

Why Fight for Our Daily Bread?

Is making one's living in a monopolized world the burning question of today? Who can doubt it, as mass unemployment grows from the 12,000,000 jobless that the Biggers committee counted last Winter toward—or beyond—the 18,000,000 mark set at the bottom of the greatest depression of modern times in 1932? Who can doubt it as employers more and more find themselves faced with the ghastly fact of insolvency, brought about by forces beyond their control?

But that it is the existence of monopoly in the civilized world, and particularly land monopoly, which makes making one's living in it the burning question of today still needs to be pressed upon the consciousness of the literate masses, for if most persons do not doubt it, in the present state of sentiment upon the issue, it is because the idea has never occurred to them at all.

Louis Wallis, the sociologist, author of "God and the Social Process" and "Safeguard Productive Capital," makes a significant contribution toward popular understanding of the issue in his new book, "Burning Question" (Willett Clark & Co., 35 East 20th St., New York, 75 cents).

Mr. Wallis succeeds in making clear to the casual reader, and in making interesting at the same time, the theory of land monopoly and the theory of social land value taxation as a social instrument for attacking industrial monopoly and abolishing land monopoly by presenting a series of concrete social situations which illustrate that theory.

He opens with the slum problem and shows how the forces bred by dark tenements undermine the public health and the welfare of the nation. He establishes that the problem occurs from the co-existence of speculative land values and over-taxed buildings and that the failure of the current slum-clearance move-

ment to seek the transfer of taxation from improvements to the rental value of land foredooms its efforts.

"The slum question," he points out, "is part and parcel of the larger, comprehensive economic problem. It cannot be dealt with as an isolated thing."

The larger problem, he shows, is that of land speculation as a force making for successive business depressions and as a force making for the destruction of the natural and human resources upon which depend the living standards not only of the present generation but its heirs for many generations.

Current social unrest, Mr. Wallis sets forth, can be traced to the pressures generated within the economy by the presence of monopoly exactions of an appalling size levied by landowners, of staggering taxes on productive industry, and of a large tax premium for non-production, land

gambling. He traces this anomaly back in history to pre-capitalist times, to show that it represents a compromise between producers and non-producers, a compromise which he finds is no longer workable.

"The liberation of productive enterprise from the grip of land monopoly is indispensable to democratic progress," he warns in conclusion.

Mr. Wallis' colorful book, written with the fluency that distinguishes his style, is achieving wide distribution in important strata of public opinion's makers. For this alone, land and tax policy reformers are further indebted to its author. The book also will be useful in making clear to students of economic policy the concrete applications of that theory and in interesting workmen, business and professional men and civic workers in the practical possibilities of the theory.

—W. L.