

state prescribes that each bill shall be read three times, then the rule of procedure can provide that a referendum vote can be demanded after the second reading and passage.

He prefers the four readings, with the popular vote between third and fourth, in all cases where constitutional obstacles do not exist, as likely to be less difficult in practice. For American legislatures have become so accustomed to making the third reading of bills the occasion for debate, amendment, etc., that the shifting of debate and amendment to second reading might not be easy to accomplish.

That is probably true. But the theory of the custom of first, second and third readings of bills is that at its second reading a bill shall be debated, amended and otherwise put into final shape for passage or rejection. The habit of leaving the real consideration of bills to third reading is an outgrowth of bossism. That being the final reading, bad bills slip through more easily, they escape organized opposition more readily, if a debate at second reading has not aroused public hostility. But inasmuch as this is now the custom very generally, Mr. Shibley's plan of a fourth reading, with the popular vote between third and fourth, wherever permissible under the constitution, probably adopts the line of least resistance.

Besides the rules with reference to the Referendum, rules of similar character are proposed with reference to the Initiative.

This Winnetka plan of securing the advantages of direct legislation without waiting for legislation, has special merit. It can, for one thing, be easily made the subject of effective non-partisan organization. For another, if the organization were to become influential it would completely effect its purpose. Meanwhile, here and there locally, the purpose would be effected even though balked and delayed in the larger governmental divisions. Moreover, the plan has been for years in actual and effective operation at Winnetka. Finally, it contemplates a spontaneous command from the people as to public servants, not a petition from them as to public masters.

Some one has complained of party government that—

old constitutions bind the people, old platforms fetter the parties, and men who feel and think alike are as helpless to concert plans of escape as prisoners mewed up in separate cells. Not their own disagreements, but the dead fabric built by brains and hands long ago crumbled to dust, holds them apart.

A means of escape from that coercion appears to be offered by this Winnetka system of non-partisan organization.

NEWS

No reports have appeared this week regarding the referendum vote of the Amalgamated association on propositions for settling the steel strike, which the press dispatches freely published last week, and of which we gave the substance at page 329. There, is, indeed, no definite news of the strike this week, although reports are abroad as we write (Sept. 5) that the trust has offered terms of settlement which Mr. Shaffer has rejected. The basis for these reports is the fact of a conference held on the 4th. It met in New York and was attended by Samuel Gompers, president of the Federation of Labor; John Mitchell, president of the Mine Workers; R. M. Easley, secretary of the National Civic Federation; Harry White, secretary of the garment workers; Prof. J. W. Jenks, of the United States Industrial Commission; Charles M. Schwab, president of the steel trust; W. E. Corey, president of the Carnegie company; V. Preston, ex-president of the sheet steel trust; D. G. Reed, president of the tin plate trust, and William Edenborn, vice president of the steel and wire trust. According to the reports it was agreed by the trust representatives at this conference that the trust would settle the strike, if the labor organization would order all strikers to resume work at 6:30 a. m. of the 4th, upon the following terms: That all mills, whether union or nonunion, which have continued in operation during the strike, or, after being closed in its earlier stages, have been put into operation since, shall be regarded as nonunion mills; while those plants which the strikers have succeeded in closing and keeping closed shall be recognized as union mills. The same reports, said to have emanated from

official sources, have it that upon being advised of this offer by Mr. Gompers and Mr. Mitchell, who used the long-distance telephone, President Shaffer, speaking from headquarters in Pittsburg, refused to accept. But Mr. Shaffer himself gave to the press the following contradiction, dated the 4th, at Pittsburg:

I have absolutely nothing to say about the reported New York conference. I did not know there was a conference until I was asked about it this afternoon and read about it in the evening papers. I do not know what propositions were made. The gentlemen who appear to be acting for us have no authority from me or the association to settle the strike. If they receive any proposition looking to a settlement and present it to me I shall be glad to present it before the executive board. I have not been in conference with any of the gentlemen. On the subject of the conference, Mr. Gompers, who participated, gave out this interview:

We met Mr. Schwab and other representatives of the steel corporation in conference this afternoon. We discussed the steel strike. As to whether any proposition was submitted to President Schwab and as to what discussion took place, or whether any decision was reached or not, are matters regarding which we think that it would be best at present to keep silent.

Beyond this, there is no strike news.

The South American troubles also are at a standstill. Fighting between the revolutionary forces and the government, both in Venezuela and Colombia, is reported; but war between the two countries has not yet been declared. On the 3d the American state department informally divulged the substance of a communication, the text of which is as yet withheld, which had been sent on the 24th to the American ministers to Venezuela and Colombia. It directs them respectively to make a tender of President McKinley's kindly offices for an adjustment of differences, and to warn these governments against any action on the part of either which may menace the security of transit across the Isthmus.

From the Philippines the meager news that filters through the American censorship at Manila, is not reassuring as to the pacification of these new possessions. When last we referred to the Philippine situation (p. 250), the press dispatches were telling of the abrogation of civil government in the islands of Cebu and Bahol and