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LB 143

on their bill every month and they have problems with the same people over and over and then I read this section, Senator Simon, section 7, a domestic subscriber may dispute the proposed discontinuance of water, natural gas and so forth....just a minute...

SENATOR SIMON: Are we reading the white copy or the green copy?

SENATOR COPE: This is the white copy. That is correct. Isn't it? Section 7. Then it goes ahead some more and then it says if a statement has been made by the subscriber a conference shall be held before the utility may discontinue service. Then go into section 8, upon notice of the employee designated by the utility of a request for a conference by a domestic subscriber the employee shall notify the domestic subscriber in writing at the time, place and date scheduled for a conference. Then, hold a conference within fourteen days of the receipt of the domestic subscriber's request and it goes on and what I am getting at is, I can see where a person that is late just regularly will have probably, they will have at least two weeks, could have three or so and they are going to be that much later and I just can't see. Now would you answer that?

SENATOR SIMON: I would be happy to, Senator Cope. The intent of the bill and the Supreme Court decision deals only with disputes. Now an individual who was chronically late as you talk about would not be able to have the hearing in the first place because the utility would turn him down. It would have to be for a dispute. In other words, if you came to the utility and said I have been overcharged then the utility could say, all right, we will set up a hearing but if you just say I don't want to pay my bill then the utility can shut you off just like they always could.

SENATOR COPE: Now let me just answer that. I am naturally going to say I have been overcharged. I don't think it should be this amount. I looked at my meter and it said this and I have been charged this, so isn't that a dispute?

SENATOR SIMON: Except that the utility would still have the right to accept or reject that. You know, the first time that that happened on a person that was chronically a late payer the utility might go ahead and have that hearing. Although understand again, and Senator Cope, all I can tell you is that the utilities came in and said