IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI LOGGERS SELF INSURED FUND, INC.

APPELLANT

versus

NUMBER

2007-WC-00554-COA

HOWARD McDONALD, ANDY KAISER LOGGING, KCS LUMBER COMPANY, INDINAN LUMBERMEN'S INS. CO. AND MISSISSIPPI-PACIFIC CO.

APPELLEES

JOINT REPLY OF APPELLANT to Responses of KCS Lumber Co. and Mississippi-Pacific Co.

Oral Argument Requested

Appeal from:

The Circuit Court of Lawrence County

STEVEN D. SLADE

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Rule 803(5) & (6), M.R.E.	fn. 2
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SUMMARY OF THE JOINT REPLY

The Response of the entity¹ insured by the Grain Dealers Mutual Insurance Company (hereinafter referred to as "Tri-Lake" and "Grain Dealers" respectively) relies heavily upon witness testimony regarding their reliance upon "certificates of coverage" issued by the Fund. There are no such certificates within the record, and are thus not "substantially credible." This absence fails to satisfy the requirement that "substantially credible evidence" must exist within the record to support an administrative finding.

Neither the Commission nor the Circuit Court pointed to Parker's testimony respecting these certificates as being a critical factor in their decisions. Tri-Lake does not illustrate how Parker's testimony refutes Allen's letter, nor how it justifies the misapplication of a "statutory employer" analysis for a properly conducted analysis under §71-3-37(13). No legal argument is attempted by either party (including KCS) regarding the distinction between §71-3-37(13)'s intent from §71-3-7 ("statutory employer"). The lone evidence within the record addressing §71-3-37(13)'s purpose remains Allen's letter.

REPLY

A. Certificates of Insurance

Notwithstanding Tri-Lake's reliance upon expired certificates, the Administrative Judge correctly declared that the appropriate and "legal" method for confirming coverage was by checking the Commission's records (See specifically C.R., pp. 100I - 100J). Had each entity done

The effort to create an issue out of this factor on page "1" of the Response brief of "Mississippi Pacific" is rendered moot by the Agreed Order substituting parties (C.R., pp. 139-140). Current counsel for Grain Dealers was privy to neither the dialogue nor the correspondence leading to the agreement giving rise to the Order.

so, all (like KCS) would have appreciated the need for obtaining an alternative coverage arrangement for Kaiser as illustrated within Allen's authenticated² letter. Oddly enough, it is the Fund which would have thrust the certificates into the record had they been remotely relevant. This is because no certificate (See Addendum) issued by the Fund relating to Kaiser's coverage was effective beyond and after December 31, 1995.

The legally required documents governing cancellation of Kaiser's policy are illustrated within Miss.Code Ann. (1972) §71-3-77, and General Rule 5 of the Commission's rules (C.R., pp. 16 - 17). But Tri-Lake's Response insinuates that the Fund had a legal duty to notify each "certificate holder" of Kaiser's cancellation or its coverage would otherwise continue. No such duties are found within General Rule 5 or §71-3-77. The Order of the Administrative Judge dated August 18, 1997 (C.R. pp. 100A - 100L) likewise addressed no such requirement. The present attempt to revive issues disposed of by this Order are irrelevant. The Fund's cancellation of Kaiser's coverage has long been adjudicated.

Nevertheless, Tri-Lake's Response does not attempt to illustrate how the testimony of Robert Parker relating to these certificates satisfies any known "substantial credibility" test. Once again, this appeal concerns the failure of the Commission and the Circuit Court to recognize the "coverage" significance of a properly conducted §71-3-37(13) analysis. And the record contains no "substantial" facts which contradict Allen's unsolicited statements of April 17, 2007. This

