

The politics of the 1987 Iowa groundwater  
protection act

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Concern over environmental problems has had a definite impact on the policy process in recent years. Government has moved to deal with the environment in a variety of ways, and these methods are influenced strongly by the demands of interest groups in the policy arena.

In 1987, the state of Iowa moved to deal with the problem of groundwater contaminated by a number of pollutants, the most prominent being agricultural chemicals. Concerned legislators drafted the Iowa Groundwater Protection Bill, legislation directed towards the cleaning up and protection of Iowa's groundwater. The efforts by interest groups to influence the outcome of this bill is an interesting study into the workings of American Government and Interest Groups.

Chapter 1 of this paper will try to define interest groups, how they are formed, why individuals partake in interest group activities, and how they attempt to influence the policy process through lobbying.

Chapter 2 will narrow the focus on interest groups to agricultural interest groups. A history of agricultural interest groups will be provided and a description of how the current farm lobby operates.

Chapter 4 deals with the emergence of environmental issues into a major public policy concern. The chapter will deal with the beginnings of the environmentalist movement and the early efforts of the federal government in environmental regulation. Current developments in the policy area will also be explored.

Chapters 5 and 6 will deal with the problem of groundwater pollution in Iowa and the efforts of the state to study, document and finally deal with the problem with the drafting of the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act. Chapter 7 progresses to the legislative battle over the bill, with a focus on the lobbying activities of the concerned Iowa interest groups. The study concludes with a look at how the groundwater bill may have prompted certain Iowa interest groups to attempt to influence the 1988 Iowa House of Representatives elections.

Harold Lasswell once defined politics as "who gets what when, and where" (Lasswell 1936). The limits that environmental protection places on the economic actions of man requires the state to distribute the costs and benefits of exploiting finite natural resources. It is evident that certain interest groups, perceiving that they will receive fewer benefits or more costs from new governmental environmental policy, will mobilize to influence that legislation in a different direction. Their ability to influence legislators will depend on a number of factors: their interest group resources, the skill with which they lobby the legislature, and the sentiment with which other interest groups and the larger body politic view the issue.

## CHAPTER 1. EXPECTATIONS ABOUT INTEREST GROUP INFLUENCE

The politics of the groundwater bill reflect the group basis of political activity. Individuals have needs and goals that they wish to obtain from society and will often band together to obtain these objectives. David Truman has given us the most widely used definition of an interest group: "A group that on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by shared attitudes" (Truman 1957, 33).

Because many needs can be fulfilled through governmental activity, it is logical that individuals with similar goals will organize to influence governmental decision makers. Collective effort holds many advantages for the individual actor in attaining benefits from governmental policy. An organized group is best able to translate the potential power of a segment of society into actual power by providing a representative entity with which government, politicians, and other interest groups are able to deal in seeking support for their own activities. Organization also more efficiently channels the efforts of its individual units into resources that can directly influence governmental policy makers: votes, money, public opinion, and service (Holtzman 1966, 4-5). Thus, a segment of interest that is organized and cohesive has a major advantage over other groups that remain unorganized.

The individual decision to participate in group activity is motivated by the desire to obtain certain rewards from efforts within the group framework. In James Q. Wilson's Political Organizations, the author places these rewards into four categories (Wilson 1973, 36-51).

The tangible rewards that can be defined in monetary terms are the Material Incentives. Some examples of these rewards are wages, salaries, profits, fringe benefits, anything that would otherwise have to be paid for.

The intangible benefits which arise out of the act of associating Wilson calls Collective Security Benefits. These include the sense of belonging and feeling of solidarity that one gains from group activity, and also social interaction that takes place at group functions. The individual can also achieve a feeling of self-worth from the status that the group holds in society.

Specific Solidarity Benefits are the intangible benefits that can be withheld from group members. Specific members of the group are often singled out for awards, honors, and deference from other group members.

Purposive Incentives are the concerns and desires that one holds for the well-being of the general public. The benefits the group member attains from purposive incentives are somewhat indirect, as nonmembers are just as likely to share in the fruits of the group's efforts. What the group member does earn is a sense of satisfaction at having changed society for the better.



The issue of interest group participation in the governmental process is not a recent phenomenon in American politics. James Madison, one of America's "founding fathers", defined interest groups in a very negative fashion. Madison wrote:

"By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by a common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community" (Federalist 10, Berry 1984).

Modern political scientists have been much kinder to interest groups. With the writings of David Truman and other theorists, the model of a "pluralist state" began to emerge. In the pluralist model, groups act as surrogates for individuals and that "competition among interests in and out of government, will produce policies roughly responsive to public desires, and no single set of interests will dominate" (Loomis and Cigler 1986, 8).

While this model has come under much criticism from many observers, it seems to hold some merit in helping understand the American public policy process. The American political culture and governmental structure is favorable to the development of group politics. The United States is extremely diverse in ethnic, racial,

and religious composition. These cultural ties help create separate group identifications within the greater population.

The freedoms guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution are also conducive to group formation. The freedom to organize, the freedom of speech, and the freedom of the press are crucial to the organization of institutionalized interest groups. The decentralized American power structure allows many points of access to interest group pressure (Loomis and Cigler 1986, 9). The state and local levels of government are prime targets for interest group lobbying.

The lack of ideology in the political party system in the United States benefits interest group activities in many ways. American legislators and voters are less ideological than their European counterparts, and are not motivated or strongly committed to act on ideological grounds (Campbell 1960, 23; Holtzman 1966, 56). This characteristic probably makes American legislators more open to interest group influence. Jeffrey Berry has commented that a two-party system will probably result in ideologically indistinct parties that have to address broad constituencies and a broad range of issues.

With plurality elections in single member districts (and thus no proportional representation), the likelihood is that there will be two very broad parties covering a great deal of the ideological ground. To win an election, the parties must build a coalition of some breadth, attracting large numbers of those in the center

("moderates") to go along with those who form the ideological core of the party. By their very nature, then, American parties are "vote maximizers." To win elections, they must dilute many policy stands, and generally ignore some, so as not to offend segments of the population that they need in their coalitions (Berry 1984, 56).

This gives interest groups a strong advantage in attracting the support of many interests that exist in American society. They are much more narrowly focused and concentrate more on affecting policy changes than on attracting votes (Berry 1984, 47). Thus an individual citizen wishing to influence government will find interest group participation to be a much more direct and cost-effective means to obtain his objectives than participation in the political party structure.

The size and structure of the American economy is also a factor in the large number of interest groups in the United States. Economic specialization has created a high level of interdependence in the American economy and with this integration comes a greater potential for conflict of interest (Salisbury 1969, 3-4). Interdependence makes each economic actor more vulnerable to the actions of others, and motivates that actor to find means by which to control the outcomes that affect his economic well-being. The simple agricultural economy of the European middle ages would have had little need for interest groups as each farmer or craftsman labored in small, family-run enterprises (Loomis and Cigler 1986; 6). With the Industrial

Revolution, came greater specialization of labor and greater social differentiation. Group association is an outgrowth of this process as the specialized segments of the economy unite to assert claims on other segments of the economy or on the government (Truman 1957, 43). This "proliferation hypothesis" links technological change with and changing social roles into a greater diversity of interests, with the newly differentiated groups desiring a separate agenda of goals (Salisbury 1969).

Institutionalized interest groups exist to influence the government, and the current proliferation of interest groups can probably be traced to the increased governmental role in American society that has occurred since the "New Deal" of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Beginning with the Roosevelt administration, the American public sector began to actively regulate the economic activity of American citizens. Government moved to regulate business, agriculture, labor, and industry, and created social programs that redistributed wealth. The economic benefits government could bestow increased considerably. The civil rights movement of the 1960s would also involve the government in engineering social change, as the ability to influence government social and economic policy became crucial to any segment of society's welfare.

### Lobbying

Lobbying is how an interest group attempts to influence government decision makers. An interest group lobbyist can apply pressure directly or indirectly. Direct lobbying involves efforts to influence the decision maker through direct interaction with an interest group representative. Indirect lobbying involves the promise to help win elections by helping to muster "grassroots" support among the electorate. Of course, the indirect lobbying effort carries the threat of an interest group working to defeat a legislator who does not vote the way they wish.

Lobbyists are interest group representatives who serve as "transmission belts" of communication between interest groups and government decision-makers. What do interest groups wish to achieve through this communication process? Political scientist Lewis Froman once summarized interest group objectives as channeling communications to government, structuring alternative policy choices, acting as buffers between government and public opinion, checking the political gains of others, providing functional representation, and compartmentalizing access to decision makers (Froman 1966, 942-951). Their ability to achieve these aims is strongly affected by the resources available to each group. Group resources can be placed in four categories. These categories are:

1. Physical resources - money and membership size.
2. Organization resources - membership skills and unity, leadership skills, substantive expertise.
3. Political resources - campaign expertise, knowledge of the political process, political reputation and political strategy expertise.
4. Motivational resources - ideological commitment (Ornstein and Elder 1978, 69-71).

Lobbyist-legislator interaction is crucial to the interest group's access to government policy making. Interaction involves the possibility of modification of another person's behavior through communication and the exchange of benefits and information (Zeigler and Bear 1969, 9). Both legislator and lobbyist have goals that they wish to achieve in the creation of government policy and they use the interaction process to size up each other's objectives.

Once lobbyists believe that they can influence a legislator's decision, they hope to exchange some measure of interest group resources for the legislator's support for the interest group's position.

#### Lobbying Strategies

Lobbying consists of bringing the above-mentioned group resources to bear in order to influence government decision makers. A variety of strategies can be called upon to obtain this objective, both indirect and direct.

Indirect strategies Indirect methods include letter and telegram campaigns, public relation campaigns, and the publishing of the legislator's voting record in the media. These methods include bringing constituent pressure upon the lawmaker, hoping that the fear of losing potential votes will alter legislative behavior. The lobbyist is attempting to broaden the conflict and to convince the legislator that there are many in the general public who feel the same way the lobbyist does and that it would be in the legislator's best interest to start dealing with the lobbyist. Interest groups with large physical resources would be more likely to use this approach, which requires a large membership base. Media campaigns tend to be expensive and groups with few financial resources will most likely find this approach too costly.

Most lobbyists rate indirect techniques as being less effective than direct lobbying. Indirect techniques are considered too diffuse, delayed, and hard to measure (Milbraith 1966, 211-212). The possibility of reaching a level of participation from the general public that would pose a significant threat to an elected official is considered to be unlikely.

Direct strategies Most lobbyists consider direct techniques to be the most effective in influencing lawmakers. Direct techniques involve personal interaction between lobbyist and legislator. Political scientist Lester Milbraith, in his classic The Washington Lobbyists, divides direct techniques into three categories, the most prominent of which is direct personal communication. This technique

involves the presentation of arguments and information directly to the lawmaker, through personal conversations, presenting research results, and testifying at committee hearings (Milbraith 1963, 353). Lobbyists tend to concentrate on the legislature's committee system where they can best focus their political and organizational resources (Zeigler 1964, 162). Key committee members and powerful members of the legislature are most often the focus of lobbying efforts. Interest groups will often try to select legislative "champions" or legislators who are in strong agreement with the interest groups on most issues. These legislators provide immediate access in exchange for strong support from the interest group.

Since the committee hearing is the principal source of information for the average legislator, the lobbyist will offer to give testimony at these hearings (Zeigler and Bear 1969, 163). Through these presentations or through meeting with individual legislators or groups of legislators, the lobbyist will try to convince the legislator of the accuracy of the information being presented.

It is through direct, personal techniques that lobbyists can market one of their most important resources—the supply of valuable information (Ornstein and Elder 1978, 59). Lobbyists gain access to policy makers by providing them with information that can help them make policy decisions. They can assist the legislator in making policy decisions in drawing up policy proposals and pieces of legislation.

To be successful in gaining access to policy makers, a lobbyist has to establish a reputation for providing quality information.



Research and the recruitment of technical expertise are crucial to lobbying efforts. The ability to present information which places the interest group proposals in a favorable light is of utmost importance (Schlozman and Teirney 1986, 289). The lobbyist must be skillful in his attempts to persuade the lawmaker that the information is accurate, credible, and in the legislator's best interests to consider it when making his decision. Lobbyists who rely on the presentation of information are generally considered more influential than those who are oriented towards pressure tactics (Zeigler and Bear 1969, 125). Most lobbying is probably a mixture of both with presentation of research findings and other information mixed with some limited cajoling.

The near monopoly that some interest groups have over the credible information in some policy area can make them quite potent in mandating government policy. The American Medical Association, as an example, provides the best and most recent information in their area of expertise, health and medicine. The ideal situation for any lobbyist is to "create a dependency", where agency officials and legislators are dependent on the interest groups for information on a given topic. This relationship will over time result in an "issue network" that will allow the lobbyist consistent input on the formulation of policy (Berry 1984, 122).

