

never was such parody of justice as was perpetrated by the initiator of the policy of "Four acres and a cow," as area and equipment of the European farmer at his first opportunity. In giving an account of the West Coast Reserves it is necessary to state that they were the outcome of a Royal Commission sitting in 1880-4. I have the reports for all those years before me. The interim report was published in the second number of the STAR. In the second report, the Commissioners quote the following minute of Sir Donald McLean, dated 26th December, 1871: "I think it would be politically undesirable, and I fear practically impossible, to attempt to prevent their (the natives) occupying the country north of the Waingongoro, the confiscation of the country having been abandoned by the Government, so long as they believe themselves and keep the compact about not crossing the Waingongoro." Old Hawera settlers remember when those natives could not be induced, on any account, to visit their rising town. The Commissioners said: "This minute was approved by Sir Donald McLean. Nor must it be supposed that the statement so approved was an accident, or a mere slip of the pen. The words 'confiscation of the country having been abandoned by the Government,' were underlined in the Secretary's minute, and could not have escaped the Minister's attention." But the Royal Commissioners sat, not to deal equitably with those lands between Waingongoro and Stoney River only, but to exercise in equity their functions over the whole area from Waitotara to White Cliffs. I quote from the interim report what the Commissioners say about the Parihaka block, as the basis of award mentioned there, was their guide over the whole area from Waitotara to White Cliffs: "Since 1878 it is said the Parihaka settlement has increased; but whether it is so or not, no one pretends we can tell Te Whiti and his people they must leave it. So that for all practical purposes the Parihaka block is only what will be left after a large reserve for those people; and this means, taking the Native Land Act scale of 50 acres for each soul, that we have to set apart at least half the available land there for them." The balance was to be sold on the State account to Europeans, which was done. The total area of native land, actually or nominally confiscated, the Commissioners had to adjudicate on was 1,192,000 acres. Of this immense area they recommended to be reserved for the natives a total of 214,675 acres. The following lands were then granted by the Queen on the Commissioners' recommendation, and the initiative of Parliament, to the natives, each mentioned by name, living in the respective areas. (A. 5B, 1884.)

A.—Lands Granted or in course of being Granted (roods and perches omitted):

	Grants.	Grantees.	Acres.
1. Waitotara to Patea ...	41	639	11,096
2. Patea to Waingongoro	39	1328	32,538
3. Waingongoro to Taungatara ...	42	676	26,604
4. Taungatara to Moutoti	12	250	45,393
5. Moutoti to Waiweranui	41	578	21,482
6. Waiweranui to Omata	56	351	25,035
7. Bell Block to White Cliffs ...	68	1582	26,657

Compensation Awards, i.e., Awards previously made to Loyal Natives now merged in the Reserves Crown Granted:

Division I.—Waipiangao to Titoki ...	20	12	3,458
Division II.—Titoki to Urenui ...	35	35	6,450
Division III.—Urenui to Rau-o-te-Huia ...	38	38	2,700
	392	5289	201,395

