

14. ESTHETICS OF OVERHEAD TRANSMISSIONS LINES - W.O. 5668.

The Commission's long-range policy question on overhead transmission lines was discussed. The Executive Officer reported that this matter had been reviewed at hearings of the Assembly Committee on Public Utilities and Corporations, and that currently all State agencies that have any control, or concern, are being circularized for suggested specifications as to methods by which this problem could be controlled.

A bill was introduced in the Assembly, which would have authorized the Public Utilities Commission to take esthetic considerations into consideration in connection with approval of an application for installation of transmission lines, but this bill has been sent to an interim committee for further study.

The staff of the State Lands Division is collecting the viewpoint of all other agencies, including those on the eastern seaboard, who by the nature of their development and control have achieved favorable esthetic results. It was estimated that the staff study on this matter probably would be ready within two to three months. The Chairman asked that it be given higher priority, if possible.

The renewal options in and rental rates on leases for easements were discussed. It was explained by the Executive Officer that the renewal options are necessary to assure the occupants that they will have time to amortize their investments; also, that increases in rental rates would be reflected in final rates to consumers.

Although the renewal options give the lessees a certain amount of assurance that they can hold their easement rights for a considerable length of time by paying any increases in rents at time of renewal, the State nevertheless may have the right, because of reasonableness and necessity, to terminate an easement.

The Chairman asked whether the State, if it eventually adopted a policy of requiring lines to be placed underground or underwater, could fifteen years from now make such requirement of a lessee who held a lease with renewal rights. Assistant Attorney General Jay L. Shavelson informed the Commission that the language of the easement would appear to make this possible if there is a change in circumstances to justify the change in requirements.