

Decision No: 37838

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

CENTRAL GARDENS WATER CONSUMERS'  
ASSOCIATION,

Complainant,

-vs-

SUBURBAN MUTUAL WATER COMPANY,  
a corporation,

Defendant.

ORIGINAL

Case No: 4742

Marshall Denton, Jr.; Attorney, for Complainant:

Bernard Hiemenz; Attorney, for Defendant.

BY THE COMMISSION:

O P I N I O N

Central Gardens Consumers' Association, a group of forty-five consumers of Suburban Mutual Water Company, a public utility, asks the Commission to revoke the company's operating rights in Tract No: 5671, Los Angeles County; and upon proper application to authorize the Conservative Water Company to serve the members of the association. Pending the rendition of a decision in this proceeding, the Commission is asked to modify the monthly minimum charges for water delivered in order to afford some degree of relief to the complainant association.

The complaint alleges that the service rendered by the company is highly unsatisfactory, as it is subject to frequent interruption and that the water delivered to the consumers is polluted and unfit for human consumption.

A public hearing in the matter was held at Los Angeles.

The company is a business trust and has served complainants and other residents of Tract No. 5671 since about 1923. It was held to be a public utility by the Commission in its Decision No. 16335, dated March 30, 1926. (27 CRC 829.) The tract has an area of approximately twenty-six acres and has been subdivided into 165 lots. It is located near the town of Watts and also lies within the service area of the Conservative Water Company, a corporation, also a public utility. This latter company supplies fifteen consumers within the tract.

Suburban Mutual Water Company's water supply is obtained from a well 180 feet in depth, and is distributed to the consumers with the aid of an 1,800-gallon pressure tank that is normally operated at pressures that range from 20 to 40 pounds per square inch. A supplemental storage is provided by means of a 3,000-gallon wooden tank on a 30-foot tower, located at the highest point on the tract. The tank supply is used for standby purposes and is automatically cut into the distribution lines when the working pressure falls to ten pounds or less. At present, the system serves 76 consumers, of which 74 are supplied on a measured basis and two at flat rates.

The record shows that there were some interruptions in service throughout the year that have lasted for several hours at a time, and, during periods of heavy demand, the pressures were low in some areas. However, the principal complaint concerned the quality of water delivered. The consumers claim that the water is dirty, has an offensive odor and is considered unfit for human consumption. Only a few of the consumers use it for cooking and drinking, bottled water being purchased for these purposes. An analysis of the water was presented which showed that it had a total hardness of 1,251 parts per million, and due to its high magnesium chloride content the water is deleterious to most vegetation and could cause intestinal disturbances in human beings. The consumers believe that owing to the limited uses to which the water could be applied, the charges for service should be reduced.

The company's witnesses testified that the interruptions in service were largely due to shutting down the plant to make repairs to the distribution mains and to make service and meter installations. The metrograph record of the pump operation showed that the plant has been operated in a fairly continuous manner at "on and off" pressures of 25 to 40 pounds, respectively. In connection with the quality of water, Mr. R. W. Sparling, president of the company, stated that undoubtedly leaks had developed in the well casing and permitted an inflow of an objectionable quality of water, as the supply had been satisfactory for all purposes in the past. He stated that an investigation would be made of the well supply and an improved quality of water delivered to the consumers at an increased pressure and with less interruptions in the service.

While it is not of record in this proceeding, Suburban Mutual Water Company informed the Commission, after the submission of the matter, that a connection had been made to the Conservative Company's system and water will be purchased and distributed from that source until the defendant company's well can be made to produce a potable water. Under the circumstances, the question of a rate reduction and revocation of operating rights will not be considered at this time. However the company will be requested to provide a better quality of water than heretofore supplied from its well and at an increased pressure.

#### O R D E R

Complaint having been filed with the Railroad Commission as entitled above, public hearing having been held thereon, and the Commission now being fully informed in the premises,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED as follows:

1. That Suburban Mutual Water Company, a business trust, investigate the quality of its water supply and make such improvements to its well or obtain a source of supply that will provide a potable and satisfactory water for human consumption;

- 2. That Suburban Mutual Water Company operate its pressure system to provide a working pressure within its distribution system of not less than 25 pounds per square inch;
- 3. That Suburban Mutual Water Company shall, within sixty (60) days from the date of this Order, report to this Commission the results of its investigation of the condition of the well and the quality of water, and the action it will take or has taken to improve the quality of water to be delivered to its consumers, and to increase the pressures throughout its distribution system.

The effective date of this Order shall be twenty (20) days from and after the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 24<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1945.

Harold Anderson  
Justice J. Wagner  
Richard Locke  
Francis O'Leary  
Irvin Paul  
 Commissioners.