

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 86636

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Evelyn Silver,

Complainant,

vs.

Southern California Gas Company,

Defendant.

Case No. 10108
(Filed June 1, 1976)

David Silver, for complainant.
E. R. Island, Attorney at Law,
for defendant.

O P I N I O N

Complainant Evelyn Silver seeks an order requiring defendant Southern California Gas Company to reduce the rate for her gas service to the level of rate in effect at the time she installed her gas air conditioning system for health reasons.

Public hearing was held before Examiner Johnson at Los Angeles on October 1, 1976 and the matter was submitted. Testimony was presented on behalf of complainant by her husband, David Silver, and on behalf of defendant by its manager of tariff administration.

Complainant's Position

Testimony presented on behalf of complainant indicated that:

1. Complainant's gas and electric bills have increased approximately \$720 a year which is beyond the ability of complainant to pay.

2. Complainant is totally disabled and requires the continuous operation of gas and electric appliances just to sustain life.

3. In the establishment of gas rates, no consideration was given to those customers on fixed incomes who, for health reasons, need to operate appliances continuously to sustain life.

Defendant's Position

Testimony presented on behalf of defendant indicated that:

1. The special rate for gas used for air conditioning was terminated as of January by Commission decision indicating that such rates are inconsistent with the present circumstances of diminishing gas supply (Decision No. 85354 dated January 20, 1976 on Application No. 55345).

2. The special air conditioning rate provided a discount for complainant for the months it is in effect (May through October) of approximately \$1.50 per month, or approximately 5 percent of the gas bill.

3. Complainant's gas bills have increased approximately 30 percent since 1974, of which 20 percent is due to increased usage caused by the installation of the air conditioning and the balance by general rate increases authorized during this period.

4. Complainant's bills were correctly computed in accordance with the applicable tariffs.

5. Under the presently effective interim lifeline quantities of gas, approximately one-half of complainant's consumption of gas is billed at lifeline rates.

Discussion

The elimination of a special rate for air conditioning usage was a proper step in the direction of effecting conservation in view of the ever diminishing supply of natural gas. It should be noted, however, that for the small user such as complainant, the annual saving resulting from being billed the special rate was less than \$10 a year. The increase in such bills, because of the elimination of the air conditioning rate, is more than offset by the differentials created by the establishment of lifeline volumes of gas. Needless to say, the lifeline volumes of gas were established to provide residential customers minimum service at reduced rates primarily for the benefit of those such as the complainant who are on a fixed income.

It is clear from the record that the major portion of the increase in complainant's gas bill was due to the increase in her usage caused by the installation of the air conditioning system and the general increases in her rates rather than the discontinuance of the special air conditioning discount. It is also clear from the record that complainant was correctly billed in accordance with the applicable tariff schedule.

Findings


1. The complainant was correctly billed in accordance with the applicable tariff schedules.
2. The complainant should not be granted the relief requested.

The Commission concludes that the relief requested should be denied.

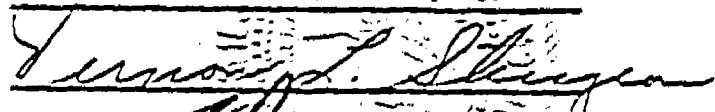
O R D E R

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 16th day of NOVEMBER, 1976.



President



Commissioner



Commissioners

Commissioner William Symons, Jr., being
necessarily absent, did not participate
in the disposition of this proceeding.