In addition to this area there were 12,764 acres set aside, mostly surveyed and reported on, but not "recommended to be granted at present." I don't know what has become of this area. I know some has been allocated for the natives, but a Commission sat last week in New Plymouth to enquire how natives are to be compensated for a block of land, variously stated at from 1500 to 3000 acres, thus reported on by the Commissioners, but which has since been sold by the Government to Europeans. I am dealing now with the 201,395 acres as provision for 5289 natives, and granted to them by the Queen for ever. In 1881 the West Coast Settlement Reserves Act was passed, which handed to the Public Trustee the administration of the reserves with power to lease for a term of twenty-one years, as provided by the Crown Grant. Mr Thos. Mackay was appointed Commissioner to arrange with the natives for leasing. In the Hawera and Normanby STAR of November 28, 1882, is the following: "Further progress has been made by the Trustee respecting the leasing of the West Coast Settlement Reserves, he having concluded an agreement with the leading natives of the Ngatimanihakai hapu, Titokowaru's tribe, for the leasing of 200 acres of their lands. This is proof of the sincerity of the good advice the old warrior lately gave the natives in this district." I was Mr Mackay's agent to Titokowaru's tribe, and after quoting the Crown Grant and Proclamation, securing their lands for ever, and assuring them of the temporary nature of the leases, I obtained the appointment of a delegate to arrange lands to be leased. I have before me a copy of the marked plan made by Mr Mackay, showing the lands the natives wished to keep for themselves. It contains the names of the "leading natives," or rather their agents, who concluded the agreement spoken of in the STAR. They are Komene, Hana Tamihana (Thompson), and R. S. Thompson, and the witness to these signatures is P. Wilson, J.P. I did not think Mr Mackay was justified in telling the STAR that he had obtained an agreement to lease, but to have publicly protested would have retarded settlement. The understanding with the natives was that if the portions marked on the plan were not leased, the Europeans leasing the other portions would not be interfered with, and I can confidently say the natives from that day to this have not broken faith. Once a start had been made by this arrangement with the leading fighting hapu on the Plains, the rest was all plain sailing. The lands were leased for twenty-one years on such terms as made it not impossible for the natives to get back the lands at the expiration of the term. All went well for nine years, and during that time of lean years, when the settlers complained of poverty, the rents were reduced by half. In 1892 Mr Ballance brought in his West Coast

Settlement Reserves Bill. It proposed to nationalise the reserves, and the STAR printed, in pamphlet form, my protest against the purchase of lands made inalienable by Crown Grant. But Mr Ballance obtained the consent of the Parliament of the day to a clause which gave the lessees a right of perpetual renewal of their leases over lands which the grants said could only be let for 21 years. The following is a return supplied by the Public Trustee of the lands of the reserves let to Europeans, and that held under occupation license by the natives respectively. Approximate area of West Coast Settlement Reserves leased on 30th June, 1904, 128,408 acres; approximate area of West Coast Settlement Reserves held under occupation license on June 30, 1904, 20,304 acres. The Act of 1892 vested the total area of the reserves in the Public Trustee in fee simple. Acting as owner by Act against the owners by grant, he charges the latter rent for the occupation of their own Crown Granted lands. It will be seen that the above return leaves 46,683 acres of reserves unaccounted for out of the 201,395 acres of reserves. It is probable that much of this is being made use of by the natives without license, and, indeed, why should it not when it is Crown Granted to them? But at the same time it is liable to be let by perpetual lease at any time by the Trustee, to whom Mr Ballance gave the fee-simple. Only those who hold lease or occupation license have any protection, and the latter is a poor one. It is possible that much of this surplus is wooded and inaccessible land in the mountain ranges. Had the natives the whole area of 201,395 acres there would not be 31 acres per capita towards the statutory area of 50 acres per soul. As it is, 128,408 acres having been let to Europeans on perpetual lease, the 20,304 acres if assured on license to 5289 grantees is not quite four acres a-piece. Instead of proposing to take their freehold from them, it would appear that measures should be taken to obtain the relinquishment of some of the leases on compensation being given. Even if the doubtful area of 46,683 acres be added to the 20,304 acres of occupation licenses, the 5289 natives would have short of 13 acres each, out of the 201,395 Crown Granted them of the 1,192,000 acres confiscated, and the great bulk of this last-mentioned area has been sold to enrich the revenues of the State. The natives are very weary of looking for justice to Governments whose existence in office depends upon the votes of those who long for the natives' lands, and they appeal to the great heart of the nation not to allow them to languish on four acres a piece.

The Proposed Seizure of the Freehold.

In my first letter I extended the palm branch to all of the Farmers' Union who inadvertently advocated a wrong to the natives in the innocence of honest error. Since seeing Mr Combridge's letter I must equally absolve all lessees who are, with him, unaware of the real position. First, I may say that the primary object of the reserve of 201,395 acres out of the 1,192,000 nominally confiscated was to make provision for the tribes and ancestral owners of the lands. I