

## Wanted: Peacemaker to Resolve Auto/Oil Dispute

By Carol Cole, Octane Week

**T**he conflict has been brewing for years. The parties involved hold differing opinions. Each expects the other to change. How can they be expected to work together to solve a shared problem?

There has been little in the way of cooperation between the auto and oil industries, yet that is exactly what's needed if car makers and refiners hope to meet EPA's daunting Tier 2 fuel and vehicle emissions standards set to take effect in the 2003-2006 time frame. One industry executive thinks he knows how to get the dialogue started.

"Let's recruit an internationally known expert in the field of mediation to guide an auto/oil dialogue at this crucial stage of the process," suggested Art Suchanek, vice president of hydrocarbon processing technology at Criterion Catalysts & Technologies LP. "The dialogue must be between technical people in both industries. So far, that's been lacking, and look where it's gotten us."

To date, industry representatives have been mainly angling for the best advantage they could garner for their group. That could be understandable during the proposal phase, but now the rules are finalized.

"We know where we need to go, and I have serious doubts we can meet the fuel and vehicle specs in the time frame required. I know we can't do it if we don't have technical people talking to each other."

So far, there's been little of that. To get people out of their bunker mentality and to the negotiating table, Suchanek suggests employing a high-level mediator.

"Former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Jimmy Carter, both peacemakers, come to mind," Suchanek said. "Former Senator George Mitchell or [former White House Counsel] C. Boyden Gray also have a lot of credibility in this area." It will take someone of renown to lead the group, constructed along the lines of the Blue ribbon panel on MTBE.

And who would be in the group? Suchanek would only say, "it's got to be technical people." But the outspoken executive says; if pressed, he would name the half-dozen or so

oil and auto representatives he would like to see sit down together in an atmosphere of cooperation to solve the technical hurdles to achieving the standards.

"EPA's regulation-setting process aims to force technologies," Suchanek explained. "So the final Tier 2 rules are based on technologies the agency reasonably believes will be available in time, but they don't know for certain. EPA doesn't seem to hear us say we have real doubts a 15 ppm diesel standard is one the oil industry can meet reliably and consistently. I would add that gasoline at 30 ppm is a concern, based on what we're beginning to learn about mercaptan recombination.

"Now we're hearing from the auto industry that they're not entirely confident after treatment technologies for NOx will work consistently over the vehicle lifetime. We have legal standards in place for both industries that rely on technologies that haven't been proven. If we're going to get them proven and commercialized in the time frame required, we've got to have technical people on both sides of the table working with each other."

Instead of working together to solve Tier 2 problems, the auto industry is promoting even more stringent fuel specifications, Suchanek noted. "The automobile industry has banded together behind the Worldwide Fuels Charter, which calls for virtually sulfur-free gasoline and diesel, DI limited gasoline and high-cetane diesel. We need more solutions, not more demands, from the auto industry."

To establish a technical fuels forum, Suchanek endorses the use of a mediator, an arbitrator, a peacemaker – a highly respected individual who embodies knowledge and trustworthiness. Then, Suchanek said, the technical people can do their jobs.



Art Suchanek, Vice President of Hydrocarbon Processing Technology