



R E P O R T

of the

HOUSEHOLD SERVICE WORKERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

G U Y A N A

TO His Excellency Sir Richard Edmund Luyt,  
Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St.  
Michael and Saint George, etc., etc.,  
etc., Governor-General of the Country  
of GUYANA.

On 6th November 1965 His Excellency The Governor,  
under the provisions of Section 7 of the Labour Ordinance,  
Chapter 103, appointed the following Advisory Committee:-

Miss Lucille E. Campbell - Chairman	}	Independent Members
Mrs. May C. Rodrigues		
Miss Magda Pollard		
Mrs. Clementina Da Silva		
Mr. Bertie J.H. Nichols	}	Workers' Representatives
Miss Ivy Ifill		
Miss Joyce Henry		
Miss Volda Julian		
Mr. Lyndon A. Bennett	}	Employers' Representatives
Mr. R. Sharma		
Mrs. R.K. Steele		
Mrs. Marie King		

Mr. K.S. Williams, Labour Officer - Secretary.

With the resignation of Miss Volda Julian, Miss  
Hermie Reece was appointed to fill the vacancy from 1st  
May, 1966. Miss S.L. King was appointed to act as Secretary  
from 20th January, 1966, vice Mr. K.S. Williams.

T E R M S O F R E F E R E N C E

2. The terms of reference of the Committee were:-

" (i) to enquire into the conditions of  
employment and wages of domestic  
workers in private homes, guest houses  
and hotels.

(ii) To make recommendations for improvement  
of same."

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

3. The Household Service Workers' Advisory Committee 1965 was set up with the purpose of investigating and making recommendations on wages and working conditions of domestic workers in Private Homes, Guest Houses and Hotels, as well as to attempt to establish some measure of uniformity in the basic wage scales of different categories of domestic workers. This has been attempted before, and the present committee was fortunate in being able to study the reports of the following committees:-

- The Domestic Servants' Advisory Committee 1953;
- The Domestic Servants' Advisory Committee 1958;
- The Licensed Premises Advisory Committee 1959 - 1962.

It was noted with some disquiet, that in spite of the detailed enquiries instituted by the above committees, and the useful recommendations made by them, very little improvement in conditions has resulted.

Among the recommendations of the Domestic Servants' Advisory (Burnham) Committee (1953) on conditions of service, were two, Nos. VII and X, which have given rise to improved legislation, viz:

- (i) the Workmens' Compensation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1957, includes provisions for insurance of workers by employers against injuries sustained in the course of their duties;
- (ii) the Holidays with Pay (Domestic Servants) Order, 1959, provides for twelve days unbroken vacation leave, with pay, and the value of meals in respect of that period.

4. The Committee therefore considered that its principal objectives should be

- (i) to make recommendations on conditions of service compatible with the accepted policies with regard to labour, as established by the International Labour Conventions, and as practised in industries employing labour on a large scale;
- (ii) to recommend a basic wage structure which would improve the lot of the majority of Household Workers, especially those, mainly employed in private homes, who might be in receipt of low wages.

THE ENQUIRY

5. The Committee caused notices to be published in the Official Gazette of Saturday 27th November, and 4th December 1965, and in the daily newspapers, inviting interested members of the public to submit representations in writing to the Secretary. The deadline had been originally fixed for 18th December 1965, but this was subsequently extended.

The notice also invited persons to give oral evidence before the Committee. The following organisations and individuals either submitted memoranda, and/or subsequently gave oral evidence before the Committee:-

1. British Guiana Labour Union (now Guyana Labour Union).
2. Women's Public Health Officers' Association.
3. British Guiana General Domestic Union (now Guyana General Domestic Union).
4. The Sword of the Spirit Movement.
5. British Guiana Women's League of Social Services (now Guyana Women's League of Social Services).
6. National Union of Workers.
7. Mr. D.P. Sankar.
8. Mrs. Dorothy Bayley, M.B.E.
9. Mrs. M.Y. Moses.
10. Mr. F.E. Hope, Chief Statistician.

