

1 STATE OF MISSOURI
2 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
3 -----
4 TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
5 Public Hearing
6 April 29, 2004
7 St. Joseph, Missouri
8 Volume 5
9 -----
10
11 In the Matter of Missouri Gas)
12 Energy's Tariffs to Implement a)
General Rate Increase for Natural) Case No. GR-2004-0209
Gas Service)
13 -----
14 MORRIS L. WOODRUFF, Presiding,
15 SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE
16
17 STEVE GAW, Chair,
18 COMMISSIONER
19
20
21
22
23 REPORTED BY: Melanie K. Williams
24
25

1 A P P E A R A N C E S

2

3

4 BRUCE H. BATES, Assistant General Counsel

5 FOR: Staff of the Missouri Public

6 Service Commission

7

8

9 JOHN B. COFFMAN, Missouri Public Counsel

10 FOR: Office of the Public Counsel

11

12 ROBERT J. HACK, Vice President

13 FOR: Missouri Gas Energy

14 Pricing and Regulatory Affairs

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

COVERING MISSOURI ST. LOUIS TO ST. JOSEPH 1-800-633-8289

1	I N D E X	
2		
3	WITNESS CAROLYN PORTER.....	6
4	WITNESS DEB COOK.....	12
5	WITNESS JIM CHERRINGTON.....	14
6	WITNESS SARAH BURKS.....	19
7	WITNESS JOHN WELCH.....	22
8	WITNESS ROBERT HART.....	26
9	CERTIFICATE.....	31
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2

3 (Hearing commenced at 6:30 p.m.)

4

5

6

7 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Good evening everyone.

8 Welcome to our local public hearing here in St.

9 Joseph. My name is Morris Woodruff. I'm one of the
10 regulatory law judges for the Commission, and I'll
11 be presiding here this evening.

12 This is Case Number GR-2004-0209, and it
13 concerns Missouri Gas Energy's Tariffs to Implement
14 a General Rate Increase for their natural gas
15 service.

16 And with me this evening is Commissioner and
17 Chairman of the Commission Steven Gaw, to my left
18 here.

19 The purpose of this hearing is to take comments
20 from the public about the proposed rate increase so
21 the Commission can have some idea of what your
22 concerns and interests might be in this matter.

23 I've got a sign-up list here with, it looks
24 like, about six names on it. What I'm going to ask
25 you to do is to come up and come forward, and I'll

1 swear you in as a witness, just like on television,
2 and have you state your peace. Then I'm going to
3 give the attorneys here a chance to ask you some
4 follow-up questions, if they want to, and, of
5 course, Chairman Gaw and myself might have some
6 questions for you, also.

7 To get things started, we're going to take
8 entries of appearance from the attorneys who are
9 here. And we'll begin with MGE.

10 MR. HACK: Robert Hack for MGE.

11 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you. And for the Staff.

12 MR. BATES: Bruce Bates for the Staff of the
13 Commission.

14 JUDGE WOODRUFF: All right. And Public
15 Counsel.

16 MR. COFFMAN: John B. Coffman appearing on
17 behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel.

18 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Are there any other parties
19 here who are represented by counsel? All right. I
20 don't see anyone. Let's begin then with Chairman
21 Gaw, and ask if he has any opening statements to
22 make.

23 CHAIRMAN GAW: Thank you, Judge. I just thank
24 those of you who are here. I know everyone has a
25 lot of things on their schedule, and it means a lot

1 to us that you show up here. We want to hear from
2 you. Those commissioners who are not here will have
3 a chance to read what you had to say in a transcript
4 that's being taken down by the court reporter. And
5 so and they will -- they will be able to hear what
6 you had to say, as well. Again, thank you. We
7 appreciate your time.

8 Thanks, Judge.

9 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you. If I can ask you
10 for a favor, Mr. Ochoa, if you can control the
11 microphones up there for us.

12 MR. OCHOA: I can do that.

13 JUDGE WOODRUFF: All right. Let's go ahead and
14 call the first witness on the sign-up list here,
15 which is Carolyn Porter. Will you come forward, Ms.
16 Porter. Just come up to the lectern there. Thank
17 you.

