The reciprocal role played by other growers in each individual's network was the key to the smooth flow of counter-positions which were articulated in day-to-day conversations. Virtually every grower on the Lund Plain was a member of either the Kävlinge or Dalby Districts of The Landmen, which incorporated some 500-600 producer members each. From this pool of farmers a grower was able to include as many other cereal producers in his networks as he had time for. With these men he would trade counter-positions which formed the basis of what he then actually did on the farm in so far as planning for and

producing crops during the implementation of the Fallow Program.

## **(2) Evasion**

In this section, I look at how actions taken by individual growers constitute forms of resistance to the Fallow Program. Such acts ranged from not signing up for the Program, but contracting with The Landmen to grow fodder peas, to signing up, but only bits of land which yielded poorly. In signing up poorly yielding land for the Program, growers used a variety of tactics to ensure they would gain maximally.

The following is an examination of the range of response I found in the Norrarp Local Division. Fifteen farmers cultivated land in this Local Division. All were eligible for participation in the Fallow Program, registration for which closed with the third and final deadline on 31 January 1987. Of the fifteen growers, two had signed up for the Program, while thirteen refused to participate in it.

The varied ways in which actions can bear the traces of one constellation of power relations when farming is as individualized as it is in Sweden can be seen in the following examples.

Anders Göransson was a tenant farmer who cultivated approximately 65 hectares of land. His tenancy status, combined with the fact that he was near retirement age and only had two years left on his lease, were reasons given by himself for not wanting to participate in the Program. But there were other factors embedded in the larger structure. His farm being above average, and his crop plan thus capable of accommodating a legume crop, he had been able to secure a contract through The Kävlinge Landmen to grow fodder peas on one of his fields. His statement to me that he was against the idea of leaving good land fallow also reflected the fact that he did not have any poorly yielding land.

Another grower in Norrarp, Arne Henriksson, also rented all of his land, and therefore saw fallowing in terms of not being financially viable. Henriksson, however, unlike Göransson, was unable to contract with The Landmen to grow fodder peas. This was because he had a prior contractual arrangement with Findus, the food processing company, to grow green peas. All contract growers with Findus were precluded by a previous arrangement from growing fodder peas, on the basis that a disease associated with fodder peas spread all too readily to green pea crops if these were located within too short a distance. Findus being extremely concerned that its contract growers produce top quality crops, which were sold for export, this automatically excluded Henriksson from eligibility for a fodder pea contract.

As tenant farmers, Göransson and Henriksson were both bound by the terms of their leases to produce sufficiently to at least pay their rents to the land-owner. Throughout the Plain, tenant farmers were, at this stage, adverse to fallowing as evidenced by the fact that one group of men who leased all their land had travelled to Stockholm to protest against Lyngé's proposal to make the Fallow Program obligatory. Tenant farmers usually included other tenant farmers in their networks; many were also members of the Tenant Farmers' Association which served as an information exchange on all legal matters in relation to land tenancies. However, on the Lund Plain ego's network never includes a farmer simply because he is a neighbour. Ingvarsson and Henriksson mentioned above, who lived virtually next door to one another, and were both tenant farmers, did not have overlapping networks.

Of the eleven other farmers in the Norrarp Local Division who refused to sign up for the Fallow Program all had networks which overlapped with one another. Amongst these, there emerged a category of farmer who resisted the Fallow program on the basis that they complemented crop growing with dairying. The dairy branch of the agricultural sector had in the past also suffered from surpluses. This imbalance, as the Farmers' Federation referred to surplus problems, had been redressed by the introduction of a two-price



system, whereby dairy farmers received a higher price for a certain limited quantity of milk produced, and a lower price for anything produced above this quota. There were two dairy farmers in the Norrarp Local Division who thus had already once before been subjected to production restrictions. Neither of them wanted to take further losses by now also fallowing land sown to cereals. Dairy producers invariably included other dairy farmers in their networks, and all were members of the Dairy Producers' Association, a cooperative similar to The Landmen.

A third category of growers in Norrarp to resist the Fallow Program included those several owner-operators who cultivated land which consisted exclusively of superior soils. Claes Johansson, with forty hectares of arable land, was an example of such a grower. His yields were so high in his opinion that the fallow compensation payments offered in this district would not make it worthwhile for him to fallow. He was also a fairly newly established grower, around forty years of age, with a wife and two daughters aged eight and ten years to support. He said quite frankly that he was not interested in cutting back on his output. Growers who did not have young families found other ways of justifying non-participation, usually by saying that their capital costs were too high for them to be able to take a loss.

In the Norrarp Local Division, only two farmers signed up for the Fallow Program. Both of them registered bits of their most poorly yielding land. The Chairman of the Local Division of the Union Branch, Per Almgren, I had expected to perhaps heed Provincial level Chairman Lynge's call to fallow so as to reduce the cereal output. As Chairman he refrained from publicly criticizing the agreement reached by the Farmers' Federation and Government. At first Almgren's signing up also seemed to confirm a sense of loyalty to the Union Branch consonant with my hypothesis. However, I soon learned that signing up for the Fallow Program could rarely, if ever, be interpreted as synonymous with compliance. Almgren operated two farm units (one of which his wife's parents' farm in Norrarp Parish, the other a rented unit in the neighbouring parish), and also leased some additional land from the Kävlinge District Council. Although his primary farm unit,

located on the Plain proper, consisted of very good land, much of the tenanted land which was located closer to the Kävlinge River comprised sandy soils graded as of extremely inferior quality relative to the great majority of land in the Division. The compensation payment for fallowing being based on the quality of the majority of the land in the District, Almgren would clearly come out ahead if he did not produce anything on this inferior land, and instead accepted the compensation payments. This was what prompted him to sign up for the Fallow Program. Similarly, Lars Bertilsson, who owned an above-average sized unit in the same Local Division, also set aside poorly yielding land which comprised the extremely sandy, and thus relatively unproductive, sections of two fields which sloped towards the Kävlinge River.

In the Norrarp Division, as elsewhere on the Plain, there is a pronounced relation between productive land and private self-esteem, indeed social identity. Participation in the Fallow Program thus became a public declaration of the true worth of one's fields. By way of compensating for this, growers were quick to point out that they would make money by fallowing. In this situation, low yielding fields which were usually seen as liabilities were turned into assets: as the fallow compensation payments were based on an average yield for the 'crop yield district' as a whole, fields yielding well below the average would bring in a profit. For those who signed up low-yielding fields, therefore, participation also became synonymous with resistance, but for different reasons. As Anders Göransson expressed it to me, when he realized that his neighbour Lars Bertilsson was setting aside the sandy areas towards the River and not visible from the main road:

I always suspected that he never got much out of those fields. I bet he will come out ahead on those. Perhaps he is the real winner. Maybe I should have signed up too.

Resistance to the Fallow Program was therefore evident not only in the absence of action, in farmers refusing to sign up, but also in the act of signing up itself, in participants exploiting the Program in a way not intended by the Farmers' Federation and Government.

This is a reflection of the high value farmers in the Norrarp Division, and other Divisions on the Plain, placed on land as a resource, a major source of income, but also the importance of productive land to one's social worth and public standing. This is linked to the individualized nature of farming, where the continued existence of a farm business is contingent on the political acumen of the owner of the business, and him acting in accordance with, as one farmer put it to me, "what is best for the farm". The organization of farming as a business undertaking which was intended to support one family gave individual farmers ample justification for any action taken to increase income rather than reduce it. This was why there was no conflict between the small number of fallowing growers and the much larger number of growers who had ignored the Fallow Program. For even those men who had signed up were at the same time engaged in resisting the Program by exploiting it. By signing up poorly yielding land, they were thwarting the intent of the Program as much as those who had not signed up, and even more so because they were at the same time making money on it. All this was possible because soil quality varied greatly within the districts on which compensation payments were based, a factor over which no one had any control.

I have indicated that each farmer engages a network of individuals in the reciprocal exchange of formulations and strategies which run counter to what the Union Branch and the CAB wanted to see, and that such networks are not confined to the Local Division, but rather extend to individuals far and wide. Therefore, although I now turn to an examination of grower response to the Fallow Program in the Sederby Local Division, this should not be taken to mean that producers in this Division lived in one another's pocket. These men, like those in Norrarp and all the other Divisions on the Plain, had wide first-order and, by extension, second-order zones.

By focussing momentarily on the twelve farmers who cultivated land in the Sederby Division, I simply want to convey some additional dimensions of the range of response to the Fallow Program, which in Sederby was rather more diverse and entrepreneurial than in

Norrarp. Why this was so I can only speculate on: I believe it may have been linked to the extensive networks of some of the highly politically active men in Sederby.

Out of twelve growers in Sederby only two men had fallowed land. Christer Jansson was one of the men who signed up for the Fallow Program. He operated two farm units, one his parents' farm, the other a unit he rented from the Parish church. Jansson's neighbour, Gunnar Fransson, volunteered that "Christer is fallowing just because that's what one is supposed to do", intimating that this was a clear case of a man who had decided to *lojalitetsträda*, fallow out of a misguided sense of loyalty to the Union Branch. Jansson himself expressed it quite differently. He explained that he needed to replace some of the below-ground drainage pipes of that field, so fallowing was quite convenient. The repairs to the drainage system would also improve the productive capacity of that field. But there were other reasons why Christer Jansson was able to fallow some of his land. His wife had off-farm employment in Malmö. His children were of adult age. His son did not want to become a farmer, and the land attached to the farm would therefore eventually be sold off to a neighbour. His financial situation was such that he could afford a small loss. Nevertheless, his signing up for the Fallow Program constituted an act of resistance in that by replacing the leaky pipes, he would actually increase subsequent yields on that field, this at a time when the Government stated categorically that output had to be curbed.

The only other person in Sederby to set aside land which he was currently cultivating was Nils Börjesson, the owner-operator of an above-average sized farm. Börjesson came up with the idea of 'fallowing' not a field, but a continuous four-meter wide belt around the perimeter of every field, which he had estimated would equal 2.5 hectares. He had sown the strip with a cover crop, in this case grass. Subsequently, he had erected signs at various points along the road which cut across his property. The text on the signs invited the public to *beträda* this nature strip, a verb which means 'to set foot on', but which in this context was an intentional play on the word *träda*, meaning 'to fallow'. Börjesson's invitation to the general public to use his land for recreational purposes, such as walking

and horse-riding, to all intents and purposes looked like an act of compliance. What made this strategy particularly interesting, however, was not that Börjesson turned the land over for recreational purposes (although such land is in extremely short supply on the Plain between sowing and harvesting), thus apparently supporting the fallowing effort, but that he as a member of the Staffanstorp Council Treasury had secured District Council funds to pay for the grass seed he had used to create the green-belt surrounding his fields. As a justification for applying for public funds to pay for the seed Börjesson advanced the argument that the land would now be available to the public on a year-round basis, hence public funds should be used to pay for the seed. As a member of Council, Börjesson had a wide-ranging network, which included other council members and council staff. It was in interaction with them that he had developed and won support for this idea.

At this point, some background to the politicization of cover crops is called for. The Grain Group had announced in February 1987, after registration with the Fallow Program had closed, that in future no set aside land was to be left bare, as this was said to be bad for the environment. Since then, the cost of sowing a cover crop (to bind nitrogen and so avoid nitrogen leaching) on fallowed fields had been a constant topic of conversation amongst farmers. Those growers who had not registered for the Fallow Program, no matter where they were located, applauded themselves for not having signed up for the Program. They were critical of the new requirement of a cover crop, introduced by the Farmers' Federation and Government after the registration period had already closed. By then, it was too late for those growers who had already signed up to pull out. Growers who had registered were trapped, forced to accept the new amendment. This scenario provoked strong objections to the incurring of costs above and beyond what the fallow compensation payment would cover. The sowing of a cover crop entailed an expense no one had taken into consideration when working out whether the fallow payments would adequately compensate for the loss of a crop.

Nils Börjesson's participation in the Fallow Program therefore was not an act of

compliance but in fact an act of resistance against the Government and Farmers' Federation setting the compensation payments too low. It was also an act of resistance against the institution of a requirement that a cover crop be sown, as well as against the Federation failing to convince Government to agree to compensate farmers for the cost of sowing a crop of no commercial value. From the farmers' point of view, nitrogen could have been bound in the soil just as easily by a regular, commercial crop.

It was rather difficult to acquire additional land solely for the purpose of fallowing it against compensation. Some growers ploughed up grazing paddocks no longer in use. Purchasing new tracts of land was not easily done (as I explained in Chapter 2) as every sale and purchase of land at the time of fieldwork was controlled by the CAB. Gunnar Fransson, Chairman of the Sederby Local Division, had however received permission by the CAB in 1986 to purchase twenty hectares of land bordering his property. The land was of considerably lower quality than other land he already had under cultivation. When the Fallow Program was announced in mid-1986, Fransson signed up this land as his contribution to the fallow effort. However, although in so doing he was indeed participating in the Fallow Program, he was clearly not making a contribution to the overall reduction of cereal crop output. Fransson was a newly established grower, with three children. He hoped his five-year old son would take over the business some day. He had no intention of setting aside any of his other high quality land.

Having signed up his newly acquired but relatively speaking low-yielding land, Fransson soon sold off some of the trees and shrubs still left on the land. On the cleared land he grew corn flowers, a crop the CAB had granted permission to grow as an alternative crop under the Fallow Program.

At this stage, the CAB had also started approving the conversion of land into golf courses as another means to set aside land and so hopefully reduce the output of cereal crops. Once he had completely cleared the land of bushes and shrubs, Fransson planned to turn it

into a golf course. But Fransson's plans did not stop here. He also hoped to obtain paid employment for himself as a green-keeper at the golf course once it was in operation.

Registering this rather substantial land area as fallowed land (located in a district with one of the highest compensation payments as the majority of the land in the district was high-yielding), and growing alternative crops on it, earned Fransson a reputation as someone who really knew how to make the most of the Fallow Program. But this was not all. Fransson had also secured a contract to grow fodder peas for The Landmen on one of his other fields, for which he would receive support payments of approximately 650 Kronor per hectare. He was an example of a man who took every opportunity to maximize his income.<sup>1</sup>

### **(3) Manipulation**

An important way of expressing resistance to the Fallow Program was in exchanges with the CAB over the telephone, the Ministry of Agriculture's regional arm. This was done in the form of statements, inserted into conversations about other matters, to the effect that the land was too good to fallow, the compensation payments were too low, and there was no guarantee that cereal prices would increase as a result. Sometimes the advisors at the CAB would ask growers why they did not want to register for the Fallow Program. Some men advanced the view that if any land were to be fallowed, it should be land in the poorer yielding regions of Sweden, but not the superior soils on the Skåne Plain. Other growers said that fallowing land on the Plain was akin to stopping a high output production line in a factory, such as a Volvo assembly plant. Growers who advanced this line of reasoning maintained that it did not make sense to 'shut down' a successful and productive sphere of the agricultural sector.

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<sup>1</sup> McEachern (1990:230) makes a similar point in her discussion of how sheep farmers organize their farms so as to maximize returns from the state support system.

Other ways of expressing resistance involved actively exploiting the fact that the rules of the Fallow Program were changing rapidly (a direct consequence of large-scale resistance). I have mentioned earlier that the rules of the Fallow Program were amended in spring 1987 to allow 'alternative' crops on fallowed land (some examples of crops for which permission was granted were flax, buckwheat, wormwood, sun flowers, and millet). The catch here was that as the crops would have to be sold on the open market, growers would have to find their own buyers and negotiate their own price. Many seasoned growers found this unacceptable. Nevertheless, as soon as the rules of the Fallow Program had been amended to allow growers to sow 'alternative' crops for the open market, the CAB was inundated with telephone calls from growers wanting to know exactly what would qualify as an 'alternative' crop. This was a new category of crop, created to redress the production imbalance in the cereal sector of the planned agricultural economy. Setting aside land and receiving compensation in return for fallowing was meant to encourage growers to grow less cereals for the controlled market on that land. In that scenario, many growers wanted to know if they could grow vegetables on the set aside land. The answer to this was no. Growers could not expand into vegetables as they represented yet another established market separate from that of the controlled market for the traditional crops of cereals, oilseeds, sugarbeet and so on.

It needs to be explained here that the purpose of allowing new, or niche, crops to be sown on fallowed land was not to create competition between sub-specialities but to stimulate growers to think of and experiment with non-traditional crops, and possibly locate new markets for them. But the new category 'alternative' crop was still quite ill-defined. For example, discussions were underway at national level about the viability of planting trees on fallowed land. Some experimentation had already been initiated. If a tree-planting scheme went ahead, trees would be deemed an 'alternative' crop. But if a farmer had already for some time been growing a crop which was now being defined as 'alternative', could he sign up land sown or planted to such a crop, trees included, retroactively?



The following are two examples of how growers tried to exploit the CAB's as yet unclear guidelines on what constituted an 'alternative' crop.

The strategies employed by the first grower, Gunnar Fransson, can only be understood by first explaining that in the wake of a general anti-nuclear power push by environmentalists in Sweden in the 1980's, much Government-funded and supported experimentation and research had been undertaken into fuels to replace both fossil fuels and electricity (Sweden being a voracious consumer of both heat and light). Thus, there had been some experimentation with a fast growing willow tree to be used for energy purposes and therefore known in Skåne as energy forest (*energiskog*)(its Latin name is *salix*). The trees looked rather like tall thin poles with very short branches. Their growth period was seven years, whereupon they would be "harvested" and used to replace oil and other types of energy used in heating buildings and public works. Fransson had for some years been growing this type of willow on a small piece of land on an experimental basis, on contract with the National Energy Board (*Statens Energiverk*). Taking the view that energy forest was an alternative crop because it was a tree, Fransson rang the advisor at the CAB to find out whether he could sign this piece of land up retroactively as set-aside land against compensation. Whether his request was in fact approved by the CAB as compensable, I do not know. These were sensitive matters, and growers such as Fransson, having found a way of exploiting the absence of clear guidelines from the CAB, did not want to broadcast the fact. If they had, then the hole would have been plugged. In some circumstances, then, the information exchanged in growers' networks was remarkably lacking in detail, farmers being reluctant to divulge whether they had been successful or not in their attempts to negotiate border-line deals with CAB officials.

The second example relates to a grower in a Division not far from Sederby, who similarly had made enquiries to the advisor at the CAB about a piece of land on which he was growing Christmas trees. As soon as the Farmers' Federation had informed growers through the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land* that it supported the idea of reducing the

arable land area by growing trees on portions of it (at the time popular opinion preferred deciduous trees over conifers on the Plain), he had telephoned the Senior Advisor at the CAB to check whether the land on which he for some time had grown Christmas trees could be signed up for the Program against compensation. Again, however, I do not know whether he received approval for this. In any gathering of growers, therefore, there were always a few who were withholding information about their strategies, particularly if they had been told by the advisor to keep quiet so that the CAB would not be flooded with similar borderline requests.

All of these acts were part of a broader pattern of resistance which emerged as a consequence of a constellation of power relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government which flagged agreement, and therefore had to be enacted on back stages away from the centre stage of the Union Branch.

#### **(4) Creating personal interpretations**

The reason why networks are so culturally appropriate is to be found in the individualized nature of farming, where farmers depend on each other as well as a host of other individuals for up-to-date information of crucial importance to them as entrepreneurs. There was on the Lund Plain a tacit understanding that no matter what the political circumstances, it was each man for himself. Said one farmer to me in spring 1987, "it is the conditions on each individual farm which determines how one will act in any given situation". This is also why resistance was accorded a high degree of legitimacy, and why non-participants in the Fallow Program were always ready to explain their reasons for non-compliance to other farmers, to CAB officials, and myself. Stating one's personal reasons for not participating in the Fallow Program signalled that one was a competent business man, aware of not only the obvious, but also the hidden, cost of fallowing. Thus, non-compliance was accorded an emergent legitimacy in the flow of daily conversation.

In spring and summer 1987, I asked scores of farmers whether they were fallowing. The replies I received from non-participants confirmed that they were asserting their right to act as independent entrepreneurs, no matter what the Farmers' Federation and Government at national level, and the Union Branch and the CAB at regional level, wanted to see them do: act against their own best interest. One way of contesting the Government's and Farmers' Federation's position was to create their own new interpretations of the meaning of 'alternative' crop.

As I have explained earlier, the CAB's definition of 'alternative' crops was at first quite specific. However, it became subject to on-going modification as growers tried to get an ever-growing variety of crops approved as 'alternative' crops. Initially, 'alternative' crops only referred to new, niche, crops to be grown as of that season and on a purely experimental basis on fallowed land.

That many growers were not interested in these 'alternatives' became evident when one grower facetiously explained to me that alternative crops were crops which "[don't] make any money". Soon I realized that growers were using the new category alternative crops in daily conversation, but providing it with a meaning quite different from that given to it by the CAB.

Thus, when I asked Sven Hansson, a cereal grower, whether he was fallowing any of his land, he simply replied: "I am growing an alternative crop." At first I understood this to mean that he was indeed fallowing, and on the set aside land growing an alternative crop approved by the CAB. However, when I asked Sven which new crop he was growing, it became clear that he had started to label all the traditional non-cereal crops, the basis of his income, as 'alternative' crops. He, like so many others I spoke with, simply borrowed the CAB's new category but jokingly gave it a meaning which was intended to make fun of the whole idea of fallowing productive land. Hansson reasoned that as it was only cereal crops which were produced in surplus quantity, any other crop was fair game.

I encountered several other growers who were employing the same logic. For example, when I asked Tore Jonsson, who cultivated superior quality land in a Local Division not far from Norrarp, whether he was participating in the Fallow Program, he answered, as I had come to expect: "No, I am growing an alternative crop." When I asked what sort of crop, he replied with a gleam in his eye: "Green peas." Although not grown for the Government and Farmers' Federation controlled market but rather for Findus, the private sector food processing company, green peas clearly were not on the CAB's list of approved 'alternatives'. Other men of whom I asked whether they were fallowing stated no, but they were growing an alternative crop. These growers claimed that their potatoes and oilseeds were 'alternative' crops, and that as major portions of their land were sown to these crops as opposed to cereals, they were not really contributing to the cereal surplus and therefore there was no need for them to fallow. Furthermore, if they fallowed land they would only create a shortage of non-cereal crops. These growers were simply displaying the entrepreneurial talent on which Swedish farming rests.

Other ways of justifying non-participation revolved around exploiting the new label environmental pollution bandied around by Government (I analyze the pattern of protest vis-a-vis a package of policy measures directed at agricultural production methods which Government stated would stem water pollution in Chapter 5). All growers at this time interpreted the new proposed environmental pollution control measures, which did not have the support of the Farmers' Federation, as nothing but an attempt to force a reduction in output without compensation. They also argued that the Government's new measures unfairly implicated them as environmental marauders, something they persistently denied.

It was in this scenario that some growers began to defend non-participation in the Fallow Program by advancing their own alternative interpretations of what was and was not good for 'the environment'. For example, when I asked some growers in spring 1987 whether they were fallowing, they would respond "no, it is better for the environment not to

fallow", or state that "fallowing is bad for the environment". Such assertions were based on research reports which had shown that fallowed fields, unlike fields sown to a crop, leached large quantities of nitrogen into the streams and coastal waters as a result of an absence of rootsystems to fix the nitrogen in the soil. And this was the sort of pollution Government wanted to stem.

As I have already mentioned above, one of the first amendments to the Fallow Program introduced the requirement that all fallowed land not sown to an 'alternative' crop be sown to a cover crop, the purpose of which was to bind the nitrogen in the soil, and thus prevent or minimize leaching into streams and ocean. However, as mentioned earlier, Government refused to agree to compensation for the cost of sowing a cover crop (a short green grassy looking cover of no commercial value). It was these developments at national level which provoked the response described above on the Lund Plain.

By not fallowing but rather continuing to grow the customary, traditional crops, and claiming that in so doing they were acting out of concern for 'the environment', growers resisted the Government's emergent position that farmers were causing environmental pollution. This they did by presenting themselves as environmentally aware and responsible farmers, the exact opposite of what Government officials claimed them to be in statements to the press, speeches and reports. A farmer's statement that "fallowing is bad for the environment" therefore became a most expedient way to defend non-participation in the Fallow Program and at the same time thumb his nose at Government.

By reinterpreting and standing on its head the Government's position in day-to-day interactions with other farmers, growers again asserted their entrepreneurial independence to other farmers. This was an important act of resistance, and one which I will elaborate on in Chapter 5, where I discuss at length growers' response to accusations that they were destroying the environment through their farming methods.

### **(5) Showing polite indifference**

Expressions of resistance were tempered by the fact that the Fallow Program had been agreed upon by the Government and the Farmers' Federation. Opposition to the Program, although widespread and well-anchored, had to be shaped in such a way that it did not obviously and publicly dispute the Farmers' Federation's and Government's position. I now turn to an analysis of a particular act of protest in an arena in which growers came face-to-face with an high-ranking Government representative. Here resistance was expressed very subtly and obliquely indeed.

The Weibulls Plant Breeding Institute is an important private sector institution on the Plain, especially for seed growers. Many of the most competent farmers will enter into contract with Weibulls to grow seed crops. Seed growers will often include other seed growers in their networks, as well as Weibulls' managers and salesmen. The latter individuals, like their counterparts at the Landmen, were of help in the shaping of counter-interpretations in the early stages of resistance against the Fallow Program. Seed growers were often in touch with salesmen and managers by telephone. In casual comments, such as when a manager informed a producer that "we need growers to grow such-and-such variety, and grade, for us", the manager was in fact also making a political statement showing he sided with growers against the Fallow Program. His statement was political in the sense that the action to which it was related, the production of seed, would impact on growers and therefore on policy negotiators when farmers continued to ignore the Fallow Program.

While such casual comments were frequent between growers and employees at Weibulls, they were made in the full knowledge that they went against what the Farmers' Federation and Government had agreed to. How then did this situation shape farmers' and employees response to a speech by a Government official?

In November 1986, the Weibulls Institute arranged what it called its 'traditional seed day', held annually at Citizens Hall in Eslöv. The key speaker on this occasion was none other than the Vice Managing Director of the Swedish Grain Trade Association, Anders Fyrenius, who in his half-hour long speech in favour of fallowing said things like:

Sweden produces 0.3 per cent of the world's grain. There is in Sweden a surplus production of 1.4 million tons. No matter what happens, it will be painful. We should lessen the inevitable pain by fallowing. The time period for registering for the Fallow 87 Program has been extended until the 31 January. Isn't it better to really do something now rather than wait for all hell to break loose next year?

The response by the attending growers, all of whom cereal producers, to this speech was a polite show of indifference. No one attempted to advance a position contrary to that of Government and the Farmers' Federation in this context, although every single person in the audience would have been perfectly capable of being openly confrontational. Rather, the audience remained passive, displaying resistance through non-verbal means. This was done by not applauding the speech, instead delivering a slight of silence, quite an impolite response in most other situations. The two men on either side of me, for example, did not even unfold their crossed arms at the end of the speech. Their facial expressions conveyed no emotion. Other men in the audience whispered comments to one another, indicating they did not like what they had heard.

The only verbal statement in response to Fyrenius' speech came from Torbjörn Sandberg, the Managing Director of Weibulls, who introduced and thanked all the speakers invited to the event. At the end of Fyrenius' talk he emerged from the sidelines. With a fixed smile and even tone of voice he simply looked at the speaker and said:

We thank you for your educational talk, but not for the bad news.

With those words, he articulated in a nutshell the sentiments of the audience, adroitly

dismissing the key message of Fyrenius' speech. The remainder of the scheduled speakers that day did the same, by covering a range of topics related to cereal production. So, too, did the attending seed growers when, during coffee, taken in a room next to the auditorium, the discussion immediately came to center on how to cope with falling cereal prices. No one associated with Weibulls, nor any of the growers, even mentioned fallowing of land in this context.

We see then that in a situation where the Farmers' Federation and Government both agree on a Program, acts of protest are constrained, both in terms of the context in which they occur, and in terms of their form. Acts of resistance did not have any backing from Arne Lyngø and the Union Branch and could therefore not be played out in that arena where protest was most commonly articulated. By and large, resistance to the Program was confined to casual exchanges with management, advisors and staff at The Kävlinge and Dalby Landmen, to the farm in the way in which planning and production was carried out, to conversation with advisors at the CAB, to private conversation with other farmers, and for seed growers in exchanges with management, researchers, and salesmen at the Weibulls Plant Breeding Institute. Expressions of resistance in the presence of a Government official speaking at Weibull's Annual Seed Day were non-verbal.

There were, in spring 1987, many opponents to the Fallow Program on the Lund Plain whose voice simply was accorded no legitimacy in the Union Branch. Yet, acts of protest were everywhere to be seen and heard. Unlike the patterns of defence and attack I examine in Chapters 5 and 6, the acts of resistance analyzed here were low-key, drawing on informally constructed social relations and in those same relations finding social approval and private legitimation. They were, as Scott (1985) puts it, constitutive of "multiple acts of [peasant] insubordination and evasion" (1985:xvii).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The proposal advanced by the Provincial Chairman of the Union Branch, Arne Lyngø, to make the Fallow Program compulsory did not gain favour with Government. The final decision taken by Parliament in May 1987 was for the Program to remain voluntary. However, over the summer the Program underwent significant changes. As of autumn 1987, the one-year *Tråda 87* was to be replaced with a



## 5. CONCLUSION

The Fallow Program represented the fruit of a compromise reached between the Farmers' Federation and Government. The pattern of resistance which emerged vis-a-vis fallowing as a measure to reduce the cereal surplus was constrained by the above-mentioned power constellation. Acts of protest were characterized by a variety of practices, all of which occurred in arenas well removed from the Union Branch, constitutive of the back stage of agro-political life.

By examining action and speech in various back stage arenas in which growers met with other growers, talked with managers, advisors, and other staff at The Landmen, engaged in conversation with advisors at the CAB, as well as the farm, I have brought to the fore the shape of an informally assembled form of protest staged following the implementation of the Fallow Program. In this circumstance, opposition could not be effectively expressed in any arena associated with the Union Branch, on centre stage. Hence, the informal political arena assumed importance as a breeding ground for contrary views and action, which however were never articulated as a firm opposition to the Farmers' Federation or Government.

