

Sawhill's surprise

By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

WASHINGTON—Apprehension within the oil industry and the White House that Federal Energy Czar John Sawhill will be much more consumer-oriented than predecessor William Simon was confirmed last week when he joined the camp of what true Nixonites consider the enemy: John Gardner's Common Cause.

During a most friendly meeting he had with Gardner last Tuesday afternoon at the Federal Energy Office Sawhill suddenly whipped out his checkbook. He not only renewed the March, 1973, membership in Common Cause of his wife Isabel, but joined himself with a check on their joint account.

Had hard-nosed Nixon aides known this, they would have gone into shock. Gardner's Common Cause, a liberal lobbying group which has hounded Nixon for campaign fund scandals, ranks high among White House enemies.

Nearly as distressing to the White House, Sawhill generally agreed with Gardner Tuesday when he proposed registration and regulation of non-congressional energy lobbyists. During a cordial conversation, Sawhill several times stressed the problem of FEO achieving credibility with the public, a favorite Common Cause theme.

Industry lobbyists became worried last Monday about testimony before joining the Nixon Administration in 1973. Sawhill's testimony stressed consumer protection far more than did Simon, a staunch supporter of free enterprise and defender of the oil industry.

"Sawhill sounds like Ralph Nader, Jr.," one FEO official told us. "He changed his colors completely the day he was appointed."