

Bills to change PUC operations

HARRISBURG (AP) — A House-Senate conference committee tentatively agreed yesterday on two bills to change Public Utility Commission operations, including a ban on retroactive rate increases.

The PUC would be forced to decide rate cases within nine months instead of the present 11-month limit.

The measures would bar the PUC from setting temporary rates, as it does now

when it fails to decide a case within the 11-month period.

Retroactive increases are allowed when the PUC finally makes up its mind and lets the utility collect back over the entire period of temporary rates.

The bill would require that at the end of nine months the entire rate increase be allowed to take effect if the PUC still needs more time.

Later, the PUC could order refunds, with interest com-

parable to prevailing mortgage rates.

"It's like a budget plan," said James Cawley, counsel to the Consumer Affairs Committee that wrote the bills. "People won't have to wait for the tax to fall."

The PUC will be encouraged to act promptly, solving the utility's money problems. And utilities will tend to keep their rate requests down, knowing that they could be stuck for refunds, Cawley said.

Recent PUC-approved retroactive rate increases will cost some consumers as much as \$62 in back payments.

The two bills, showcases of the PUC reform package, emerged from the two houses

in different forms.

The conference committee worked for about five hours yesterday on the compromise.

Members will meet again next week to review the new version in print. Final votes are expected the week of Sept. 20 when the legislature returns from its summer recess.

Among the other changes: — By May of each year, the PUC will have to decide if the fuel adjustment clauses for the previous year were justified. Refunds could be ordered. The old version gave the PUC until July of each year.

— Utilities would have to show each component of a customer's bill.

Salaries for PUC commissioners would go up in two steps. On Jan. 1, 1977, the chairman's salary would go to \$37,500 and members salaries to \$35,000. On Jan. 1, 1978, the salaries would be \$42,500 and \$40,000 respectively. They now make \$25,000 and \$24,000 respectively.

Salaries had been one of the key differences between the House and Senate versions. The Senate had approved a \$32,500 and \$30,000 schedule. The first step of the new version is the same as the proposal passed by the House.

— The PUC's new conservation bureau would have to review all power plant expansion plans and determine their impact on rates.

Viking spies rocks, mysteries unrolled

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — Scientists scanned pictures of the rocky Martian terrain of the Utopia Plain yesterday in search of an ideal spot to send Viking 2 on its first digging expedition this weekend.

Members of the Viking team also were analyzing information gathered by the Viking 1 lander as it plunged through the Martian atmosphere last Friday. Scientists are looking specifically for traces of the gases nitrogen and argon.

The spot where Viking 2's soil-scooping arm was initially programmed to dig is covered with boulders, which could block the shovel's task of gathering a sample of soil for the lander's miniaturized laboratories.

The Viking scientists say the field Viking 2 is to dig is an interesting one, littered with an intriguing array of rocks of at least two different geological origins.

One part of the field contains porous, spongy-looking rock that appears to have gushed from a Martian volcano.

Across the field are scattered larger, angular rocks that scientists say look as though they were blasted out of the planet's crust by the impact of meteorites and carried to their present resting place by molten material from the craters.

Near the lander is an open area looking like

a winding ditch, or trough. Scientists are considering the possibility that it is indeed a dried-out stream-bed.

If it is, "it would be the first evidence we've seen ... of running water," said Dr. Allen Binder, a member of the team that interprets surface pictures.

When Viking 2 scratches the surface on Sunday, it will deposit samples of the soil into various experiments inside the lander, to begin the search for chemical evidence of life.

Of paramount significance will be Viking 2's search for organics, carbon-based molecules found in every living thing on earth.

The results of similar chemical tests by the Viking 1 lander, called "tantalyzing, but inconclusive" by scientists, could be interpreted as an indication of life processes if Viking 2's probe comes up with organic molecules.

However, head Viking scientist Gerald Soffen says nothing seen on Utopia so far would indicate it is more likely to harbor organics than was the Chryse plain on which Viking 1 now rests.

Viking 2 will begin conducting organic experiments Sept. 17.

Calls it a purely domestic matter

Wallace admits wife ordered phone tap

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (UPI) — Gov. George C. Wallace yesterday admitted his wife had secretly ordered his bedroom telephone tapped. He called it "a purely domestic matter" and refused to explain it.

"There were some tapes and a device" found in the governor's mansion, Wallace told a hastily-called news conference. He said the tapes had been destroyed.

"There were no politics involved at all," Wallace said. "No one has been hurt; no one has been harmed."

Wallace's attractive wife, Cornelia, who has said she may run for governor when Wallace steps down, was not at the news conference. Wallace refused to explain the "domestic matter" that brought the taping, and said the press should drop the matter because it "remains the business of me and my wife" and

did not involve his duties as governor. Wallace is 57; his wife is 37.

