Decision No. 80495

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Investigation into)
the rates, rules, regulations, charges,
allowances and practices of all common)
carriers, highway carriers and city
carriers relating to the transportation)
of any and all commodities between and)
within all points and places in the State)
of California (including, but not limited)
to, transportation for which rates are)
provided in Minimum Rate Tariff No. 2).

Case No. 5432
Petition for Modification
No. 691
(Filed March 6, 1972)

And Related Matter.

Case No. 7858
Petition for Modification
No. 133
(Filed March 6, 1972)

Jess J. Butcher, for California Manufacturers

Association, petitioner.

Richard W. Smith and A. D. Poe, Attorneys at

Law, and H. F. Kollmyer, for California Trucking
Association; R. Canham, by J. L. Alloin, for
Standard Oil Co. of California; E. R. Chapman,
for Foremost Foods Co.; Robert A. Kormel, for
Pacific Gas and Electric Company; Howard W. Haage,
for National Can Corporation; Hugh T. Jones, for
Continental Can Co.; William D. Mayer, for Del
Monte Corporation; and Gordon A. Rodgers, for
Allied Chemical Corporation; interested parties.
B. I. Shoda, for the Commission staff.

<u>CPINION</u>

In a series of decisions culminating with Decision No. 74310, dated June 25, 1968 (58 Cal. P.U.C. 445), the classification transition plan of the Commission was completed. Said decision adopted the ratings and provisions of the National Motor Freight Classification to govern minimum rate tariffs containing class rates, to replace the Western Classification published by the rail lines.

That decision also found that the exception ratings applicable in connection with the prior Classification were no longer valid, but should not be cancelled without giving interested parties ample opportunity to justify said exception ratings to apply in connection with the new Classification adopted therein. Such existing exception ratings were subjected to an expiration date, and interested parties were directed to supply the information necessary for permanent application of said ratings before the expiration date.

In this proceeding California Manufacturers Association (CMA) seeks to cancel the expiration date in connection with the exception ratings and provisions applicable to empty returning carriers (containers) set forth in Minimum Rate Tariff 2 (MRT 2) and Exception Ratings Tariff 1 (ERT 1), so that said ratings and provisions will apply on a permanent basis. $\frac{1}{2}$

Public hearing was held before Examiner Mallory at San Francisco on April 24 and 25, 1972 and the matters were submitted. Representatives of Continental Can Company, National Can Corporation, Foremost Foods Company, Del Monte Corporation, Allied Chemical Corporation, Standard Oil Company of California, and Pacific Gas and Electric Company testified in support of the retention on a permanent basis of the exception ratings on various types of empty containers. A representative of California Trucking Association (CTA) testified in opposition to the continuation of the exception ratings in question. The Commission staff presented no evidence.

Decision No. 79409, dated November 23, 1971, in Case No. 5432, Petition No. 670, and Case No. 7858, Petition No. 111, revised the ratings and provisions for empty returning carriers set forth in MRT 2 and ERT 1, and extended the expiration date of said provisions to April 30, 1972. Said expiration date was extended until further order of the Commission by Decision No. 79844, dated April 21, 1972, in these proceedings, in order that the exception ratings and provisions would not expire before the matters may be considered by the Commission after public hearing.

- Item 80 of ERT 1, which contains rules governing. the circumstances in which empty packages and carriers may be returned under the exception ratings in ERT 1 and MRT 2.
- Item 340 of ERT 1, which provides a truckload exception rating of Class 85, minimum weight 4,500 pounds, on metal bulk commodity shipping containers.
- Item 330-6 of MRT 2, which provides a less-truckload rating of 50 percent of Class 55 on the following second-hand, empty, used containers:

Barrels, Drums or Kegs, sheet iron or steel (40830). Bottles, Carboys or Demijohns, NOI, glass, one gallon or less (87700).

Bottles, plastic, one gallon or less, in barrels boxes or crates, with or without covers (156600). Boxes, fibreboard, KD flat or folded flat, in

packages (29275, 29280).

Carboys, glass, in boxes, with or without neck protection (87840).

Carriers, NOI (40850, Sub 2).