#### GENERAL PROCEDURE

6. In keeping with our main objectives, the Committee sought the opinions of those persons who either submitted memoranda, and/or gave oral evidence, on suggested improvements in conditions of service, and on basic wage rates.

It was clear from the outset that a distinction would have to be carefully made between workers employed in Hotels and Guest Houses, which are run for profit, and in Private Homes which are not usually run for profit.

7. There was lengthy discussion as to the advisability of attempting to divide workers into categories e.g. trained or untrained, experienced or inexperienced. In the end, it was decided that this would be a very difficult task in the absence of adequate opportunities for training, and for lack of some just yardstick for measuring the competence of untrained workers, who form the large majority of the labour force. In the case of trained workers who already possess paper qualifications, it was felt that they should be able to demand and expect to receive, as high a level of wages as the market will bear. A small number are already in this fortunate position. The main hardships are experienced by the 80% or more of the domestic workers who are not protected by any minimum wage.

8. The Committee felt strongly, therefore, that there should be a gradual increase in the opportunities for training of those seeking employment in this field, until such time as the demand can be relieved by the establishment of new industries which can offer alternative employment. Higher levels of wages for trained workers will help to provide incentives for the more ambitious to become trained.

MEMORANDA

9. The Committee studied all memoranda submitted before inviting representatives of the organisations concerned to appear for interview. Three persons who did not submit memoranda, Mr. D.P. Sankar, Mrs. Dorothy Bayley M.B.E. and Mrs. M.Y. Moses were interviewed as a result of letters which they had forwarded. Mr. F.E. Hope, Chief Statistician, was specially invited to appear before the Committee in order to assist with information as to the rise in the Cost of Living.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY ORGANISATIONS AND COMMENTS THEREONConditions of Service

10. Among the conditions of service on which there was general agreement among representatives of organisations, that improvement was needed, were:-

- (1) Hours of Work: It was generally felt that Household Service Workers should be required to work not more than 8 normal working hours per day, exclusive of breaks for meals.
- (2) Overtime: Overtime should be paid, although there were varied opinions as to rates, some suggesting time-and-a-half and others double time.
- (3) Sick Leave: Fourteen days sick leave per year was recommended, a medical certificate to be tendered after three days.
- (4) Maternity Leave: Maternity leave was considered to be absolutely necessary by persons interviewed. - The British Guiana Women's Public Health Officers' Association was particularly emphatic on this point, owing to their special knowledge and experience in this field. Again there were divergent opinions as to the length of leave, the length of service to be completed before such leave is given, and the length of leave with pay. Most of those giving evidence thought that this should be part of a National Scheme.
- (5) Sundays Off: Every other Sunday off.
- (6) Sundays and Holidays: Domestic workers working on their Sundays off and Statutory holidays should be paid double time and time and a half on non-statutory holidays.



- (7) Dressing Rooms and Lockers: The provision of dressing rooms and lockers, where employees may change and store their personal belongings, was regarded as necessary in hotels and guest houses. This facility is also usually provided by employers in the highest income group. Workers' representatives agreed however, that with the present shortage of housing, and the crowded conditions resulting from this shortage, it would be unreasonable to demand this from private employers, who often do not have enough room for all the members of their own family.
- (8) Uniforms and Protective Clothing: Where the wearing of uniforms was required by employers, such uniforms should be provided by the employer. There were different opinions as to whether employer or employee should be responsible for the making and laundering of uniforms. It was the general opinion that the employee should be responsible for laundering, especially in private homes. Protective clothing such as rain-coats, umbrellas and long-boots should be provided for those employees whose duties necessitated their working out-of-doors e.g. cooks going to market.
- (9) Eating Accommodation for Employees: It was generally agreed that domestic workers should be provided with adequate seating and table facilities at meal-times.
- (10) Severance or Redundancy Pay: Workers' unions felt that in order that domestic employees should enjoy some security of tenure, that they should be compensated when their services are arbitrarily terminated for reasons other than unsatisfactory work, misconduct, or wilful neglect, e.g. when expatriate employers are leaving the country. Rates were suggested by one union, but the consensus of opinion was that such an eventuality should be covered by a National System and become part of a National Insurance

Scheme, rather than be the responsibility of the private employer.