Great efforts are made to discount Mr. Allen's letter as "triple hearsay." Yet, without objection, he admitted on cross-examination that he drafted the letter (Ctt. p. 55, lines 18 - 26), satisfying M.R.E. numbers 803(5), (6), and 901. Most importantly, he confirmed its contents (Ctt. p. 56). This present attempt, at this stage of the litigation, only serves to underscore the previous failures to comprehend, or appreciate, the relevance the contents of this letter has upon a properly conducted §71-3-37(13) calculus.

evidence stands un-controverted in showing that another arrangement had been made to cover Kaiser's activities prior to McDonald's injury. In applying this undisputed fact, it is inescapable that: 1.) the Fund was known not to be Kaiser's current insurer³; 2.) the Fund mistakenly paid McDonald's benefits, and, 3.) "Tri-Lake would be responsible for the workers comp on the entire logging activities for Andy Kaiser." The latter statement of fact, standing alone within the record, is all that exists to satisfy §71-3-37(13)'s purpose.

Had the issue of certificates been relevant to either cancellation or coverage, research would have likely shown that Kaiser delivered his harvest under his dealership's (a Grain Dealer's) certificate identified as an "additional insured." This would be consistent with both Allen's letter and Parker's testimony (relying upon International Paper's acceptance of Kaiser's delivery (C.tt. p. 62)). But in addition to being irrelevant, the Fund's "effective dates of coverage" had lapsed before McDonald's injury. Thus, introducing such a document would eviscerate Parker's testimony. Furthermore, testimonial evidence about legally-irrelevant documents not within the record cannot be considered "substantially credible."

B. Section 71-3-37(13) versus Section 71-3-7

Neither KCS nor Tri-Lake provide any citation of authority for the Commission's and Circuit Court's substitution of a "statutory employer" analysis under §71-3-7 with a "solely liable party" analysis under §71-3-37(13). No legal argument is raised illustrating how the legislative intent behind these two statutes is identical. The Fund will not repeat its arguments. But it will reiterate that the passage of §71-3-37(13), long after the Act was first adopted, would have no

³ If it were, Allen would not have made the statement he did within his letter.

purpose if §71-3-7 satisfied the latter's intent. Plus, the analysis conducted in *Collins*⁴ (with reference to Minnesota's counterpart statute to §71-3-37(13)) reveals the inadequacy a mere "statutory employer" analysis has within the "solely liable party" coverage context.

Tri-Lake does not dispute how "other coverage" evidence is relevant to an informed §71-3-37(13) discussion lest it draw attention to Allen's letter. Since the letter expressly refers to responsibility for "workers comp", it is impossible to extricate its importance from the coverage context. Though all had the opportunity to do so, only the Fund made an attempt at trial to address the letter in terms of coverage intent. But if §71-3-37(13) possesses any coverage connotation, Allen's letter is the only evidence within the record addressing timely coverage for Kaiser. The Commission's and the Circuit Court's choice to ignore this lone evidence for §71-3-37(13)'s purposes is reversible error.

On less evidence than exists here, the Supreme Court in *Collins* determined that a "statutory employer" situation did not exist because Collins' employer, Shewmake, possessed coverage through Box. *Collins*, at 459-60. To the extent that the Commission reached a similar finding in this case (McDonald had no "statutory employer") is correct in result only, but falls short of completing the task. Unlike what it was limited to in 1956, the Commission here had a duty to go further beyond this mere §71-3-7 analysis and examine factors consistent with §71-3-37(13) which - by definition - must include the terms of Allen's letter. Kaiser, like Shewmake, had coverage. Because of the "new" statute, no "independent action" was warranted as directed in the subsequent *Collins*' ruling (See 231 Miss. 319, 96 So.2d 456, (*342) (1957)).

