

Consolidation of our membership to the present eight created a number of operational advantages from the standpoint of NAPA Headquarters. It gave us a new awareness of our total capacity, which has helped to blend our individual potentials into a better, more cohesive marketing attitude. This, in turn, has permitted frequent—and better—overall forward planning.

The resulting attitude of strength, urgency and singleness of objective has been a major factor in our press for accelerated growth.

Late in the 1960s, with our NAPA momentum at full pitch, we were forced to recognize a new movement in America—an unprecedented drive toward consumer protection which, unfairly directed as it was, demanded our NAPA reaction. Ralph Nader and "Consumerism" had made their debut.

Based on a generally-emotional appeal, they caused a ground swell of public opinion which clamored for—and established—sweeping new "rules and regulations" for safer automotive vehicles in the future.

Riding this "wave of public indignation", the news media responded to the scent of blood with customary zeal. Under their spur, Congressional Committees began to work round the clock, and both vehicle manufacturers and our own aftermarket repair service came under severe attack from many directions.

Regulatory legislation from Congress established the first significant controls to affect engineering and design of automobiles of the future. At the same time, national outcry against the growing problem of pollution began to make headlines. Again, our industry became a prime target—the classic villain for the self-appointed crusaders.

Of course, both of these developments immediately became integral parts of the total NAPA concern. Obviously, our business future needed clearer definition, in view of the doubt and stigma developed in the public mind about the entire automotive industry.

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