18

19 CAROLYN PORTER, called as a witness herein, having been
20 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

21

22 JUDGE WOODRUFF: All right. And could tell us
23 your name, please?

24 WITNESS PORTER: Carolyn Porter.

25 JUDGE WOODRUFF: And do you live here in St.

1 Joseph?

2 WITNESS PORTER: Yes, I do.

3 JUDGE WOODRUFF: What would you like to tell
4 us?

5 WITNESS PORTER: I visited the Southern Union
6 website, one section on there, and they were right
7 with their annual report. They were assuring their
8 stockholders that they could look forward to
9 increased safety of their investment, but, also,
10 increased profits because of the rate case that is
11 being filed. And one of those is pending with MGE.

12 One thing I -- as a consumer, I'm more
13 interested in what is this rate increase going to do
14 for me. I'd like to see improved customer service.
15 It seems like since I've lived on the St. Joseph
16 side of the river, that there's been a lot of
17 miscommunication between the MGE corporate office
18 and dispatch in St. Joseph and some of the office
19 people in St. Joseph and maybe even between dispatch
20 and the servicemen.

21 Also, I'd just heard this year that some gas
22 leaks aren't considered unsafe. Even though
23 consumers are told, whenever you smell a gas leak,
24 you always report it. It turns out that if there's
25 a little bitty minimum leak just around by the

1 meter, that's safe. However, at seventy-five cents
2 per CCF, it might not be unsafe, but it sure can get
3 expensive. And so I want to increase the customer
4 service if I'm going to pay more for my utilities.
5 And I think that's what most of us will want. Thank
6 you.

7 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Have you had any specific
8 problems with customer service when you've tried to
9 call in?

10 WITNESS PORTER: We've been able to resolve
11 everything, but it seems like it takes a long time.
12 With the first house I lived in, when Missouri Gas
13 Energy and Southern Union subcontracted moving all
14 of their meters out of basements. And their
15 subcontractors switched my meters. And it took
16 about six months to convince Missouri Gas Energy
17 that the meters were backwards and I was paying for
18 my neighbor's and they were paying for mine.

19 JUDGE WOODRUFF: How long ago was that?

20 WITNESS PORTER: That was probably 2000, right
21 after the meters were -- '99 or 2000.

22 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Chairman Gaw, do you have any
23 questions?

24 CHAIRMAN GAW: Thank you. Ms. Porter, I'd like
25 for you to tell me, if you could, a little more

1 specifics about when you say it takes a long time.
2 Do you have other examples, and can you be more
3 specific about how much time it takes between a
4 contact and when you receive --

5 WITNESS PORTER: Well, here's an example of a
6 misunderstanding. I'm not -- I had trouble with my
7 meter this winter. There was a leak for a couple of
8 weeks at the meters. It turned out that, even
9 though it was costing me a little extra, it wasn't
10 dangerous is what I'm told. And I called Missouri
11 Public Service Commission to make sure they wasn't
12 going to explode. But the -- I was able to get a
13 pipeline discount, but about two to three weeks ago,
14 there was a note on my door that my meter was going
15 to be removed. And the gas company left it on
16 because I wasn't home. I had already made
17 arrangements because the March bill was -- the high
18 bills finally caught up with me. In March, I had to
19 make arrangements to pay. So they weren't supposed
20 to take the meter out. And so I called. They said
21 they're not supposed to take the meter out. They're
22 supposed to give you a new meter or a different
23 meter and take the old one out to have it tested.
24 So I called back and made an appointment to have
25 that -- have that done. And that was supposed to be

1 yesterday. And I had an appointment, so I stayed
2 home all afternoon. And I had to change some other
3 appointments so I could be there for the gas service
4 person. Today, the gas service person came. They
5 didn't come at all yesterday. And they said, well,
6 if they'd known it was an appointment, they would
7 have come yesterday. So there's a lot that can be
8 improved I think.

9 CHAIRMAN GAW: When did you make that call,
10 again? When did you make the call to set up the
11 time?

12 WITNESS PORTER: Probably a week ago.

13 CHAIRMAN GAW: And was it your understanding
14 that they would come on a particular day when you
15 made the call?

16 WITNESS PORTER: Yes. And, yesterday, I called
17 to verify and they said -- yesterday afternoon,
18 about 2:30, I called and they said they called
19 dispatch and said, yes, they would be there. Well,
20 when he came today, he said, "Well, I'm supposed to
21 pull the meter." And he said, "But that's not
22 right, is it? You're supposed to get a switched-out
23 meter." So he called and got that corrected. So
24 there's a lot -- I think maybe your employees need
25 some more customer service training or something.