⁴ U.S.F.& G. v. Collins, 231 Miss. 319, 95 So.2d 456 (1957)

C. Substantial credibility

As pointed out in the initial brief, courts cannot add or subtract evidence from an administrative agency's record but must limit their review to its contents when addressing the issue being appealed. *Mississippi Comm'n on Environmental Quality v. Chickasaw Co. Bd. of Supervisors*, 621 So.2d 1211 (Miss. 1993). The only reason Allen's uncontradicted agreement was ignored was due to the misconstruction of §71-3-37(13). Such misapplications of law to fact are not only appropriate for judicial review (*Central Elec. Power Ass'n v. Hicks*, 110 So.2d 351, 356 (Miss. 1959)), but likewise satisfy all four (4) judicially-established criteria for overturning an erroneous administrative decision (*Thomas v. Five County Child Development Program, Inc.*, 958 So.2d 247 (Miss. Ct. App. 2007), citing *Miss. Sierra Club, Inc. v. Miss. Dep't of Envt. Quality*, 819 So.2d 515, 519 (¶ 15) (Miss. 2002)).

The focus of this appeal must therefore be concentrated upon whether Parker's testimony had sufficient "substantial credibility" to contradict or refute the agreement Allen identified. But neither the Circuit Court nor Tri-Lake explain the "substantial credibility" of his testimony in ths regard. Neither provide suggestions explaining why Allen informed the Fund of an ostensibly "unnecessary" agreement when the latter's coverage was still "assumed by all." Tri-Lake generally suggests that the remaining witnesses all testified to relying on certificates also. But the Circuit Court did not rely upon any "certificate" testimony. Instead, it relied upon Parker's generic "company policy" testimony as a "substantially credible" basis for refuting the agreement Allen depicted. Thus, even if Tri-Lake's arguments on certificates are accepted, the Circuit Court did not rely on this testimony and it does not otherwise serve to refute or create doubt as to the contents of Allen's letter. No "substantiation" of the "credibility" of this evidence is shown.

Tri-Lake makes no attempt to illustrate how Parker's remote testimony of "company policy" was sufficiently "credible" to refute an agreement to which he was not a party. The agreement was entered between Allen and another employee, Monty Sanders. As pointed out by Justice Roberts in *Gibbes*⁵, "substantially credible" evidence cannot simply pertain to the subject matter, it must also be legally qualitative. As such, the witness must have probative knowledge tending to make any fact (such as the agreement) more or less probable. Parker's knowledge of his company's generic intentions is irrelevant to whether Allen and Sanders entered such an agreement. Tri-Lake prevented Sanders from commenting (C.t.t., pp. 85-88).

Parker neither testified to, nor did he introduce, a valid certificate of insurance. And he only expressed "doubts" regarding the coverage agreement. As relied upon by the Circuit Court, Parker's testimony has no substantial credibility regarding Tri-Lake's assumption of "workers' comp" responsibility for Kaiser's activities. "Skeptical" as the Court may be, such agreements are commonplace and necessary within the timber harvesting industry. Given the effective dates of Kaiser's prior coverage, the existence of one here is hardly surprising.

D. Conclusion

Tri-Lake argues that the Fund continued coverage and was otherwise a "volunteer." All such arguments were disposed of by the Administrative Judge on August 18, 1997, and later by the Circuit Court on the first appeal, and are thus *res judicata*. But if the language of §71-3-37(13) authorizes the Commission to order one carrier mistakenly paying benefits to be reimbursed by another if the latter constitutes the "solely liable party", then the Fund clearly occupies the

⁵ Gibbes v. Hinds County Board of Supervisors, 952 So.2d 1011 (Miss.Ct.App. 2007)

former position. The question then focuses upon any evidence in the record of other compensation arrangements. If none exists, then the result reached (naming Kaiser the "solely liable party") might have merit. But since the record contains Allen's letter which for some obvious purpose plainly depicts such an arrangement, the record cannot be ignored and the legislative purpose behind §71-3-37(13) administratively disregarded. The record must stand as it exists. And after having purposefully succeeded in squandering their opportunities to do so beforehand, neither Mississippi Pacific/Tri-Lake nor KCS should now be given more chances to re-open the record and introduce belated evidence refuting the terms of that letter. Accordingly, the decisions on appeal should be reversed and rendered.

