IN THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION COURT STATE OF MONTANA

ALEXIS RAUSCH,	et al.,) .	JAN 1 3 2005
-vs- MONTANA STAT	Petitioner, E FUND,)) WCC No.) 9907-8274R1)	WORKERS' COMPENSATION JUDGE HELENA, MONTANA
and	Respondent/Insurer,)))	
JEREMY RUHD,))	
-vs-	Petitioner,)))	
LIBERTY NORTH INSURANCE COI	WEST RPORATION,)))	
	Respondent/Insurer.		COPY

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Heard at the Workers' Compensation Court 1625 11th Avenue, Helena, Montana December 16, 2004 11:20 a.m.

BEFORE THE HONORABLE MIKE McCARTER

LISA R. LESOFSKI, RPR Lesofski & Walstad Court Reporting 21 North Last Chance Gulch, Suite 201, Placer Center Helena, Montana 59601 (406) 443-2010

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	Diana Ferriter
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Page 5 Page 3 1 of supervisory control was drafted and filed by 1 The following proceedings were had: ***** 2 Brad. We do have an order back from the 2 3 3 Supreme Court which is carefully phrased and what it requests is it requests that Rex Palmer 4 THE COURT: I'm going to tell you who's 4 5 here. We just had a conference in Hiett and 5 file a response stating whether or not he 6 6 agrees or disagrees with my order, and Larry I've got a headache and I understand I can take 7 7 too. Larry, I assume your response is going to Ibuprofen for it but I can't go to the 8 be that you agree with my order? 8 chiropractor. That's an inside joke. 9 9 I've got Greg Overturf, Brad Luck, Tom MR. JONES: I agree with everything you 10 Harrington, Larry Jones, Nancy Butler, Cris 10 say, Judge. McCoy is here from the State Fund. I don't 11 THE COURT: Okay. And I think since Rex 11 participated in the drafting of the order and 12 know whether you guys know Cris or not. And 12 I've got Diana Ferriter from the Department as we had the order before we ever sent it out, he 13 13 14 well as Carol Gleed from the Department. We do 14 is going to reply that he agrees with my order. 15 have a court reporter. I decided to keep her 15 But the phrasing of that order from the Supreme since she was here for our conference in Hiett Court indicates to me that they are going to 16 16 so we can get a transcripts of this if anybody basically reject the writ of supervisory 17 17 18 wants it. And then Jackie Bockman, my clerk, 18 control and leave my order intact, although we 19 19 could all be surprised. But I expect that is here. 20 MR. MARTELLO: And Tom Martello incognito. 20 that's going to come about and if that comes 21 about, I would expect in all of these cases to THE COURT: I've got Tom on my lift. 21 basically proceed in the fashion that I 22 Yeah, he's here too. 22 We started out I think with you, Lon, we 23 23 directed in the Flynn case, which is to open up 24 started talking about the letter that Monte had the information in these common fund cases to 24 25 sent to us regarding the proposed summons that 25 the claimant's attorneys with the protection of Page 4 Page 6 1 I had drafted and also Larry had some concerns. 1 the confidentiality order and the 2 And I think we didn't have Larry on the phone, 2 confidentiality agreement. 3 I think we didn't have him and we didn't have 3 So that's sort of where I'm at in these 4 Monte or Steve so we decided to go ahead and 4 cases, but I wanted to talk to you some more to 5 postpone the call, although we had a little bit 5 make sure that we're on-line as far as the 6 of discussion. I'd indicated to Lon that the 6 procedure that I'm proposing to follow and also 7 purpose of the summons was to get this thing 7 with respect to the draft summons that I sent 8 going and that my intent is ultimately to turn 8 to everybody. And I can tell you I asked for a 9 lot of information in that summons but I would over any information that we gleaned from the 9 10 summons to the three of you, but I don't want 10 expect that with respect to a lot of these 11 to do that until we have a reply from the insurers I'm going to get a number nine 11 12 Supreme Court with respect to the order that I 12 response, which is that at the present time 13 issued in Flynn, because we've got the they can't provide us anything more than what 13 14 confidentiality issues which may be raised on 14 they've got. 15 behalf of the claimants. And I requested, if 15 Anyway, with that, I guess I'm going to 16 not directed, the State Fund to take a writ of throw it back -- The two primary movers in this 16 17 case who drafted letters to me were Larry and supervisory control from my order in Flynn in 17 18 order to see if the Supreme Court had a 18 also Monte. So maybe I'll throw it back to 19 different view of it with the potential that 19 you, Monte, and you let me know what you think 20 they could say, "I can't open this up, we have 20 of the summons and the procedure we're 21 to follow an opt-in procedure like was followed 21 following and what you would like me to do. 22 in St. James versus an opt-out procedure," or MR. BECK: Sure, Judge. This is Monte 22