The tension created as a result of the uneasy fit between a nationally determined approach and a quite different regional agro-political agenda was not allowed full political expression in the Union Branch. There was, in fact, no one arena in which the growers on the Plain were allowed to express and confirm their specifically regional orientation and views on land as a resource. The absence of a forum in which growers could stand up and argue that fallowing was not in their individual self-interest, that fallowing was not in the

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three-year scheme known in Swedish as *Omställning 90* (literally Adjustment 90, in effect a land diversion program). By this time, the initial emphasis on fallowing of land, so thoroughly resisted on the Lund Plain, had been firmly shifted to the production of some kind of alternative but viable crop with a guaranteed market.

best interests of the region, was consonant with the incorporation of all farmers into the national policy making process, whereby agro-political concerns specific to certain regions cannot be given formal legitimation. Consequently, resistance developed in a number of dispersed informal arenas, characterised by the fact that virtually all those involved had a vested economic interest in the continued cultivation of the Plain's most important resource, arable land.

## CHAPTER 5

### PATTERNS OF PROTEST II: DEFENCE

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I examined various expressions of resistance, all played out vis-a-vis a program representing the fruit of a compromise between the Farmers' Federation and Government which was in the process of being implemented. During the period of fieldwork, however, several other policy measures to restrict cereal production were also under consideration. All were at different stages of negotiation. Resistance therefore represented only one broad pattern of opposition to restrictive policy at this time of cereal surplus crisis. Another form of political action was that of defence, a pattern which had begun to unfold in late 1986 and was to form a constant backdrop as fieldwork progressed.

In this second case study, I examine defence as a pattern of protest as this emerged on the Lund Plain vis-a-vis policy on which relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government were highly strained. The particular policies against which acts of defence were directed were still under negotiation. This gave rise to much political debate, and would continue to do so until early 1988. The final wording of the policies would as usual represent a compromise reflecting numerous conflicting interests. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate that protest takes a different form during the prolonged negotiation of policy than it does once a bill has been passed by Parliament and the new act gone into force. The fact that the Farmers' Federation was actively involved in passing negative comment on the Government's new policy proposals enabled growers to take a much more vocal stand in their protest than they had been able to do vis-a-vis the Fallow Program. The aim of acts of defence, in contradistinction to acts of resistance analyzed in Chapter 4, was to challenge the general public, either face-to-face or through the *South Swedish*

*Daily*, to deliberately influence public opinion and by extension the national policy-making process.

Just as the cereal growers on the Lund Plain and elsewhere on the Skåne Plain took a stand against taking land out of production, fallowing, so they did against this next policy, in fact a package of policy measures, which entailed imposing restrictions on yieldboosting inputs. Again, the interests of cereal growing farmers using intensive methods of production clashed with those of farmers in the forest region to the east of the Plain (and in other lower yielding regions throughout Sweden), where farming was more extensive (in this context extensive farming means less reliance on agricultural inputs, and less emphasis on cereal crops in comparison with the kind of intensive farming carried out on the Lund Plain). The Lund Plain growers not only desired to cultivate all their land, they also wanted to continue to use all inputs available. This is why they supported the Farmers' Federation's pro-intensive farming methods stand. Farmers in the forest region, on the other hand, were broadly speaking opposed to the Federation's pro-intensity stand and could see no reason why farmers on the Plain could not cut back on their use of inputs. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I am not primarily concerned with this split amongst producers in Skåne, but rather with the practice of protest which emerged on the Lund Plain vis-a-vis the Government's proposed policy package to reduce the use of agricultural inputs. Below, I offer a second case study of regional agro-politics as this was played out on the Plain during the cereal surplus crisis, but now in the form of defence against a package of policy measures in the negotiation stage of its career.

What I refer to as defence is a response characterized by its open and legitimate nature: it aims to influence the policy-making process in a legitimate manner (unlike resistance which is characterized by subversiveness and therefore tainted with illegitimacy). In deploying legitimate lobby activities against the policy package restricting the use of agricultural inputs, the growers had the full backing of the Union Branch, as well as The Landmen. Both organizations followed the national Farmers' Federation's line which was to defend

current levels of use of inputs. This enabled growers to talk about, prepare, and then formulate elaborate counter-positions specifically for public consumption. The aim was to undermine the credibility of the Government's arguments, in particular its stated rationale for the new policy package. Acts of defence were shaped in such a way that it was immediately clear that defence as a pattern of protest had official standing, i.e. bore the Farmers' Federation's stamp of approval. The national negotiation process shaped social relations at two different levels in the region: firstly amongst the farmers themselves, and secondly between producers and consumers. This case study shows up the formation of action sets amongst intensive growers. At the same time, the case study demonstrates how rural producers, often on their own, negotiated increasingly strained relations with non-agriculturalists in the region. These two processes of farmers coming together while at the same time trying to take their message out to a hostile public on an individual basis, occurred while contentious policy was being negotiated at national level. If left unopposed, policy would have a devastating effect on all farmers. By stating their reasons for opposing policy, individual growers signalled to members of the public that they would not be taking this lying down.

The pattern of defence which emerged in this scenario where the Farmers' Federation was clearly opposed to restrictions on agricultural inputs differed from that of resistance in that it was directed at a specific target, the non-farming public. This reflected the origins of the proposed policy package. The proposals had not been initiated in the usual manner as a result of discussions between the Farmers' Federation and the Minister of Agriculture. Rather, this policy package was the end result of new constituent groups, representing consumer and environmental concerns diametrically opposed to those of farmers, lobbying the Minister for the Environment for changes to existing policy.

These extra-institutional movements had gained force since the new Food Policy Act of 1985 went into effect (see Chapter 1). Spokespersons for the food quality and environmental movements, representative of what some social scientists refer to as new

social movements (see for example Offe 1985), had been particularly critical of farmers' production methods. Much pressure had been brought to bear on the State in the 1980's through channels of non-institutional politics (Offe 1985:826) to ban the use of certain agricultural inputs and methods of raising livestock. The Government's response had been to introduce new policy to restrict the use of chemicals and fertilizers.

In this context it is worth noting that although farm production methods have come under fire in many western European countries, no one has as yet effectively analyzed farmers' responses to what they consider unfounded criticisms by an ill-informed public. Newby (1979) has provided the most extensive treatment to date of sources of conflict between modern farmers who use intensive methods of production (for example in eastern England, a region which in many ways resembles the Skåne Plain), and the non-farming general public who reside in these rural (often commuter-belt) areas. Newby describes the source of rural conflict as rooted in competing ideologies (1979:259). Simply put, conflict arises out of the fact that farmers cultivate the land for a living, while non-farming members of the public, who do not depend on the land for their livelihood, merely look to the land for visual and recreational enjoyment. While I do not dispute the general validity of Newby's argument, I believe it important to examine the actual expression of conflict. Newby does not offer any ethnographic details on how conflict is enacted between environmentalists and farmers. Neither does he explore how farmers might challenge the environmentalists' position. One of the few references Newby makes to the practice of protest, which I see as integral to the everyday life of rural producers when restrictive policies are on the agenda, relates to the farmers' organization's role in protest. Newby covers this in one sentence: "The National Farmers' Union will attempt to minimize as far as it possibly can the scope of any resulting [planning] legislation which may impinge on the farming industry" (1979:281).

Newby's seminal work on conflict in the English countryside lacks a treatment of the actual form conflict takes, and also fails to explicate the relationship between the nature of

conflict and the political system in which it occurs. In this chapter, therefore, I extend on Newby's treatment of conflict between farmers and non-farming members of the public. Firstly, I examine how cereal growers on the Lund Plain lived with and defended themselves against what they perceived as attack on their integrity on a day-to-day basis in the late 1980's. Secondly, I link every-day acts of protest to particular points in both the national policy-making process and the agricultural cycle. Thirdly, I note how acts of defence are shaped by the political system during the negotiation phase of policy. In other words, I examine specific instances of conflict where I was able to observe individual farmers defending themselves against wage and salary earning members of the non-farming public. Defence is an important strand in farmer-State relations in Sweden. It is a dimension Scott (1985) does not cover in his examination of peasant protest in Malaysia. The following analysis, as stated in Chapter 1, is informed by Ortner's (1989) conceptualization of the relationship between structure and human action, in which structure is imprinted on actors' every day practice.

Everyday acts of defence occurred in a variety of contexts over a long period of time. Although defence was a collective grassroots response, the actual staging of acts of defence did not in the main require growers to act as a collectivity. This enabled growers to fit protest activity around farm work and family obligations. But while most activities of defence gave the appearance of being highly individualized, they were in fact different expressions of a generalized and collectively enacted pattern of defence which had spread to all growers through the formulation and exchange of a string of counter-arguments in settings where networks overlapped.

The organization of this chapter reflects the very nature of defence. This kind of protest demands a multitude of activities, from preparations to executions, in as many sites as possible to impact effectively on the wage and salary earning sector of the population. Here I take the reader on an extended journey through time and space. The time frame is autumn 1986 to autumn 1987. The locations in which acts of defence are analyzed range

from the farm office, out-buildings and fields, to educational institutions, council meetings, the usual farmers' meetings, and the *South Swedish Daily*. These are the arenas in which farmers prepare their arguments, come face-to-face with members of the public, or by some mediated means reassert their position in the face of criticism by non-farmers.

The material in the body of this chapter is organized into five sub-sections under the general heading Acts of Defence. This is to enable an examination of the characteristics of acts of defence at different points in time during national negotiations and in the agricultural cycle (autumn, winter, spring and autumn), and vis-a-vis specific measures (cuts in agrochemicals, a ban on a particular chemical, and reduced use of commercial fertilizer). The material in each sub-section is presented in the form of vignettes of micro social situations linked by broader sweeps of related events and an analysis of both. The vignettes, similar to freeze frames, have been written in the present tense to enable the reader to stop and observe acts of defence as they happen.<sup>1</sup> While sub-sections (1), (3) and (4) cover farmers' response in the normal course of national policy making, sub-sections (2) and (5) deal with their reactions in an instance in which the rules of policy making procedure are broken by the Minister for the Environment. Sub-section (2) analyzes the growers' and Farmers' Federation's immediate response in the face of this untoward event, while sub-section (5) takes up further political activity vis-a-vis the same event, but four months later.

## 2. NEGOTIATION OF INPUTS POLICY PACKAGE

In the particular case under discussion the policies being proposed aimed to force an overall reduction in the use of agricultural inputs. A brief explanation of their importance to crop growing farmers is therefore warranted.

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I only deal with reactions to policies which were aimed specifically at cereal growers, notwithstanding that there were other aspects to the production methods policy package, an important one being concerned with restrictions on intensive, factory-style livestock rearing.



A grower's arable land merely provides the soil in which the plants grow. To a crop producing farmer, it is vitally important also to continually replenish the soil's fertility, nurture the plants, and kill off weeds and pests to produce good quality and high quantity crops. This is done by applying measured doses of many types of agricultural inputs, principally commercial fertilizer, barn manure and agrochemicals, which are integral to the actual production of crops.

The proposed policy package, around which considerable debate occurred during fieldwork, aimed to reduce the use of these inputs. Each policy measure, including an extraordinary ban, will be explained in more detail at appropriate points in the chapter. The growers' principal objection to restrictions on the use of inputs was that this would have an adverse effect on both the quantity and the quality of the crops produced (which happened to be the criteria by which they were paid). Unable to go on strike, or even to put in place short, minor stoppages like wage and salary earners, even public servants, might do (and in fact did in autumn 1986 -- see Chapter 1) to draw attention to the problems this would cause, the farmers instead launched a campaign to challenge the population at large, the mass media, politicians and Government. They attacked the Government's justification for this policy, and also questioned why farmers should bear the cost of "an environmental clean up" when the major polluters were big industry.

A key point in the negotiation of restrictions on farm inputs is that the Farmers' Federation had been excluded from the formal policy negotiation process, having been granted no or little representation on the three commissions which developed the various proposals to force a cut in the use of chemicals and fertilizers. Rather than being a full member of the commissions formulating the proposals (as had been the case for the Fallow Program), the Federation was relegated to play the weaker role of critic of already formulated policy. The *remiss*-procedures in place, whereby interested parties can submit comments on policy proposals, enabled the Federation to speak out against the proposals, both in the press and

in formal submissions. In this, the Farmers' Federation relied heavily on broad-based backing from growers such as those on the Lund and wider Skåne Plain to support its own lobby activities which centered on changing or cutting out key clauses in the proposed legislation. Throughout policy negotiations, growers were encouraged to actively challenge public opinion, which it was held would have a flow-on effect on those engaged in the national negotiations. Their proposals would be vetted by Parliament, whose members represented the interests of the public. For this reason, the Federation considered it important that a multiplicity of useful counter-arguments be put in circulation amongst the rank and file for ordinary growers to use in as many contexts as possible, especially in encounters with members of the public throughout the course of negotiations. The purpose of such grassroots lobby activity was to take every opportunity to voice opposition to each measure on various grounds. By the time the new environmental bill, of which the package would form a part, was presented in Parliament (in spring 1988), grassroots lobbying in combination with national lobby activity would have resulted in a series of amendments to the bill. Assuming lobbying was successful, the final Act would be but a watered down version of what Government had hoped for.<sup>2</sup>

Leaders of the Farmers' Federation knew that strong grassroots support would be particularly forthcoming on the Skåne Plain. In this scenario, Arne Lynge, Provincial Chairman of the Union Branch in Skåne, came to play a completely different role from that which he took vis-a-vis the Fallow Program. Whereas he had been pushing (unsuccessfully) farmers to fallow land against their will and better judgement, effectively preventing any anti-fallow sentiments from being expressed in the Union Branch context, here he was giving growers his full support to argue for continued use of yield-boosting inputs at then current levels. His stand greatly shaped discussions at Union Branch

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<sup>2</sup> I do not know whether the omission of the Farmers' Federation from the various commissions was deliberate on the part of Government, or whether the Federation had declined representation on the grounds that the organization was fundamentally opposed to a reduction in the use of inputs, which equalled loss of income for farmers, without provision for financial compensation.

Meetings as well as in all other arenas where farmers' networks overlapped. His position accorded all acts of defence, i.e. statements in favour of high-intensity farming (the opposite of what Government intended with its new policy proposals), a high degree of legitimacy.

### 3. ACTS OF DEFENCE

#### (1) Policy Proposal On Agrochemicals: Autumn And Winter

On 20 December 1986, the *South Swedish Daily* published the details of a report released by a commission called the Intensity Group (*Intensitetsgruppen*), which had been meeting for some time. The Intensity Group comprised representatives of the National Board of Agriculture, the National Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Chemicals Inspectorate. The Farmers' Federation had no representation on this commission. Several previous progress reports on what the commission would propose had been published by the *Daily*. The stated aim of the measures contained in the Intensity Group's report, titled "Action Program to Reduce Health and Environmental Risks when Using Agrochemicals", was to reduce by half the volume of agrochemicals sprayed on crops over a five year period.<sup>3</sup>

Every grower on the Lund Plain owns or by some other means has access to spray equipment. This consists of a plastic tank, capable of holding several hundred litres of liquid, mounted on two wheels. The required chemical, usually stored in small, easy to handle, plastic containers, is emptied into the tank, and then mixed with the correct ratio of water. The tank is trailed behind a tractor. A pump sucks the liquid out of the tank and into the delivery lines which are attached to a horizontal boom. On the boom are placed a

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<sup>3</sup> For a history of environmental conservation (protection of the natural environment) in Sweden, see Hillmo and Lohm (1990).

number of evenly spaced nozzles through which the chemical emerges in the form of a fine mist.

The proposal to reduce the use of agrochemicals did not intend to do away with chemicals altogether. Rather, farmers were to be encouraged to use more care when spraying, were to have their spray equipment, especially the working order of the boom nozzles, tested regularly, and were to be encouraged to switch to low volume chemicals. Whether these measures would in effect result in a halving of the amount of agrochemicals used was another matter. With high-volume spraying, the drops are relatively large, therefore tending to coalesce and cover the whole surface of the plant being sprayed, with any excess running off and into the ground. With low-volume spraying, the relatively smaller quantity of spray applied per hectare is split up into fine droplets, the spray striking the plants and adhering to the surface in individual specks. Low-volume spraying required less water to be mixed with the chemical. Many growers complained that it was absurd to be told they had to reduce the use of chemicals by half, and at the same time be told to switch to low-volume chemicals, which were highly concentrated, and just as if not more effective (polluting, in the Government's terms) than high-volume chemicals.

*(i) Preliminaries: Everyday conversations*

The shaping of a position which ran counter to that of Government was a process which occurred in stages. It began with growers engaging in informal preparation, and continued with a gradual elaboration of their arguments and the dressing of these in legitimate language. The process culminated in at least the more outspoken men articulating a counter-position with a great deal of confidence, either in writing or in face-to-face situations where they were heavily outnumbered by their critics.

At the core of producers' acts of defence lay the newly appointed Minister for the Environment's, Birgitta Dahl's, encroachment on matters which had previously been in the

domain of the Minister of Agriculture (since autumn 1987 Mats Hellström). Through the Farmers' Federation, growers disputed Dahl's assertion that farmers who used intensive farming methods were ruining the environment and producing poor quality food (constructions which the Federation had had no part in formulating and therefore vehemently opposed). The constant critique directed at Government, especially the Minister for the Environment, and mediated by the Farmers' Federation, was reflective of exceptionally strained relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government during the negotiation phase of restrictions on agricultural inputs.

The mobilization of defence began with growers defining themselves vis-a-vis the opposition as a powerless minority, at the mercy of an ignorant and irrational public, and a press which supported the Government's emerging position. Integral to defence was the act of recasting the proposed policies in terms of a slur on their professional competence, an attack on their integrity, their self-ascribed and officially recognized role as landscape managers and protectors of the natural environment.<sup>4</sup>

One grower turned the Government's position around with the sentence, "We are being persecuted". Implied in his statement was that Government was turning its back on farmers, now listening ever-more intently to a public he saw as irrational. A second grower, alluding to the same process whereby farmers' interests were now being subordinated to those of the non-farming public in front of their very eyes, said "we have become like an ethnic minority". As a third grower put it to me, with openly stated reference to how this was all part of the process of Government reversing long-established policy initially negotiated with the Farmers' Federation: "We have become punchbags. They think they can do anything to us because we are a minority, our vote is unimportant."

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<sup>4</sup> Westerlund (1990) makes the point in his treatment of Swedish environmental legislation that "if the gap between the opinions of those in power and the general public on the law [regulating environmental problems] becomes too wide, then various crises can arise; crises which may affect the position of various power groups" (1990:123).

When I asked a fourth grower what he thought about the new proposed policy, he replied that "We have always been told that we are clever (*duktiga*), efficient (*effektiva*), and able to produce good quality cheap food, but now they are telling us that we are destroyers (*förstörare*), environmental villains (*miljöbovar*), and that we produce poor quality food stuffs". All these statements, uttered in the course of everyday conversations, constituted attacks on the Government's position. Throughout, growers portrayed themselves as a group with minority interests, being held to ransom by a politically powerful, but uninformed, majority.

What other expressions did defence take at regional level? One arena in which policy measures are frequently discussed informally at grassroots level is in the study circles (*studiecirkel*) which are held in all Union Branch Local Divisions every winter. In 1987, the Union decided to extend this practice, but to call it a course and for the first time ever invite members of the non-farming public to attend. This exercise in consumer education was designed to challenge the Government's redefinition of farmers (forced by changing consumer attitudes) as producers of poor quality commodities. Some of the key characteristics of defence were here present: public concerns were addressed, their logic questioned, and arguments portraying farmers as responsible used to refute the opposition's claims. This was done to dispute a media-perpetrated link between intensive production methods and 'unhappy' livestock, poor quality pork and poultry meat, 'poisoned' crops, and water pollution.

The quality of farm commodities produced was directly linked to the use of agricultural inputs by both farmers and the public. But producers construed the linkage between agrochemicals and fertilizers, on the one hand, and quality crops on the other, differently from consumers. This was the very point of conflict, the pivot around which turned the Government's and general public's position on the one hand, and the Farmers' Federation's and growers on the Lund Plain on the other. To summarize the key points in the arguments: consumers were lobbying for fewer chemicals to be used in farming, on the

basis that this would result in higher quality food products free of chemical residue; farmers countered that what consumers thought of as a higher quality food was in fact of inferior quality, not having been properly protected against pests. Further, growers asserted that it would cost more to produce food products derivative of commodities produced with less or without agrochemicals (substances which in their opinion ensured high even quality yields), as yields would drop and quality deteriorate. If agrochemicals were removed from the production process, the price of foodstuffs would therefore have to be increased to cover farmers' escalating production costs. But there was no indication that consumers were willing to pay a higher price for food in the shops. This was corroborated by the Consumer Delegation's standard position taken in the annual price negotiations (see Chapter 1), when the Delegation invariably opposed food price increases.

What action did the Farmers' Federation take? The Federation took the view that the matter of food quality should be thrown open for direct discussion between producers and consumers at regional level in the hopes of a meeting of minds occurring, and a solution emerging. This was a regionally deployed variant on national negotiating techniques which aimed for compromise through consensus building. The discussions were to take place under the auspices of the Union Branch in the context of courses advertised and held by the adult education organizations *Vuxenskolan* (literally the Adult School), a branch of the Centre Party (representing the interests of rural producers), and *Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund, ABF* (literally the Workers Educational Federation), a branch of the Social Democratic Party (representing the interests of wage and salary earners). During the winter months of 1986-1987, a total of 81 courses were held throughout Skåne, under the aegis of the Provincial Union Branch but facilitated by the two adult education organizations which have offices and classrooms in most District Centres in the Province. The course was appropriately titled Food - a hot potato (*Maten är en het potatis*). The text book chosen for the course was a publication by Marit Paulsen, a vocal spokesperson for the food quality movement. The 130-page paperback, titled *The Stressed Potato (Den stressade potatisen)*, written in a popular and easy-to-read style, was a statement against

intensive, factory-style farming and food processing, which however offered no viable alternatives. Two eight-week courses were run out of *Vuxenskolan's* premises in Kävlinge in late winter, early spring. One course ran from the end of January until the end of March 1987. Here, I was able to observe how in this context one farmer tried to engage four women, representative of consumer interests.

### VIGNETTE

The sessions are informally led by a farmer, Björn Andersson. There are four other participants, all women with adult children two of whom have worked in school canteens and nursing home kitchens, two in a meat processing plant. The group meets eight Thursday evenings from 7 o'clock onwards. The time is structured into two "study hours" (*studietimmar*), each 45 minutes long, with a break in between for coffee and sweetbreads.

One Thursday evening, for several weeks having simply listened to the four women talk away about various aspects of food (selecting, buying, preparing, cooking and storing) Björn resolves to put the group to the test, by asking a couple of questions. In his low key manner, he asks the women to define precisely what they mean by the term quality. The women immediately stop in their tracks. Eyes downcast, they rack their brains. One starts to flick through the reading material. Another opens her handbag and pulls out a handkerchief. A third fiddles uncomfortably with her diary. The fourth woman looks at her watch. Björn sits passively waiting for an answer. After a few moments of silence, one of the women concedes that quality is not an easy concept to define. The other three nod in unison. After all, chemically untreated, worm eaten apples look horrible. And most people, including themselves, do not want to buy vegetables half eaten by slugs. But fresh looking, unblemished vegetables have invariably been chemically treated. Is a commodity which has been sprayed, whether cereals or vegetables, of a higher quality than one which has not been treated in this way, and therefore might be damaged by insects, snails, crop disease and so on? Or is it the other way around? They have no answer. When Björn presses the women to tell him if they would be willing to pay a higher price for foodstuffs bought in the supermarkets which have not been chemically treated, again the group falls silent. Finally, one of the women suggests that it is time for coffee, and with this they conclude their attempts to define quality.

This incident confirmed to Björn that consumers did not know what they wanted. He shared it widely with other producers in his network whenever the opportunity arose (for example at meetings in his Local Division, and at events arranged by the producers' associations of which he was a member) throughout his two month stint as course leader. His was a contribution to the growing number of stories put into circulation about members of the non-farming public at this time.



*(ii) Community building: Telling stories*

In the everyday language of growers on the Lund Plain, the general public refers to anyone who is not a farmer. The term includes children, young adults, working adults, the retired and elderly. It can refer to people of any non-farming occupation, and is never applied to farmers. The public constitutes all those people who live in the church villages, dormitories, District Centres, Lund and Malmö (see Chapter 2). Often non-agriculturalists are referred to as consumers, reflective of the current polarization of producers and consumers in the political economy, indeed in the annual commodity price negotiations as well as negotiations on restrictions on the use of agricultural inputs.

Parallel with structured encounters held in formal arenas under the auspices of the Union Branch, an informal and unstructured process was simultaneously in motion whereby amongst themselves, in the course of daily living, growers had begun to collect and tell unflattering stories about the public. This was an expression of a felt sense of frustration which they were as yet unable to articulate in the more formal language required to exert maximum impact on public opinion, and by extension the policy negotiation process. The following are examples of how in the early stages of national negotiations, growers were sharing amongst themselves first-hand observations which confirmed that individual members of the public did not know what they wanted, as they were acting at odds with what Government was proclaiming the public desired. These were wage and salary earning people working in factories, offices, shops, hospitals, the public sector, schools, universities, the food processing industry, and so on, who wanted their food dollar to stretch as far as possible.

Systematically observing members of the non-farming public from a distance, and formulating disparaging opinions about them, became a common practice amongst some growers. The stories which producers then created about what they had seen people do and not do all revolved around the same theme, that the men and women, generally adults,

observed were clearly not concerned about chemicals. One grower told me how he had walked around the supermarkets in Kävlinge, Lund and Malmö watching shoppers' buying patterns: they always bought items on special (which confirmed that they wanted to pay as little as possible for their groceries), always ordinary flour rather than organic flour, always chemically produced vegetables and fruits (which confirmed that they were not concerned with chemical residue in food products), even when unsprayed, organically grown produce was available.

The complexity of the stories varied. Frequently, they were no more than simple statements in which two apparently incompatible ways of looking at things were juxtaposed. One man, for example, remarked:

People don't accept modern farming methods. They want things to be like they were thirty years ago, without chemistry. They don't understand that there are chemicals in everything. We flush out shampoo, washing up liquid, laundry detergents by the ton every day.

On other occasions, growers provided quite vivid descriptions of what to them were inconsistent behaviours, in some cases observed on their own farms. One producer, who had regular visits to his farm by school children and their teachers, said:

There are adults, teachers, who turn their nose up at drinking fresh milk out of the tank on farms when they have open days for school children, because it hasn't been pasteurized. Then they will turn around and drink a bottle of soft drink which is full of chemicals.

One man drew to my attention the disastrous consequences of inconsistency for farmers:

The Environmental Party wants a healthy society. People think that what we eat is dangerous. For example, they say there is chemical residue in the flour. But we import tomatoes from abroad which have been sprayed with a substance against mould. If Swedish grown tomatoes get this disease then they have to be thrown away. But this does not mean there won't be any tomatoes in the supermarkets. No, it means that then they will import

tomatoes which have been sprayed with this substance which is prohibited in Sweden. Yet the consumers complain about using chemicals.

The *South Swedish Daily* wrote stories about members of the public who wanted chemicals free foods. From growers' own observations the public did not seem too concerned about chemicals. The farmers' stories about consumers served several purposes. Firstly, the exchange of such stories in their networks, whether at meetings or in chance encounters, signified an on-going process of community building while policy was being negotiated in Stockholm. Secondly, stories served as a short-hand of the storyteller's awareness of the forces around him which were imposing themselves on the content of agricultural policy measures at national level. Finally, through the recounting of stories about the public, growers confirmed a reality witnessed by themselves and different in every respect from that created daily by the media. While the *South Swedish Daily* invariably described consumers as extremely "worried" and "anxious" about "poisons" in food products, the stories told by growers without fail cast the public as quite indifferent to chemicals. This was confirmed when one grower pointed out to me that in his opinion the whole situation, the polarization of growers and members of the public, had come about as a result of "a vocal minority which has managed to get its views into the newspapers simply by sensationalizing its claims with language which is exaggerated and inaccurate". Thus, media interpretations, considered skewed by growers, gave rise to their own, in their view more accurate, representations told in the form of stories.

The "pollution" of food was only one of the general public's concerns, according to the *South Swedish Daily*. Another was water pollution, this also linked to agricultural production methods, especially the use of agrochemicals and commercial fertilizers.

#### VIGNETTE

On 19 November 1986, I am talking at some length with Olof Agnesson, a farmer in his mid-thirties. Our conversation takes place in the foyer of the Lund Town Hall where he,

along with some three hundred other farmers, have been listening to a series of speakers invited to address the Second Annual Agricultural Conference organized by the Savings Bank. My meeting with Olof takes place at that point in the national policy-making process shortly before the Intensity Group's action plan on how to halve agrochemicals has been completed, and some time before discussions regarding fertilizers are to begin.

Olof asks me rhetorically: "Why is the Government targeting farmers and not big industry when everyone knows that it is big industry which is the real polluter?" He continues:

Everyone blames the farmer for polluting the water supply and the Öresund. But it isn't just the farmers who are responsible for pollution. We are never presented with a complete picture of the situation. Poland and other countries around the Baltic for example are pumping sewage straight into the ocean which Sweden would never do. Also it happens quite frequently that planes around here have to make emergency landings. When they do they have to dump excess loads and that includes whatever sewage they are carrying onboard into the Baltic or Öresund. That has happened several times this autumn.

There are many other sources of pollution:

Also, it is wrong to just blame the farmers for using commercial fertilizer and agrochemicals; ordinary people use just as many of these substances on their gardens as the farmers do on their fields. The difference is that when it is for people's gardens then anyone, any teenager, can walk into a store, even supermarkets, and buy any poison they want, of any toxicity level. But when it comes to farmers then you have to have a certificate of competence to be able to use the substance at all and there are very strict rules about storing them in a safe place.

