

DECISION NO. 7533

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Investigation,)
on the Commission's own motion, of)
the electric service rendered by) Case No. 1402.
GREAT WESTERN POWER COMPANY OF CAL-)
IFORNIA in Plumas County.)

Guy C. Earl and Chaffee E. Hall,
for Great Western Power Company
of California.

I. J. Truman, Jr., for Engels Copper
Mining Company.

DEVLIN, Commissioner.

O P I N I O N

The Railroad Commission instituted this proceeding on its own motion for the purpose of investigating the character of service furnished by Great Western Power Company of California in Plumas County and, in particular, to the Engels Copper Mining Company, the principal consumer on the Power Company's system in that territory, who complained that frequent and costly interruptions to service had occurred. Defendant, Great Western Power Company of California, was notified to appear before the Commission on December 23, 1919 to show cause, if any it had, why the Commission should not proceed with such investigation and make such order or orders in connection with service in Plumas County as might be found proper in the premises.

Extended hearings were held in San Francisco and the matter is now submitted and ready for decision.

The evidence herein clearly shows that interruptions to the service in question have been quite frequent and, in many instances, over extended periods of time, and that these interruptions have been due to a multiplicity of causes.

Particular stress has been placed by the Mining Company upon the frequency with which service has been affected by falling trees and it contends in this connection that the right of way clearing provided for the transmission line is insufficient to safeguard the line from the hazard of falling trees. The Commission, in the course of the proceedings in Case No. 1271, Engels Copper Mining Company vs. Great Western Power Company, found it desirable, and the parties to the proceedings agreed, to direct a representative each of the Commission, the Mining Company and the Power Company to make a survey of tree conditions along this right of way. The Commission's representative, Mr. Lloyd Henley, submitted a report in which the other representatives concurred. In this report it was recommended that certain additional clearing or tree falling be done, the opinion being expressed that, with this done, the line in this respect would be in a reasonably safe operating condition. The record in this present proceeding shows that all work outlined in the above mentioned report had been completed.

Immediately prior to the initiation of this proceeding, several informal conferences were held between representatives of the Mining Company, the Power Company and the Commission, wherein the Mining Company vigorously protested against the service which they had received, and again urged that the transmission right of way was inadequately cleared, especially that section of line between the Vermont Substation and Engels

Mine, a distance of approximately ten miles. It was also contended that the carrying capacity of this section of line was inadequate to satisfactorily care for the demands soon to be placed upon it by reason of contemplated further developments at the mine.

In order that the Commission be assured that no hazardous tree situations were overlooked at the time of the inspection above referred to, it again directed one of its engineers, Mr. Lloyd Henley, to inspect the section of the line in question in company with representatives of both interests. Notwithstanding the recommendations concurred in by the former inspection party, Mr. Henley recommended that certain additional clearing be done. This was agreed to by the Power Company and it is shown herein that the same has been effected.

The Mining Company has repeatedly urged that the right of way of this transmission line be cleared of all trees within falling distance thereof, regardless of the character of timber encountered. Such extensive clearing is, in our opinion, not dictated by engineering practice and judgment. We are furthermore of the opinion that since the recommendations of the engineers, who have made inspection of the line upon direction of the Commission, have been carried out the line is in a reasonably safe operating condition, and can be kept so with diligence and proper maintenance on the part of defendant.

The Commission has been advised, subsequent to the submission hereof, that Great Western Power Company has completed the construction of a private telephone line on the poles of the transmission line between Smith's point and

Paxton. Such facilities will enable workmen engaged upon repairs in this section of line to report clear with dispatch. This should effectively avoid a repetition of many delays heretofore encountered in the reestablishment of service and disposes of the difficulties to which the Mining Company has been subjected on this account.

Referring to the adequacy of capacity of that section of the line between Veramont Substation and the mine, and basing my conclusions upon calculations of our engineers, I believe that the capacity of the line is sufficient to satisfactorily meet the demands which now exist or are at present contemplated by the Mining Company. I fully realize, however, that future developments at the mine may progress to a far greater degree than is now anticipated, thus rendering the existing line inadequate. In this event the Commission desires to give full assurance that it will require such additional facilities as may be necessary to meet all requirements of the consumer.

From a review of the evidence herein, I am of the opinion that the Engels Copper Mining Company and all other consumers in Plumas County are entitled to a more continuous and dependable service than that which has been heretofore rendered. Considerable sums of money could be spent in additional clearing of trees, perfecting line devices, reinforcing long spans, etc., and nevertheless leave unremoved a great many possibilities of service interruptions. Duplicate transmission facilities would obviously go further toward insuring satisfactory service than perhaps any other remedy.

I desire at this juncture to refer to the new Caribou

hydro-electric development of defendant. When this plant is completed and in operation, a very substantial source of power will be located some thirty miles nearer to Plumas County consumers, thereby reducing transmission distance an equivalent amount. This alone would obviously reduce the probability of transmission troubles to approximately one-half. Another available and important possibility for service improvement lies in the utilization of the existing Butt Creek-Veramont line as an alternate transmission circuit from the Caribou plant, and if a new line were now constructed from Butt Creek plant to a point on the Las Plumas -Veramont line, somewhere in the vicinity of Smith's Point, duplicate delivery of Las Plumas energy would then be obtained from this point into Plumas County. In order that this additional circuit be available it would be necessary to double the voltage on the Butt Creek-Veramont line, and to more extensively clear its right of way. Defendant's Plumas County consumers are justly entitled to the improved service which the above proposal would doubtless bring about. The Caribou plant should be in operation early in the year 1921, but the improvements in transmission facilities herein described should not be delayed in the interim, and I shall recommend that this work be initiated at an early date and completed before the winter storms of 1920 set in, as set forth in the order which follows.

I submit the following form of order:

O R D E R

The Railroad Commission of the State of California, having instituted an investigation into the electric service rendered by Great Western Power Company of California in Plumas County, hearings having been held and such investigation now

completed, and the Commission being of the opinion that definite and constructive steps should be taken to the end that the Great Western Power Company of California render more continuous and dependable electric service to its consumers in Plumas County.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Great Western Power Company of California proceed at once with the following work:

1. Construct a 44 K.V. transmission line from a point on the present Las Plumas-Veramont line near Smith's Point to or near to the site of the Caribou plant, equivalent in capacity to the present line.
2. Install a substation at or near the site of the Caribou plant of such design that it may be temporarily utilized for the purpose of delivering energy from Las Plumas for construction purposes at Caribou, and thereafter for the purpose of supplying energy from Caribou to consumers in Plumas County.
3. Reinsulate the existing Butt Creek-Veramont line for 44 K.V. service and clear the right of way for this line of all trees and underbrush for a distance of at least 20 feet each side of the center line of poles and of all other trees or brush within falling distance of the line which may be a menace to service through the probability of the same falling into the line, and put the line generally in first class operating condition.
4. Construct a 44 K.V. line from Butt Creek to substation above mentioned at Caribou of capacity at least equivalent to that of the present Las Plumas-Veramont line.
5. Install such switching equipment as will make possible the transmission of electricity from Las Plumas to Veramont either by way of Paxton or by way of Caribou and Butt Creek, or over the two lines in parallel.

IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that the additional facilities hereinabove prescribed shall be completed within

five months from the date of this order, in a manner satisfactory to the Commission, and that Great Western Power Company of California shall install such other and additional facilities as this Commission shall hereafter from time to time direct in pursuance of the intent and purpose of this order.

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 3^d day of May, 1920.

Edwin O. Edgerton
H. D. Loveland
Frank R. Wilson
H. P. Boudreau

Commissioners.