

pastures, hill land, rivers and highways within a fair distance of Port of Spain, that caused the price of the ordinary shares to advance to a peak of 47s 3d last year . . . Only 14 acres were sold last year, but this land realised over £26,000, an average of £1,860 per acre, compared with a net book value of £7 per acre and the original cost of £8 8s 0d per acre. The chairman emphasises that these sales represented good sites on road frontages or in villages, and are thus not representative of general values. Any attempt to value the surplus lands must be liable to a large margin of error. If the hill lands and villages are excluded altogether, but, taking an optimistic view, and giving the remaining 1,570 acres a value of £1,860 per acre, the estate is worth nearly £3 millions."

It may be doubted whether wages or interest on capital have increased more than 200-fold during the period that land has increased from £8 8s 0d to £1,860 an acre. Trinidad should follow Jamaica's example—if she is not to go the way of Cuba.

NAIROBI COUNCIL INCREASES RATE ON LAND VALUES

TWO paragraphs from an article surveying general business and development in Kenya published in the January issue of *The Standard Bank Review* are of interest:

"Estimates providing for a record gross expenditure of £3,400,000 have been approved by the Nairobi City Council for 1960. It has been agreed that an undeveloped site value rate of 2 per cent will be levied, an increase of ¼ per cent over 1959. It is estimated that the new figure will produce more than £1,000,000. The Council also approved a capital programme for 1959/64 involving the spending of more than £12,250,000.

"A new nine-storey office block, built at a cost of £122,000 has been opened in Nairobi as the headquarters of a large United Kingdom insurance society. The building, 106 feet high, is the tallest in the centre of Nairobi and one of the most colourful, with red and blue mosaics and a silver-grey washed terazzo façade."

S. AFRICAN LAND TAX PROPOSAL

THE South African *Farmer's Weekly*, January 20 reported: "A special tax on farms without Europeans on them and a progressive tax on land to discourage large holdings are among the recommendations in the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Depopulation of the Platteland.

"The commission, under the chairmanship of Dr. E. J. de Toit, Chairman of the Natural Resources Development Council, was appointed in 1957, and report on the upsetting of balance between European and Native populations on the platteland. It says that by 1970 there will be only 42,000 Europeans as against 4,000,000 Natives on the platteland.

"It is also pointed out that three per cent of farmers, owners of more than 5,000 morgen* each, own nearly

*1 morgen = 2.116 acres.

one-third of South Africa's 102,000,000 morgen of farmland . . . The report is now in the hands of the Cabinet and a white paper is being prepared it is understood, for tabling during the present session of Parliament."

A fortnight earlier, in reporting on the Commission's proposals, the Johannesburg *Star* stated:

"During the Second World War a land tax was imposed in South West Africa and is still in being. It was to help make room for returning soldiers. It is different from the proposal of the Du Toit Commission in that it is applied not merely to farms that are not occupied by whites but all holdings irrespective of whom they are occupied by or whether they are occupied at all. The tax is normal up to a certain acreage depending upon the area, and after that it grows progressively stiffer as the size of the farm increases."

W. GERMANY MAY TAX LAND INTO USE

THERE is a good prospect that the West German Parliament may shortly introduce a measure to tax building land. Our correspondent in Hanover, Mr. Erich Zincke, writes that the scarcity of land suitable for building has reached catastrophic proportions.

Land prices remain officially pegged at 1936 levels, so that the private citizen can obtain a home site only through the "black market" although a few are fortunate enough to obtain a small terrace house through a housing association. Thousands of contract members of such associations, however, are unable to build a family home although they have completed their payments.

The federal government proposes (1) to abolish the fixed price system in order to re-open the market for building land, and (2) to lay a tax on all present and potential building land so as to compel owners to sell.

Although this falls short of the taxation of land values as advocated in Britain and practised elsewhere, it is in line with that system. It has the merit of requiring a valuation of the land concerned, of being simple and of commanding political support. If the tax is introduced and achieves its object, Mr. Zincke believes, it may pave the way for a general valuation and land value taxation.

N. W. KENT GEORGEISTS' DINNER

The N.W. Kent Branch of the Land Value Taxation League held its third annual dinner and social at Eitham on Saturday, February 13. Mr. Stephen Martin, branch chairman, presided. Guest speaker was Councillor David Brooke, the only Liberal member of West Ham Borough Council, whose recent election after eight annual attempts attracted national publicity. Cllr. Brooke described some of the methods he and his colleagues had employed to "put across" the land values policy to the electorate, and offered useful suggestions for promoting the Rating Reform Campaign which he warmly welcomed. Reports on the Campaign and the Henry George School were given by Mr. P. R. Stubbings and Mr. V. H. Blundell respectively.