(11)

One organisation has suggested that a new class of worker 'Home Help' as provided for in the United Kingdom, should become a feature of the domestic scene in Guyana. This means that a competent authority should provide part-time domestic help for households where such help is required owing to the presence of illness, an expectant mother, an aged person, or a child of pre-school age. Persons employed in such a capacity as 'Home Help' would need to be of a type in which both authorities and employers can place the utmost confidence. The Committee feels that failing the provision of 'Home Help', part-time or hourly service could be given by women who need extra money, and who are prepared to serve with honesty.

#### W A G E S

11. The Committee studied with care the recommendations with regard to wages made by the Trade Unions concerned, by means of memoranda, and in evidence given by their representatives. The wage rates recommended varied considerably. One union recommended that "Head Cooks" in private houses should receive \$80 per month with food or \$108 per month without food, while another recommended \$12.50 per week with food for a cook in an 'ordinary' private dwelling house. When representatives were asked during interviews with the Committee, on what facts they had based their recommendations on wages, they all admitted that they had made a rough assessment of the rise in the cost of living, and had arbitrarily decided on the figures presented.

There was an obvious difficulty in the minds of representatives when they tried to differentiate between owners of dwelling houses who enjoy a high income - relatively few - and the vast majority of the middle and lower middle class who are the largest employers of domestic help and whose incomes vary considerably. Most representatives admitted that the majority could not pay the wages possible to the highest income group, and conceded that the only way of relating wages to employers' incomes would be by a Means Test for the whole country, - an extremely difficult, expensive, and time-consuming method.

12. It was noticeable that some union representatives were willing to admit that if wage rates were legislated for at such a level that the majority of employers found difficulty in paying them, there would be a rise in the

numbers of unemployed domestic workers. They felt, however, that since more married women are earning salaries or wages outside the home, they would continue to need domestic help, especially where there are children, and should be willing to pay more for this help. Labour-saving devices could take the place of domestic help only within certain limits.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

13. The private individuals who gave evidence were emphatic in their belief that very high wage rates would lead to increased unemployment among domestic workers, and to the use of more labour-saving devices by employers. They pointed out the general incompetence of the majority of domestic workers available, due to lack of training and low standards which were not always the fault of the worker, but an unfortunate factor in the historical background of the country. They felt that the employer - employee relationship in the domestic field was, of necessity, such a close one that efforts to improve it must be made not only by a rise in the wages paid, but by an increase in the standards of competence and honesty on the part of the employee.

#### COMMITTEE'S FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Conditions of Service

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Recommendation<br>(1) | <u>Hours of Work:</u> It is recommended that the normal hours of work for domestics should be 8 hours per day, exclusive of time off for meals. The time at which work begins or ends should be a matter of arrangement between employer and employee. There should be a 96-hour fortnight (i.e. equivalent of a 48-hour week) allowing one half-day per week and every other Sunday off. |
| Recommendation<br>(2) | <u>Overtime:</u> If domestics are required to perform duties in excess of the normal daily working hours, they should be paid overtime at the rate of one and a half times the normal hourly rate.  |
| Recommendation<br>(3) | <u>Annual Leave:</u> This has already been legislated for under the Holidays with Pay Ordinance and the Committee sees no reason for change.  |
| Recommendation<br>(4) | <u>Sick Leave:</u> Domestics should be granted 14 days sick leave per year with pay after one year's service. A medical certificate must be tendered after two days' absence.   |



