



EDITORIAL

大公社評

Hefty electricity tariff increases not groundless but heartless

The Hongkong Electric Co, Ltd (HK Electric) and CLP Power HK Ltd (CLP Power) yesterday announced simultaneously **hefty** tariff increases of 6.3% and 9.2% respectively – starting next year.

Just like what they had always done in the past, this time when the two power operators announced the tariff hikes, both also played some deceptive tricks of taking "one step back for two steps forward". For instance, CLP Power said it would reduce the Basic Tariff for the first 400 units of electricity consumption per bill for residential customers, and estimated 700,000 customers would benefit from this. But even so, these customers still have to pay up to \$10 more each month. How on earth can this be said as to "benefit" them?

Likewise, when announcing the tariff increase, HK Electric also stressed that about 70% of its domestic customers using 500 units or below monthly would have their tariff increased by "less than" \$25 a month. And for 70% of non-domestic customers using 1,700 units or below monthly, the increase would be "less than" \$131 a month. This is obviously **a play on words**. The so-called "less than" \$25 or "less than" \$131 is in fact meant paying \$25 or \$131 more. One may have to **beats his brains out** trying to figure out how to interpret "more than" into "less than".

However, what makes all citizens in Hong Kong feel helpless, defenseless and even outraged is by no means limited to such tricks as a disguised replacement of words or a play on words the two power companies used to justify their tariff increases.

Needless to say, as the two largest public utility companies in Hong Kong, they can always find some high-sounding reasons when they want to increase tariffs. The two reasons cited by the two power companies for tariff increases this time are surging fuel costs and their increases of investment in environment protection.

These two reasons may be said as quite sufficient and irrefutable. For example, HK Electric argues that international fuel prices have remained high in recent years. Coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices have gone up by about 20% and 47% respectively since the end of last year and the upward trend is expected to continue in 2012. The company has not been charging customers in full fuel costs over the past years, resulting in an accumulated negative balance of \$500 million in the company's fuel clause recovery account. Therefore, 90% of the upcoming tariff increase is to compensate the fuel price hikes and the company makes no extra profit from it.

How nice such words as "compensation" and "no extra profit" may sound! As a matter of fact, which sector in Hong Kong could be spared by increased operational costs caused by international fuel price hikes? But which sector would be able to increase charges like HK Electric for "compensation"? Many enterprises in other industries have gone under due to international fuel price hikes, as they could not have even sustained minimal profits for survival. Who else could be so "arrogant" as to say they would make "no extra profit" for price increases?

Likewise, power generation is by no means the only industry in Hong Kong to make extra investment, and thus increase the operational costs, to meet

requirement for emission control for the sake of environmental protection. How come CLP Power could **make so bold as** to cite meeting emission reduction requirement and increase in investment in emissions control facilities and new infrastructure for using more natural gas in power generation as reasons for tariff increase, and in this way completely shift its social responsibility and "cost" of emission reduction onto its customers? Do other industries enjoy such privilege?

In fact, according to HK Electric's annual report, its profits last year totaled more than \$7.1 billion – up 7.4% from the previous year. Of the total, the profit from its Hong Kong business operation accounted for \$4.659 billion. CLP Power last year reaped total profits of \$10.3 billion with its net profit up 26.1% from a year before, and its profit from Hong Kong business operation reached \$7 billion, up 3.3%. To date, the two companies are making considerable profits and still expanding investments in order to make even more profits.

On this, Secretary for Environment Edward Yau Tang-wah yesterday pointed out that the two power companies' proposed tariff increases were too high and hoped they would reconsider their proposals. Under the effective franchise agreements, the government can do nothing about it if the tariff increase by either of the two power operators is kept below 9% or the level of so-called "reasonable profit". The government may not be able to do anything about it. But citizens and public opinions can voice their objection and antipathy. They can demand the two power operators to shoulder their corporate social responsibility and show their corporate social conscience, and **take into consideration** the hardships of vast citizens under the pressure of inflation while making money.

