—Bus drivers gripe

(Continued from page 1)

Bruce Frame, director of marketing for MTA, said he cannot deny "week-to-week" problems and harassment occur on the street, because "I'm not on the street. But I can't say it's racist."

Drivers also complained that white operators receive preferential treatment.

"Black guys get hell because they (MTA) know they're expendable. Young whites get good treatment," a white driver said.

Service to black neighborhoods slacks off after 6 p.m., when "all the white people have gone home, the buses go off the street," said a 13-year veteran. He cited specific areas, namely Park Heights, Randallstown and the 20 route in Edmondadale.

He also said when white drivers retire, and a black driver replaces him, the run or the schedule would change.

Slipshod maintenance was cited by several drivers.

One operator told the AFRO he would rather drive his son's bicycle because the bike has more rubber on its tires than MTA buses.

"The buses are safe provided it doesn't rain or snow," he said.

Horns do not work on half the buses and on the other half, "you have to stand up and really press them to make them work," a driver said.

Another operator complained that "maintenance is lousy. I've written up work that needs to be done and gotten the same bus a week later with the same problem."

Frame said MTA maintenance people are supposed to check each bus every time it is fueled or serviced. Drivers can fill out defect reports and turn them in at the end of the day with their cash and transfers.

Safety items are fixed immediately and drivers can always call in from the street if necessary, Frame said.

All the drivers expressed dissatisfaction about stringent scheduling which does not allow enough time to drive the route.

Drivers are supposed to call in if they are 15 minutes behind and supervisors will re-route the bus to make up for lost time.

Drivers said dispatchers often do not revise the schedule, especially at night. But drivers run the risk of disciplinary action for being behind schedule.

Frame disagreed, saying that if an operator runs into heavy traffic or many passengers, he will not be written up.

"If a driver has a reasonable excuse, he will not be written up for running behind," Frame said.

It is, however, a violation for a driver to run ahead of schedule, he said, which is the cause of most complaints from passengers.

Driver complaints that the union, Local 1300 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, is "weak, almost a company union," were labeled "preposterous" by Local president Jim Sieling.

"We have a democratic organization here. We are directed by the majority of our members," Sieling said.

The union has a grievance procedure and binding arbitration in disputes between drivers and MTA, he said.

When a passenger breaks a bus rule or hassles the driver, they said little or nothing is done by MTA police except "public relations" to smooth over the situation.

"If you call MTA cops for assistance, they may show up by the next day. They come and calm the issue but they can't enforce anything," a driver said.

Since most incidents on buses are misdemeanors, Frame said, police cannot arrest a person unless they saw the person commit the act. Rowdies normally get off the bus before police come, he said.

Drivers said they are told to turn off their engines if they are going to be parked for more than two minutes to save fuel.

But they charge that MTA often runs buses for several hours every night to burn fuel so MTA receives its diesel allocation. They are also kept running because they might not start.

"I've never heard of buses running all night," Frame said. "Buses are started early on cold mornings in compliance with union regulations and because diesel engines are more difficult to start.

"With diesel fuel at 90 cents a gallon, there is no way on God's green earth we are going to run all night," he said.

MTA does not have to waste fuel to maintain a specific fuel allocation because under federal energy guidelines, public transportation companies are guaranteed their full requirement.

All the drivers who contacted the AFRO cited what they called intense stress as a result of driving a bus.

One said drivers turn "into Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. It turns young men into old men."

Another was more resigned to job stress.

"After a while you just have to live with this kind of stuff, you just get used to it," he said.

But a third said job tension has a negative effect on passengers.

"We can't be friendly because we just don't have time. The public is suffering more than we are."

Both Frame and Sieling told the AFRO that the complaints may have surfaced because the union will elect new officers in the near future. When the drivers who talked to the AFRO were asked if their grievances were connected to the upcoming election, they all said the timing of their complaints had nothing to do with the election.

—Spine patient

(Continued from page 1)

Without a new spine, Mrs. Thomas would be forced to remain lying flat for the remainder of her life. The front portion of the metal artificial spine was attached to the spinal bones above and below with sliding rods and stabilization sleeves recently developed by Dr. Charles C. Edwards for use in spinal injury operations.

The operation's success allowed Mrs. Thomas to sit and use a wheelchair, thus regaining a relatively normal lifestyle.

When Mrs. Thomas leaves University Hospital in two weeks, her husband will be faced with a $71,724.56 bill. Ray Thomas, 38, stated, "I don't know how much of the bill I will have to pay. Blue Shield is paying some of it. Right now I am anxious to see my wife come home."

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas have been married 12 years. "I am faced with additional problems when Jesse comes home. I will have to buy a wheelchair, a bed for her and a van so I will be able to take her out. I will also have additional work done in our house to make it comfortable for her," said Thomas.

