

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI**

**BERNARD PENELTON
613 W MADISON
WASHINGTON IA 52353**

**ABC BEVERAGE MANUFACTURERS INC
ATTN HUMAN RESOURCES
PO BOX 4656
DES MOINES IA 50306**

**Appeal Number: 05A-UI-08021-S2T
OC: 07/10/05 R: 03
Claimant: Appellant (2)**

This Decision Shall Become Final, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

STATE CLEARLY

1. The name, address and social security number of the claimant.
2. A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
3. That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
4. The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Bernard Penelton (claimant) appealed a representative's August 1, 2005 decision (reference 01) that concluded he was not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because he was discharged from work with ABC Beverage Manufactures (employer) for fighting on the job. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on August 22, 2005. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Brenda Dixon, Regional Human Resources Manager, and Cory Van Asten, Quality Control Manager. The employer offered one exhibit which was marked for identification as Exhibit One. Exhibit One was received into evidence.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on February 22, 2005, as a full-time lab technician. The claimant received a copy of the employer's anti-harassment policy and signed for its receipt on February 17, 2005. The claimant and a coworker had a personality conflict. The employer repeatedly counseled the two regarding their behavior.

On July 6, 2005, the employer called the claimant in for a meeting. The employer had received information which alleged the claimant threatened the co-worker. The claimant denied such conduct. The claimant left the meeting and saw a co-worker who was a friend. The claimant told his friend what the employer said. The friend became angry with the claimant for no apparent reason. He called the claimant a "fucking nigger" repeatedly. The employer sent the friend away. Later the friend returned with a box cutter and told the claimant he was going to cut him.

By the time the employer arrived on the scene, the altercation was over. The friend said the claimant shoved and slapped him. The claimant denied such conduct and said the friend threatened him with a box cutter. On July 7, 2005, the employer terminated both employees for fighting.

The testimony of the employer and claimant was conflicting. The administrative law judge finds the claimant's testimony to be more credible because the employer was not an eye witness to the altercation.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct. For the following reasons the administrative law judge concludes he was not.

Iowa Code section 96.5-2-a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:
 - a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

871 IAC 24.32(1)a provides:

Discharge for misconduct.

(1) Definition.

- a. "Misconduct" is defined as a deliberate act or omission by a worker which constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of such worker's contract of employment. Misconduct as the term is used in the disqualification provision as being limited to conduct evincing such willful or wanton disregard of an employer's interest as

is found in deliberate violation or disregard of standards of behavior which the employer has the right to expect of employees, or in carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design, or to show an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. On the other hand mere inefficiency, unsatisfactory conduct, failure in good performance as the result of inability or incapacity, inadvertencies or ordinary negligence in isolated instances, or good faith errors in judgment or discretion are not to be deemed misconduct within the meaning of the statute.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). If a party has the power to produce more explicit and direct evidence than it chooses to do, it may be fairly inferred that other evidence would lay open deficiencies in that party's case. Crosser v. Iowa Department of Public Safety, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976). The employer had the power to produce eyewitness testimony but did not. The administrative law judge concludes that the hearsay evidence provided by the employer is not more persuasive than the claimant's denial of such conduct. The employer has not carried its burden of proof to establish that the claimant committed any act of misconduct in connection with employment for which she was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. The claimant is allowed unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The representative's August 1, 2005 decision (reference 01) is reversed. The claimant was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. Benefits are allowed provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

bas/tjc