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WORDS AND USAGE

- ① **Hefty** (adj) – Large in amount or size. (超出一般的，可觀的)
Examples: 1. Professionals charge quite hefty sums for their services. 2. Her salary will go up by a hefty 10%.
- ② **A play on words** (idiom) – A type of joke using a word or phrase that has two or more meanings. (文字遊戲)
Examples: 1. He once had a very bad dream about his horse. It was a knight mare (nightmare). 2. What is the difference between a conductor and a teacher? The conductor minds the train and a teacher trains the mind.
- ③ **Beat one's brains out** – Think very hard about something for a long time. (絞盡腦汁，挖空心思)
Examples: 1. She beat her brains out during the examination. 2. I was beating my brains out all weekend trying to write the script.
- ④ **Make/be so bold as** (to do sth) – To dare to do something. (膽敢，冒昧)
Examples: 1. May I make so bold as to ask what institution sponsored your experiment? 2. One student was so bold as to argue with the professor.
- ⑤ **Take sth into consideration** (idiom) – To consider something to be an important factor in some decision. (考慮到，顧及)
Examples: 1. You can be certain that we will take it into consideration. 2. Control of noise should be taken into consideration at the design stage of a building.

兩電大幅加價 有理據味良心

香港電燈有限公司和中華電力有限公司昨日同時宣布，將由明年一月起增加電費，加幅分別為百分之九點二和六點三。

如同歷次加價一樣，兩電在宣布加價的同時，都玩弄一些「以退為進」的「掩眼法」；比如中電宣布，調低住宅用電首五百度的基本電價，有七十萬戶可以受惠，但即使如此，這些用戶每月還是要多交最少十元的電費，「受惠」二字實不知從何談起？

同樣，港燈在宣布加價時強調，七成平均用電在五百度或以下的住宅用戶，每月加幅將「少於」二十五元；商業用戶每月平均用電一千七百度或以下者，加幅將「少於」一百三十一元。這也明顯的是在玩弄「文字遊戲」，所謂「少於」二十五元或「少於」一百三十一元，實質就是最少也要多交二十五元或一百三十一元。如此把「多加」說成是「少於」，也可謂挖空心思矣！

然而，對全港市民來說，感到無奈、無助以至氣憤的，又何止這些偷換概念或文字遊戲的加價花招？

當然，作為全港最大的兩家公用事業公司，要加價又豈會沒有冠冕堂皇的理由？兩電加價的理據，一是國際燃料價格上漲，二是用於環保的投資增加。

這兩大理據，要說充分，也確實是夠充分和無可辯駁的了。如港燈說，近年燃料價格持續高企，自去年年底至今，國際煤價及液化天然氣的價格已分別增加兩成及四成七，預計來年升勢仍會持續，而過去多年，港燈一直沒有加足燃料費，導致公司的燃料帳目出現五億多元的負結餘，因此今次加價九成屬燃料開支，是「實報實銷」，港燈不會因此而增加額外利潤。



▲民建聯約20名成員到中電總部請願，批評中電在豐厚盈利下仍大幅加價

好一個「實報實銷」和沒有增加「額外利潤」。事實是，國際燃料價格上漲，導致經營成本本增加，全港各行各業又有哪一個可以倖免？但如港燈那樣可以「實報實銷」加價的，又還有哪一個行業？不少行業公司，因國際原材料價格上漲而倒閉，他們連最起码的利潤以至生存都無法維持，還有這樣「大口氣」說什麼沒有因此多賺「額外利潤」嗎？

同樣，環保減排，需要增加額外投資以致經營成本增加的，也絕不止電力公司一個行業，但中電卻可以以實施減排目標、增加減排裝置以及輸入新的天然氣作為加價理據，將履行企業責任、環保減排的「成本」完全轉嫁到用戶頭上，其他業界能有這樣的「特權」嗎？

事實是，港燈去年公布全年業績，利潤達到七十一億多元，按年升百分之七點四，其中，香港業務溢利為四十六億五千九百萬元；中電去年全年溢利則達到一百零三億元，純利按年升百分之二十六點一，其中香港業務溢利為七十億，上升百分之三點三。目前，兩家公司的經營均處於盈利可觀的狀態，且正在不斷擴大投資，賺取更大的利潤。

對此，特區環境局局長邱騰華昨日指出，兩電電費加幅過高，希望重新調整。在目前專營合約下，兩電加價，只要不超過百分之九的所謂「合理利潤」，政府不能反對。但政府不能反對，市民大眾、人心輿情卻可以反對、可以反感，可以要求兩電多負一點企業的社會責任、多講一下企業的社會良心，在賺錢之外也要顧及一下通脹壓力下日子不好過的廣大市民。