Crates, bottle carrying (40883, 40885, 40890, 40900, 40910, 40920, 40930).

Cylinders, for shipping air, gases or liquids under pressure (41150, 41160).

Drums, shipping, fibreboard, nested (21840, Sub 2).

Pallets, metal or wooden, shipping (150370, 150390) including inside spacers or supports for palletized loads.

Reels (41330, Sub 5).

(Numbers within parentheses immediately following commodities shown above refer to such commodities as they are described in the corresponding item numbers of the Governing Classification.)

Representatives of can manufacturers and Del Monte asked that the tariff be amended to apply to the combination of packaging materials commonly referred to as a "can pack" which is used to haul empty metal cans from can manufacturing plants to food and beverage processors. Said pack consists of a wooden paller, solid fibreboard separators, a plastic or fibreboard shroud (overwrap) and a fibreboard or wooden cap. The empty metal cans are transported outbound

in closed vans equipped with gravity rollers, and the loaded pallets are positioned in the van by the driver. The loaded pallets are moved to and from the tailgate of the van with forklift equipment supplied by the consignor and consignee. The use of this type of packaging substantially reduces loading and unloading time of the outbound shipments as compared with handstacking or other loading methods. The packaging materials and pallets are returned to the original shipping point for reuse. The aforementioned shipper representatives ask that lower ratings be accorded the used packaging materials and pallets because of the greater efficiency of loading and unloading outbound movements, which assertedly reduces carriers' operating costs, and because the returned materials have little value.

The representative of Foremost asked that the present exception rating on wooden and metal milk shipping containers be continued in effect, and that certain plastic containers be accorded the exception ratings in Item 330.6 of MRT 2. The witness explained that, over the years, the use of plastic containers has gradually replaced the use of wooden and metal milk shipping containers, so that plastic containers are now used more frequently than containers made of other materials. The record shows that plastic containers have substantially lower densities than metal or wooden containers, and that plastic containers are subject to higher ratings in the Governing Classification than metal or wooden containers.

Shippers, other than those mentioned above, described the containers which are used by them to transport commodities which they manufacture or sell. Said shippers urge that such containers continue to be subject to reduced ratings when returned empty.

California Trucking Association (CTA) presented evidence through a transportation specialist in opposition to the continuation of reduced exception ratings on empty returning containers. The witness described the procedures established by the Commission in

prior proceedings with respect to retention of exception ratings bearing expiration dates. $\frac{2}{}$ The witness pointed out that the exception ratings on empty returning containers maintained by the California railroads (along with many other exception ratings) were adopted by the Commission to govern Minimum Rate Tariff 2 (formerly Highway Carriers' Tariff No. 2) when that tariff was initially established in 1938. The witness stated that the exception ratings on empty returning containers here in question were made subject to an expiration date upon request of shippers and carriers, so that said ratings would not be automatically cancelled when the National Motor Freight Classification was adopted. The witness stated that, under the findings and conclusions in Decisions Nos. 65639 and 74310, the exception ratings at issue in this proceeding do not differ from others where the Commission has required as a prerequisite to continuance, a positive demonstration that the circumstances and conditions of transportation in California differ materially from those which obtain elsewhere. The witness testified that, except with respect to the intrastate movement of so-called "can carriers", CTA is aware of no different circumstances and it believes that none exist.

The CTA witness urged that there has been no introduction of evidence indicating that the present exception rating of one half of Class 55 is the appropriate and reasonable level of class rating to apply to movements of "can carriers" and requested that the Commission continue the current provisions as they relate to "can carriers" for an additional period during which time parties may present evidence to the Commission which will allow an appropriate determination of the levels of ratings to apply to such transportation.

In history of the transition from the rail-oriented Western Classification to the truck-oriented National Motor Freight Classification, and the program for gradual elimination of exceptions to the Western Classification are described in detail in Decision No. 74310 (68 Cal PUC 445). Said decision recites the tariff changes made by Decisions Nos. 66268 (61 Cal PUC 655) and 70771 (65 Cal PUC 601), and the criteria for considering the establishment of exception ratings set forth in Decision No. 65639 (61 Cal PUC 162) and in Decision No. 67610 (63 Cal PUC 170).

