

fires. Could this be done I am confident that timber would not only be cheaper to the settler, but the Crown forests would also be preserved. There would of course have to be exceptions to this stringency in the distant forests not likely to be settled, such as at Waikawa and the West Coast.

22nd January, 1869.

J. T. THOMSON,  
Chief Commissioner, Waste Land Board.

### No. 6.

His Honor O. CURTIS to the Hon. E. W. STAFFORD.

Superintendent's Office,  
Nelson, 9th February, 1869.

SIR,—

I have the honor to forward herewith the replies of the Chief Surveyor of this Province to the questions accompanying your circular letter of the 27th November last, received at this office on the 28th December, relative to the present condition of the Forests of the Colony.

I have, &c.,

OSWALD CURTIS,  
Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

### Enclosure in No. 6.

REPLIES to DR. HECTOR'S QUESTIONS.

Survey Office, Nelson, 27th January, 1869.

Q. 1.—What is the area, character, and value of the forests in the district ?

A.—I estimate the area of the forests in the Nelson Province at about three million acres. On the level land and in the valleys, the forest consists of the totara, rimu, rata, and what is called the white, yellow, and red pines; and on all rising ground, and nearly to the summit of all the mountains, the forest consists of the various species of the birch tribe. From the large acreage of forest land in this Province, no value is given to it above the estimated value of Crown land.

Q. 2.—What was the original area of the forests ?

Q. 3.—How much is still Crown land ?

A.—But a very small proportion of the original acreage of the forest in this Province has been alienated by the Crown; and in the settled districts of Nelson and the Waimeas, the planting of English and other trees has almost equalled the amount of native forest that has been destroyed.

Q. 4.—What has been the relative destruction of forest on Crown lands and on freehold ?

A.—But very little forest has been destroyed on Crown land, but some few thousand acres have been cut down and burnt on freehold land.

Q. 5.—What causes have led to the destruction of the forests, particularizing the relative effects of accidental fires, felling by holders of bush licenses, and destruction by cattle ?

A.—From the nature of the forests in this Province, very little injury has been caused by accidental fires. There are not any bush licenses now granted in this Province, and I do not think the quantity cut at any time under these licenses would exceed a few hundred acres. During the last year some leases have been granted, under which a few thousand acres of bush or forest have been cut down and burnt, and the land cultivated. Cattle, I think, will do much injury to the forests, both by preventing the growth of the young trees and by barking or breaking down trees of larger growth, but at present this can hardly be noticed in this Province.

Q. 6.—State any damage which has occurred to agricultural districts, or other destruction of property, such as mills, &c., that has been imputed to floods or droughts being rendered more severe through the destruction of the forests ?

A.—I cannot say that, up to this time, I have heard of any damage done in this Province being attributed to the destruction of the forests, and I do not think that the very small amount of forest that has been destroyed can have affected either the floods or droughts. I think some damage has been caused by cutting down the timber on the banks of the rivers, but to what extent I am unable to say.

The above questions appear to relate rather to small districts or portions of a Province; I have therefore been unable to give more than very general answers.

### Second Series of Questions.

Q. 1.—Are bush reserves advisable, or should the forests be allowed to pass into freehold, with a view to their better conservation than at present ?

A.—I think it would be most desirable to make some bush reserves, and would suggest that the tops of many of the mountain ranges should be reserved on either side for a certain distance from their summit, and also that reserves of the forest should be made at the source of all rivers and streams.

Q. 2.—Does the system of granting bush licenses lead to an extravagant waste of the forest, and could you propose any system of supervision by which the forests might be thinned without their absolute destruction ?

A.—I do not think that granting bush licenses would lead to a wilful waste of the forest, but I should not recommend their being granted. The large acreage of forest land in this Province makes it necessary that some should be annually cut down and burnt, this being the only profitable way in which forest land at the present time can be utilized. From the few attempts I have seen made in this Province to thin the forests, I do not think it can be done without their absolute destruction. I therefore think it would be better to make actual reserves of the forest; and would also beg to suggest that every encouragement should be given to the judicious planting of all kinds of English and other forest trees.

THOS. BRUNNER.