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ORIGINAL

Decision No. 83394

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

AKIRA & MARY HIRAMATSU,

Complainants,

vs.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON  
COMPANY,

Defendant.

Case No. 9679  
(Filed March 11, 1974)

Mary Hiramatsu, for complainants.  
Woodbury, Cahall, & Elston by  
William T. Elston, Attorney at  
Law, for defendant.

O P I N I O N

Complainants seek a correction and reduction of the \$81.04 closing bill of defendant. A hearing on the complaint was held in Los Angeles before Examiner Rogers on July 25, 1974 and the matter was submitted.

The complainant's case was presented by Mary Hiramatsu. She and her husband Akira had a liquor store at 3854 Sepulveda Boulevard, Torrance, in 1972 and until early 1973. The best way to state her testimony is to quote the pertinent portions of the complaint as follows:

"Closed my business on February 9, 1973, at 3854 Sepulveda Blvd., Torrance, Calif. I called So. Calif. Edison Co., on Feb. 7, 1973 A.M., to turn off the electric and take the closing reading on meter. To mail my closing bill to above address.

The lady at the switchboard said she would send someone down. Waiting every day and I called over one-half dozen times for them to close my electric and take a meter reading. All she would say, she will send someone down. Finally, on March 10, 1973, I called 6 times on that day and at the end I asked for the supervisor and complained to send someone down, that I wasn't going to be responsible for the closing bill if they didn't send someone down. I had to use the public pay phone each time to call Edison Co. It cost me 10¢ each time, it was getting me mad. There was no excuse for not sending someone down earlier than March 10, 1973. Finally, someone came around 5:30 P.M. Where the meter is located it is very dark and you cannot see anything. The man had a very dim flashlight, you couldn't hardly see the meter. He admitted he could not make out the numbers. I guess he just put down some figures. Before he wrote down some figures he pulled out 2 things out of the meter box and put it in upside down and turned the handle. Maybe that's what through (sic) the meter off because I could not have used that much kilowatts in 15 days. I did not have all the refrigerators going like the normal times and did not have any neon sign lit after January 31, 1973. I was there from morning till night so I know exactly what went on.

"First they send me a bill for 158.78 than another for 142.98, and another for 88.19, and 81.04, they are all too much for the 15 days that I used electric and especially with none of the outside neon lights burning and not all the refrigerators running. The meter is read each month and I never had a large bill like the amount they had mailed me. All refrigerators going and all the neon light burning till 11:00 P.M. Our usual business hours and I never came up with amounts like that in four years. It is impossible for me to have a bill of 81.04.

"I asked the Edison Co., why the ridiculous (sic) figures and she told me there was a misreading in the meter. I received the second bill and I said there is a mistake in calculation or reading meter and she said that meter reading was wrong and someone has tampered with the meter.

"I told Edison Co., that as soon as you send me a corrected bill that I would pay it, also if I have to go to court, I will. I will not pay until they send me a correct bill. They have turned it over to collection agency: Credit Bureau of South Bay Dist., 1628 Cravens Ave., Torrance, Calif., 90508. They had no business turning it over to the collection agency and embarrassing us and has ruined my credit rating."

A recapitulation of the complainants' electric bills for 11 billing periods from March 24, 1972 to January 25, 1973 are set forth on Exhibit 1. The monthly bills varied from a low of \$124.11 (period ending March 24, 1972) to a high of \$142.45 (period ending October 25, 1972). When the complainants terminated their service at the liquor store, their closing bill was for the period from January 1, 1973 to March 9, 1973 and the original bill for this extended period was \$150.13 (Exhibit 2). As stated in the complaint, after objection by the complainants, the defendant, for the same consumption, reduced this bill to \$83.99 (Exhibit 2), which was comprised of \$81.04 for energy and \$2.95 city tax. Although the complainants insisted that no energy was consumed after February 9, 1973, the defendant's records show that electric energy was still being supplied to complainants on March 3, 1973; that on March 3, 1973, complainants requested that defendant continue electric service at the liquor store until March 6, 1973 (Exhibit 3); and that on March 6, 1973, the complainants had the electric service continued until March 9, 1973 on which date the service was terminated (Exhibit 4). The defendant's witness said that service was actually terminated on March 9, 1973; that the original bill was for the actual electrical consumption, but that for the benefit of the complainants, the defendant showed a termination date of February 9, 1973; that this is six-tenths of the billing period so the original bill for \$150.13 was reduced to six-tenths thereof based on the rates in effect in March 1973 (Exhibit 1).

While the complainant violently disputed the dates and amounts, she had no definite record of times or amounts. Based on the prior record of consumption (Exhibit 1) and the complainants' pleading wherein they state they closed their place of

business on February 9, 1973, we cannot find that the reduced charge is not correct.

Findings

1. Complainants were furnished electric service by defendant to a liquor store at 3854 Sepulveda Boulevard, Torrance, for one year or more. During this period their electric bills varied between a low of \$124.11 per month (March 1972) and a high of \$142.45 per month (October 25, 1972). The last business period of the complainants ended on January 25, 1973.

2. On February 9, 1973 the complainants advised the defendant they were closing the liquor store. It was closed to the public on February 9, 1973.

3. Between February 9 and March 3, 1973, the store was closed to the public but was used by the complainants to dispose of the remaining stock and store fixtures.

4. On March 3, 1973, the complainants requested that the defendant continue to furnish electricity until March 9, 1973.

5. On March 9, 1973, the electric service was terminated.

6. The actual period from the last electric billing to March 9, 1973 was one month and 16 days. The correct charge for this period and the consumption, pursuant to defendant's tariff Schedule A2, was \$150.13.

7. The billing by defendant to complainants was correct.

Conclusion

The relief requested should be denied.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that the relief requested is denied.

The effective date of this order shall be twenty days after the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California,  
this 4th day of SEPTEMBER, 1974.

William L. Stevenson  
President  
William J. ...  
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...  
Commissioners