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EDITORIAL

REVOLUTION DE FACTO.

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AN unprecedented blizzard that thwarted all the displayful plans for the inauguration ceremonies at Washington immediately resulted in a crop of proposed amendments to the Constitution, looking to the prevention of similar disappointments in the future to revellers in ostentation and parade. While this strain for “improvement” is pulsating strongly, the Constitution is being deliberately violated and thereby amended in a vital respect and in unconstitutional manner, and yet not a whisper is heard in opposition.

The Constitution provides that “all bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives.” There was, there is a reason for this. The conformation of the Senate is essentially undemocratic. Its history; the reason for its existence; the length, aye, the continuity of its life—all combine to remove the Senate from close contact with the people. For these reasons that body was not held the proper one to be vested with the power to originate bills for raising revenue. The power was vested deliberately in the House, the branch of two short years’ life, hence presumably in direct touch with and directly amenable to the tax payer, from whose pockets the revenue was to come. Of course, the Senate being a part of Congress, the legislative body, it was given a say in such matters. While vesting in the House the power to originate revenue bills, the Constitution allowed the Senate “to propose or concur with amendments” on these, “as on other bills.” Obviously, the act of “amending” by wholly recasting is another thing. It is this very thing that the Senate is now doing with the Tariff Bill.

The House, where such a bill must originate, has not yet passed the new tariff bill. It is discussing the schedules. How the bill will come out of the House no one does, or can know. This notwithstanding, with no bill passed by the House and now before it for consideration and possible “amendment,” the Senate Finance

Committee is holding sessions, giving private hearings to representatives of private interests, and drafting a new bill, which Standard Oil father-in-law, Senator Aldrich of Rhode Island, calmly, coolly, yet most revolutionarily, announces “will be ready by the time the House passed its bill.”

In form the Constitution exists; in essence it exists no longer. Whatever is unessential about it is revered with the suspicious reverence that bigots, who violate every law divine and human, ever bestow upon the outside of the platter. An amendment of so unessential a thing as Inauguration Day is to be gone about reverently in constitutional manner. An amendment that centers legislative power in the few members of a committee of one branch of Congress—and that branch the Senate—upon so vital a thing as the raising of revenue, and which thereby effects a revolution—such an amendment is adopted de facto, by practice, rough-shoddedly.

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