While technical expertise is of extreme importance, the successful lobbyist must also have political expertise. The interest group must have thorough understanding of the political process and the ability to

"zero in" on where the actual political decision making is being done. Many interest groups will hire ex-legislators and office holders as lobbyists to provide this "inside information" (Milbraith 1963, 180-184). The lobbyist must establish a reputation of being politically savvy and worthy of trust to obtain access to elected officials, most of whom are quite careful about their dealings with special interests (Ornstein and Elder 1978, 76).

Most lobbyists consider direct personal communication to be the most effective means to influence lawmakers. Another means of direct lobbying is communication through an intermediary. Often this will be used when the lines of direct communication are not available. Most often lobbyists would prefer this intermediary to be a constituent, another legislator, or another lobbyist (Milbraith 1963, 355). The lobbyist is usually trying to find someone who has access to the legislator, hoping to open the lines of communication or use his associate as a proxy in the lobbying effort.

Milbraith lists the last category of direct lobbying as "keeping the lines of communication open". The lobbyist hopes to establish a framework within which communication can take place. This can be done through a variety of methods, most of which involve the "facilitation of communication, rather than the exchange of information" (Zeigler and Bear 1969, 192). Lobbyists can provide entertainment and social gatherings for legislators. A much more substantial way to achieve this goal is to provide campaign contributions. An even more drastic and quite risky method would be bribery. It is not often that a

lobbyist will resort to such action. Most studies of lobbying have suggested that attempts to influence a lawmaker with threats, bribes, or favors are usually not successful (Greenwald 1977, 324). Milbraith concluded that the main role of lobbyists is the presentation of information in a positive light and to provide government officials aid with policy proposals (Milbraith 1963, 159).

Interest group money mainly goes to incumbent legislators who are sympathetic with the interest group's demands (Berry 1984, 170-173). An effort to campaign for the defeat of any incumbent is considered to be risky and nonproductive by most lobbyists. Lobbyists generally try to maintain as much access to governmental decision-makers as possible, and targeting someone for defeat does not make a lobbyist appear trustworthy in the eyes of the lawmakers the lobbyist is trying to influence.

## CHAPTER 2. AGRICULTURAL INTEREST GROUPS

In the century following the American Revolution, the U.S. population was mostly composed of self-sufficient farmers. With the Industrial Revolution, the economy shifted from heavily agricultural to industrial. The process of industrialization reduced the amount of farmable land and increased the use of machinery in agriculture (Zeigler 1964, 166-67). The pattern of self-sufficiency was to be broken. Farmers began to produce mainly for profit and then specialized in the crops that they produced. The processes of commercialization and specialization have had a profound effect on American agriculture in the years since the Civil War. The dramatic technological changes that have occurred with the Industrial Revolution have resulted in a much more differentiated role for the farmer in the American economy.

Ever since the Civil War, it is quite clear that farmers have grown more and more differentiated as technical innovations, such as mechanical combines and cotton pickers or refrigerated transport, combined with other factors, such as the increased use of less flexible, arid land, and changing demand patterns in both peace and war, to induce each farmer to concentrate his resources on the commodity he could produce to greatest advantage rather than supply

himself with a wide range of necessary food and fibers  
(Salisbury 1969, 3-4).

With this specialization process came a new interdependence in agriculture. Each farmer was now vulnerable to the actions of other segments of the economy, banks, railroads, merchants, and others (Truman 1957, 87-88). Realizing the need to control these economic outcomes, American farmers began to organize to increase bargaining ability with competing economic interests. The economic insecurity felt by many farmers in the 1870s resulted in an era of strongly political farm organizations.

#### The General Farm Organizations

The first national farm interest group was the National Grange. The Grange rose to prominence in the 1870s with strong stands against the railroad interest and strong stands for government regulation (Browne 1988, 15). The Grange was organized originally in 1867 as a fraternal and educational organization concerned with improving crop production and providing an active social life for farm families. The organization would soon become more political, trying to influence the government to regulate railroad freight rates. Grange members would often become involved in third-party protest movements that hoped to unite the disadvantaged in American society in opposition to the big industrialists. The Grange and its much more militant contemporary, the National Farm Alliance, actively began cooperative ventures

between farmers to eliminate middle-man costs. The Grange reached its peak in 1875 with 800,000 members and chapters in 49 states.

Grange membership and influence began to decline in the late nineteenth century, and other farm protest organizations rose to prominence. The National Farmers Union, a direct descendant of the National Farm Alliance, was an active farm protest group that concentrated on the creation of the Populist Party, an alliance between farmers and laborers. The party gained a measure of success in attracting voters, but gained little progress in breaking the two-party lock on power in the United States. Many other politically oriented farm groups rose and fell with the fluctuations of the farm economy in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Most had one thing in common, the desire to create a third party to help protect farm interests.

The years following the First World War saw some definite changes in the farm lobby. The thrust of political activism moved from the creation of third parties to attempts at establishing strong working relationships with legislators and other policy makers.

Perhaps the most significant organization from this trend was the American Farm Bureau Federation. The origins of the Farm Bureau go back to the Morrill Act of 1862, which gave public lands to the states for the creation of colleges to teach agricultural methods. These institutions soon began doing agricultural research and providing educational services for farmers (Block 1960, 10). In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act offered federal grants to states for the purpose of

organizing farm bureaus that would act in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. By 1919, the state bureaus were no longer limiting themselves to educational efforts, and were actively helping farmers to compete with other economic interests (Zeigler 1964, 177).

The Farm Bureau was in many ways the product of government activity, as Harmon Zeigler explained in his Interest Groups in American Society:

The new organization, with the purpose of furthering the farmer's economic objectives through the influencing of public policy, was not "spontaneous" but rather had an evolutionary growth from well-financed, governmentally-supported units (Zeigler 1964, 178).

The organizational structure and technical expertise the Farm Bureau had obtained from its origins as a government bureaucracy aided in the creation of a very powerful interest group which would become the main spokesperson for American agriculture. It had all the resources needed for successful lobbying—a large membership spread across many states and across party lines, technical expertise, and a thorough knowledge of the workings of government.

By 1943, Farm Bureau membership had overtaken that of the two other national farm organizations, the Grange and the National Farmers Union (Talbot and Hadwiger 1968, 101-103). The Farm Bureau usually attracted large, successful farmers. It was generally thought to represent the "upper strata" of American farmers, building alliances

with other business organizations, and cool to government interference with the farm economy.

During the Roosevelt "New Deal", the Farm Bureau and the N.F.U. would feud over the direction of farm policy, the N.F.U. and the Roosevelt Administration supporting programs more favorable to smaller, less prosperous farmers. This conflict came to a head with the Brannan Plan, a federal price-support plan that targeted small farmers (Talbot and Hadwiger 1968, 193-194; Zeigler 1964, 196). The Farm Bureau and the Grange broke with the Roosevelt Administration and have since aligned with the Republican Party. The National Farmers Union has since become associated with the Democratic Party. These partisan differences also carry regional distinctions, with the Farm Bureau strong in the Midwest corn and wheat belts and the N.F.U.'s main strength being in the South.

The agricultural lobby in the past few decades reflects serious changes that have occurred in the farm economy. The processes of consolidation of farms and greater specialization by crop have brought a new proliferation of commodity groups into the policy process (Browne 1988, 20). The general farm organizations still have much influence, but cannot be issue-specific enough to satisfy this newly diverse constituency. Rapid technological changes in farming methods and the increased intrusion of the public sector in the farm economy have created several new sets of actors in the agricultural policy process.



## CHAPTER 3. THE MODERN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

William P. Browne, in his Private Interests, Public Policy, and American Agriculture, has suggested the use of Tom Veblen's systems approach to understanding the American food industry" (see Figure 1).

Veblen's model divides the actors in the food system into several categories, depending on their role as producers, distributors, consumers, and other roles in the system. Each segment of this progression is institutionally organized and a possible lobbying force.

A group's position in this complex and diverse economy will affect how it will influence governmental decisions. Not all these organizations have become active lobbies, while some have reached a level of influence that is much greater than their actual level of importance in the farm economy. Browne classifies these groups into "active" and "supportive" functions. "Primary", or active groups, represent "clear and distinct policy positions of their own choosing. These organizations also mounted independent campaigns to influence policies that their officials deemed important" (Browne 1988, 28). "Supportive" groups generally only lobby through coalitions with the primary groups. Often these groups lack the important interest group resources to lobby effectively. Note the Veblen diagram includes an arrow for government and public interest groups, as these institutions have become quite active in influencing American agriculture. Some of the more active and influential links of this chain deserve to be explored more thoroughly.

The primary producers of food and fiber are the commodity organizations. These groups include the general farm organizations described earlier (Farm Bureau, N.F.U.), and the much more specialized commodity groups such as the National Milk Producers Federation and the National Association of Wheat Growers. The general farm organizations can be considered "multi-commodity" groups as they are composed of members of the specialized commodity organizations. The general farm organizations are likely to take a "big-picture" view of agricultural policy, trying to form broad policy proposals and attempting to form coalitions across the spectrum of the agricultural community (Salisbury 1987, 1219). Commodity groups are well-financed and active in promoting the well-being of their constituents by trying to influence public policy. One major issue that commodity groups have consistently lobbied is the need for the removal of surplus production from the market to keep commodity prices high.

Agribusiness middlemen organizations These are groups of food processors and manufacturers. These groups tend to have a much narrower agenda than the general farm organizations and the commodity groups. Middlemen organizations usually have an issue-specific focus on policy decisions that have a direct influence on their constituents. Issues of government regulation of processed food safety, for example, and content are a major concern of these organizations.

Input industry organizations The full-scale commercialization of American agriculture has required farmers to purchase large amounts of manufactured goods and raw materials to maintain high production

levels. These items include farm machinery, fertilizers, seeds, and other raw materials. Support industries make modern, intensive agriculture possible and profitable. Input organizations generally have a very narrow focus on influencing public policy and are not as active as the general farm organizations in influencing governmental decisions. As agricultural policy specialist Robert Salisbury noted:

Specialized producers, with relatively narrow policy agendas, tend to avoid becoming embroiled in adversarial encounters. As becomes the protagonists in a system of distributive politics, they try instead to confine their efforts to building whatever support they can for their primary policy goals (Salisbury et al. 1987, 1220).

With the exception of the general farm organizations, most agricultural interest groups keep their policy goals very narrow and their efforts confined to specific issues, such as backing government programs that attempt to keep commodity prices stable, or working to avoid new taxes or governmental regulation that they feel inhibit their viability as a profitable industry.

#### The Ex-al Coalition

The above mentioned groups are all similar in one aspect. They are all federations of capitalist producers, united mostly by the desire for the material benefits that result from interest group activism. They may in many instances find themselves in competition,

but all agree that the institution of commercial agriculture should be promoted and expanded.

Recent developments have seen the rise of new "public interest groups" or the externality/alternative groups. Ex-al groups are a reaction against the social and environmental consequences of agriculture (Hadwiger 1982, 150-168). The prime motivations for ex-al interest group activity are probably purposive and solidary, as one receives little material benefit from support of ex-al organizations. What motivates ex-al groups to try to influence public policy is the desire to see legislation enacted to protect the natural and social environment from the damage agricultural methods can inflict.

The processes of commercialization, specialization, and mechanization have increased the toll that farming can take on the natural environment. The need to increase the size and quality of harvests has prompted farmers to extensive use of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides, and there is worry that these chemicals can cause disease and death among people and animals. The draining of the wetlands and the conversion of wilderness to cultivated land can result in the extinction of certain species of animal or plant, and the destruction of many eco-systems.

The concern of citizens over the damage to the natural environment by agriculture and other industry has resulted in an increase in the number and influence of environmentally-oriented pressure groups. Three of the largest and most powerful include the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, and the Izaak Walton League.

While some conservationist groups have existed since the 1880s, the environmental lobby has seen a growth in size and power over the last three decades. This could probably be attributed to the new awareness of environmental concerns that higher educational levels and increased media attention has given the American public. Another phenomenon that has helped in this process is the new political activism that arose out of the Civil Rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s. Many of the new environmentalists were influenced by the liberal activism of the 60s, espousing, as Browne has noted, "neo-populist beliefs about the need for countervailing political power based on citizen input" (Browne 1988, 135).

Browne describes ex-al lobbying as waiting for policy "windows" or times when conditions make reform proposals politically acceptable (Browne 1988, 135). Ex-al groups may have strong grassroots support and are skillful at exploiting sympathy for their cause in the general public and the media. Political scientist Don Hadwiger comments:

By generating information, imagery, and demands for action, the public interest groups provide news for the media, mandates for agencies and committees, and issues on which politicians can assume leadership roles (Hadwiger 1982, 157-158).

