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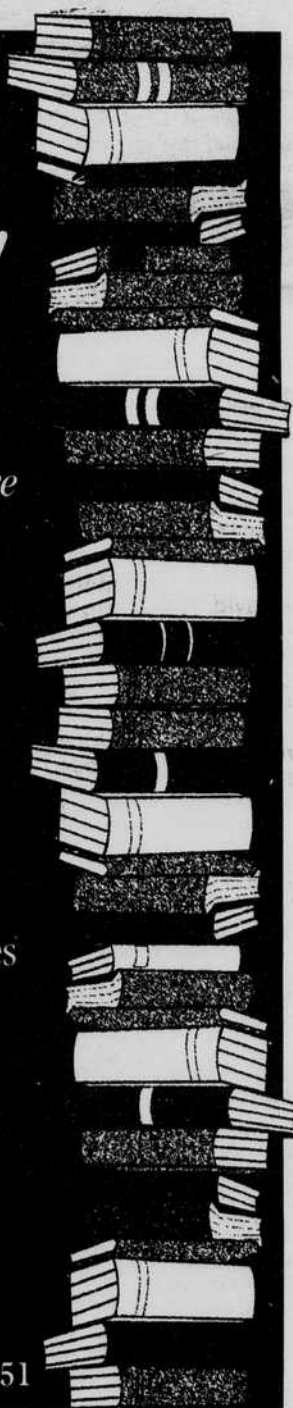
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Accusations fuel frustration

By Martha Irvine
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Oil and ethanol industry executives blamed each other for rising gas prices Monday at a congressional hearing designed to examine why drivers are paying more than \$2 a gallon in cities such as Chicago and Milwaukee.

Few left the special hearing convened by Illinois Democrats with much hope for a resolution.

"I think this could be a serious situation throughout the summer," said Eric Vaughn, president of the Renewable Fuels Association, a Washington-based group representing ethanol producers.

One oil industry spokesman blamed higher local taxes, noting that Chicagoans are paying more than 50 cents in total taxes per gallon. He also said new mandates to use reformulated gas with ethanol in Chicago and Milwaukee have contributed to the price jump.

Ethanol, made from corn and subsidized by a federal tax break, burns cleaner than other fuels.

"I'm not knocking ethanol. It's a good product," said David Sykuta, executive director of the Illinois Petroleum Council. "But it's a logistical nightmare to handle this stuff."

For example, he said, gas with ethanol must be transported by truck or train because it damages pipelines. Meanwhile, only about half of the six refineries in Illinois have been retooled to make gas with ethanol, he said.

In a separate briefing in New York, American Petroleum Institute president Red Cavaney cited "six or seven different variables" for the higher Midwest prices — everything from ethanol to the increase of crude prices to above \$30 a barrel to pipelines that have been out of commission.

But members of the congressional panel, the Environmental Protection Agency and a spokesman for the ethanol industry disputed the explanations.

Panel members said the industry should be charging no more than an additional 8 cents a gallon for gas that has ethanol in it instead of MTBE, a controversial additive used in most states that some environmentalists believe contaminates water supplies.

Illinois, the nation's biggest ethanol producer, is one of the few states that requires its use as a gas additive. Minnesota, where prices have not exceeded the \$2-a-gallon mark, is another.

"I think the oil companies are punishing and gouging us for using ethanol," said Rep. Jan Schakowsky, one of four Illinois Democrats who made up the Congressional panel. "It's the only reason I can come up with to explain why Chicago and Milwaukee are paying 40 cents more a gallon than everyone else."

The meeting came just two days before ministers from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries are scheduled to meet to discuss raising production by about 500,000 barrels a day — or about 2 percent of the countries' total production.

But analysts have suggested that even if the increase is approved, it could be several weeks before enough oil is produced to help lower gas prices.

Rep. Luis Gutierrez said he would ask Attorney General Janet Reno to look for any signs of price-fixing in the oil industry. The Federal Trade Commission is already investigating.

Cavaney, of the American Petroleum Institute, defended the industry, saying it was being blamed as a scapegoat even though no proof existed of the companies' alleged price manipulation.

Arrests

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Schoonmaker walked away from the jail shirtless.

Sunday afternoon's rally was mostly peaceful, with speakers using a bullhorn to address the crowd about their beliefs or sometimes just to rant and yell obscenities. Hundreds of people milled about, either listening to the speeches or talking amongst themselves.

Once a punk band wrapped up its set, a group of about 100 people moved the rally to the Saturday Market area at Eighth Avenue and Oak Street. There they played several games of Red Rover in the middle of the street before police in riot gear ordered them to leave the area.

When the protesters stood their ground, police moved in and began making arrests, firing bean bag rounds at the dispersing groups. The police brigade then began cordoning off streets and

pushing the protesters out of the area.

Arrest figures for Sunday night were in the mid-20s, and the most common charges were disorderly conduct and interfering with a peace officer. A strong number of police — estimated at 100 to 150 — swept into the Washington-Jefferson Bridge area on bikes, in vans, in patrol cars and on foot.

One of the neutral observers at Sunday's afternoon rally in the park was told by police officers that he would have to leave the area as they began their Sunday night actions.

"I think the anarchist folks are a little frightening; they're scary to the community," John Buffalo said. "But I think that no matter what they did ... which they didn't really do anything ... Nothing could have brought on this; this is overkill to the max."

The majority of the weekend's arrests came Friday night following a gathering at Prince Lucien Campbell Hall on campus, where approximately 300 punks, anar-

chists and other citizens attended a video premiere of "Breaking the Spell." The video, made by Eugene resident Tim Lewis, is a compilation of footage from last December's World Trade Organization protests in Seattle.

A large part of the contingent then made its way to the Lane County Jail, where police confronted the crowd and began making arrests. All observers and news media were kept at bay while the arrests were being made.

Included in the total number of arrests were two suspects in a vehicle fire at the Joe Romania car dealership at Franklin Boulevard and Walnut Street.

After police received a 911 call at 1:04 a.m. Friday, they responded and stopped Jeffrey Michael Luers, 21, and Craig Andrew Marshall, 27, who were observed driving in the area. The men were eventually arrested and charged with first-degree criminal mischief and first-degree arson.

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