1 There's a lot of lack of communication.

2 CHAIRMAN GAW: Okay.

3 WITNESS PORTER: Which is costing you more
4 money.

5 CHAIRMAN GAW: You're talking about -- when you
6 say me, you're talking about the company; is that
7 what you're talking about?

8 WITNESS PORTER: Well, I don't have any
9 specific names, but I'm --

10 CHAIRMAN GAW: No. I mean, you're talking
11 about MGE; right?

12 WITNESS PORTER: Right.

13 CHAIRMAN GAW: Okay. We have your information,
14 Ms. Porter. Do we have your information on your
15 telephone number and --

16 WITNESS PORTER: Yes. And everything's taken
17 care of now, but I wanted to bring that to your
18 attention. Because even though I feel like I'm the
19 only one that's happened to, I'm sure I'm not.

20 CHAIRMAN GAW: I appreciate that. Thank you
21 very much.

22 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Ma'am, just wait. There may
23 be some questions from the attorneys. Let me ask
24 them first before you leave.

25 Do any of the attorneys have any questions for

1 Ms. Porter?

2 MR. HACK: Just one.

3 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Go ahead, Mr. Hack.

4 MR. HACK: May I have your service address so

5 we can look into this information, please?

6 WITNESS PORTER: 607 Northeast (inaudible) --

7 MR. HACK: St. Joseph?

8 WITNESS PORTER: Uh-huh.

9 MR. HACK: Thank you.

10 JUDGE WOODRUFF: The next name on the list --

11 I'm sorry, Mr. Coffman, did you have a question?

12 MR. COFFMAN: No.

13 JUDGE WOODRUFF: The next name on the list is

14 Deb Cook, I believe it is.

15

16 DEBORAH COOK, called as a witness herein, having been first

17 duly sworn, testified as follows:

18

19 JUDGE WOODRUFF: And tell us your name, please.

20 WITNESS COOK: My name is Deborah Cook.

21 JUDGE WOODRUFF: And you live here in St.

22 Joseph?

23 WITNESS COOK: Yes.

24 JUDGE WOODRUFF: All right. What would you

25 like to tell us?

1 WITNESS COOK: I am a principal at an
2 elementary school here in St. Joseph, Hosea
3 Elementary, and I would like to share the
4 prospective that we have from our business
5 partnership that we have with Missouri Gas Energy.
6 Because they really give a lot back to our
7 community. And I'm not sure that everyone realizes
8 how much they give back to our community. They've
9 supported us financially with student needs and
10 teacher needs and, you know, group needs, such as
11 sponsoring field trips, funding special events for
12 sixth graders, at holidays, adopting some of our
13 Hosea Elementary families that have those needs.

14 Also, they share their human resources with us.
15 They come down and educate our students and teach us
16 some crisis awareness and such things as gas leaks
17 and, also, like safety issues around the holidays
18 and Halloween and those kinds of things. Also, one
19 of the big things that Missouri Gas Energy does is,
20 they always come and attend our career and business
21 days and share with our kids what different careers
22 there are within their company. And so I just
23 wanted to make everyone aware that they do give back
24 tremendously to our community.

25 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Chairman Gaw, do you have any

1 questions?

2 CHAIRMAN GAW: No, I don't think so. Thank
3 you.

4 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Any questions from the
5 attorneys?

6 MR. HACK: No.

7 JUDGE WOODRUFF: You may step down then. Thank
8 you.

9 The next name on the list is Jim Cherrington.
10

11 JIM CHERRINGTON, called as a witness herein, having been
12 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

13

14 JUDGE WOODRUFF: And could you tell us your
15 name? And might want to spell the last name for the
16 benefit of the court reporter.

17 WITNESS CHERRINGTON: My name is Jim
18 Cherrington, C-H-E-R-R-I-N-G-T-O-N. I'm employed by
19 the Missouri School Boards Association, 2100 I-70
20 Drive Southwest, Columbia, Missouri.

21 Judge Woodruff and Commissioner Gaw, as I'm
22 sure you both know, Columbia is not served by
23 Missouri Gas Energy. I'm here on behalf of some of
24 the Missouri Public School Districts that are
25 members of our association. And this is going to be

1 very familiar to you, Commissioner Gaw, because he
2 was very involved in previous discussions we've had
3 on this consortium I'm about to speak to.