Like other interest group lobbies, ex-al groups strive to gain access to governmental decision makers by providing the lawmaker with credible information that can be used in making policy proposals.

Research done by the major environmentalist movement was crucial to the implementation of antipollution regulations in the early 1970s.

It is important to note the major differences between the farm organizations and the ex-al groups. The agricultural business groups have a shared belief in the benefits of the expansion and continued prosperity of the agriculture industry. The ex-al coalition, while not hostile to farming, wishes to limit farming methods in various ways that could possibly inhibit large scale agriculture. It could be stated that the two camps have a "shared disinterest", and end up on opposite sides on many environmental issues (Browne 1988, 136; Hadwiger 1982, 150-168). In a 1987 study of interest group representation, it was suggested that farm business groups, especially trade organizations, found externality groups to be the one segment of the agriculture lobby they would most consider an adversary (Salisbury et al. 1987, 1225).

The growing complexity of agricultural policy and the agricultural policy process has prompted the farm business groups to unite in informal coalitions that aid in the exchange of information and the sharing of the lobbying workload (Browne 1988, 187). The farm business organizations can find allies in business lobbies outside agriculture. The ex-al groups also have their like-minded allies as in populist lobbies that worry over the power of corporate wealth, including labor unions, feminists, and other liberal political coalitions.

Commercial agriculture and environmental concern may not always be in conflict, but it is apparent that the two blocs have substantial

disagreements on many issues. One of these theaters of conflict is groundwater protection legislation. The Iowa bill of 1987 is an excellent example of these two sets of organized interests trying to influence government policy in different directions.

## CHAPTER 4. THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWAKENING

Environmental concern became a strong new issue in American politics in the 1960s and 1970s. In those two volatile decades, the conservationist movement evolved from a small number of conservation enthusiasts to a powerful political force that wished to make significant changes in American society. This movement pressured the Federal government into implementing substantial environmental protection legislation.

Why has this policy area come into such prominence in recent years? In Walter Rosenbaum's The Politics of Environmental Concern, the author explores three major phenomena that help explain this awakening of interest in protection of the environment. These phenomena are:

The end of industrialism - On a global level, environmental concern is high in developed, industrialized countries and almost nonexistent in the underdeveloped Third World. Rosenbaum hypothesizes that "in the United States, having arrived at a high plateau of economic development, its leaders are free to ponder the environmental effects of industrialism and the economic controls necessitated by environmental protection without surrendering the benefits of industrialization itself" (Rosenbaum 1977, 59-60).

The changing American power structure - The environmentalist movement coincided with some great social upheavals in American society. At the same time environmentalism was coming to the



forefront, so were the issues of racial and sexual discrimination, the protest to end the war in Vietnam, and public outrage over the Watergate affair. These national "traumas" may have, at least temporarily, broken the monopoly certain traditional interests had on governmental decision making. Rosenbaum asserts, "This argument asserts that power at most government levels had customarily resided in different constellations of private interest, which could force 'non-decisions' on government" (Rosenbaum 1977, 59-61). The divisive issues of the 1960s politicized American society, and led many people to interject themselves into issue networks previously dominated by private interests. Most of the core of the environmentalist movement emerged from the antiwar and civil rights movement, composed of young, highly educated college students who had become distrustful of big business. These and other "public interest" activists pushed for "collective issues", such as environmentalism, at the expense of private interests and pressured the government to be more responsive to the "public interest" (Rosenbaum 1977, 61-63).

Reaction to environmental degradation - The environmental awakening of the past 30 years could be attributed in part to public anger over a number of environmental disasters that have occurred over the past 25 years, such as the chemical spill at Love Canal in New York or the Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969. The public was also alarmed by the air pollution problem affecting many American cities.

Extensive media coverage of environmental disasters has probably aided in this new public concern. An excellent example of the media's

ability to focus public attention quickly is Rachel Carson's 1963 book on the environmental damages of pesticide use, Silent Spring. This book had a definite impact on attitudes toward environmental protection among Americans, both the general public and government officials. Frank Graham suggests in his 1970 work on the influence of Silent Spring that retrospective studies conclude that

Silent Spring made large areas of government and the public aware for the first time of the interrelations of all living things and the dependence of each on a healthful environment (Graham 1970, 238).

Membership in environmentalist organizations doubled in the late 1960s, and on April 22, 1970, the strength of the environmentalist movement was demonstrated with "Earth Day", a nation-wide outpouring of sentiment for environmental protection. Americans were speaking loudly for government action on this issue, and elected officials began to listen. In the early 1970s the federal government began to implement strong antipollution legislation at a national level.

#### The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

Environmental concern translated into government action with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The NEPA required all federal agencies to weigh the environmental consequences of their actions through "environmental impact statements" that must be issued with any federal action that might have a negative impact on the

environment. Another provision of this bill created the Council of Environment Quality, an advisory body within the executive branch of the federal government.

#### The Environmental Protection Agency

President Richard Nixon officially established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December of 1970. This action was a product of the same wave of environmental concern that helped push through the NEPA. The EPA centralized federal antipollution efforts, which had been divided among several agencies. The EPA's function is to implement congressional antipollution legislation.

#### The Air and Water Amendments

Federal air and water pollution regulations can be divided into two distinct periods, those passed before 1970 and those after. The Water Pollution Control Act of 1956 and the Clean Air Act of 1963 are the most note-worthy, but these acts never established a strong federal role in the regulation of pollution (Rosenbaum 1977, 138). The pre-1970 laws were attempts to guide state regulation of pollution standards. The federal government considered pollution to be a local problem and deferred to the state the authority to enforce the provisions of these regulations. Most states were quite reluctant to pursue aggressive anti-pollution laws for fear of losing business and industry to states more tolerant of polluters.

In the early 1970s Congress reacted to public pressure for environmental protection by passing the Clean Air Amendments of 1970

and the Federal Water Pollution Control Acts of 1972. For the first time, Congress set rigid compliance requirements to be enforced by the EPA. Standards were set for minimum emission and discharge of certain pollutants into air and water. The law also included an 18 billion dollar grant for states to build water treatment plants.

The EPA and the clean air and water amendments gave the federal government the leadership role in regulating pollution nation-wide. Through the rest of the decade, the EPA was active in enforcing antipollution standards and pursuing other policies aimed at environmental protection.

#### New Federalism

The coming to power of the conservative Reagan administration in 1980 signaled the end of aggressive federal leadership in antipollution efforts. Reagan, a conservative Republican friendly to business interests, tried to scale back the federal role in environmental regulation. Basic to Reagan's domestic policy was the concept of "New Federalism", the return of responsibility for many government programs from the federal government to the state governments. The role of the EPA was to be redefined as explained in the following agency memo:

The clear intent of [EPA] policies is to make use of federal, state, and local governments in a partnership to protect public health and environment. State and local governments are expected to assume primary responsibility for the implementation of

environmental programs because they are the best-placed to address the specific problems as they arise on a day-to-day basis. The EPA role is to provide national environmental leadership, develop general frameworks, establish standards required by federal legislation, conduct research and national information collection, provide technical support for the states, and provide assistance to states in strengthening their programs (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1988, 184: 20).

Meanwhile, technological improvements in the detection of pollution had begun to dispel previous notions about groundwater. It had earlier been assumed that groundwater could not be polluted because the soil provided a natural filtration process. Using more sophisticated monitoring devices, substantial groundwater pollution began to be detected.

In 1984, the EPA issued a groundwater protection strategy. Reflecting the principles of "New Federalism" the strategy places the responsibility for groundwater protection in the hands of the states. This program provided federal funds for the states to develop new groundwater plans. The agency hoped to offer technical assistance to the states in developing groundwater protection plans and to eliminate legal barriers to state efforts to combat groundwater pollution. Money was not provided for states which had previously instituted groundwater protection plans. Money was not provided for implementation. Given the lack of a strong federal role on this issue, the state and local

governments would be the main policy arena for imposition of groundwater protection legislation.

## CHAPTER 5. THE PROBLEM OF GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION IN IOWA

Paul Johnson, who had earlier authored the Iowa Groundwater Protection Bill, has remarked on Iowa's groundwater contamination problem: "Iowa may have serious groundwater contamination problems because so much of Iowa is farmed. Ninety percent of our land is under cultivation" (Des Moines Register 2-26-89). Iowa is the most intensively agricultural state in the nation, and this agriculture is modern, specialized farming that involves extensive application of pesticides and herbicides. The major source of groundwater contamination in Iowa is agricultural chemicals. Other sources exist, like leaking underground fuel tanks and polluted seepage from land fills, but farm chemicals, especially pesticides are considered the most serious threat to Iowa's groundwater. These chemicals enter the underground water supply from several sources. Sinkholes and drainage wells allow pesticides in rainwater and runoff to seep underground. Abandoned wells, improperly sealed, can channel drainage laced with pollutants to enter the groundwater.

The use of agricultural chemicals has increased 600 percent over the last thirty years (Rajagopol 1984). Application of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers has resulted in huge increases in farm productivity and is considered by most farmers to be crucial to modern commercial agriculture. Without these products, a major portion of the harvest of certain grains would be lost to weeds, insects, or soil

depletion. The production and sale of agricultural chemicals is a large industry in Iowa and nationwide.

Iowa Department of Natural Resources researcher Bernard Hoyer noted the unwanted results of the use of agricultural chemicals:

By 1980, anecdotal evidence of well contamination was widespread in Iowa, especially in northeast Iowa. Stories from rural residents, dairymen, and county sanitarians provided evidence of nitrate and bacterial problems in wells, but documentation of aquifer contamination by agricultural contamination was nonexistent (Hoyer 1987, 60).

In 1981, the Iowa Geologic Survey attempted to study the apparent problem of groundwater contamination with a focus on agricultural chemicals. The agency began research in Iowa's largest spring, the Big Spring in Clayton County. This project was funded by the EPA, the Iowa DNR, and the United States Department of Agriculture-Soil conservation Service. The research involved sampling a series of wells and analyzing the water quality. The findings from this study supported earlier research at the national level that had suggested a link between groundwater nitrates and agricultural chemicals (Hoyer, 1987). The survey also found earlier generations of persistent pesticides at a higher level than had been anticipated.



The linking of groundwater contamination to agricultural chemicals was viewed with concern by both government and industry. Medical research has suggested that drinking water contaminated with certain chemicals can result in a higher incidence of cancer and other health problems. Within one year of the Big Spring study, a group of thirteen public and private organizations formed the Iowa Consortium on Agriculture and Groundwater Quality (ICAG) (Hoyer 1987, 66). The ICAG was composed of government agencies including the Iowa Department of Agriculture. It also included some private groups such as the Iowa Fertilizer and Chemical Association, which is the trade association for agricultural chemical dealers in Iowa. ICAG was established to facilitate cooperation between concerned agencies and groups and make recommendations on groundwater protection policy.

In the 1985 legislative session, the Iowa General Assembly mandated to the Iowa DNR the development of a state water plan. The legislation dealt mainly with water quantity and allocation, but it did include language that required the DNR to develop strategies to protect the state's groundwater resource. By including this language, the General Assembly could have been reacting to several developments including: (1) the results of the Big Spring Survey, (2) growing constituent concern over the issue, and (3) the 1984 Federal Groundwater Protection Strategy, which provides federal funding for the development of new state groundwater protection plans.

George Hallberg of the Iowa DNR found a number of factors contributing to the drive for some kind of strategy to deal with

groundwater pollution. Hallberg notes a strong sense of concern about the problem among Iowa residents, and the very high level of cooperation afforded DNR persons researching the problem. Hallberg noted that studies in rural sociology have suggested that rural people, who are dependent on groundwater for their drinking water and the watering of their livestock, do not feel efforts to improve the environment should be neglected in favor of economic development (Hoyer 1987, 8). Hallberg also pointed to the attention given the issue in the media, especially the Des Moines Register. The Register ran a five-part exclusive series of articles on groundwater pollution in early 1986. The Register has the highest circulation of any Iowa newspaper and is read state-wide.

Another factor mentioned by Hallberg is both financial and technical support from the EPA. Groundwater was given a higher priority in the EPA with the development of "superfund" legislation to deal with hazardous wastes. The negative effects of chemical poisoning had reached the residents of Love Canal through their drinking water, and the 1984 Federal Groundwater Protection Strategy demonstrated the new concern with which the issue was viewed at the federal level.

Further documentation of groundwater contamination was obtained in May of 1985, when the DNR conducted an EPA-financed sampling of public water supplies along the Little Sioux River in northwestern Iowa. Twenty-five wells were tested for 64 synthetic organic compounds and 35 pesticides. The findings of this study were similar to those of the earlier Big Spring Survey. Nine of the 25 wells were found to be

contaminated with pesticides being the most commonly detected contaminants.

