of Maoris, whom they wish to equip for battle in the new order of things which is giving place to the old. It is asserted that those terms were written before the signatures were affixed. But that when the documents were returned to them from Wellington the terms were newly stated to be for twenty-one years, with a perpetual right of renewal to the European lessee, thus defeating the object the natives had when, by an act of self-denial, they had defaced their own immediate interests in favour of their children, whom they wished to have a good opportunity of becoming farmers. For their mode of life is the only one open to the Maori, who has no land and no capital, to get that land improved.

This matter was brought before the Native Minister, but not in the House, during last session of Parliament, and he promised redress during the recess. We believe the right of perpetual renewal has been deleted from the terms, but, on the other hand, the lessee has the right to be paid for all improvements at the end of both the first and second term of twenty-one years, and we believe, taking our information from the public advertisements, that there is no limit placed on the amount of improvements with which the lessee may load the land. In the first leases issued on the West Coast Settlement Reserves, when it was thought that the native owners had a right of occupation on the reversion of the lease, the amount of improvements to which the lessee was restricted was £5 per acre in value. At the meeting held up the Whanganui River to settle the terms, a more moderate estimate than that was placed on the value of the prospective improvements, and though the lessees were not restricted, it was calculated that they would put about £3 worth per acre on the land. It was felt that even that amount would stand in the way of the natives regaining occupation. We saw a letter written to the "Puke-ki-Hikurangi (Maori newspaper), published at Greytown, dealing with this matter, and advocating that the European lessess be allowed a further term of occupation in extinguishment of the claim for improvements.

There is another and most important aspect of this matter, for we are treating of the dealings with Ohotu as typical of what will be the policy over the whole of the lands held in trust under the Maori Lands Administration Act. We allude to the provision made for native occupation, his papakianga, his town or village home. At the meeting above alluded to his attention was drawn to the fact that the 1000 acres set apart for the native village settlement, out of the 40,000 acres to be occupied by European leaseholders, was quite unsuitable, being on precipitous river-cliffs. It was advocated that a block of 5000 acres should be set apart for native settlements, and this was agreed to. But when application was made to the Native Land Court for the reservation of this area, the natives were told that the Native Land Court has no authority to do this, that no such partition could be made, and that the only way left for the owners of 40,000 acres to gain a home and cultivations for themselves would be to tender for leases in the same way as Europeans had to do. And the natives are angry with the Judge, who probably has no option, but is guided entirely by legislation made and provided. And so the matter rests. Neither European nor native occupation is secured, and we are asked to believe that the Maori Lands Administration Act provides machinery by which the reputed 5,000,000 acres of waste native lands may be brought under beneficial occupation.

Again, the native lands vested in the Maori Councils for leasing purposes and the settlement, both of Europeans and natives, have not the native title individualised. The consequence is, as it is with administration of the West Coast Settlement Reserves by the Public Trustee, for land taxation purposes, the assessment is made on the large blocks. The hundreds of owners in these blocks have interests differing in area and value, some of them small. By this assessment en bloc there is absolutely no exemption, such as is enjoyed by European owners of land less than £500 in value; the native owner of £5 worth has to pay. And he not only has to pay, but has to pay largely, for the assessment being made on large blocks, the valuation is on a high scale. When last session the natives were made amenable to the payment of full local rates, it was thought that as a mere matter of justice legislation would ensue to remove this differential treatment of the Maori in comparison with the European subject. But nothing was done. Whilst making the Maori amenable to all the penalties of citizenship, by what right, except that of the strong over the weak, do we withhold the enjoyment of full privileges?

# Wanted, a Trust.

Before finality can be reached in the dealings with the remaining lands of the natives, as well as those already reserved for them, it is absolutely necessary that a trust shall be established which will be free from interference by Governments which rely on the suffrages of Europeans for their position, and whose chief end is the increase of settlement. The Public Trust Office is not such trust, as a review of its constitution and the result of its dealings will show. Constituted as they are, the Maori Land Councils are equally open to objection for the same and other reasons. We are supposing that it is the wish of the people of the colony to do absolute justice to the race we have, in a measure, supplanted, and to whom it is acknowledged we are responsible in providing them with an equipment for the battle of life and equal opportunity in the pursuit of happiness with their fellow British subjects of European origin. It is not necessary for us to formulate such a scheme of trust, but for adumbration of it we have to listen, in imagination, to the regretted tones of a voice which is still. It was heard on the second reading of the West Coast Settlement Reserves Bill, a Bill which, after becoming an Act, has brought, we believe, almost irremediable wrong to the native owners of between two and three hundred thousand acres of Crown-granted Reserves, themselves over 5000 in number. Mr Rolleston said, inter alia (see Hansard, Vol. 75, p. 367-8): "In this Bill enormous power is given to the Public Trustee. . . . This Bill is an instance of what is evidently in the Premier's mind—to make the Public Trust Office an absolute department, controlled only by the Treasurer, who is to be given the power to deal with people's fortunes as seems fit to him. It is a very dangerous power, which, I think, is intended to be put in the hands of the Public Trustee, who will be acting alone, except so far as he may be controlled by the political head. . . . My own opinion is that these trusts ought to be dealt with by a private Bill. If the natives could see that their reserves were removed from outside interference they would feel that what had taken place in the past would not take place again—namely, that by one Act after another the power of retaining these reserves should be taken away from them. It is, I think, one of the most melancholy things to see how provisions, made and paraded before the public with respect to the early settlement of the country in regard to native reserves, have been set aside. The whole of this town is dotted with lands that were originally absorbed by Europeans. That is the position of native reserves at this day, and what I have had to do with regard to these reserves on the Coast has been to make an attempt, partially frustrated by subsequent legislation, to place these reserves on a proper footing that would secure them from being interfered with as reserves have been in the past. I wish we could get this: that when a native property is put into the hands of the Public Trustee it should no more be capable of being dealt with by the General Legislature, as now proposed, than the property of a private individual." And following Mr Rolleston came Mr Taipua, now also departed. Among other things he said: " . . . The present position is this: The natives had no means whatever of getting justice, and of getting their wrong rectified. As a last resource, the natives, having received the advice of lawyers, placed the case in the Supreme Court. The result of the recent legislation has been a distinct gain to the natives; and the Europeans, finding they did not occupy as strong a position as hitherto, have encouraged the framing of the measure now before the House; and I am quite sure that, if it had not been for the success of the natives in that litigation, no attempt would have been made to deal out justice to them. In my opinion a great deal of the wrong and confusion is to be laid at the door of the Public Trust Office. All the losses the natives have been put to, and all the confusion that has arisen, may be attributed to that office. It is true the Public Trust Office is now presided over by another officer, and that the gentleman who had charge of it recently has been removed; but is there any guarantee that the present head of the office will not make the same mistakes as his predecessor made? It is true that the late Public Trustee has been removed, but the regulations framed by his office are still in force. But I think that the experiment of placing these lands in the hands of the Public Trustee has been tried long enough, and that we should find some other method of administering them. I think we should make a new departure altogether."

And that is the opinion of the majority of the natives who were represented by Mr Taipua in the House. They find all the worst apprehensions have been fulfilled, and that whilst