

most of whom I have seen, have shown the most generous recognition of this. With regard to the West Coast Settlement Reserves, I hold the opinion, which will be found recorded in *Hansard*, for it has many times been expressed by me in the House, that the administration of these lands by the Public Trustee is a great mistake. That office was really formed for certain specific purposes—the administering of certain trusts which were defined by law, and respecting which there was very little scope for discretion, and, when the necessity for such discretion arose, there was always provision for referring to a tribunal, empowered to give advice and to indemnify the Trustee for acting upon it. That seems to be the spirit with which that office was formed. But an office which should have the execution and management of land reserves, such as the West Coast Settlement Reserves, seems to me to require to be formed so as to exercise a large amount of discretion, and a personal supervision not to be expected from, and which cannot be exercised by, the same person who regulates the proceedings of the Public Trust Office. I should like to say that Mr. Rennell, who has been administering the office in this district, appears to me to be a most efficient officer, and, I believe, if it had not been for his knowledge of the Natives, and for their high respect for and trust in him, things would be far worse than they are. He was brought up in a school which, though bad in many respects, still did allow of uncontrolled action within certain wide limits by agents of the Native Office in the past, and therefore he had learnt to use, and was in the habit of using, this discretion in small matters, and he has prevented much friction by not referring everything to the red-tape code which his superior, the Public Trustee, had of necessity to regard as his sole rule of conduct. I know of very many cases in which, by a certain amount of breadth of view which has been displayed by him, and through the very great caution taken by him,—possibly without reference to any one,—he has facilitated the arrangement of transactions, and prevented very great discontent amongst the Maoris. Whenever I have seen him come in contact with the Maoris, I have always seen them place implicit trust in his friendliness and respect his word. With regard to those Native lands which are vested in the Public Trustee at the present time, and in respect of which he acts as trustee for the Natives, I still respectfully recommend that they be taken entirely out of his administration. This matter has from time to time been fully debated by the House, and by Committees of the House composed of independent members; and what machinery should be substituted for the Public Trustee has always been the question. The view advanced by some representatives of the southern constituencies has been that the Waste Lands Boards should undertake the duty. But I cannot help thinking that the Natives would not feel that their interests were being properly looked after if they were placed in the hands of the Waste Lands Boards. It seems to me that there must be a certain amount of representation of the Native owners on the Boards which administer these lands, so as to secure the confidence of the Natives. They know nothing of the Waste Lands Board. It was not constituted to represent the interests of the Natives, but those of the European settlers, and I think therefore that such a body as the Waste Lands Board as at present constituted is not fitted for the administration of these lands. I think, on the contrary, it would be necessary to create probably some new Board for the management of the two classes of reserves to which I have referred, and which would have the appointment of its own officer and the direct control of that officer, and would receive from him periodical reports as the Waste Lands Board does from its Crown lands ranger. With one secretary, who might and probably would be a gentleman holding some other Government position as well, and a ranger, who very possibly might also hold another position, the Board would be able directly and without reference to persons outside, who know nothing of the circumstances, to take into consideration the details of each case and deal with it on its merits, and do ample justice to the Natives and at the same time facilitate the settlement and the improvement of these lands. I think, too, that the individualisation of the interests ought to be pushed ahead more than it is at present. There are many areas of land held by the Public Trustee on behalf of dozens of Natives, and none of them know the particular pieces which belong to themselves. Though it may not be necessary for the enjoyment of the lands that these interests should be subdivided, still I think it is very desirable that this should be done, for in many cases a great number of these Natives—probably the majority in value so far as the interests in the land go—do not live near the land, and are therefore deriving no benefit from it. It would consequently be better to ascertain and individualise the interest of each particular Native in each particular block, and to provide machinery also by which these interests may be transferred to other reserves in exchange for the interests of other Natives, and thus to so regulate the interests of all these Natives that they shall be comprised within blocks upon or near to which they respectively reside, instead of being contained in distant blocks. I find a great many Natives who say “Yes, we have land in such and such a block; we have a great deal there, but we do not live there. We live at a certain other place.” “And have you got none there?” I have asked; “No, but the people at the place where we live are our friends, and we want nothing but to live there also.” “Are the people there in the grants for that land?” “No, only some of them; but they hold grants for other lands elsewhere.” It seems better to give them their respective interests in the land and to fix those interests near to their particular places of abode; the machinery provided for the purpose of administering these lands being also capable from time to time of exchanging interests at the request of the Natives themselves. That may be done easily if, in the first place, in each particular block of land the interest of each individual Native were as far as possible ascertained. Another great advantage would accrue in this respect: it would tend to prevent those migrations of Natives from one part of a district to another which are now so frequent. When I have asked Natives what about their wheat-fields, and their tara or kumara plots, they have said, “Oh, it is no use cultivating them. If we do so, it will happen that just when they are quite ripe another lot of Natives will come and visit until our taro or kumaras or other crops are quite done. There is no encouragement for us to grow food. It is better for us to join these migratory parties and eat of other people’s crops.” A great many