During 1985 and 1986, the DNR evaluated policy proposals for groundwater protection. Advisory committees were established with representatives from all levels of government, members of environmental groups, and representatives of business and industry. The DNR sampled public opinion with a series of town meetings and a telephone survey. The public sentiment sampled by these efforts suggested deep public concern for groundwater quality.

The Big Spring Demonstration Project was established in 1986, an interagency cooperative effort developed at the suggestion of the ICAG. This project explored the possibility of a voluntary, nonregulatory approach to the reduction of groundwater contamination. The project sought the cooperation of farmers and other residents of the Big Spring area (Hoyer 1987).

Research findings from the Little Sioux Basin and other studies were to form the basis of the Iowa DNR's Iowa Groundwater Protection Strategy submitted to the state legislature in January of 1987. The Iowa Groundwater Protection Strategy would form the basis of the Iowa Groundwater Protection Bill of 1987. The Groundwater Protection Strategy proposed high standards of purity for the state's groundwater and set a "non-degradation goal". The goal was to eliminate all future contamination of Iowa's groundwater. As stated in the bill, "The goal of the state is to prevent further deterioration of the quality of the groundwater of the state, and it necessary to restore groundwater to a

pre-contaminated state, regardless of present condition, use, or characteristics" (Environmental Protection Commission, 1987).

The bill would allow the Iowa DNR to set regulatory standards that are more stringent than federal standards. It was tagged House File-631, debated in both houses of the state legislature, and passed in April of 1987.

## CHAPTER 6. THE IOWA GROUNDWATER PROTECTION ACT

The Iowa Groundwater Protection Act was enacted on July 1, 1987. The goal of the act "is to prevent contamination of groundwater from point and nonpoint sources to the maximum extent practical, and if necessary to restore the groundwater to a potable state, regardless of present condition, use or characteristics" (Environmental Protection Commission, 1987).

The act approaches this goal with an eye toward educating society on the danger of groundwater pollution and funding research to combat the problem. The act establishes two new research centers; one center is the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University in Ames and the other center is the Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Both institutions are charged with the tasks of researching the environmental effects of groundwater pollution and to assist in the development of alternatives to the current methods of chemical management. The cost of researching this problem is estimated, in the bill, at six million dollars.

Several provisions of the act address education; these include the topic of water quality to be included in the curriculum of public schools, and local agencies will cooperate with the Department of Natural Resources in the dissemination of information on water quality. The act requires pesticide applicators to attend classes on safe application and to pass a written exam.

While the act's emphasis is on education, it is not completely devoid of regulation. Regulations in the act are: (1) tougher regulation of landfills, (2) regulation requiring the plugging of abandoned wells, (3) permits for the drilling of new wells, (4) adoption of groundwater protection strategies by all counties, (5) the requirement of a permit for dumping on any land, and (6) regulation of minimum standards for all underground storage tanks. The most controversial aspect of the act is the question of who will pay to finance its implementation. The Iowa Groundwater Protection Act requires \$60 million dollars, and all but 17.5 million (the State of Iowa committed this sum from an oil overcharge fund) will be provided by fees on the producers of pollutants. Approximately 20 million dollars will come from agricultural sources. An increase in pesticide retailer fees and product registration fees for chemical manufacturers will provide about \$17.5 million, with a tax on nitrogen fertilizers making up the rest.

But how did this landmark legislation move from the DNR to House File-631 to the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act? The efforts by certain elected officials and interest groups in pushing through the bill was met by a counter-force of equally-committed opponents of HF-631. The struggle over groundwater protection in a small Midwestern state is a fascinating study in interest groups and the politics of environmental degradation.

## CHAPTER 7. THE LEGISLATIVE BATTLE OVER HF-631

In studying the battle over the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act, the most informative source for information was interviews with the major political actors. Most of the information of this description has been obtained by interviews with legislators, lobbyists both for and against the passage of the groundwater bill, DNR personnel who were influential in drawing up the bill, and private citizens concerned with the issue.

Interview subjects were asked to give their impressions on the passage of the groundwater bill, and to comment on the political actions of concerned groups and individuals. Those interviewed also provided literature that provided insight into the passage of the groundwater bill and the problem of groundwater contamination in Iowa.

The Iowa Groundwater Protection Act was heavily debated in both House and Senate in late March and early April of 1987. It passed through Senate and House committees and was voted into law with a large plurality.

The bill was introduced and strongly lobbied by a group of environmentally concerned legislators that will be referred to as the "key six". They were supported by representatives of Iowa's largest environmental groups. Opposition to the bill came primarily from the Iowa Fertilizer and Chemical Association (IFCA), a trade organization composed of dealers of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. The IFCA sent lobbyists to the statehouse to defeat the bill. Other groups

that lobbied to defeat or "water down" the bill were the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF) and the state's major commodity groups.

The Iowa Groundwater Protection Act was based on the principles of the Iowa Groundwater Strategy and introduced in a bill co-authored in the Iowa House of Representatives by Representatives Paul Johnson and David Osterberg. Johnson and Osterberg, along with four other legislators, would compose a group dubbed the "key six" who would be the main proponents and lobbyists behind the bill. DNR personnel lobbied for HF-631, and testified at the hearings to defend the DNR research forming the basis of the bill. Opponents of the bill lobbied to defeat the bill, or at least "water down" some of its proposals with amendments.

A total of 23 pages of amendments were proposed to amend HF-631. The major points of contention can be explored here.

The issue of proposed standards of purity of groundwater was a focus of much debate. The Iowa Groundwater Protection Strategy called for a "non-degradation goal", a long term goal to eliminate all groundwater pollution. Opponents of this provision proposed several amendments to change the language of the bill. Senator Tabor proposed replacing the non-degradation provision with the "Illinois Language" which states "no unreasonable pollutant shall be allowed." This change would have allowed for some level of pollution in Iowa's groundwater. Another proposal called for the Iowa standards of purity to be consistent with EPA groundwater pollution standards. HF-631 allowed Iowa to exceed federal standards. The issue was left unresolved by the



groundwater bill with final passage, the final language of which states that "adopting health-related groundwater standards may be of benefit in the overall groundwater or other regulatory efforts of the state. However, the existence of such standards, or lack of them, shall not be construed in degradation of the groundwater protection goal and protection policies of the state" (Environmental Protection Commission, 1987).

Establishment of the Agriculture Management Account to finance the provisions of the bill was opposed by legislators and lobbyists who claimed the expense to individual farmers or pesticide retailers was much too high. Most of the funding sources prescribed in the bill were left intact. The use of the oil-overcharge account funding helped lessen initial costs to Iowa's agricultural sector.

The issue of individual pesticide applicator liability was lobbied heavily by the Farm Bureau and this effort was successful. The act protects applicators who followed label directions from liability for cleanup costs.

Under the provisions of the bill, abandoned water wells must be plugged, and existing drainage wells must be closed by 1992. Critics of this provision pointed out that many areas of northern Iowa are drained by these wells, and farmland would revert to wetland without them. Alternative drainage methods also tend to be expensive. Under the act that was passed, abandoned wells must still be plugged, but the section requiring closure of Agricultural drainage wells was modified somewhat. The act now requires agricultural drainage wells (ADWs) to

be registered with the state and establishes a long-range plan to find alternatives to ADWs by 1995.

Proponents of the bill were unable to include a new 4 percent tax on hazardous household wastes. The bill still does provide funds for hazardous household waste cleanup days where citizens, with state assistance, can dispose of their household wastes without dumping them directly in the landfill. Hazardous wastes leaking from landfills are believed to contribute directly to groundwater contamination. Supporters of the bill had hoped the tax would help clean up state landfills and direct citizens away from the use of hazardous chemicals. Opponents claimed the tax was too high and that few people participate in household cleanup days.

Sue Mullins, a Republican "key six" legislator, felt that most of the attempts at "watering down HF-631 occurred in the Senate, and were undertaken by a group of senators, mostly Republican, who are "tight with chemical money (Mullins 4-13-89)". Proponents of the bill pointed to the Senate version of the bill as being less committed to the principles of the Iowa Groundwater Protection Strategy.

Mullins, who had been minority leader on the House Agriculture Committee, had to fight a move by some Republicans to remove her from the conference committee that hammered out the differences in the House and Senate versions. Winton Etchin of the IFCA does suggest fertilizer industry unhappiness with the composition of the committees in the house. "The Committees were chaired by people unfriendly to us who did not want us to be heard" (Etchin 2-24-89). Mullins suggests the

opponents of HF-631 wished the first conference committee to fail so new committee assignments could be made bringing representatives less sympathetic to groundwater protection to the forefront. However, "key six" legislators feel the bill survived the conference committee without losing most of the important points. David Osterberg states the bill is the "best in the nation" and that it "does exactly what it is supposed to do..." (Osterberg 2-24-89).

CHAPTER 8. POLITICAL ACTORS IN THE GROUNDWATER BATTLE  
AND THEIR OBJECTIVES

Iowa State Legislators - The driving force behind the passage of HF-631 were a number of Iowa State Legislators. Paul Johnson (D-Decorah) and Doug Osterberg (D-Mount Vernon) co-authored the bill, and were in close cooperation with Representatives Ralph Rosenberg (D-Ames) and Jack Hatch (D-Des Moines). Also included in this group are House Speaker Don Avenson (D-Oelwein) and Sue Mullins (R-Corwith), who was minority leader of the House Agricultural Committee. These six legislators helped translate the Iowa Groundwater Protection Strategy into a policy proposal and push it through to passage in the house. The bill became so identified with the "key six" legislators, that after the bill's passage, the chief lobbyist for the Iowa Fertilizer and Chemical Association, Winton Etchon, urged the IFCA and fertilizer dealers to work for their defeat.

Interviews with the "group of six" suggests they share deep environmental concern and agree on many social issues as well. Jack Hatch notes that he and several other of the main proponents came of age in the late 1960 period of environmental activism. "All of us came of age in the sixties and seventies, our socialization came at the same time as Earth Day and Rachel Carson, we are children of that era and we never lost it" (Hatch 3-3-89). Representative Ralph Rosenberg saw HF-631 as being based on the shared ethic of "stewardship" or preserving the quality of the environment for future generations to enjoy

(Rosenberg 4-7-89). Rosenberg, who has been proposing environmental protection legislation in the Iowa House since 1983, affirmed that the states need to "step in where the (federal) executive branch is neglecting" (Rosenberg 4-7-89), and be the main policy initiators for environmental protection.

Concern was also voiced among proponents of the bill about the long and short term health effects of agricultural chemicals upon the people of Iowa. Sue Mullins saw her support of HF-631 as being tied in with her concern for health issues (Mullins 4-13-89). Mullins, whose district has numerous agricultural drainage wells, hoped that the research-and-education-oriented bill would give her constituents a chance to deal with ADW problem without strict new regulations from the state.

Rep. David Osterberg said that groundwater pollution is a serious threat to Iowa's health, and points to several incidents of health problems across the state that may have been caused by agricultural chemicals in the groundwater. In Osterberg's home district, cattle in the town of Holy Cross had begun to die from what Osterberg believes is contaminated water. He hoped that "by acting quickly, we can avoid some serious health problems..." (Osterberg 2-24-89).

Many of the six main proponents of the bill express distrust of business interests in the area of dealing with pollution. When asked about the chemical industry lobbying effort over HF-631, Rep. Hatch saw it as a contest between "what's good for people versus what's good for

business..." He added, "They [the chemical lobby] chose what's good for business and they lost" (Hatch 3-3-89).

For a number of reasons, including environmental sentiment and constituent concern, six Iowa House Representatives made a strong and concerted effort to bring an important piece of groundwater protection legislation to passage. They authored the bill, argued its passage on the House floor, and were instrumental in its passage. Other legislators are mentioned when observers discuss the introduction and passage of HF-631, but the "key six" consistently appear as the main driving force behind the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act.

#### The Pesticide and Fertilizer Industry

The provisions of the groundwater bill would affect the well-being of the chemical and fertilizer industry more than any other sector of the farm economy. The bill provides new taxes and regulations that could reduce the size and profitability of the agricultural chemical industry. Opposition to HF-631 came from both the Iowa Fertilizer and Chemical Association (IFCA) and from national manufacturers of agricultural chemicals such as the Dow and Monsanto chemical companies.

Industry objectives for groundwater legislation, as told by several industry officials and lobbyists are, in the short term, to avoid the new expenses and regulation that HF-631 includes, and in the long term, to preserve the viability of the agricultural chemicals industry.

While the provisions of HF-631 would cost the industry from three to five million dollars (Etchin 2-24-89), probably the chief motivation for the IFCA's aggressive lobbying effort was long-term concern over the future of their industry in the face of new environmental legislation.

The industry clearly felt that the groundwater bill was the first attempt by environmentalist legislators to reduce and ultimately eliminate the use of agricultural chemicals.

