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Labour Union 'Court' 'Tries' Man For Rape

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Labour Union 'Court' 'Tries' Man For Rape

In the course of a trial before Mr. Justice Spencer Wilkinson, in which the head Mandor of West Country Estate, Kajang, was convicted of rape, it appeared that the Chairman, Secretary and some Committee Members of the Labour Union on the estate, instead of reporting the incident to the person in charge of the estate or to the police, proceeded to hold an "Unofficial Court" at which they apparently convicted the accused and fined him \$25.

The first the police heard about this incident was on May 29, 1946, when the Manager of the West Country Estate informed the O.C.P.D., Kajang, of a rumour of a rape on the estate. Statements from witnesses alleged that on May 27, Thirumalay, head Mandor on the estate, committed rape on a 16-year-old Indian girl employed on the same estate. The girl reported the matter to the Secretary of the Labour Union on the estate. A meeting of the Labour Union was called on the night of August 28, which proceeded to hold an "Unofficial Court."

Witnesses were called to make statements, exhibits were produced at this "trial," and the accused was found guilty and fined \$50. The accused said that the fine was too heavy and so it was reduced to \$25. The Labour Union resolved that the fine, when realised from the accused at the end of the month, would

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be given to the temple.

The matter would have ended there had the police not heard about it. Such a proceeding not only hampers the police in their duties but might well cause a miscarriage of justice, and in many cases the persons taking part would be guilty of a criminal offence.

Trade Unions are being established throughout the country, and it is important that this improper practice should not be allowed to creep in. It is the duty of Trade Unions, instead of taking the law into their own hands, to report either to the Estate Manager or the Police the commission or suspected commission of any serious offence.

Trade Unions should confine their activities to arbitrating between employers and employees, to protecting the interest of their members and generally to promoting the material, social and educational welfare of the members in a lawful manner.

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