

1607 Orlando St., SW
Atlanta, Georgia
September 8, 1966

Mayor Ivan Allen
City Hall
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Mayor Allen:

While the Atlanta Journal raves on about the courage of our Mayor in a time of stress, while this newspaper media continues to condemn the city firemen for their stand, taken after many, many years of hardships brought about by low salaries and poor working conditions - while the propaganda continues to fly about how the citizens of Atlanta are appalled and disgusted with the striking firemen, I think it behooves you, The Atlanta Journal, Chief C.H. Hildebrand, Chief Jenkins and your Aldermanic Board to really get out and take stock of how the general public feels, and then face up to the fact that you are not as popular as you might have been - none of you. When you speak of people losing respect, you might start with the Mayor and go on down the list of people above mentioned - many of whom I have had the utmost respect for in past times.

Sure, I come from a Fire Department family. Since I was two years old we have had from one to six members of our family on the Department. Today I can walk in Greenwood Cemetery and see a fireman's grave - a fireman who was my husband - a fireman who HAD to work two jobs to make a living for his family - not afford luxuries mind you, but just make ends meet. Many people asked why he stayed on this job with such a low salary and long hours, and there is but one answer - he was LOYAL AND DEDICATED, the things his friends are accused of not being now - these friends who have been LOYAL AND DEDICATED to the cause of firefighting for as many as thirty years. I believe as honestly as I know I am writing this letter that the short life he lived can be contributed in part to the long hours he worked and the pressure of having to work two jobs. If he were here today, I am sure he would join his friends and fellow firemen in their effort to better a condition that should have been corrected many years ago. I have lived to see men that he respected and admire sell these firemen down the river, and this would have been heart-breaking to him, for he believed in brotherhood, and certainly he would have wanted a Chief that would have supported his men, rather than turn from them.

How does the unbiased general public feel?

Listen to the bank teller that openly brought this subject up yesterday, without me approaching it in any way: "I am so disgusted with the great Ivan Allen and his superior attitude. The policemen of this city should first have walked off their jobs when the Hank Aaron case was at issue, and now they are being made, in this supposedly land of the free - to work firemen's jobs while they are 'fired' They need to come out in support of these firemen, instead of working their jobs at the direction of Chief Jenkins. I hear that they are being paid extra to work and the police that are taking care of regular police duties have an extra load on them at no extra pay. If there's money to pay these police extra, why isn't there more for the firemen. Our trouble here in Atlanta is that our Mayor was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and it's not necessary for him to be interested in the little man. Then Chief

Jenkins has gotten rich since he became Chief of Police and he's more crooked than the crooks his men catch."

And the florist just today -

"I'll be so glad when things get back to normal in Atlanta if they ever do. Maybe if Allen had gotten his headbusted the other night, everybody would have been better off. He sure did boast about running this city and it is apparent that he does and not to the best interest of the people. The firemen ought to walk off and the police should have walked off when this nasty Aaron situation developed. That's repulsive to every citizen in this town."

Now, can you say that ALL public sentiment is against these firemen?

You and Chief Hildebrand insult the intelligence of Atlanta citizens when you say we have adequate fire protection. Why have we needed all these fire stations and men all these years - why haven't we just gone along with the some 200 now working and paid them good, decent salaries. Evidently we thought we needed the other men and other stations. And we question the calibre of men you are now hiring for firefighting jobs when in just recent days you have not even been able to fill vacancies - nobody wanted to be firemen.

The stations are being manned by Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs, Fire Prevention Bureau personnel and some few good, real firefighters, but if you would be honest, and Chief Hildebrand would be honest, and we want to get into name calling, many of these many now working are men who have not been responsible, capable firefighters for many years and have been carried so to speak by these firemen they have now betrayed. Remember, I said some of them still work^{ing} are GOOD, CAPABLE MEN - but what about the one who was on suspension and was called back to work - what about another who has had all kinds of offenses against him and has been hanging by a thread and the others that are physically sick....don't sell your Atlanta Public short, Mr. Mayor. We're not as stupid as you think and much of our knowledge comes from personal experience and personal knowledge - not from heresay, nor from propaganda.

I'm on the Firemen's side, Mr. Mayor. I have yet to find many people who are not - except those in our city government who choose to make a big deal over a new stadium rather than see that their employees are paid decent wages. You've never known what it was to not have enough to eat and not be able to take care of your family, but believe me, there's many "fired" firemen who have been in that position, although I feel that some who have taken a stand against their brother fireman have forgotten this.

I'm sure you have received many such letters and they do not bother you, as long as you are carrying your point, but I could not live with myself if I didn't say to you that when you, and the others in authority, lie down at night, I hope you are able to sleep well with your conscience and that you can continue to live with the injustice you are doing these good men.

Today we determined in our offices to not buy office supplies in the future from your company, not that it would affect your profit to any great extent, but because the name on various things here is repulsive to us in view of the position you have taken against our firemen.

Sincerely,

Edna Mc Gill