

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 1148

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA.

The City of Huntington Beach,  
a municipal corporation,

Complainant,

vs.

West Coast Gas, Light & Fuel  
Company, a corporation,

Defendant.

Case No. 481

R. E. Sackett, for defendant

S. M. Davis, for complainant

EDGERTON, Commissioner.

### OPINION

This is a complaint by the City of Huntington Beach, against the West Coast Gas, Light and Fuel Company, alleging that the service of gas to the citizens of Huntington Beach by said company is inadequate and inefficient, and that the gas is of poor quality.

This company furnishes the citizens of Newport Beach with gas and Case No. 469, A. C. Derman, Jr. et al vs. West Coast Gas Company making a like complaint against the service of this company in Newport Beach was heard with this case.

Inasmuch as both Newport Beach and Huntington Beach are served from the same generating plant and that the bad service arises because of the conditions at the generating plant, which affect service in both places, an order in this case will cover the service complained of in both Newport Beach and Huntington Beach.

The evidence shows that from time to time there is a

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total failure of gas supply extending over a period of several hours, and that at intervals, particularly during the summer months when the population of Huntington Beach and Newport Beach increases very much by reason of the influx of summer guests, there is a partial failure of gas supply.

There was some evidence that the gas produced a bad smell when burned, and that utensils used in cooking with this gas were blackened, but this evidence was not of such a character as to prove that the gas was generally of a poor quality, and while I think means should be taken to test the quality of the gas from time to time, I do not believe the evidence is sufficient to sustain a finding that the gas now being produced is of a poor quality.

The generating plant consists of one oil gas machine, having a capacity of 80,000 to 100,000 cubic feet per day, with the necessary purifying apparatus, boilers and appurtenances, together with a 1,400 gallon oil tank and a 10,000 cubic feet single gas holder.

The gas from the holder is passed through a compressor, which raises its pressure from that of the holder to about 5 lbs. per square inch into a pressure tank. From the pressure tank it passes through a regulator into the street mains, then through a consumer's regulator to the appliance. The purpose of the regulator at the pressure tank is to maintain a constant pressure on the street main during periods when the compressor is shut down. This is accomplished by raising the pressure in the pressure tank before the shut-down to a point where it will carry the load until the compressor is again started.

The testimony given by several complaining witnesses, and admissions by the company in its formal answers to the complaints, is conclusive that the present plant is inadequate not only during the summer season, but at any time, and that poor and uncertain service is the result.

That the management was at fault on one occasion was shown by the unchallenged testimony of one witness who stated that the gas was off because the president and manager had forgotten to order a car of oil.

The company replied to the Commission's request for an explanation that the first interruption was due to water in the oil, and the last two due to an accident to the generator.

The fact that there was a sufficient quantity of water in the oil to cause a complete failure of gas, shows that the management is at fault for not exercising proper and adequate supervision over the purity of this most important material.

The failure due to an accident to the generator further demonstrates that the plant is inadequate during seasons of the year other than summer.

The testimony showed that during the height of the season the daily output was nearly seven times the capacity of the holder, which means a reserve capacity, which is entirely inadequate and should be reinforced. This holder should have a capacity of 40,000 cu. ft. and would cost approximately \$10,000.00. I believe that even while this expenditure is needed now that the order for its installation could be deferred for one year for the reason that the territory served by this plant is seasonal, and in that respect not a good field, a further reason being that the company is new and not strong financially, and that such a large expenditure at this time might make it necessary for the Commission to raise the rate for gas in order to pay a fair return on the investment.

The defendant's Exhibit No. 1, filed November 17, 1913, shows that the output of this plant is increasing rapidly, and there is no reason to suppose that this increase will not continue. It is necessary, therefore, for this company to provide itself with facilities to care for this future demand.

It was stated at the hearing that the company was con-

sidering the advisability of installing a high pressure main from its generating station at Bellflower, and abandoning the Newport plant, and while investigation may prove that this will ultimately be a wise thing to do, it is extremely doubtful if such a large expenditure of money as would be necessary would be justified or possible at this time.

The approximate distance from the nearest point on the Bellflower system to the nearest point on the Newport system is twenty miles and the intervening territory at the present time is not good gas territory for the reason that the land is held in large tracts and is not well settled. The cost of a three inch line of this length would be in the neighborhood of \$35,000.00.

It was suggested by the company's engineer that an arrangement could be made with the Los Angeles Gas and Electric Company whereby an analysis of the gas could be made from samples submitted, and that the time of taking such samples could be optional with the city officials. This I believe would be satisfactory until such time as the revenue of the company would warrant the establishment of a laboratory of its own.

The recording pressure gauge charts which were submitted show that the installation of the station governor has accomplished the desired result of continuous adequate pressure on the mains at least during the winter months, except in cases of accident or oil shortage.

I submit herewith the following form of order:

#### O R D E R

Complaint having been made by the City of Huntington Beach against the West Coast Gas Company alleging inadequate, inefficient and poor service of gas to the citizens of said city by said company, and a public hearing having been had on said complaint, and the Commission being fully advised in the premises,

IT IS HEREBY FOUND AS A FACT that the service of gas furnished by the West Coast Gas Company to the citizens of Hunting-

ton Beach is inadequate and inefficient, and that in order to give adequate and efficient service of gas to said citizens it will be necessary for said company to increase its facilities for producing gas and to add to the efficiency of its system in the further particulars hereinafter set out, and basing its order upon the foregoing finding of fact and the further findings of fact contained in the opinion preceding this order.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED by the Railroad Commission of the State of California that West Coast Gas Company install, and make ready for service within a period of ninety days from the date of this order, an additional generating unit of at least 100,000 cu. ft. daily capacity.

That if the delivery of gas from the plant of said company increases during the next twelve months from the date of this order at the same, or a greater, ratio than during the past twelve months, that a holder of not less than 40,000 cu. ft. capacity be installed and put in service before May, 1915.

That within a period of thirty days from the date of this order, West Coast Gas Company submit to this Commission for its approval, a plan for the testing of gas for impurities.

That in no case shall gas contain more than thirty grains of sulphur in any form per 100 cu. ft; not more than a trace of sulphurated hydrogen, and shall be free from all other impurities that will blacken or diminish the efficiency of the consumers' appliances.

These tests shall be made at least twice each month and the results of such tests shall be open to public inspection in the office of the company at Newport Beach within five days after the sample has been taken.

That West Coast Gas Company keep on hand at all times an adequate supply of oil and other materials used in the production of gas to permit of the constant and adequate production and supply of gas to the consumers of said company.

The foregoing opinion and order are hereby approved and ordered filed as the opinion and order of the Railroad Commission of the State of California.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 20<sup>th</sup> day of December, 1913.

H. D. Loveland

Alvin Gordon

Max Thelen

Edwin C. Edgerton

Commissioners.