Olof is critical of the Government's differential treatment of farmers in comparison with the population at large, and big industry. It is a lot easier for the Government to attack defenceless farmers than large industrial conglomerates, or the leaders of neighbouring nations where pollution control is non-existent, he argues.

### *(iii) Networking: Developing counter-arguments*

The Landmen was instrumental in providing an arena in which growers could get together and talk about agrochemicals in farming. In winter of 1987, this became an important site in which growers were able to formulate a counter-position on agricultural inputs. On the matter of growers' right to continue to use agrochemicals and commercial fertilizers at the usual level, unlike on the matter of fallowing of land, The Landmen had the support of the Union Branch. This lent legitimacy to the deployment of a range of strategies which had been carefully avoided in regard to the Fallow Program.

One occasion when growers discussed agrochemicals and their importance in the production of high quality, high quantity, output in some detail, was the Kävlinge District Landmen's annual Theme Day on 15 January. All speakers that Thursday afternoon focussed specifically on the subject of agrochemicals. The seminar, which drew some 250 growers, was held at the Kävlinge Theatre (which served a dual purpose as a meeting hall when not used by the local amateur theatrical group). For four hours, the assembled growers listened to a series of presentations on agrochemicals, talked about the new policies under negotiation in the question and answer sessions, and around the coffee tables during the break aired some shared concerns in relation to being crop growers in a heavily populated region where some members of the general public were becoming increasingly hostile to farmers. Specific reference was made to difficult neighbours, living in homes next to fields. They were often retired people, who with a lot of time on their hands did not hesitate to attempt to sue farmers for alleged damage to their gardens.

The Landmen's meetings were always carefully timed with important points in the agricultural cycle. The Theme Day, as an example, had been planned to fall at a time when all growers were busy finalizing their crop plans for the up-coming season, including determining their input requirements. The event coincided with that point in the national policy negotiations when the Farmers' Federation was busy preparing a critical comment on the Intensity Group's proposal that the use of agrochemicals be cut by half.

A middle-level Manager from the Skånish Landmen's Headquarters in Malmö had been invited to present the opening address. In his speech, he made specific reference to a newspaper report in a recent issue of the *South Swedish Daily* on the Government's plans to introduce measures whereby to force a cut by half the use of agrochemicals over a five year period. Recognizing what this would mean for growers, he said that they should continue to go by the old rules still in place. The Agricultural Policy Act of 1985 stated that crops should be grown on an intensive basis, so that farmers would be guaranteed a reasonable level of income.

There were several characteristics of the statements and arguments of defence presented that day which recurred in other contexts (see below), used to define farmers as being responsible and in the right. One characteristic was the reference to farmers' income. The Manager confirmed that the new proposed policy was not in anyone's interest because it would reduce producers' income:

Chemicals are an important part of this type of production. But who is to do what for the environment? What is the grower to do? He has to follow the rules as laid down, he has to choose the least dangerous substances. The point is that no-one can afford to run a farm with reduced profitability.

The speaker articulated the growers' own concerns that they were already under considerable financial strain. Their incomes had been falling behind those of industrial workers for some time. The drop of cereal prices in autumn 1986 confirmed this trend.

A second characteristic of the arguments presented to growers at The Landmen's Theme Day was that they included a positive evaluation of Swedish farmers in comparison with farmers elsewhere in Europe. A speaker representing the German-based chemicals manufacturing company BASF made comparisons with other countries to reassure growers that Swedish farmers did not use excessive amounts of inputs:

Sweden is way down on the scale in terms of use if we compare Sweden with England and other countries.

A third characteristic of statements of defence presented to growers at the seminar that day for them to use in later encounters with the public was the reminder that growers were progressive farmers:

If we are to give up modern methods of production, then we will soon find ourselves up a blind alley. Cost of production will increase. The tempo will slow down, development will slow down. We will be looked upon as old fashioned, ignorant and expensive. A 'closing down' debate will not

benefit anyone. We are high technology minded, we look to the future. No one benefits from slowing down, from reversing production.

To a man, the farmers agreed that as modern rural producers they should use all available technology. For the Government to even contemplate a reversal of progress in the agricultural sector was inconsistent with developments in other sectors of the economy.

A final characteristic of statements of defence was that chemicals were necessary to protect crops from disease. Bjarne Lembke, himself a farmer and a medical doctor, in fact a widely acknowledged authority on safe work practices and work-related injuries and disease, was also a featured speaker. Lembke, who practised at the Farmers' Medical Centre (*Lantbrukshälsan*) in the Bjuv District, made a further valuable contribution to the growers' expanding pool of arguments on the theme of inconsistency. The Government, Lembke proclaimed, was mistaken in its belief that chemicals posed a risk to consumers' health (the title of the Intensity Group's report, *Action Program to Reduce Health and Environmental Risks when Using Agrochemicals*, confirmed the Government's position). Lembke argued that farmers were at much more risk than the public:

The dangers to the general public are miniscule in comparison with the danger posed to those who use these chemicals. Why does the general public think we use these chemical substances? Just for the fun of it? No, it's not for fun, but because we have difficult weeds and crop diseases. We have to live with these substances. These are necessary substances because they prevent crop disease.

The sub-theme articulated here was that chemicals were necessary in the production of healthy, disease free, good quality crops -- conversely, untreated crops were a health hazard. This was an argument of high value indeed, in that it effectively turned on their head what he considered the Government's and the public's unfounded and scientifically unsubstantiated claims to the contrary.

These statements of defence carried weight because they constituted arguments with high validity, of the kind which could be advanced in public contexts. Growers therefore eagerly added them to their existing stocks of knowledge. Other supporting detail was dispensed through *Land* on a weekly basis. Any formulation which originated from managers, sales representatives, advisors, experts, researchers and agricultural scientists and so on, perhaps embellished with further details picked up in *Land*, was traded amongst farmers for their high value.

People in leadership positions at Board meetings, and others who regularly attended meetings, become brokers of such arguments. Ordinary growers then drew on these well-informed individuals for appropriate arguments through a trickle down effect. These were the kinds of arguments which would carry the most weight in lobbying against proposed policy. The Landmen's Theme Day thus became an important arena in which growers stocked up on counter-arguments of a kind which would strike most effectively at weaknesses in the Government's position. Such arguments would carry more legitimacy in the general mobilization of defence, than their own observations of the behaviour of individual members of the general public.

The Landmen in many other ways also confirmed that here was articulated a position diametrically opposed to that of Government and the public. The very language used by managers and advisors at The Landmen conveyed a way of looking at agricultural commodity production which jarred with everyone else's. Farming was all about "nurturing" crops (by fertilizing them), and "protecting" crops from insects, pests and disease (by spraying them). Agrochemicals, for example, were always referred to as "crop protection substances". There was no talk of destroying anything but harmful weeds and pests.

At this point it is appropriate to note that the process of growers mobilizing a well-argued position counter to that of Government did not occur in a vacuum, but simultaneously with



other processes instigated by non-agriculturalists throughout the Plain who were opposed to high intensity farming. On the Lund Plain, politically active environmentalists were, for example, busy assembling their own sets of arguments.<sup>5</sup> While environmentalists rarely had the opportunity to articulate their views to growers in face-to-face encounters (there being no arenas in which this could occur -- see Chapter 2), one man vehemently opposed to intensive farming methods decided to create his own opportunity. Thus it was that while attending the Kävlinge Landmen's Theme Day, I became witness to how an unsuspecting grower came under attack from a card-carrying member of the Kävlinge Branch of the Environmental Party. This relatively new political party, which as yet had no representation in Parliament, took a radical position against current farming methods, wanting a complete removal of chemicals and commercial fertilizers.

#### *VIGNETTE*

Lars Gustafsson is a conventional farmer who produces all the usual crops: cereals, oilseeds, sugarbeet and potatoes using the full range of available inputs. He attends The Landmen's Theme Day every year. Today he has noticed two unfamiliar faces, those of a bearded and unkempt man and a neatly dressed woman seated in the back row of the auditorium. Unbeknown to Gustafsson (but as I later learn through my association with the Environmental Party) whilst the scruffy-looking man has previously practised conventional farming, for the last several years he has embraced alternative methods of farming (his major crop is carrots). During the coffee break this afternoon, Gustafsson joins the man, who is accompanied by the female chairperson of the Environmental Party Branch, for coffee at their table.

Gustafsson utters a greeting and sits down. He is visibly surprised when before even having helped himself to coffee the man next to him opens up the conversation with some critical comments about traditional growing practices and the amount of inputs used in their production. The environmentalist farmer makes a snide remark about the kind of grain crop which results, ears of wheat packed with rows of large roundish grains. Angrily he asserts that heavily fertilized and sprayed grain kernels, "big and fat", are in fact no good at all but really "sick" (he makes a comparison with overweight people). The criticism startles Gustafsson, for whom "big and fat" grains of wheat have a high level of protein and are a source of pride. At first taken aback by the other's confrontationist manner, Gustafsson quickly collects his wits and counters that grain kernels which are big and fat are not at all sick but in fact "healthy", and only because the plants have been properly fertilized and the crops sprayed against crop disease. Bent on not getting into an

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<sup>5</sup> So were members of the Social Democratic Party in Malmö, who organized an extremely well-attended evening of debate on the subject of food quality, to which the Provincial Chairman of the Union Branch, Arne Lynge, was invited as one of the panelists.

argument with the environmentalist who is now starting to warm up and obviously eager to extend the discussion into other areas, Gustafsson refuses to become entangled in an argument impossible to resolve, pushes his chair back and hurriedly leaves the table to enjoy more congenial companionship for the remainder of the coffee break. The critic, muttering under his breath, finishes his coffee and then leaves the gathering.

*(iv) Going Public: Letter of defence*

The Landmen's managers, representatives of the chemicals industry and Dr Lembke, leaders of the Union Branch and all other support staff, were crucial individuals in the Lund Plain growers' networks. These people not only provided institutional backing on the subject of using agrochemicals, but also encouraged farmers to get their own 'facts' in front of the public. This was to dispute inaccuracies presented in the *South Swedish Daily* and other newspapers.

On the matter of agrochemicals, where the *Daily* so obviously took a stand against the farming sector, many producers believed this would have to be the primary arena in which to present statements of defence. One grower attending the Kävlinge Landmen's Theme Day in January complained bitterly to me about how the mass media had misled consumers on the subject of chemicals:

They get their information from the newspapers. There are no journalists who know anything about farming. They just write what sells.

His bitterness was symptomatic of the Government's shift, away from policy already in place, to new restrictive policy, all because of a push from consumer and environmental groups. He, like many others, believed the Government's new stand was no more than a way of securing votes, provoked by the fear of losing support to the steadily growing Environmental Party in the next election (September 1988)(see Chapter 1). It was not surprising, therefore, that every speaker invited to The Landmen's Theme Day confirmed the need to confront the general public's misconceptions about agrochemicals. As one of the speakers said: "This is all about the formation of public opinion." Trying to influence

public opinion, as I stated earlier, was a key characteristic of producers' acts of defence during the negotiation stage of policy.

Acts of defence were staged in multiple arenas in what seemed to be highly individualistic ways, but were in fact, on closer scrutiny, part of a large-scale collective effort. One speaker said as much:

We have to help one another, we all have to pitch in in order to set the formation of public opinion straight.

His statement echoed generalized sentiments amongst farmers that the great majority of the non-farming population was being swayed by a vocal minority of radical environmentalists. The implication was that if only the correct information could be placed in front of the general public, then they could be persuaded to see things from the growers' perspective. For this, they could not rely on journalists, who consistently wrote their stories with an anti-chemicals slant. Reporters were held in low esteem, were in fact despised, by growers for the reason that they could "never be trusted to get the story right".

In Chapter 3, I explained what I mean by the interactive nature of the *South Swedish Daily*, and presented several examples of how growers used the *Daily* to get their own views onto its pages. One of the *Daily's* well-established practices was to print long discussion pieces on its op ed page, written by members of the public, usually people with expert knowledge. The following is an example of such a letter, a piece especially critical of the Government's new position and published during agricultural inputs policy negotiations.

The long so called debate letter (*debattartikel*) was written jointly by Sven Gesslein, Director of the Malmöhus County Agricultural Society<sup>6</sup> and Fritz Norden, a grower and user of the service, and published in the *South Swedish Daily* on 2 February 1987. The letter was one of the most important discussion pieces written in defence of farmers on the Plain at this time. Here, I focus specifically on the rhetoric used in this particular manifestation of defence aimed at a broad audience, which as I stated in the introduction, had to be based on sound argumentation, or what Bourdieu (1982) refers to as legitimate language (as opposed to stories told amongst the farmers themselves which were phrased in everyday language).

The arguments used reflected the location of growers in a heavily industrialized region, outnumbered by wage and salary earners, but also their close proximity to producers on the European continent. Thus, Gesslein and Norden stated, Swedish farmers were far more responsible than growers abroad, the industrial sector was the real culprit, the risk of excessive chemical residue in commodities arising out of agrochemicals was small as Sweden had strict laws in place, and foreign produced commodities (not subject to the same restrictions) were much more likely to contain unacceptably high levels of residue.

The writers began by stating their letter was based on fact:

In the general debate about the environment, the farming sector is often singled out as one of the biggest villains when it comes to pollution of streams and coastal waters. Unfortunately, this debate lacks a factual basis, which we want to demonstrate here.

While two thirds of the letter dealt with "the role of nitrogen in the environmental discussion" (in sub-section (4) I take up farmers' response to restrictions on the use of commercial fertilizer, another crucial input), one third was devoted to "biocides" and their

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<sup>6</sup> The County Agricultural Society (*Hushållningssällskapet*) is a private sector advisory service used by many intensive growers on the Plain.

role in farming. Gesslein and Norden continued by placing Sweden in the wider context of Europe, to demonstrate that in comparison with others Swedish farmers were responsible:

We have a relatively low level of use (of agrochemicals) in comparison with the majority of West European countries.

The agricultural sector was then defended by comparing it favourably with the Swedish industrial sector:

Of all the biocides in the form of an active substance, the agricultural sector uses 38 per cent, industry 55 per cent, and individual households [for use in their gardens] 6 per cent.

The major strands of the Government's new anti-chemicals position were then attacked one by one. Firstly, there had been no significant increase in the use of chemicals over the past fifteen years:

According to official statistics, the use of biocides has not increased noticeably in the agricultural, forestry and horticultural sectors since the early 1970's, seen as an active substance.

Secondly, there were other far more serious sources of pollution to consider:

The residue which one finds in our streams with today's improved methods of analysis does not necessarily have to come directly from crop spraying. There are many other sources of pollution. According to the majority of researchers, the risk of direct leaching of for example various herbicides is judged to be very small under normal conditions of use.

Finally, there were already strict regulations in place:

Every year the National Food Administration (*Livsmedelsverket*) carries out extensive analyses of chemical residue in food. Only in exceptional cases has such residue been found in Swedish produced products. In those cases where it has been found, it has been in horticultural products, and then primarily in imported products.

The letter ended with an angry question to those who farmers saw as responsible for the creation and perpetration of a link wrongfully made between agricultural inputs and water pollution, by which farmers were implicated as destroying the environment through their methods of production:

Finally, a question to many politicians, mass media and others: Why don't you try to be objective as regards the effects of the agricultural sector on the environment? Why not also present those facts which, nevertheless, are available? Is it because it is more popular to appeal to people's ignorance, than to show consideration towards a minority group in society, i.e. the country's skilled (arable) farmers?

The above letter was an important public refutation of the Government's new position against agrochemicals, directed at the non-farming public in the region in the early stage of mobilization of defence. It both confirmed the Farmers' Federation's position in favour of continued high intensity farming, and complemented other acts of defence such as consumer education activities undertaken at this time.

***(v) The Farmers' Federation's position confirmed***

The Union Branch is the forum in which the national Farmers' Federation's stand is articulated, confirmed, and disseminated. The most important event at which this occurs is the Provincial Annual Meeting. In 1987, this meeting was held on 6 April, as usual at Citizens' Hall in Eslöv, and as always attended by several hundred delegates from all 271 Local Divisions. Arne Lyngé, Provincial Chairman, chaired the meeting; other Board members were also present.

The Annual Meeting (the same meeting at which Lyngé was supporting the Fallow Program) was used as a forum in which to articulate the most coherent and well-argued attack on the Government's chemicals restrictions policy. The Union Branch's key argument hinged on a continual questioning of the rationale used by the Government to

justify the new policies. Where was the evidence, which research studies confirmed, that the environment would be properly protected, human health improved, and the cereal surplus reduced, if the use of agricultural inputs were cut back?<sup>7</sup> And how would farmers be compensated for loss of income?

As usual, Arne Lyngø supported the national Farmers' Federation's line. In the months leading up to the Annual Meeting, both he and Bo Dockered, the national Chairman of the Farmers' Federation, had taken every opportunity, Lyngø through statements in the *South Swedish Daily* and Dockered in the *Daily* as well as national newspapers, to deny that current levels of inputs used in farming had polluted the environment, and to dispute that by reducing the use of farming inputs, the environment would be saved from further degradation. On the Plain, Lyngø played a key role in maintaining the momentum of the campaign. Plains growers lauded his stand against reduced intensity, and read with approval his consistent rebuttals in the *Daily* of the Minister for the Environment's linking of the cereal surplus to water pollution.

At the Provincial level Annual Meeting, Lyngø's disputation of the Government's position was the major theme. In a statement prepared by the Board he said:

Proposals are being put forward with ever-increasing frequency about reducing intensity as a way of dealing with the surplus problem and also improving the environment. The Board, however, considers that it is necessary to separate the surplus issue from the environmental issue. ... The environment must be considered regardless of whatever production balance we have ... If we are to stop using production methods which have been approved by society [Parliament], then the consumers must be prepared to pay for this and the same rules must be applied to imported commodities as those which are produced within the country.

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<sup>7</sup> Seymour, Cox and Lowe (1992) note that in England, Government has consistently funded research into the positive effects of commercial fertilizer, nitrate nutrition (on yields) to the exclusion of studies on the negative effects of commercial fertilizer, nitrate leaching [into water] (1992:89). This accounts for the absence of any scientifically proven clear cause and effect relationships between fertilizers and so called pollution. The situation appeared to be the same in Sweden, where farmers actively exploited it.

Lynge's statement was a declaration that the Farmers' Federation did not intend to back down on its position during policy negotiations. Listening intently, the delegates from the Norrarp and Sederby Local Divisions, as well as all the other representatives from Divisions on the Lund Plain, seated in the packed hall, recognized this. Lynge's stand, articulated from the elevated stage at the front of the hall, constituted official permission for delegates in attendance to encourage ordinary members in their Local Divisions to continue to formulate and to openly announce increasingly incisive and critical counter-positions.

Lynge closed his statement on this particularly politicized measure with an argument no one could refute, and which delegates would find particularly useful additions to their own batteries of arguments:

If society wants changes, then society should pay for the cost of this. In the negotiations, the Consumer Delegation has not said a word about the environment and quality.

Here he alluded to the annual price negotiations between the Farmers' Federation and the Consumer Delegation, and that clause of the Agricultural Policy Act which stated that farmers should be adequately compensated for what they produced. The Union Branch's stand, mirroring that of the national Farmers' Federation' on this matter, was quite uncompromising. Agreements were in place, and these should not be broken.

#### *VIGNETTE*

The charge that Government was pandering to the public is elaborated on by Bengt Pettersson, a delegate I am talking to at the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Union. During the protracted processing and voting on motions, he and I sneak out to the adjoining room for coffee. Pettersson criticizes the Social Democrats' "jerky agricultural policy" (*den ryckiga jordbrukspolitiken*). He is venomous in his criticism of Minister for the Environment, Dahl, and disdainful of the Minister of Agriculture who "has been party to an agreement reached after negotiation with the LRF that all of Sweden's arable land should be cultivated intensively". The agreement has been passed by Parliament as the



new Agricultural Policy Act. But now, he says, not only is there a Fallow Program in place, the Minister for the Environment has also announced that the use of agricultural inputs is going to be reduced. "Where is the consistency?" he asks rhetorically (*var är konsekvensen?*).

When I ask Pettersson what he plans to do, he retorts: "I am not going to fallow, and I am against reduced intensity." He downs the rest of his second cup of coffee, and disappears into the hall to cast his vote for the remainder of the motions.

Statements such as the above were sometimes articulated in terms of Government having abandoned the farming sector in favour of the non-farming public. Growers cast the public as irrational, worried when there was no cause for worry, and often accused Government of pandering to its whims when there was no factual basis for doing so. The Government's shift away from supporting the agricultural sector, from the growers' point of view, had become particularly pronounced with growing involvement of consumers in the policy-making process. In sub-section (2), I analyse an event which proved to growers beyond a doubt that the Minister for the Environment was trying to score points with consumers and environmentalists, to the detriment of farmers.

## **(2) Wham Ban - Part I: Spring**

On 15 April 1987, the *South Swedish Daily* and Swedish national radio reported that the Minister for the Environment would impose a ban on growth regulator, a widely used chemical on the Plain, to take effect as of 1 May 1987. This she would do on the basis that it would reduce the cereal surplus, and also be of benefit for both the environment and human health.

In this section, I examine the response to the ban, an untoward event, by the Farmers' Federation as well as the growers on the Plain. Before turning to the analysis, I highlight what makes the ban different from the other policy measures to reduce farmers' use of agricultural inputs, and offer some background to the ban.

The Minister for the Environment's ban on growth regulator constituted an ambiguous event. It occurred unexpectedly in the middle of negotiations. It fell outside the proper policy negotiation procedures in place in regard to restrictions on the use of agricultural inputs (chemicals and fertilizers), yet was directly related to restrictions on chemicals. Farmers saw in the ban a negation of proper consultation between the Minister for the Environment and the Farmers' Federation. It represented the bringing down of a totally new kind of restrictive measure. The finality of the ban was associated by farmers with a lack of respect for due democratic process. The ban therefore meant something totally different from the other policy measures on agrochemicals (which would allow for their continued use by producers but would require growers to exercise more care and caution in their use).

What did the power constellation at national level look like in this scenario? The strain between the Farmers' Federation and the Minister for the Environment, evident throughout the policy negotiations on inputs, intensified. This took immediate expression both amongst leaders of the Federation and amongst growers at grassroots level.

At the national level, leaders of the Farmers' Federation were thrown into an unanticipated frenzy of activity. In Skåne, the Union Branch and The Landmen both issued statements condemning the ban. Amongst ordinary growers on the Lund Plain, the ban caused a great deal of discussion as it fell outside the parameters of proper negotiation procedures. Acts of defence were temporarily put on hold. In any case, growers were at a particularly busy point in the agricultural cycle when they were prevented from engaging in the usual lobby activities which were part and parcel of acts of defence. As the ban went into effect, some growers reverted to acts of resistance, enacted in the course of farming the land.

While on the surface the imposition of the ban can be seen as similar to the implementation of the Fallow Program, there were clear differences. Firstly, the ban was non-voluntary and would apply to everyone. Secondly, it had been imposed against the express

recommendation of the Farmers' Federation, the majority of farmers, not to ban the use of growth regulator.

The Federation had in fact been consulted in regard to the advisability of a ban several months earlier. At that point, the Federation issued a questionnaire to all members, mailed to Provincial Headquarters and then distributed to each Local Division. All members had been asked to indicate whether they supported or objected to the continued use of growth regulator. To my knowledge, every Division on the Lund Plain had returned the questionnaire with a tick in the box indicating opposition to a ban. As one of the farmers in the Norrarp Local Division averred at the time the questionnaire was being filled out at the Annual Meeting in late January: "We should keep using it until such time as it is proven to be harmful. There is no evidence that growth regulator causes damage." In the country as a whole, 51 per cent of farmers opposed a ban. On the basis of this figure, the Federation advised the Minister for the Environment against a ban on growth regulator. The Farmers' Federation also argued that the banning of growth regulator, which was only used on fourteen per cent of the land sown to cereals (and only on rye and wheat), would not reduce the surplus; a ban would however reduce the quality of the grain considerably. No more was said about the matter at the time.

The Minister for the Environment's single-handed ban on growth regulator only a few months later, against the advice of the Farmers' Federation, was clearly an act different from the negotiating of a compromise in various commissions appointed by her.

The ban provoked a response different from that deployed in relation to the measures which had been subjected to proper negotiation procedure (there was no public education/statement by farmers, although strongly worded statements by Farmers' Federation, the Union Branch and The Landmen). The response by growers was in some ways similar to that engaged in vis-a-vis the Fallow Program (subversive acts were being contemplated, but on a smaller scale).

I present the ban on growth regulator as an example of an unexpected event the response to which came to be informed by elements of both resistance and defence (as well as later in the year elements of attack -- see sub-section (5)).

*(i) Reacting to unexpected news*

On a Wednesday only nine days after the Union Branch's Annual Meeting in April, growers heard on the radio that growth regulator was going to be banned. All of them read about the ban in the *South Swedish Daily* the next day. The announcement, which came at a press conference in Stockholm, was like all other reports on agricultural inputs just more "bad news". But the news of the ban on growth regulator was worse in that it came like a bombshell, not preceded by the usual discussion and negotiation. The ban constituted a clear case of the Minister for the Environment breaking the rules of proper negotiation procedure.

In their farm offices, resting at lunchtime before resuming work, growers contemplated the news. The ban would interfere with the production of two major crops, wheat and rye, every detail of which had been carefully charted and plotted months in advance.

The problem which had arisen for growers was simple. In mid-April, all the growers on the Lund Plain, indeed the Skåne Plain as a whole, had already spread fertilizer on their young wheat and rye plants. The normal procedure would have been to follow this some time later with a spraying of growth regulator. This chemical regulated the growth of the stalk of the plant, shortening and thickening it to prevent the plants when ripe from breaking under the weight of fully developed ears. The growers were now faced with a situation in which half way through the maturation phase of wheat and rye, they would be unable properly to execute the remaining stages of production in the approved manner.

The situation created by the ban left the growers with three options, none of which satisfactory. Firstly, they could spray their crops prematurely with growth regulator in the two weeks left before the ban went into effect. That would not be good for the crops. A second alternative was to ignore the ban and continue as normal, but this meant running the risk of getting caught by an inspector. A third option was to obey the Minister for the Environment's directive, knowing that this was likely to ruin the crops to such an extent that considerable financial losses would result. As one grower said to me: "The Government is forcing us to break this new law." By this he meant that for him to be able to make any money on the crop, he would have to at least cover production costs.

The ban provoked the Farmers' Federation to also use extraordinary measures in retaliation. The Federation pulled out all stops in denouncing Dahl's ban on growth regulator in a series of statements to the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land*. Specifically, and predictably, the ban was used to again lay charges against the Government that it was inconsistent and contradictory in its directives. Inconsistency in this instance referred to the fact that in the limited consultations which had taken place on growth regulator, the Federation had advised the Government not to ban this chemical.

I turn first to the response to the ban in Skåne, by The Landmen as well as the Union Branch. In reaction, senior level farmers' representatives and management of the Skånish Landmen wrote a letter to the authorities protesting against the ban, and asking that The Landmen's field trial plots be exempted from the ban. At the Skånish Landmen's Annual Meeting in Malmö on 6 May 1987, the Managing Director Håkan Dahlberg and the Chairman Lennart Engleson (a farmer from the Kävlinge District) both denounced the ban. None of these representatives of The Landmen as a whole, however, issued statements to the *South Swedish Daily*. Their protests, rather, served to complement statements issued by the Union Branch.

The key person to protest publicly against the ban in Skåne was the leader of the Provincial Union Branch, Arne Lynge, who criticized the ban in a lengthy statement to the *South Swedish Daily* (14 April 1987). He told reporters the ban was shortsighted, and questioned why it had been imposed before the results of the investigation then under way by the National Chemicals Inspectorate had been made public. Lynge called the ban a "political decision", as opposed to "a decision based on knowledge/facts", another clear breach of proper negotiating procedure. He also used arguments with which we are by now already familiar, for instance that were growers to be barred from using growth regulator again in the future, then production costs for grain would increase. For this growers would have to be compensated. If not, then profitability would be adversely affected, and the price of food would as a consequence have to be increased. Finally, banning growth regulator was not the way to reduce the grain surplus. A ban would only reduce the grain surplus by 1.5 per cent, whereas the entire surplus amounted to 22 per cent. The effect of the ban on the surplus, he reiterated, would be marginal.

The most prominent role in the protests against the Minister for the Environment's unexpected and extraordinary ban on growth regulator was played by the national Chairman of the Farmers' Federation, Bo Dockered, who had been consulted regarding the ban, had said no to a ban, only to have his advice ignored. He criticized the ban at length in press statements:

Is this ban reasonable? Yes, of course, if it had suddenly been discovered that this chemical was dangerous to human health or the environment. But this has not happened -- on the contrary, the experts agree that this chemical is harmless (*Land* 24 April 1987).

This he followed with an attack on the Minister for the Environment:

Neither during current negotiations nor at any other time during our frequent contacts have those from the Government's side warned of this measure. Suddenly there is a total ban on growth regulator (*Land* 24 April 1987).

In the public arena of *Land*, with a majority of the audience farmers but also widely read by Government officials, Dockered questioned why the Government, i.e. the Minister for the Environment, had been so slow in introducing pollution control measures for other industries which were also under her jurisdiction, but so quick to slap a ban on the farming sector:

This is an issue of fairness: If industry gets ten years to phase out the use of freon, which has been proven hazardous to the environment, why do farmers get twenty days to stop using growth regulator which no one has been able to prove is dangerous? One gets the distinct impression that this is (yet) an(other) expression of the Government's different attitudes to on the one hand the large industry-*LO*-complex, and on the other hand the insignificant agricultural sector. There is no judgement about risks behind this -- but possibly a judgement about votes. In addition, we assumed that moving the environmental questions out from the Ministry of Agriculture would mean an extension of the government's newly awakened ambitions for the environment into other areas -- not a *carte blanche* for the Minister for the Environment to concentrate them even further to the agricultural sector (*Land* 24 April 1987).