2011/12/14 大公報社評

看，空調是過去10年香港用電的大戶。

逾半電力來自燃煤電站》》》

香港環境局數據顯示，本地能源完全依賴進口燃料，煤炭是電力的主要來源：2009年，約54%的電力來自燃煤電站，23%來自天然氣，餘下23%是從大陸進口的核電。過去10年，香港致力節約能源，總能源需求下跌，但電力消耗卻在上漲，2009年總電力消耗比2008年增長了1.4%；1997至2007年間，人均電力消耗量增長了18.7%。

中文基本功

唐太宗消除民族歧視重用蕃將 李林甫雖禍國是奸臣而非權臣

十一月十九日晚上，香港電台《古今風雲人物》續講安祿山，有三點與史實不符：一、「府兵沒有騎兵」之說；二、「唐玄宗開始用蕃將」之說；三、唐玄宗時「李林甫一相獨大」之說。

一、府兵制創於北周，盛於隋及唐代初年。按隋唐制度，分十二府，各置大將軍統轄之，分設功、倉、兵、騎、法、金諸曹（部門），分別管理銓敘、糧餉、武器、馬匹、獎懲、盔甲等項工作，可見府兵的兵種，主要是騎兵。事實上，不論北周與隋唐，主要敵人是突厥人，他們用騎兵作戰，對付他們，豈能只用步兵？可見主持人所謂「府兵沒有騎兵」，只屬想當然。

二、唐太宗倡「胡越一家」之說，消除民族歧視。太宗、高宗父子，已大量使用蕃將，最著名的是太宗任用突厥王子阿史那社爾典重兵，並招為妹夫（娶南陽公主）。此外，阿史那彌射、阿史那步真兄弟，太宗、

高宗兩朝俱為大將軍。鐵勒契苾部人契苾何力也是兩朝大將軍。唐高宗又任用薛延陀人延陀梯真為將軍，百濟人黑齒常之，則屢典重兵，從事多次征戰。唐玄宗是唐高宗之孫，主持人說他才開始用蕃將，也是想當然。只是玄宗不像乃曾祖、乃祖懂得駕馭，使安祿山等蕃將稱兵作亂，禍國殃民而已。

三、唐朝宰相制度，太宗時是尚書（左右僕射）、門下（侍中）、中書（中書令）三省制衡。唐玄宗時，是兩省（門下省，侍中稱左相，中書省，中書令稱右相）。李林甫相玄宗，是擔任右相，而左相則其他人擔任，李林甫無法「一相獨大」。例如，身為右相的李林甫，用權術使玄宗不信左相李適之，只信自己，但大權仍操在皇帝手裡，仍是玄宗「宸衷獨斷」。由於制度如此，李林甫只能說是奸臣，不能說是權臣（如董卓、曹操）。

容若

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SOHO DIARY



Marking Compositions (I)

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When I was in my secondary school doing English compositions, the students were first given a topic. Then the teacher would say a few words before we started to write. Usually I did not listen because I immediately started to think of what to write.

For Chinese compositions, we were told to follow the "four-character rule" (四字訣) of "the beginning, the development, the turn, and the conclusion" (起承轉合) .

At that time I did not know why there was a need for "the turn". In English composition lessons, "the turn" was never mentioned.

My teachers, no matter whether they were teaching Chinese or English, had never told the students something like this: "If you begin the composition with a question, you would get

higher marks. If you begin it with a nice story, you would get even higher marks. And if you begin the story with something that can make me laugh, you would probably get the highest marks."

Later, I became a teacher myself and marked the mock exam papers of the students preparing for their public exams. I was given a marking scheme. Browsing through the marking scheme, I came to know that I had been, in the past, preparing for public exams in a very inefficient way. I had tried very hard to write good compositions without knowing what good compositions meant in the eyes of those who marked the papers.

In order to do well in exams, a smart student would ask such a question before he/she writes: "how can I get higher marks?"

通識記憶體

港商業及空調用電量最高

就各類別用電而言，1999年香港商業用電佔總電量的58%；緊隨其後的住宅用電佔商業用電量的一半不到，僅為25%；工業用電則更不及商業用電的四分之一；2009年商業用電比例上升到65%，工業用電進一步下降為商業用電的九分之一，僅為7%。

就最終用途而言，1999年香港電能32%用於空調，比用於照明（17%）、鐵路（3%）、工業生產和設備（9%）都多。到2009年，用於空調的電力佔總電力的27%，仍高於其他用途。從最終用途