

*Patriots, Politics, and the
Oklahoma City Bombing*

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American Opinion commended the AAM for exposing a government conspiracy. Rick Elliot's antitax National Agricultural Press Association (NAPA) used its publication, *The Primrose and Cattlemen's Gazette*, to weave virulent anti-Semitic ideas into news stories about key farming issues. Elliot supported the AAM farm strike and the demand for 100 percent parity, scapegoating Jewish bankers. By 1981, he claimed to have three thousand NAPA members in thirty states (Diamond, 1995: 260; Levitas, 2002: 179).

Arthur Kirk, a Nebraska farmer, joined Elliot's NAPA in 1984. He became convinced that his financial problems were the result of an international conspiracy by Jewish bankers. On October 23, 1984, sheriffs' deputies arrived at the Kirk farm with foreclosure papers. Kirk owed approximately \$300,000 to the bank. The angry farmer met the deputies with a loaded shotgun and ordered them off his property, pointing toward a Posse sign that he had been told by Elliot barred government officials from the land. Later that day, the deputies returned with the SWAT team of the Nebraska State Patrol. Negotiators tried to talk Kirk into surrendering, but Kirk was distraught. "Damn fucking Jews," he yelled into the phone, "destroyed everything I ever worked for. Who's got the power in the world? Who runs this world? The fucking Jews. By God, I ain't putting up with their shit anymore!" (*ABC 20/20*, "Seeds of Hate," August 15, 1985). Kirk later stormed out the back door of his house, outfitted with camouflage and a helmet and carrying an automatic weapon. Gunfire was exchanged and Kirk was killed in a shootout. An interview with Kirk's widow following the incident confirmed that the couple believed that the farm crisis was "no accident" but part of a larger conspiracy by international bankers and Jews to take over the country.

Lyndon LaRouche launched a concerted campaign to win over AAM members. Davidson (1996: 112–14) observes that LaRouche planned to strategically "align himself with farmers' interests and, once inside the organization, steer the AAM in his own direction." LaRouche's courtship of AAM was allegedly designed to build an urban-rural alliance between marginalized inner-city residents and disillusioned rural denizens through his organization, the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC). LaRouche supported the AAM farm strike and linked demands for parity to his attacks on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Federal Reserve, and the World Bank. According to Levitas, LaRouche and his operatives "dogged AAM followers at their meetings and national conventions" and in 1980 attempted to persuade AAM president Marvin Meek to run as LaRouche's vice-presidential candidate (2002: 212). Though Meek

declined, LaRouche was successful in gaining support among a core of high-ranking AAM activists by early 1983.

Richard Butler, founder of the Aryan Nations and the Christian Identity-based Church of Jesus Christ, Christian, "saw among the desperate farmers recruits for a revolution that would result in the establishment of a national racist state" (Corcoran, 1990: 35). In a 1982 Aryan Nations newsletter, Butler reached out to farmers attempting to link the farm crisis to Identity doctrines and beliefs. "The farmer is being backed into a wall," Butler wrote, "and he's beginning to believe there has to be an answer for all of this. The answer is revolution. . . . He's [*sic*] been used and abused. . . . He's going to get a lot more angry, and eventually he'll see that the only way to turn things around is to fight to win his country back for white Christians" (quoted in Corcoran, 1990: 35).

Posse and Identity leaders also used radio broadcasts to reach farmers and other rural families. Jim Wickstrom appealed to besieged farmers over Dodge City, Kansas, radio station KTTL-FM beginning in the fall of 1982. Wickstrom's anti-Semitic diatribes warned of the designs of Jewish bankers to steal lands from unsuspecting farmers. He also called for Posse indictments of judges and other "servants of Babylon" who allowed foreclosures on family farms. Wickstrom's broadcasts reached parts of eastern Colorado, southwestern Kansas, and northern Oklahoma. KTTL-FM also broadcast weekly messages by William Potter Gale. In one broadcast, titled "Victory with Jesus," Gale inveighed against Jews and other minorities, calling for a need to "cleanse our land" with a "sword" and with "violence." Identity leader Sheldon Emry, who claimed that all the economic problems of farmers were the fault of the Federal Reserve System, produced a syndicated show, "America's Promise," which was broadcast on more than twenty-five radio stations throughout the Farm Belt (Corcoran, 1990: 30–1).

The effect of these penetration efforts served to fracture the AAM, thus making social appropriation more likely. In 1981, disgruntled AAM supporter Keith Shive founded his own organization, the Farmers Liberation Army (FLA). Shive was rabidly anti-Semitic and racist, condemning international Jewish financiers and advocating the abolition of the Federal Reserve System. The development of spin-off groups like FLA and GRAAM underlined the growing ideological differences among farmers and highlighted the internal fragmentation of AAM. Increasing numbers of rural activists were radicalized by economic deprivation and the unresponsiveness of political elites and embraced the insurgent ideas of the burgeoning Patriot movement.

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