The rhetoric used by Dockered centered on what he saw as differential treatment of individual farmers, in comparison with large industrial conglomerates, by the new Minister for the Environment in her zeal to please voters concerned for the environment. In protesting against the ban, the Federation continually hammered home the point that the production of agricultural commodities was carried out by self-employed farmers who had to cover their production costs, as well as have something left over for their own survival. The message was given a physical manifestation when the Federation immediately dispatched a letter to the Minister of Agriculture demanding reimbursement to growers who had already purchased supplies of growth regulator for the spring 1987 season which they would now be prohibited from using.

That the Farmers' Federation saw the ban as an act of rule breaking was evidenced by the fact that the Federation called into question whether the ban was legal. Throughout May

1987, staff at the Federation's Legal Bureau (*LRF's juridiska byrå*) in Stockholm were seeking to establish that the ban was indeed inconsistent with Swedish Law, as well as in breach of the European Convention. Soon, the national Chairman of the Farmers' Federation was able to inform growers through *Land* that according to lawyers expert in constitutional law, it looked as if the ban was a so called nullity, a ban without meaning. The Government had overstepped its mark by banning growth regulator on the basis that the chemical posed a danger to the environment and health. There was no evidence to show that water supplies would become less polluted or that human health would benefit as a direct result of banning the chemical. Secure in the knowledge that at the grassroots growers were fuming because of the havoc the ban had caused during the crucial growing phase of the crops, the Federation continued to build a case that the ban was unconstitutional.

Farmers reading about these acts of protest by the Farmers' Federation in itself constituted a form of participation in protesting against the ban. As time went by, it became amply clear through reports in the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land* that the ban was an instance of rule breaking of the worst kind. What was not clear, however, at least not in May, was how growers should react to the ban. No one knew quite what to do, and there were no clear directives from the Farmers' Federation, which in the absence of firm guidelines from its legal advisors left it up to individual growers. If the ban was illegal, the growers could safely go ahead and spray their growth regulator without fear of repercussion. If on the other hand the ban was legal, they would be running the risk of getting caught. In this situation, growers quickly activated their networks to ascertain what the safest and less costly course of action would be on the basis of available information.

#### *VIGNETTE*

On the same day that the ban on growth regulator is announced, I am having afternoon coffee in the kitchen of Olle and Astrid Arvidsson, one of the farm couples in Norrarp. Olle protests that:



The Government doesn't know what it has done. By banning this, we will have a lower protein level in our rye. *WASA* (the rye crisp bread manufacturing company) are already complaining about the quality of our rye. So what will happen is that they will just import better quality rye, rather than use ours.

And then, he predicts, the Government will order the Swedish Grain Trade Authority to import rye to make up for the shortfall, and the imported rye will have been sprayed with growth regulator. Olle looks at me, expecting me (by now) to be able to see the inconsistency in this for myself. His neighbour, who has come over to discuss the bad news over a cup of coffee, is visibly disturbed by it all and is looking to Olle for advice. Olle does not know at this stage what he is going to do about the ban, but says most of the other growers he knows are talking about defying the ban.

In the days following the ban, Olle tapped into his network to find out what his options were, and the consequences of each. For two weeks, he talked constantly to other farmers in the Local Division about the best course of action, over the telephone, in casual encounters, and over cups of coffee at meetings. He also spoke to farmers from throughout the Kävlinge District he met at the field walks arranged by The Landmen which he attended fortnightly in spring.

Throughout the region, all those producers who grew wheat and rye made enquiries of key people in their networks to collect as much information as possible on which to make an informed decision. This was done by telephone to the County Agricultural Board in Malmö as to how the ban was going to be enforced, if it was going to be enforced. Would they get caught if they went ahead and sprayed anyway, and what would the penalty be? Growers also rang The Landmen managers to find out whether the cooperative would take delivery of rye crops which have not been produced in the prescribed manner, as stipulated in the contracts they had entered into. They also asked whether they could be reimbursed for growth regulator purchased from The Landmen but not used. They wanted to know how much they would get paid for down-graded wheat and rye crops. Finally, concerned farmers telephoned the legal advisors at Union Branch Headquarters in Höör for up-dates on how to proceed.

All information collected by individual growers was then put into circulation in his network, where it came to be shared by other producers who passed it on to their friends, by telephone, at Board meetings, at general meetings, and in chance encounters. No specific action sets were formed in response to the ban, indicative of the fact that the ban occurred in the middle of the busy sowing, spraying and fertilizing season. Rather, individuals were acting on their own initiative, quickly trying to establish where they stood and taking action consonant with the best interests of the farm business.

The ban was used by growers to strengthen further their case against the Government on agricultural inputs. The ban on what the growers considered a relatively harmless chemical had only confirmed that the Minister for the Environment was incompetent, not trustworthy, and ignorant about farming. The event was exploited maximally for its high value in the on-going elaboration of inconsistencies committed by the opposition, now specifically the Minister for the Environment.

That the ban was an extraordinary event was further highlighted by the fact that I was unable to carry out a systematic count of who responded how. How many growers ignored the ban, how many followed the ban, and how many sprayed some of their wheat and rye before the ban took effect, but left the rest of these crops unsprayed? I could not obtain answers to these questions because, once having weighed the pros and cons of each strategy in discussions with key people in their networks, every grower became extremely close-mouthed about which course of action he would actually follow. Several months later, growers joked about this amongst themselves. One man said to me in autumn, after an exceptionally rainy summer, that "Now we can tell who sprayed and who didn't spray [with] growth regulator!" By this he meant that those farmers whose crops had lodged during the rain had obviously not sprayed them, while those men whose crops despite the extremely wet conditions remained upright had ignored the ban. By then the risk of getting caught had passed. But few of the farmers who had defied the ban were willing to admit this openly in May, at the time when it was a crucial concern to them.

We seen, then, how the response to the ban was different from defence. Acts of defence aimed to influence public opinion, and the eventual shape of new policy, during the negotiation phase, through various activities which brought farmers' point of view to public attention. Response to the ban, on the other hand, was one of initial bewilderment, which then settled down to a cool evaluation of various strategies to be put in place on the farm, some of which bore resemblance to acts of resistance vis-a-vis the Fallow Program. In this respect, the response to the ban, a *fait accompli*, resembled that of resistance, played out at the implementation stage of policy. Working out ways to circumvent the ban was similar to subverting the Fallow Program. The ban, thus, represented an ambiguous event, not easily classified or slotted into the usual scheme of things, an act of rule breaking. This was what provoked the editor of *Land* to write an angry editorial in response to the ban.

**(ii) *Land's reaction to the ban***

The banning of growth regulator was such a clear instance of rule breaking that the editor of *Land* was moved to challenge Birgitta Dahl, Minister for the Environment, to admit she had made a mistake. This was an occasion when *Land* sided wholly and without reservation with the national Chairman of the Farmers' Federation, the Provincial Chairman of the Union Branch in Skåne, the Chairman and Managing Director of Skånish Landmen, and individual farmers. Just prior to the ban going into effect, the editor wrote:

It is human to make mistakes. They can be excused if no damage is done before they are corrected. It is still not too late for Birgitta Dahl to correct the Ministry's mistake about the timing of the ban on growth regulator ... It is not too late, Birgitta Dahl, to show common sense and win the respect of the agricultural sector. And we believe you have reason to strive for this in view of your radical plans for adjustment of the agricultural sector. A restructuring can be something very positive for both the country and the agricultural sector, if it is worked out together and with reasonable conditions for the farmers. For this, cornerstones of a different quality are needed, not conflict and suspicion. Admit that it was a mistake you made in the Ministry (*Land* 30 April 1987).

The editorial referred to proper negotiation procedures having been breached. This piece of writing and other activity were intended to pressure the Minister for the Environment into reversing the ban, and then to bring growth regulator back into the policy discussions for proper consultation and comment by the Farmers' Federation. This could not, however, be accomplished in the short time which remained (May until mid-June) before policy-negotiators took a break over summer, when Parliament also rose. In sub-section (5) of this chapter, however, I will return to the ban, but in that context from the point of view of how some growers attempted to overturn the ban in autumn, when negotiations resumed and Parliament was once again in session. At that point I will elaborate further on the Lund Plain growers' response to the ban, which at that time focussed on reading about protests elsewhere in the country which incorporated an element of attack.

There was no question that the ban lent further weight to the continuing mobilization and elaboration of a position counter to that of Government on agrochemicals in the form of properly conducted lobbying activities.

### **(3) Policy Negotiations on Agrochemicals Continued: Spring**

The four week period straddling the day on which the ban went into effect, beginning with the announcement of the ban and ending when spraying had been completed, was a disconcerting time for growers, characterized by a great deal of uncertainty. But once spring spraying and fertilizing of crops had ceased, which coincided with the plants having grown out of their immature stage when they needed much nurturing, and having entered their maturation phase during which they would be simply watched over, lobbying at grassroots level resumed as previously planned and agreed vis-a-vis the policy package under negotiation at national level.

I now want to elaborate further on how structured activity, undertaken under the auspices of the Union Branch, and unstructured activity, unexpected events, shaped interactions between growers and members of the public. In one scenario, differences of opinion were kept under control, while in the other they were expressed openly in a variety of ways.

*(i) Defence as structured activity*

When spring work was over, the spraying and fertilizing period to an end, the growers' mobilization of statements of defence continued. In the next two sections, I analyze the forms acts of defence took in a series of sites in two different contexts, structured and unstructured.

In late 1986, early 1987, Union Branch Headquarters had announced to all Local Divisions in Skåne that an Open Farm Day was to be held on 24 May. The purpose of Open Day was to engage members of the general public on the growers' terms. Consumer education of this kind had only been attempted once before, several years earlier, and then on a relatively small scale. In 1987, the Union Branch built further on this previous experience, elaborating on what was to be an open invitation to all members of the public to come out and again meet farmers at their place of work, for a first-hand view of what commodity production was all about. The event occurred at a particularly opportune point in time in the negotiation of policies (which had emerged as a result of complaints by the population at large about modern farming methods). Reports on agrochemicals had been published and were being scrutinized and commented on by the Farmers' Federation. Further reports suggesting restrictions on commercial fertilizer were next to be formulated and would be made public in autumn. It was late May, only a few weeks after the furore over the ban on growth regulator, and just prior to politicians and others in Stockholm taking a break from negotiations over summer. Locating the event in the agricultural cycle, it took place in late spring, a time when all crops were well out of the ground, the countryside looked beautiful, and the weather was pleasantly warm. All of this, growers believed, would have

a beneficial impact on visitors who would thus be especially receptive to what farmers had to say.

Open Farm Day was a highly structured exercise. That Open Day was advertised by the Union Branch to the public as an outing, a leisure activity for families, did not conceal that the invitation extended to families and other members of the public to spend a day on various farms was in fact an integral part of the general mobilization of growers against criticisms of farming methods. In the Union Branch's Annual Report (1987:22), the event was referred to as an 'information activity', the largest ever. The purpose of this public relations exercise was for farmers to engage face-to-face with the public on the general subject of modern farm production methods, whether crop production (not specifically growth regulator but chemicals and fertilizers in general), or livestock production. The aim of Open Farm, like the course Food is a Hot Potato, was to "influence public opinion" in favour of farmers by providing a positive counter-weight to the negative image the *South Swedish Daily* for some time had been presenting of rural producers. Open Farm differed from the evening courses on food also held under the auspices of the Union Branch (analyzed in sub-section (3)(i) in that the actual process of educating the public occurred in the private domain of the farm. Thus, members of the public, whether families with young children, adults of all ages and occupations, retired people, or old men who had worked as farm hands in their youth, were invited into the farmyard, pig units, cow barns and machine sheds, space which (unlike fields) was never visible to outsiders. Here they were presented with a short informational talk on various aspects of modern farm production. Guided tours were conducted by the farmer himself, sometimes with the assistance of his son and other growers in the Local Division. The family was present in the background, to emphasize that farming was by and large a family business. On one farm, for example, the hosting farmer's wife served juice and biscuits to visitors while the couple's children directed arriving visitors to an area designated as car park.

In this structured context can be clearly seen one way in which growers' lobby activities were now quite considerably informed by media reports on the Government's new position, a stand developed in response to the public's complaints about modern farm production methods.

### *VIGNETTE*

Two farms are open in Norrarp. On each, visitors are taken on a guided tour by producers through the out-buildings. At appropriate points, the guide stops to give a brief explanation of what is produced on his farm. On one of the farms, Torsten Ingemarsson's son Leif explains in great detail the intricacies of crop rotations to a group of visitors he has collected in front of the plough and seeder in the machine shed. He avoids mentioning the regular sprayings which all crops are subjected to during the growing season. The sprayer has been deliberately parked out of sight behind the large harvester.

In a neighbouring parish, one farm is open. Roland Hansson (secretary of the Lund Zone of the Union Branch) guides visitors around the pig units, while Per Radby (vice Chairman of the Lund Zone) talks about cropping. Radby offers visitors a technical and detailed presentation which emphasizes the importance of nitrogen and phosphorous in crop production (both purported by Government to be major pollutants). A young farmer, the son of one of the older men in the Division, shows visitors the machines used in crop production. He points to the sprayer, only one of a dozen other highly sophisticated pieces of machinery in the shed, and says: "That is what makes so many people angry, but they don't realize that much of what we spray is totally harmless, nutrients and so." Not one of the visitors challenge the accumulated knowledge and expertise of these men, nor the reference to chemicals and fertilizers.

The guided tour is supplemented with printed information directly related to the two key concerns at this time: food quality and the environment. One brochure is titled *My Job Your Food*, the other *Farming and the Environment*. By handing out printed material to visitors on the most controversial aspects of production, growers do not actually have to say anything themselves about these subjects. The Farmers' Federation's views are clearly spelled out in the pamphlets. The men execute Open Farm Day in the knowledge that they have full institutional backing.

Here we see how behaviour and speech are shaped not only by media reports on the Government's position which is informed by what it claims to be broad-based public opinion, but also by the Farmers' Federation's counter-position, echoed by growers on the Plain. This particular moulding of their presentation is a clear instance of how structure is imprinted on actors, but also of how a counter-power arises in response.

When Open Farm Day was evaluated by the Union Branch, the figures showed that some 210 farms in 155 Local Divisions throughout Skåne had held open house. The event had drawn a total of 35,000 visitors. I estimate that in Norrarp, with two farms open between the hours of 10 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon, some 100 to 200 people would have passed through the doors. The event also received a write-up in the *South Swedish Daily*, as well as the other two newspapers, the following day. This ensured that the farmers' message reached everyone on the Plain. It did not, however, provide an opportunity for environmentalists and others to dispute the farmers' position.

**(ii) Defence as unstructured activity**

Acts of defence also occurred in unstructured contexts, by which I mean in sites and times not bracketed as public relations events. In this section I move from enclosed sites in discrete time frames, to events in the unstructured informal arena out of doors (consisting of roads and fields always open to the public gaze) in the free flow of time. In the day-to-day context of living and working the land, where the full weight of the Union Branch behind every grower on the Plain was not evident to the outsider, interactions between individual farmers and members of the public could at times be quite hostile. I will now go on to detail some of those arenas in which individual growers became targets of attack by particularly critical members of the public. The manner in which growers in their individualistic ways responded to these unpleasant occurrences is the focus here. Their responses in these contexts were shaped by the individualized nature of farming, as well as the Farmers' Federation's and Union Branch's stand in favour of intensive farming. As self-employed entrepreneurs, farmers worked on their own. In the day-to-day activities of farming, they would often have to fend off attack by members of the public, whom as I noted earlier Government had accorded an increasing say in how commodities were being produced.



It scarcely needs mention that skirmishes between farmers and non-farmers were also turned into stories to be told and retold in the many contexts in which growers met up with other producers.

The key point here, as Newby (1979) has noted, is that although fields are private property, they can also be regarded as public space. All the work carried out in the production of crops is performed in full view of whoever happens to pass by. Fields are not fenced in, nor lined by hedges which might obstruct views. Although the public is barred from setting foot on fields when the soil is being prepared, and during sowing, maturation and harvesting of crops, i.e. the greater part of the year, fields are always open to public view. Cultivated land is often bordered and dissected by roads. Roads are public space used by ordinary citizens to get to and from work, services and recreational areas. In 1987, roads were particularly convenient arenas from which members of the public could stage attacks on farmers working their fields.

I was present when one farmer recounted to a group of other men, chatting outside a meeting hall, the following incident. A woman on a bicycle, who had passed on the highway skirting the field while he was spraying, had pointedly let go of one handlebar and held her nose as she pedalled past. In recounting the incident, he turned to me and explained that he, who was the one to actually have to lift the heavy containers, pour the chemicals into the tank on the sprayer, and mix them with water, was at much greater risk than she or any other person would ever be. He added rhetorically: "Does she think about the car exhaust fumes she is breathing in while bicycling on that busy road?" (a statement relating to farmers' views that there were many sources of pollution, cars being a significant one). At the time of the incident, he had simply shaken his head and laughed, ensconced in the cab of his tractor, and had continued the spraying as planned until the entire field had been completed, safe in the knowledge that he was not breaking any rules.

Attacks were intended to signal support for the policies being negotiated at national level. Commonly, members of the public used intermediaries to convey their political persuasions to individual farmers. The preservation of their anonymity robbed the targeted farmer of any chance of a retort.

An example in point was the constant stream of telephone calls from men and women living in close proximity of fields, concerned that spray drift might ruin their flowers, shrubs, hedges, or fruit trees. These calls were made not to farmers but to the Council's Environmental and Health Protection Unit in the relevant District Centre, as soon as they spotted a farmer heading for a nearby field with his tractor and sprayer. As required, the official at the Council would then ring the targeted farmer to ascertain whether any rules had been broken. Usually, it was simply a matter of growers confirming that they had indeed followed all the regulations in place. If the farmer enquired as to who had reported him, the official would decline to divulge the name of the caller. Thus, after each complaint, growers would spend a great deal of time speculating as to who had made the phone call, anxiously enquiring of neighbouring farmers whether they too had been the target of similar (unfounded) complaints, and if so by whom. Through a process of elimination, the complainant would eventually be identified. Telephone calls made by anonymous callers to the authorities did not improve relations with any of the people who lived in homes on the edge of one's fields, but in fact only made growers stronger in their resolve to continue to oppose the Government's emerging position until the bitter end.

On occasion growers were taken to court by individuals whose homes bordered fields. A celebrated test case was still moving through the judicial system at the time of fieldwork. Ian Hamilton, owner of the large Barsebäck estate, had been sued by a retired man, a keen gardener, a retired policeman, who claimed that one of the estate's farm workers had pulled the sprayer too close to his garden which was completely surrounded by agricultural land, and so caused damage to his plants and shrubs. Hamilton had no choice but to defend himself in court. While the lawyers for both sides fought the battle, the estate

owner sat silently refusing to make eye contact with the plaintiff. In the absence of clear evidence that the damage was related to agrochemicals and not some natural cause, the court found in favour of the land owner. The outcome of this case lent even more weight to growers' continuing to defend high intensity farming methods.

This court case was a subject of conversation in many different contexts. While attending a several week long course on safe work practices and injury prevention on farms at the Department of Building Technology at the University of Lund, I became acquainted with a farm worker employed by the Barsebäck estate. One evening he recounted how some of the workers employed by the estate, to prove that this man was complaining just for the sake of it (actually to get an insurance pay out), had decided to pull a practical joke on him. They had filled the sprayer with water, hitched it up to a tractor, and pulled it out onto a field near the retired man's house. It was not long before they had a phone call from the Environmental and Health Protection Unit in Kävlinge, to whom the man had been immediately on the phone with complaints about how "the chemicals were damaging his garden". Here, instead of sitting back and waiting to be attacked, the workers baited the complaining policeman, knowing the law was on their side. The workers had explained to the official that the sprayer contained nothing but water, and that they could not possibly have caused any damage to anything. The retelling of the story in the company of fifteen or so farm workers was yet another example of how stories about the public were created, told and retold, exchanged as highly valued pieces of evidence that public opinion had gone haywire.

The man who had filed the suit against Hamilton was the clearest example of how a non-farming person was tainted with the charge of being fickle. He became known in many quarters as a *kverulant* (literally a person who is querulous) who would complain even when there was no justifiable reason to do so. The process was aided by endless reports in the *South Swedish Daily* in which the man was interviewed for his anti-chemicals views.

Although a photograph of the man accompanied every article about him and his lawsuit, no one knew him personally.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, and again in sub-section (3)(iv) above, growers were actively working on getting their views into the *South Swedish Daily*, as part of acts of defence vis-a-vis policy proposals to restrict the use of agrochemicals. They were angered by their relatively restricted access to the *Daily* in comparison with members of the non-farming public critical of production methods, whose sentiments they believed were openly supported by the *Daily*. They could not easily get their side of the story into the *Daily*, although several successful strategies were deployed during fieldwork. Farmers said reporters were not interested in their point of view. This had been brought home to me when I attended some of the hearings in Malmö in regard to the court case mentioned above. I could not fail to notice how the reporters from the *South Swedish Daily* and other newspapers flocked to the querulous and garrulous plaintiff in the hall outside the courtroom during breaks in the proceedings (and how willingly he talked to all of them). By contrast, the defendant in the case, the quiet and softly spoken estate owner, was never approached by journalists for his views. He would disappear with his lawyer behind a closed door to wait out the recess.

In 1987, such differential access to the public arena of newspapers on their own terms provoked hitherto unheard of strategies amongst some growers, Tore Siwersson in the Lomma District being a case in point. By way of providing some background, Siwersson had been accused by a retired woman of causing damage to her garden. The dispute, which had been simmering since 1985, the year in which the new Food Policy Act was tabled in Parliament, came to a head in spring 1987. Following a spraying by Siwersson on the field adjoining the woman's garden on 30 April 1987, she had lodged a complaint with the anti-establishment Environmental Centre (*Miljöcentrum*), a lobby group which was offering assistance and advice to members of the public against chemicals (as opposed to the District Council Environmental and Health Unit which was simply enforcing existing

rules and regulations). There had been no face-to-face interaction between the woman and Siwersson, despite several attempts by Siwersson to reach her by telephone.

Siwersson chose an unusual course of action to refute the woman's accusations. He elected to do it in the most public of all arenas available. Thus, he telephoned the *South Swedish Daily* as well as one of the other two newspapers, inviting reporters to a meeting he was organizing. The meeting took place on the edge of the field where he had been spraying, on the border separating his field from the woman's garden. For this event, Siwersson enlisted several key people in his network. Present were two advisors, one from the County Agricultural Board, the other from the County Agricultural Society. In front of the two reporters, they inspected the alleged damage. Two retailers of agrochemicals as well as a friend who was a farmer were also on hand to lend support. Standing on the edge of the field on a cold and overcast day in early May, surveying the woman's shrubs and other plants, Siwersson and the men then confirmed the place of chemicals in farming. The advisors tried to ascertain which, if any, rules had been breached by Siwersson. The conclusion was that Siwersson had observed every rule and regulation, and this was also corroborated by the Manager of the Environment and Health Protection Unit in the Lomma District who had been watching him through binoculars throughout the fifteen minute period that he had been spraying on the particular occasion in question.

The whole point of Siwersson's exercise was to manufacture a strong statement of defence for publication in the press against the woman who had complained about him spraying. Thus, the event occurred in the presence of two reporters, both of whom later wrote articles about the dispute published in the *South Swedish Daily* (7 May 1987, 15 May 1987) and the *Skånish Daily* (7 May 1987). Enlisting reporters in this manner, however, was an unusual occurrence which did not happen again during my period of fieldwork.

We see then that members of the public attacked farmers in a number of ways, some subtle, some very damaging, and that growers responded in a variety of ways. This

interaction, I argue, was the grassroots manifestation of tense relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government in on-going policy negotiations at national level. That attacks were staged in the course of every-day life rather than in structured contexts, bracketed by place and time, where Union Branch backing was in strong evidence, simply confirms that such attacks are out of the ordinary, another form of rule breaking. For the same reason, growers improvised a number of different responses, depending on how attacks were staged. The situation demanded a fluid response, qualitatively different from those deployed at events arranged by the Union Branch, as there were no guidelines in place on how to deal with such attacks.

Fortunately, acts of attack on farmers were bracketed in time, for as soon as the spraying season had come to an end in late May, so did the anonymous telephone calls and other acts of attack stop. The strain growers felt themselves to be under eased. Over the summer, when negotiations came to a halt and Parliament was in recess, the strain lifted completely. This was no doubt in large part due to the absence of stories in the *South Swedish Daily* about polluting farmers. The focus of ordinary people's attention now shifted from politics to family events, holidays, and travel. But when Parliament reconvened in autumn, the *Daily* again filled with reports about the damaging effects of agricultural production methods. Now the subject was fertilizers as opposed to chemicals. Farmers' once more found themselves in a situation where they had to defend themselves against what they considered unfounded accusations of wrong-doing.

#### **(4) Policy Proposal On Commercial Fertilizer: Autumn**

On 15 November 1987, the *South Swedish Daily* reported on the contents of a report released by the Intensity Group, by then reconstituted. Out of a total of twelve or so members, the Farmers' Federation had one representative on this commission. The second task of this commission (the first being the proposal on how to halve the use of agrochemicals) had been to come up with a plan whereby the use of fertilizers could be

reduced, again with the rationale that this would protect the environment by reducing nitrogen leaching. The aim of the second report was to propose a way to reduce the volume of nitrogenous fertilizer applied on crops by five per cent over a five year period. This was to be achieved by increasing the fees levied on fertilizer, and chemicals. The Chairman of the commission, Professor Arne Engström, former Director General of the National Food Administration, had recommended a twenty-five per cent increase in the fee on fertilizers, but the exact figure would not be known until later. The levy proposed for chemicals would increase the price paid by farmers by more than fifty per cent (*Land* 20 November 1987).

Commercial fertilizer is more commonly used in the production of crops than livestock manure on the Lund Plain. The fertilizer is manufactured by Supra, the largest plant in Scandinavia, located on the coast just beyond the perimeter of the Lund Plain, in the city of Landskrona. Commercial fertilizer is purchased from The Landmen, and comes in sacks. The content of the sacks is emptied into a special fertilizer distributor, either tractor mounted or trailed behind the tractor. There are many different kinds of commercial fertilizer on the market. Fertilizer is used for a variety of purposes, and at specific points in the agricultural cycle.

The Intensity Group was of the opinion that the best way to achieve a reduction in the use of commercial fertilizer was to increase the levy, which was already embedded in the price of nitrogenous fertilizer (and agrochemicals) by around two Kronor per kilo, or twenty-six per cent. This would raise the levy from thirty to eighty *öre* per kilo nitrogen, the total cost per kilo rising by 1.88 Kronor. The Intensity Group also proposed that most of the money collected by increasing the levy was to be put toward further research into environmental protection (*miljövard*). Some of the funds, however, the Group proposed be used to finance the export of the cereal surplus. This reflected the Government's, and Minister for the Environment Birgitta Dahl's, dogged determination to link environmental pollution with the cereal surplus problem. The public was to be convinced that a cause-

effect relationship existed between the production of cereals in surplus quantity on the one hand, and water pollution (through chemical residue and nitrogen leaching) on the other.

The proposed levy increases caused so much commotion within the Farmers' Federation that the figures were deleted from the final version of the report presented to the Government. This must be understood in relation to the fact that the annual grain price negotiations were at that time well under way, and rumours circulating that a drop in the grain price was on the cards.

*(i) Reacting with anger*

Lobbying in autumn shifted away from a concern with chemicals to a concern with rising levies on fertilizers. In this Section I demonstrate how individual farmers faced head on politically active members of the public who were beginning to use council meetings as a forum in which to advance the usual environmentalist criticisms of modern farming practices. My argument is simply that by this time in the negotiation process, growers were quite adept at disputing the opposition's arguments and did so even in the most politically loaded arenas where they were clearly outnumbered.

As usual, growers first read the *South Swedish Daily's* report on Arne Lyng's statement about the latest policy proposal, and discussed amongst themselves the implications of the policy proposals for them as producers.

As soon as the announcement of increased levies on commercial fertilizer was made, growers tapped into their networks to determine the best course of action. For many, this was to stockpile fertilizer bought from The Landmen at the then current price before the price increase went into effect. To a man, they also continued to augment their stocks of counter-arguments by reading the *South Swedish Daily*, particularly statements by Farmers' Federation leaders.



Arne Lyngge, the Provincial Federation Chairman, simultaneously issued a statement to the *South Swedish Daily* (15 November 1987) in which he denounced the proposal with a series of counter-arguments. Speaking to the public at large, he railed that Sweden's farmers were being treated much worse than growers in other European nations:

If the fees for nitrogenous fertilizer are increased, we will be paying twice as much for commercial fertilizer as farmers in Western Europe, despite the fact that we get paid less for our grain than the farmers in any other country.

He painted a picture of inescapable doom, created by an unsympathetic general public:

The pressure on farmers has become unbearable. Hundreds of farmers are fighting to survive. They have to borrow to pay their taxes.

He lambasted the Government for ignorance of the true facts:

The use of nitrogen does not decrease if the price is increased. There are studies which show this. No, the entire report is most suited for the wastepaper basket. It is a mindless proposal (*South Swedish Daily* 15 November 1987).

In day-to-day conversations, growers complained angrily that increasing the fee by twenty-five per cent would force them to use not only less fertilizer, but also fewer chemicals (on which a levy was also going to be imposed). This would reduce the yields. They would lose income. But the loss of income would not be off-set by them buying fewer inputs. One man provided me with the following example: the cost of fertilizer would increase by 40 Kronor per hectare, the cost of chemicals by 90 Kronor per hectare. But the income from the crop on the same hectare would be reduced by 160 Kronor, which was more than those two amounts combined. His counter-argument was part and parcel of the generalized mobilization of defence growers had been deploying throughout this extended

period of policy-making, which had begun with measures to reduce agrochemicals, and was now proceeding with measures to restrict the use of commercial fertilizer.

