

UPEI exposé



50 Years Independents in the European Oil Industry

To mark the occasion of our organisation's 50th Anniversary, former UPEI-President Hellmuth Weisser gave a speech to UPEI-Members and friends.

My friends, ladies and gentlemen,

firstly, let's get down to brass tacks:

We are small. We come from different national environments and traditions. We also come from different sectors of the value chain. We are not perceived by the general public as a major player – or as a player at all.

And we are all independent. We like to act alone. We are all exposed to normal competition but also threatened by much larger competitors. And not only subject to national legislation with its direct and indirect influence on our business but increasingly by the EU and its framework legislation.

I admire our forbears for their vision to unite at a very early stage of the then European Economic Community.

They became convinced that everyone acting for himself was impossible if they wanted to be heard in Europe. Compromises were necessary to achieve the goal of a united stand. Overcoming



Hellmuth Weisser at the Dinner Reception at Cercle de Lorraine, Brussels

narrow national or individual interests was essential. The points of view of others were as relevant as one's own. It took money to persevere as well as personal initiative and engagement for the common cause.

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All the above is still true today and I would say even more so. Our industry in Europe is no longer pushed forward by the force of market growth or rising market shares. We are in a stagnant business at most.

All the more it is important that we do not withdraw into our little cubbyholes, close the hatches, and pray for better times.

We – if we still want to be a serious player in the coming years – have to keep on actively promoting our cause with the political and administrative powers to make our point of view heard and to stress the importance of a viable independent market sector for the health of competition, the security of supply and local employment.

We can persevere if all of you – the entrepreneurs, who are working with your own money – stay on top of things.

Nobody can speak more convincingly than those who know their business day in and day out.

And you have to keep your UPEI organisation funded. Even perfect arguments need money to be heard.

So my plea is to honour the work of our predecessors, to keep their conviction alive and preserve our good standing with the EU – be they politicians or members of the administration – for those who follow us in the next business generation.

We can be proud of our past successes: We saw to it that import tax reduction for low-sulphur products from Russia was maintained, we launched the Auto Oil Program and the CSO review, we laid the ground for vertical integration and won battles for the Internal Market in our industry.

Europe in a broader context

Forgive me for using this platform to give my personal opinion on the present state of Europe – but it is my last chance to address you as an assembly.

After the devastation of two world wars the European Union has brought us all unprecedented peace and wealth. The foundation for this success lies in working together, in our common interest, being inclusive and creating win-win situations.

Unfortunately we take this state of affairs for granted and regard it as a stable equilibrium. We forget that only dedicated hard work, tough choices and commitment to our common European house keeps us en route.

We talk too much about “they should do this” or “it is their problem” or “we can not be expected to do this or that”.

It reminds me of aged and overfed people sitting in their lovely furnished apartments and complaining that the neighbours should start extinguishing the fire.

If the house burns everybody is required to help. There is no penthouse to live in if the rest is devastated.

I implore you to speak up where- and whenever you can and resist politicians who pander to national interests only.

Our future as a prosperous community with a strong voice in the world is at risk. More – not less! – integration and working together is the order of the day. The devastating economic and political lessons of the Thirties must not be forgotten.

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Hellmuth Weisser, 19 June 2012