4 Basically, I'd like to relate a very positive
5 experience we've had with Missouri Gas Energy over
6 the last several years and how they've helped not
7 only the St. Joseph school district, but numerous
8 others on this side of the state.

9 To back up just a little bit, in the early
10 1990's, Missouri School Boards Association afforded
11 the possibility of creating an aggregate natural gas
12 purchasing consortium for school districts. We had
13 basically twofold reason for that. Obviously, the
14 first would be to explore savings opportunity for
15 the school districts whereby they could realize a
16 lesser energy cost. The second was basically
17 focused on greater financial certainty. We have a
18 lot of school districts that are indeed magnified
19 even more now because of the current financial
20 status of the state. School districts are very
21 concerned about keeping a constant level of expense,
22 if they can do so, in projecting the number of their
23 energy costs. And that's what we've been after in
24 this program. In the late 90's, specifically 1999,
25 we began a purchasing consortium for natural gas.

1 We had ten school districts enrolled in the program.
2 And the utilities, investor-owned utilities, had to
3 file tariffs with the Missouri Public Service
4 Commission at that time and before November of '99.
5 Unfortunately, the tariffs which were filed, which
6 were all filed appropriately, they were set up so
7 that the smaller schools couldn't economically
8 afford to be in the program. And we went to the
9 legislature in 2002. We had roughly ten districts
10 that qualified for the program. And we went to the
11 legislature in 2002 and got some language inserted
12 which, again, we went through -- before the Missouri
13 Public Service Commission in speaking with the other
14 utilities. Basically, it opened the door, if you
15 will, for any size school to participate in this
16 natural gas program. One of the -- one of the
17 utilities that was extremely cooperative from the
18 very beginning -- there was basically two that were
19 extremely cooperative, and one was Missouri Gas
20 Energy. And MGE worked very closely with our staff,
21 with our program administrator and consultants to
22 provide a program that we thought would ensure
23 district savings. They worked very closely on the
24 reporting aspect of it and also on the billing side
25 of it. And these are -- again, I think they're

1 extremely important to our school districts. As I
2 stated, ten districts began the program in November
3 of '99. Of those, eight were MGE customers. We had
4 some that were served by AMRON, a little farther
5 west, but five in the Kansas City area and three
6 down in the southwest corner of the state that
7 started the program. Savings were realized pretty
8 much immediately, to be quite honest. And through
9 the year 2003, roughly, November or December of last
10 year, we've been able to see a savings to school
11 districts of over \$2 million in natural gas costs.
12 So the program is working and working very well.
13 And these funds -- if they save ten percent, twenty
14 percent, those are funds that they're not getting a
15 piece of. That will be ten or twenty that goes
16 directly to the district and they can use that in
17 their district however they so mean, whether it be
18 personnel or equipment or supplies or what have you.
19 That's the school's money. And we're very proud of
20 the fact that they can invest those funds.

21 In summary, this program has been a huge
22 benefit to public schools. And we are working with
23 private schools now for legislation. But I'd just
24 like to state that Missouri Gas Energy has been very
25 instrumental in this program since day one. In

1 these difficult financial times, savings
2 opportunities are even more magnified, even more
3 valuable. Schools look for money where they can
4 find it. And this program is providing some aid in
5 that area. So I'd just like to say, we've been
6 extremely pleased and proud of the cooperation shown
7 by the Missouri Public Schools, and we look forward
8 to expanding the program and working with them in
9 this professional relationship.

10 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you very much.

11 Chairman Gaw, do you have any questions?

12 CHAIRMAN GAW: I don't think so. I might say
13 that, Jim, thanks very much for taking the time to
14 come in here. You came up from Columbia?

15 WITNESS CHERRINGTON: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN GAW: We appreciate you taking the
17 time to do that. By the way, I'm just curious, who
18 was the other utility?

19 WITNESS CHERRINGTON: AMRON was pretty
20 cooperative, right off the bat. We had a couple
21 that drug their feet, you know, but all seven were
22 very cooperative. I mean, it's been a wonderful
23 program. I wouldn't talk bad about it.

24 CHAIRMAN GAW: Thank you very much.

25 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Questions from any of the

1 attorneys?

2 MR. HACK: No, thank you, sir.

3 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you, sir. The next name
4 on the list is Sarah Burks.