Dr. Richard Fawcett, and ex-IFCA board member, states that since the main proponents of the bill believe that all pesticides are leeching into the groundwater from regular use, the next logical step for them would be to try to eliminate the use of pesticides completely (Fawcett 3-3-89).

IFCA leaders note that the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture is charged with conducting research on alternatives to the use of pesticides and fertilizers. The concept of "organic farming" or farming without the use of synthetic chemicals is popular among many environmentalists, and is seen as a threat by most chemical dealers. Representative David Osterberg, who strongly advocates a substantial reduction in the use of chemicals, suggested the fertilizer lobby does not want farmers to "look twice at the use of chemicals and fertilizers...and fear the state being able to spend some money to look at alternatives to the use of more and more chemicals" (Osterberg 2-24-89).

The IFCA disagreed with the bill's presumption of the dangers of agricultural chemicals in groundwater, and of the identification of agricultural chemicals as the main source of pollution in Iowa's groundwater. Industry officials claim the research done by the Iowa DNR conducted on the state's groundwater supply did not prove a link between agricultural chemicals and groundwater contamination, and that there is no conclusive proof that certain pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers mentioned in the DNR study are harmful to human health (Etchin 2-24-89).

Winton Etchin, chief lobbyist for the IFCA, wonders why agricultural chemicals have been singled out for regulation when pollution from industrial sources is in his view far more serious. He asked, "Why is the state out swatting ants when the elephants are running wild?" (Etchin 2-24-89). Etchin expressed industry resentment that the IFCA is not to be represented on the boards of the centers of research created by the law, even though the fertilizer industry is being charged 5 million dollars to support these institutions.

National chemical manufacturers had two objectives in mind in lobbying the bill. As specified by Dr. Fuggett of National Agricultural Chemicals they are:

1. The national manufacturers, such as the Dow and Monsanto chemical companies, hoped to influence the Iowa legislature to include standards of toxicity that would allow some level of pollution in the state's groundwater. The chemical industry as a whole was quite critical of the bill's "non-degradation goal".



2. The major chemical manufacturers were also concerned with the issue of liability for the costs of contamination sites. They lobbied heavily to avoid provisions in the bill which made the manufacturer liable for the cost of cleaning up groundwater polluted by chemicals purchased from chemical manufacturers (Fuggett 4-10-89).

Iowa externalities-alternative groups Three major environmental groups were mentioned as being active players in the lobbying effort for passage of the bill. They are the Sierra Club, the Audubon Council, and the Izaak Walton League. Iowa's ex-al groups, state and local chapters of national environmentalist organizations, are not considered to be very well financed or organized. Their membership is composed of a relatively small number of activists acting out of personal concern for environmental issues.

The provisions of HF-631 were quite compatible with the environmental objectives of these groups and they welcomed its introduction and passage. Environmental groups felt little progress would be achieved for environmental protection nationally under the conservative Reagan Administration. The focus of environmental activism may have shifted to efforts to influence state regulation of pollution such as the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act.

All three of Iowa's significant environmental groups expressed strong support of the bill. They believe groundwater contamination is a serious problem which could reach a crisis situation in the near future. While the environmental groups did not set the agenda for HF-

631, they were strong advocates of the bill mobilizing interest group resources to fight for its passage.

While the environmental groups were comfortable with HF-631, they worried about the bill becoming "watered down" by the demands of the political process. They hoped to play a "watchdog" role, using their interest group resources to try to maintain the provisions of the bill they considered to be most crucial to combatting groundwater pollution. Two major components of HF-631 lobbied heavily by environmental groups were the maintenance of the bill's "nondegradation goal" and the assignment of a funding source that provides both money for researching the problem and penalties for polluters.

Environmental groups endorsed the bill's "non-degradation goal" with much enthusiasm. In an Audubon Council memo, environmental activist Cindy Hildebrand wrote, "Given our incomplete knowledge of the effects of individual contaminants and combination of contaminants, and given the expense of cleaning up polluted groundwater, Iowa's proposed code goal of preventing further contamination of the quality of the groundwater in the state is well-justified" (Hildebrand, Iowa Audubon Council Memo, C.A., 1988). Environmentalists worried about the imposition of standards that would allow continued pollution of groundwater at a lower level. Tolerance of a certain level of pollution would allow new pollutants in areas that have a contamination level below an established standard.

Cindy Hildebrand of the Audubon Society noted how the Iowa environmental groups considered the assignment of a funding source for

the provisions of the groundwater bill to be important (Hildebrand 4-5-89). Hildebrand hoped the major financial burden of funding HF-631 would fall on the parties who are polluting. This funding source not only provides funding for research and education, but also provides a deterrent from further polluting. Chris Robbins, in a Sierra Club "Legislative Alert" wrote, "HF-631 represents sound economics. It raises money to fight pollution from the sources of pollution. Taxes and fees on hazardous material will discourage overuse of those materials" (Sierra Club, Iowa chapter, Cedar Prairie Group, Legislative Alert 1987).

#### Agricultural Interest Groups

Iowa Farm Bureau Federation      The Farm Bureau is considered by both Democratic and Republican staff at the Iowa Statehouse to be the largest and most powerful agricultural interest group in Iowa.

The Bureau preferred the educational and research approach in combatting the problem of groundwater contamination. Spokesman Ted Yanocek said the IFBF is quite comfortable with the establishment of the groundwater research centers and the tougher licensing requirements for pesticide applicators and did not lobby to defeat these provisions of the bill (Yanocek 3-9-89).

The primary objectives of the Farm Bureau with regard to HF-631 were to lessen the costs of groundwater clean-up for the individual farmer. The issue of strongest importance was the protection of

individual farmers from liability costs for the clean up of polluted groundwater.

Farm Bureau lobbying also centered on the issue of agricultural drainage wells, hoping to avoid tougher regulations that would strongly affect farmers in north-central Iowa. As IFBF spokesmen Richard Naeve testified at a House hearing in March 1987, "The legislators must recognize that by simply outlawing the use of drainage wells, extreme hardship may result, less drastic courses of action should be investigated" (Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, Spokesmen 3-21-87).

Commodity groups Iowa's four largest commodity groups, the Iowa Pork Producers, the Iowa Soybean Association, the Iowa Cornrowers, and the Iowa Cattlemen's Association share a communal lobbyist who is permanently stationed at the statehouse to express commodity group concerns to the state legislature.

Commodity group lobbying on HF-631 was quite limited, because these groups tend to be interested in issues more specific to their particular interests. David Larson of the Iowa Soybean Association explained that his organization is more of an "association" than a lobby and generally defers to the Farm Bureau on issues of a more political nature (Larson 5-1-89).

On the issue of groundwater pollution, commodity groups expressed the need to balance the protection of their production resources (water, soil, air) with the need to maintain profitability. Continued contamination of the groundwater with which Iowa's producers water their livestock and crops is seen as a serious threat, but the cost of

dealing with this problem would be financed partly from Iowa's producer industries.

Commodity group leaders feel that the research documenting the problem is not yet complete and they support the research and educational aspects of the bill. Larson strongly supports tougher licensing requirements for pesticide applicators, and most commodity groups prefer more demonstration projects like the Big Springs effort. The producer organizations would not have been as comfortable with a more regulatory bill, which they feel would have been based on incomplete data. For the same reason, David Larson of the Soybean Producers would not have supported the introduction of standards of toxicity into the bill.

Maynard James, head of the Iowa Cattlemen's Association, stated that his organization did not consider the issue of groundwater pollution to be relevant to the beef industry (James 5-2-89). James feels that the beef industry is more threatened by environmental protection regulation that might block access for watering cattle at streams or the acquisition of grazing land for conservational use.

James suggests that the Cattlemen's Association is probably more responsive to proposals for environmental protection because his industry is less detrimental to soil and water resources than the row-cropping industries, such as those based on corn or soybean. He sees the possibility of the cattlemen building bridges to Iowa ex-al groups in the future, especially on the issue of soil conservation. He explained, "Our idea of soil conservation is a grass-covered hill with

a cow running across it" (James 5-2-89). The Cattlemen's Association did not see a coincidence of interest with the chemical industry or the row-cropping commodity groups on the groundwater bill and did not take an active part in the lobbying effort.

Clearly Iowa's commodity groups did not feel threatened by HF-631. As long as the bill approached the issue with a mostly educational and research approach, the major commodity groups did not actively oppose its passage.

## CHAPTER 9. THE LOBBYING EFFORT

The debate in the Iowa House and Senate over the groundwater bill was the subject of much lobbying by interest groups. Interest group lobbyists came to the Iowa state capitol in Des Moines to monitor the debate on the House and Senate floor, meet with legislators to discuss their concerns, and to testify at the House and Senate hearings.

The issue of groundwater pollution is a very complex topic on which few legislators were very knowledgeable. The main source of information for most of the legislators was the House and Senate hearings that discussed the topic of groundwater contamination. Lobbyists for both sides presented research findings and information at these hearings.

Lobbying in support of the bill was mostly done by the "key six" legislators with some help from Iowa ex-al groups. DNR personnel testified at hearings to defend the research that formed the basis of the groundwater bill.

Lobbying strongly against the bill was the Iowa Fertilizer and Chemical Association along with lobbyists dispatched to Iowa from national chemical manufacturers such as Dow, Monsanto, and others. The Iowa Farm Bureau Federation and the major Iowa commodity groups also lobbied certain provisions of HF-631.

## Group Lobbying on HF-631

IFCA lobbying The Iowa Fertilizer and Chemical Association lobbied heavily to defeat or seriously "water down" the Iowa

Groundwater Protection Act. The IFCA strategy was in two parts, to find alternative sources of technical information to contradict DNR research findings and some direct pressure on state legislators from fertilizer dealers and farmers.

IFCA lobbyists attended the House and Senate hearings and presented research findings to state legislators. An important source of alternative information on which they relied is Dr. Richard Fawcett, an Iowa State University professor of etymology. Fawcett was highly critical of the Iowa Groundwater Protection Strategy and of the bill in general. He claims the authors of the bill did not conduct any alternative research to the findings of the DNR studies. He said, "They only listened to the DNR and disregarded everyone else" (Fawcett 3-3-89).

Fawcett's findings are quite different from the research forming the basis of the Iowa Groundwater Protection Strategy. He explained: "In my opinion, many misconceptions exist about how pesticides can contaminate groundwater. These misconceptions may have a harmful effect on efforts to protect groundwater." Fawcett does not think normal use of pesticides causes the groundwater pollution problem: "It is my scientific opinion that leeching with normal use does not ordinarily cause measurable contamination of wells....," and "Reductions in the amount of chemicals applied should not be expected to have measurable positive impact on groundwater quality, if leeching with normal use is not the most important mechanism of contamination for most pesticides used in Iowa" (Fawcett 1988). He points to an Illinois



study in 1984 which supports his findings that agricultural chemicals enter the groundwater only when the soil is very sandy or the pesticide has been applied in very high concentration, much higher than with normal use.

Dr. Fawcett, an IFCA board member and ISU extension employee, was not allowed to testify at the House or Senate hearings, but says he provided information and training with which IFCA lobbyists were able to lobby the bill.

IFCA lobbyists did not limit themselves to the presentation of supportive research findings. In mid-March 400 IFCA members converged on the Iowa State capitol to express their concerns. Fertilizer dealers were encouraged to contact their state representatives and lobby against HF-631. Some critics suggest the IFCA conducted an intense pressure campaign against the bill. Chris Robbins of the Sierra Club remembered meeting individual farmers and hearing them speak out against the bill with the same "canned answers", which she suggested were provided by IFCA lobbyists attempting to mobilize opposition to the bill at the grassroots level (Robbins 4-13-89). Several of the "key six" expressed sentiment that the IFCA was out to convince legislators to defeat the bill with misinformation and threats to defeat these legislators in the next election.

National chemical companies flew in technical advisors and experts to Iowa to monitor the situation and do some lobbying. The Iowa bill was on the cutting edge of a national trend and the major chemical companies considered the Iowa bill to be a test case for future

legislation. Manufacturers provided some technical and research help to the IFCA (Etchin 2-24-89). The national manufacturers organized a meeting with ex-al groups that Chris Robbins of the Sierra Club says could have been to "size up the opposition for the future" (Robbins, 1989).

Dr. Robert Fuggett of the National Agricultural Chemicals Association, a trade association of the large pesticide and herbicide manufacturers, was one of these outside experts. Fuggett saw his role as a technical advisor to chemical industry lobbyists. Fuggett and the national chemical lobby attempted to get standards of toxicity introduced in the Iowa bill. "The Iowa bill was an absolutist bill which is not practical in today's day and age. Man cannot live on this earth without making footprints" (Fuggett 4-10-89). Fuggett's main message to the Iowa state legislators was—"the poison is in the dose", and that low levels of agricultural chemicals in groundwater are not dangerous to public health.