The CTA witness also presented a comparison of the average costs for various weight groups and distances, as introduced by CTA in a recent offset rate proceeding, with revenues under the exception rating of one half of Class 55 for the same weight groups and distances. Said comparison showed that the revenues under the exception rating fail, by a substantial margin, to cover the average costs of transporting general commodities in the same weight group and for the same distance.

Discussion

The Commission, in Decision No. 74310, placed <u>all</u> parties on notice that the exception ratings here in issue were temporary in nature and that complete justification for their continuance must be provided, or said ratings would be allowed to expire.

The justification required to support continuation of the temporary exception ratings is the same as that required to justify the establishment of new exception ratings. The Commission has stated in several decisions that to establish an exception rating it must be shown that the transportation characteristics or conditions in California intrastate traffic of the item in question are different than elsewhere, or that the characteristics are similar to many other articles presently enjoying the sought rating [Decision No. 65639 (61 Cal. P.U.C. 162) and Decision No. 67610 (63 Cal. P.U.C. 170).]

The evidence introduced in support of the retention of the exception ratings in issue does not show the reasonableness of said ratings. Inasmuch as the less-truckload exception rating of one half of Class 55 is substantially lower than any other less truckload exception rating maintained in MRT 2 or ERT 1, it is incumbent upon proponents of the reduced exception rating to show by competent evidence that the sought exception ratings are reasonable. The only evidence which bears on this point is the cost-revenue comparison introduced by CTA, which provides a rebuttable presumption that the sought less-truckload exception rating is below a reasonable level because it fails, by a substantial margin, to provide revenues which cover the average costs of transporting general commodities.

C.5432 Fet.691, C.7858 Pet.133 JR *

With the exception of the so-called "pallet pack" or "can pack" used for transporting metal cans to food and beverage processors, there is no evidence that transportation conditions or circumstances in California intrastate traffic are different than elsewhere. Therefore, the test set out in prior Commission decisions has not been met with respect to returning empty containers, with the exception noted.

The record shows that considerable effort has been made by California shippers to develop a method of handling metal cans which reduces the handling required by highway carriers, and that the use of the so-called "can pack" is limited, for the most part, to California intrastate shipments, and that no specific entry covering "can pack" is provided in the Governing Classification. For these reasons, it appears that an exception rating is justified with respect to the empty-return movement of "can packs". However, the record does not demonstrate that the existing rating of one half of Class 55 is reasonable. The involved shippers and carriers should have further opportunity to present evidence with respect to a reasonable exception rating on "can packs". In order to provide opportunity for the presentation of such evidence, the existing temporary exception rating will be extended.

Federal Economic Stabilization Act

This Commission, on June 27, 1972, issued its Resolution No. A-4014, amending its Rules of Procedure by promulgating standards for evaluating filings for rate increases in conformance with regulations of the Federal Price Commission issued under the authority of the Economic Stabilization Act of 1970. Rule 23.1 of the Commission's Rules of Procedure, entitled "Compliance with The Economic Stabilization Act of 1970", became effective August 2, 1972 upon issuance of a certificate of compliance by the Price Commission.

This proceeding is the first involving an increase in a classification or exception rating to be considered by the Commission since the effective date of Rule 23.1.

Rule 23.1 does not specifically refer to classification or exception ratings, except in paragraph (E)(2)(d) and (e) which exclude from said rule matters handled on the Commission's Special Tariff Docket (General Order No. 109) or its Shortened Procedure Tariff Docket (Rule 25 of the Commission's Rules of Procedure).

Paragraph (B) of Rule 23.1 provides that the Commission will not, on and after August 2, 1972, issue orders requiring increases in its minimum rate tariffs unless the Commission finds and determines:

- 1. The increase is cost-justified and does not reflect future inflationary expectations. (This portion of the rule provides that cost-of-service studies may be updated to reflect known cost increases and decreases, as a means of evaluating the increase.)
- 2. The increase is the minimum required to assure continued, adequate and safe service or to provide for necessary expansion to meet future requirements.
- 3. The increase will achieve the minimum rate of return or comparable operating ratio needed to attract capital at reasonable cost and not to impair the credit of the carriers.
- 4. The increase does not reflect labor costs in excess of those allowed by policies of the Federal Price Commission.
- 5. The increase takes into account expected and obtainable productivity gains as determined under policies of the Federal Price Commission.

