

Consumers resumes branch operations

Consumers Power Co. plans to renew most of its bill paying service through some Detroit area banks and stores following customer protests of last month's shut down of the service.

The public utility, according to a spokesman, plans to re-open "between 80 and 90 percent" of the 550 bill payment locations that were closed in mid-December. The majority of the locations are in Oakland, western Wayne and Macomb counties where Consumers has an estimated 500,000 gas

customers.

According to a prepared statement, the utility received thousands of customer protest letters and telephone calls since last month's reported cost-cutting move.

"WE JUST didn't realize how strongly they felt about it," said Michael Blombach, a Consumers public affairs director. The bill paying service at banks, savings and loan associations, supermarkets and drugstores costs the

utility about \$1 million annually, Blombach said. Participating businesses are paid 10 cents for each bill they process.

More than 20 customer contact offices, including those in Birmingham and East Detroit, will remain closed.

The utility had hoped customers would be satisfied with paying bills by mail, Blombach said, which is a less expensive procedure for Consumers.

Consumers will provide signs for those businesses renewing the bill paying service.

Thursday, January 15, 1981

(OJ5A)

Solar electric energy lecture in Ann Arbor

The Michigan Solar Energy Association will host a free lecture and demonstration of new developments in solar electric energy (the conversion of sunlight to electricity) on Jan. 16.

The lecture, beginning at 7 p.m., will be held at the Ann Arbor Public Library, 343 S. Fifth Ave.

Methods for converting sunlight into usable electrical energy, through the use of photovoltaic cells, are being improved by independent companies and research teams across the country. This represents an effort to bring manufacturing costs and costs per kilowatt-hour down to a level competitive with conventional electricity sources.

Richard Komp, a solar electric researcher with Wayne State University, will be featured as guest speaker. Komp is completing study work on photovoltaics for a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. He will show slides and actual solar equipment to demonstrate the feasibility of photovoltaics.

The Michigan Solar Energy Association, based in Ann Arbor, is a non-profit statewide organization dedicated to promoting the use of solar energy in Michigan.

The MSEA holds regular bi-monthly meetings and lectures around the state.

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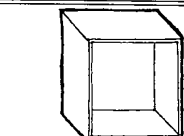
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