

'Monopoly' vs. 'Anti-Monopoly'

Parker Brothers, the owners and distributors of "Monopoly," is locked in a legal battle with a professor who is distributing a game called "Anti-Monopoly."

Although many adults spurn the game, calling it "Monotony," Parker has made a fortune with the familiar land-use game that, with a role of the dice, can land you on lucrative or costly territory or send you to jail.

While he's not likely to be incarcerated nor will he threaten the freedom of Parker executives, now the minions of General Mills, Inc., Ralph Anspach, an economics professor at San Francisco State University, is countersuing Parker for his freedom to distribute his own version of the monopolist struggle. Fittingly called "Anti-Monopoly," the professor's game names the squares on the board for fictitious corporations that sound familiar.

In the fashion of our time, the professor's appeal is to government as the agency for relief rather than the more effective freer market discipline. Rather than attack the cause of monopoly, he allows players to hit at its manifestations. By propitious roll of the dice, players gain the opportunity to bring anti-trust suits against the giants and collect damages. The one who amasses the largest number of these "social credits" is declared the winner.

The striking similarity of the professor's "anti" game with the one of the same positive name, prompted General Mills via its subsidiary Parker Brothers to appeal to the courts to stop this com-

petition. At this point, the professor can give himself a handful of "social credits" because the court refused to give Parker an injunction halting the sale of "Anti-Monopoly." On his part, Prof. Anspach is charging Parker with monopolistic practices. Parker claims it has a monopoly on "Monopoly" because they bought the patent from Clarence B. Darrow, who claimed to have invented it in 1935.

"Not true," says the professor. Mr. Darrow, an unemployed engineer at the time, appropriated the game from the public domain, the professor asserts. According to a copyrighted story in the Wall Street Journal, the professor's attorney charges that Parker built up the strength of the trademark "Monopoly" behind a patent they knew to be fraudulent.

The professor seeks to back his claim by suggesting that Mr. Darrow learned the game from people in Atlantic City who had been taught it by Ruth Hoskins, a teacher at the Friends School. Ms. Hoskins it seems got her instruction from those who played a game called "The Landlord Game," a favorite pastime on campuses around the turn of the century. This progenitor of "Monopoly" seems to have been "built around the single tax-theory of Henry George," so the story goes.

The professor and his attorney are most eager to learn more about this early version of land-use simulation. If you have any information about or relics of The Landlord Game, the School and the editors of the NEWS would like to hear about it.