The Union Branch's major line of defence was similar to the line it took on agrochemicals, namely that "if society wants a change in production methods, then society should pay for this". In other words, farmers should not have to carry the loss resulting from interventionist measures imposed by Government in response to lobbying by environmentalists. This was especially so when wage and salary earners were constantly demanding wage increases, at first through the collective bargaining process at national level, and when that failed to produce the desired result, by staging strikes.

*(ii) Responding with acts of defence*

In Sweden, neither wages, industrial policy, nor any substantial aspect of agriculture, fall within the purview of the District Council. But many growers do participate in District level politics, often holding seats on the Council as members of either the Center Party (formerly the Farmers' Party) or the Moderate Party. Council meetings provide one of the few opportunities for them to come face-to-face with members of the established opposition: the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party. By the time of fieldwork, many District Councils on the Lund Plain also included at least one representative of the Environmental Party, formed in the early 1980's and by 1987 constituting a further entrenched dimension of the opposition, although the Party had not yet managed to secure sufficient votes to get into Parliament. It was becoming increasingly common for the member of the Environmental Party to seek to advance the Party's stand against intensive farming methods in this context, often with support from the Social Democrats and Communists.

The Environmental Party was a vocal exponent of a whole-sale change-over to farming methods which did not include the use of agrochemicals or commercial fertilizer. The

Party did not pose much of a threat although it held at least one seat on all of the District Councils on the Lund Plain except that of Staffanstorp, but its vote often had the potential to tip the balance of power in favour of a particular course of action proposed by the established political parties (the Party finally got into Parliament in the election of 1988). The Centre, Liberal and Moderate parties shunned all collaboration with this Party, while others, notably the Communist Party but sometimes also the Social Democratic Party, would seek its support on certain issues. The Centre Party, which prided itself on being the only party with an environmental conscience (on the basis that it had been the first party to oppose nuclear power in the 1960's), was openly hostile to the Environmental Party. In private, growers (the majority of whom members of the Centre Party and the Moderates) would laugh at the Environmental Party's manifesto, ridiculing it as "unrealistic, out of touch with reality". The District Council meetings became an arena in which farmers sometimes had to respond to attacks by certain representatives of the broad and in number overwhelming majority of non-farming constituents.

### *VIGNETTE*

The Kävlinge Executive Council is well underway. It is 18 December 1987, only a few weeks after the release of the policy proposal on how to force a reduction in the use of nitrogenous commercial fertilizer. At the appropriate point in the proceedings, the sole member of the Environmental Party takes the opportunity to propose that Council consider introducing a requirement that all those farmers who lease small pieces of land owned by the District (in total some 400 hectares) be required to cultivate that land by alternative methods, using no chemicals and fertilizers. Two farmers on the Council object strongly.

Knowing full well that the Environmental Party in the Trelleborg District to the south has been successful in forcing through such a requirement, Executive Council Chairman, Per Radby, a farmer who is also the Vice Chairman of the Lund Zone of the Union Branch quickly responds to this in his view preposterous proposal:

There is a program within the farmers' movement where people are doing everything in their power to come to terms with various problems. It is a big problem and it cannot be resolved here. The farmers cannot solve it, it is for society to solve it.

The Communist Party's only member then speaks in support of the Environmental Party member's proposal. At this stage, Nils Nilsson, another farmer, takes the floor, and counters:

How many hectares of land are we talking about - 384 hectares? People talk about agriculture as if it is the farmers who are the big villains. What about the sewage treatment works -- they are not equipped to remove nitrogen. Find out more about that! There is also nitrogen fallout from above. When I attended agricultural college in Svalöv forty years ago, I learned that so much came down from up above. Today the nitrogen fallout is three times that, around 50-60 kilos per hectare. This lands on paved roads, on forested land, on our gardens, on our soil. It comes from above, from the air. Of course the farmers contribute to some of the nitrogen leaching, but we cannot solve the problems here. I want to correct the problematic. If half of the nitrogen comes from above, then we cannot blame the farmers.

The proponent of alternative methods presses ahead. He says he knows of people who are working on developing ways of removing nitrogen (considered a major water pollutant by Government) from sewage and waste. He is again supported by the Communist Party member who says: "We cannot bury our heads in the sand. We know that nitrogen is dangerous but not how dangerous." Another person also opposed to current farming methods says he believes that it is the increased use of fertilizer which is "the villain" (*boven*), as well as intensive livestock farming methods which increase nitrogen leaching.

Nils Nilsson, now visibly agitated, deploys the political language of the Union Branch to quell the proposal once and for all:

All parties need to cooperate, *kommunerna* as well as the farmers, but the debate is skewed. Remember that it is raining nitrogen from above. No-one mentions that. It is difficult to grasp that nitrogen fallout has trebled. It is falling into the Ringsjö Lake. It runs into the streams. The Laholm Bight is another example. It is chance which determines how much fallout there will be. We cannot see it and it doesn't smell. But it is there.

Using counter-arguments formulated in countless conversations with other farmers, for they were both members of various boards and committees, Radby and Nilsson eventually silence the opposition. Radby closes the debate.

After the close of the meeting Bo Arvidsson, a farmer and leader of the Moderate Party, and Executive Council Chairman Radby, approached the Environmental Party representative, a lecturer at the University of Lund, with a copy of some recent research findings. With the words "You might be interested in this", they proffered the report, compiled by the County Agricultural Society, which concluded that commercial fertilizer applied at current rates did not cause nitrogen leaching. They walked away and there was no further interaction between them and the university lecturer.

*(iii) Delivering extended criticism*

As throughout fieldwork I had attended almost every Council meeting in the Kävlinge District, and also had extensive contact with the Environmental Party, I knew that there was nothing unusual about the marked way in which the farmers on the Council distanced themselves from the Environmental Party member, and his allies on environmental matters, the spokesmen for the Social Democratic and Communist Parties. I was also aware that this was a problem the environmentalists, a group which included several teachers, an editor, a secretary, computer analyst and laboratory assistant, in Kävlinge were seeking to overcome. The major difficulty was finding a venue in which to hold a meeting, and to devise a format for the meeting which would attract farmers.

At a meeting of the Kävlinge Environmental Party Branch in spring, one of the members, a school teacher, had urged the others to get out and actually confront farmers in the act of spraying:

We must go out there and tell them to stop what they are doing. We cannot let this continue. I am sick of poison in my food.

None of the others had taken this suggestion seriously, realizing that because of the individualized nature of farming, and the dispersal of farm units, this would have meant straying onto private property, and in all likelihood interrupted the production process of one man only. Instead, several months later, but only after weeks of discussion, the group finally decided to hold a public meeting to be titled Farming and Economics (*Jordbruk och ekonomi*) which it was believed might attract farmers. The loaded word environment (*miljö*) was deliberately left off the flyers and posters. Every farmer in the District was invited by mail to attend this event, the first of its kind arranged by the Branch. The meeting was held at the Kävlinge Theatre on 23 November 1987. All the Party's members were also invited, and asked to bring along friends and relatives to boost numbers. The speaker chosen for this public meeting was a vegetable growing farmer from Hjo in the

province of Småland to the north of Skåne who practised alternative methods of farming. He gave a talk on how a switch to alternative methods might be effected in the traditional farming sector.

Twenty environmentalists, partners and friends came to the meeting, but only one out of a total of over two hundred farmers in the Kävlinge District responded to the invitation. The low turn-out rate was yet another expression of distancing, reflecting strained relations between growers and environmentalists, and the usurption of a new up-and-coming political party of matters which until the early 1980's had been of concern exclusively to farmers.

Ingemar Persson, a member of the boards and committees of several producers' associations, was a conventional cereal grower used to speaking at meetings. On this occasion, and on his own initiative, he represented the collective voice of growers on the Plain. He listened patiently to the speaker as he outlined his views on how to change over from conventional to alternative methods of production. Upon the conclusion of the speech, Persson rose to his feet in a measured way, turned around, gazed at the audience to finally turn back to face the speaker on the platform. Weighing his words carefully, he explained how in his view the speaker's suggestion was an unworkable proposition. The following is a good example of how a farmer at this point in the sequence of national-level events, when the annual commodity price negotiations had only just been concluded, would criticize the environmentalist position:

I could speak about this for an hour but ... The reason why we produce so much is so that there will be something left over for us to live on. If we were to start growing without chemicals then we would never cover our costs. They have done experiments at Bjärsjölagård, that farm which hasn't been fertilized for forty years (and by implication not sprayed either) ... it doesn't work. The raw commodity price would have to be a lot higher if this were to work, and that consumers are not willing to pay for. There is more expensive flour (implying organically grown) but the quality is worse. The bakeries don't want it. Also, if we were to use chemical free methods then our hectarages wouldn't be big enough so then we would have to

import. What? Products which have been sprayed seven times worse than Swedish products. Look at Germany and Denmark. They spray a lot. We can't get those around us to look at things the way we do.

This counter-argument was presented at a time when farmers around the country were staging blockades of ships trying to unload rye from West Germany which had been heavily sprayed with growth regulator. It was an extended criticism of consumers and environmentalists, as well as Government.

Not only did Persson exploit the fact that farmers were protesting against imports, he also cleverly turned the environmentalist's argument on its head by explaining that if Swedish farmers were to no longer be able to use agrochemicals and fertilizers, they would not be able to satisfy the domestic demand for high quality commodities -- the evidence was already there in the form of forced imports as a result of the Government's ban on growth regulator. Deliberately playing with consumers' anxiety (as reported in the *South Swedish Daily*) about imported commodities which random tests had shown repeatedly to have been sprayed with chemicals banned in Sweden, he concluded that commodity production on an intensive basis by Swedish farmers was the only way in which the public could be provided with foods safe to eat.

A while later, everyone moved to the back of the room where coffee, biscuits and sweetbreads were on offer. Persson followed suit, but only as if he had stopped temporarily on his way out the door. Several people, coffee cups in hand, gathered around him. This was the first time most of them had ever come face-to-face with a farmer. They were curious to hear what else he had to say. Persson lingered for a while, all the while disputing the feasibility of what environmentalists were proposing, opposing the encroachment of this new social movement on matters over which the farmers as an old and established movement had up until then enjoyed sole jurisdiction. So as to further mark out his oppositional stand vis-a-vis what he considered to be out-moded views, he declined the invitation to have a cup of coffee, and was the first person to exit the site soon

thereafter. The inclusion-exclusion principle which operates during the coffee break at farmers' gatherings (see Chapter 2) when outsiders are present, was here deployed by Persson in the reverse to make a strong political statement indeed.

In summary, the acts of defence I observed by farmers at this late point in the policy making process were made quite forcefully, incorporating references to the commodity price negotiations, ordinary policy negotiations, the ban on growth regulator and the importation of rye. These were all events which had figured prominently in the *South Swedish Daily* and which they therefore presumed to be as much a part of non-farmers' consciousness as other broad political issues were part of their own. There was a general presumption of a shared reality, mediated by the *Daily*. It was now late November 1987. Without pre-empting myself, I note that at this time relations between farmers and the State had become inflamed indeed (see Chapter 6). Before analyzing the next pattern of protest, which emerged in autumn, I now return briefly to the Minister for the Environment's ban on growth regulator in spring, so as to close this chapter, but also set the scene for the next chapter.

## **(5) The Ban - Part II: Autumn**

### ***(i) Mediated encounters with distant farmers***

I have earlier described how while negotiations were underway, the Minister for the Environment broke all rules regarding proper negotiating procedures by imposing a ban on the chemical growth regulator. In that context I also analyzed the response by growers, which I described as different from defence, but somewhat similar to resistance. This was so because the power constellation between the Farmers' Federation and Government showed strong signs of strain immediately following the announcement of the ban, and for several weeks thereafter, as the Federation deemed the ban unconstitutional. The usual lobby activities deployed during the negotiation phase of policy were temporarily suspended as growers contemplated what to do in this unexpected situation. Signs of



resistance in the form of evasion were in evidence. So were strong statements of defence by leaders of the Farmers' Federation.

In this last section, I now return to the subject of the ban on growth regulator, again to analyze growers' response, for this provides the lead-in to Chapter 6, in which I analyze the expression of protest through acts of attack. To set the scene for Chapter 6, I now examine how growers engaged with farmers elsewhere in Sweden through the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land*, but more importantly how the press reported on acts of protest which exhibited elements of attack.

Reading was an important activity in relation to any policy on which farmers on the Lund Plain followed the national Farmers' Federation's line, as was the case on continued high intensity farming. For an examination of how growers keep themselves abreast of undercurrents in other regions, we must turn to the mediation of public events by *Land* which they read about in the farm office.

The farm office is the most private arena of all, the indisputable domain of the farmer. His wife may sit in the room when doing the books, but the children would not normally be allowed to play in here or use it for any other purpose. As we have already seen, this is a site in which the planning of farm production, the formulation of counter-arguments, the writing of letters and motions occur (see Chapter 3). Paradoxically, this is also the site in which growers follow most intensely media reports on events and undercurrents in distant parts of the country. During the prolonged period of staging acts of defence while policies are under negotiation, there is at the same time on-going engagement with farmers elsewhere in Sweden through the *South Swedish Daily* and *Land* (see Chapter 3). Through this newspaper and the farmers' weekly, a grower can read about events occurring in other parts of the country which form part of the same pattern of protest in which he is himself engaged. On the matter of agricultural inputs, but in particular the ban on growth regulator which broke all rules pertaining to what constituted proper

negotiation procedure, this enabled him continually to confirm that he was part of a wider campaign waged against a non-localized opposition.

The following is an example of events which reached the growers on the Lund Plain through *Land* and the *South Swedish Daily* in October 1987, and which were related to the Minister for the Environment's ban on growth regulator on 1 May. Through the press, farmers learned that in regions near the harbours of Södertälje (approximately 800 kilometers north-east of Lund), Västerås (approximately the same distance from Lund) and Helsingborg (some sixty kilometers north of Lund on the west coast of Skåne) had staged blockades of ships carrying imported rye. The blockades were widely reported in the *South Swedish Daily*, and became mandatory reading for every single grower, for they indicated that the matter of the ban on growth regulator had not been laid to rest, but was now being actively challenged in various parts of the country, although not on the Lund Plain itself. The *South Swedish Daily* confirmed that a process was in motion whereby a substantial number of farmers had formed an action set to try to have the ban rescinded. These were clearly more than acts of defence -- they also exhibited a strong element of attack (see Chapter 6).

Stories in the *South Swedish Daily* in early October told how a throng of some one hundred and fifty farmers had stopped the unloading of a shipment of 1,100 tons of rye at Södertälje. The men had arrived at the shipping terminal early on a Monday morning. With ten tractors, they had blockaded that area controlled by The Landmen, where the shipment was to be unloaded into dockside silos. Later in the day the blockades had developed into a struggle with the authorities, with the Union Branch leader insisting that inspectors from the National Food Administration (*Livsmedelsverket*) come out immediately to take samples of the rye aboard the ship. These samples were to be analyzed for growth regulator residue. The leader of the group had demanded that if levels exceeded the permissible limits the shipment would have to be returned to its point of origin (*South Swedish Daily* 9 October 1987). Not long thereafter, two more blockades

were attempted, but on these occasions the shipments had already been unloaded and so it became a matter of stopping the distribution of the grain to the country's bakeries.

A month later, the National Food Administration's laboratory results were made public. On 14 November 1987, the *South Swedish Daily* announced that the samples had been analyzed for traces of one type of growth regulator, Cykosel (known by growers as CCC). Traces had been found in a concentration of between 0.02 and 0.08 milligrams per kilō. The National Food Administration's report confirmed that as the acceptable limit was 0.5 milligrams, the rye was safe for human consumption.

Growers on the Lund Plain then read (I might add with a great deal of satisfaction) that fellow protesters in central Sweden had disputed the National Food Administration's test results. The rye, the protesters raged, had originated in West Germany. In that country, they said, farmers were allowed to use two additional growth regulators not available in Sweden (where only Cykosel, or CCC, was used). The National Food Administration's analyses had tested for residue of Cykosel, but not these two additional growth regulators, they railed. The real concentration of residue, they argued, was therefore much higher than the National Food Administration's results showed.

As I will explain in more detail in Chapter 6, acts of attack by farmers are characterized by large numbers of producers staging events in the public arena. The constellation of relations between the Farmers' Federation and the Minister for the Environment, at this point, was characterized by a poles apart stand, which enabled the staging of such acts of attack. Having presented their counter-argument, the protesting growers insisted in no uncertain terms that the rye be shipped back to its point of origin. There was a clamorous outcry at Swedish authorities approving importation of rye sprayed with growth regulator when Swedish farmers had only a few months earlier been banned from using this chemical. This was the growers' way of getting their back at the Minister for the

Environment for having broken the rules in regard to proper negotiation procedure by banning growth regulator on 1 May.

That the Swedish Landmen would lose a considerable amount of money by not being able to take delivery of the shipment could not be helped, for a principle was at stake, and the protesters did not budge. Under escalating pressure from the angry farmers, the Swedish Grain Trade Association (responsible for imports and exports) and The Landmen, but ultimately Government, had to accede to their demands.

At the height of the dispute in autumn 1987, during the Farmers' Federation's haggling over grain prices with the Consumer Delegation, growers retaliated by announcing that they were obviously much more concerned for the welfare of the population at large than Government:

If we have been banned, for health reasons, from using growth regulator in Swedish farming, then we should not import West German rye for our bread. They use four times as much growth regulator as we do. ... We are thinking of the consumers (*South Swedish Daily* 9 October 1987).

These stories in the *South Swedish Daily*, including the new twist that the blockades were really staged to protect consumers, were also added to the by then overflowing pool of counter-arguments circulating throughout the networks on the Plain.

The incident is a particularly good example of how in a situation where rules have broken, elements of all three patterns of protest are brought into play. Thus, an amalgam emerges. Elements of resistance by growers in spring are combined with elements of defence by the Farmers' Federation and the Union Branch, also in spring, as well as attack by farmers in autumn, with the full backing of the Union Branch (and The Landmen for a short period of time getting caught in the crossfire). We see then how rapid shifts in the constellation of relations at national level provokes a range of responses at grassroots

level. While everything is running smoothly, protest activities proceed as planned. When the ban is announced, the Farmers' Federation immediately pulls back from the Minister for the Environment.

During the staging of these blockades in central Sweden, individual growers' networks on the Lund Plain were virtually flooded out with venom and vitriole. During the one month or so from early October until mid-November when growers waited for the *South Swedish Daily* to publish the laboratory results confirming level of chemical residue in the imported rye, they were spectators of events occurring elsewhere in response to the ban which had affected them as much as growers elsewhere. While waiting, and simultaneously participating in acts of defence on the matter of proposals still under negotiation, another distinctive pattern of protest emerged. I call this final pattern attack, an analysis of which is the subject of the last case study.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how acts of defence on matters relating to farm commodity production were informed by the fact that the Farmers' Federation and Government remained in unresolved disagreement in regard to new proposed policies regarding restrictions on agricultural inputs. Thus, I have laid bare the dynamics of a broad pattern of defence which emerged within farming ranks and was subsequently deployed in numerous encounters with members of the general public amongst whom growers lived and worked. It had the full backing of the Union Branch and the Farmers' Federation as a whole. Without the full backing from both the Union Branch and The Landmen, growers would not have been able to stage acts of defence in so many public arenas. This pattern of defence constituted a campaign staged to influence the individual

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<sup>8</sup> On 19 November 1987, a short paragraph in the *South Swedish Daily* announced that the Intensity Group proposed that the ban on growth regulator be rescinded for rye for the next five years, pending the development of new hybrids which would not require sprayings with growth regulator to prevent the stalk of the plant from bending and breaking under the heavy weight of ripe ears.

and collective opinion of the public on farm methods (something which had not been attempted in regard to the Fallow Program, for reasons explained in Chapter 4). In the process, and through the on-going elaboration and exchange of stories and counter-arguments, acts of defence also served to create unity amongst dispersed and individualistic growers.

Characteristic of the pattern of defence was the variety of counter-arguments used, story telling, long and detailed discussion pieces to the newspaper, a consistent focussing on the fickleness of Government and consumers, and the effective turning on its head of the Government discourse. Arguments were shaped to appeal to the public, and were based on the Farmers' Federation's rhetoric. The loosely structured nature of defence enabled a number of individualistic responses to occur. The campaign was waged for more than a year, and acts of defence were in all cases fitted around the day-to-day work of farming. Although there were many confrontations between individual growers and members of the public on the subject of chemicals and fertilizers, there were few attempts to stage a large-scale coordinated manifestation of protest involving hundreds of people all in the same place at the same time. The exception was Open Farm Day, but even this event bore the marks of the individualistic approach to defence deployed throughout the protracted policy negotiations.

In this chapter I have also juxtaposed growers' response to the Minister for the Environment's ban on growth regulator. I did this to highlight differences between acts of defence and acts of resistance (and to a limited extent attack), to show that in an ambiguous situation such as that created when the Minister for the Environment brazenly ignored Bo Dockered's recommendation not to ban the use of growth regulator, elements of all three patterns of protest are brought into play.

The vocal campaign of defence against the proposed policy measures to restrict the use of agricultural inputs was in every respect distinct from the transmuted pattern of resistance

vis-a-vis the Fallow Program. Resistance entailed avoidance of the Program, manipulation of the rules of the Program, the exploitation of vague categories, the attribution of unofficial meanings to official categories, and a general subversion of the Program. Resistance did not entail seeking support from other constituencies. Resistance was not sanctioned by the Union Branch. Defence, on the other hand, aimed to influence public opinion, and entailed the preparation and presentation of arguments for consumption by members of the public, the staging of consumer education events, challenging the environmentalist position at meetings, and writing letters to the *South Swedish Daily*, in short the full range of legitimate lobby activity. Defence was fully sanctioned by the Union Branch, indeed an important part of Union activity at grassroots level. In contrast to both of these patterns, I now go on to analyze a pattern of attack which occurred in response to a proposal to deregulate the cereal sector of the controlled agricultural commodity market.

## CHAPTER 6

### PATTERNS OF PROTEST III: ATTACK

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I examined various expressions of defence, all played out vis-a-vis a policy package which proposed ways to reduce crop growing farmers' use of agricultural inputs. That the policies were still under negotiation, with the Farmers' Federation actively challenging Government on particular clauses, shaped defence, making it akin to what is normally known as lobby activity. I threw farmers' acts of defence into relief by also examining their response to an anomalous occurrence, a ban, unexpected because it fell outside the parameters of normal negotiating procedures. I demonstrated that the ban placed a great deal of further strain on relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government, with concomitant effects noticeable in farmers' reactions at the regional level.

In this third and final case study, my analysis takes place against a background configuration of power relations at national level in which the Farmers' Federation and the Government have not yet formed any kind of formal relationship. The proposed policy with which I am here concerned, deregulation of the cereal market of the agricultural economy, was still in its embryonic stage. The particular constellation of relations in evidence at this time between the two key negotiating parties, determined by the early location of the policy in its career, gave a content and form to farmers' protest qualitatively different from resistance (Chapter 4) and defence (Chapter 5). I have already alluded to some aspects of this pattern of protest, which I call attack, in the final section of Chapter 5.

In this context, attack refers to a response characterized by its openly hostile nature, which is also tinged with a sense of urgency. Attack aims to pressure Government into shelving proposed policy plans altogether. For this kind of protest to be effective, a considerable



number of farmers must be mobilized, and a large-scale performance staged in the public arena. This is done to attract media coverage. For the purposes of this study, attack as a pattern of protest is to be further distinguished from that of defence in that it is directed at a political alliance generally deemed by farmers to wield considerable power in Sweden, namely the *LO* (*Landsorganisationen* -- the Swedish labour movement) and the Social Democratic Government. The *LO* and the Social Democratic Party have for five decades been heavily influential in the shaping of Swedish politics and policy (see Chapter 1). In this chapter, therefore, I not only examine the particular characteristics of attack as a form of protest, generated by the Swedish policy-making system, but also problematize yet another blind spot in studies of Swedish politics. I am referring here to some of the ways in which the conflictual relationship between the Farmers' Federation and the *LO* is expressed by growers on the Lund Plain, in relation to a particular policy proposal.<sup>1</sup> Attack as a response distinct from both resistance and defence represents a further important dimension of farmer-State relations, in times of cereal surplus crisis and concomitant production restrictions.

Farmers' mobilization of attack on the Social Democratic Government and its ally the *LO* required large-scale collective participation by growers. Eventually, attack climaxed in a publicly-staged performance in the streets of Kristianstad, the capital city of Kristianstad County due east of Malmöhus County. Throughout mobilization and during the demonstration itself, anger and fury were represented through the use of metaphor. In contradistinction to acts of resistance and defence, which occurred in a number of dispersed arenas over a substantial period of time, preparations for and the eventual staging of a demonstration took place in a restricted number of sites over a period of only a few weeks. For this reason, I have organized this chapter around two events which took place in the lead up to the demonstration, followed by the rally itself.

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<sup>1</sup> I refer the reader to Micheletti's (1988) historical overview of the transformation of the *LO*, the Farmers' Federation, and other major established interest organizations in Sweden.

The attack on the *LO* and Government occurred in two phases. The central concern of this chapter is to analyze the conditions which enabled large-scale mass action, and to bring to the fore the various ways in which fury and anger were represented in these two phases. To this end, I explore firstly the processes involved in mobilizing growers on the Lund Plain, indeed in this case in the somewhat wider Lund Zone, by leaders of the Union Branch. The end result of this first phase of attack was the eventual adoption of a resolution to send two letters of protest to Stockholm, one to the Chairman of the *LO*, Stig Malm, and the other to the Minister of Agriculture, Mats Hellström. Secondly, I examine the staging of a demonstration, also arranged by and with the full backing of the Union Branch. The end result of this second phase of attack was the taking of protest into the streets of a city, a county capital, and from there moving it into what is the most public forum available in Skåne, the *South Swedish Daily* and other newspapers. In both stages, attack aimed to project rural producers' deepening distrust of and sharpened hostility to Government. It also aimed to pressure Minister of Agriculture Hellström into dropping the proposed policy on deregulation before it had been allowed to gain wide support.

Deregulation of the cereal market was intimately related to the Government's two other policies around which I began and then proceeded to build my analysis of the diversity of political action in response to the introduction of restrictive policy to resolve the cereal surplus crisis. This attempt to remove some of the protectionist measures which so characterized the controlled market followed on from fallowing of land, and a reduction in the amount of inputs used in commodity production. All three measures represented for cereal producing farmers on the Lund Plain a concerted attempt by Government to put the brakes on grain production, without considering the full implications of restrictive policy on growers in a region where cereals constituted a major source of income. These were measures they as individual entrepreneurs and producers of cereals on a significant scale were determined to oppose in every way possible. The longer-term implications of deregulation, however, were somewhat more far-reaching than those of the other two

measures. The gradual dismantling of the regulated cereal market in favour of the introduction of some measure of free trade in cereals signalled a substantial break away from the current system (see Chapter 1). The prospect of international market forces guiding growers' output to a much greater extent than hitherto, leaving them at the mercy of a wildly fluctuating price, was not greeted with enthusiasm.

Before I analyze in some detail the unfolding of growers' attack on the *LO* and Government in autumn 1987, I will first sketch out some of the background to, as well as content of, the *LO*'s proposal.

## 2. AN UNOFFICIAL PROPOSAL TO DEREGULATE THE MARKET

The proposal to deregulate the cereal sector of the agricultural economy originated in labour movement circles. The principal agent behind the initiative was the Confederation of Blue Collar Workers (*Landsorganisationen, LO*) which had prepared the proposal with the Confederation of Lower Grade White Collar Workers (*Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation, TCO*). The origin of the proposal in these quarters, traditionally strong supporters of the Social Democratic Party, in no small measure contributed to the rapid escalation of anger amongst farmers and the eventual expression of fury in the form of a street march. The determining factor, however, was the poles apart stand which characterized relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government on the proposed plan. It was this particular constellation of power relations which enabled growers to now state openly in letters of protest and during a demonstration sentiments which had up until then been kept under a closed lid. The Farmers' Federation saw itself as permanently pitted against the *LO*, locked into an on-going battle over the fair distribution of resources, specifically in regard to how much growers were to be paid for commodities and the price to be paid by shoppers for foodstuffs in the supermarkets (see Chapter 1). As we shall see, the permanently strained relationship which obtained between the Federation and the *LO* informed the farmers' attack in particular ways.

In contrast to the policy proposals to cut back on the use of inputs (Chapter 5), deregulation of the cereal market had not been a daily subject of discussion amongst the growers on the Lund Plain. This initiative was dropped like a bomb shell a full twelve months into fieldwork. With the announcement of the proposal by mass media the proposed measure immediately took up a position in the embryonic stage of its public career. Nevertheless, it soon became evident that a great deal of behind-the-scenes preparation within Social Democratic quarters had preceded the proposal's discovery and subsequent demolishing by the Farmers' Federation. Although at that stage the proposed measure was contained in what was no more than an unofficial draft paper, it was shortly to have been officially announced, an indication that considerable discussion and research had already taken place -- without input from the Farmers' Federation.

During the embryonic stage of what was later to become new policy, relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government were characterized by the fact that no officially defined relationship existed. This constellation of power relations, or more accurately absence of a defined relationship, left the field wide open for the Farmers' Federation to formulate a stand and to launch a public attack on Government's still unofficial plans to deregulate the cereal growing sector. Because of the location of the proposal in a very early stage of its career, no commission had been appointed. Hence no terms of reference had been formulated within which negotiations were to be conducted. A chairman of the commission which would eventually have been set up had not been appointed, nor had any ordinary members been selected for the commission who would be party to preparing the official proposed policy report. The relationship between the Farmers' Federation and Government on this proposal at this point in the policy-making process was non-existent, or at least did not take a public form. This was exploited maximally by the Federation. National leaders of the Federation saw in the absence of a publicly defined relationship with its adversary an opportunity for its farmers member to stage large-scale protest rallies. This was to be done to attract media attention, so as to place pressure on

Government not only to shelve the *LO's* plan, but also to force Government to agree to an increase of the price of cereal crops in that year's commodity price negotiations.