It is apparent that each of the above criteria is designed to test the propriety of an increase in minimum rates, rather than to test the propriety of a change in a classification or exception rating. Quite different criteria serve as a basis for the determination of a reasonable classification or exception rating.

Classification of articles for rate-making purposes is an evaluation of the transportation characteristics of one commodity or a group of similar commodities as compared with all

other commodities offered for transportation. Commodities having like transportation characteristics are assigned the same transportation or exception rating. Commodities having less favorable transportation characteristics (such as high density or value) are assigned higher classification ratings than commodities having more favorable transportation characteristics. The assignment of classification ratings is independent of, and has no relationship to, the determination of reasonable levels of minimum rates.

The increases in classification ratings resulting from the order which follows are for the purpose of equalizing the ratings for empty containers within California with the ratings applicable in the balance of the nation, the Commission having found that transportation conditions within California with respect to empty containers (other than "can packs") are not substantially different than elsewhere within the nation.

Classification changes of the type authorized in the order which follows are not cost-based, having been determined on the criteria described above. Moreover, there is no evidence in the record of this proceeding, nor facts available to the participants in this proceeding, to make findings with respect to:

- 1. The total revenue earned by highway carriers under the classification ratings in question for transportation performed within California.
- 2. The total emount of traffic handled within California under the classification ratings in question.
- 3. The traffic handled by any individual carrier, nor revenues therefrom, under the classification ratings in question.

The Commission, in Decision No. 74310, supra, determined that the existing exception rating on empty containers was temporary and should remain in effect, until such time as a factual showing was made that said rating was reasonable as a permanent rating; otherwise, it should expire. The burden of proof in this proceeding is on petitioner to show the immedsuableness of the classification

ratings to which the temporary provisions are an exception, and also to show that the temporary rating will be reasonable as a permanent rating. Failure to support this burden should result in denial of the petition. In this circumstance, petitioner would have the benefit of the lower exception rating without meeting the burden of proof demanded of it under Decision No. 74310, merely because the Commission did not have before it data to comply with Rule 23.1(B), if that data need be supplied before the temporary exception rating could be allowed to expire.

In view of the foregoing, the Commission concludes that findings pursuant to Rule 23.1(B) are inappropriate and unnecessary herein.

Findings and Conclusions

The Commission finds:

- 1. Concurrent with the adoption of the National Motor Freight Classification to govern MRT 2 and other minimum rate tariffs, the Commission ordered that certain exceptions to the prior Western Classification should be continued as temporary ratings to give affected shippers and carriers and the Commission staff opportunity to justify such ratings on a permanent basis. Included in said group of temporary exception ratings are the ratings in Items 80 and 340 of ERT 1 and 330.6 of MRT 2 (Decision No. 74310, supra).
- 2. The same tests should apply to the determination of whether the temporary exception ratings should be made permanent as are applied to the establishment of new exceptions to the National Motor Freight Classification (Decision No. 67610, supra).

- 3. The tests for determining whether a new exception rating should be established or a temporary exception rating made permanent, as set forth in Decision No. 74310 (58 Cal. P.U.C. 445, at 452), are:
 - (a) Transportation conditions or circumstances surrounding the commodity involved are different for California intrastate traffic than elsewhere, or
 - (b) Transportation conditions and circumstances involved in the movement of the commodity are similar to those involved in the movement of commodities currently subject to exception ratings on the same level as the proposed or temporary exception rating.
- 4. Proponents of retention of existing exception ratings on empty returning containers (except the so-called "can pack") have not sustained the burden of proof described in Finding 3, above.
- 5. The record shows that transportation conditions with respect to the empty-return movement of so-called "can packs" are different in California than elsewhere, but the record contains no evidence to show the existing rating of one half of Class 55 is reasonable for said return movement.
- 5. The retention of existing exception ratings or empty returning containers (except "can packs") has not been shown to be just and reasonable. Just, reasonable and non-discriminatory ratings will result from the application of the ratings set forth in the Governing Classification on said commodities.
- 7. The increases in ratings and related provisions that will result from the expiration of the temporary exception ratings indicated above were determined by the Commission to be justified in Decision No. 74310.

