money by these persons amongst the owners was unsatisfactory, and would be unsatisfactory if the practice were again introduced. I refer to these returns to show the Committee that it is altogether impossible that the lands, or a large proportion of them, included in these reserves could be leased by the Natives themselves. There are 201,000 acres in this class of reserve alone, which have to be dealt with in either of two ways—either to be occupied by the Maoris or leased to Europeans. I apprehend that for 201,000 acres of some of the best land in the colony to remain practically waste would not be for the benefit of the Maori owners or of the colony. Therefore a part of the land must be leased. I shall point out to the Committee, first, the impossibility formerly existing of getting leases executed, and, second, the uncertainty of the method that was formerly adopted, and would be adopted again if the old practice were revived; these being the two grounds which have caused the Crown to retain the control and management, which it has never parted with from the beginning. I affirm that it is a delusion, which is the source of the error into which my learned friends have fallen, to speak of these Native reserves as the "lands of the Natives." I am aware that Natives speak of them as their own lands. But I say they are not their own lands in the sense that ordinary Native land may be said to be their own land. Native lands proper are unquestionably as much the property of the Native owners as the lands of Europeans belong to Europeans; but Native reserves are not the property, in that sense, of the Natives who may happen to be in the Crown grant. Even with regard to Native lands proper the colony has felt it necessary to legislate and make provisions of a character which does not apply to Europeans; but in regard to Native reserves the persons who are in the grant, or in the ascertained title, have, at most, but a life-interest. What were these reserves made for? Not for the purpose of permitting the Natives to sell them. They are not in that sense the property of the Natives in the grants: they were made for the preservation of the foothold of the Native race in the country. In all these reserves, children, females, whole families have as much interest as the persons who at the moment are named in the grant. When Natives, in their petitions, say, "Let us deal with our own land," that is perfectly right and just so far as Native land is concerned—in that case their petition has a true bearing and applicability; but when, using such a phrase, they refer to reserves, of which at the outside they can only be life-tenants, their petition can have no effect. At the best, I submit, they can only be trustees for themselves and others. In the case of the West Coast Settlement Reserves there is this additional fact, which must never be forgotten: that they are also a very distinct class of reserves. They come from the grace of the Crown, and not from any reservation by the Natives themselves. The Commissioners, Sir William Fox and Sir Dillon Bell, were very careful, in the commencement of their inquiry and throughout their reports, to point out not only to Parliament, but to the Natives, reiterating it again and again, that this land was all confiscated to the Crown, that it was the property of the Queen, though return of part would be made in performance of the promise given to the loyal Natives and others to reserve what was necessary for the maintenance of themselves and their families. This confiscated land differs entirely from the "tenths," or reserves, of the South Island, which are reserves provided for by the Maoris themselves upon a contract of sale. To that class of reserve there may attach some kind of equity to the vendors. In this class of reserves it is, I submit, quite plain that what comes to the Natives is by grace of the Crown and the colony; it is property over which the Crown has always retained, and been careful to retain, the right of legislation. What I have here said applies especially to those reserves on the West Coast of the North Island. But it is said by Sir Robert Stout and my learned friends before this Committee that the legislation in regard to the West Coast reserves has been exceptional. Has it been so? These reserves, as I have pointed out, being distinct from Native land proper, the analogy I would suggest is to such land as has been reserved for Harbour Boards or corporations, which are the property of the inhabitants of the district of a harbour or a borough. The inhabitants for the time being are in one sense the owners, and get a benefit from the leasing of such land by the reduction of rates, but the *corpus* of the property is reserved for posterity. With regard to all that class of reserves the Public Bodies' Powers Act has given exactly the kind of powers to which Sir Robert Stout objects to here—power to grant to the tenant a perpetual renewal of the lease. There is again a stronger instance: In the very same year that this "West Coast Reserves Act, 1887," of which so much has been said, was passed, there was passed "The Westland and Nelson Native Reserves Act, 1887." The Town of Greymouth is built on a Native reserve. It may be that there are rights which may justly belong to persons building shops in a town which do not belong to country farmers like my clients; but I am unable to appreciate the distinction. With regard to these Greymouth leases, they give far greater advantages to the tenants than any which have been granted, or which are assumed to have been granted, to my clients under the West Coast Reserves Acts of the North Island. The Act of 1887—the Westland and Nelson Native Reserves Act—following on previous Acts, was the result, like the North Island Acts, of the reports of special Commissions appointed for the purpose. There was no cry then that Maori land had been confiscated. It was thought then that it was altogether out of the question to inquire as to whether the Maoris were to have the management of "their own land;" the demands were that Parliament should provide for the benefits of their improvement being protected to the tenants. When, therefore, Sir Robert Stout calls the West Coast Acts "exceptional legislation" he forgets that in every instance where the Crown deals with land these questions arise, and in the case of the west coast of the South Island reserves the provisions are stronger than any which we insist on in favour of the present leaseholder. These were granted in favour of those whom the country had encouraged to settle permanently upon the land. That is all I have to say under the first head of the attack made by the petitioners. They claim that the lands should be taken out of a corporation holding from the Crown, and given back to those whose names happen to be in the grant as grantees of the reserve. Now, secondly, with regard to the original leases from the Public Trustee—that is to say, the leases other than the confirmed leases—all I desire to point out to the Committee is that it appears to be a very serious matter—a very serious matter indeed. Who can