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EDITORIAL

## AMENDMENT V.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE amendment here under consideration is the 16th on the list published by the Second Bulletin of *The Industrial Worker*. It concerns the provisions for a referendum vote of the membership. Much that is essential to the consideration of the subject, and that serves as introductory thereto, was treated last week under the head of "Amendment IV.," which provides for a stenographic report of the transactions of the conventions, and thereby furnishes the membership with the information required for an intelligent vote. The acquisition of information being provided for, the subject of the referendum can now be handled.

As stated last week, representative Government is the inevitable result of mass-constituencies. The Labor Movement implies a mass-constituency. The interests at stake are not those of a few, who can meet in a back-parlor or hall, and there decide; the interests at stake concern millions, they can not themselves meet in committee of the whole, they must delegate their powers to others, few enough to meet and deliberate. The danger of such a state of things is obvious. Representatives may take the bit between their teeth and run off. There is but one preventive of the danger—the referendum. The former constitution was meager, even defective upon this head. It provided a referendum only for the election of two national officers. Amendment V. provides a referendum on all the acts of the convention, and provides also for the procedure in detail. The opportunity, between convention and convention, to ascertain the will of the membership is thus guaranteed.

Amendment V., does not end with that. It contains a declaration of weight. It pronounces the conventions of the I.W.W. the supreme legislative power of the body. Without this declaration both referendum and conventions would be farces. If the acts of a convention are law without appeal, then the danger above referred to

would be imminent; if, on the other hand, the acts of a convention are null until ratified, then the I.W.W. conventions would be essentially A.F. of L. annual gatherings—pow-wows and junketing meetings of irresponsible men. An organization that annually meets in convention sends its delegates instructed. To leave the action of such delegates wholly in the air until subsequently ratified would practically amount to strapping the organization for nearly two years down to statutes which its membership rejects. The convention took the middle course. Aware of a militant constituency that is active enough to look into matters, clearheaded enough to express its wishes, and determined enough to see its wishes enacted with the least possible delay, the convention held the position that its enactments were of legal force subject, however, to the veto of the membership. This was the position taken by last year's convention; this is the position taken, confirmed and solidified by the convention of this year.

That the position is correct events have proven. Any other position, taken last year, would have meant immediate dissolution, to the delight of the A.F. of L. agencies which appeared in that convention. The position taken last year thwarted the purposes of those A.F. of L. agencies; it left on foot a fact, an ORGANIZED FACT. Any other position, taken this year, would have given the same agencies, all of which conspired to defer the convention, an extension of time to bankrupt the I.W.W. and lead it back and down into the swamp of pure and simple craftism. The position taken this year supplements that taken last year—it left the organized fact of last year so well buttressed that all further efforts against it will be dashed for good and all.

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

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