

APR 9 1997

Decision 97-04-009 April 9, 1997

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Susan C. Melkonian,

Complainant,

vs.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company,

Defendant.

ORIGINAL

Case 96-05-016
(Filed May 3, 1996)

Susan C. Melkonian, appearing in propria
persona, complainant.
Terrie L. Robinson, Attorney at Law, for
Pacific Gas and Electric Company, defendant.

O P I N I O N

Background

This complaint by Susan C. Melkonian arises from a wrongful termination of her electric and gas service by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). Complainant's electric service at 118 Escalon, Unit 101, in Fresno was terminated from approximately 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on November 21, 1995. Melkonian is not satisfied with PG&E's explanation of the events surrounding the termination, and alleges fraud and conspiracy. She asks for a thorough investigation of PG&E's practices, both by PG&E and by the Commission.

PG&E responds that the termination was a result of miscommunication between a new resident at the apartment complex where Melkonian lives and PG&E regarding the apartment for which new service was requested. PG&E explained the situation to her, and offered a \$25 billing adjustment for the inconvenience, which she deemed inadequate and offensive.

Hearing

A duly noticed hearing was held in Fresno, November 7, 1996, before an administrative law judge.

Melkonian represented herself.

PG&E was represented by attorney Terrie L. Robinson, and presented the testimony of customer service representative Anna Grace Makar, and Consumer Affairs Lead Consultant Mark Denardo.

The case was submitted upon receipt of the transcript.

Positions of Parties

Complainant

Melkonian cannot understand how such a mixup can occur, and alleges a coverup by PG&E. Her service was shutoff without any notice of any kind, and she was misled when she called PG&E about the problem, as she was falsely told that there was an outage in her area. She is further angered that it took hours for PG&E to restore her service even after it realized the error.

Melkonian asks the Commission to assess to the full extent of the law fines or jail terms against Denardo and penalties, fines, and charges against PG&E, Denardo, Stanley J. Skinner, Robert G. Glynn, Richard A. Clarke, and Wilson Lau. She further requests that the Commission order PG&E to retrain its employees and to create a program for future employees that will enable and cause them to communicate with customers without resorting to falsehoods, dishonesty and deception.

Defendant

PG&E responds that it terminated her service in error, and thought that she was satisfied with the \$25 adjustment, since she did not indicate otherwise. Until they received her subsequent letters, PG&E was not aware of her apparent level of rage over the incident of her services being wrongfully terminated.

Discussion

Melkonian operates a business at her residence, thus the period without service may well have cost her some business. However, she made no attempt to negotiate a settlement compensating her for her loss of business with PG&E. Instead she seems to be intent on causing major investigations and possible resulting penalties to be assessed on PG&E and its officers and employees.

PG&E freely acknowledges that it made an error, and should not have terminated her service as it did. PG&E has adopted a new procedure that hopefully will prevent future occurrences of the type Melkonian experienced.

However, to put this occurrence in perspective, the problem was rectified shortly after PG&E was notified. Melkonian expected service to be reactivated immediately and was not satisfied that it took several hours. PG&E is staffed by human beings who, despite best intentions, will err at times. This is one of those times. If this were a widespread problem, the Commission would be aware of it and would consider opening a generic investigation into PG&E's service policies and operations. But since this appears to be an isolated occurrence, we will not further investigate.

Melkonian has presented no evidence of concealment of data or fraud and conspiracy by PG&E. PG&E cannot be reasonably expected to keep written records of every conversation and contact, and service people who handle many accounts each day cannot be expected to remember every detail of every account in the past.

We conclude that except with respect to asking that PG&E change its operations to avoid a repeat of this occurrence, the complaint has no merit. PG&E has changed its procedures in an attempt to avoid a repeat of Melkonian's wrongful shutoff.

Findings of Fact

1. Complainant's electric and gas service was turned off by PG&E in error due to a mixup with a new customer's service.

2. PG&E has changed its operating procedures in an attempt to avoid a recurrence of this incident in the future.

3. PG&E has apologized to complainant and attempted to satisfy her with a billing adjustment.

Conclusions of Law

1. Complainant has not presented evidence of fraud, a coverup, or conspiracy by defendant.

2. The complaint should be denied.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that the complaint of Susan C. Melkonian is denied.

This order becomes effective 30 days from today.

Dated April 9, 1997, at San Francisco, California.

P. GREGORY CONLON
President
JESSIE J. KNIGHT, JR.
HENRY M. DUQUE
JOSIAH L. NEEPER
RICHARD A. BILAS
Commissioners