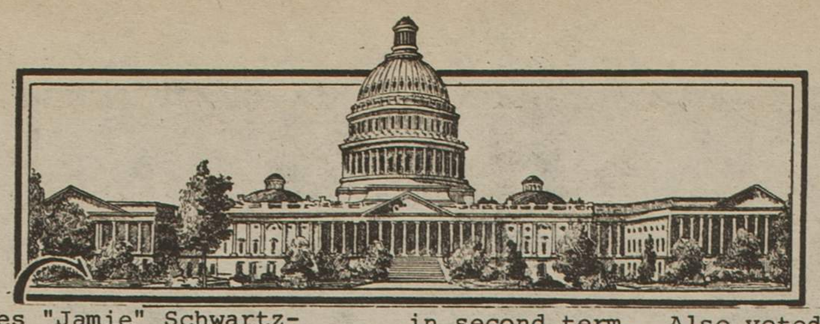
Legislative Energy...



(Cont. from page 18.)

They could move to force utility rates that encourage conservation instead of consumption. They could recommend the establishment of a state "energy bank" that could provide low-cost financing for the installation of insulation and solar devices. They could establish policies that would discourage the mammoth overbuilding of profit-hungry utilities. If they don't seize this opportunity, they should be held accountable.

The committee will hold its first two full-day meetings sometime in early June. Its nine members, and a little bit of their background, follows (in case you'd like to give them a piece of your mind):

Rep. Donald Mainey-(Chairperson, D-Topeka), 430 Sumner, Topeka, 66616. Rubber worker, representative four years, chairperson of House Energy committee. Fair-minded, wants to do right thing, listens to input from all sides (and naturally gets a lot of it from the utilities). Has authored a bill that would put a ceiling on charges to low-income senior citizens; co-sponsored "conservation gas" bill.

Rep. Robert Miller-(R-Wellington), R.R. 2, Wellington, 67152. Farmer; state representative, six years. Sponsor of nuclear-veto bill and rate reform study bill. Relatively progressive Republican. He is rumored to have his eye on higher office.

Rep. Tim Holt-(D-Wichita), 525 W. 27 ST. South, Wichita, 67217. First term as representative. Construction worker and real estate salesman. Actively worked for passage of nuclear-veto bill and CWIP-prohibition bill.

Rep. Charles "Jamie" Schwartz-(D-Junction City), R.R. 1, Box 64, Junction City, 66411. First-term representative; citizenship director, Kansas 4-H foundation. His father sits on the board and holds several thousand shares in KPL. Yet he worked for the passage of the nuclear-veto bill. So it should be interesting to see what he does.

Sen. Arnold Berman-(D-Lawrence), 101 Coventry Manor, Lawrence, 66044. Attorney, chief of production and materials, Atomic Energy Commission, five years. Perhaps the Legislature's sharpest utilities critic. (Note the relative nature of that statement.) First-term Senator.

The above five will probably constitute, more of less and relatively speaking, the "progressive wing" of the committee. The other four members are:

Rep. J.B. Littlejohn-(R-Topeka), 614 Morningside, Topeka, 66606. Director of Public Affairs. First term in House. Voted against both the nuke-veto bill and the CWIP bill.

Rep. August Bogina-(R-Lenexa), 13513 W. 90th Place, Lenexa, 66215. Consulting engineer, representative in second term. Also voted against nuke-veto and CWIP bills.

Sen. Donn Everett-(R-Manhattan), 1730 Fairview, Manhattan, 66502. Lawyer, state representative seven years; first-term senator.

Sen. Bill Morris-(R-Wichita), 9822 Hardtner, Wichita, 67212. Publisher, state representative four years; in first term as Senator. Senate Majority Leader Norman Gaar (R-Westwood) pegged him as an "...anti-consumer-oriented legislator, though probably one of the neatest I've ever seen."

A good test of how willing these folks are to stand up for the consumer will be their stands on the CWIP issue.

The utilities are fairly lusting for the chance to get their customers' pockets by charging for plants before they are built. That would make it easier for them to build more and bigger plants. Which means more profits.

