

and public articulation, of the most intensive and extensive examination of the Constitution of 1867 that has ever occurred before or since. Every section of the proposed constitution was discussed in detail and compared minutely with the Constitution of 1867. The *Debates* therefore represent not only a revealing picture of modern constitution making, but they provide a remarkably revealing analysis of the constitution that governs Maryland to this day. In 3,452 pages of closely spaced type, delegates of various political affiliations, representing diverse backgrounds and interests, debated the entire gamut of constitutional issues.

As rich as the *Debates* are as a source of information on Maryland's constitution, they are not without limitations. The fact that the delegates were aware, and frequently reminded, that their words were being recorded and transcribed verbatim meant that much was left unsaid in the convention. Many of the most sensitive issues were resolved in conferences off the floor. And, as is the case with the General Assembly today, much substantive work was done in committee, with only the consensus view being aired in the public forum. The *Debates* can, therefore, give an incomplete or inaccurate representation of the relative importance of items discussed by convention members. The oath to be taken by officeholders, for example, specifically whether the phrase "In the presence of Almighty God" should be relegated to an optional requirement appearing in parenthesis or eliminated from the constitution entirely, was discussed on four separate occasions and the delegates' remarks occupy twenty pages in the *Debates*. The vital and technical question of how state funds should be audited, on the other hand, was dispatched quickly on one day in the convention, with discussion of the issue covering fewer than five pages in the printed *Debates*.

And, as is typical of such deliberative proceedings, debate in the Constitutional Convention of 1967-1968 often concentrated on topics of current interest or propositions put forward by proponents of special interests rather than on the eternal verities popularly associated with constitutions. The expressed goal of the Constitutional Convention, as outlined by the Constitutional Convention Commission, was to draft a short, concise statement of the fundamental principles of government.⁸ But this object frequently came into conflict with the desire of delegates to enshrine in the constitution their own favorite proposal for solving specific social and economic ills or propositions near to the hearts of the voters back home. Heated debate centered around a proposal to include in the new constitution a provision that the General Assembly should provide by law "for the conservation, enhancement, improvement, and protection of the natural environment, natural resources, and natural beauty of the State."⁹ Correctly noting that "resources in 1867 were in man's way,"¹⁰ proponents of the provision turned aside critics who argued that subjective concepts like "natural beauty" were unfit for constitutional status and succeeded in having the mandate added to the document. Consumer rights proved even more devisive, but again those who argued that such concerns were statutory rather than constitutional failed to convince the majority, who believed that the new con-

⁸ For the drafting principles followed by the Constitutional Convention Commission, see *Report of the Constitutional Convention Commission*, pp. 6-7.

⁹ Section 9.06, in *Constitution of Maryland as Adopted by the Convention* (Annapolis: Constitutional Convention of Maryland, 1968), p. 44.

¹⁰ Del. Elroy G. Boyer, *Debates*, p. 735.