tegrity; that the methods adopted for arriving at a conclusion were likely to produce the best results. I will undertake to prove that the arbitrators personally visited and inspected the land in every case; that the Natives themselves were heard, and gave evidence as to value; that in every case the rent fixed was such as commends itself to the experience and judgment of men known to be highly honourable men living in the district, who are thoroughly competent to form an opinion on matters of the kind. I will call these witnesses before you. Take the instance of Mr. McLean, who was umpire in the cases arbitrated by Messrs. Livingstone and Nolan. He was not called on in any case to give a decision as umpire, in each case the arbitrators agreeing. But Mr. McLean, a man greatly respected in the district, a large farmer, who has been settled there for the last seventeen or eighteen years, still living there, will tell the Committee, as he told me, that if he had been called to give a decision he would have given a rent not exceeding 6d. either way different from what the arbitrators awarded. What better test could you have of the competence of the arbitrators than the judgment of such a man, who sat in Court and heard the whole of the evidence, and went on the land to investigate every particular? He says that the award of the arbitrators was in every case within 6d. per acre of the true value. I do not propose to do more than give general evidence except on two cases. I think the Committee will want to hear something about Ross's agreement. A special point has been made in regard to Gower's lease. I will prove the particulars in that case, for there is a specially large reduction there. Special evidence will be given with regard to the question of costs. I will prove that we suffered a great injustice in this matter, for we have had to pay three-fourths of them. But how were these costs incurred? The Natives kept out of the way; they evaded service; they would not receive either the notices or the awards, and they drove the people out with sticks when they came to serve the notices upon them. The costs of the service, therefore, represent a very large proportion of the costs. I contend that we have been most unjustly compelled to pay three-fourths of them, while the Natives have to pay one-fourth. If they had appointed an arbitrator on their own behalf instead of most unwisely refusing to do so—if they had accepted service, as they should have done, the costs would have been very little. But the costs have been enormously increased by their action, and three-fourths of these costs we have had to pay. In one case the tenant was ordered to pay the whole of the costs; in every other the lessees are obliged, as I have said, to pay three-fourths. When Sir Robert Stout told the Committee that the costs in one case were £80, which the Natives had to pay, that was, I presume, a slip on his part. He used that statement (even if he had not said the Natives were ordered to pay these costs)—it was a kind of proof that the arbitration was not only improper but injurious to the Natives. But the action of the Natives was very injurious to us, because it increased the costs enormously which we were called upon to pay. An honourable member of the Committee yesterday, in reference to this question of costs, seemed to assume that there was something in them which showed that the arbitrators themselves were unjust. The arbitrators were bound to serve these notices on the Natives: they had also to serve on the Natives copies of the awards, or to see that it was done. My clients have had to pay the whole of the costs, and are entitled to recover only one-fourth from the Natives. I repeat that the proceedings were properly conducted; that the Natives were heard whenever they wished to give evidence; that the arbitrators were fair, honourable, and just men; that their award was a fair and just decision; and that the rents found under them are also fair and just. Sir Robert Stout told the Committee that he wants legislation for certain purposes which he indicated. Mr. Taipua wants to abolish the Trustee. Both Sir Robert Stout's and Mr. Taipua's Act ought to be properly entitled "The West Coast Leaseholders Confiscation Bill." We were prevented by the passing of the Act of 1889 from obtaining leases to which we were entitled. People who had advanced money for the purpose of getting their title—for some of the leases had been executed—have been prevented from obtaining their security. Some of these leases—two of them we know of—have been sold or assigned for valuable consideration; others have been mortgaged to banks. These are to be questioned, and the legislation of last session perpetuated.

*Mr. Peacock:* He (Sir Robert Stout) said he did not intend to disturb those leases which had been already executed.

*Mr. Bell:* We say we are prepared to defend our position in the Supreme Court. But we go further, and ask, "Supposing the Committee to come to the conclusion that the Act of 1887 enacted fair and just provisions (we do not get compensation for improvements under the Act of 1887; we get it under the Act of 1884, if we have it at all), and if the Committee also come to the conclusion that the proceedings have been just and fair, then, ought the Committee to leave us to fight a series of legal actions in the Supreme Court with a body of Natives who cannot pay our costs if we succeed? If the Committee come to a conclusion different from that suggested by Sir Robert Stout, under which our property would be confiscated, then I submit that we are entitled to ask for an Act to declare that these leases should be executed under the awards which have been made.

*Mr. Stewart:* Have awards been made in all instances?

*Mr. Bell:* No, not in all cases: there are five or six in which there has been no surrender; some cases in which surrender has been prevented by the Act of last session. We submit that the Committee should not recommend the legislation suggested by Sir Robert Stout; and we contend that the alternative is, that we are forced to go to the Supreme Court to contest a series of actions, unless the Committee, being convinced that the awards were fair and just, should recommend the legislation I now ask for.

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*Mr. Levi:* It has been stated, sir, that the reserves dealt with under the West Coast Settlement Acts are not in any sense the property of the Natives, and my friend Mr. Bell has contended that these reserves are in exactly the same position as all Native reserves in the colony,