

EDITORIAL

THAT CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE amendment to the Constitution proposed by the Senate on the subject of the Presidential term is this:

“The executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. The term of office of President shall be six years, and no person who has held this office by election, or discharged its powers or duties, or acted as President under the Constitution and laws in pursuance thereof shall be eligible to again hold the office by election.”

We shall leave to the dandies of style the idle pastime, which they have started to indulge, of criticizing the concordance of “to again hold the office” as a “split infinitive.” There is more serious matter in hand.

The object of the proposed amendment is not to prevent “second terms,”—tradition, consecrated by the action of Washington, speaks “second terms” free from blame, and even justifies the same.

Nor yet is the object of the proposed amendment to prevent “third terms,” with, or without, an intermediary term.

The issue was presented by the personality of Roosevelt. The real fear entertained by the “anti-third termists” was, as one of them expressed himself, that “if Roosevelt is re-elected he cannot be removed alive.” The object, accordingly, of the proposed amendment is to prevent a “perpetual term”; and in this, its actual purpose, the proposed amendment fails. By providing that a citizen, being elected to the office of President and having served his six years term, or having acted as President under the laws, shall not again be qualified to “hold the office by election”—by so providing, the door is actually left open for a perpetual President; and, what is drollest of all, the passage just quoted expressly provides how the door shall be left open for a life term.

“Under the Constitution and the laws in pursuance thereof,” in case of a vacancy in the presidency, the Vice-President succeeds to the office, and in case of a vacancy in both the presidency and vice-presidency, then a number of appointative officers, the Secretary of State at their head, stand in the line of successive succession.

Accordingly, an individual of the tribe Roosevelt having been duly vested with the executive power BY ELECTION, may, at the end of his six years term, contrive to allow the people to go through the forms of electing a new brace of President and Vice-President, who, upon being inaugurated, may appoint the gentleman of the Roosevelt tribe Secretary of State and immediately resign. The Secretary of State, coming into the office by APPOINTMENT, and not by ELECTION, could “hold the office”—and there is your President in perpetuity, obedient to the “Constitution, as amended, and laws in pursuance thereof.”

Roosevelt already tried to be succeeded by a dummy President. Moreover, dummy directors being a product of our “clever” bourgeois brains, a dummy President for a few hours would be nothing out of the way.

Is the Senate’s proposed amendment to the Constitution a symptom of the rattled state of the mind of our highest legislators? Or was the wording of the amendment chosen deliberately, with an eye to emergencies that the threatening times may bring about, and that may render desirable a “constitutional” Executive for an indefinite period?

In other words—

Are our national legislators worthless, even at their own trade?

Or are they actually past-masters in the chicanery of the Political State?

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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