

API President Warns Oil Industry

By Jack Anderson

In a confidential letter, the embattled president of the American Petroleum Institute has warned oil company executives that they had better make peace with the little people in the industry.

API's Frank Ikard, as mouthpiece for the oil industry in Washington, bluntly scolded the corporate chiefs for their insensitivity to the problems of the jobbers, distributors and retail dealers. This highhanded attitude, he warned, was making life difficult for pro-industry legislators in Congress.

"Clearly," Ikard wrote, "it has become politically popular to take potshots at the oil industry—in fact, it has almost become a political necessity to do so. . . . Right now, the Congress — or a large segment of it — is in a punitive mood."

He continued: "Unfortunately, one of the biggest problems we face springs from right within our own industry. Scattered all across the country, there are literally hundreds of highly vocal and very angry jobbers, distributors, commission agents and retail dealers."

They are angry, Ikard said, because the oil companies are not listening to their problems or answering their questions. "We can't win this fight," he declared, "with a large and very influential segment of our industry battling against us in-

stead of with us."

He called upon the oil moguls to court the small operators and to persuade them to join in a "grass roots" campaign to keep Congress from "taking punitive actions which could cripple the entire industry."

He warned that the "next three to six months could quite literally decide the future of the free-enterprise petroleum industry."

Casey's Caper — Former Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman William J. Casey is quietly trying to alter testimony he gave a House committee on the disappearance of 34 boxes of ITT documents from the SEC.

The boxes contained embarrassing references to former Vice President Agnew, ex-Treasury Secretary John B. Connally and other high administration figures. After the House Commerce Committee demanded the documents from the SEC, they were mysteriously spirited away and locked up at the Justice Department.

The committee held hearings to determine who was responsible for the abduction. Casey and Ralph Erickson, then the deputy attorney general, blamed each other.

So heated was the dispute that Casey told the committee: "Erickson had to be telling a lie. . . . Let's get this clear, Mr. Erickson is lying in any event." Er-

ickson, of course, maintained he was telling the truth.

The transcript of these smoking remarks was sent to Casey, now an under secretary of State, for correction of grammar and punctuation. But instead, Casey wrote in modifications to make it look like he had not called Erickson a liar, thus changing the entire tone of his testimony.

When Chairman Harley Staggers (D-W. Va.) learned of Casey's efforts to rewrite history, he had copies of Casey's recommended changes sent around to committee members so they could decide what would be allowed.

As for Casey, he told us he called Erickson a liar "in the heat of the argument" and wanted to soften his remarks because "I probably thought I'd been too harsh."

After we called him, he quickly wrote Staggers that "if the committee wishes to let the testimony stand . . . I have no objection."

Food Threat — American farmers are approaching the planting season for their third year of agricultural boom with a widespread shortage of tractors. Demand has so far outstripped supply that a number of manufacturers admit they are at least a year behind meeting orders.

While some experts insist that the shortage will not cut into crop production, others are sure

that the farms will not be able to grow as much as they otherwise might.

"There are optimum conditions for planting," said a spokesman for the John Deere Co., the nation's largest manufacturer of farm equipment. "If a farmer misses the optimum time, he will not get as high a yield when it comes to harvest."

With American farmers adding between 15 million and 40 million more acres to their croplands this year to cash in on soaring prices at the supermarket and to meet the heavy foreign demand, the pressure on them to grow the most per acre is greater than ever.

Experts put the blame for the tractor shortage on other shortages, such as petrochemicals needed for tires, metal castings that used to be produced by federal foundries now closed by federal safety rules, and complicated parts like double reduction axles that cannot be made easily or quickly.

With the nation and the world facing more food shortages, the tractor squeeze is the biggest of a number of problems facing farmers. Other major problems include shortages of fertilizer, baling wire and fence posts.

And farmers' problems usually bring higher prices for consumers.