

## THE STRUGGLE OF THE NIGHTWATCHMEN AT GROENVLEI

Nightwatchmen from the Cape Town City Council's House Building Unit at Groenvlei have been fighting for over a year to establish a works committee. ABASEBENZI recently spoke to a number of the watchmen to find out why they wanted a works committee.

The workers feel that a works committee will unite them and force the bosses to meet at least some of their demands. They are demanding an improvement in working conditions.

- == They want shorter working hours. At present they work more than 12 hours a day, 6 days a week.
- == They want sick leave and holidays. At present they are allowed neither.
- == They want an end to victimisation. Sometimes the checker does not like a particular worker and accuses him of sleeping while on duty. Proof of this is not given and pay is deducted from the worker's wages.
- == The workers want protection against the weather. At present they must sit in the open even on cold and wet nights.
- == The workers want protection against "skollies". The City Council does not provide them with any weapons.

### Low Wages

For working under these bad and dangerous conditions they are only paid about R24 a week. They are not paid extra even if they have worked for 10 years. Workers feel they should get at least R2 extra after 3 years service, increasing by R1 for every year after this. This does not mean that they are satisfied with their basic wage, which they feel should be much higher. The watchmen told ABASEBENZI that they feel they deserve at least R40 - R50 per week.

Workers are also very angry about their time of pay. After they have finished work on Friday mornings, they have to wait for 2½ to : five hours before they receive their pay.

Is it any wonder that the nightwatchmen at Groenvlei are angry about their conditions? Let us now look at the way they have tried to organise themselves to improve their wages and conditions.

Firstly they talked to other workers about their problems and they discovered that the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau might be able to help them. They approached the Advice Bureau and the organisers helped the watchmen to organise a meeting to demand a works committee. The bosses refused to speak to the workers and would not give them a works committee. Eventually four of the representatives of the workers were dismissed by the bosses, but the watchment did not give up their struggle.

### The Struggle Continues

They continued to build up their unity and strength in their fight for a works committee. The watchment have now drawn up a petition which they hope will force management to give them a works committee.

The nightwatchmen at Groenvlei are taking the first steps in building up their strength and unity. They have resisted all efforts by bosses to divide them and their determination is a shining example to the workers of Cape Town.

### KNOW YOUR BOSSES

Would workers like to earn R30 000 per year and more? Get a free car from your firm? Own a house in the best suburbs, worth between R60 00 and R250 000? These are the salaries and conditions of the top bosses of the companies in which workers now works