5

6 SARAH BURKS, called as a witness herein, having been first
7 duly sworn, testified as follows:

8

9 JUDGE WOODRUFF: All right. And tell us your
10 name, please.

11 WITNESS BURKS: My name is Sarah Burks, and I'm
12 the elementary principal at Pershing Elementary.

13 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Is that here in St. Joseph?

14 WITNESS BURKS: Yeah, in St. Joseph.

15 JUDGE WOODRUFF: What would you like to tell
16 us?

17 WITNESS BURKS: I'd like to tell you that rate
18 increases are inevitable to keep up with rising
19 costs, but I'd also like to tell you about some of
20 the benefits our elementary students at Pershing
21 received because of our business partnership with
22 MGE. Most local businesses have one school that
23 they partner with. And I would like to point out
24 that MGE is one of the few businesses that has two
25 schools that they take care of, and not only Hosea,

1 but Pershing reaps the benefits from that
2 partnership. At every PTA conference, open house or
3 other family nights, MGE has a booth that gives out
4 information to our parents and patrons. In second
5 grade, Barbara comes in and gives a lesson to the
6 second graders to tie it with their curriculum on
7 gases and gas safety. They're an active business
8 partner. They donate to our school for our sixth
9 grade tea. She continually calls and makes contact
10 with our school to make sure, if there are any needs
11 that come up, that she is free to help take care of
12 our students. And she is in regular contact with
13 us. We've had a partnership with MGE for ten years.
14 And I would like to say that I'm very pleased with
15 that partnership. Thank you.

16 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you.

17 Chairman Gaw, do you have any questions?

18 CHAIRMAN GAW: Ms. Burks, are you -- just for
19 clarification, are you in support of the company's
20 request for a rate increase?

21 WITNESS BURKS: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN GAW: And is that because of the fact
23 that you believe the rate increase is warranted or
24 because of the work and the partnership MGE has with
25 your school?

1 WITNESS BURKS: I believe it's probably
2 warranted, but my fear is, if they have to cut
3 costs, like most places do when there are no rate
4 increases, that we might suffer in that rate
5 increase. So I would be in agreement of the rate
6 increase, as necessary.

7 CHAIRMAN GAW: So you're anxious for them to
8 continue to partnership the work they have been
9 doing?

10 WITNESS BURKS: Very much so.

11 CHAIRMAN GAW: And you have some concern it
12 might not continue if the rate increase is not
13 allowed?

14 WITNESS BURKS: They've not indicated that,
15 but, in all fairness, I'm sure that there would have
16 to be cuts made somewhere.

17 CHAIRMAN GAW: Okay. Thank you. I don't have
18 any other questions.

19 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Questions from the attorneys?

20 MR. HACK: No. Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRMAN GAW: Thanks.

22 JUDGE WOODRUFF: John Welch.

23

24

25

1 JOHN WELCH, called as a witness herein, having been first
2 duly sworn, testified as follows:

3

4 JUDGE WOODRUFF: And can you tell us your name,
5 please?

6 WITNESS WELCH: My name is John Welch. I am
7 clergyman and pastor of the Hyde Valley and South
8 Park United Methodist Churches, which are located
9 toward the south side of the city of St. Joseph. I
10 am also a resident of the city.

11 First of all, a couple of facts. To my
12 knowledge, you're the only gas company in town,
13 natural gas company. You've got the -- you are the
14 only people who can deliver the product that most
15 people have to have for heating and cooking. And,
16 unfortunately, there are lots of people who are
17 having a very difficult time paying for that product
18 now. This last winter, I received a lot of calls
19 from individuals. I could not even start to tell
20 you the number or their names. Yet, there were
21 people who called saying they needed help paying
22 utilities. Gas bills happened to be one of them
23 that happened to be one of the highest utilities.
24 Now, the gas bills for the buildings that I have to
25 work and serve out of are also very high. We do

1 well to pay our bills. We are not a goldmine,
2 contrary to popular opinion about churches by many
3 people. Yet, folks that call in needing this help
4 are, in many cases, young people who have not had
5 the opportunities to prepare themselves for really
6 significant paying jobs or they can't work at all.
7 Another segment of our population is the elderly.
8 We have people who are retired and, in many cases,
9 really too old or unhealthy to work. And,
10 therefore, they find themselves on fixed incomes and
11 they find that they have to make a decision as to
12 whether or not they're going to pay their heating
13 bill, which sometimes is a little bit more because
14 they have to have their homes warmer than other
15 facilities, maybe, or whether they're going to get
16 some other things like medicine or food. And my
17 concern is, I know you have your overhead. We all
18 do. But we also have people that are your customers
19 that just may not be able to pay for it sometime.
20 What are you going to do about that? I'll leave
21 that with you. Any questions?