- 8. Common carriers, to the extent they maintain exception ratings on empty returning containers lower in volume or effect than the ratings resulting from the order which follows, should be authorized and directed to increase their ratings and provisions to the levels established by the order which follows.
- 9. It is not possible for this Commission to determine the effect of classification changes on carriers' revenues and net earnings.

The Commission concludes:

- l. The temporary exception ratings on empty returning containers should be allowed to expire, except with respect to "can packs". Upon such expiration the ratings in the Governing Classification will be applicable.
- 2. A temporary exception rating of one half of Class 55 on so-called "can packs" should be continued for a reasonable period to provide opportunity for affected shippers and carriers to supply additional evidence to justify the level of a permanent exception rating on this commodity.
- 3. Except to the extent provided above, Petition No. 691 in Case No. 5432 and Petition No. 133 in Case No. 7858 should be denied.
- 41 MRT 2 and ERT 1 should be amended as provided in the following order.
- 5. Findings pursuant to Rule 23.1(B) are inappropriate and unnecessary in connection with classification changes.

<u>ORDER</u>

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Minimum Rate Tariff 2 (Appendix D to Decision No. 31606, as amended) is further amended by incorporating therein to become effective October 28, 1972, Third Revised Page 31-AAA, attached hereto and by this reference made a part hereof.

- 2. Exception Ratings Tariff 1 (Appendix A to Decision No. 66195, as amended) is further amended by incorporating therein to become effective October 28, 1972, Seventh Revised Page 7, and Sixth Revised Page 15, attached hereto and by this reference made a part hereof.
- 3. Common carriers subject to the Public Utilities Act, to the extent that they are subject to Decisions Nos. 31606 and 66195, as amended, are hereby directed to establish in their tariffs the amendments necessary to conform with the further adjustments ordered herein.
- 4. Tariff publications required to be made by common carriers as a result of the order herein shall be filed not earlier than the effective date of this order and may be made effective not earlier than the tenth day after the effective date of this order on not less than ten days' notice to the Commission and to the public; and tariff publications which are authorized but not required to be made by common carriers as a result of the order herein may be made effective not earlier than the tenth day after the effective date of this order and may be made effective on not less than ten days' notice to the Commission and to the public if filed not later than sixty days after the effective date of the minimum rate tariff pages incorporated in this order.

- 5. Common carriers, in establishing and maintaining the amendments authorized hereinabove, are hereby authorized to depart from the provisions of Section 460 of the Public Utilities Code to the extent necessary to adjust long- and short-haul departures now maintained under outstanding authorizations; such outstanding authorizations are hereby modified only to the extent necessary to comply with this order; and schedules containing the amendments published under this authority shall make reference to the prior orders authorizing long- and short-haul departures and to this order.
- In all other respects Decisions Nos. 31606 and 66195, as amended, shall remain in full force and effect.

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

	Dated at	San Francisco	, California,	inis inth
day of _	SEPTEN	MBER , 1972.		
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SECTION 1RULES OF GENERAL APPLICATION (Continued)		ITE
EXCEPTIONS TO GOVERNING CLASSIFICATION AND EXCEPTION RATINGS TARIFF (Continued) (Numbers within parentheses immediately following commodities shown below refer to such commodities as they are described in the corresponding item	Class Rating	
numbers of the Governing Classification.) CARRIERS (USED PACKAGES), SECONDHAND, EMPTY, subject to Notes 1 and 2, viz.: **Carriers used for transporting metal cans, knocked down, flat, consisting		
of: Pallets, metal or wooden, shipping; Wooden or Fibreboard Top Frames; or fibreboard overwraps; Fibreboard or Chipboard separators. Less truckload (1) Subject to minimum rate of 44 cents per hundred pounds or actual	50% of 55	. *
Class 55 rate whichever is lower. On continuous through movements on which charges are obtained by use of combinations of separately established rates, the minimum rate stated above shall apply, not in connection with the separately established factors, but to the total of the combined rate applicable to the through continuous movement.		(E)
NOTE 1 Applies only on Carriers (used packages), secondhand, empty, returning, or when shipped for return paying load. Applies only when return movement is over same line, or lines, as outbound movement, subject to Item 291 of this tariff, except as provided in Note 27 and subject also to estimated weights, if any, which are published in the Governing Classification.		
NOTE 2.—If the charge accruing under the rating in the Governing Classification is lower than the charge accruing under the exception rating contained herein, the lower charge resulting from the Governing Classification rating will apply.		
& (E) This item expires with April 30, 1973.	<u></u>	
# Addition Decision No. 80495		
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effective

