law. I have complaints from Natives equal with Europeans in my district, and if there was a Commission in this district you would find that these are mild complaints that have been brought by the members of the West Coast League. Many persons have suffered injustice from the Trustee who will rather bear them than petition Parliament, seeing that there has been no redress got from previous petitions. I believe myself that if these lands were under the control of the Government, through the Land Boards that they would be administered to the interest of the Natives and in the interest of the Europeans, and that it would give satisfaction instead of dissatisfaction. A case I wish to illustrate is that of a man named Harge, who had a lease of land for twenty-one years. He had taken the land when it was under bush He applied to the Trustee about two years ago to give him a new lease, without competition, with a fresh valuation. He applied to the Trustee to give him a lease for nine months while he got his crops out. The Trustee would give him nothing of the kind. There happened to be no other person tendered for this particular piece of land, and, although he was the only tenderer, the Trustee would not give a new lease except on a valuation given by the Trustee. Fortunately he retained his old land, but he has had to pay a higher rent than the Natives were willing to allow him to have it for. I do not know who was the valuer. The grievance of Wray is, that when the valuer went there only the children were at home, and accordingly no information could be given to him. The valuations have been very expensive to the settlers, the valuer having come from Wellington, and gone all over the lands, and then gone back to town again, and then come back to these lands. It has been most expensive. Another point that I wish to bring before the notice of the Committee is this: Where they have tendered a high rate for the lease, and something has occurred and the lease could not be granted, another £12 10s. has been demanded because the lease could not be granted in the first place. In regard to this Puno Road, which opens up a block of some 4,000 acres of land, it has been pointed out that if the Trustee would have that land surveyed the young men, the sons of the settlers, will take it up, and by being there will have something to do. An administration which puts people on bush-land miles from a main road, and with no roads to be made, present or prospective, is an administration opposed to the administration of the Government, and to the policy of the Government. The Government are making roads in advance of settlement, and in some cases they are metalling them. I have no objection to the Trustee, who is a gentleman of great ability, but I have only to state the cases as they come under my notice as the representative of this important district. If the Committee could see their way to grant the prayer of the petition, and place this land under the same conditions as the Crown lands of the colony, it would be better for the Trustee, and would meet the case all round.

141. *Mr. Warburton.*] You are aware that I am a statutory officer with statutory duties?—Yes.

142. Why should I be guided by the Government or the Ministry, or anything but legislation?—I was on the Committee that dealt with that case, and from conversations I had with Mr. Ballance, who initiated, I believe he intended that discretionary power should be given to you, in order that you could look on both sides of the case. It was never intended that you should look at it only from the Natives' point of view. What the Trustee was doing in Mrs. Wray's case was strictly in accordance with the law perhaps; but what we say is that the Maori people whom he says he is administering the trust for have no more power than if the land did not belong to them. My object in speaking before this Committee is with a view of getting the Act amended. I had missed this point so far as Mr. Leidham was concerned. It is perfectly true about this flax-mill, but they have missed one point. This land was given to a half-caste, who had given a lease, and the Trustee said they had no power to give the lease although the flax-mill was there. This man had tried to get the Trustee to give him a lease as an occupier, or by the year. The Trustee would not extend mercy or consideration to that man, and, although he is a very industrious man, he was positively ruined by the Trustee's action.

J. K. Warburton, Public Trustee, examined.

Mr. Warburton: The land which is the subject of this petition comprises what is known as "the confiscated territory," in the Taranaki District, in the North Island, those portions which the Governor in Council was authorised to grant to Natives by "The West Coast Settlement Reserves (North Island) Act, 1880." Crown grants were issued accordingly, containing restrictions preventing the grantees from alienating the granted land otherwise than by leasing for a limited term—that is, for not more than twenty-one years. The Legislature, not content with these restrictions, and no doubt taking into consideration the value and extent of the reserves, which comprised upwards of 190,000 acres of first-class land, passed, in the years 1881, 1884, 1885, and 1887, statutes by which these lands were to be administered by the Public Trustee. These statutes in law prevented the Native grantees themselves from leasing or disposing of their lands, the whole authority to lease the lands being placed in the hands of the Trustee under the Act of 1881. The motive for setting up the trust would be the protection which it was necessary, in the interests of the colony, to afford to the Native owners of the property from their own improvidence and the designs by which their land, when subject to no restriction, so regularly passed out of their possession. And, of course, it would follow, if the beneficiaries of this trust were to sign such a petition as that before the Committee against the administration of the trust, their signatures would simply accumulate the evidence for the necessity for the trust. Many wrongs have been done to the Natives in the past on their own signatures. The property was to be managed by the Public Trustee in the interest of the beneficiaries or the Native owners. Judge Connolly, in his judgment, delivered on the 23rd May, 1891, in a test case submitted to the Court of Appeal against the Public Trustee, and another by the Native owners of a portion of the reserves in question, stated as follows: "The Public Trustee is in no way less liable to his *cestui que* trust than any other trustee would be, and that he must not accept the surrender of a lease unless it is certainly to their advantage to do so. The power to be exercised was