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Beck, and I did read Flynn and I read Miller.

concerned about is the idea that we would be

of course, and the issue that I am most

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something along those lines, and I avoided both

I can tell you that the petition for writ

of those procedures in my Flynn issue.

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delayed for some length of time waiting for the Supreme Court. Now it sounds like that may be mooted. But my analysis still is, as I said in the letter, I think that we need to have the common fund counsel have access to medical information that is contained in the files of the various insurers merely for the purpose of verifying the information that I requested or that I pointed out in the letter that I sent to the Court.

I think that there has been waivers but, most importantly, Judge, the point that I would make is that the common fund counsel and this whole process is under the guise of the Court. It is your job in effect to do this and we are your agents. I feel that as common fund counsel and your approval of all things, including attorney's fees and how and what we do is under your guidance and under your auspices and under your court. So if we are in effect officers of the Court and agents of the Court, it seems to me to be no different if you receive the information as well as whether or not we as common fund counsel receive the information.

speaks for itself. I think that we will submit ourselves to the Court's jurisdiction. We will be willing to sign a confidentiality order ensuring the privacy of this information and would only release information with a court order and with the agreement of all parties if we needed to, for instance, have an independent doctor or something like that review information for purposes of obtaining an impairment rate.

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So I would rather see us go forward, however, it sounds like the Court wants to wait for the Supreme Court to gives its ultimate guidance, so as far as the summons is concerned, I'm in agreement with that. I guess I had a couple of questions about it. I wanted to, I guess, ask about the OD aspect of it and so maybe the Court can give us information there. I realize that if we do this with injury we may just turn right around and have to do it with OD and the other case. So I assume that that's what the Court had in mind when you included all of the OD information.

THE COURT: I think you're correct in that. I think when I was looking at this, it's

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I have another point and that is that when we did this process with the State Fund with the cooperation of Greg and Tom and Nancy and Brad, we didn't have a problem. We were given what would be considered to be private, confidential information. I don't think anyone in the room would say that we abused our position, we tried to verify certain things, we had the assistance of the State Fund's people actually reviewing files for us, making determinations, in particular determinations that temporary total disability of claimants should really be perm total claimants, and had a procedure by which they were then sent to doctors, if it wasn't their own, doctors that we could agree with the State Fund that would render impairment ratings and the processing to work. And I think that they would verify that we honored all of the confidentiality provisions that we agreed to among the attorneys and I think -- I can't recall if the Court signed off on a confidentiality order or not. THE COURT: I did.

MR. BECK: But I think our track record

going to apply to the OD cases so why not just do it all at one time.

MR. BECK: Yeah. And then the last question I had about this one is we had a time period that we were looking at, and I think this might be something that Cris McCoy or someone from the State Fund can look to. You have in your order if someone has received TTD benefits for 18 months or longer then they should be provided the names and addresses. And one of the things that we agreed to in our last meeting was to have Cris or someone from the State Fund give you or give us a little bit of information about what seemed to be a reasonable cutoff date.

Because I noticed that when Diane Ferriter gave us claimants at least for the Liberty group of claimants that were there longer than a year, we show, you know, some 400. That's actually a discrepancy from what I was reported to verbally from Mark Cadwallader on October 4th when he said there were 553. But, you know, I don't know how that exact figure worked out, but I think that I would like to know from at least the State Fund what seemed to be a