issued by the public utilities commission of the state of california.

San Francisco, California.

	SECTION 1RULES (Concluded)	ITEM
SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	
References to Items and Other Tariffs	Unless otherwise provided, references herein to item numbers in this or other tariffs include references to such numbers with letter suffix, and references to other tariffs or classifications include references to amendments and successive issues of such publications.	50
Shipments Loaded on Elevating Truck Pallets or Platforms or Lift Truck Skids	Articles loaded on elevating truck pallets or platforms or lift truck skids will be rated the same as when such articles are not loaded and not transported on elevating truck pallets or platforms or lift truck skids. When used, such elevating truck pallets or platforms or lift truck skids must be furnished and installed by the shipper at his expense. Transportation charges for the weight of the elevating truck pallets or platforms or lift truck skids will be at the rate applicable on the freight which they accompany and the weight of such elevating truck pallets or platforms or lift truck skids may be used to make up the minimum weight applicable to the freight which they accompany.	60
Empty Packages or Carriers, Secondhand	When Empty Packages or Carriers, as described below, are offered for shipment at the rates published in tariffs governed by this ERT: (a) Empty Packages or Carriers, secondhand, empty, returned: The carrier must determine that such packages were moved filled and are being returned over the same carrier or carriers to consignor of the original filled packages at locations from which original filled packages were shipped or to another location; (b) Empty Packages or Carriers, secondhand, forwarded for return paying loads: Carrier must determine that such packages will, when filled, be moved over the same carrier or carriers to the consignor of the original empty packages at locations from which original empty packages were shipped or to another location; otherwise carrier will apply the ratings for secondhand packages or carriers not returned.	(E) 80
Dangerous Articles	Dangerous Articles include those articles described in and subject to the provisions of the Dangerous Articles Tariff. Dangerous Articles must not be accepted for transportation unless at the time of or prior to the initial pickup the consignor has furnished to the carrier written information as required under the regulations of the Dangerous Articles Tariff.	90

^{6 (}E) This item expires with April 30, 1973.
6 Change, Decision No. 80495

EFFECTIVE

	ARTICLES	
Carriers (used packages) and 2, viz.: (Conclud), as described in Items 320 and 321, subject to Notes 1 led)	
With truckload shipmer rating provided the	nts of articles named below there may be included at a refor:	
Malt Liquors, viz.: sumption in quant:	Ale, Beer, Porter or Stout, that is unfit for human con- ity not exceeding 2,000 lbs.	
	Malt Liquors (actual weight of which must be certified to pping order) not to be used in determining the minimum trucks containers.	
# Carriers (used pack)	ages), viz.r	
Barrels.	Hogsheads,)	
Half Barrels,	Kegs,) ale, beer or cereal beverages, wooden,	
Casks, Drums,	Puncheons,) metal or wood and metal combined, Tierces,)	.
•		1
Bottle Carriers () partitions),	bottle-carrying boxes or crates, with permanently fixed	
	acity not exceeding one quart), in boxes, barrels or in	}
visions of this is	raced. erwise provided, to ratings, minimum weights and other pro-	
# Subject, unless oth visions of this in (1) Freight charges on (2) Subject to less-true NOTE 1.—Applies or ing, or when shipped for over same line, or line vided in Note 2 and sub in the GC. NOTE 2.—If the charge is lower than the charge is not the charge is subject to	raced. erwise provided, to ratings, minimum weights and other pro- tem. shipments of empty Cement or Plaster Bags must be prepaid.	n,
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EFFECTIVE

ISSUED BY THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA. SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.