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## FIFTY MEN GO TO GAOL

### PASSIVE RESISTANCE BY INDENTURED INDIAN LABOURERS

ON Sunday, the 18th ultimo, a number of indentured Indians on Mr. Balcomb's estate at Kearsney, near Stanger, were asked to clean the barracks and the land about it.

One of the men refused to do such work on Sunday. He and the sirdar exchanged some words. For this so-called insolence on the part of an indentured coolie, he was arrested. The other men then refused to work unless their comrade was released.

The leader was handed over to the police to set an example to the others. All, numbering 52 men with their women and children, followed to lay their complaints before the Magistrate against working on Sunday, thinking in their old Indian way that an Officer of Justice would rectify all hardships suffered by them through the harshness of their superiors. But they found that the law of the land protects the strong and wealthy against the weak and poor.

The Magistrate at Stanger found all the men guilty of leaving work "in a body" without permission, and inflicted upon each of them a fine of One Pound (more than a month's wages) or one month's imprisonment with hard labour. The men went to gaol. The women were asked to return home. They all went weeping to Mr. Balcomb, and asked him to release their husbands.

After one day in gaol, Mr. Balcomb, it seems, paid the fines and the men were released. Without their husbands these poor women were helpless and unprotected. What they now fear is that, at the end of the month, they will be without food for themselves and their children if, as they have reason to fear, their husbands' wages will be forfeited to pay the fines.

On inquiry it was stated that the employer was willing that representative men amongst the Indians should proceed to Stanger to lay their com-

plaint, but the men felt so indignant that they would not listen to such a proposal, and so went "in a body," which the law says they must not do.

It was also stated that there was a condition of the contract of service which states that the immigrant was bound to work two hours on Sundays.

The Magistrate refused to show the record of the prosecution, and so we have to rely on information from un-official sources, which, however, we believe to be thoroughly reliable.

[We refer to the above in our leading columns.—Ed. I.O.]

#### A Verulam Employer Cautioned

On Tuesday (writes our Verulam correspondent) a remarkable occurrence took place before the Court in which about 70 indentured Indians and their employer were concerned. On that day the men and women employed by Mr. William Starr, near Verulam, did not attend the roll-call and refused to work. Their complaint was that their wages for the last two months had not been paid, their rations had not been fully given, and they, both men and women, were compelled to work until late at night. When they asked their employer for permission to go to the Magistrate and lay their complaint, they were refused. So they decided to go without permission. They appointed two men as leaders, but the whole of the people followed them, saying: "If our leaders are sent to gaol, we shall not leave the Court until we, also, are sent to gaol." In the meantime Mr. Starr had reported the matter to the Magistrate who sent a policeman to investigate. Before he reached the place, however, he met the Indians coming to the Court.

On their arrival in the village, the Indian-Committee took up the matter

and engaged Mr. Dickinson to defend them.

The Magistrate, after hearing the complaints, cautioned Mr. Starr, and made an order that the wages of the Indians be paid at once and full rations given. He also ordered that no task work be imposed upon them. To the Indians the Magistrate said: "You are all to work on the farm for nine hours a day, and if you have any complaints to make, you should appoint one of your number to come to me."

The charge against the Indians was withdrawn and they were allowed to go free, having thus gained their point by passive resistance.

#### Prosecutions at Durban

In the Durban Court on the 13th ultimo Raajan, an Indian, was charged with desertion. He stated in the dock that he would prefer to serve five years in prison rather than go back to his employer. Sentence: Thirty days.

On the 17th instant, Jadubansi, an Indian woman, was charged with desertion from service and refusing to return, and admitted five previous convictions, and refused to go back. Thirty days.

Mommout and M. Ramsamy pleaded guilty to desertion, and admitted previous convictions. First accused said he was determined not to go back to his employer, and was sentenced to five days' hard labour. The second accused said he would go back, and was discharged.—*Natal Advertiser.*

#### Poll Tax Defaulters

In the Borough Court a few weeks ago, before Mr. B. Hodson, three Europeans were charged with failing to pay their poll tax. All the defendants pleaded guilty, but stated that they were in receipt of irregular pay, and frequently they only got