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WHO OUGHT TO CONTROL EDUCATION?**

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**Inured to inflation?**

**Edison rate hike request draws  
ho-hum response at public hearings**

By TIM RICHARD  
They held a public hearing and practically nobody came.

They held a second public hearing and no one at all came.

They, in this case, is the Michigan Public Service Commission which is deciding whether to grant Detroit Edison electric rate increases averaging 8.6 per cent.

Irv Bluestone, a vice-president of the United Auto Workers and head of its Detroit CAP, held a press conference Wednesday to say the union advocates a "lifeline" rate system for residential customers.

Bluestone himself never showed up for the actual hearing, held at 1:30 p.m. on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills.

Instead, he sent Peter Eckstein, an economist in the UAW's research department.

THAT EVENING at 7:30, no one spoke at all for or against Edison's rate request. Robert E. Hollenshead, Daniel Dernow, and others from Minneapolis attending a solar heating con-

ference, waited for a half-hour, threw the program open to questions, and finally one bite.

Dennis McCoy, a notebook-carrying young man from Walled Lake, asked the PSC if it had the capacity to offer management advice to Edison.

Lenton Sculthorpe, senior member of the three-person PSC, said no.

"It's against the statute. We act only

to substitute our management judgment for the company's."

Later he added: "We don't have the right to order, but we can make a rate adjustment to 'fix' 'em in the pocket book."

Willa Mae King, newest member of the PSC, added: "We don't have the power to manage. But you do indirectly what you can't do directly," she said, referring to the rate structure. And she added that the PSC's consumer service division will investigate complaints about bad service.

Missing was the PSC's chairman, Daniel Dernow, who was in Minneapolis attending a solar heating conference.

Instead, he sent Peter Eckstein, an economist in the UAW's research department.

Older taxpayers may now want to amend their 1976 federal returns to claim a retirement income credit that has now been extended through 1978, the Internal Revenue Service suggested this week.

The Tax Reduction and Simplification Act of 1977, gives some taxpayers the option of reducing their liability for taxes by choosing either the new tax credit or the former retirement income credit. Previously, under the Tax Reform Act of 1976, the retirement income credit could not be used on 1976 tax returns since it was replaced by the tax credit for the elderly.

The IRS also advises taxpayers who claimed the tax credit for the elderly on their 1976 returns to consider recomputing their taxes to determine whether they could get a larger credit.

Amended returns (Form 1040X) and new retirement income credit computation forms 1976 Schedule RIC (Form 1040), are available at local IRS offices.

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THE UAW's Eckstein explained the union's "lifeline" plan:

"Each family would be allowed to use a basic—or lifeline—amount of electricity at a rate substantially lower than that currently being charged. The size of the 'lifeline' would not be uniform for each household, as in the present inverted rates, but would be larger for larger families."

"Amounts of electricity used above the 'lifeline' amounts would pay a rate substantially higher than currently being charged. Thus, families would pay less for necessary use of electricity and more for luxury use."

For example, a lifeline rate would be reduced from the present 3.85 cents per kilowatt hour to three cents per kWh. The rate for use beyond the lifeline amount would be increased to six cents per kWh from the current 4.15 to 4.45 cents.

Eckstein added:

"The Detroit Edison proposal would substantially raise the cost of basic uses of electricity without doing nearly enough to curtail marginal uses. Instead, we need to make it cheaper for a family to operate an electric stove and refrigerator, to light the rooms it is currently occupying and to watch some television."

"We need to make it more expensive, however, to leave the lights on in rooms that aren't being used, to cool the house to 65 degrees in summer and to leave the color TV on all day, whether or not anyone is watching."

The UAW also criticized the rate structures for business use of electricity for failing to encourage conservation. "Such rates typically include large fixed charges and charges tied to a firm's single hour of peak use, but they provide very low rates for the use of electricity at all the other hours of the month," Eckstein said.

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