Respectfully submitted, this the 4th day of 4th day of

THE MISSISSIPPI LOGGERS SELF-INSURED

FUND, INC., APPELLANT

STEVEN D. SLADE, its attorney

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Steven D. Slade, attorney for the Mississippi Loggers Self Insured Fund, Inc., do hereby certify that I have delivered by U.S. Mail, postage prepaid, the foregoing **JOINT REPLY** to:

Christopher E. Kelley, Esq. Gwin, Lewis & Punches, LLP Post Office Box 1344 Natchez, Mississippi 39121 John T. Ball, Esq. Post Office 2037 Natchez, Mississippi 39121

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Jackson, Mississippi 39236-6295

Clifford B. Ammons, Esq. Watkins & Eager Post Office Box 650 Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0650

Honorable R. I. Prichard, III Circuit Court Judge - Lawrence County Post Office Box 1075 Picayune, Mississippi 39466

Mississippi Workers' Compensation Commission Phyllis Clark - Secretary Post Office Box 5300 Jackson, Mississippi 39296-5300

This the $\frac{44}{4}$ day of $\frac{2007}{4}$.

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ADDENDUM

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DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS/LOCATIONS/VEHICLES/SPECIAL ITEMS

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LOGGING AND LUMBERING

ERTIFICATE HOLDER

EXCESS LIABILITY

UMBRELLA FORM

EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY

PARTNERS/EXECUTIVE

THE PROPRIETOR

OFFICERS ARE:

WORKERS COMPENSATION AND

OTHER THAN UMBRELLA FORM

TRI-LAKE TIMBER CO.

P.O. BOX 1405

NATCHEZ, MS 39121

CANCELLATION

SHOULD ANY OF THE ABOVE DESCRIBED POLICIES BE CANCELLED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION DATE THEREOF, THE ISSUING COMPANY WILL ENDEAVOR TO MAIL 300 DAYS WRITTEN NOTICE TO THE CERTIFICATE HOLDER NAMED TO THE LEFT.

BUT FAILURE TO MAIL SUCH NOTICE SHALL IMPOSE NO OBLIGATION OR LIABILITY
OF ANY KIND LIBON THE COMPANY ITS AGENTS OR REPRESENTATIVES.

AGGREGATE

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ESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS/LOCATIONS/VEHICLES/SPECIAL ITEMS

.OGGING AND LUMBERING

ERTIFICATE HOLDER

HIRED AUTOS

EXCESS LIABILITY

THER

NON-OWNED AUTOS

GARAGE LIABILITY

UMBRELLA FORM

OTHER THAN UMBRELLA FORM

WORKER'S COMPENSATION

AND

EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY

('ICKENS BROTHERS LUMBER CO. P. O. BOX 433 PORT GIBSON, MS 39150

CANCELLATION

SHOULD ANY OF THE ABOVE DESCRIBED POLICIES BE CANCELLED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION DATE THEREOF, THE ISSUING COMPANY WILL ENDEAVOR TO MAIL DAYS WRITTEN NOTICE TO THE CERTIFICATE HOLDER NAMED TO THE LEFT, BUT FAILURE TO MAIL SUCH NOTICE SHALL IMPOSE NO OBLIGATION OR LIABILITY OF ANY KIND UPON THE COMPANY, ITS AGENTS OR REPRESENTATIVES.

AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

CERTIFICATE 16-93 01-01-94 12-31-94 DISEASE-POLICY LIMIT

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PROPERTY DAMAGE

BODILY INJURY & PROPERTY DAMAGE COMBINED

EACH OCCURRENCE

STATUTORY LIMITS

DISEASE-EACH EMPLOYEE

AGGREGATE

EACH ACCIDENT

100,000.

500,000.

100,000.

CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE THIS CERTIFICATE IS ISSUED AS A MATTER OF INFORMATION ONLY AND PRODUCER CONFERS NO RIGHTS UPON THE CERTIFICATE HOLDER. THIS CERTIFICATE DOES NOT AMEND, EXTEND OR ALTER THE COVERAGE AFFORDED BY THE POLICIES BELOW. WALKER, HUNTER & ASSOCIATES, INC. COMPANIES AFFORDING COVERAGE OF MISSISSIPPI P.O. DRAWER 5537 COMPANY MERIDIAN, MS 39302-5537 AMS LOGGERS ASSN. SELF INSURED FUND LETTER COMPANY B LETTER 004-0158 COMPANY C KAISER, ANDY LOGGING LETTER P. O. BOX 17916 COMPANY D NATCHEZ MS 39120 LETTER COMPANY E LETTER VERAGES THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE POLICIES OF INSURANCE LISTED BELOW HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO THE INSURED NAMED ABOVE FOR THE POLICY PERIOD INDICATED, NOTWITHSTANDING ANY REQUIREMENT, TERM OR CONDITION OF ANY CONTRACT OR OTHER DOCUMENT WITH RESPECT TO WHICH THIS CERTIFICATE MAY BE ISSUED OR MAY PERTAIN, THE INSURANCE AFFORDED BY THE POLICIES DESCRIBED HEREIN IS SUBJECT TO ALL THE TERMS, EXCLUSIONS AND CONDITIONS OF SUCH POLICIES. POLICY EFFECTIVE POLICY EXPIRATION LIMITS TYPE OF INSURANCE **POLICY NUMBER** DATE (MM/DD/YY) DATE (MM/DD/YY) BODILY INJURY OCC. S GENERAL LIABILITY BODILY INJURY AGG. s COMPREHENSIVE FORM PROPERTY DAMAGE OCC. \$ PREMISES/OPERATIONS UNDERGROUND EXPLOSION & COLLAPSE HAZARD \$ PROPERTY DAMAGE AGG 8I & PD COMBINED OCC. PRODUCTS/COMPLETED OPER. \$ BI & PD COMBINED AGG. CONTRACTUAL 5 PERSONAL INJURY AGG. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS BROAD FORM PROPERTY DAMAGE PERSONAL INJURY AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY BODILY INJURY 5 (Per person) ANY AUTO ALL OWNED AUTOS (Priv. Pass.) BODILY INJURY \$ ALL OWNED AUTOS (Other Than) (Per accident) HIRED AUTOS PROPERTY DAMAGE NON-OWNED AUTOS

ESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS/LOCATIONS/VEHICLES/SPECIAL ITEMS

_OGGING AND LUMBERING

ERTIFICATE HOLDER

GARAGE LIABILITY

UMBRELLA FORM

OTHER THAN UMBRELLA FORM

WORKER'S COMPENSATION

AND

EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY

EXCESS LIABILITY

OTHER

COLUMBUS LUMBER

P. O. BOX 536

BROOKHAVEN, MS 39601

NTTN: TED RATCLIFF

CANCELLATION

CERTIFICATE 16-93 01-01-94

SHOULD ANY OF THE ABOVE DESCRIBED POLICIES BE CANCELLED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION DATE THEREOF, THE ISSUING COMPANY WILL ENDEAVOR TO MAIL DAYS WRITTEN NOTICE TO THE CERTIFICATE HOLDER NAMED TO THE LEFT, BUT FAILURE TO MAIL SUCH NOTICE SHALL IMPOSE NO OBLIGATION OR LIABILITY OF ANY KIND UPON THE COMPANY, ITS AGENTS OR REPRESENTATIVES.

BODILY INJURY & PROPERTY DAMAGE

STATUTORY LIMITS

COMBINED

EACH OCCURRENCE

AGGREGATE

FACH ACCIDENT

DISEASE-POLICY LIMIT

DISEASE-EACH EMPLOYEE

12-31-94

AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

Olyton M. Davis

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100,000.