As we saw in Chapter 1, in the Swedish agricultural policy-making system the Farmers' Federation has long enjoyed the status of a legitimate negotiating party in the agricultural policy-making process. In Swedish agricultural politics, leaders explicitly emphasize and strive for the achievement of compromise, which is reached through a long process of consensus building. As a consequence of the prominent role played by the Federation in agricultural policy-making, the organization's leaders have had to accept constraints on farmers' expression of dissatisfaction. Thus, once negotiation is under way for new collective agreements based on compromises between opposing interests, whether between the Federation and the Minister of Agriculture (as in the case study of resistance in Chapter 4), between the Federation, popular organizations concerned with the effect of chemicals and fertilizers, and the Minister for the Environment (as in the case study of defence in Chapter 5), or between the Federation and the Minister of Agriculture and the *LO*, protest must conform to the standards of acceptable kinds of lobby activity. Neither ordinary farmers nor leaders of the Farmers' Federation use radical, by which I mean violent or otherwise illegal, tactics to get their views across. They may talk about doing so, even seriously consider it in a period of time when Government is determined to restrict the national output of cereal crops, and growers are feeling the hot breath of bankruptcy on their necks. In the main, however, that kind of activity is not condoned by any of the large established organizations. The Farmers' Federation is party to the negotiation of agricultural policy. The legitimization of the organization as a key player in policy making places responsibility on its leaders to secure mass support for all policies agreed to. The prominent position of the Federation in national level politics places limits on acceptable expressions of protest by farmers at the grassroots level. There is only one point in the decision-making process, the embryonic stage of any future policy, where the Federation is well-placed to encourage its farmer members to use tactics which fall at the far end of the continuum of legitimate lobby activity. These tactics include large-scale, but

always peacefully enacted, performances in the public arena. The embryonic point in the career of a policy provides an opportunity for the Federation and farmers to quickly wrest considerable power from the opposition in the form of public opinion to secure as favourable a starting point as possible in the ensuing policy negotiations. Once it has been determined whether the Federation will participate directly in negotiations as a member of commission(s) or more passively by commenting on proposals, and negotiations have actually begun, the Federation becomes locked into a particular position, well-defined vis-a-vis other interests. As I have demonstrated in the two case studies preceding this last one, this gradually shapes and transmutes farmers' expressions of protest at regional level, moulding them initially into acts of defence to influence public opinion during policy negotiations (Chapter 5), to be followed, at the implementation stage of policy, by turning them into acts of resistance, to manipulate and evade new programs following their implementation (Chapter 4).

In this case study, the focus of attack was a secret draft proposal produced by officials in the *LO* and rumoured to have been commissioned by Minister of Agriculture Hellström.

The *South Swedish Daily's* presentation of the *LO's* proposal to deregulate the cereal growing sector is a good example of how this newspaper matches its reporting style (see Chapter 3) to the location of policies in their careers, and hence the particular constellation of power relations which obtains on the policy at that time between the two contending parties. I offer it here to set the scene for the analysis which follows.

On 28 October 1987, the *South Swedish Daily* was ablaze with the heading "Price press medicine against cereal mountain", which introduced a detailed article summarizing the contents of the *LO's* proposal. The key message was that a substantial reduction in the price paid to growers for cereal crops would be the best way to remedy excess production of cereals. The *Daily's* use of the words "cereal mountain" in its headline signalled to farmers reading the report that this was the voice of the opposition speaking. This

metaphor for cereal surplus was never used by the Farmers' Federation (for reasons which I will explain below).

To convey that the Farmers' Federation was furious with the *LO* over the plan, the *South Swedish Daily* printed a rebuttal on the same page immediately next to the summary of the *LO*'s proposal. The headline of the second article proclaimed "The Countryside Assassinated", and was followed by a long statement in response by the national Chairman of the Farmers' Federation, Bo Dockered. The metaphor of politically motivated murder was particularly apt to signal that this was the voice of the Farmers' Federation speaking.

The *Daily's* choice of metaphors echoed those used by producers and consumers in everyday conversations. In Chapter 5 I described how members of the non-farming public often complained of farmers "poisoning" commodities and the environment with agrochemicals, while farmers saw themselves as "protecting" and "nurturing" crops through the use of chemicals. In reporting on the burgeoning conflict between the Farmers' Federation and the *LO*, the *Daily* used variants on these same metaphors in its headlines, but reversed them. Thus, the *LO* was portrayed as offering a "medicine" which would "cure" the surplus problem, while the Farmers' Federation was portrayed as responding that the *LO*'s "medicine" was no more than an effective way to "kill off" farmers. The portrayal of the *LO*'s medicine as the Farmers' Federation's poison or deadly bullet constituted the *Daily's* rendition of the polarization of the two interest groups over the proposed plan.

The Government's point of view on the proposed policy received no coverage, as there was none to report on in this embryonic stage of the proposed measures.

The *South Swedish Daily* was the principal conduit of the content of the document to growers at grassroots level. This was particularly so in the week before *Land* had been able to cover the proposal, and additional information had begun to circulate through the

growers' networks.

The content of the eight-page, single-spaced, seven-point proposal was divulged in the *South Swedish Daily*, a morning paper, on the very same day (28 October 1987) the document was later to have been, so it was said, officially announced by Government in Stockholm. There were rumours that the Federation had pre-empted the Minister of Agriculture by leaking the proposal along with press releases criticizing it to the *South Swedish Daily* and other newspapers before the planned press conference, which never eventuated.

According to the *Daily's* report, the *LO* and the *TCO* suggested the planned cereal market be deregulated in the following way:

Firstly, the basic price for cereals was to be gradually reduced by no less than 0.30 Kronor per kilo over a three-year period. Protectionist border tariffs were to be gradually lifted, although over a longer period of time.

Secondly, and simultaneously with the gradual reduction of prices, a limited number of contracts to grow cereals were to be made available principally to farmers on the Skåne Plain.

Thirdly, the milling fee charged of all producers, another regulatory instrument, was to be reduced at the same rate that the cereal surplus was reduced.

Fourthly, financial support based on the total land area sown to cereals was to be offered to growers during the transition period. This would be based on the area of arable land cultivated in 1987. Farmers cultivating superior land, such as that on the Skåne Plain, would receive the lowest level of subsidy.



Fifthly, a form of selective support was to be introduced. This would enable those unable to survive deregulation financially to leave their farm businesses without having to go bankrupt. A State-owned body called the Soil Fund (*Jordfonden*) would purchase the land at a price which would enable those forced off the farm to pay off their debts. In the case of tenant farmers, financial support would be made available to assist in the repayment of outstanding debts.

Sixthly, with this new system, cereal prices would be removed from the annual commodity price negotiations. The basic commodity price, as well as the income support and the selective farm subsidy, would henceforth be determined according to a separate order. In practical terms, this meant the Government single-handedly, without consultation and negotiation with the Farmers' Federation and the Consumer Delegation, would set cereal prices and determine levels of support to growers during the transition towards deregulation.

Finally, while the total land area sown to cereals was to be reduced (as proposed by the introduction of the Fallow Program), this did not mean farmers would be able to expand hectares sown to any of the other crops. Rather, the regulation of maximum and minimum hectares sown to sugarbeet, oilseeds, potatoes and so on would rather be tightened up so as to avoid the accumulation of new surpluses in those sectors.

Arne Lyngge, the Provincial Chairman of the Union Branch in Skåne, denounced the proposal in the *South Swedish Daily* on the grounds that it would have a disastrous effect on farmers' incomes. On the Skåne Plain, where cereals constituted a major source of income, a steady drop of the price by 0.30 Kronor per kilo would mean a net loss of between 2,500 and 3,000 Kronor per hectare. For the typical grower cultivating a hundred hectares of arable land, with fifty per cent of his land sown to cereals, this would amount to a loss he would be unable to carry.

The Farmers' Federation built its attack around the Government's underhandedness. Indeed, the Federation's immediate branding of the proposal as the *LO/TCO utspelet*, the Swedish word *utspel* meaning to play two people off against each other, confirmed that leaders of the Federation believed important rules of fair play, such as the expectation of equal treatment, had been broken. The Federation lambasted the *LO* for having breached the rules of proper negotiating procedure. The mere existence of the document also constituted proof that Government was not to be trusted to play its role properly. The implication was that the Government had colluded with the *LO* and the *TCO* in the preparation of this document, an unacceptable activity because neither confederation enjoyed the status of agricultural policy negotiating party, and also because this gave the two confederations unfair advantage in the form of Government backing. The whole episode raised doubts about the Government's sincerity: were the Social Democratic rulers of the country really committed to the central goal of current agricultural policy, that of ensuring farmers received an income comparable with industrial workers? The Farmers' Federation's interpretation of the event was that it had become ever-more obvious that Government was in fact bent on forcing farmers off the land.

Unlike the matter of agricultural inputs, farmers' use of which both Government and the non-socialist *South Swedish Daily* presented as having caused environmental pollution (see Chapter 5), on this occasion growers on the Lund Plain enjoyed the support of the *South Swedish Daily* for the next several weeks. To mark that the editor sympathized with the farmers' plight, the paper published an editorial critical of the *LO* and the *TCO*. While the editor was of the opinion that there was no point in continuing to produce ever-increasing yields when Sweden was burdened with a surplus of cereals which had cost 1.6 billion Kronor to export in 1986, he fully supported all those farmers who had been outraged by the *LO*'s and the *TCO*'s collaborative effort. He surmised that the jointly prepared proposal had probably been commissioned by the Social Democratic Government. He continued:

Those within the *LO* and the *TCO* ought to have taken into consideration that the present structure of the agricultural sector is a result of long-standing political policy. Policy change may very well be justified, but it must consider that the farmers have followed the rules of the present system. If this is changed, then individual farmers will face an untenable situation. They have the right to refer to agreements controlling the sector, and other promises they must follow. It is little consolation for them that the document favouring a price squeeze with the effect that production be reduced has been coupled with a guarantee that the State will take over the land as the agricultural sector gradually goes bankrupt. Here we glimpse nationalization to a degree never before imagined (*South Swedish Daily* 7 November 1987).

Amongst the growers on the Lund Plain, the most vocal criticisms came to focus on precisely that clause in the proposal which suggested an introduction of selective farm support. To the farmers, this part of the proposal included an acknowledgement by its author that deregulation would end in bankruptcy for many producers. The clause fuelled farmers' rising anger, providing a ready reason for their vociferous condemnation of the proposal to deregulate. Deregulation might, indeed was likely to, reduce the financial viability of their farm businesses to such an extent that they would have to be bailed out by Government. That Government would purchase the land of bankrupted farmers and return tenanted land to the owner in cases where deregulation forced the tenant off the land was held up as yet a further, and very serious, threat to the principle of private ownership of farm land, and farming as an entrepreneurial undertaking. Around the kitchen tables and in encounters at meetings this was the point which most raised the ire of rural producers, the immediate focus of rage. Nothing could have provoked more irritation than the thought or threat of Government nationalizing privately owned farm land. This went against the grain of agricultural commodity production, an economic activity which has always been in the hands of independent men. Following World War II, farmers' status as individual entrepreneurs has been formally recognized through their incorporation into the economy under the label self-employed registered business owners. To any farmer, the clause that Government would purchase the land of bankrupted farmers was like a red rag to a bull. In the ensuing rhetoric, nationalization was talked about as a real threat, and one which

reeked of Eastern European style socialism. Large Government-run kolkhoz (collective farms) represented a kind of (socialist) farming abhorred by every grower on the Lund Plain and often held up as an example of the antithesis of efficient farming carried out by a corps of individual farm business owners. Ultimately, the *LO*'s and the *TCO*'s proposal to deregulate the cereal sector of the agricultural market was perceived in terms of an attack on farmers' identity.

In the Farmers' Federation's and growers' formulation of a strategy of attack on the opposition, the Government and the *LO*, the financial consequence of deregulation for individual farmers was particularly emphasized. This was especially appropriate as the proposal came to light during the prolonged, and in 1987 highly inflamed, annual grain price negotiations. In 1987, two years after the Government had decided the national production of cereals had to be curbed, growers had suffered one of the rainiest seasons of the decade (rain being a factor over which no one had any control), with extensive crop damage the inevitable result. Leaders of the Farmers' Federation were therefore arguing for a higher grain price to compensate growers for losses, while the Government steadfastly refused to consider a lift on the grounds that this would only be interpreted by farmers as an incentive to continue to produce cereals in the same unacceptably high quantities. (The Government had by this point realized that the Fallow Program was not attracting as many growers in the south as it had hoped; to further complicate the picture, the international price of cereals had also continued to plummet.) In the general mobilization of attack on the *LO* and Government, the financial consequences of the *LO*'s proposal for cereal growers were therefore used by both the Farmers' Federation and growers as a weapon. The campaign for a price hike which unfolded aimed to bring to the attention of the general public, Members of Parliament, and others from whom sympathy might be elicited, that Government was brazenly granting benefits to constituencies who supported Social Democratic policy (although there would be a flow-on effect to the general public as a whole whichever Party they aligned themselves with) at the expense of farmers who were consistently disadvantaged relative to consumers.

The Farmers' Federation's attack on the *LO's* proposal was inextricably interlinked with the Federation's strategy in the negotiations of that year's grain prices. Some *South Swedish Daily* reports had predicted that the negotiations would end with the price of cereals (which had been dropped in 1986) either falling even further in autumn 1987, or being frozen at its current already low level. This scenario provided the impetus for the Lund Plain growers to express their outrage through public protest. Their anger was fuelled by the *LO's* and *TCO's* proposal in favour of a continued steady drop in cereal prices by 0.30 Kronor over the next three years, eventually to end with a price determined by the international market force. What had to be determined next were the specifics of political action. A rapidly unfolding mobilization of attack staged at regional level followed. Preparatory meetings aiming to capture the urgency of the situation were hastily arranged. Leaders and ordinary growers alike were all agreed that something had to be done before the price of grain was set. At the time of the *LO's* proposal coming to light, the final price was expected to be announced on 6 November, only a week away.

### 3. COLLECTIVE MOBILIZATION

In this section I analyze, firstly, how in the first phase of attack growers in the Lund Zone were mobilized and, secondly, how anger was expressed in the context of two extraordinary meetings called with very short notice. It is an extended analysis of the formation of a temporary action set, and the determination of a course of action by its constituent members. The leaders of the set were the Board of the Lund Zone; the others were ordinary cereal growers.

The mobilization of attack on the *LO* for its proposal to deregulate the cereal sector was characterized by its cutting across all sub-branches of farming, the speed with which it was effected, and the prominent role played by the two senior members of the Zone Board of the Union Branch.

The all-inclusive nature of attack was evident in that mobilization occurred Skåne-wide, all rifts and divisions amongst farmers, for example between Plain and forest, forgotten. This was the only occasion when I could see little or no evidence of polarization of regional interests. Everyone was against the *LO*'s proposal to deregulate. This fact was exploited maximally by the Union Branch whose leaders were well aware how quickly lines of division usually developed between intensive growers with large areas of land sown to cereals on the Plain, and farmers in the forest region who produced on a less intensive basis, sowing relatively smaller areas of land to cereal crops.

The importance of mobilizing farmers quickly was evident in the effective use of all resources available. In the last few days of October, the Provincial Chairman Arne Lyngé immediately instructed Union Branch Headquarters in Höör to ring in a series of advertisements to be placed in all of Skåne's regional newspapers, as well as the *South Swedish Daily*, calling members to "crisis meetings" (*krismöten*). Union Branch staff also booked the various meeting halls required. The speed with which the invitation to attend crisis meetings went out to all farmers in the Province indicated a well-organized bureaucracy. The meetings were to be held the very next week, the first week of November, by the end of which it was expected that grain prices would have been set.

Two meetings were organized in the area of fieldwork, each at the opposite end of the area covered by the Lund Zone. The first was held at Ugglarp south-east of Lund on Tuesday evening 3 November, and the second at Vallkärra north of Lund on Wednesday evening 4 November. Each meeting was attended by 100-150 farmers, and lasted from 7 o'clock until around 10.30 p.m. Under normal circumstances, only Zone and Provincial level Annual Meetings drew such large crowds. Bearing in mind that the total number of farmers resident in the Lund Zone was 1,176 (the majority of whom registered business owners, with a minority of sons in training and retired farmers), this meant that each and every one of the Zone's twenty-three Local Divisions had sent four to six representatives

each. Growers from the various Divisions attended the meeting closest to them, in some cases both meetings. In the days following the two meetings, it would fall upon these men to spread the word about the outcome to all others in the Zone's twenty-three Local Divisions.

A final characteristic of the mobilization of attack on the *LO* for its proposal to deregulate the cereal sector was the prominent role played by the Zone Board. While Lyngé was busying himself soliciting support on all fronts, members of the fourteen Zone Boards took over the role of organizing and leading the crisis meetings in their respective Zone. Each of the two protest meetings held in the Lund Zone was organized and led by the three senior members of the Zone Board: the Chairman (Rurik Tham), the Vice-Chairman (Per Radby), and the Secretary (Roland Hansson). Other Board members were also present, but played no formal role in the proceedings. Tham and Radby, as the most senior and hence most experienced leaders, came to play a significant part in the shaping of growers' response to the *LO*'s proposal.

Both of the crisis meetings held in the Lund Zone followed the same format. Tham opened the meeting at seven o'clock in the evening by presenting a short speech on developments in Stockholm up until that point in time. This was followed by what was referred to as a "debate". On this occasion (unlike others, when "debate" referred to the question and answer period following speeches, or commenting on motions before they were put to a vote), farmers were to suggest, discuss, debate and finally agree on which course of action to take against the *LO*'s straying into the domain of agricultural politics.

### **(1) Oratory**

In the collective mobilization of an action set the task of which was to formulate a strategy for the expression of fury, Tham as leader played a key role. His opening speech contained important clues which framed the ensuing debate in a particular way -- although

not exactly in the direction he had hoped. Tham was a competent speech maker, able to summarize broad sweeps of events occurring at national level and tying them in with growers' collective concerns. Information about the national policy process, as well as the day-to-day flow of communication between the Farmers' Federation's Headquarters and the Ministry of Agriculture, he gleaned through his frequent interactions with Provincial Chairman Lyngne and leaders of the other thirteen Zones (who constituted an important, permanent, action set).

On Tuesday evening 3 November, Tham opened the first meeting held in the Lund Zone with a lengthy address. In this section, I relay all of Tham's speech. Except for direct quotations, I use the English-language vernacular equivalent to Tham's own words and phrases but converted into the past tense. I introduce the key themes of the content of Tham's speech in short paragraphs which string the various sections of Tham's speech together.

Tham began by summarizing the scenario in the most negative terms possible, both in terms of relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government at national level, and events in the agricultural cycle at grassroots level.

Thus, Tham noted with indignation that a gradual reduction of financial support from the Government out of general budget funds to the agricultural sector was on the cards. This was most disturbing as there were no alternative crops available as yet which could be grown profitably as replacements to cereals. The season had been exceptionally bad, with extremely uncondusive weather conditions. Wheat and rye crop yields were also down due to the Minister for the Environment's ban on growth regulator in April. In view of this, he railed, growers simply had to be compensated for their losses by higher commodity prices that autumn. This was not asking too much: the current agreement between the Farmers' Federation and the Government stated that when the national crop yields are down, the price is lifted, and vice versa. However, Tham conceded, the fact that the



annual price negotiations were dragging on without an end in sight was a bad sign. It meant there were several points of dispute between the negotiating parties. It was possible that the Farmers' Federation's rightful demand for increased prices was not going to be met. So, he said aggressively, something had to be done.

Tham painted the Government as fickle, not to be trusted, inconsistent, and unwilling to honour agreements. This was conveyed in the following way:

The state powers (*statsmakterna*) are refusing to fulfill the terms of their contract with us. It is fairly common these days. The *LRF* wants the farmers to get 4 Öre more per kilo for all cereals, plus an additional 3 Öre for oats because of the lower than average yields. Are we being too optimistic? The Government does not want to give us an increase at all. The reason for this disagreement is the surplus.

Tham acknowledged that the crowded meeting room was full of farmers from throughout the Zone, some of whom derived the major proportion of their income from dairying and pork production.

Tham did not deny that each sub-sector of the agricultural sector had been plagued by surplus problems, but said that just as the milk, and meat and pork surpluses had already been reduced, the cereal surplus would similarly shrink, with assistance from the State. How this was eventually to be accomplished was still under discussion, but the first step was for the Farmers' Federation to pressure Government into shelving the document prepared by the *LO* and the *TCO* once and for all, thus stopping it from ever being used as the basis for any future negotiations.

As this chapter proceeds, I will be devoting increasing attention to the farmers' use of metaphor in the mobilization of attack. At this point I would like to note that throughout fieldwork, the cereal surplus was consistently referred to, both in farming circles and by Minister of Agriculture Hellström and others involved in resolving agricultural sector

problems, as a surplus (*överskott*). The accumulated surplus was never referred to by anyone connected with agriculture as a cereal mountain, a metaphor which occurs with some frequency in literature on problems facing member nations of the EEC (butter mountains and wine lakes are other examples). This, I argue, was because a mountain (like a lake) is considered a permanent feature of the geography, and thus beyond influence (as is variation in soil fertility, and the weather). In Swedish agricultural circles, the cereal surplus was regarded not as an insurmountable obstacle but as a temporary anomaly. This was in fact signified through frequent use of another metaphor, imbalance, a word which when used for example by leaders of the Union Branch denoted that the accumulation of cereals was a problem which could be redressed if the correct combination of policy measures was applied to it (the maintenance of balance being the driving force in regulated, or planned, economies such as the Swedish agricultural market).

Every speech made by Union Branch leaders, Tham's included, was used as an opportunity to portray the Farmers' Federation as a responsible organization, and its farmer members as actively engaged in generating ideas on how to resolve the cereal surplus problem. This was yet another way of flagging that a state of imbalance was temporary and could be reversed to one of balance if all pitched in.

At the first crisis meeting on Tuesday evening, Tham reiterated that the onus was on farmers as a collectivity to brainstorm the sorts of changes they wanted to see and raise them for wider discussion (for example in the form of motions). He summarized all the proposals already put forward by the Farmers' Federation on how to solve the cereal surplus problem, solutions with which every farmer was already familiar as many had originated from the grassroots in the form of motions. Tham then slammed the Government for having failed to embrace these suggestions. He mentioned, for example, that the Federation had proposed that the voluntary Fallow 87 Program be made compulsory during the next three-year long phase of the program from 1988-1990, but that the Government had refused to agree to this claiming it would be too difficult to

monitor. He also pointed out that proposals put forward by the Federation in regard to various crops which could be grown as substitutes for cereals for human and livestock consumption, such as fast growing trees, ordinary timber, grain to be used in producing ethanol and niche crops to be grown on a limited scale, had been met with varying degrees of scepticism by the Government.

Tham's contemptuous assault on Government and the *LO* was yet another expression of the Federation's leaders' view that the organization was the only party which enjoyed the right to negotiate with Government on these matters, indeed the only body in full possession of all the knowledge required to appreciate fully how policy change would affect farmers' livelihoods in practical terms. By criticizing the *LO* and the *TCO* for having engaged in discussions with the Government about possible solutions to the cereal surplus problem, Tham signalled that these organizations had overstepped the mark. So of course had Government, which should not have even entertained the idea of inviting the *LO* to submit a proposal. That the Government had in fact done so, and thus breaching some important groundrules, was cause for grave concern, according to Tham.

Oratory by Union Branch leaders invariably focussed on farmers' incomes. In reference to the *LO*'s and *TCO*'s proposal's implications for individual farmers, Tham spoke as follows.

Tham argued that the *LO* and the *TCO* wanted to force farmers out of business:

The situation is grave. It is despicable that *LO/TCO* want to break us. This Departmental Memorandum is the reason why we are here tonight. What does it contain? Why is it so dangerous? In it, it is suggested that we move away from a high-price line to a middle-price line. This would mean a reduction of grain prices by 30 Öre per kilo, or 10 Öre per kilo per year over a three-year period. This my friends would be the final deathknell for Swedish agriculture.

Tham supported his argument with an example on the overhead projector to show what

this would mean in financial terms. Using figures, he illustrated how the average grain farmer with 50 hectares of arable land, and a yield of 48 decitons per hectare, would lose 1,400 Kronor per hectare. He ended with an angry: "Do you like this proposal?"

That the men assembled in the crowded hall that evening did not could be readily observed from their bodily movement. They began to shift in their seats, cross and uncross their legs and arms, pull their ear lobes, scratch their necks, and whisper comments to people seated next to them. To any northern European, these reactions in an audience are quite the opposite of sitting back in a relaxed manner, listening silently with pleasure to an entertaining performance, and at the end showing appreciation by applauding. The growers' behaviour clearly indicated that they had been uncomfortably and not pleasurably moved by Tham's speech.

By way of concluding his speech, Tham brought into play an elaboration of the bleak scenario, namely that under a Social Democratic Government, farmers were always at risk of having their land nationalized. In the following way, Tham pointed out how it was that the *LO's* proposal constituted a real threat to the principle of private ownership of agricultural land, the cornerstone of agricultural production in Sweden:

This is the beginning of the Government taking over all of our land. Many farmers will go bankrupt. The report writers say that the Government will step in and help those farmers who go bankrupt. If the farm is a tenant farm, then the land will revert to its owner. But what would the owner want to do with that land? He wouldn't be able to cultivate it! The purpose of this proposal by *LO/TCO* is for the consumers to benefit in terms of cheaper food. But, in fact, that consumers will get zero Kronor out of this. Instead, a loaf of bread will become five Kronor more expensive. I bet this is what will happen.

Implied by Tham was a concern that if the farmers did not put a stop to the *LO's* proposal now, they might as well say goodbye to their farms, their land, their livelihood. This final part of Tham's impassioned speech again had the audience squirming in their seats, now

looking ever-more disturbed. By way of summary, Tham again emphasized that growers' survival was at stake:

I know that you have very high expectations that we are going to come up with suggestions tonight as to what action to take, but it is very complicated. Should they manage to kill us off, then we will all have to go to Stockholm. This means a twenty-five per cent reduction in income for us. What we have in the form of a surplus, they are going to take away from us in this way. We have no theoretical chance of surviving.

By this time, the tension in the room was palpable. To summarize, Tham had achieved this by painting the Government as opposed to farmers in every possible way, even to the point of enlisting its ally the *LO* to play a key role in formulating new policy. The real reason for Government doing this, Tham implied, was to force as many farmers out of business as possible, so that privately owned land, a valuable resource indeed, could eventually come under the complete control of Government.

On this note, it was now up to the growers in the packed hall to nut out how best to confront the *LO* on its illegitimate involvement in agricultural policy making. Within the span of only a few hours that Tuesday evening, the men had to decide on the means to be used, and how, when, and where to deploy them.

## **(2) Individualism: The limits of protest**

During the discussion period an important shift occurred. This was signalled by Tham bringing a new metaphor into play: battle and warfare. I never heard the language of battle and warfare used on any other occasion during fieldwork. This was not the language used when engaging in acts of resistance, or responding with acts of defence. It was quite obviously a special language saved for exceptional circumstances. Tham let it be known that this crisis meeting was such an occasion by initiating the use of this particular language himself.

Tham started by saying that a strategy, a tactic, a counter-attack had to be devised quickly. This phraseology was soon picked up by the other men in the hall that night. Within seconds, the crowded meeting room was buzzing with words such as militant, defence, attack, push, counter-weapons, counter-attacks, mobilization plan, tactics, strategy, firing the gun, and so on. As one farmer urged:

We must make a push. We must be militant. A sudden push for a short while. Suddenly. Wham bang.

One by one, the men started to suggest strategies appropriate for the successful staging of attack. The timing of attack was crucial. The more radically-minded favoured short-term action before the end of that year's round of grain price negotiations which was expected to conclude at the end of the week. Drawing upon their experience in the national service (compulsory for all Swedish men) and intimate knowledge of the area, the men proposed various ways of inconveniencing the general public, consumers, for example by blocking roads and railways. This would prevent the ordinary person in the street from going to work (and so, presumably, earn his keep).

Tham's and other growers' ability to invoke images of battle and warfare appeared to be linked to the important role older farmers on the Lund Plain saw themselves as having played during World War II, when Sweden for some time lay in readiness for the possible invasion of German troops in the south. Agricultural policy still stipulated that in times of war or blockade, it would fall on farmers to secure a steady supply of food and raw commodities. An entire section at the Malmöhus County Agricultural Board was in fact, at the time of fieldwork, devoted to emergency planning of this kind, plans which also took into consideration that in case of war, many producers would be called to active service in the armed forces.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Many farmers' wives are members of the women's army corps, which consists of several separate associations (for example *Blå Stjärnan* and *Bilkåristerna*).

This, I argue, explains why metaphors of battle and warfare sprang so readily from the lips of seasoned farmers. In this context, however, the enemy was not a foreign intruder, but to be found amongst one's non-farming neighbours in the region. Thus it was that farmers angrily suggested many specific ways in which commuter traffic could be disrupted. The best time to strike would be at five o'clock in the morning. One way of doing it would be to move heavy machinery onto the major roads. Another suggestion made in the heat of the moment was for those men who owned earth excavators to dig up the motorway between Malmö and Lund. One man was adamant that the best effect would be achieved by parking several tractors on the major Segevång roundabout on the northern rim of Malmö. Somebody else wanted to pull up the commuter train railway tracks. A final idea was to retaliate by dumping loads of smelly manure on the sidewalks of Malmö (where the Social Democrats were particularly strong).

Other suggestions focussing on preventing consumers from gaining access to life's necessities, food (of which farmers in case of war would be the guardians), were presented. Some farmers said with bitterness that the general public's access to groceries and other foodstuffs should be cut off, that the entrances to all the major supermarkets in the area should be blocked. Others held that the dairy factories be blockaded, and that the trucks which transport milk, bread, eggs, meat, vegetables, and other food items throughout the region and country be stopped. Again, many of these ideas had a distinctly regional character, reflective of western Skåne being a food producing region, and of the growers' perceptions that everyone who was not a farmer was a consumer of commodities produced by them. More importantly, however, this was a way of attacking those who voted for the Social Democratic Party, and members of unions affiliated with the *LO*.