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS Page 11 1 reasonable time period there. So that was my 1 2 only question, did we want to use it one year? 2 3 Eighteen months seemed like a good compromise 3 4 so I'm just throwing that out, but maybe the 4 5 State Fund can give us some feedback on that as 5 6 to how, when they looked through all of that 6 7 files and they determined that there were 7 it over to you. 8 people that needed to be converted, what would 8 9 be the best and reasonable time period to go 9 10 back. 10 11 THE COURT: Cris? 11 12 MS. MCCOY: Personally, we use two years. 12 13 THE COURT: Cris says they use two years. 13 14 MR. BECK: Okav. 14 15 MR. OVERTURF: To go look at. 15 16 THE COURT: To go look at, right. And I 16 17 backed it up to 18 months. I guess the 17 doing in Flynn. 18 question you're raising is whether we should 18 19 back it up to more than 18 months, and I would 19 20 question doing that just based on my own 20 21 experience and the fact that especially with 21 22 back surgeries and stuff like that we often 22 23 have temporary total benefits being paid out 23 24 for a year or more. 24 25 MR. BECK: That's true. So I think that's 25 Page 12 1 a reasonable time period but I just wanted to 1 2 get the feedback. And then that was really my 2 3 only question, I think. On paragraph 4 you 3 4 want to put in the word state, "Please state 4 5 5

were talking about in the first place. I agree with you that you're acting as officers of the Court. I trust you implicitly. Counsel who have worked on all of these cases have done a good job, they've honored the confidentiality provisions and I don't have any problem turning

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The problem I have is the Supreme Court might not see it the same way as I see it, you see it, Brad sees it. Everybody else I think that's talked about this issue in this court agrees that it ought to be turned over to common fund counsel subject to the confidentiality agreement, and it's my intent to do so if I we get through with Flynn and the Supreme Court basically validates what I'm

So my thought is and still is to issue this summons, require them to produce this information and let Flynn come down and if it comes down as I anticipate at this point, given the way they phrased the order to counsel, to the respondent's counsel, then I would expect that the information that we gleaned from this would be turned over and we would proceed in

whether an impairment rating has been rendered," and the rating given followed after the word on the second line of paragraph 4.

THE COURT: Right.

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MR. BECK: And the only other little change, not little change, but the idea of the very last paragraph of the summons, I hope we could prevail on you that as the common fund counsel could see these responses as we did in the State Fund and assure the Court on behalf of Steve and Lon and I that we'll treat all of that information confidential and, you know, even if the Court gets it and could redact the names and we just are dealing with claim numbers, that would be fine. But I think Brad can assure you that we're very careful about these things and always went through them and didn't distribute any names to anybody except for our own purposes here.

THE COURT: Okay. Well, let me sort of answer that, and that goes back to what you

the same fashion as we proceeded in Rausch, and I don't have any problem doing that. I just think I can't authorize that until we've got an answer from Flynn, until the Supreme Court has been given an opportunity to review it and say, "We're way off base," or to say, "You know, we're not going to interfere and you can go forward with this." So that's my anticipation.

The one other thing is I think I need to put in here some notice to them that if they object to the production that they have an opportunity to do that, because we may get some objections and I think I ought to let them do that since they aren't parties and they ought to be able to raise objections. I don't anticipate that's going to be a big deal but I think I probably am obligated to put something like that in there. And so what I'll try to do is I'll try to draft a little bit of language along that line and recirculate this so that you can see it.

I take it, Monte, that you didn't have any other problems with what I was asking for. asking them to produce?

