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Utility commission sets new rate rules

The Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC), in three days of public hearings, adopted rules governing rates and services of utilities under its jurisdiction. The adoption of the rules marked the end of a thirty-day waiting period during which time public comment was actively solic-

707 TEXAS

Representatives of various utility utilities, concerned three main companies, plus such groups as the areas: rate setting, service League of Women Voters, the Texas standards, and reporting require-Municipal League, and the Texas Consumer Association were present

and participated in the meeting. The rules, which apply to all tele-phone companies in the state and all rural electric, water and sewerage

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In setting rates, utilities will be allowed to charge advertising, con-tribution and donation expenditures in the rate base as long as those expenditures do not exceed threetenths of one per cent (.3 per cent) of the gross receipts of the utility for services rendered to the public.

The commission encouraged fully-recoverable expenditures of such funds used for promoting conservation of energy or measures that can allow a consumer to save in his total bill. Other recoverable expenditures encouraged were those seeking to improve utility peak load usage and support of utility trade associations that directly contribute toward professional standing of their

memberships.
Contributions to charitable causes and such organizations as Chambers of Commerce will be allowed as a cost of service so long as the total sum of all such expenditures does not exceed the .3 per cent formula.

The utilities were excluded from charging customers for funds spent for political or lobbying activities, membership in social, recreational, or religious organizations or clubs, or promotion of increased energy consumption. Utilities, if they choose, however, may spend investor dollars

for these purposes Although the Texas Railroad Commission has jurisdiction over

natural gas in Texas, the PUC is empowered to examine all electic utilities' contracts for fuel supplies when the utility comes before the commission for a hearing. If any impropriety is found, the fuel supply contract may be disallowed. The total cost of fuel will be shown separately on all customer's bills and will no longer be included in the base

charge.
This will have the effect of insuring that all customers — large and small alike — will pay the same rate for fuel which the electric utility uses for generation. Fuel consumption to the first rule to be always to the delay in the country of the delay and the country of the delay of the del will thus be paid for on a per-kilowatt-hour basis. Utilities may continue to charge customers according to the actual cost of serving

each class of customer, however.

The service standards set forth by
the PUC deal with many areas of
company-customer relations. Utilities are required to advise customers of rate changes, deferred payment plans for outstanding bills, and the most economical service available for the individual customer. Deferred payment plans may include a 5 per cent penalty for late payment, but may not include a finance charge.

Applicants for new service who can demonstrate a satisfactory credit rating by supplying generally accepted credit references and those persons aged 65 and older who do not have an outstrading belong for not have an outstanding balance for the same utility service will not be required to furnish a deposit. If a deposit for utility service is required, the company will refund such deposit automatically and will

Utility bills will be printed in a manner that a customer can understand and compute his bill. Residential customers w be charged a late-payment p and the terms "net" bill and bill, which will no longer at residential bills, will not be u commercial or industrial bills the utility is in fact granting

quest. The first rule to be adop

the commission states in par These rules shall be given a fa impartial construction to these objectives and shall be a uniformly, regardless of race, creed, sex, or marital status.

The reporting section of the while lessening the burd utilities to supply data to the Plan monthly basis, requires the companies supply the com with information on quarter annual bases regarding their costs and other expenses, such vertising, contributions, e

expense accounts, and political bying expenditures.

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