Thomas says he has not missed a day visiting his wife at the hospital. For a while, Thomas was not working but is now working as a mechanic. "If my wife is home by Feb. 14, that will be the best valentine gift I could ask for," Thomas told the AFRO.

BALTIMORE AFRO-AMERICAN
(Registered U.S. Patent Office)
Second Class postage paid at Baltimore, Md.
Circulation audited by Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC)
Published every Tuesday and Saturday by the AFRO-AMERICAN Company, 628 N. Eutaw St., Baltimore, Md. 21201 Phone (301) 728-8200
John H. Murphy 3rd, Chairman of Board; John J. Oliver Sr., President; Mae E. Dyson, Secretary; George C. Lattimer, Treasurer; Frederick A. Howard, Vice President/Production; Raymond Boone, Editor; Vice President; Kenneth O. Wilson, Vice President/Advertising; Ralph Matthews Jr., Managing Editor; Elizabeth M. Oliver, City Editor
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CITY DESK 728-8201
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A CHAMPION OF CIVIC WELFARE AND THE SQUARE DEAL
National Adv. Representative: Amalgamated Publishers Inc. 45 W. 45th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036
AFFILIATED NEWSPAPERS
WASHINGTON AFRO-AMERICAN 2002 11th St., N.W. 20001 (202) 332-0080
RICHMOND AFRO-AMERICAN 411 E. Clay Street, 23219 (804) 648-6478
NEW JERSEY AFRO-AMERICAN 11 Holt St., Newark 07103 Suite 200 51 (201) 622-2593
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—Mayor nixes

(Continued from Page 1)

Most of the caucus members would not directly comment on the group's decision to lessen the pressure on the mayor. The legislators including Troy Brailey, Margaret Murphy, Frank Conaway, Howard Rawlings, Clarence Blount, Walter Dean and Wendell Phillips all stated that they went along with the chairman's decision.

Any other questions posed to the black lawmakers were referred to the chairman who is acting as the group's spokesman.

This action comes after the controversy over the caucus' decision to change the bylaws and allow Douglass to seek another term as head of the group. Several reports appeared in daily papers that caused confusion within the group.

However, Dean did comment on the lessing of pressure on the mayor by stating, "This action may in the long run damage our credibility."

One of the group's proposals called for a 25 percent set aside program for minority firms which the mayor also rejected. In turn the mayor said he would support the city's proposed minority business enterprise program which has been in the drafting stage since July, 1979.

The program if approved by the mayor, city council and board of estimates would establish a 25 percent participation goal for contracts awarded for construction projects and a 15 percent provision for professional services, purchase of equipment and supplies and other contractual services. It could go into effect as early as March.

City Solicitor Benjamin Brown whose office is handling the program stated that the only problems of the program could be that it could lead the way to "fronts" or businesses getting minority contracts that are actually white owned.

—Cherry Hill

Continued from page 1

Van Story Branch, head of public housing for the city told the AFR that a special shelter had been set up at school 163 and the Cherry Hill Multi Purpose Center had cots for families to sleep if they did not want to stay in their homes. Only four people stayed at the school Wednesday night.

Joel Newton, housing manager, issued a notice to all residents and said, "We suggest that during our present emergency situation, oven meals be prepared to conserve energy and provide heat. Our management and maintenance staffs will provide 24 hour emergency service."

Cherry Hill residents remained calm and very few complaints were reported. In Mrs. Lorraine Johnson, a spokesman for the tenants, said she was concerned about the elderly and babies. However, space heaters were provided in several homes.

Tenants said they have never had any problems before with heat and were thankful that they still had gas and electricity. One tenant said the only trouble he has had with heat in the past was that at times it had been too much.

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KENYA DIPLOMAT the Honorable Abdallah N. Mwidau (second left) member of Parliament and former mayor of Mombassa, was given honorary Baltimore citizenship Tuesday at City Hall by Mayor Schaefer's representative (L to R) Paul J. Nevin; the Honorable Mr. Mwidau; Charles Katz, director of Youth for Peace in the Middle East, Washington, D.C.; Mrs. Ruth Hurwitz, associate director of the Baltimore Jewish Council and Retired Col. Michael Lorenzo, US Army. (Right Panel) ON TOUR of the AFRO home office Mr. Ryales Photo Mwidau is shown with (L to R) Mr. Katz and AFRO President John J. Oliver Sr. and Chairman of the Board John H. Murphy III.

Kenyan diplomat gets keys to Baltimore

By Elizabeth M. Oliver
City Editor

Honorable Abdallah N.Mwidau, member of Parliament and former mayor of Mombassa, Kenya, East Africa, was guest speaker Tuesday at a luncheon at the Baltimore Jewish Council's monthly meeting and in the evening at a forum by the Jewish and Black Students groups at Johns Hopkins University.

