

OUR VIEWPOINT

LOOTING THE POOR AND UNEMPLOYED

CORRUPTION has become so endemic in South Africa that not even those who do menial jobs in exchange for a pittance are immune from its effects.

An investigation by *The Witness* into the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which provides short- to medium-term work opportunities to the poor and unemployed, has re-

vealed that the many millions of rands provided to municipalities to oversee the project are not going where they should be going.

Instead of helping those struggling financially to make ends meet, the programme is being undermined by scores of people supposedly on the pay roll, but who have never yet reported for duty. There are also rumours that a few lucky folk

in the city are getting paid as a thank you for helping their political masters on the campaign trail.

What those who abuse the programme are definitely not doing, however, is making Pietermaritzburg look decent by helping the council with general maintenance work, including street sweeping, picking up litter, cleaning halls and

sport facilities and doing grass cutting.

A bigger question is: are those enrolled in the EPWP — who earn R120 a day, for three days of work a week, and for between six and 12 months — being exploited.

What they earn is certainly not the minimum national wage, after all.

And as ward councillor Sandile Dlamini asks:

Why doesn't our government use our tax money to develop a skilled workforce instead?

Having our city look decent is certainly something we would all cheer about.

But for those who live close to the poverty line, perhaps they would find much more fulfilment if they could learn to be plumbers, welders, builders and roofers.