MR. BECK: No, I think we're all in

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Page 15 Page 17 1 agreement with the intent of the summons. It 1 THE COURT: Larry also sent me a letter 2 sounds real good. 2 and I think what Larry proposes is basically THE COURT: But my idea is to get them in 3 3 turning you guys loose in his files to examine 4 here, get them represented, get some sort of 4 them yourself, and it's a procedure that he 5 response and then we can go from there, but at 5 followed in Cheetham where Liberty initially 6 least we've got the procedure started. 6 identified the potentially benefitted 7 MR. BECK: Yeah. 7 claimants, and then we let Dave Lauridsen. 8 THE COURT: There was a question about the 8 again, with the confidentiality order, look at 9 numbers identified on this second run by the 9 those files and satisfy himself as to whether 10 Department and the discrepancy between what 10 they were due benefits or not. I guess the 11 Mark had represented? 11 only thing I'm going to say is, again, I don't 12 MR. BECK: Yes. 12 object to that procedure and I think we can do 13 MS. FERRITER: Monte, this is Diana 13 it in line with my logic in Flynn. And I think Ferriter. I didn't plan to be at this 14 14 what I'll do is Larry can just put that's what 15 conference so I didn't bring all of the 15 he wants to do in his reply and if for some 16 information I have but I can find out what that 16 reason we can't do it then I'm going to have to 17 probably order him to give us more information discrepancy was. Did Mark give that to you in 17 18 writing or is that something he told you? 18 in some other more defined format and leave it 19 MR. BECK: That is what he reported to me 19 up to the two sides to work out exactly the 20 on October 4th, that the Liberty companies had 20 specifics of how you're going to do it. 21 553 TTD claimants who have been on benefits 21 MR. DALE: Judge, I can speak to that. We 22 greater than one year and it was confined to 22 hadn't reviewed the proposed protective order 23 four companies in the Liberty group. And he 23 that was utilized in Cheetham until yesterday 24 gave me some other pretty specific information 24 is the first time we saw it and the language 25 about perm total claimants throughout, you 25 there is not something we could agree to Page 16 Page 18 know, throughout the entire system but he did 1 1 because it restricts access to any medical 2 give me that very specific figure, and then 2 records. 3 when I looked at your report for those greater 3 THE COURT: Because we didn't need that in 4 than one year it was 424 and that was only done 4 Cheetham so we would have to change that. 5 20 days later. So I just wasn't sure about 5 MR. DALE: Is that a problem, Larry? 6 that. 6 MR. JONES: No, not at all, it's just that 7 The correction to the perm total claimants 7 was the basic format into which we could drop 8 being 47 and then the revision to 44 was 8 any exclusions. For example, in Cheetham we 9 explained in your note to Larry Jones and they 9 excluded medical records from disclosure. In 10 were just those three, there were three 10 our case I anticipate you would get medical 11 duplicates. But I didn't get a -- I didn't see records and exclude everything else. 11 12 and I was waiting to see maybe, because that 12 MR. BECK: Well, we'd need wage 13 did match what Mark told me but I didn't see 13 information, Larry, we're going to need more 14 any information on the discrepancy of over 14 than just that because we need to check rates, 15 120-some people. 15 and so in order to properly check an impairment MS. FERRITER: Monte, I'll have to check 16 16 award we need to have information concerning 17 that out and then I can get back to everyone or rates, which does involve other information, so 17 18 to Monte. What do you prefer, Judge? 18 we would object to that. I hope we can work 19 MR. BECK: Thank you, Diana. 19 that out, but that's a fundamental aspect of 20 THE COURT: Why don't you get back to 20 determining an impairment award. 21 Monte and then if a problem arises that needs 21 MR. JONES: Monte, rate information is not 22 my intervention they'll let me know or you can 22 a problem. 23 let me know and then we can talk about it. 23 THE COURT: We'll make sure we get the job 24 MS. FERRITER: Okay. And I'll share the 24 done. We can redraft the confidentiality

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agreement and the scope of it so that we

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information with you too, Larry.

