errors inherent to the one system are present in the other—continual danger of legislative interference, tending to deprive the natives of their reserves, and Government predominance. The Ohotu block is the only one, we believe, yet placed upon the market by the Councils. The Hon. Mr Carroll lately stated in the House that the block contained about 58,000 acres, that during the last two months 3610 acres have been taken up, and during the last six months ending 30th June, 17,612 acres. We find that of the area chosen by selectors, as above, 10,839 acres have been taken up by the Maoris themselves. They were promised 5000 acres for their own farm settlements. They tried to get partition through the Native Land Court, and were told that the law provided for no such operation. They could only gain possession of their own lands for use by leasing them, the same as Europeans were slowly doing. So they are resuming occupation that way, but the prospect of having thus to pay, and the change from a clear native title to a leasehold one from the Councils, are not likely to encourage other owners of other blocks. And the position demonstrates that before the scheme foreshadowed by the Premier at Rotorua can be worked out by the Council, legislative changes in the Act governing procedure must be made. Farming settlements for natives must be made before the lands are placed in the hands of the Council for lease.

West Coast Reserves.

The Confirmed Leases.

Before the Royal Commissioners made the West Coast Reserves very large ones had been made south of Waingongoro, and these were subsequently merged in the former. But long before that settlement was attempted the natives, wishing to beneficially occupy the old reserves, made agreements to lease with Europeans, placing the rent at such a figure that the lessees suffered no hardship when they were to hand back the lands, improved, to the natives at the end of the respective terms. But the day of resumption never arrived. The dream of the Maori of farming his own land was never allowed to materialise. The leases were declared invalid, but the Commissioners Fox and Bell, on investigation, finding some of them bona fide between the parties, confirmed them for the respective terms for which they were made. There were others repudiated by the Commissioners, but those were subsequently confirmed by Mr Thos. Mackay. These two classes of lease, those considered in good faith and those lacking this hall mark, are what are called the confirmed leases. The improvements were the property of the natives, but in 1887 legislation was passed by which the lessees could surrender their old leases and acquire new ones from the Public Trustee. The Act provided for Arbitration Courts to sit, but the natives disapproved of the whole proceedings, and refused to appoint an arbitrator. The Government appointed one for them. The improvements were taken away from the natives and given to the lessees. The term for which the leases were to be made was thirty years. The Crown Grants say the lands cannot be leased for a longer term than twenty-one years "without fine, premium or foregift." The natives sued, in the Supreme Court, the Public Trustee. The latter was defeated, on the ground that the regulations were ultra vires of the Crown Grants. But it was a costly proceeding for the natives. We believe they had to pay the entire cost, although they won. It was palpable that unless the conditions of the Crown Grant were destroyed, the Government and the lessees could not do as they wished. They were destroyed by the Act of 1892. The lands were vested in the Public Trustee in fee simple, although they had been granted to the nominated natives by Her Majesty Queen Victoria for ever. The Public Trustee has a dual position. By one section of the Act he holds the lands for the benefit of the owners; by another he is empowered to act as if he were absolute owner of the lands. The latter pose is much in evidence. The provision of the Act which forbids any European lessee from enquiring more than 640 acres was avoided, and one owner-lessee acquired about 4000 acres. The natives on renewal of leases tried to get the large area subdivided for closer settlement; they tried in vain. But a lessee holding 1000 acres lately advertised the goodwill of it for sale, in areas suitable for dairy farming, asking, we are told, £8 or £9 per acre for the goodwill, although the natives by the Crown Grants were not allowed to take any "fine, premium, or foregift," and the improvements are the property of the natives till paid for. All partition by the natives through the Native Land Court was stopped by the Act of 1892. Before that they were in a fair way of each obtaining his individual holding. Taking one Grant as a sample, the Court found that three-fourths of the land was subject to lease, and one quarter only remained for occupation by the owners. At that time it was never anticipated that the temporary leases would be made perpetual. The Supreme Court declared the improvements on the leased lands belonged to the natives, but lessees pleading poverty, were allowed to pay interest only on the capital sum, the value of the improvements. Some comparatively wealthy lessees pay this interest. The natives pay land-tax, not on what they individually own, but on the whole big block, with assessments intended for "social pests." They pay full rates, and have no voice in the expenditure. They let the lands leased, temporarily, hoping to get them back improved. The Legislature has taken them from the natives for ever, and defamed the Queen's Crown Grant. The voice given them in fixing the rental has proved inoperative in practice. The final decision rests with the Public Trustee. In the late trouble at Greymouth it was said: "It seems that there was a covert agreement amongst the leaseholders in Greymouth not to attempt to outbid each other at the sale." That was in the South Island. On the reserves we are writing of it is more than suspected that there has been covert agreement between the natives, agents of the Maori owners, and intending lessees, by which low rentals are fixed and the majority of the natives wronged. The natives cannot now get back the land they leased but for a time, and the remainder they have to pay rent for, although they are the owners thereof. And some of them lease land from Europeans on which to grow potatoes. (For short history of the confirmed leases see Hansard, Vol. 27: Speeches of the Hon. E. C. J. Stevens and others.)

The following are extracts from a correspondence which lately appeared in the Hawera and Normanby STAR, a paper published in a town in the heart of the reserves:—

The Proposed Reconfiscation.

In reading your account of the debate on the above matter by the Taranaki provincial section of the Farmers' Union, it was a large satisfaction to me to be able to recognise that the majority of 16 to 5 in favour of the seizure of 200,000 acres of Crown Granted lands was obtained by a misrepresentation of the position, in, I believe, the innocence of honest error. No one welcomed the advent of the Farmers' Union more heartily than myself, because I thought it would inherit all the best traditions of the British yeoman, and, whilst presenting a sturdy front for the maintenance of the just rights of the farming community, be an immensely strong factor in advocacy for cleanly administration and equitable legislation, and at the same time be a trenchant foe to all chicanery. In such belief I have, since its inception, been a sincere advocate by voice and pen of the programme of the Farmers' Union, and its extension, which is rapidly becoming inevitable, to a stall in the political arena. But, Sir, no right-thinking man would continue to give countenance and support to the Farmers' Union, if by 16 to 5 they adopted an iniquitous proposal in the fullness of knowledge. I will take a portion of Mr Maxwell's last speech as my text, and in doing so let me say that, without personally knowing that gentleman, I have a most sincere admiration for the way in which he protected settlers' rights in the Harbor Board matter, and I believe that when Mr Maxwell knows the true position of the Reserves he will cease to advocate their confiscation. Says Mr Maxwell: "The reserves consisted of 200,000 acres of confiscated land, and the natives had never got it back." The total area of the confiscated territory, that is, not of land actually confiscated, but of native lands over which settlement of Europeans might be made, was 1,192,000 acres (see Parliamentary Paper, 1864 A—5B). At that date there were 235,350 acres of this area occupied by Europeans, and 528,800 more acres available for European settlers. This latter has since been sold or leased by the Government on State account. The reserves made in former years, called Compensation Awards, have also, almost to the last acre, come into the occupation of Europeans. Those which had not been thus alienated at the date of the report were absorbed into the West Coast Settlement Reserves, which are, in the P.P. I have quoted, stated to be in area 201,395 acres. Mr Maxwell states the natives "never got it back." I had considerable admiration for the Farmers' Union when they, or some of them, refused to sanction the revaluation of lands held