22 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you, sir.

23 Chairman Gaw, do you have any questions?

24 CHAIRMAN GAW: Yes, sir. In your capacity as
25 pastor of your church --

1 WITNESS WELCH: Yes, sir.

2 CHAIRMAN GAW: -- do you have a lot of
3 interaction with individuals who are having
4 difficulty paying their bills?

5 WITNESS WELCH: Most of the people who call in
6 needing help with utilities -- most of our church
7 members do not tell me they can't pay, just asking a
8 question how are they going to continue to pay with
9 things going up and up and up.

10 CHAIRMAN GAW: Are you familiar with any
11 difference in this last winter in people having more
12 or less difficult time in keeping up with their
13 heating bills than they had in other years?

14 WITNESS WELCH: I received more calls. It
15 seems there's a higher volume of calls that came in.

16 CHAIRMAN GAW: Did you make -- do you make
17 referrals to any agencies for funding assistance?

18 WITNESS WELCH: Yes. I explain that we do not
19 have the ability to help them pay their utility
20 expenses. However, I do tell them there are
21 agencies, but I'm frequently told they've been that
22 route and can't get any more help.

23 CHAIRMAN GAW: Did you experience that this
24 winter?

25 WITNESS WELCH: I did.

1 CHAIRMAN GAW: Do you know whether or not the
2 funds sources, in your experience, this winter ran
3 out earlier or later; do you know?

4 WITNESS WELCH: I do not know that information.

5 CHAIRMAN GAW: The homes that some of the
6 people that you have contact with, the homes they
7 live in, are some of those older homes?

8 WITNESS WELCH: Yes.

9 CHAIRMAN GAW: Are those heating bills
10 sometimes higher because of poor insulation?

11 WITNESS WELCH: It could be. But, again, if
12 they can't pay the gas bill, they probably can't pay
13 for more insulation either.

14 CHAIRMAN GAW: I understand. I'm just trying
15 to -- I've get a bigger picture in mind here. I
16 appreciate your patience with me.

17 In St. Joseph itself, does St. Joseph have a
18 large percentage of older homes?

19 WITNESS WELCH: Yes, it does.

20 CHAIRMAN GAW: Do you know whether or not there
21 are any programs in St. Jo that impact St. Jo in
22 dealing with upgrading insulation or heating
23 efficiency in those homes?

24 WITNESS WELCH: I do not know that. That
25 doesn't mean it doesn't exist. It just --

1 CHAIRMAN GAW: I understand. And it's okay if
2 you don't know, too. I'm just curious.

3 I think that's all I have. I appreciate you
4 taking the time to come out, Pastor.

5 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Questions from the attorneys?

6 MR. HACK: No. Thank you very much.

7 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you, sir. The next name
8 on the list then is Robert Hart.

9
10 ROBERT HART, called as a witness herein, having been first
11 duly sworn, testified as follows:

12
13 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Will you tell us your name?

14 WITNESS HART: My name is Robert Hart, and I'm
15 an employee with Missouri Gas Energy.

16 JUDGE WOODRUFF: What would you like to tell
17 us?

18 WITNESS HART: Well, I think MGE is a good
19 company. It cares about its customers. It cares
20 about its employees. I also know that I am the
21 president of the local union PACE 5267. And we meet
22 quite a bit about discussing the future of MGE and
23 what we can resolve, differences between our union
24 and the company, and try to make it better in order
25 to help the customers of the city of Kansas City,

1 whatever, St. Jo, wherever we're at. That's what we
2 do. And we do meet monthly. And we do a very good
3 job in trying to accommodate people for helping them
4 out, whether it's going to their house and checking
5 their meters out, whatever. We also can't do that
6 all the time. We need financial support because we
7 have to have money to lay out for the trucks that we
8 use, tools, computers and stuff like that to help us
9 go on to really actually support and help give good
10 quality professional customer utility, as we are.
11 That's basically all I have.