Page 21 Page 19 1 what age he is now? 1 satisfy everybody. 2 Brad indicated that you may have pretty 2 MS. MCCOY: I don't specifically but I 3 3 much wrapped up the State Fund's participation think it was 64. 4 in this case. 4 MR. LUCK: Cris isn't sure but he's about 5 MR. LUCK: We think so. The last person 5 there. We'll get the details on it and let you 6 to pay was Rose Fleming and we paid her. We 6 know right away. 7 7 MR. ROBERTS: Yeah. The only reason I ask have one issue, one of the fellows that came to 8 8 is because I remember this fellow from the hearing and you guys excluded and he wanted 9 Philipsburg and I think he was about eight or 9 just to wait and get his money at retirement 10 has now decided he wants his money. So, if 10 ten years away and if that was the case, I'd want to know if he was the one. 11 that's the case, do you guys want a fee out of 11 it if it calculates in? He's pretty close to 12 MR. LUCK: We'll figure it out. 12 THE COURT: And then you'll be able to 13 retirement, there may not be a lot of fee. 13 14 But I think that's the only string that's 14 compute what fee you would be entitled to and we'll let you rehash that. I'll let you guys 15 left and we'd like to resolve that and then 15 figure that one out. 16 report to the Court that we're completed as 16 17 long as you guys think we're completed and then 17 MR. LUCK: And just to confirm though, as 18 maybe we can take our name off the summons. 18 far as you all are concerned, there are no 19 MR. ROBERTS: Brad, is that the guy from 19 other issues with us? 20 Philipsburg? 20 MR. ROBERTS: No. 21 MR. LUCK: Mr. Berg. 21 THE COURT: I have to throw in one little glitch here as far as taking the State Fund's 22 22 The question is, we need to resolve that, 23 name off of the case. I think we have to leave 23 which we can do, but at that point do you guys 24 have any sense that there is anything else that 24 it on the caption for continuity sake. Once on 25 25 we need to do or can we by agreement report to the caption --Page 20 Page 22 the Court that the process with the State Fund MR. OVERTURF: Always on the caption. 1 1 2 has been completed? 2 THE COURT: -- always on the caption. 3 MR. BECK: I would be willing to -- if 3 Well, that may not always be true. But I think 4 4 for purposes of this case we need to leave you this person is close to retirement anyway, 5 5 Brad, is to waive, and I'm not speaking for on the caption, but I can indicate that all 6 Steve and Lon, but I would be willing to waive 6 issues as far as you are concerned are resolved 7 them and also have this completed, this process 7 and you need not further participate. 8 8 MR. LUCK: Or just not issue it to us. completed. 9 9 THE COURT: Well, you're already in this MR. DALE: We don't have any problem with 10 10 anyway, I don't need to reissue you a summons. that, Brad. 11 MR. ROBERTS: I don't have any problem 11 We'd confuse somebody in the mail room, I'm 12 12 13 MR. LUCK: Tom reminded me that we sent 13 Let's proceed along that. I'll do some 14 minor redrafting on the summons, I'll send it down a few weeks ago a proposed closing report, 14 15 15 to all of you by e-mail and, if it's okay, 16 MR. HARRINGTON: I think we circulated it 16 we'll do the mailing. 17 17 One question I don't remember whether we before the October meeting, I believe, but I'm raised it before or not, do you want this sent 18 not entirely certain if you guys have it in 18 19 your file or not. 19 certified or other should we just send it 20 MR. LUCK: Why don't we look at it and 20 regular mail and then if we get people that 21 we'll make sure it's updated and then we'll 21 don't, or insurers that don't reply we can 22 send you something as a proposed closing report 22 follow up and figure out what we do with them 23 and make sure you are okay with it. 23 later? 24 24 MR. ROBERTS: Brad, when you say he's MR. ROBERTS: I think regular mail would 25 close to retirement, do you have a sense of 25 be fine with following up.

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	MR. DALE: Could the Clerk of Court, and I know Pat will probably call me later, but could the Clerk of Court just keep track of those that have responded and those who haven't and put it in a time line in the sense that if it's over 30 days and no response they can notify us and then we will agree that we will pay the Court to send out certified letters? THE COURT: Yes, we can do that. We probably do that as a matter of standard procedure anyway. We usually docket these ahead for responses and Pat has a procedure where if they don't respond she sends them a letter saying, "Shame on you, you better respond." Yeah, I'll make a note of that and we'll make sure. And we probably could just send these out ourselves. On some of these other cases we're just turning them over to the attorneys and I think we did that in Flynn. There is only 54 in here so we'll just send them out. Mechanically, that's not a big deal. Okay. Anything else from anybody? MR. ROBERTS: No, Judge. THE COURT: All right, that will be it.	1 2 3 4 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	CERTIFICATE STATE OF MONTANA : ss. COUNTY OF LEWIS AND CLARK I, LISA R. LESOFSKI, Registered Professional Reporter, Notary Public in and for the County of Lewis and Clark, State of Montana, do hereby certify: That the proceedings were taken before me at the time and place herein named, that the proceedings were reported by me and that the foregoing -24- pages contain a true record of the proceedings to the best of my ability. I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal this day of 2005. LISA R. LESOFSKI Registered Professional Reporter Notary Public Commission Expires 3/31/08.	
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	We'll get going on this and we'll wait for the Supreme Court decision as to what we're going to do with the petition for writ of supervisory control in Flynn and proceed from there. (The proceedings were concluded at 12:13 p.m.) **********************************			

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