But it also means one more incentive for inefficiency. The plants they've already built operate at an average of only 40-50 percent of capacity. Why make it easier for them to build more plants, and further inflate our utility bills? Especially if we're going to start seriously conserving?

At any rate, this committee's composition could have been much worse; but it's clear that the Legislature is not going to go much further than public opinion forces it to.

CPF

ENERGY BRIEFS

In the coming months, householders, businessmen and others throughout Minnesota will be able to view special aerial pictures of their homes, schools, stores and factories to find out whether poor insulation is wasting energy and costing them money.

If successful, the idea could become a model for other states and localities in tracking down energy waste from the sky.

An aircraft took the pictures at night over a five-month period as part of a project being conducted jointly by the U.S. Energy Research and Development Administration, the Minnesota Energy Agency and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The aircraft surveyed a total of 25 cities, including Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth. To conduct the flyovers, the weather had to be cold, with low humidity, clear skies and no snow accumulation on the roofs (snow acts as insulation).

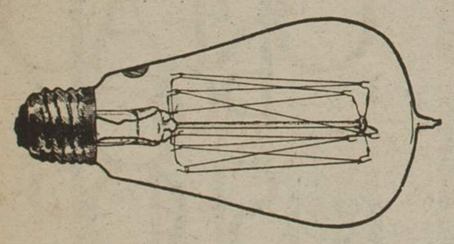
The City of Aztec, New Mexico has ordered "lifeline" electric rates for the elderly. The municipally-owned electric system serves 16,000 customers. Already 60 out of an estimated 100 eligible elderly customers have received the "class four" rate. This rate is the price the city charges itself for power, a level just above the break-even point. The city calculates that the elderly's electric bill will be reduced by about 30%.

The Government has failed for three years to force a single electric utility to begin using coal as an energy source. According to FEA Administrator John F. O'Leary, "In the first three years of the coal conversion program, we have not converted a drop of oil or a molecule of gas." In 1974, Congress gave the FEA authority to require electric utilities to burn coal instead of gas or oil because coal is much more plentiful.

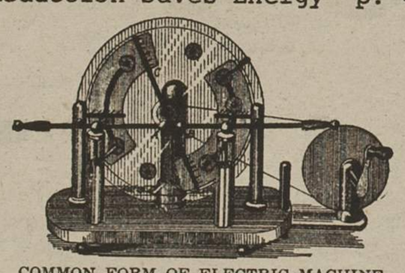
VOLT'S GOING ON?

by Paul E. Schaefer, 4311 Holmes KC Mo. 64110

A feasible way of reducing the need for electricity and prolonging the life of some appliances would be for Kansas City Power and Light Company to reduce the voltage supplied to homes from 126 volts to 120 volts. Household appliances, light bulbs, and small motors are designed to operate within a standard range of 114 to 126 volts. Electric companies traditionally have kept the voltage at the top of the range. I checked an electrical outlet in my home and it measured approximately 126 volts.



A means used by KCPL to reduce the demand on Jan. 17, 1977 was to reduce the voltage by 5%. This is equivalent to a change from 126 volts to 120 volts. A Kansas City Star article indicated that customers wouldn't notice the change. ("Utilities Averted Power Crisis" by John Wylie Jan. 30, 1977) Recently Northern California Pacific Gas and Electric Company reduced its service voltage level by 3%. The energy savings was one million barrels of oil per year. ("Not Man Apart", published by Friends of the Earth, Mid-March- April 1977 "Voltage Reduction Saves Energy" p. 4)



COMMON FORM OF ELECTRIC MACHINE

When you have equipment designed to operate between 114 and 126 volts, it is best to keep the voltage set at 120 volts. Below 114 volts the equipment may not operate while above 126 volts, a shortened life span or deterioration can be expected. A 60 watt light bulb will last 1000 hours at 120 volts, 1700 hours at 115 volts, but only 600 hours at 125 volts.

The electrical power saved by going from 126 volts to a service voltage of 120 would be about 10%. What is occurring now in our electrical system can be compared to adding an extra battery to a nine cell flashlight. The extra battery may cause the flashlight to be a bit brighter but the bulb will only burn out sooner because it was not designed for the higher voltage. Since the extra battery is not needed to make the flashlight function, it is just an unnecessary expense.

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