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EDITORIAL

## AMENDMENT III.

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**T**HE third of the amendments to the constitution, adopted by the I.W.W. convention, and here to be considered, abolishes the office of President. At each session the General Executive Board will choose its presiding officer, and the national conventions will do likewise. Many an organization of labor is built upon the same law.

In the language of Delegate Pinkerton of the transportation workers, “if we have not funds enough to support a King, we should keep our funds to support ourselves.” The convention abolished the presidency as a costly luxury—many also thought as a harmful luxury. It is due to this latter opinion—the opinion that the presidency was harmful—that the amendment, otherwise of no vital significance, assumes importance. Its importance lies, not so much in the change it works, as in the danger there lies in the belief that, the presidency being abolished, the wrongs it did are thereby wholly abolished. The convention had no choice but to decapitate the presidency, and to do so with despatch. The Augean stable, that centered and was incrustated around the incumbent President, had to be cleaned out, and the cleaning-out could abide no delay, lest the organization went under. In the cleaning-out process the presidency had to go. The importance of the move lies in the need of perfect clearness concerning the source from which all presidency draws its nourishment, for good or for evil.

The ridiculously violent agitation against free masonry, that broke out in the days of Daniel Webster, caused that witty statesman to observe that, to him, nothing was more ridiculous than free masonry, unless it was anti-free masonry. With equal appropriateness may it be said that nothing is more ridiculous than to get into a passion in favor of a President, unless it be to get into a passion for his abolition. “Wherever McGregor sits there is the head.” “McGregor” is not necessarily

a person; “McGregor” may be a principle: he usually is. The point, together with all that thereby hangs, may be illustrated with the case of the deposed and abolished officers and offices; and the illustration can now be made more pointedly than it was made even in the convention, seeing that things have since happened which had not yet happened during the convention.

It was clear during this year’s convention, it is infinitely clearer now, that, no sooner did last year’s convention adjourn than an alliance was perfected between the Gompers-Mitchell Civic Federation and the pure and simple politician element in the Socialist party to hamstring the new organization. Representatives of the allied forces had figured in the convention of 1905. Guided by instinct, though, probably, as yet acting without concert, they wormed their ways into the convention of 1905, and there indulged their machinations. They had come confident of success, yet not without some misgivings. Before the convention was well under way they realized the existence of a force that they had not counted with. When the convention adjourned these elements were wiser, but sadder men. Do what they could to prevent it, they were thrust aside with deserved ignominy, and an organization was set on foot that marked a new era in the Labor Movement of the land—the organization was even unique in the International Movement—it planted the economic organization of Labor upon a new footing, constructed it according to a system not yet put into practice, and established its connection with and at the same time its true relation to the political Movement. The theory of the new organization was, first, the ECONOMIC UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS; second, the PRE-EMINENCE OF THE ECONOMIC OVER THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT; third, the essential role of the economic to REFLECT THE TRUE POLITICAL PARTY OF LABOR and to furnish the machinery or the Might wherewith TO ENFORCE THE FIAT OF THE BALLOT, or, be it, TO TAKE AND HOLD THE REINS OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION. The theory, incarnated in the new organization, was the first application in the International Movement of the Marxian doctrine that “only the Trades Union is capable of setting on foot a true political party of Labor.” Thus proudly arose the I.W.W. in the only country in which it could rise—America. It implied the revolutionizing of the system of Unionism; it implied the revolutionizing

of the political Socialism of the land. Such a body spelled “Revolution” at every inch. The capitalist press denounced it in chorus; craft Union leaders spewed upon it their venom; and the pure and simple political Socialist{s} cast off the mask of “neutrality” and came out as unscrupulous bruisers for the A.F. of L. One touch of nature made all the three elements kin. The evidence, of the three having worked together to annihilate the I.W.W., by throttling the spirit it had kindled and the principle which animated it, is ample, circumstantial and convincing. How did they go about their work? By playing upon a majority of the General Executive Board. What the McCabes, the Kirkpatricks, the Cronins and the Mahoneys did is now a matter of history. Their heads were drawn together. The industrial feature of the organization was to be cast off; labor economics were to be suppressed; Mitchell and the A.F. of L. in general were to be left in peace. In short, a new A.F. of L. was to be set up, and the old corpse was to be rigged up in the new name of “I.W.W.” so as to lure dupes into it. It goes without saying that graft of rank proportions forthwith flourished. It can not now be denied that Sherman, the ex-President, was likewise operated upon and yielded readily to the operation. The point of importance is this—suppose there had been no President, would matters have stood otherwise when the convention met? Not in the least, at least not substantially so. The “McGregor” among the members of the G.E.B. had become a reactionist, hence a corruptionist. As a consequence, President, or no President, Reaction and Corruption would have presided anyhow. That the Presidency is comparatively a matter of little importance the issue of the convention proved. Though the “McGregor” among the G.E.B. was Reaction and Corruption, the “McGregor” among the rank and file being Revolution and Honesty, the latter triumphed. Had the “McGregor” of Revolution and Honesty pervaded the G.E.B., as it did the rank and file, the reactionary and corrupt President could have been squelched by the G.E.B. as effectively as the reactionary and corrupt G.E.B. was squelched by the rank and file in convention. In short—the safety of a Labor organization rests primarily in the principle that animates it; the style and name of the officers are matters of secondary consideration; these are but “finishing touches.”

The Socialist Republic, or Co-operative Commonwealth, is not likely to indulge in the puppet-show of “Presidents.” For reasons, infinitely more imperative than

those that to-day demand a presiding officer at meetings and conventions, at the critical time of the enforcement of the Revolution, one man with central authority will become indispensable—be his name, “President,” “General,” “Chairman,” or what-not. But there the matter ends. Amendment III. was not undertaken by the convention as a “finishing touch.” The convention had infinitely more practical work of immediate importance in hand. As explained above, Sherman, together with the majority of the G.E.B.{,} had to be removed in short order. Once about it, the office of the President might as well be abolished with its incumbent, and was so abolished.

Amendment III. is, accordingly, a move of immediate practical importance, besides an ultimate “finishing touch” that some future convention would undoubtedly have had to put upon the organic framework of the I.W.W.

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