500,000.

100,000.

						Issue Date: N	Лау 24, 1994			
`FR	TIFICATE OF IN	RANCE			is issued a	in anh and conf	ers no rights upon the			
		ICES, IN	1	This Certificate is issued as a matter of information only and confers no rights upon the Certificate Holder. This Certificate does not amend, extend or alter the coverage afforded by the policies below.						
\circ	Drawer 553/				Com	panies Affording Covera	ge			
Merio	dian, MS 39302-5537			National Union Fire Ins. Co.						
INSUF	RED:		-			MS LOGGERS ASSN. SELF-IN	SURED-FUND			
AND	Y KAISER LOGGING		<u> </u> -	Company l			·			
PO	BOX 17916		-	Company I						
NAT	CHEZ, MS 39120			Company						
				Company	Rinder evi	dences the limits of liability in effect at the laims paid exhaust the aggregate limits ar	inception of the policies			
			shown. Note	the aggregate	minto	•				
				to the Insured	named abov	re for the policy period indicated notwiths	tanding any requirement afforded by the policies			
This is	to certify that policies of insurance in	isted below he document w	ith respect to W	hich this certification	ficate may b	re for the policy period indicated notwiths be issued or may pertain. The insurence on may have been reduced by paid claims. ALL LIMITS IN THO				
term d	or condition of any contract of bed herein is subject to all the terms,	exclusions, a	nd conditions of	Policy Eff.	Policy	ne issued or may pertain. In may have been reduced by peld claims. ALL LIMITS IN THO	USANDS			
Co	TYPE OF INSURANCE	POLICY	NUMBER	Date	Exp. Date					
Ltr			.0	8/19/93	8/19/94	General Aggregate \$	50			
A	GENERAL LIABILITY XII Commercial General Liability	GLA 17512	00			Products-Comp/Ops Aggregate \$	INCL IN OC			
	C Claims Made XDOCCUrrence					Personal & Advertising Injury \$	5			
\ \	Owners' & Contractors' Protective					Each Occurrence \$	<u> </u>			
1 1	0				\	Fire Damage (Any one fire) \$				
}						Medical Expense (Any one person)\$				
						Combined \$				
	AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY II Any Auto					Bodily Injury (Per Person) \$				
	All Owned Autos Scheduled Autos	utos				Bodily Injury (Per Accident) \$				
	☐ Hired Autos ☐ Nonowned Autos				İ	Property Damage \$				
	☐ Garage Liability			-		Each Occurrence	Aggregate \$			
}	EXCESS LIABILITY D Umbrella Form									
	D Other than Umbrella Form				CÒNT UNTIL		(Each Accident)			
В	WORKERS' COMPENSATION & EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY	CERTIFICATE #16-93		5-1-93	CAN-	\$100	(Disease-Policy			
					CECTO	\$500	(Disease-Each			
					_	\$100				
	OTHER:									
1		1 24-15	ialaa/Specia		: LOGGI	ING & LUMBERING -				
D	escription of Operations/Loc	ations/Ven	(cles/special	10000	CANC	ELLATION	CIES BE CANCELLE			
CE	ERTIFICATE HOLDER	7			THE ENDEA HOLD IMPOS ITS AI Autho	LD ANY OF THE ABOVE DESCRIBED POLITIES FOR THE ABOVE DESCRIBED POLITIES FOR THE AVOR TO MAIL 30 DAYS WRITTEN NOT BE NAMED TO THE LEFT, BUT FAILURE TO SE NO OBLIGATION OR LIABILITY OF ANY GENTS OR REPRESENTATIVES. WHICH THE ABOVE DESCRIBED POLITIES FOR THE ABOVE DESCRIPTION OF THE ABOVE DESCRIPT	ONANI SUCH NOT			
_			lf you have	any questions,	please call	600 483-8252	<u></u>			
			<u> </u>		مسميعه	\sim				