

# Beating High Living Costs

An enterprising advertising and sales consultant, Ray Giles, has just published a book, "How to Beat the High Cost of Living." He offers "864 practical money savers."

Obviously, no matter how well his ideas may work at the moment, if too many people buy his book it will turn out to be a fraud, just as horse-meat turned out to be as a beef substitute—too many impoverished French families decided to economize by eating the flesh of worked out nags instead of stringy cattle. They bid the price out of the reach of many.

Mr. Giles is to be commended for giving a moment's thought to the hordes of folk being pinched between wage levels and living costs. But if he wants to rise above the ranks of the home economists who, by regimenting menus, showed how a family of five could live on local doles—and almost wasted off the few humanitarians who tried it—he ought to search behind the headlines which inspired him to write.

That milk prices, house rents, food, heating oil, gasoline and coat and suit prices are up is painfully true

and he might have added many more. But the drama of the rise is not in the result but in the cause.

Take milk prices. Behind them he would find, among other things: The distributors' monopolistic combination. State milk control experiments. An extortionate rise in business and other taxation on farmers, distributors and processors.

Railroad rates inflated to pay rent charges in the name of interest on watered securities capitalizing the value of the franchise and the monopolistic agreements into which carriers enter, and to cover the costs of the inefficiency which is the result of the whole business. Tariffs on cheese and other milk products and on substitutes. Exactions levied by patent and other industrial monopolists on users of farm implements. Federal crop control and farm aid schemes.

And—most interesting of all—the quasi-monopoly of urban land which inflates with monopoly rent the value of grazing and crop land in the proximity of our population centers and which tacks a needless transportation charge on the products of

more remote areas thus pressed into use. And the quasi-monopoly of agricultural land which adds its own dose of monopoly rent while denying more than half the rural population the right to obtain possession of soil on which cattle might transform fodder into milk.

Even these suggestions do not exhaust the drama of the subject. A look at the market would show an unstable demand for this necessity with, behind the instability, harrowing pictures of under-nourished children of industrial and agricultural workers, denied this food by the rising price and by falling real wages.

Indeed, if he continued on, seeking why prices rise and real wages fall and how this might be reversed, he would find himself pacing the trail blazed more than three-score years ago by that famous economist who himself knew the agony of the husband and father whose suffering wife and new-born babe must starve before his eyes for lack of milk.

—W. L.

See: "Protection or Free Trade," pp. 60—68; 71—72; 267—268.  
"Condition of Labor," pp. 13—14 ff.