Fuggett believes the groundwater conflict in Iowa had become so interlaced with politics and emotion that science took a backseat, and he also felt that his presentations were not given fair consideration by Iowa lawmakers. Fuggett and other chemical industry officials met with lawmakers on several occasions to discuss the bill.

IFCA lobbying over HF-631 was criticized by some involved in the bill. Critics claimed the IFCA greatly exaggerated the regulatory provisions of the bill to gain support in defeating it.

Representatives Sue Mullins, Janet Adams, and David Osterberg filed a

complaint with the House Ethics Committee against IFCA lobbyist Winton Etchin for sending a letter to his association claiming the Leopold Center was a study center for organic farming. Osterberg and Mullins are pro-"sustainable agriculture", a position which advocates the reduction, but not elimination of agricultural chemicals (Des Moines Register 4-10-87). Etchin denies ever lying and defends the IFCA lobbying. "We only tried to sit down with the legislators and talk sense, but they were not listening" (Etchin 2-24-89). It is safe to say that the IFCA did consider the defeat of the bill to be very important and used much of their interest group resources to accomplish that goal.

#### Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF)

Possessing strong physical resources and a wealth of experience in Iowa state politics, the Farm Bureau successfully lobbied the issue of farmers liability in the House and Senate. The Farm Bureau endorsed final passage of HF-631, after the House had voted 99-0 to protect farmers from liability claims. Efforts by the Farm Bureau to soften the bill's language in regard to agricultural drainage wells may have had some impact on that section of HF-631.

Farm Bureau spokesman Ted Yanocek notes IFBF lobbying efforts were instrumental in freeing up the oil-overcharge account funds to help lessen the cost of the bill to Iowa's agricultural sector (Yanocek 3-9-89).

It is clear that the IFBF and the IFCA were not in close cooperation in lobbying the groundwater bill. While the IFCA came out strongly to defeat the bill, the IFBF pursued a much more limited strategy of attempting to limit the expense to Iowa's farmers. After the main battle for this objective had been won, IFBF lobbyist withdrew from the debate and endorsed passage. As a large and diverse organization representing thousands of individual farmers, the IFBF saw protection of its constituents as its major goal in this round of groundwater protection legislation.

#### Commodity Groups

Iowa commodity groups did not strongly lobby for defeat or passage of HF-631. Commodity groups spokesmen report that their organizations did monitor the bill and they participated in an informational network of concerned groups sharing educational information to better understand the technical aspects of the bill and the issue of groundwater contamination (James 5-2-89, Williamson 5-2-89, Larson 5-1-89).

#### Iowa Ex-al Groups

Ex-al lobbying for HF-631 was done by a small number of self-financed "volunteer" activists. Lacking a stable of full time lobbyists may have hurt the environmental lobby on the groundwater issue.

Although Iowa environmental groups were able to dispatch a small number of lobbyists to the Statehouse to lobby in favor of their

objectives, they lacked the financial resources to match the direct lobbying effort of the chemical industry.

The ex-al groups relied on indirect methods to influence the lawmakers. The Sierra Club and the Audubon Society concentrated on marshalling support at the "grassroots" level to pressure the legislature. Sierra Club literature urged its members to fight for the passage of the bill through the mobilization of their "human resources". Sierra Club members received "legislative alerts" explaining the importance of the bill and requested its members to contact their legislator.

Environmental groups courted media attention with a press conference in mid-March explaining the importance of the bill in protecting groundwater. Izaak Walton League national president, Carl Bratmul, an Iowa resident, feels his group may have had more influence in helping the DNR and the "key six" legislators with some technical expertise on the topic of groundwater pollution. Bratmul notes that Izaak Walton League members are prominent on advisory groups dealing with water pollution and helped provide technical expertise to proponents of groundwater legislation, including Groundwater Protection Bill author Paul Johnson (Bratmul 4-7-89).

While the support of Iowa's ex-al groups was welcomed by the "key six", the lobbying effort by Iowa environmental groups was not considered crucial to the passage of HF-631. The environmental groups were helpful, but in Rep. Hatch's view, "the strength of it (the lobbying effort) came from the legislators themselves" (Hatch 3-3-89).

Ralph Rosenberg felt the "key six" were able to use staff work to develop their own lobbying expertise on the issue (Rosenberg 4-7-89).

#### Why HF-631 Passed

In retrospect, all four of the "key six" legislators felt that HF-631 was passed into law with most of its key provisions intact. A few points may have been lost in the political process but the legislators express satisfaction with the results.

It is probably not accurate to credit any argument or any single reason for the passage of the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act. The passage of this legislation is due to a mixture of several factors, whose influence this chapter will attempt to explain.

#### Public Opinion

The strongest explanation given by many observers was public opinion. Ralph Rosenberg states that groundwater purity "is a mom and apple pie issue, right up there with the American flag" (Rosenberg 4-7-89). Four of the five polls taken on the issue of groundwater showed a strong majority favoring groundwater protection (Hoyer 1987). Iowa DNR official George Hallberg states that the main driving force behind the bill was public opinion, and from his vantage point, "it was obvious many legislators were hearing from home on this issue and did not want to go home without having done something positive on the groundwater problem" (Hallberg 4-10-89). Hallberg strongly asserts public opinion was "overwhelmingly" in favor of the bill. Hallberg also notes the response that the DNR received at hearings that were

held in 1985 and 1986 that gauged public concern over the groundwater contamination issue.

A study of the DNR of public opinion on the groundwater contamination issue produced results that strongly support Hallburg's assertion. When Iowans were asked how serious they considered the problem of groundwater pollution to be, 44 percent responded "very serious", 42 percent "somewhat serious" with only 11 percent answering that it is a "minor problem". Of these sampled, 63 percent volunteered "agricultural chemicals" as the main source of groundwater pollution in Iowa. Eighty-three percent of those sampled wished to see the state take stronger action on the problem of groundwater pollution (Environmental Protection Commission 1987). There was less support for a more regulatory approach in this survey with only 36 percent supporting tighter restrictions on farm pesticides. No proposed regulatory solution gained a majority of affirmative votes in this study. Public opinion, as sampled by this survey in 1987, seemed to support the objectives of the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act, while preferring non-regulatory solutions. The bill acknowledges this position by granting there is a problem with agricultural chemicals in Iowa's groundwater, and moving to address it in a mostly nonregulatory manner.

Dick Frieberg, an IFCA member and fertilizer dealer in rural Fairfield, expressed a belief that rural Iowans have a very strong sentiment that their water should be pure as possible and were not very receptive to suggestions that minimal amounts of contamination were within a margin of safety (Frieberg 4-24-89).

Even critics of the legislation admit that the public was probably pro-groundwater bill, but assert that uneven treatment from the media may have been a contributing factor to public opinion. Winton Etchin of the IFCA said public opinion was shaped by "misinformation circulated by certain people and printed as gospel in the media" (Etchin 2-24-89). Dr. Fuggett of the National Agricultural Chemicals Association, expressed concern that "the public at large is not well-educated on the topic and is unduly alarmed about groundwater pollution. With this strong sense of alarm over the topic, Fuggett felt that the public was incapable of looking at the issue objectively. "If they don't want something in their groundwater, they don't want something in their groundwater" (Fuggett 4-10-89).

Media attention to the issue helped focus public attention on the issue and increase the pressure on the legislature to pass protective legislation. IFCA president Larry Thompson thinks the issue may not have risen to the policy forefront if "The Des Moines Register had not taken the issue under its wing" (Thompson 4-10-89). The Register raised concern on the groundwater pollution program with a five part series of articles in early 1986, and published several editorials supporting groundwater protection legislation. A great majority of the parties concerned with HF-631 consider public opinion to be the most crucial factor in the bill's passage.



### A Backlash Against IFCA Lobbying

The lack of success that the chemical lobby had in defeating the bill might suggest a backlash against IFCA lobbying. The IFCA's strong and vociferous opposition to the bill, pressure tactics, and utilization of outside lobbyists has received strong criticism from many observers and could have hurt the IFCA efforts to defeat the bill.

Dave Larson of the Iowa Soybean Association thinks the IFCA's utilization of lobbyists from outside Iowa hurt their credibility in trying to defeat the bill in the Iowa State legislature (Larson 5-1-89). A number of the "key six" legislators expressed strong criticism, not only for its intent, but also for the way it was carried out. Representative Jack Hatch claimed the IFCA lobbying was "amateurish" and "the IFCA just sent people up here to speak against the bill without adequate information, so they could easily be discounted" (Hatch 3-3-89). Sue Mullins called the effort "sleazy", and asserted that the main IFCA lobbyist deliberately lied and misled their dealers about the contents of the bill. "It was one of the few times I have seen a lobbyist lie, and legislators do not take that too well" (Mullins 4-13-89).

Representative David Osterberg suggested the strong IFCA lobbying effort backfired against the bill with regard to public opinion: "The people saw a strong bill going through the legislative process, and saw that those who were trying desperately to defeat it were those who were making the most money from the sale of more and more chemicals" (Osterberg 2-24-89). Osterberg asserts that the IFCA has made itself

"the most untrustworthy group in Iowa by continuing to deny that there was a problem" (Osterberg 2-24-89).

Even 1987 IFCA president Larry Thompson, who had a strong role in mapping the IFCA lobbying effort, expresses some regret about the strategy and wishes the IFCA could have used a more information oriented approach. If Thompson had the chance to lobby HF-631 again, he said the IFCA would be more likely to bring in more scientists to educate the legislators on the issue rather than lobbyists and dealers to apply pressure to individual legislators (Thompson 4-10-89). It seems clear that IFCA lobbying efforts were by no means effective in defeating HF-631.

#### The Issue Specific Nature of the Iowa Farm Lobby

This made a united effort impossible for opponents of HF-631. Each component of the agricultural business sector had its own objectives in the lobbying effort, and there was little cooperation and coordination. Spokesmen for the soybean, corn, and cattlemen associations all assert that they usually limit themselves to issues that directly influence their industry, and they felt that the Groundwater Bill was not considered a major threat to their well-being. 1987 IFCA President Larry Thompson feels that the rest of the Iowa farm lobby was not active or supportive of the IFCA's attempt to defeat the bill: "It was us out lobbying against the bill and everyone else has a real hands-off approach" (Thompson 4-10-89).

The bill would have added some extra expense to all sectors of the local farm economy and the degree of opposition varied with the degree of new taxes or regulations imposed. Most militant in opposition to the bill was the IFCA, while the Farm Bureau and Commodity groups lobbied a few specific points of concern to them. When the bill finally came to a vote, Winton Etchin of the IFCA notes, "In the last closing days of the legislature, it was us against the world and we did not come out looking too good" (Etchin 2-24-89).

Perhaps the differing segments of the farm lobby did not have a coincidence of interest. As commodity group representatives have suggested, the producer groups feel a strong need to preserve their production resources of land and water, something input organizations like the IFCA may not consider as important (Larson 5-1-89).

George Hallberg of the DNR suggests the agricultural industry may be "the new boys on the block when it comes to regulation" and their inexperience may have been a factor in the lack of success in lobbying HF-631 (Hallberg 4-10-89). Thompson and Etchin both foresee the producer organizations and the Farm Bureau moving into more active opposition to groundwater legislation as the future bills become more regulatory.

Passage of HF-631 may have been aided in the political process by the legislative actions of the "key six". The "key six" legislators have been seen by observers as having expertise on the issue and persuasiveness in their arguments for passage. Larry Thompson suggests that most legislators were not knowledgeable on the issue of

groundwater pollution, related well to the "key six" legislators, and were easily swayed by the "key six" legislators' appearance of technical expertise on the issue (Thompson 4-10-89). The support of powerful House Speaker Don Avenson was helpful in gaining the support of a majority of the House and Senate. Partisan consideration may be factored in because the authors of the groundwater bill were mostly Democrats, and the Iowa Democratic party holds a majority in the House of Representatives.

CHAPTER 10. THE FUTURE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE  
GROUNDWATER PROTECTION ACT

The passage of HF-631 was merely the beginning of the road for groundwater protection in Iowa. HF-631, by its research-oriented, nonregulatory nature, leaves much room in the future for embellishment.

The issue of standards is unresolved, and it is still a point of contention in 1989. Hearings held in 1988 brought veterans of HF-631 into the policy arena once again. Environmentalists are again hoping for non-degradation while the chemical lobby is hoping for the imposition of EPA standards, which are considered much more lenient than most state standards.

Yanochek of the Farm Bureau is critical of recent groundwater protection proposals, and is concerned that the state may be shifting to a more regulatory approach. The state does seem to be focusing on the regulation of one chemical, Atrazine. Atrazine is believed to have the greatest potential for causing cancer of the agricultural chemicals used in Iowa.