The central theme in metaphors of battle and warfare was a large-scale surprise assault on the population at large, guaranteed to attract coverage by the *South Swedish Daily*. The purpose of attack was to garner support and so convince the grain price negotiators of a

price increase. For this to occur, the farmers' anger had to take centre stage on the front page, rather than a less visible position on the open tribunes page. Rather than relying on elaborate, well-reasoned arguments, prominently placed photos of serious-looking men marching the streets would do the speaking. This was a form of protest completely different from those deployed vis-a-vis the Fallow Program and the policy package on inputs. Here, a particularly graphic and out of the ordinary metaphor would be used to express anger at a distantly located target. The aim was to make this front-page news, the newspapers being the most public arena of all, and one especially well-suited to convey fury.

Many growers demanded that something to be done the next day, as opposed to waiting for three days until Friday 6 November when the grain price negotiations were expected to be wrapped up. The most vocal proponent of immediate militant action was Knut Waldemarsson, a cereal growing farmer whose large property was located on the outskirts of Lund. Waldemarsson, tall, well-spoken, and self-confident, argued strongly in favour of militant action:

Others go on strike but we do nothing. You can hear from the way I speak that I am no Skåning. My blood is hotter than yours; you are too placid. We have too much food, we cannot sell it. Our only chance is to produce something which cannot be eaten but which can be used in some other way. Creating golf courses and growing spices is not enough. In five years we will have no people left who know how to do what we know. We must be militant on this. We must do something *now*, quickly, immediately, in case there is a reduction of the grain price on Friday.

His statement was received with a loud applause. During this discussion, another theme was brought into play, namely the individualized nature of farming. Waldemarsson brought this out in the following way:

We want to be free enterprisers. We are individualists. We have 4-5,000 Kronors worth of fixed costs per hectare. We receive 2,700 Kronor per hectare in fallow compensation if we live on good land. How many of us



are brave enough to challenge this? We must think about this in complex terms. We must go out there and demonstrate. Things have been taken too far now. (But) can we achieve the solidarity that is needed? Where should we make our attack and how? Should it be against the railways, the supermarkets, the dairy factories? When, where, how fast can we fire? We must have contingency plans, plans A, B, C. Somebody must call the Local Divisions. What is it that we are to attack?

This was the crux of the matter. Against whom or what should attack be directed? And how to get individual farmers spread over such a large area of land together for an effective performance? There were many potential targets in the heavily populated commuter-belt surrounding Malmö and Lund. Furthermore, the opposition was not one body, but a conglomerate, consisting firstly of the largest trade union confederation in Sweden with headquarters in Stockholm, secondly the Social Democratic Government also based in Stockholm, and finally millions of workers, thousands of whom were employed in the public sector, cooperative sector (where The Landmen and other farmers' cooperatives predominated), food processing and other industries on the Plain.

Tham, the leader of the meeting (who also grew cereals on an above-average scale) implored the attending farmers to consider militant action. Just before the coffee break, he placed another transparency on the overhead projector. Three words were projected on the large screen behind him:

demonstrations  
striking  
following

Tham explained that the Farmers' Federation favoured the first two strategies, at this particular time, but he did not specify against whom these tactics should be aimed.

The following is an example of how Tham attempted to draw on other political circumstances, the result of Government-initiated policy. Thus, Tham encouraged the farmers at the meeting that night to exploit an existing program for their own purposes.

This, as I demonstrated in Chapter 4 when analyzing the various forms resistance might take, was a strategy used by individual growers in an uncoordinated fashion and without official sanction from the Union Branch. In this context, however, Tham as leader of the Lund Zone of the Union Branch was suggesting the growers exploit the program as an organized collectivity. Tham's suggestion may seem out of place, but was in fact a manifestation of him advancing his own political agenda -- he had been and still was vehemently opposed to fallowing of land.

I am referring to the third suggestion for action on Tham's list, fallowing, which as he himself acknowledged was his own suggestion (not one that had the approval of more senior leaders of the Union Branch). No one in the audience could at first see the point behind Tham's idea (perhaps because most of them were not fallowing any land). He explained that he wanted to exploit the Fallow Program, or the Adjustment 90 Program (*Omställning 90*) as it was known by then. Noticing the blank looks on people's faces, Tham elaborated. What he had in mind was that everyone in the room agree to fallow all land which had not been sown as of the date of the meeting (i.e. refuse to sow and crops on all that land which was now bare but which would be sown to crops in spring). He likened his suggestion to the closing down of a factory. This approach would soon affect the availability of food supplies, he said irately, meaning it would hit consumers where it really hurt. Also, if all farmers registered all their unsown land as fallowed in early 1988 (the deadline for registration being January 1988), the entire land diversion program would collapse. There simply would not be sufficient money in the fund to pay compensation to all those registered.

In the event, Tham's idea as to how the Fallow Program might be destroyed did not win any support amongst the assembled farmers. This, I argue, was because such systematic, but above all collectively organized, exploitation of an existing program cannot be achieved amongst a group of self-employed farmers, except with a great deal of difficulty. Furthermore, most of the farmers present at the crisis meeting had not signed up for the

Fallow 87 Program in the first place. Few of them had any intention of registering for the follow on Adjustment 90 Program, the details of which had around that time been announced in the *South Swedish Daily and Land*, and through letters and other information from the Union Branch and the County Agricultural Board. It is in this light that I interpret the indifference shown by the attending group of farmers to Tham's proposal that growers fallow land en masse as a way of protesting against the LO's proposal. Waldemarsson was the only person in the packed hall to even comment on this un-sanctioned strategy. This he did by questioning whether anyone in the audience could really afford to take such drastic action, again highlighting the individualized and entrepreneurial nature of farming.

As we can see, at this point in the mobilization of attack, farmers did not give serious thought to staging a strike, nor to demonstrating in the streets. This was evident in that some of the other men in the audience now began to advocate tactics Tham had not included in his list. Instead of attacking the Fallow Program, why not exploit the public purse, use the welfare system, apply for benefits, to make their point that their finances were stretched beyond an acceptable limit? One man suggested with rancor they all go and register for unemployment benefits the following day. A second man bitterly offered that they should apply for sickness benefits "on the basis of psychological illness caused by uncertainty". A third man argued that they declare zero preliminary income tax (being self-employed, they were required to submit preliminary income tax calculations at regular intervals). Other members of the audience asserted they should refuse to pay the *MOMS* tax.<sup>3</sup> One person believed strongly they should stop paying rent for pieces of land leased short-term from the District Council and other state bodies, and also refuse to renew leases and entering into new contracts with such bodies. What it all boiled down to was how to

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<sup>3</sup> *MOMS* is the Government's major revenue raiser. It is a value added tax, a general goods and services tax, of 23.46 per cent extracted from users and buyers and collected by providers of services and producers of goods. For the self-employed, such as producers of agricultural commodities, this means the tax is extracted from and paid by themselves.

stage an attack without cutting their own throats financially.

Having earlier argued that the individual nature of farming made it difficult to organize an all-out and collectively executed exploitation of the Fallow Program, how then do I explain growers' spontaneously suggesting such strategies in regard to other policies in place? Firstly, following on a broad scale as proposed by Tham would have entailed loss of income, while the other strategies suggested by the farmers themselves all aimed to put more money in their pockets. Secondly, this kind of talk was part and parcel of the rhetoric of attack. It was my impression that no one really believed that anything like it could be effectively organized on a large scale. That being the case, anyone who on their own engaged in what was potentially illegal activity with penalties attached would have to be prepared to take full financial and personal responsibility for the consequences.

We see, then, how the individualized nature of farming, farmers being self-employed owners of business enterprises, places restrictions on the form collective acts of protest can take.

The above point, that farmers are responsible for their own survival, was further illustrated when Tham abruptly brought the discussion back to strikes. Even though he was in favour of a strike, by which he meant not sowing any of the crops which were due to be planted in spring, by his own admission the question of how growers would survive if they went on strike remained unresolved. There was no strike fund for the self-employed:

We could stop production as of midnight Monday, *but* we can't get any compensation if we stop producing. Basically, we have the choice of whether to die fast or slowly. That is our choice. What are we going to do? Is it a realistic solution to close down production? How many would join in? We can never count on a hundred per cent support. Some people do not like the idea of militancy: they want to do things the proper way.

Thus, the individualistic nature of commodity production, an activity undertaken by men

who operate within either extremely narrow or non-existent profit margins, financing their undertaking through loans, mortgages, grants, credits, and so on, was a significant factor in their failure to rally around any of the above suggestions. Many of the assembled growers did not want to risk further loss of income. The whole point of protesting was to ensure commodity prices did not drop any further. No one wanted to lose any more money than what he already faced.

It now became apparent that another camp amongst the men at the first crisis meeting on Tuesday evening held other views on how to stage an attack. Tham thus opened the floor for a number of further suggestions. These were characterized precisely by the fact that they would not put anyone under further financial strain.

### **(3) Collective action**

In all large action sets, where the aim is to settle on a particular course of action, a range of viewpoints will be put forward. For agreement to be reached on a large-scale collective action, intervention is required by the leaders of the meeting. In this section, we see the other senior leader of the Lund Zone in action, as he actively engages with those farmers who had showed up for the crisis meeting for the purpose of engineering a decision on some form of collective action to take.

Several of the men now said that everyone at the meeting should take it upon themselves to talk or write to members of the general public, in particular people associated with the unions affiliated with the *LO* and the *TCO*, politicians, members of Parliament, and so on. The general consensus amongst these growers was that if they presented these individuals with the facts regarding their financial situation, they could possibly be swayed. One farmer said:

I think we should write to each member of Parliament and outline how this plan by the *LO/TCO* will affect different farmers, give examples of how it

will affect pig producers, grain growers, dairy farmers. That would be the most proper way of doing it.

The strategies which followed next centered on addressing key Government figures such as an expert in the Ministry of Agriculture, to whom Tham referred as "the villain" (*boven*), as well as the man at the *LO* who had actually written the draft document. Tham encouraged all present to contact both men by telephone to condemn them for having been party to the drafting of such a contentious proposal.

The Vice Chairman of the Lund Zone Board, Per Radby, emerged as an important figure in the latter half of the crisis meeting. Radby operated an above average sized cereal farm north of Lund in the Kävlinge District.<sup>4</sup> He had written a letter of complaint at home, addressed to the Minister of Agriculture, with the other Board members' consent. He had brought it to the meeting for reading, discussion and voting. Half way through the heated discussions that Tuesday evening at Ugglarp, during the break for coffee, Radby walked from table to table handing out photocopies to growers. Radby's major concern at this stage, as he said to the men while distributing the copies, was with the wording of the letter: had he properly conveyed the sentiments of the collectivity? Following the break, by which time everyone present had read his letter, an animated discussion took place on whether the letter had enough bite.

The wording of letters was always crucial, in particular when written statements were to represent the collective voice of many farmers. Because letters also became permanent textual records, care had to be exercised in the choice of metaphor. While the metaphor of battle and warfare was appropriate in the context of a farmers' meeting, this was not the case with a letter. Here, fury had to be expressed using a different metaphor.

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<sup>4</sup> Per Radby was also Executive Chairman of the Kävlinge District Council.

To convey fury, Radby had denounced the *LO*'s and the *TCO*'s proposal as "disgusting". Further, he had suggested the document be "thrown into the toxic waste incinerator". His choice of words implied that the proposal was rubbish of a particularly dangerous kind, toxic waste, requiring intense heat for its complete incineration, destruction, and neutralization. No one at the meeting took issue with his choice of metaphor.

Tham had concluded his statement with a "Let us live like free farmers". Here he was alluding to the difficult position of farmers as individual entrepreneurs and property-owners locked in steady battle with Government over the form, content and appropriate financial returns of agricultural commodity production. It was significant that this last sentence became the focus of objection by some men. One man who spoke said the sentence sounded "too much like a plea", another that the statement "should be replaced by the sentence 'We *think* like free farmers'." The bottom line, as one farmer fumed, was "the continued right to free ownership" (*den fria äganderätten*), to private ownership of agricultural land. Again, we see how the individualized nature of farming, rooted in individual title to land, informs farmers' thinking in a crisis situation, even to the point where a statement which reads "*Let us live* like free farmers" has to be discarded in favour of "*We think* like free farmers."

The generation of collective agreement on anything in farming circles is always fraught with difficulty. This was illustrated when, before Radby's letter was put to a vote, Tham as Chairman asked the assembled farmers whether they all supported the amendment. At this point, the grower Gunnar Fransson shot to his feet. Fransson, Chairman of the Sederby Local Division, who farmed around forty hectares of land, was extremely angry about the attack on farmers by the *LO* and the *TCO*. From the back of the room, where he was seated with several other growers from his Local Division, Fransson objected loudly that Radby's letter to the Minister of Agriculture was

much too tame, too nice. Why should we be negotiating with the

*LO/TCO?* We negotiate with the Government, not anybody else. I don't like this statement, it is a *plea* to the *LO/TCO*. It is *no* good.

In order to successfully accommodate this diverging view on Radby's choice of words, Tham suggested Fransson write another letter of his own and bring it to the second meeting scheduled for the following night, a Wednesday, at Vallkärra. Fransson agreed to this, after some initial hesitation. He cited as an obstacle his long-before scheduled delivery of several loads of sugarbeet to the sugar factory the next day. This is yet another example of how individualism comes into play, in this instance manifest by each farmer operating on different time tables depending on the crops he grows.

Before closing the meeting around 10.30 pm, Tham urged everyone to write, talk, and telephone all relevant individuals to register complaints about the proposal. Radby's amended letter was voted through and would be sent to the Ministry of Agriculture, but not until it had been passed by those growers in the Zone who would be attending the second crisis meeting to be held the following evening. With this the meeting ended.

At this point the action set was disbanded with no plans made to meet again. A new action set would be formed the next evening, but under the same leadership.

This first group of farmers had by this stage travelled some distance down the political track, but not far enough to stage a public mass action. The Zone Board of the Union Branch had confirmed the need for protest to be brought out into the public domain, but this group of growers in the Zone had settled for a letter of complaint. This was the usual way to lobby Government leaders. It required the least amount of energy, time, and money. The up-shot of the other crisis meetings held throughout Skåne was similar with farmers in every Zone expressing their anger and fury by letter to the opposition. At this stage no one was as yet prepared to stage a public display of rage by taking protest to the streets.



#### **(4) Metaphoric expression of fury: a letter**

In this section, I examine the formation of a very small, temporary, action group, the purpose of which was to formulate a letter with more bite than Radby's. This example also provides further analysis of use of metaphor to convey fury.

The following day, Gunnar Fransson mobilized a small group of people, including myself, to prepare a letter which he could take to the second crisis meeting that evening. He called on Åke Berntsson, the Secretary of his Division, who was also a friend of his, for assistance with its formulation. He asked myself for help with the typing. On a wet and rainy November afternoon while drinking many cups of coffee, a statement was slowly drafted at the kitchen table. Gunnar had an extensive network, was well versed in legitimate language, and was a master in the use of words as weapons. Familiar with a range of useful facts, he suggested content and phraseology appropriate for the occasion: a mixture of legitimate and highly emotive language. Åke either nodded in agreement, or offered alternative formulations, sometimes questioning Gunnar's choice of words. The end result was a letter of protest addressed to the respective Chairmen of the *LO* and the *TCO* so vitriolic that Gunnar and Åke were doubtful that the other farmers in the Zone would accept it.

In its final version, the letter read as follows:

"In regard to your abominable memorandum: you have in a most unfortunate manner meddled in the agricultural policy act of 1985. This is proof that, as many have suspected, you lack expertise in agricultural issues. The tone of the memorandum and its contents show contempt for the Swedish people's cultural heritage, as well as for the farmer, his work, and his rights by agreement. Never before have we observed as clearly as now the emerging shape of socialism with its emphasis on confiscation, despite the agreement reached regarding Adjustment 90 and the agro-political decision of 1985.

The immediate effects for us here in Skåne will be:

- around 60 per cent of the farmers will go bankrupt within the two first years; for those who despite all survive, the financial situation will be so heavy that they too will disappear after a few years.
- fewer orders and less work for companies which service the agricultural sector (for example Alfa Laval)
- unemployment will increase dramatically as thirty per cent of all employed in Skåne are directly dependent on the agricultural sector.
- the younger generation will abandon the industry (the number of students wanting to study at agricultural college is going down dramatically).

We feel disgusted by the fantasies you have created at your desks and demand that the above-mentioned memorandum with its thoughts and contents be dropped into an incinerator, and that you yourselves jump in as well.

Despite the fact that Parliament passed the new agricultural policy act in 1985, a number of know-it-alls have in the two following years been expressing their views on agricultural politics. What these views all have in common is that the truth is so far away that not even the Devil himself (*Hin Håle*) would be able to find it. We don't want your and your cohorts to interfere in agricultural negotiations in the future.

Even though the farmer's real income has fallen considerably in the last eight years, we still had to accept a further reduction last year. Now you are suggesting in your defamatory memorandum a further thirty per cent reduction. The result of this would have to be that you, in the name of solidarity, which you hold up so often in various situations, follow (the Minister of Finance) Feldt's proposal for zero-growth in the up-coming wage negotiations, in order to keep food prices down."

The words and phrases used by Gunnar Fransson and Åke Berntsson to make their point were not usually employed in everyday farmer conversations, nor in ordinary correspondence. Words such as 'abominable' would only be used in exceptional circumstances. The same was true of expressions such as 'you lack expertise', 'the emerging shape of socialism with its emphasis on confiscation', 'we feel disgusted by the fantasies you have created at your desks', and 'we demand that the above-mentioned memorandum with its thoughts and contents be dropped into an incinerator, and that you yourselves jump in as well'.

The most remarkable metaphor was the reference to the Devil: "what these views all have in common is that the truth is so buried that not even the Devil himself would be able to find it". The Devil was usually only invoked in the coarsest of swearing. The absence of truthfulness, and the linking of this to the presence of the Devil, was Fransson's way of conveying that the *LO*'s and the *TCO*'s proposal was a piece of horrifying drivel, signalled also by the words abominable and disgusting. In any political context, this language certainly conveyed fury. The expression of dismay through letters to officials or administrators was part and parcel of protest. But this vitriolic letter, addressed to the two trade union confederations which represented several million wage and salary earners, was symptomatic of an all-out attack, suffused with rage, on all those who, as Gunnar Fransson put it with a sneer, were "only interested in cheap food".

That evening, the Board of the Lund Zone then held its second crisis meeting, at Valkärä just north of Lund. This meeting was held to accommodate all those who had been unable to attend the first meeting at Ugglarp, south of Lund. The document produced by the *LO* and the *TCO* was again the subject of discussion. By this stage, word had already spread that the majority of the men at the previous night's meeting had opted not to engage in militant action, nor to demonstrate or call a strike. The discussion at the meeting at Valkärä therefore came to center exclusively on "proper methods" of protesting. Two letters of protest were now going to be voted on, one being the relatively conservatively formulated letter written by Per Radby, the other the more radical statement by Gunnar Fransson, Chairman of the Sederby Local Division. Radby went first, reading his letter to the Minister of Agriculture to this second assembly of farmers at Valkärä.

At the end of the reading, a discussion erupted over the wording of his letter. A grower questioned whether it was such a good idea to suggest that the document they were protesting against be thrown into a toxic waste incinerator. When Tham countered that the Chairman of the *LO*, Stig Malm, used "language far worse than that", and that no-one

would get very far by using 'bureaucratese' (*kanslisvenska*, the stilted and legalistic language of public service documents, legitimate language void of metaphor) the objecting grower replied:

I want the words 'be disregarded' (*lämnas därhän*), not 'thrown into the incinerator'. We want to achieve results, not sink too low, not use verbal abuse.

At this point, Knut Waldemarsson rose to his feet and jokingly proffered another perhaps more acceptable metaphor for fury:

Could we use the expression 'our sublime disdain' (*vårt sublima förakt*) instead of the word 'disgusting' (*avskyvärd*) when referring to the memorandum?

This provoked loud laughter. When Radby's letter was finally put to a vote, the majority voted for it to be sent as was.

It was now Gunnar Fransson's turn to read out his own letter addressed to the Chairmen of the *LO* and the *TCO*. The statement, with its unusual reference to the Devil, was voted through without a single objection. This I argue was in no small part due to the fact that his letter, unlike Radby's, was addressed to the *LO* and the *TCO*, rather than to the Ministry of Agriculture.

From the farmers' point of view, the Chairmen of the *LO* and the *TCO*, and the Minister of Agriculture, occupied two completely different positions in the opposition's camp. The *LO* and the *TCO*, core confederations of the labour movement, were equivalents to the Farmers' Federation. All three were so called established organizations. The *LO* and the *TCO* constituted the Federation's opposite number in, for example, the price negotiations. Generally speaking, the stronger metaphors are reserved for competing interest organizations.

If caustic and pointed metaphor can be used to mark out equality of standing in competition for resources, then we should expect not to see it used in communications and interactions with the Minister of Agriculture. The head of this Ministry is a senior member of cabinet, the man who presides over the entire agricultural sector, the direct link with Government. In him is vested a great deal of power. He is the voice of the Government. He appears in the newspaper on an almost daily basis during important policy negotiations. The language used in communications with Minister of Agriculture Hellström, whether by letter, or at a mass meeting (such as one I attended with two thousand farmers in late November at which Hellström and Bo Dockered, Chairman of the Farmers' Federation were the featured speakers) tends to be of the legitimate kind, that is having less bite.

The two letters from growers in the Lund Zone, one addressed to the Minister of Agriculture, the other to the national Chairmen of the *LO* and the *TCO* respectively were part of a much wider letter writing campaign taking place throughout Skåne and Sweden at that point. A number of similar letters had been penned by farmers in other Zones throughout the country. These were, according to Tham, already landing in droves on the desks of key decision-makers.

As it turned out, the letter writing campaign became but the first phase in the two-stage mobilization of large-scale public protest. The two temporary action sets, formed by the leaders of the Lund Zone Union Branch, served an important purpose in shaping the collective voice, and finding an appropriate metaphoric expression for anger. The meetings also confirmed the need to remain united at this particular time when the annual grain price negotiations were shortly to be wrapped up. However, this was never stated openly, and no time was set for any further meetings. It was taken for granted that through their own networks growers would stay in close touch with developments on the Provincial and national plane.

#### 4. SUSTAINED MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

Action sets such as the ones described above formed in all the Zones of the Union Branch throughout Skåne from Monday 2 November to Thursday 5 November (as they did elsewhere in Sweden). In central Sweden, one such group actually came to a collective agreement to stage a demonstration which became the subject of many conversations amongst farmers on the Lund Plain who read about it in the press. As this demonstration appeared to have had a significant effect on the national grain price negotiations, I will describe it in some detail here.

On Thursday 5 November, the day following the second crisis meeting in the Lund Zone, farmers in the region surrounding Stockholm had rallied outside the *LO's* Headquarters in the center of the capital, demanding to speak to *LO* officials, and to hand over a letter of complaint in person. The following day, the *South Swedish Daily* reported extensively on the demonstration and the chaos and mayhem which had broken out when a lowly receptionist was sent out to receive the farmers' letter of protest. This was interpreted by many growers on the Plain as confirmation that the top brass at the *LO* had indeed acted in an underhanded manner and were now afraid to face up to an angry mob of farmers on the warpath. The *South Swedish Daily's* and *Land's* reports on the rally were read by all Plains farmers with a great deal of interest.

It was only two days later, on Saturday 7 November, that growers learned, again from the *South Swedish Daily*, that the grain price negotiations which were to have been concluded the day before (Friday evening 6 November) had come to a standstill. Further meetings would not be held until 19 November. The impasse arose out of the Farmers' Federation's demands for an increase in prices and the Government's (through the National Agricultural Marketing Board) refusal to grant one. In the *South Swedish Daily*, the stalemate was announced by the headline "Chaotic agricultural price negotiations". The article which followed was juxtaposed with a story in which Lyngé denounced Government thus:

this is an obscene encroachment, it is hypocrisy without comparison [for Government] to participate in a campaign for the countryside [the European wide Living Countryside campaign] and then to kick the farmers' legs out from under them (*South Swedish Daily* 7 November 1987).

Although the *South Swedish Daily* never linked the demonstration outside the LO's Headquarters in Stockholm to the stalemated grain price negotiations, the growers on the Lund Plain interpreted the deadlock to mean that the march on the LO's Headquarters in Stockholm two days earlier had been instrumental in stalling negotiations. For this to happen so soon after the demonstration was fairly good evidence to them that the demonstrating farmers had caused the stalemate. The impasse was greeted with enthusiasm, giving rise to much speculation as to what might happen next.

Growers had a great deal of faith in the national Chairman of the Farmers' Federation, Bo Dockered, whom they trusted was using every strategy possible to ensure the LO's proposal to gradually drop prices was fully discredited and that a commodity price increase was won in the autumn 1987 round of price negotiations. Arne Lyngé, Provincial leader of the Union Branch, held the view that to win an increase in this exceptionally difficult situation, Dockered needed a show of strong vocal grassroots support, including the backing of prominent public servants in the regional economy.

At the regional level, Lyngé now launched a campaign to secure support from the two County Governors (*landshövding*) of Skåne. Appointed by Government for six-year terms, Governors represent the national administration at county level as Chairman of the County Council. The position of Governor carries some considerable prestige. Governors are usually former politicians, and therefore well-versed in the rules of backstage politics. Their position gives them access to the innermost circles of Government and cabinet in Stockholm. This was why Arne Lyngé now mobilized another action set, consisting of himself and two supporters, Nils Gyllenkrok, Chairman of the Grain Growers' Association,

and Claes Bloch, Chairman of the Farm Workers' Union. The purpose of this action set was to garner support from the Governor of Malmöhus County. On Wednesday 11 November, the group, led by Lyngé, met face-to-face with Governor Bertil Göransson at Governor's House in Malmö. At the meeting, also attended by reporters, a promise was extracted from Governor Göransson that he and Governor Einar Larsson (a farmer by profession) of neighbouring Kristianstad County would seek an appointment with Minister of Agriculture Hellström the following week, to impress upon him the disastrous consequences of reduced grain prices for growers in the region. All of this was the subject of a lengthy report in the *South Swedish Daily* on Thursday 12 November.

By this time, farmers were mobilizing throughout southern and central Sweden. *Land's* 13 November issue confirmed that farmers' anger was reaching a boiling point. Half of the front page was taken up by a photo of a throng of farmers gathered outside the *LO's* headquarters in Stockholm. The main headline, in large black capital letters, read "The Protests". The caption of the photo proclaimed "Hundreds of furious farmers gathered outside the *LO*-fortress in Stockholm with placards and leaflets. But Stig Malm [Chairman of the *LO*] refused to open the door to receive the farmers' written statement of protest." The sub-heading read "Farmers are boiling". The text which followed described the farmers' rising anger with another metaphor borrowed from the natural environment: "An avalanche has been set in motion across the country." The unrelenting movement of a mass of rolling snow represented something unstoppable, but more importantly something too cold to quell an out of control situation, a pot which was close to boiling over. As the paragraph told the story, numerous farmers had telephoned *Land's* offices in Stockholm when the weekly had organized a panel of Farmers' Federation leaders to take phone calls from members in the evening of 6 November. The message from farmers in the regions was "Call a strike, stage a blockade, occupy. We will do whatever! Our patience has run out." The headline of the editorial in the same issue of *Land* announced that farmers were "Ready for battle!"



## 5. GRABBING THE HEADLINES

In the dialogue of everyday life in the days following the two crisis meetings held at Ugglarp and Vallkärra, and Lynges meeting with Governor Göransson, growers became increasingly caustic in their remarks about the *LO*. They referred to leaders of the *LO* as old men (*LO gubbarna*), and described them as hiding from view in their impenetrable fortress (*LO-borgen*), where they were plotting and scheming behind closed doors (*bakom stängda dörrar*). By mid-week, growers' networks were saturated with irritation over "the *LO/TCO* attack" and Minister of Agriculture Hellström's apparent complicity. At meetings, in telephone conversations, and in chance encounters, in short any site where growers' networks crossed over, such comments were also accompanied by much glee over the success of the demonstration mounted outside the *LO*'s Headquarters in Stockholm in deadlocking the price negotiations.

Lynges as leader of farmers in the Province, who maintained an extremely extensive network, was now in contact with leaders elsewhere in the country and Stockholm. Immediately, he began to consider the next step for farmers to take to bring their furore into the public arena. A rally like the ones being held elsewhere in Sweden, Stockholm included, seemed to Provincial Union Branch leaders the best way of attracting mass media attention. On Thursday 12 November, only a day after Lynges emergency meeting with Governor Göransson, the call went out to all farmers in Skåne to stage a demonstration that night.

Rather fortuitously, Lynges had learned that Thursday from the Farmers' Federation's Headquarters in Stockholm that Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson was on a two-day visit to Skåne and that he would be having dinner with Governor Einar Larsson of Kristianstad County that evening. A plan was immediately devised by Lynges and the fourteen Zone leaders (I have no data as to whether the planning occurred by telephone or in a specially scheduled meeting). Ordinary farmers throughout the Province were notified of the plan

by telephone. Reporters and press photographers were also notified, but for the purpose of writing stories about the event. The purpose of the formation of this unusually large action set was to hold a rally outside Governor Larsson's official residence during his dinner with the Prime Minister.

A primary feature of public rallies in this context is the remarkable speed with which mobilization of large numbers of members can occur through effective use of networks. Within a matter of a few hours, Lynge had been on the phone to the Chairmen in Skåne's fourteen Zones, imploring them to immediately ring all the Chairmen in the 271 Local Divisions, and to alert them to the time and place for the demonstration, and the availability of chartered buses. Tham, leader of the Lund Zone, telephoned his twenty-three Local Division Chairmen. His instructions to the Chairmen were to round up as many members as possible for the demonstration that evening in Kristianstad. Gunnar Fransson, Chairman of the Sederby Local Division, received his phone call from Tham in mid-afternoon, whereupon he rang as many of the other farmers in his Division as he could get hold of and urged them to contact the remaining ones. In less than a day, and despite short notice, word had spread from Lynge to every single farmer (a total of 16,000) in the Province to be in Kristianstad by six o'clock that evening.

