

CITY AND TOWN COUNCIL WORKERS' UNION

MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE WAGES AND WORKING CONDI-
TIONS OF AFRICAN CITY COUNCIL EMPLOYEES.

Submitted to:

1. His Worship, The Mayor of Johannesburg.
2. The Chairman and members, Management Committee, Johannesburg City Council.
3. The Chairman and members, Non-European Affairs Committee, Johannesburg City Council.
4. The Chairman, Staff Board, Johannesburg City Council.
5. The Manager, Non-European Affairs Department, Johannesburg City Council.

Copies for information sent to:

1. The Hon. The Minister of Labour.
 2. The President, South African Federated Chamber of Industries.
 3. The President, Association of Chambers of Commerce.
 4. Provincial Chambers of Commerce and Industry.
-

Johannesburg.

11th October, 1962.

MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE WAGES AND WORKING CONDI-
TIONS OF AFRICAN CITY COUNCIL EMPLOYEES.

1. PREAMBLE.

The City & Town Council Workers' Union represents the African workers in all departments of the City Council except the graded staff. We submit that wages paid by the Council fall far below minimum subsistence levels and that instead of giving a lead to private industry, the City Council in fact undercuts private employers by paying lower wages.

2. WAGES.

We draw your attention to the following extracts from a publication entitled YOUR BANTU SERVANT AND YOU, published by the Non-European Affairs Department of the City Council. (January 1962).

"As a matter of general interest this Department has established by careful surveys in the Bantu townships that the minimum wage on which a family of five can exist is R48.00 per month. Regrettably very few families earn this amount, even when both parents are working." (Page 5) (our emphasis).

"The Department's experience is that the majority of tenants living in the Municipal Townships struggle unsuccessfully against severe loads of poverty because of low wages and cannot, in many cases meet their basic living costs of rent, transport, food and clothing." (Page 10).

"Also contrary to popular belief most male servants do have families at home in the tribal areas who are wholly dependent on the money sent home, so that it is incorrect to assume that such person is only responsible for his own support." (Page 5).

We therefore, assume, on the direct authority of your own Non-European Affairs Department, that the majority of your City Council African employees are not single men, but that they have families (either in the Reserves or in one of the City Council Townships), dependent upon them.

The minimum figure fixed by your Non-European Affairs Department on which a family of five can exist is R48.00 per month. Our own investigations prove the figure to be much higher, namely, R60.00 per month, in order to obtain the minimum requirements of life.

It would be reasonable to expect, that if your own Non-European Affairs Department, the Department most directly concerned, states that the minimum wage required is R48.00 per month, that your Council would pay your employees this amount.

We find, however, that the wages paid by your Council are far below this minimum set by your own Department.

(a) Labourers.

We quote hereunder an extract from a letter to the RAND DAILY MAIL, from ex-Councillor Mr. Harold McCarthy, published on 7th September, 1961:

"Of a payroll of 20,000 workers, only 600 receives a basic wage of R50.00 per month. These are the skilled building artisans. About 10,000, who live in hostels or compounds receive the pitifully inadequate wage of R26.00 per month. The remaining 5,000 receive R27.70 per month."

We have noted that it is the intention of the City Council to have the dustmen regularly examined for tuberculosis. While fully supporting such a move, we state that it will prove meaningless while the wage paid to these workers is so far below subsistence level that they invariably become victims of deficiency diseases.

(b) Municipal Policemen.

These workers earn only R8.00 per week which is not only totally inadequate, but gives no recognition to the responsibility of the particular job.

(c) Drivers of Heavy Vehicles.

The wages of these drivers (as in all other categories) are fixed by the Staff Board of the City Council.

In the City Engineer's Department, the starting wage for a driver of a heavy vehicle is R8.62. In other departments, (e.g. Housing Division) it is slightly higher, namely, R9.45. There is a yearly increase of R2.33 per month.

For work on public holidays, the drivers are paid their normal daily rates, plus R0.50. In private industry, workers are normally paid double rates for working on statutory public holidays; over-time rates are, depending on the particular agreement in the industry, time and one-third or time and a half. City Council drivers only receive overtime pay after one hour.

City Council drivers are called upon to drive all types of vehicles, namely, trucks, road scrapers, caterpillars and steam rollers.

We would point out that the wage paid to these drivers is just over half that paid by private industry. In the Food & Canning industry, for example, the following rates are paid:

Driver of a motor vehicle, the unladen weight of which does not exceed 6,000 lbs.	R17.40 per week.
Driver of a motor vehicle, the unladen weight of which does not exceed 10,000 lbs.	R20.75 per week.
Driver of a motor vehicle, the unladen weight of which exceeds 10,000 lbs.	R24.24 per week.

If a driver is required to drive vehicles of varying rates, he must be paid the full rate for the heavier vehicle. But the Johannesburg City Council simply pays a flat rate, irrespective of the type of vehicle driven.

When wages are laid down by the Wage Board for private undertakings, the nature of the work, the skill required and the special qualifications of the workers are taken into consideration. The drivers are literate and they have a responsibility not only to the City Council but to the general public in the handling of their vehicles. We find no justification whatever for the fact that the City Council ignores general wage trends and undercuts private industry in regard to this category of workers.