During the visit he was also hosted by the AFRO and Mayor Schaefer's officials in his absence at City Hall. Mayor Schaefer was in Annapolis in session with the Black Caucus of the Maryland General Assembly and was represented at City Hall by Paul J. Nevin.

Mr. Mwidau was made an honorary citizen of Baltimore during the brief ceremonies and given the city's peuter plate and other citations in the presence of his aide, Charles Katz, director of the Washington D.C. office of Youth for Peace in the Middle East Institute and Mrs. Ruth Hurwitz, associate director of the Baltimore Jewish Council. The event was followed by a tour of the Port of Baltimore and the AFRO home office.

Mr. Mwidau was nominated for Parliament by the late Kenya President Jomo Kenyetta in 1974. Presently he is on leave until March 10 to speak under the auspices of the Youth Institute for Peace in the Middle East and from Baltimore journeyed to Pittsburgh to talk with students at Duquesne University and Carnegie Mellon University.

He was also guest speaker at the Graduate School for Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh.

Before returning to Kenya, Mr. Mwidau will also address students at various universities and colleges in Los Angeles, Miami, Philadelphia and New York.

Among topics he addressed at the Jewish Council luncheon were Ways and Means of Promoting Relations between Judaism and Islam and African Muslim Attitudes toward Israel and the Middle East.

Ronald M. Shapiro is president of the Baltimore Jewish Council. In addition to members, guests included Dr. John Crew, superintendent of Baltimore public schools; Dr. Leslie King Hammond, Dr. Samuel Banks, Mrs. Jessie B. Gladden, Mrs. Hilda Ford, Elizabeth M.Oliver, Travis Vauls and Norman Ross.

Mr. Mwidau is a founding member of the Mombassa African Union and KANU (Kenya African National Union. He was elected deputy mayor and chairman of the Mombassa Established Committee in 1966.

Unemployment

City job outlook bleak

By Ann Sagi and James M. Abraham
AFRO Staff Writers

The unemployment picture for black Baltimoreans looks as bleak as the winter landscape, according to area business and labor authorities.

Rising unemployment in the face of a recession has caused several local employment specialists to predict that things will get worse for black workers before they get any better.

"Most indications are that we should expect unemployment to get worse for everybody. There is no economic policy that leads us to believe things will change and go in the opposite direction," said Douglass Sands, director of the state Office of Minority Business Enterprise.

"The national economic atmosphere has been manipulated so that small businesses have declined," he said. "Minority businesses are the only places where you can be sure blacks will be hired. If small businesses fare poorly, you can be sure jobs will be lost."

Jay Harrison, of the Mayor's Office of Manpower Resources, paints an even grimmer picture of youth unemployment.

He states that his office has been documenting youth unemployment at a rate of 35 to 40 per cent since 1976, because there are no new figures available. But he added that the actual rate of youth unemployment may be even higher.

"Youth just aren't being counted," he stated. He said the fact that few youth apply for unemployment insurance is one of the main reasons, since the polls of those applying for unemployment compensation are used to help determine the rate of unemployment.

The last annual survey of area unemployment in the Baltimore area, according to the state Department of Licensing and Regulation's Division of Labor and Industry, was compiled in 1978. The following is a statistical breakdown of that survey. Total area unemployment

6.0 Black males
4.6 Black females
7.0 Black Youth
43.5 per

The figures above are percentages of the total population currently out of work.

Call position 'misguided'

Jewish leaders back D.C. amendment

Jewish leaders have asked Maryland lawmakers to disregard their feelings about District of Columbia Congressional Delegate Walter Fauntroy's meeting with Arab terrorists and vote for the D.C. voting rights amendment.

In a statement from his New York headquarters Wednesday, American Jewish Congress executive director Henry Siegman said his group supports the constitutional amendment because it is necessary to "enfranchise the residents of the District of Columbia.

"The deplorable action of Walter E. Fauntroy (The city's non-voting delegate to Congress) in paying homage to PLC terrorist chieftain Yasir Arafat ... does not diminish our support for a measure we regard as essential to enfranchise residents of the District of Columbia.

"The misguided efforts of certain Maryland legislators to link these two events are distasteful and certainly do not reflect the position taken by the American Jewish community."

Fauntroy, a Democrat, was lobbying for the amendment last week before the General Assembly and was criticized by four Jewish legislators for meeting with Arafat. He offered to draft a statement criticizing the PLO in return for the votes of the four.

The amendment failed in the Maryland House by one vote on three occasions last year.

The delegates, David Shapiro and Steven V.M. Sklar, both D-Baltimore, Ida G. Ruben, D-Montgomery, and Paula C. Hollinger, D-Baltimore County, last year voted for the amendment, which would give the city two senators and at least one congressman.

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