Chemical industry officials believe that as future research is conducted, the results will vindicate agricultural chemicals as not being a major source of groundwater contamination. Dr. Fawcett thinks the focus on atrazine shows that the state is backing away from its emphasis on trying to regulate all fertilizers and chemicals. Industry officials hope the state will begin a statewide groundwater monitoring plan that they feel will identify more serious sources of

contamination, like industrial solvents and private septic systems (Etchin 2-24-89, Thompson 4-10-89, Frieberg 4-24-89).

The "key six" legislators and the main environmental groups clearly do not consider the battle for groundwater protection to be over. The Iowa General Assembly moved in '88 and '89 to deal with polluted surface water with a plan for filter strips around streams and rivers. Proponents of HF-631 note that many who opposed the groundwater bill are now pleased with the results. The "key six" legislators all express satisfaction with the implementation of the bill. The legislators do not rule out the prospect of much more regulatory legislation in the future. Ralph Rosenberg feels that HF-631 merely created the apparatus for dealing with groundwater pollution in the future.

## CHAPTER 11. THE "KEY SIX" ELECTION RACES

One of a lobbyist's key levers in influencing an elected official is the promise to help him or her retain the seat in the next election, or the threat to work for the legislator's defeat.

All of the "key six" legislators seats were up for election in 1988, and the strong stand they took on the groundwater bill would have some impact on their re-election campaigns.

Interest groups have two major resources in influencing the outcomes of elections, one resource is the contribution of campaign funds, and the other is contribution by group members of time and effort to an election campaign (Ornstein and Elder 1978, 70-73).

Iowa's interest group participation in the 1988 House of Representatives varied from group to group, as certain groups came out strongly in supporting candidates, and other groups observed a firm principle of nonparticipation in elections. Still other interest groups were limited in their ability to influence elections by lack of financial resources or by a lack of organizational skills.

The most significant interest group activity in the 1988 house elections was the decision by the IFCA to actively try to defeat the "key six" legislators. This chapter will describe the role interest groups may have had in the "key six" contests.

Activities of Iowa ex-al groups      The Izaak Walton League and the Iowa Audubon Council do not endorse candidates or take part in elections. Members of these groups may have taken part in the "key

six" election races but on a strictly unofficial basis. Audubon activist Cindy Hildebrand endorsed Rep. Ralph Rosenberg for re-election. Discussions with Hildebrand and Walton League President Bratmul suggest that many of their members are supportive of the "key six" legislators, but there was no concerted effort by members of these two groups to help them win re-election.

Sierra Club chapters were more active in trying to influence the "key six" races. Sue Mullins reports that Club members provided time and effort in her campaign. Chris Robbins of the Sierra Club said that some Sierra Club chapters sent out literature supporting the re-election of "key six" legislators and that some chapters made official endorsements of some of the "key six". Robbins reported the effort was not co-ordinated across the state, and that each chapter was acting on its own behalf. Robbins said that no Sierra Club funds went to re-election campaigns, as the organizations do not have the financial resources to contribute.

Robbins also suggests that candidates wish to play down support from environmental groups. The activities of many environmental groups are somewhat controversial and candidates often wish to keep from being associated publicly with certain environmentalist groups.

#### Agricultural Business Groups

Iowa Farm Bureau Federation With a campaign war chest of 124 thousand dollars (see Appendix B) the IFBF was one of the major PAC contributors in Iowa. IFBF spokesman Ted Yanocek denied the



Groundwater Bill was a major issue in influencing IFBF contributions or endorsements. However, the IFBF did contribute substantial funds to many of the challengers to the "key six". Generally Farm Bureau contributions are given to Republican candidates, and the contributions to the challengers to the "key six" do not seem excessive in comparison to IFBF contributions to Republican candidates statewide. No IFBF contributions went to the "key six" including Sue Mullins, a Republican. It seems apparent that while the IFBF did not strongly oppose the passage of the groundwater bill, their campaign contributions suggest they would be pleased if the "key six" proponents of the bill were defeated and replaced by candidates the IFBF finds more friendly to IFBF interests.

Iowa Fertilizer and Chemical Association Just as the IFCA was the most active of Iowa's special interests in lobbying the bill, the organization was also quite active in the 1988 election. The IFCA worked to defeat each of the "key six" by giving early support to prospective opponents of the "key six", including direct financial contributions and contributions of IFCA personnel to opposition campaigns.

Ex-IFCA President Larry Thompson described the 1988 IFCA election effort as (1) Working with the Republican Party to find prospective opponents to the "key six", (2) educating them on the groundwater issue, (3) providing financial assistance with direct IFCA financial contributions, and (4) encouraging individual fertilizer dealers to contribute time and money to these candidates' campaigns.

The IFCA contributed 500 dollars to the campaigns of three challengers, as follows: to the campaigns of Charles Hurley of Fayette who ran against House speaker Don Avenson, Tom Deerburg who opposed Representative David Osterberg, and Robert Christianson of Humboldt, who defeated Sue Mullins. The three other opposition candidates refused IFCA financial contributions. It is harder to estimate the financial contributions of individual fertilizer dealers, as the Iowa Election Commission records do not specify contributions from private citizens. Ex-IFCA president Larry Thompson estimates that 25-30 percent of the IFCA membership was active in trying to influence the 1988 house and senate elections (Thompson 4-10-89).

Winton Etchin of the IFCA, denies creating a "hit list" and he saw the IFCA's role in this campaign as no different than the PAC contributions of other interest groups. Etchin said that the IFCA realized the difficulty of defeating incumbent legislators and asserts the objectives of this campaign were merely to "keep them at home and keep them campaigning..." (Etchin 2-24-89). Rep. Osterberg asserted the IFCA lobbying was based on "scaring legislators into thinking that if they supported the groundwater bill, they would lose the next election" (Osterberg 2-24-89), so perhaps the IFCA wished to show they could inflict some damage on the political fortunes of those who had supported groundwater protection legislation. A successful campaign to defeat the "key six" could not only have removed strong protagonists of groundwater legislation, but also could have served as a warning to others considering supporting future legislation.

The IFCA campaign definitely suffered a low success rate, as five of the six legislators were re-elected to another term. Furthermore, a comparison of the 1986 and 1988 races show little difference in the electoral fortunes of Rosenberg, Hatch, and Johnson. The other three of the big six did have greater difficulty in 1988, with Osterberg facing an opponent for the first time in four years and Don Avenson having his margin of victory narrowed considerably. Only Sue Mullins, the lone Republican among the "key six", lost her re-election bid. Ralph Rosenberg and Jack Hatch say they used the IFCA opposition to their advantage, and that the opposition from opponents of the groundwater bill was a plus in their campaigns.

While the IFCA campaign effort was unsuccessful in defeating individual legislators, it did have some limited success in imposing a political burden on several of the "key six" legislators. Rep. David Osterberg felt he would not have had a well-financed opponent without the campaign of the IFCA and the rest of the agricultural lobby's opposition to his re-election.

A comparison of the "key six" re-election races with six other House races involving incumbent Democrats chosen at random suggests that the opponents to the "key six" were definitely better financed than other Republican challengers (Table 2 and Appendix A). The challengers to the "key six" received large contributions from Farm Bureau and three received substantial direct contributions from the IFCA. A direct link with the groundwater bill would be very difficult to prove, as undoubtedly other issues may have influenced this figure.

Yet early IFCA funding may have enabled three of the opponents to the "key six" to launch credible campaigns which attracted support from other PACs and private citizens. It is also difficult to trace the amount of financial support that the opposition candidates may have received from individual fertilizer dealers. Rep. David Osterberg suggested much of the fertilizer industry contributions to his opponents may have been "laundered" to avoid negative publicity.

In retrospect, it is hard to see how a "hit list" to defeat incumbent legislators could have worked. The IFCA lacked the financial ability to bankroll this sort of activity. Says Etchin, "We are a small PAC, when you have Farm Bureau out there with 100,000 dollars, our 10,000 dollars doesn't cut a lot of ice" (Etchin 2-24-89). The IFCA could have provided the "seed money" for an opposition campaign to grow and attract other sources of support, but even that would be offset by the benefits of incumbency and support from PACs and interest groups traditionally friendly to the Iowa Democratic Party.

#### The Races

Table 2 clearly shows that the campaigns to defeat the incumbent "six" did attract considerable financial support from private donors and established PACs with ties to the Republican Party. A comparison of the "key six" opponents with six other Republican challengers suggests the "key six" campaigns received greater financial support than the other Republican challengers. The challengers often outspent the incumbent "six", but the incumbents seem to have an edge in

contributions from PACs. The races seem partisan contents with Republican candidates receiving funds from business PACs and the National Rifle Association, Taxpayers United and Democrats countering with money from the major labor unions.

This typical pattern is best demonstrated in the race for the 28th district between House Speaker Don Avenson and Republican challenger Charles Hurley. Several residents of Don Avenson's district assert that PACs generally shied away from opposing Avenson, who holds the powerful "gate-keeper" role in the Iowa House, deciding what legislation will reach the floor. Few PACs would risk offending a powerful legislator like Avenson, who outspent Hurley by a wide margin.

Observers of Avenson's battle for re-election against IFCA-financed Charles Hurley of Fayette felt that the contest turned on traditional urban-rural issues, with Avenson winning the blue-collar vote in the city of Oelwein, and Hurley receiving a majority in the rural areas.

Harold Brinkman of Nevada, who opposed Ralph Rosenberg, asserted the IFCA took a strong interest in his campaign, but he did not take any campaign funds from the IFCA. Both Rosenberg and Brinkman deny that the groundwater bill was a factor in the election. The population of the district is largely nonagricultural as the main employer is Iowa State University in Ames.

Jack Hatch stated that the IFCA campaign helped him in his urban Des Moines district. Hatch called attention to the IFCA "targeting" in

his campaign literature. However his opponent, Mike Conley, did not accept IFCA campaign contributions.

David Osterberg felt he paid a political price for his groundwater activism, facing a well-financed opponent in Tom Deeburg of Tipton. "I earned a strong opponent who spent three times as much as my last one." Osterberg concedes having to campaign more and winning by a smaller margin (Osterberg 2-24-89). Jack Hatch thinks Osterberg and Johnson paid a heavy political price in their largely rural districts because "their opponents may not have necessarily spoke out against their stand on the groundwater bill, but suddenly their opponents began to infer that they were anti-agricultural, anti-rural, anti-farmer, and anti-Iowa" (Hatch 3-3-89). Both Johnson and Osterberg retained their seats by a comfortable margin.

The only "key six" casualty of the 1988 election, Sue Mullins, denies that her support for the groundwater bill was the major cause of her losing the primary race for the Republican nomination to Robert Christianson of Humboldt. Mullins notes that she won Pocahontas County, which had the most agricultural drainage wells and the worst groundwater contamination problem in her district. She does feel the IFCA played a role in her campaign by heavily financing Robert Christianson. Mullins attributes her defeat to apathy among many Republicans in the 15th district. Conservative Christianson suggests Mullins, a strong advocate of abortion rights, was much too liberal for her constituency, and the groundwater bill was just one of many issues that hurt her re-election bid (Christianson 3-30-89). Christianson

lost in the general election by a wide margin to Democrat Dolores Mertz of Humboldt.

Election results suggest the IFCA efforts had a very limited affect on the electoral fate of the "key six". Perhaps a political price was exacted by making certain "key six" legislators work much harder for their re-election and possibly facilitating in the defeat of Sue Mullins. However, five of the six legislators have survived and are currently spearheading the drive for strengthened groundwater legislation. If the IFCA hoped to deter these legislators from this goal, it certainly did not achieve this objective.

## CHAPTER 12. CONCLUSIONS

The battle over the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act provides insight into the workings of interest groups and the policy process of environmental politics.

The actions of the IFCA support Truman's "proliferation hypothesis." Truman had suggested the growing complexity of the American economy has stimulated interest group activity by the newly specialized and differentiated segments of American society. The IFCA is one of these interest groups, occupying a niche in the agricultural economy that was created by the massive mechanization and specialization of American farming in the past century. Motivated by the material benefits of continued sale of agricultural chemicals, the IFCA lobbied hard to defeat legislation which they considered to be focused on eliminating their place in the agricultural economy.

What does seem atypical in the light of the materials reviewed on lobbying is the aggressive IFCA campaign to defeat the incumbent "key six". This risky strategy is not undertaken by many lobbyists, as Jeffrey Berry and other political scientists have noted.

The inability of the Iowa farm lobby to reach a consensus on HF-631 could be construed as evidence of the issue-specific nature of agricultural interest groups suggested by Browne. It seems apparent that the only agricultural interest taking a nonissue-specific "big picture" approach to Iowa agricultural issue was the IFBF, and they did



not feel the need to ally themselves with the main opponent of HF-631, the IFCA.

In support of passage of HF-631, Iowa ex-al groups function in many ways described by Hadwiger and Browne. The ex-al groups saw the 1985 and 1986 and the exposure given these findings by the media as creating the "policy window" needed to influence the legislature. The groups concentrated on the marshalling of "grassroots" support through directing media attention, such as the mid-March press conference of Iowa environmentalists.

