

Red Tape Strikes Again

Lady Pays Bill-Gas Turned Off

by Rudy Anderson
Staff Writer

Almost a month ago Mrs. Lillian Robinson, 53, of 1018 W. 14th Street, had her gas turned off for non-payment of a bill. The bill was paid, marked and dated Sept. 23rd by the Piedmont Gas Company. But a mix-up in paperwork at the company and the slowness of channels caused Mrs. Robinson to spend a chilly weekend at home without heat.

Mrs. Robinson said that two weeks after her husband had paid the bill a service man from Piedmont Gas Company came to her house last Thursday with orders "to cut the gass off." Mrs. Robinson said she asked him why and

she was told for non-payment. She said she tried to explain to the service man tha she had a receipt to show him that would prove she was telling the truth. She said he became very nasty toward her and hurt her feelings tremendously.

She said the serviceman refused to look at the receipt. She said she was told by a manager at the gas company that she would have to bring the receipt to his office before her story could be believed.

Friday morning her husband reportedly went there with the receipt. He was told by the manager that the gas would be cut on the same day. It wasn't.

Mrs. Robinson called Friday afternoon to inquire why it had

not been turned on. She said she was told that the servicemen did not work in the rain. The result was no heat over a weekend that gave us our first taste of winter. She felt these things were happening to her and her husband because of their color.

However on Monday, a serviceman did come out to turn the gas back on. But much to the dismay of Mrs. Robinson, the serviceman said in answer to her inquiry that the seal on the gas meter had been put on because the company felt that someone had been using gas from a meter that was supposed to be turned off. She said that this was adding insult to injury because she nor her husband had any idea of how to turn the gas on even if they had tried, she insisted that they had not touched it.

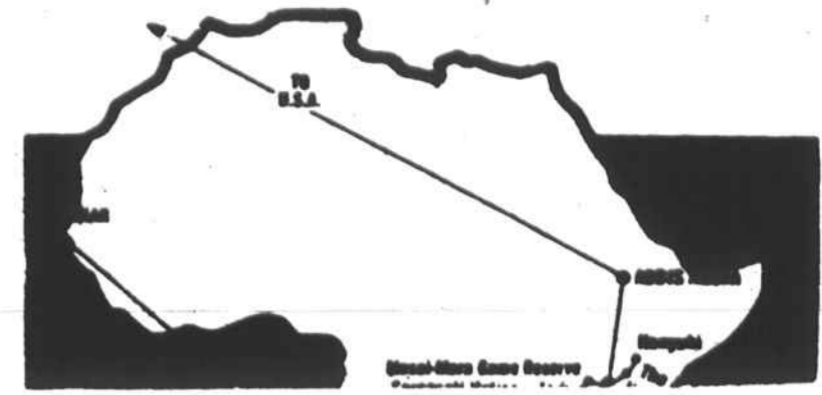
Carl Christensen, office manager for Piedmont Gas, explained that what this unfortunate occurrence mounted to was that the account the Robinsons paid on was at the same time being closed out for non-payment. "If they had paid just two days before or the day after their bill was finalized, none of this would have happened," he said.

He said it was just one of these times "when everything happened at once and the paperwork was to slow getting in the right hands." He said the accounts representative probably collected their bill not knowing that it was in the process of being closed out.

"The reason the seal had been put on the meter," he said, "was because the company showed that gas was

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African Spotlight



The Europeans Came

Part II

The adventures of the Portuguese into West African coast in the 15th century drew greater attention of the Europeans than the earlier ones partly because the voyages were backed by the Portuguese government, partly because of the interest of other European states in the discovery of a new route to India, and partly because of the comparative ease with which news was disseminated following the invention of the printing press.

Portugal was also the first widely popularized European state to embark upon a career of discovery. Founded about 1095, its territorial growth was completed by 1293. In 1393 it entered an era of national greatness at the beginning of the King Jon I's reign. The Portuguese had been unified and aroused to aggressive action by their wars against the Moors. Eventually the Portuguese found more expression for their aggressive nature in an outward expansion beyond the Atlantic.

During the 14th century, Portuguese vessels visited the Canary Islands, the Madeira, and the Azords. Maritime crusades against the Moors stimulated the building of strong ships while the state encouraged seafaring enterprises by providing timber free to Portuguese ship-builders. Yet the insular position of Portugal, the earlier seafaring enterprise of its people, the economic viability and the political stability of the state do not completely account for the advent of the Portuguese in West Africa. This was achieved by the presence of Prince Henry, the 4th son of King John I of Portugal.

The foremost patron of seafaring enterprises in Portugal was Prince Henry "the navigator." As a result of his stay in the Moorish stronghold of Ceuta, he heard of the legendary Christian King, Prester John whose kingdom was thought to be flowing with gold, milk, and honey. He also heard of the interior of Africa as far as the Senegal river. He heard of the caravan trade into the heart of Africa by which the Moors enriched themselves in gold, slaves, and ivory. Then Henry came up with his "master plan". He would explore the West African coast to determine just how far the Moorish power extended. The black people of Africa were to be christianized while the inland trade which the Moors carried on with West Africa was to be diverted by an ocean route to Lisbon. Of course, a friendship with Prester John would help to secure the workings of his plans. But most of all, Prince Henry thought that his exploration would open a new route to India, while Portugal would achieve an imperial greatness in Africa such as would not have been capable of realization of Europe.

Between 1420 and 1431, Prince Henry's 8s mariners made some progress in the exploration of the West African coast. However, it was not until 1441, that one of Henry's explorers, Goncalves rounded Cape Blanco, landed on the African coast and returned to Lisbon with a sample of gold dust and a number of black slaves. These first blacks were "christianized" and trained as interpreters for future ventures. Now there was great enthusiasm for the schemes of Prince Henry which were first greeted with a degree of mockery. In 1443, Goncalves repeated his 1441 performance and returned to Portugal with more gold and West Africans to be sold as slaves in Europe. Thus was the start of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Ironically, Prince Henry who inspired all of this never made a voyage along the West African coastline.

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