The majority of City Council drivers are not housed in compounds. They are urban township dwellers, tenants of the Council, yet they do not earn your own bare minimum wage.

3. HOURS OF WORK.

Hours of work vary from department to department, the hours being usually 8 - 9 hours a day, with the following exceptions:

i. Male cleaners (City Hall).

These workers work a 56 hour week.

ii. Women Toilet Attendants.

These workers work a 56 hour week. Their work ends at 10 p.m. but no provision is made to see that they are escorted home. Two have been assaulted by thugs while returning home from work.

4. ANNUAL LEAVE.

With the exception of graded staff, all Africa City Council employees receive only two weeks' leave. Again this is contrary to the general trend in private undertakings where African workers receive three weeks' leave, as for example, in the commercial distributive, laundering, and other industries.

5. DEDUCTIONS.

Workers in all categories complain that amounts are deducted from their wages, with no indication as to why the deduction is made. In many departments, workers do not receive their pay in envelopes with each deduction listed. This is contrary to the provisions of the Factories Act and the Shop and Offices Act, under which private employers are prosecuted if they flout this particular provision.

6. REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES, APPLICATIONS FOR INCREASED PAY.

The workers of every Department state that they cannot have their grievances redressed. They are often dismissed, for frivolous reasons and have no access to the heads of their Departments. The women toilet cleaners complain of ill-treatment by their Supervisors. Those who have complained about this are dismissed. Applications for increased pay are ignored.

7. PROTECTIVE CLOTHING.

The ragged clothing of those labourers employed by the City Council is a civic disgrace. Dustmen are not given masks to save them from the inhalation of dust and fumes, nor overalls to save their clothes from dirt. Street labourers (pick and shovel workers) similarly do not receive overalls, nor do drivers. Here again, the City Council is at variance with private industry, where protective clothing is provided.

The workers have been told that they will all be issued with protective clothing, but nothing has come of this.

8. DEMANDS OF THE UNION.

WAGES:

A minimum wage of R10.00 per week for all 'unskilled workers' namely, labourers, watchmen, toilet attendants, dustmen, policemen, with yearly increases of R2.00 per week.

For drivers, the Union demands a starting wage of R20.00 per week, with additional pro rata payments for those who drive vehicles over 6,000 lbs and over 10,000 lbs. The yearly increase for this category is R2.00 per week.

HOURS: A 40 hour week for all categories of workers on full pay.

ANNUAL LEAVE.

Three weeks' annual leave for all categories of workers on full pay.

PROTECTIVE CLOTHING.

Adequate protective clothing for all workers, including masks for dustmen.

PAY ENVELOPES.

All wages be paid in envelopes on which all deductions, overtime payments and all details regarding remuneration are listed.

OVER-TIME PAY.

Overtime pay shall be time and a half.

SUNDAY AND PUBLIC HOLIDAY PAY.

This shall be double normal rates of pay.

RECOGNITION OF THE UNION.

The only possibility of harmonious relations between the City Council and its employees is through the recognition of the City & Town Council Workers' Union, which will negotiate on behalf of the workers.

CONCLUSION.

The City & Town Council Workers' Union states that no explanation has ever been made by the Johannesburg City Council as to why it regards itself in a special category as an employer and therefore entitled to pay lower wages than private employers. This is particularly unethical when one has regard to the statements made by the City Council's own Non-European Affairs Department, namely that City Council tenants (including City Council employees) "struggle unsuccessfully against severe loads of poverty and cannot, in many cases, meet their basic living costs of rent, transport, food and clothing". (See YOUR BANTU SERVANT AND YOU, above-quoted).

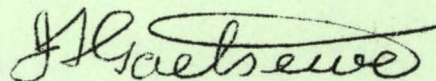
It must be remembered that the Johannesburg City Council has an unenviable record for the prosecution of tenants for rent arrears. This is basically a matter of poverty wages and one would expect that the Council would give a lead to private employers instead of undercutting them.

We submit that the Council's policy of underpaying its own employees will reap a bitter harvest in ill-health (particularly in the incidence of tuberculosis), juvenile delinquency, crime and all the evils which flow from poverty wages.

We cannot accept that the Council is unable to increase wages. This is the wealthiest City Council in South Africa and its wealth and continued existence depend on African labour. Living wages are an absolute priority and rank far ahead of express highways, civic theatres and centres, parking garages and other amenities built by the Council.

The Union submits that its demands are reasonable on both moral and economic grounds and trusts that the Council will accept the above proposals.

Should the Union, however, fail to obtain these demands, it will have no alternative but to take all possible steps to call for a public enquiry into the wages and living conditions of African employees of the City Council.



J. GAETSEWE.

for and on behalf of CITY AND TOWN COUNCIL WORKERS' UNION,
104 LENVIC HOUSE,
1 KERK STREET,
JOHANNESBURG.

Collection Number: AD1137

FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN 1954-1963

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a collection held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.