

Rate increase delays for utilities cause higher costs, says professor

Political pressure to delay rate increase approvals for public utilities will cost the public more money in the long run, Prof. Hans J. Wilhelm of The University of Michigan insists. Wilhelm, a business economist in the U-M Graduate School of Business Administration, notes all across the nation politicians are "making political hay" by opposing rate increases for utilities to provide them with the funds needed to pay higher operating costs.

As a consequence, he adds, public

utility commissions which control the rates are slow to increase them. "HOWEVER, it is the consumer who is going to be hurt the most by the holding down of the utility rates," Wilhelm says.

"There are an increasing number of reports that public utilities are slowing down or stopping construction of new facilities. And when construction on these needed facilities is started up again a year or so from now, they will cost more to build than they would have cost now."

"While we may enjoy lower rates now, we will be forced to pay far higher rates a year or so from now. "A second and more important way in which consumers are going to be hurt by short-sighted policies of public utility commissions is that reduced earnings of the utilities are pushing up the interest rates they have to pay for their money."

The U-M business economist explains that inflation has caused an "enormous squeeze" on public utilities. While bureaucratic slowness and political maneuvering slow rate increases, the utilities face rapidly rising fuel and interest costs and are squeezed for cash, he notes.

To meet the need for new facilities, utilities are being forced to either borrow money or to sell stock, and the interest costs for these funds are at very high levels, Wilhelm says, adding that interest charges for the borrowed money must come from current earnings which "simply aren't rising fast enough."

"Public utilities also are paying high fuel costs because they have been forced by environmental restrictions to burn costly, scarce, low sulphur fuels. Due to environmental blocks which have slowed down the building of atomic generating plants they have also been forced to rely more heavily on coal and oil."

Report promptly changes affecting SSI payments

Persons should report promptly changes that could affect their Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments and shouldn't wait to hear from social security, says Stefan Gasparovic, manager of the Detroit-Northwest Social Security Office at 17500 Lahser, Detroit.

The SSI program makes monthly payments to persons with little or no income and limited resources who are 65 or over or blind or disabled. Eligibility and monthly payment amounts can be affected by changes in income, living arrangements, marital status and other circumstances. "To get the right SSI checks to the right persons on time," says Gasparovic, "the Social Security Administration periodically contacts persons receiving payments to review eligi-

lity and monthly payment amounts. "But we may not be in touch with persons as often as their circumstances change. So they should report changes to us as promptly as possible."

Twin Bay opens Livonia office

A new sales office in the Livonia Trade Center at 1200 Farmington Road, Livonia, has been opened by Twin Bay Industries of Elk Rapids, Mich.

Twin Bay is a manufacturer of high precision pneumatic regulators, electrical assemblies and special tools for industry.

Ellis Racht, president of the firm, observes that business activity in this area has increased to the point where closer and more frequent contact with customers is necessary.

Dumas asks deputy rotation

Wayne County Commissioner Mary E. Dumas (R-Livonia) has proposed that county sheriff's deputies be rotated periodically between the road patrol and jail duty as a measure to improve their performance at the job.

She made her proposal in a resolution submitted to the County Board of Commissioners Feb. 6. In line with regular procedure, the resolution was referred to the board's Public Safety and Judiciary Committee for study and recommendation.

Mrs. Dumas, whose district includes most of Livonia, suggested that many incidents involving jailers "may be due in part to inadequate orientation regarding all functions of the sheriff's department and to a resentment at being assigned to the jail for an indefinite period."

If periodic rotation of all deputies is not feasible, the resolution urges the sheriff to place all new officers on a rotational system through all divisions of the sheriff's department during their first year of service.

February, a cold month

With colder days coming up, University of Michigan astronomer Hazel M. Losh says that "for such a beastly month as February, 28 days are plenty."

The new constellation for this "beastly" month appropriately is Leo, the lion. It can be found climbing over the horizon a little north of east after sunset, Prof. Losh says. Leo has six stars forming a sickle, or reversed question mark. Marking the tip of the handle of the sickle, or the dot of the question mark, is the bright star Regulus.

Professor Losh says ancient astrologers regarded Regulus as having great influence. An old tablet reads: "If the star of the great lion is gloomy, the heart of the people will not rejoice."

February is also a good month to spot the Big Dipper, a part of the constellation Ursa Major.

"Rising above the northeastern horizon just after sunset, the seven stars composing the Big Dipper move upward toward the zenith as evening progresses," she observes.

Planets of the month include Venus and Jupiter. Both are very bright and appear in the southwest a short time after sunset.

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