A second feature of public rallies is that they always involve a march from a collection point to a building of some significance, in this case the Governor's residence in Kristianstad. On this occasion, buses had been chartered by the Union Branch for the transportation of large numbers of men to Kristianstad. In late afternoon, early evening that Thursday, farmers from all corners of Skåne headed for the various locations where buses would be picking up. One such location was The Dalby Landmen depot in the Lund Zone. Gunnar Fransson of the Sederby Local Division arrived just in time to catch the chartered bus waiting to take a load of forty protesters to Kristianstad. But many of the men on the Lund Plain decided to speed the seventy odd kilometres to Kristianstad in the north-east of the Province in their own cars. By six o'clock, farmers were starting to

congregate at the collection point near the square where the County Governor's residence was situated. This was just around the time when Prime Minister Carlsson was preparing to sit down to enjoy dinner with Governor Larsson inside the building.

A third feature of rallies is the use of various paraphernalia with which to express their point. The organizers, members of the Provincial Board of the Union Branch, had brought the Provincial Federation of Skåne's standard, forty centimetres wide and seventy centimetres long, the upper edge wrapped around a horizontal wooden bar, the lower edge cut to finish in three points, a golden tassel hanging from each point. On the dark green cloth, in the centre, is a clover leaf with the letters L, R and F in each of the three leaflets. The leaf is encircled by a sturdy silver chain. Above this symbol is embroidered *Skånes Provinsförbund* (which was given its charter in 1932). Below the circular emblem is a red gryphon, the symbol on Skåne's coat of arms. A Swedish flag had also been brought, a yellow cross on a blue background. There were scores of boxes containing torches. Leaflets with the words to the songs *Advance to Victory* *Farmers* and *The March* were on hand. Some men had been asked to bring their wind instruments, and one person a drum.

While their number steadily grew, and in anticipation of the march itself, the men condemned the *LO*, lauding the farmers in Sweden's central districts who had held demonstrations and protest meetings, and heaping scorn and derision on the *LO*. It was raining steadily, with a cold and penetrating wind sweeping through the dark streets. The crowd, which eventually numbered some two thousand farmers, included representatives from all of Skåne's 271 Local Divisions.

A fourth component of rallies is a rousing speech. Just before the march began, Lyngé read out to the crowd a prepared statement in which he reproached the *LO* for its backstabbing tactics and urged Government to recommend a lift in commodity prices that autumn. The key metaphor used in this speech conveyed systematic disadvantaging of farmers by food wholesalers and retailers:

The agricultural sector is really squeezed. Our real income has been reduced by seventeen per cent since 1970 - this while the trading houses have expanded their palaces and are placing advertisements (in the newspapers) for billions of Kronor. We work every day of the week, get no holidays, and receive low returns (*lön*). We ought to receive a thank you from society for what we do, not a kick in the backside.

The aim of the rally in Kristianstad was to express fury vis-a-vis the national power base, over which the Prime Minister presided. The rally was to convey that the fight was on, and that it would be fought on all fronts. As Lyngé shouted before the march began: "Skåne farmers, we won't give up!" When he rhetorically asked the throng whether they condoned having other trade unions interfere with agreements negotiated by the Farmers' Federation, the collective response from the angry crowd was a resounding "No!". At this point, the metaphor of battle and warfare was brought back into play, but now quite differently from the way this had been done at the crisis meetings described in Section 3 above.

The march on Thursday 12 November began shortly before 7 o'clock. Firstly, the demonstrators formed one long column three men wide, marching as if army soldiers. In the first row, the man with the kettle drum slung over his shoulder provided the background drum beat, while the other two, as well as another man in the middle of the second row behind them, carried the tune of protest songs on their brass instruments. In the second row, flanking the brass player, the man on the far left carried the Swedish flag, which stands for nationalism, and the man on the right the Provincial standard, representing unity of all farmers. Arne Lyngé marched in the third row. Starting with Lyngé, every man on the far left and right in the column carried a lit torch.

Secondly, the marching men sang songs of protest. Thus, the mood of enmity and battle, expressed by words such as war, fight and victory, was heightened by these memorable verses of the song Advance to Victory:

Strength and courage are needed not just in war,  
tilling the land also requires the farmer's sweat and blood.  
Don't tire, farmers, although our fight seems hard.  
Indifference must stand aside, and then victory is ours.

Divided we fall helplessly -- united we stand.  
Hand in hand a fearless band, who can beat us?  
United in our desire, without hesitation, the well-being of the country  
comes first.  
He who never looks back, in our circles is the greatest.

Farmers' army, do not tire -- there is still time.  
Nothing worth winning is won without battle.  
Advance to victory, advance to victory is our catchword.  
Sweden's farmers have always defended home and native soil.

The need for Skåne farmers, indeed Swedish farmers, to remain united was expressed in the song *The March*:

Come from north and south, come and help us brothers,  
defend and care for our ancestors' proud inheritance.  
Help us protect the soil for farmers who drive ploughs  
and harrows on the native country's soil.  
We have for a long time marched in divided troupes,  
now is the time for farmers to wake up.

In this assemblage of burning torches, the standard of the Provincial Federation of the Union Branch in Skåne, the Swedish flag, and songs shot through with metaphors of war, battle, and victory were expressed collectivism and nationalism in the struggle against the national power base, the *LO* and Government.

To mount a rally in the public domain is to voice fury in the most dramatic way possible. However, this is invariably accompanied by a letter of protest, which states the demonstrators' grievance more formally. An attempt to hand over Lyngé's statement to Prime Minister Carlsson came as the climax of the demonstration. Lyngé's letter represented a more commonly used form of expressing bitterness and exasperation amongst farmer ranks. He would attempt to deliver the letter in the full knowledge that

Ingvar Carlsson might in all probability not come outside to receive it in person. Uncertainty as to whether the letter would be received heightened the fighting mood.

The torchlight procession having arrived at the County Governor's House, Lyngé walked resolutely towards the door. He was, however, intercepted by the Security Police stationed there, who stated authoritatively that the demonstrators had to keep moving. Nevertheless, after a few tense moments, Lyngé was granted permission to hand the statement to an intermediary who then delivered it to the Prime Minister inside the Governor's residence. As predicted, the Prime Minister declined to come outside.

Prime Minister Carlsson's declining to "show his face" provoked expressions of rancor and spite amongst the men. Some spat "He's too busy stuffing his face". Others hissed "He is as bad as the *LO* gang", in reference to the demonstration outside the *LO*'s Headquarters in Stockholm when the farmers' letter of protest in the absence of any officials had had to be handed to a receptionist. Invectives filled the air. Clenched fists were held aloft as the men assailed Government for having violated agricultural policy agreements and the *LO* for having infringed on the Farmers' Federation's sphere of jurisdiction. An audible disappointment reverberated throughout the crowd. The demonstrators interpreted Carlsson's response as further confirmation that the Prime Minister and his Government had indeed colluded with the *LO* in trying to rid Sweden of large numbers of farmers.

I now return to the prominent role played by the press in farmer-State relations, by way of ending this final case study of attack as a particular form of protest. Rallies are staged in the public domain, to attract coverage in the press, where it will come to the attention of Government officials as well as the general public. The incorporation of reporters and press photographers into this action set is therefore crucial. In this case, journalists and others became mediators not just between farmers and the public, but also between protesters and the Prime Minister himself. For instance, during the demonstration, rather than speaking directly to the farmers, Prime Minister Carlsson spoke to the protesters

through reporters who were interviewing him inside Governor's House. Carlsson's response to the angry farmers was conveyed by the *South Swedish Daily* the following day (Friday 13 November 1987) (and also in the next issue of *Land* (20 November 1987), in an interview which however appeared to have been conducted on Carlsson's return to Stockholm). In neither interview, did the Prime Minister concede that the farmers' demands were reasonable. In defence of his Government's actions, Carlsson pointed to circumstances beyond the control of the Swedish Government which he said made it necessary to exercise restraint in so far as wages and farmers' incomes were concerned:

We are in what could be the beginning of an international economic crisis and we must act in such a way that we are prepared if anything serious should happen (*South Swedish Daily* 13 November 1987).

...

At best, the stock exchange crash will lead only to the recession arriving a little sooner than we had expected. At worst, things could get very bad, and the Government does not at the present time want to increase the budget deficit or act in such a way that industry loses its competitive edge (*South Swedish Daily* 13 November 1987).

In the interview published in *Land* a week later, Prime Minister Carlsson also defended the *LO*'s and the *TCO*'s involvement in agricultural policy matters by pointing to these organization's members' role as consumers of food:

... the *LO* and the *TCO* of course have the right to present their opinions on the issue [the cereal surplus] before political decisions are taken, as their members are consumers (*Land* 20 November 1987).

By way of proposing a solution the Prime Minister said:

Government, farmers and consumers will now have to sit down to discuss methods to change agricultural politics so that we can get rid of the cereal surplus, which is a big problem. And we are open to constructive suggestions and ideas (*Land* 20 November 1987).

The role of the *South Swedish Daily* and other newspapers as mediator between the Prime Minister and farmers in Skåne was a crucial aspect of farmer-State relations. However, the above-described interview was less important to the growers than the *Daily's* coverage of the rally itself. Central to the *Daily's* story in the paper's 13 November issue were two large photographs. Dominating the report, one photo fourteen by ten centimetres took in the front rows of the marchers and the long winding column of men following behind, the end of which was out of view. The larger photo was a full twenty-two by fourteen centimetres taken side on with a grim-looking Arne Lyngé in the centre, marching torch in hand immediately behind the stone-faced bearer of the Swedish flag, and only a few metres away from the person carrying the standard of the Provincial Federation of the Union Branch. The caption of the first and smaller photograph read: "A couple of thousand farmers demonstrated their fury when the Prime Minister was in Kristianstad." The second caption of the larger photo stated that "Arne Lyngé spoke disparagingly of the *LO* and *TCO* when yesterday he led around two thousand enraged farmers on a march through Kristianstad to speak with Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson about the proposal to reduce grain prices."

These two photographs, and the accompanying text, were powerful ways in which the farmers were able to convey fury and anger to a broad audience through the *South Swedish Daily*. With this, Skåne farmers had achieved what they set out to do. They had "gotten into the paper", the most public arena of all, from their point of view a superior stage from which to make their plight known to as many people as possible. Their furore, expressed through the staging of a rally, a metaphor for going into battle with the Social Democratic *LO* and Government alliance, was now and with the aid of the *Daily* they hoped firmly etched in the minds of both the public and Government officials.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Following the conclusion of the grain price negotiations one week later, on Thursday 19 November, the growers learned from the *South Swedish Daily* on Friday 20 November that Government had caved in to the Farmers' Federation's demands. Thus, in the autumn 1987 round of grain price negotiations, growers were granted a rise of 0.04 Kronor per kilo wheat, rye and oats.



## 6. CONCLUSION

The formal incorporation of the Farmers' Federation into the national decision-making process places limits on protest. However, within these broad parameters a variety of forms of protest do occur, some muted, barely whispered, others more vocal, based on sound argument and debate, and a few resounding with bitterness and rage. It is only at that point when the Federation has not yet been incorporated into negotiations with Government on a measure that it will most persistently encourage farmers to express anger with the opposition in the public arena.

The pattern of protest I have analyzed in this case study emerged, as did the other two patterns of protest, out of the individualistic nature of farming. That this pattern was different from the other two was a consequence of the location of the proposed measure against which protest was directed, deregulation of the cereal market, in its embryonic stage of the policy-making process. At this stage, the Farmers' Federation and Government had not yet officially defined their relationship on the measure, nor their positions vis-a-vis it. This particular constellation of relations enabled farmers to stage a collective display of outrage in the public arena. A response of this kind would not have been possible in the other two scenarios where the Farmers' Federation and Government had already developed clearly defined relationships vis-a-vis the policies, where negotiations were in one case already under way, and in the other case had already been completed.

The expression of anger in public with which I concluded this chapter is perhaps that act of protest most familiar to observers of political unrest in western late capitalist countries. Such acts of protest carry news value, which only serves to confirm why farmers consider them important means of attracting attention to their plight. Nevertheless, large-scale public protest is staged relatively infrequently by farmers, whether in Sweden, or other late

capitalist countries such as England, Australia or the United States. This is a kind of protest used only for specific purposes, and only at certain points in the national policy-making process and regional agricultural cycle.

The patterns of protest observed on the Lund Plain of Skåne, whether acts of resistance, defence or all out attack, must be seen as reflections of points in the common trajectory of each policy measure as it moves from being at first no more than a draft proposal to eventually becoming the final version of a new bill to be submitted for voting in Parliament. Each point in the career of a policy is linked to a concomitant constellation of relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government, which shifts from the Federation and Government being poles apart to the two parties eventually reaching a compromise agreement, and in so doing embodying the ideal, a corporatist relationship between governing body and interest organization.

To state my argument in another way: the Swedish political system, which strives for compromise amongst parties with opposing interests through a long process of consensus building, provides a framework within which negotiation (by leaders at national level) and protest (by farmers at grassroots level) are synchronized in a wave-like pattern. Political action by rural producers, with its distinct patterns of attack, defence and resistance, is shaped by the national negotiation process, with its distinct initiation, negotiation and implementation phases. Through an analysis of acts of protest, I have demonstrated that, as Ortner (1989) puts it, "structure is both lived in, in the sense of being a public world of ordered forms, and embodied, in the sense of being an enduring framework of dispositions that are stamped on actors' beings" (1989:13).

## CHAPTER 7

### REFLECTIONS ON PROTEST

My project has been to analyze the relationship of a community of farmers on the Skåne Plain to the Swedish State and the wider society. I have done so through an examination of processes of opposition at a time defined by the Social Democratic Government as one of cereal surplus crisis. During this time a series of interventionist measures was introduced to restrict the national output of cereals. I have demonstrated that individual and collective acts of protest by cereal growing farmers against production restrictions are informed by the State system itself, and in so doing have shown some of the ways in which the community of farmers studied is embedded in the larger political economy (Marcus and Fischer 1986).

I have explored acts and patterns of protest against State intervention from the perspective of cereal growing farmers on the Lund Plain. These men operate as individual entrepreneurs in a planned agricultural economy in a political system generally described as corporatist. All these factors have a bearing on how opposition is expressed.

As explained, in the Swedish corporatist system, the constellation of relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government (whether the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister for the Environment, or Government and the *LO*) continually shifts. I have related this to the fact that negotiators of new policy, for instance to restrict cereal output, take as their focus the introduction of various policy measures with which they seek to redress the imbalance created by excessive production. The rationale behind this is that if the correct combination of measures, for example fallowing of land, cutting back on the use of yieldboosting inputs, and deregulation of the cereal market, is applied to those individuals seen as responsible for causing the problem, in this case cereal producing farmers, the problem can be rectified, the crisis resolved. I have shown corporatist policy-making to be a long process which generates a career for each policy measure. A policy measure's

career begins with the measure first being raised as a possible option, continues with the details being negotiated, and ends with the implementation of an agreed on program. Furthermore, I have argued that as the policy moves along its trajectory, the constellation of relations between the Farmers' Federation and Government changes, from a poles apart configuration, to one exhibiting considerable strain, to one of eventual compromise. These characteristics of the system affect the response by farmers to intervention, on the one hand in predictable ways, but on the other hand allowing for considerable improvisation. This I relate to the individualized nature of farming, whereby each producer operates in isolation from others as a self-employed business owner. Dispersed over large tracts of land, farmers develop extensive ego-centric networks in which they are continually trading information on the policy-making process, and how to respond to drops in income. A range of acts of protest emerge amongst farmers as a result of their individualist orientation; it is indeed considered a sign of political acuity and sophistication to develop novel ways of protesting against intervention.

In this ethnography of farmers' relations to the State I have used Ortner's (1989) approach to analyze protest. Ortner offers a framework which links actors and practice to structure. Unlike Ortner, who offers a broad historical account, I analyze a specific set of actors in one particular locale, in a clearly delineated time frame, and during a period defined by Government as one of crisis.

Ortner's definition of practice, "any form of human action or interaction ... in so far as the analyst recognize[s] it as reverberating with features of asymmetry, inequality, domination and the like..." (1989:11-12), is intimately linked to power, and the exercise of counter-power, in an on-going wave-like motion. In this study, I have used the notion of practice specifically to refer to acts of protest vis-a-vis the dominant power base. Ortner's argument, which informs my own study, is that practice emerges from structure, reproduces structure, and has the capacity to transform structure (1989:12). Like Ortner, I have sought to pin down "the configuration of cultural forms, social relations, and

historical processes that move people to act in ways that produce ... effects" (1989:12). I was not in the field long enough to actually observe ways in which practice may transform structure, in the sense of significantly changing the content of farmer-State relations. Nevertheless, I did observe during my fifteen months in the field the extent to which acts of protest had a softening effect on the form of individual policy measures, whether a measure was in its embryonic, negotiation, or implementation stage.

Throughout my study I have referred to the political economy in which farmers are embedded as the system -- my term for Ortner's idea of an active notion of structure. My conceptualization of a system is one of actors, structure and components within structure (the most relevant components for the purposes of this study being the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry for the Environment, the Consumer Delegation, the labour movement, represented by the *LO*, and the environmental movement, represented by the Environmental Party), in which actors are linked to Government in various ways, including through the press, depending on the policy measure under discussion. A key characteristic of this system is that variation in the Farmers' Federation's relationship to key actors in one component will be associated with variation in behaviour amongst actors at grassroots level.

Ortner's theoretical framework provides little guidance in an analysis of protest as practice in everyday life. Amongst cereal growing farmers on the Lund Plain, as I have demonstrated, protest is a patterned activity, with a range of activities and improvisations occurring within each pattern, whether the pattern is one of resistance, defence or attack.

To analyze effectively the range of protest activities in which farmers engage, I have relied on Bourdieu (1977), in particular his notion that practice is not a mechanical reaction, nor completely free will, but invention within limits (1977:96), the regulated improvisations of orchestrated habitus (1977:54). In the same way that Bourdieu demonstrates that the people studied by him are imbued with "a sense of honour", so I have shown rural

producers on the Lund Plain to have a sense of themselves as "politically active" people, engaged in a struggle with the national power base. This, to use Bourdieu's terms, is "a disposition inculcated in the earliest years of life and constantly reinforced by calls to order from the group, that is to say, from the aggregate of the individuals endowed with the same disposition[s], to whom each is linked by his disposition[s] and interest[s]" (1977:15). As I pointed out in Chapter 1, farmer-State relations have become increasingly institutionalized and structured over the past fifty to sixty years, a period which has seen significant transformations in the Swedish political economy. There has been a shift from agricultural to industrial production, the total number of farmers shrinking correspondingly. In the course of large-scale societal reform, "the 'customary rules' preserved by the group memory are themselves the product of a small batch of schemes enabling agents to generate an infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing situations, without those schemes ever being constituted as explicit principles" (Bourdieu 1977:16). Often, producers on the Lund Plain engage in political activity on their own, "the schemes of thought and expression [he] has acquired [being] the basis for the intentionless invention of regulated improvisation" (1977:79). Thus it is that, following Bourdieu notion's of the habitus as the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent's practices, protest is "sensible and reasonable" (1977:79), an aspect of everyday life on the Lund Plain.

Through Gluckman's (1968) case study approach, I have illustrated firstly how it is that patterns of resistance, defence and attack occur, and secondly the improvisation which occurs within each pattern. I have followed the same set of actors, observing them in a multiplicity of sites, in each case vis-a-vis a different policy or set of policies, but always as actors enmeshed in the same system. Drawing on Barnes (1954), Mitchell (1969) and Boissevain (1974), I have demonstrated that the individualized nature of farming, and farmers' incorporation into the national policy negotiation process through the mediation of the Farmers' Federation, encourages growers to create extensive agro-political networks in which they trade information about recent policy, and plan appropriate strategies in

response. This has enabled me to lay bare expressions of the broad spectrum of protest, the central focus of analysis, but more specifically the nature of protest as practice, the relationships between actors, and actor and the wider system. I have also demonstrated how growers use extra-ordinary language to give expression to the felt effect of constraints when production restrictions are on the agenda (for example by indicating that non-participation in a program is responsible action, making comparisons between themselves and ethnic minorities, telling unflattering stories about non-farmers, presenting facts and figures to strengthen their case, and using metaphors of battle and warfare).

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I would like to make two further points about the study of actors encompassed by a wider system and the various acts of protest they deploy. One concerns the issue chosen (rather than the policy measures developed to deal with it), the other the broader time frame chosen for the study of that issue.

Firstly, for this study I chose the most controversial issue of the 1980's: cereal surplus. This crisis was linked to developments on the world market for wheat and other cereals, and was thus beyond influence. Had I chosen another less political issue, and as a consequence policy measures with fewer ramifications on so many growers' livelihoods on the Lund Plain where cereal crops predominated, the response I observed would have been more muted, not as innovative, and thus less visible to an outside observer. I would in all likelihood have ended up with an altogether different study, perhaps even dismissing farmer-State relations on the Plain as quite unproblematic and straight forward.

Secondly, therefore, the findings of any study of protest will inevitably be reflective of the historical time in which protest occurred. The year 1987 was a crucial year in the history of farming on the Lund Plain, with the cereal growing sector at a crossroads. It was a year in which, following various promises made in the September 1985 election, the

Government was being particularly responsive to popular concern about pollution, toxicity and illness. It was a year when the Environmental Party, as a new political party on the rise, was doing whatever it would take to build enough support for the party to get into Parliament in the September 1988 election. As mentioned, had I chosen a different year in which to examine protest in relation to the cereal surplus issue, I would have been confronted with a more limited range of acts of protest. In 1985, for example, the cereal surplus problem had only just been placed on the Government's agenda. By late 1986, however, circumstances had already changed significantly. Sweden was still suffering the after effects of the assassination of Prime Minister Olof Palme and the Chernobyl nuclear power accident earlier that year, both events with significant ramifications on political relations. This set in motion the events I have analyzed in this study. A few years following the completion of fieldwork, the first several years of painful adjustment to changing conditions on the world market had become but a memory, with growers preparing themselves for the eventual entry of Sweden into the EEC in the mid-1990's. In the September 1991 election, a non-socialist Government was voted into power. The Environmental Party, a driving force in politics in 1987, had lost all the seats won in the September 1988 election. The new four-party coalition Government was starting to question many of the policies introduced by the Social Democrats, and indeed contemplating a reversal of some of them.

The year 1987, therefore, bracketed by several important events, was an exceptionally good one for a study of innovation and improvisation in farmers' protests on the Lund Plain.

The particular forms of protest which occur within the broader patterns of resistance, defence and attack, with their endless variations on a theme, are of course reflective of the Lund Plain growers' location in a heavily industrialized, densely populated region, with a high proportion of mediated interaction, and in which they are a minority relative to wage and salary earners. The broader patterns of protest which emerge on the Lund Plain may,



however, be characteristic of the political systems of numerous western industrialized nations. Many of these countries rely on policy negotiation systems which are variants on corporatism, with its established procedures for regular and considerable input by interest organizations in the policy-making process. These countries tend to have planned agricultural economies, and one or more farmers' organizations to represent the interests of self-employed rural producers in policy development. It is likely, therefore, that similar patterns of protest may be discernible elsewhere in times of crisis.

In this study I have demonstrated that protest is an essential part of farmer-State relations. Scott (1985) put protest on the map in his analysis of resistance amongst peasants in Malaysia. I have followed in Scott's footsteps by examining protest in the context of a late capitalist society. In conclusion, however, I would like to make the point that protest as practice is not confined to farmers, although acts of protest are relatively easy to observe amongst this occupational group. Protest is in fact an important part of the relationship between ordinary citizens and the State. This is confirmed by the newspapers and evening TV news on a daily basis. A verbal attack on a Member of Parliament, failure to declare all income earned, smearing council walls with mayonnaise, refusing to vote or writing letters of complaint may not be immediately perceived as acts of protest. However, these small-scale manifestations of the people versus the State, often part of broader efforts, constitute but a few examples of the infinitely varied ways in which protest is expressed vis-a-vis the dominant power base. Protest is in fact an integral part of most people's lives. The particular form chosen to express oppositional views will vary with the age and occupation of the person. Thus, young adults not yet in the workforce may choose as their avenue to graffiti a public building. Blue collar trade unions often organize for particularly important groups of workers, for example bus drivers, to walk off the job for a specified period of time at regular intervals to make their point. All kinds of groups elect to hold demonstrations on the steps of Parliament House. It is well known that high-flying members of the business community and wealthy sports figures engage in tax evasion by transferring large amounts of money into overseas bank accounts. Senior citizens have of

late established pressure groups and frequently embark on letter writing campaigns. By examining such common every-day activities through the lense of protest as practice it becomes immediately apparent that individuals and groups everywhere are continually engaged in a critique of the existing order.

## APPENDIX A

The Swedish Government frequently appoints commissions to investigate legislation and policy in place, and on the basis of this propose amendments or changes. Commissions may consist of single individuals or groups of individuals. In the late 1980's, scores of commissions were examining various aspects of legislation governing the agricultural sector. In this regard, the crucial point, from the farmers' point of view, was firstly whether the Farmers' Federation had representation on the commission, and secondly how much weight representatives' votes carried.

The following commissions were the ones whose work growers on the Lund Plain followed most closely while I was in the field:

1. The commission known as the Grain Group was investigating alternative crops to be grown on arable land in the future. This was the commission in which the Fallow 87 Program and subsequent Adjustment 90 Program had been formulated. The commission was appointed by the Minister of Agriculture. Ingvar Widen, former Director General of the National Board of Agriculture (*Lantbruksstyrelsen*) was Chairman of the Group. The Farmers' Federation was represented by its national Chairman, Bo Dockered, its Managing Director, Viggo Fringel, and Erik Herland.
2. A string of smaller commissions was investigating ways of reducing the intensity with which commodities were being produced. The Intensity Group investigated ways of reducing the use of agrochemicals and fertilizers. The Action Group Against Ocean Pollution, investigated ways of reducing the use of barn manure. The Farmers' Federation had no or little representation on these commissions, which were appointed by the Minister for the Environment.
3. A long term inquiry into the future structure of the agricultural sector was headed by Professor Olof Bolin of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. His brief was to devise a way to deregulate the controlled agricultural market and introduce free trade. His inquiry was only one of several others which were part of a long-term inquiry into the Swedish political economy as a whole.

In addition to the above prominently featuring commissions, there were many other smaller ones. The following is a list (probably not exhaustive) of the ones which were already underway when I arrived in the field in October 1986:

1. Ingvar Widen, former Director General of the National Board of Agriculture (a post he had held for eighteen years), was investigating land acquisition policy. It was expected that he would propose changes to, amongst other things, the policy that the County Agricultural Boards determine the price of farm land.
2. Another commission was looking into the policy governing tenant farmer-private land owner relations. It was expected that the commission would propose that tenant farmers be given first option of buying out their farms from agricultural estates (*fideikomiss*). No information was available on the composition of this commission.
3. A medium-sized commission chaired by Lars Hillbom, Director of the State Price Surveillance Authority (*Statens pris och kartellnämnd*), was looking into the organization of the food sector, specifically ownership concentration, competition and pricing. The group would analyze why food prices had increased so dramatically, determine why ownership of food retail outlets (supermarkets) was concentrated to three large blocks or

chains, and investigate the dominant position of the farmers' agricultural cooperative in the food industry. The Farmers' Federation was represented on this commission by Erik Herland.

4. A commission heavily represented by the National Food Administration (*Statens livsmedelsverk*) was looking into current regulations on date and quality stamping of bread and frozen foods. The Farmers' Federation was represented on this commission by Marit Holm.

5. A very important commission reporting to the National Energy Council (*Statens energiråd*) was looking into alternative energy sources gradually to replace nuclear power. This commission consisted of representatives of the various political parties, and numerous affected organizations. The Farmers' Federation was represented on this commission by its previous national Chairman, Sven Tågmark, who had retired in June 1986 at which time Bo Dockered was elected new Chairman.

6. A commission known as the Motor Alcohol Committee was investigating ways of partly replacing oil with ethanol. The commission would propose the construction of a full-scale ethanol production plant. The Farmers' Federation was represented by Anders Nilsson, Chairman of the Federation's Ethanol Group, and Erik Herland and Lars Dahlgren of the Federation's Industrial-Political Department (*näringspolitiska avdelningen*).

7. Members of the Wind Power Inquiry were investigating suitable sites on which to build wind power generators. Skane and the islands of Öland and Gotland off the east coast of southern Sweden were under consideration. Rune Olsson of the State Council for Construction Research (*Statens råd för byggnadsforskning*) was Chairman of the commission. The Farmers' Federation was represented by Lars Dahlgren.

8. A small commission was conducting an inquiry into legislation governing the estates of deceased persons. Principally, they were investigating the possibility of imposing a time limit on estates. Jan Fransson, Member of Parliament (Social Democratic Party) was Chairman of the commission. The Farmers' Federation was represented by Bo Eliasson.

9. The system of paying farmers for their commodities was under investigation by a group of individuals attached to the National Agricultural Marketing Board (*Statens Jordbruksnämnd*). The purpose of this inquiry was to find ways of encouraging farmers to produce an increasingly higher quality commodity. The Farmers' Federation was represented by its Managing Director, Viggo Fringel, and a member called Eskil Arvidsson.

10. A small commission by the name the Board for Technological Development (*Styrelsen för teknisk utveckling*), whose directives issued from the Ministry of Industry, was investigating small-scale industry suitable for the agricultural sector.

11. Sven Heurgren, County Governor, had been appointed to investigate the structuring of environmental conservation.

(Land 24 October 1986)

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