

# LABOR'S CHALLENGE TO THE SOCIAL ORDER

*DEMOCRACY ITS OWN CRITIC  
AND EDUCATOR*

BY

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“What is pent up in everybody?” Here is the crisis with its trail of experience centuries old. Even Rousseau said civilization began when men first put fences about their land. To the common good, they have taken down many of these barriers but only to erect and preserve them about other kinds of property. Whenever it is believed that the chief individual and social values depend on clearly definable ownership, “what is pent up in everybody” asserts itself. Nowhere is this better seen than in the agitations to revise their first utopian laws, so that these personal vigors may be expressed.

If differences in education and ordinary refinements among members were too marked, the result was a bluntness of personal criticism very trying to most men and women. In that most faithful account of frontier life, “The New Purchase,” Mr. Hall who became the first Professor of what is now the University of Indiana, tells us what happened to them because of a “worked screen.” “Powerful proud doing of stuck-up folks” was the comment on those who wanted some privacy or in any way to be screened. The author says (p. 81): “And I am sorry to say that in the ‘Purchase’ as in some other places, such opinion is found similarly expressed about extra cleanliness, decency, modesty, learning and the like, if these things exceed your neighbor’s they subject you to suspicion, often to dislike and not infrequently to rancorous persecution,—scorn, envy, hatred, are felt for your real or supposed excellencies and acted out at the first opportunities.” This long Icarian history is full of changes to escape these troubles but most significant of all are the changes which recognize the necessity of control over one’s earnings.

Thus new rules were finally made against members “absenting themselves from labor” and then the majority decide “that those who would not work should not eat.”