

the Government should obtain the services of a Valuation Commissioner who has had experience of the practical administration and application of the unimproved value system. New Zealand, we think, should be able to supply that want.

Against Exemption

Mr. L. Clement Hill, C.B.E., who, as our correspondent Mr. Williamson informs us, is an expert on local government in England and has been for two years in Jamaica to advise its Government on reorganising the work of the local authorities, argued strongly in his Minority Report against the Commission's proposed £10 exemption. "The suggestion," he wrote, is "untimely. The next elections will be carried out on the new universal adult suffrage. . . . The majority of the new voters will be drawn from the 'exempted' group; what interest can they have in municipal affairs except to try to get as much as they can for nothing? . . . The proposal is retrogressive since the 'ability to pay' maxim is being discarded by all modern governments and replaced by acceptance of the principle that all who benefit from government should make some contribution towards the cost. . . . It will encourage evasion in a number of ways which will only invite the making of more 'laws.' . . . There are some small properties which are let to tenants and exemption will benefit the landlord only. It will create dissatisfaction amongst those whose properties have been valued just over the liability figure; this will recur increasingly every revaluation period. Once this exemption is made legal it will be extremely difficult to bring the exempted class back into liability to pay, even though the range of values change, which it may do quite suddenly, if even a restricted form of inflation has to be accepted after the war. The people will not believe that values have changed; any increase in the value will give rise to suspicion that it is designed to deprive them of their exemption privilege. . . . Until every conceivable improvement in the machinery of collection has been made, and every effort put forward to educate the people in the advantages of local government, we have no right to assume that such a large body of citizens are either unable or unwilling to pay their taxes. The surest way to develop a sense of citizenship is to encourage each one to pay his share of local government administration, however small that contribution may be. . . . Real cases of hardship can be relieved in several ways, and local authorities should be empowered to give such relief after a thorough investigation into each case."

Mr. F. C. R. Douglas, House of Commons, 27th September, asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies "what recommendations were made by the Land Valuation Commission appointed by the Governor of Jamaica and presided over by the Collector General, the Hon. Simon Bloomfield; and whether

copies of the Report and the evidence are available in this country." Colonel Stanley replied that no copies of the Report had yet reached him. He had asked the Governor for them, and would communicate again with Mr. Douglas when he had the Governor's reply.

Another question about Jamaica was asked on 4th October by Mr. George Mathers, whether the Secretary of State for the Colonies had now received report from the Governor regarding the area of cultivable land found to be out of production at the time of the census, and how much of such land was being used under the compulsory Food Planting Order. Colonel Stanley had to regret that he had not yet received that report, but would communicate as soon as one arrived and had been considered.

CALIFORNIAN IRRIGATION DISTRICTS

IN MARCH last we reported that the Circuit Court of Appeals of the U.S. had upheld as valid and constitutional the provisions for land value taxation in the Irrigation District Act of California. It was the test case of Wells Fargo Nevada National Bank versus Imperial Irrigation District, 136 Fed. (2) 539. Appeal was taken to the U.S. Supreme Court, which on 27th March, 1944, confirmed the decision of the Circuit Court. Mr. J. Rupert Mason, of San Francisco, who gives this gratifying news, writes:—

"This settles the constitutionality of the California Statute, 1909, p. 461, which permitted our local units of government, known as Irrigation Districts, to exempt from taxation all buildings, planted orchards, vineyards, etc., and to collect all of their revenues necessary to operate and meet all expenses from an annual tax levied by the District, on the value of all land within the boundaries of the District without limit as to the rate of tax, even if it amounted to the full rent value

"It is significant that every one of the more than 100 such Districts in California has elected by popular vote of the people to function as permitted by this 1909 State law, and to exempt buildings and improvements from district taxation. In not one District has there ever been a suggestion that the people would like to go back to taxing buildings and improvements.

"If the State can exempt buildings and improvements from tax in these Districts, it can extend the same privilege to the voters in every county, city or other district in the State by simple statute and without need for a constitutional amendment as was thought."

Mr. Rupert Mason's reading of the situation as now established by the decision of the Supreme Court is extremely important. One recalls the intense campaigns in California to secure constitutional amendment so as to legalise land value taxation, fought at great disadvantage against the well-entrenched and politically unscrupulous landed interests. The Supreme Court's decision marks a tremendous victory if the agitation can now take the direct

road to the enactment of State laws empowering all local governing authorities to alter their tax methods as the Irrigation Districts have done.

AUSTRALIAN MARKETING BOARDS

Examples of the indefatigable work of Mr. A. G. Huie, of Sydney, are his numerous "Letters to the Editor" published in various New South Wales papers, including the *Goulburn Post*, the *Narrandera Argus*, the *Moree Champion*, the *Moss Vale Scrutineer* and others. They deal with a variety of subjects, such as Post-war Planning, the tariff as it affects primary industries, the wages tax, trends toward a servile State, obstacles to housing, and the Federal Government's plans for increased powers of control over trade and industry. Last named was submitted to a referendum of the people of Australia and was, thankfully, defeated. In one of his letters Mr. Huie asked: Are the primary industries to be harassed with a host of Federal boards, countless restrictions and regulations indefinitely? And he gives particulars of some of the existing Boards, of which there are 121, including 62 Pastures Protection Boards and 41 Committees. Consider the losses incurred: The Egg Board cost £12,099 in 1941-42, Rice Marketing Board £3,092, Rural Construction Board £76,752, State Mines Control Board £158,601, Public Service Board £285,000, Maritime Services Board £636,885, Board of Tick Control £174,069 (this is incomplete, its cost being more), Pastures Protection Boards £125,000, State Superannuation Board £13,103. For Australia these are very large figures indeed. Mr. Huie, demanding also to know what has been the cost, for example, of running the Apple and Pear Boards, asks whether the people stand for the extension of the rule of "planners" and bureaucrats? The referendum has replied in the negative.

NEW ZEALAND LAND VALUE RATING

We have received copies of *An Open Letter to the N.Z. Municipal Conference*, published as a 20-pp. pamphlet by the N.Z. League for the Taxation of Land Values, 324 Bank Chambers, Lambton Quay, Wellington. This describes the progress made in the adoption of land value rating for local taxation purposes, 223 local governing authorities having applied that system. It is a powerful answer to those who suggest that local rates for the support of hospitals should be abolished, and that this service be a charge on wages, salaries and income; in effect, making a gift of land values to private interests. Price of this informing statement, available from our offices, is 1s. 6d. per copy.

At the Glasgow Parliamentary Debating Association on 9th November, Mr. C. E. Collier was successful in carrying without division a resolution that the next Budget should provide for a national tax on land values and that there be provision also for the local rating of land values in place of the present system of local taxation.