Wallace, looking drawn and tired, began by saying, "Being in politics is very difficult ... Of course, it's been more difficult since I was shot in 1972."

"I appreciate very much what she (Mrs. Wallace) did for me" after the assassination attempt, he said, adding that she was more responsible than the doctors for his recovering from the wounds, which left him paralyzed from the waist down.

Published and broadcast reports in the last two days said security personnel last month found a tape recorder and a tap on the telephone in Wallace's bedroom at the mansion. The reports said hundreds of tapes were found dating from last Sep-

tember until early August of this year.

Wallace's office had declined comment and referred reporters to Col. E.C. Dothard, the state public safety director, who insisted the reports were false.

The governor said he resented reports that speculated Mrs. Wallace had political motives in ordering the taping.

Mrs. Wallace has said she is considering running for governor in 1978. Wallace said he did not expect her to run, but added, "If she does, I will be for her as strong as I was for my first wife."

Lurleen Wallace was elected governor in 1966, when Wallace was constitutionally barred from seeking re-election. She died of cancer in 1968 while still in office.

"There ain't any questions for you to ask," Wallace said, ending the news conference abruptly when reporters tried to question him. "If you folks in the press would leave us alone in our domestic matters, we'll solve it a lot quicker," he said.

Wallace married Cornelia in January, 1971. Mrs. Wallace is the niece of former Gov. James E. Folsom and a former performer in the aquatic ballet at Cypress Gardens, Fla. She is divorced from her first husband.

The reports of the taping, which were first broadcast Tuesday by a Birmingham radio station and a Montgomery television station, said the taping system was in place from last September until it was discovered early last month. Wallace did not say how long it was in place.

Ford-Carter debate set in Philadelphia

WASHINGTON (UPI) — President Ford and Jimmy Carter will meet in the first of three 1976 campaign debates Sept. 23 in a Philadelphia theater that opened its doors in the waning days of Thomas Jefferson's presidency.

The Walnut Street Theater, in use since Feb. 2, 1809, will be the scene of the first joint appearance of major party presidential candidates since the Nixon-Kennedy meetings of 1960.

The first Ford-Carter appearance, to run 90 minutes starting at 9:30 p.m. EDT, will cover domestic and economic issues. A panel of three reporters will question each candidate in turn, with time for follow-up questions and comments by one candidate on the answer of his opponent.

But the candidates will not directly address each other as in a formal debate.

The question and answer format was used in the Kennedy-Nixon meetings 16 years ago, and is expected to

be the method followed in the second appearance on foreign and defense policy and the third session, which will be open to questions on any subject.

Dates and places for the other debates and the scheduling details of a fourth debate between the vice presidential candidates, have not been set. But the candidates already have agreed to the meetings.

The candidates will not make opening statements in the first appearance, but will be given time for three minute summations at the end.

The panel of reporters and the meeting moderator will be chosen by the League of Women Voters, which is sponsoring and arranging all the appearances.

By presenting the meetings as news events, the broadcasting networks — all of which are expected to carry the debate — will be freed of the "equal time" requirements of federal law,

under which all presidential candidates would have to be given the same access to the air as the two major party nominees.

Several independent and minor party candidates already have said they will challenge the 1976 debates. The American Party, which nominated Tom Anderson of

Pigeon Forge, Tenn., said yesterday it already has asked a federal court for an injunction.

The American Independent Party, led by former Georgia Gov. Lester Maddox, the Socialist Workers Party and independent candidate Eugene McCarthy also are considering legal action.

Pardons sought for pot convicts

WASHINGTON (UPI) — On the second anniversary of the Nixon pardon, Rep. Edward Koch, D-N.Y., asked President Ford yesterday to grant unconditional pardon to all federal prisoners convicted of marijuana possession or use.

Koch noted in a statement that sons of both Ford and Democratic presidential nominee Jimmy Carter have

admitted smoking the illegal drug.

"Does the President really see more criminal activity in, for example, his own son's marijuana smoking than he does in all of Mr. Nixon's attacks upon the Constitution?" Koch asked.

He said the pardon should not include pushers but only those convicted of using the drug or possessing it.

Last rubber strike ends

AKRON, Ohio (UPI) — The United Rubber Workers strike against the last of the "Big Four" rubber companies, B.F. Goodrich, ended last night with unanimous ratification of a new contract by the six local unions representing Goodrich workers.

because he found that racial discrimination in South Africa "is a diagnosed illness. When an illness is diagnosed, it can be treated. In many countries it is still an undiagnosed illness."

He blamed public opinion elsewhere in the world for much of South Africa's current problems. "The attitudes are not helping us very much, because the attitude of the world is that everything the white regime does is wrong and everything black Africans do is right."

He said he was "pleased"

(answers to page 4 puzzle)

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Roast Leg of Veal, herb glaze	1.40
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