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Amish Protest

An Amish tobacco farmer from near Lancaster, Pa., smokes a cigar while wearing a "protest the cigar tax" sticker on the front steps of the State Capitol in Harrisburg. The Amish man was one of the nearly 300 tobacco farmers from Lancaster County appearing at the State Capitol protesting a 35 per cent increase in taxes on tobacco products other than cigarettes being proposed by the State Legislature.

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15,000 Cigar Makers Stage Tax Protest

HARRISBURG (AP) — Some 15,000 cigar employees, on a paid holiday of sorts, staged a massive two-hour demonstration at the state Capitol Thursday to protest a proposed 35 per cent tobacco tax, now pending before the House of Representatives.

"Your voices have been heard loud and clear," Robert Keating, a Scranton cigar executive and organizer of the movement, declared as the demonstrators

crowded shoulder-to-shoulder into the Capitol rotunda.

The cigar workers, 75 per cent of them women, were brought to Harrisburg to protest an \$8.5 million increase in the existing 5 per cent excise tax on tobacco products other than cigarettes.

"We want Shafer. We want Shafer," the placard-bearing protesters chanted as they were assured by their area lawmakers that legislative opposition to the bill was stiffening.

Gov. Shafer met with three of their representatives: Mrs. Ward Vail and Mrs. Sallie Smith both of West Pittston; and Mrs. Mary Krupsha of Exeter, all in Luzerne County, which has a heavy concentration of cigar plants.

"This is what government is all about," Shafer told the women. An aide said Shafer assured them he had no desire to harm the cigar industry, or any industry, but added that citizens must accept a reasonable tax burden if state government were to meet its mandated obligations.

Veteran Capitol guides said the assembly was the second largest in their memory, superseded only by a protest of bituminous miners against a strip mine bill four years ago.

Keating said 100 buses brought the workers here primarily from Philadelphia and Luzerne Counties, although Lackawanna and Clearfield also were represented.

"We shut down the factories," he said.