12 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you.

13 Chairman Gaw, do you have any questions?

14 CHAIRMAN GAW: Mr. Hart, how long have you been
15 living in the area?

16 WITNESS HART: Twenty years. I've been with
17 the gas company twenty years, but I've been here all
18 my life.

19 CHAIRMAN GAW: That's what I was asking. But
20 you've worked with MGE for twenty years?

21 WITNESS HART: Correct.

22 CHAIRMAN GAW: And your position with the
23 union, did you say?

24 WITNESS HART: I'm president of the PACE Local
25 5267.

1 CHAIRMAN GAW: How long have you held that
2 position?

3 WITNESS HART: It's been going on two years
4 now.

5 CHAIRMAN GAW: Is there anything in particular
6 -- you mentioned that the equipment needed to be
7 kept up to date and things of that sort. Is there
8 anything in particular that you think is problematic
9 with the current status of the equipment that you
10 use or the facilities that you have to work with?

11 WITNESS HART: The thing about what we do is,
12 we get out there and we work. And our customers are
13 counting on -- because we use them so much.
14 Compressors and just basically hand tools. And we
15 can't really actually get -- you know, we can't just
16 -- when we buy them, I mean, that costs the company.

17 CHAIRMAN GAW: Do you have a problem with the
18 current status of the tools and trucks and equipment
19 that you are utilizing or are you saying --

20 WITNESS HART: No, not at this moment. We
21 usually try to get what we need, whether it be
22 written down and get it or --

23 CHAIRMAN GAW: Do you feel like you get
24 adequate tools and --

25 WITNESS HART: We do. We get adequate tools,

1 yeah.

2 CHAIRMAN GAW: Your concern is, you may not be
3 able to do it --

4 WITNESS HART: Correct. When we get on a
5 budget crunch, we can't actually -- when they tell
6 us we want to buy something -- you know, we say,
7 well, we need this really bad, but we can't because
8 we're under a crunch and we need to hold back.
9 That's not the way to be if you're a professional
10 company. You know, if you need to have tools, you
11 need to have tools. We're a professional.

12 CHAIRMAN GAW: Yes, sir. Are you under that
13 kind of pressure right now?

14 WITNESS HART: Right now, no. Not right at
15 this moment.

16 CHAIRMAN GAW: Okay. Thank you.

17 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Questions from the attorneys?

18 MR. HACK: Thank you very much.

19 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you, sir. That was the
20 last name on the list. Is there anyone here that
21 would like to testify that didn't get their name on
22 the list? I don't see anyone.

23 Any closing comments, Chair Gaw?

24 CHAIRMAN GAW: Just thank everyone for taking
25 the time to come out. We appreciate it. And I

1 suppose, Judge, is there any other way that anyone
2 can offer comments that needs to at this point?
3 It's pretty much -- you have hearings this week in
4 Kansas City and Blue Springs and Joplin; is that
5 correct?

6 JUDGE WOODRUFF: That's correct.

7 CHAIRMAN GAW: And this is the last one?

8 JUDGE WOODRUFF: This is the last local public
9 hearing.

10 CHAIRMAN GAW: Okay. We do have -- the hearing
11 is scheduled when for this?

12 JUDGE WOODRUFF: June 21st will be the hearing
13 that will take place in Jefferson City for the
14 formal presentation of evidence.

15 CHAIRMAN GAW: Again, thank you all very much
16 for coming. We appreciate your time.

17 JUDGE WOODRUFF: Thank you. We are adjourned.

18

19

20 (Hearing concluded at 6:57 p.m.)

21

22

23

24

25

1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2

3 STATE OF MISSOURI)

4) ss.

5 COUNTY OF CLAY)

6

7 I, the undersigned Shorthand Reporter and Notary
8 Public of the State of Missouri, do hereby certify that I
9 reported in machine shorthand the foregoing proceedings and
10 that the foregoing pages constitute a full and complete
11 transcription of my shorthand notes.

12 Dated this 16th day of May, 2002.

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20 _____
Melanie K. Williams, C.C.R. No. 982 (G)

21 My Commission Expires: 03/05/2005

22

23

24 COSTS: DUE FROM: MS. LONNELL BOYCE

25

COVERING MISSOURI ST. LOUIS TO ST. JOSEPH 1-800-633-8289