However, the main push for groundwater protection legislation in Iowa came from within the policy process. The ex-al groups functioned as "cheerleaders" to a group of environmentally-oriented legislators. These lawmakers' motivations seem to span back two decades to the halcyon days of the environmentalist movement noted by Rosenbaum. Supported by public opinion in favor of groundwater protection, Iowa lawmakers were able to implement environmental protection legislation without strong support from the ex-al coalition.

Environmental policy concerns have reached a level of crucial importance in the past few years. Groundwater contamination is one of a number of pressing environmental problems that threaten to seriously harm the quality of life on this planet. In the year following the passage of the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act, the state endured severe drought and extreme heat, conditions that some scientists link to a pattern of global warming brought on by the emission of carbon-dioxide from cars and factories.

Our society will be severely challenged by these conditions. Actions needed to deal with environmental degradation will not be inexpensive. Some activities of mankind will have to be curtailed and alternatives found.

Policy decisions may involve the assignment of costs to certain segments of society. This case study suggests that interest groups wishing to influence government decisions about the assignment of the expense for environmental protection must rely on the presentation of scientific data to both the lawmakers and the general public. The strongest force behind the passage of HF-631 was the fact that Iowans were convinced there was a problem with the purity of their groundwater and that something should be done to deal with this problem.

Direct IFCA pressure tactics, such as packing the statehouse with IFCA members or conducting a campaign to defeat the main proponents of the bill, were not successful in influencing state policy on groundwater.

A different IFCA strategy using more research presentation, such as the one suggested by ex-IFCA President Larry Thompson, may have been more effective in winning the support of the general public and state legislators, and it may have also coaxed the other agricultural interest groups into a more active stance. The need for information based lobbying stressed by Milbraith and Berry seems to have been of crucial importance in this instance.

What has been suggested by everyone involved in the struggle over HF-631 is the need for more study of the groundwater problem.

Differences might have been expressed over the direction of this research, but no one denied there may be a problem with Iowa groundwater. The groundwater bill's research and educational provisions are needed to discover the depth of the problem and how best to impose the costs of dealing with it.

Iowa has begun to deal with its groundwater problem, and many other states are working on groundwater protection strategies and legislation. As so many Americans rely upon groundwater for their drinking water and so many other important functions, the protection of its purity is an urgent policy issue. Studies of the policy arena of environmental politics will surely be crucial for the understanding of American politics well into the next century.

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Table 1. A comparison of 1986 and 1988 legislative races for the major proponents of the bill

1988 State Representative District 15		
Counties	Democrat Dolores Mertz	Republican Bob Christianson
Humboldt	3,060	2,177
Kossuth	3,287	1,747
Palo Alto	517	202
Pocahontas	620	430
Totals	7,484	4,566

1986 State Representative District 15		
Counties	Republican Sue Mullins	
Humboldt	2,664	1
Kossuth	2,138	0
Palo Alto	323	0
Pocahontas	552	0
Totals	5,677	0

1988 State Representative District 28		
Counties	Democrat Donald Avenson	Republican Charles Hurley
Chickasaw	711	610
Fayette	5,425	4,735
Totals	6,136	5,345



Table 1. (Continued)

1986 State Representative District 28		
Counties	Democrat Donald Avenson	Republican John Block
Chickasaw	915	411
Fayette	5,113	2,777
Totals	6,028	3,188

1986 State Representative District 31		
Counties	Democrat Paul Johnson	Republican Wayne Walter
Allamakee	1,321	1,439
Winnesheik	5,464	3,106
Totals	6,785	4,545

1986 State Representative District 31		
Counties	Democrat Paul Johnson	Republican Gene Sivesind
Allamakee	1,150	1,290
Winnesheik	3,693	2,171
Totals	4,843	3,461

1988 State Representative District 43		
Counties	Democrat David Osterberg	Republican Wayne Deeburg
Cedar	3,178	3,743
Linn	3,845	1,934
Totals	7,023	5,677

Table 1. (Continued)

1986 State Representative District 43		
Counties	Democrat David Osterberg	SC
Cedar	3,380	34
Linn	3,088	18
Totals	5,468	52

1988 State Representative District 73		
Counties	Democrat Ralph Rosenberg	Republican Harold Brinkman
Story	7,622	4,905

1986 State Representative District 73		
Counties	Democrat Ralph Rosenberg	Republican Tracy Rector
Story	5,812	3,654

1988 State Representative District 81		
Counties	Democrat Jack Hatch	Republican Tom Conley
Polk	7,035	4,852

1986 State Representative District 81		
Counties	Democrat Jack Hatch	Republican Jon Narcisse
Polk	5,203	3,193

Table 2. Major PAC contributions and total contribution figures  
for the key six legislative contests

Sue Mullins (primary only)		Bob Christianson	
Contributor	Amount	Contributor	Amount
Woman's Campaign FD	750	Iowa Industries	2,000
Help Encourage Legis. Process	500	IFCA	500
		Maytag Corp.	250
		Taxpayers United	250
		Iowa Realtors	100
Totals	5,902		25,391
Don Avenson		Charles Hurley	
Contributor	Amount	Contributor	Amount
Construction Ind.	1,400	IFBF	1,100
United Auto Workers	1,000	IFCA	500
Iowa Bankers	1,000	Maytag Corp.	200
Northwestern Bell	1,000		
Iowa Savings & Loan	1,000		
AFSCME	645		
Totals	31,459		24,386
David Osterberg		Tom Deerberg	
Contributor	Amount	Contributor	Amount
Iowa Education Assoc.	800	Iowa Industries	2,250
H.E.L.P.	500	IFBF	1,500
United Auto Workers	500	IFCA	500
AFSCME	400	Hawkeye Bancorp.	400
Iowa Medical	400		
		Lincoln Club	400
		Nat. Rifle Assoc.	250
Totals	16,242		23,191

Table 2 (Continued)

Ralph Rosenberg		Harold Brinkman	
Contributor	Amount	Contributor	Amount
Construct. Ind.	500	IFBF	750
Iowa Bankers	350	Iowa Industry	250
Iowa Legal	500	Taxpayers United	500
AFSCME	250		
Iowa Realtors	250		
Totals	14,438		15,881
Paul Johnson		Wayne Walter	
Contributor	Amount	Contributor	Amount
Iowa Electric	750	Iowa Industries	1,250
		IFBF	1,000
Totals	8,948		25,596
Jack Hatch		Tom Conley	
Contributor	Amount	Contributor	Amount
United Auto Workers	5,000	Lincoln Club	200
AFL-CIO	2,500	EMC Corp.	100
Construction Ind.	400		
Central IA Builders	350		
Coastal Co. Employees	300		
Iowa Bankers	250		
AFSCME	250		

Note: Tom Conleys' financial disclosure for the 1988 campaign year is still incomplete as of May 9, 1989, so a comparison and analysis of this race is impossible.

## APPENDIX A. SIX HOUSE RACES INVOLVING INCUMBENT DEMOCRATS

## PAC CONTRIBUTIONS AND FINAL VOTE TOTALS

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State Representative District 63			
Daniel Jay	6,483	S. A. Wueschner	3,900
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H.E.L.P.	1,500	Nat. Rifle Assoc.	200
AFSCME	550		
Education Assoc.	400		
Iowa Bankers	500		
United Auto Workers	300		
Construction Ind.	250		
Total Funds	\$13,545		2,095
<hr/>			
State Representative District 18			
Robert Fuller	5,977	Clark McNeil	5,513
<hr/>			
Education Assoc.	800	Taxpayers Unit.	3,300
United Auto Workers	800	Construction Ind.	800
IFBF	700	Nat. Rifle Assoc.	500
AFSCME	500	John Deere Corp.	500
Iowa Law	500		
Totals	\$14,659		21,372
<hr/>			
State Representative District 12			
Josephine Gruhn	6,735	Ruth Peltzer	4,787
<hr/>			
Iowa Law	700	Taxpayers United	700
Education Assoc.	400	Lincoln Club	300
Iowa Bankers	400		
United Auto Workers	300		
AFSCME	200		
Totals	\$8,090		5,661
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 State Representative District 69

David Schrader	7,491	Leonard Gosselink	4,790
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H.E.L.P.	1,500	Iowa Industries	1,250
Education Assoc.	800	Taxpayers United	800
United Auto Workers	700	Employees Rights	700
Iowa Medical	280	(right to work)	
Education Assoc.	800	Taxpayers United	800
United Auto Workers	700	(right to work)	
		Construction Ind.	400

Totals	\$14,371		22,075
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## State Representative District 14

Janet Adams	6,080	Kirk Leeds	5,128
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Education Assoc.	1,000	Iowa Industries	1,250
United Auto Workers	700	Construction Ind.	750
ASCME	500	IFBF	700
H.E.L.P.	500	Employee Rights	500
Iowa Medical	300		
AFL-CIO	250		

Totals	\$20,986		21,600
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## APPENDIX B. 1988 PAC EXPENDITURES

1. Taxpayers United	\$166,053
2. Iowa Farm Bureau Federation	122,144
3. Construction Industry	94,278
4. Help Encourage Legislative Process	82,676
5. Iowa Law	80,343
6. Iowa Medical	80,177
7. Iowa State Education Association	59,986
8. Iowa State United Auto Workers	58,400
9. Lincoln Club	57,528
10. Iowa Industrys	53,126
11. Realtors	50,391
12. Iowa Bankers	42,242
13. Linn Eagles	41,042

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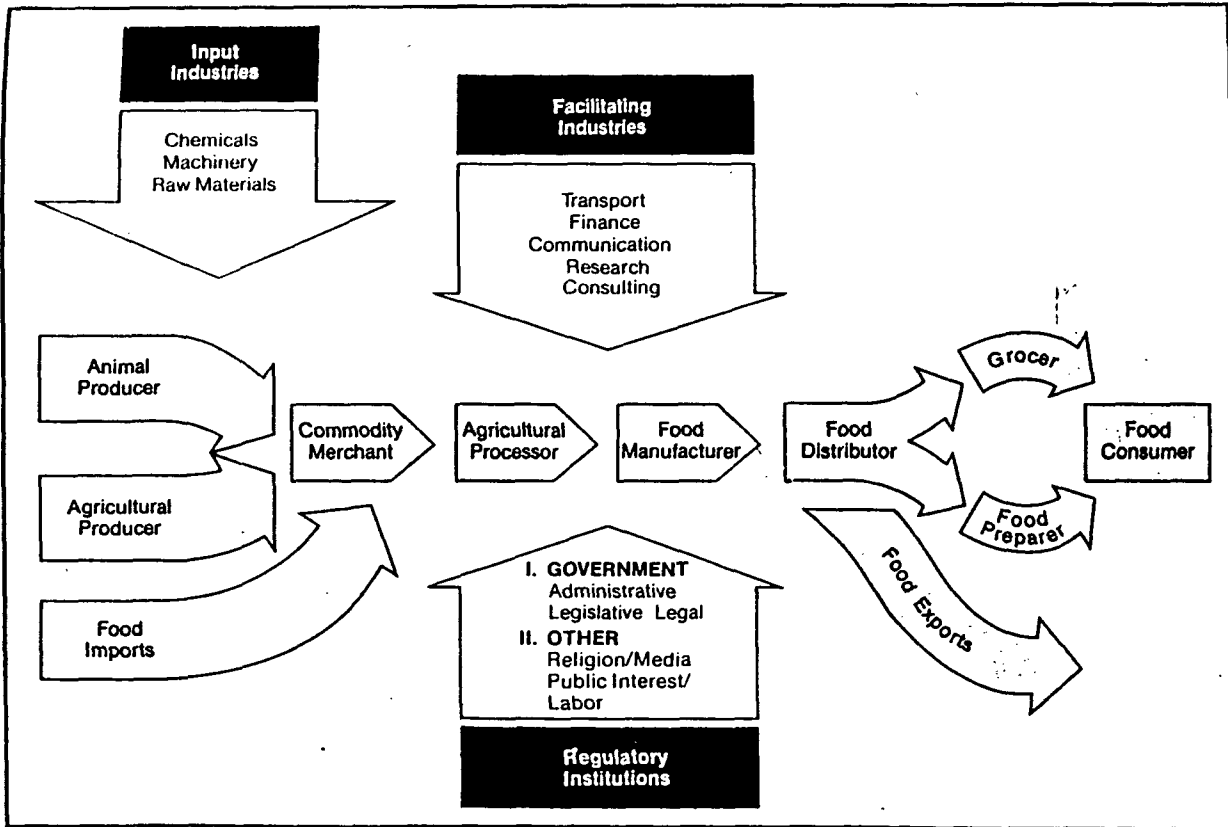


Figure 1. Food systems model for the United States