- Recommendation (5) Maternity Leave: Female domestic workers should be granted four weeks' maternity leave with pay, exclusive of twelve days annual leave, after three years' continuous service. The Committee recommends that failing legislation on this point, the subject should be made a part of a National Unemployment or Health Scheme.
- Recommendation (6) Sundays and Holidays: Domestic workers should be given every other Sunday off and every other holiday. Where they are required to work on Statutory Holidays, and on Sundays, when they would normally be off duty, they should be paid double time. Where they are required to work on non-statutory holidays when they would normally be off duty they should be paid at the rate of time-and-a-half.
- Recommendation (7) Protective Clothing: Where the duties of domestic workers require them to be exposed to wet weather after facing stoves, or where their normal duties take them out-of-doors they should be supplied with a rain-coat or other protective rainwear by the employer.
- Recommendation (8) Uniforms: Where domestic workers are required to wear uniforms, the material for same and the cost of making should be supplied by the employer. Laundering should be the responsibility of the employee.
- Recommendation (9) Accommodation: Domestic workers should be provided with adequate seating and table facilities at meal-times.
- Recommendation (10) Record Card: The Committee specially recommends that every domestic worker should be provided with a record card showing dates of commencement and termination of employment, signed by the employer. This may assist subsequent employers in evaluating the experience of employees. These cards must be numbered and issued by the Employment Exchange, where prospective employers may check their authenticity.
- Recommendation (11) Washers: Washers should be paid by the piece where they wash on their own premises. Where washers are required to launder clothes on the employers' premises, they should be treated as domestic workers, employed for eight hours per day, and given meals, or cash in lieu of meals.

## W A G E S

General

In trying to arrive at a decision on minimum wage rates, the Committee took into consideration the hotel wages as set out in the Labour (Conditions of Employment of Certain Workers) (Amendment) Ordinance, No. 12 of 1957. It was clear that these rates are now hopelessly out-of-date. Mr. Hope, the Chief Statistician had explained to the Committee the intricacies of the Consumer Price Index, which was only indicative of an increase in certain specific items listed in 1956. At the time when he appeared, the Index showed an increase of 12% in these specific items. He indicated also that there had been a rise in working class rentals from an average of \$8.00 per month to about \$20.00 per month. The Committee also took into consideration the fact that the minimum daily wage for female domestic workers in Government employment is \$3.20 per day, or 40¢ per hour, without meals.

The Committee, according to its original intention, sought to arrive at a wage rate which would lift the majority of domestic workers out of the admittedly low level of earnings which now exists. At the same time, it could not take the chance of pricing a large number of workers out of the market, as might occur, if wages were considered to be too high by employers, who could turn to other alternatives. After much consideration, a system of minimum wage rates was arrived at, which offers an increase of well over 100% in most cases on the hotel wages as laid down by the Labour (Conditions of Employment of Certain Workers) (Amendment) Ordinance, No. 12 of 1957, and which if adopted, would protect the majority of domestic workers in guest houses and private homes from the lower wages of the past. It was decided to make all wages weekly, as the domestic worker usually needs to budget and buy on a weekly basis. Half-pay for half-day work is recommended.

The following are the minimum wage rates recommended:-

A. Hotels (Georgetown and Mackenzie)Weekly wages with meals

	<u>Skilled</u>	<u>Unskilled</u>
Cook	\$25.00	\$20.00
Assistant Cook	\$20.00	\$16.00
Maid	\$15.00	\$12.00
Waitress	\$15.00	\$12.00
Maid-Waitress	\$20.00	\$16.00
Head Barman	\$25.00	
Barman	\$15.00	\$12.00
Head Waiter	\$25.00	
Waiter	\$15.00	\$12.00
Bell-boy	\$ 9.00	\$ 7.00
Cleaner	} Hourly basis at 50¢ per hour	
Dishwasher		
Handymen		

B. Hotels outside Georgetown and Mackenzie  
and all Guest Houses

Weekly wages with meals

	<u>Skilled</u>	<u>Unskilled</u>
Cook	\$15.00	\$12.00
Assistant Cook	\$10.00	\$ 8.00
Barman	\$15.00	\$12.00
Maid-Waitress	\$12.00	\$ 9.60
Maid	\$ 9.00	\$ 8.00
Bell-boy	\$ 7.00	\$ 6.50
Gardener )		
Cleaner )		
Handyman )		
	Hourly basis at 50¢ per hour.	

