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ORIGINAL

Decision No. 80118

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Investigation on the Commission's
own motion into the status, rates,
rules, regulations, operations,
service, facilities, equipment,
contracts and practices of GEORGE
H. WOODWARD and GEORGE C. WOODWARD,
individuals, doing business as
WOODWARD RANCH WATER COMPANY.

Case No. 9289
(Filed November 9, 1971)

J. Richard Thomas, Attorney at Law,
for George C. Woodward, respondent;
Robert S. McClean, Attorney at Law,
for George H. Woodward, respondent.
William Figg-Hoblyn, Attorney at Law,
for Commission staff.

INTERIM OPINION AND ORDER

On November 9, 1971 the Commission opened an investigation on its own motion into the operations of George H. Woodward and George C. Woodward doing business as Woodward Ranch Water Company. The investigation was brought about because of numerous service complaints. Public hearings were held on March 1, 1972 in Bakersfield and April 25, 1972 in Los Angeles before Examiner Robert Barnett.

The utility serves 48 customers in two subdivisions located within the city of McFarland in Kern County. It serves water on a flat rate basis pursuant to a certificate granted by Decision No. 54060 dated November 5, 1956. It is owned by George H. Woodward who presently resides in a home for the aged in Buena Park. His son, George C. Woodward, who resides in Laguna Beach, has been assisting his father in its operation. The utility has one employee, William McKenzie, who resides in McFarland.

In 1967 several customers filed a complaint, Case No. 8719, alleging various service deficiencies. By Decision No. 74336 dated July 2, 1968, the Commission found several deficiencies and, to correct them, ordered that a sand trap be installed; that a pump test be performed; that billing practices be reviewed; that a current service area map, and rules and regulations be filed; that a procedure to process complaints be instituted; and that the possibility of obtaining an emergency or standby source of water be investigated.

Since that decision, the customers have continued to complain. The complaints include such problems as water outages, lack of reserve water supply, sand, oil, and sediment in the water supply, absence of an agent in the community, failure to acknowledge customer complaints, and failure to perform adequate maintenance. Pursuant to those complaints the Commission staff investigated the adequacy of service and presented its findings as Exhibit No. 1 in this case.

The findings, which we hereby find as facts are:

1. The utility has not provided a continuity of service to its customers; to insure continuity, the utility should either construct a 100,000-gallon storage tank, together with the necessary pumping equipment for providing a sufficient quantity of water at adequate pressures to the customers, or provide and equip a new well, or attach its water system to a nearby water system as a standby source of supply.

2. The utility has filed revised tariff sheets including a service area map, and rules and regulations;

3. The utility has not formulated procedures to process complaints and investigations;

4. The utility has performed a pump test;

5. The utility now has adequate billing practices;

6. At the time of the hearing the utility had not yet installed a sand trap on its system; but has done so since the hearing started;

7. The utility is not in compliance with the Commission's General Order No. 103 pertaining to cleaning and flushing mains.

The staff at first requested that the Commission find that George C. Woodward has, since 1969, controlled, operated and managed the utility, and that George C. Woodward is a public utility and responsible for the operation and maintenance of the water system. Later, the staff recommended that the Commission withhold such a finding pending further investigation of this issue. The examiner concurred in that recommendation and the matter of George C. Woodward's status was taken off calendar subject to being reset.

The Commission concludes that an interim order should issue providing for improvements to be made in the operation of the utility, and that the inquiry into the status of George C. Woodward be deferred.

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Utility shall insure continuity of service to its customers by either constructing a 100,000-gallon storage tank together with the necessary pumping equipment, or provide and equip a new well, or connect its water system to an existing water system as a standby source of supply. The utility shall present its completed plans to the Hydraulic Branch of the Commission for approval. The utility shall have construction completed by March 1, 1973;

2. The utility shall commence and continue a flushing and cleaning program of its tanks and mains as prescribed by General Order No. 103, Section IV, 3;

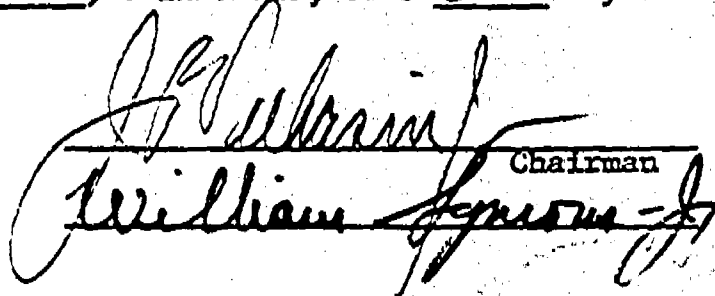
3. The utility shall institute procedures to process complaints;

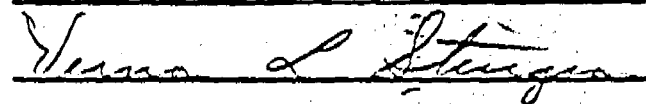
4. The utility shall inform this Commission in writing, each month until completed, its progress in complying with the foregoing paragraphs;

5. Further hearings on the status of George C. Woodward are taken off calendar subject to being reset on motion of the staff.

The effective date of this order shall be twenty days after the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 31st day of MAY, 1972.


Chairman




Commissioners

Commissioner Thomas Moran, being
necessarily absent, did not participate
in the disposition of this proceeding.