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Magistrate Appalled at

"SLAVE GANG" IN TRANSVAAL

Farmers Fear Native Labour Boycott

From Our Correspondent

BETHAL, Saturday.

SCENES reminiscent of slave-trading and chain gangs are being reported in the North-Eastern Transvaal as a result of the shortage of Native farm labour.

These reports are being made as a sequel to the revelation that bogus recruiters of Native labour are intercepting Natives crossing the borders of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Mozambique in search of work, robbing them of their money and personal belongings, and forcing them into the employment of some Transvaal farmers, who are alleged to be no better than slave-drivers.

A good deal of the evidence concerning these practices has come to light in recent trials in the North-Eastern Transvaal, the latest being that of Balthasar Johannes Brenkman, a foreman on the farm Kalabasfontein, who has been found guilty by the Magistrate of Bethal, Mr. B. H. Wooler, on four counts of common assault and one of assault with intent to do grievous harm to Native labourers under his charge.

The evidence showed that Brenkman assaulted the Natives with sjambok and booted foot while working them from sunrise to sunset.

NATIVE CHAINED

One Native was stripped, beaten almost senseless by a boss boy in the presence of Brenkman,

and then chained to another naked Native and driven to the compound.

Passing sentence, the magistrate said that the conduct displayed was disgusting, and the whole affair sordid and reminiscent of slavery.

MAGISTRATE ISSUES WARNING

He issued a warning that any future cases of a similar nature would carry a sentence of imprisonment without the option of a fine. Brenkman was fined £5 with the alternative of one month's imprisonment on the first four counts, and on the count of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, £50 or three months' imprisonment, and a further three months' imprisonment without the option of a fine, suspended for 12 months.

The police are confident that the activities of bogus labour recruiters will be curtailed soon. Many farmers are worrying about the effects of all this adverse publicity on Native labourers, who may boycott an area which is already finding it difficult to obtain Native farm labourers.