C. Private Houses

Weekly wages with meals

	<u>Skilled</u>	<u>Unskilled</u>
Cook	\$10.00	\$ 8.00
Maid	\$ 8.00	\$ 7.00
Nursemaid	\$10.00	\$ 8.00
General Servant	\$12.00	\$10.00
Washer	Piece rate	Piece rate (see appendix)
Cleaner )		
Gardener )		
	Hourly basis at 50¢ per hour	
Baby Sitters	- 50¢ per hour	
	60¢ per hour after 6 p.m.	
	Refreshment after 3 hours.	
	Transportation after 11 p.m.	

C O N C L U S I O N

The Committee recommends that Government gives urgent attention to the following suggestions:-

- (i) The introduction of radio programmes which may help in easing the employer-employee relationship. It is felt that some employers do not show enough consideration for their domestic help, as persons. Programmes such as "Mainly for Women" and "Women's World" may be used to assist in fostering better relations in this respect.

- (ii) The introduction of a National Insurance Scheme, to which workers may contribute in order to secure themselves against temporary unemployment.
- (iii) The enforcement of the law compelling employers to insure against Workmens' Compensation. It was observed by representatives that while firms and employers, such as hotel owners, comply with the law, the private employer was often negligent in this respect.
- (iv) The periodical reconsideration of any wage rates adopted. The Committee suggested that this should be done every 3 - 5 years.

The Committee would like to record its appreciation of the useful services rendered by the two Secretaries, Mr. K.S. Williams, Labour Officer, and Miss S. King, Labour Officer.

APPENDIX

Rates of Wages to be paid out-washers for laundering  
on a piece basis

<u>Ladies' Garments</u>	<u>\$.¢</u>
Aprons	.12 each
Blouses	.20 "
Brassieres	.12 per pair
Dresses	.30 each
Dresses (children's)	.15 "
House-coats	.24 "
Night-gowns	.20 "
Night-gowns (silk)	.25 "
Pyjamas	.25 per pair
Pyjamas (silk)	.30 " "
Panties	.06 " "
Skirts	.25 each
Skirts (pleated)	.40 "
Slacks	.20 per pair
Shorts	.20 " "
Slips	.15 each
Slips (silk)	.15 "
Vests	. 8 "
Uniforms, smocks	.30 "

  

<u>Household Linen</u>	<u>\$.¢</u>
Blankets	.25 each
Blankets (double)	.35 "
Bath Towels (large)	.10 "
Bath Towels (small)	.05 "
Bed-spreads	.30 "
Sheets (large)	.25 "
Sheets (small)	.20 "
Maids' Caps	.05 "
Mattress covers	.25 "
Nets	.40 "
Pillow cases	.10 "
Table-cloths	.20 "
Tea-cloths	.10 "

  

<u>Men's Garments</u>	<u>\$.¢</u>
Bath Robes	.40 each
Collars	.10 "
Coats, Tunics	.35 "
Khaki Coats	.35 "
Doctors' Coats	.50 "
Overalls (tumbled)	.30 "
Overalls (pressed)	.35 "
Trousers	.25 per pair
Drawers (Jockey type)	.10 " "
Drawers (pressed)	.12 " "
Handkerchiefs	.05 each
Pyjamas	.25 per pair
Pyjamas (silk)	.30 " "
Shirts	.20 each
Shirts (Polo)	.10 "
Shirts (Dress)	.20 "
Socks	.05 per pair
Sweaters	.30 each
Undervests	.10 "
Shorts	.15 per pair