

Mr. Jones, of Somerset, presumed that the gentleman from Prince George's (Mr. Marbury) desired to have the opinion of the judiciary committee on the only restriction or instructions imposed upon the Convention—that respecting compensation by the State for emancipated slaves. It has been avowed that, despite the clause in the Convention act forbidding any measure for such compensation, the hidden purpose of the call was to disregard that injunction, and so to violate the very terms of the act under which the Convention was called. He had never doubted that it was the purpose of gentlemen occupying seats in the Convention, under the provisions of the bill, faithfully to carry out the restrictions of the act. It was the very general sentiment of the State that we should not tax ourselves to pay for property which was taken for what was considered a great public end, affecting the interests of the whole Union—in fact taken, as all knew, by the Federal government, directly or indirectly. The sense of the State on the subject was expressed by the Legislature at its last session. We ought not now, ourselves, to assume a debt which fairly belongs to the United States, and which would be paid by the United States whenever a returning sense of justice should prevail.

Mr. Ritchie said that whatever might be his practical action on the subject of compensation, should it arise, he had, as a lawyer, no hesitation in expressing the opinion that the Convention represented the people of the State in their sovereign capacity, and could not be bound by the action of the Legislature.

Mr. Jones said that the question of the call of a Convention having been submitted to the people with that restriction, the law as passed by the popular suffrage was the charter of the powers of the Convention.

Mr. Nicolai, of Baltimore county, offered a substitute looking to the incorporation into the constitution of a provision forbidding the passage of any law providing for compensation for emancipated slaves, but subsequently withdrew it.

Mr. Marbury said the idea suggested by the gentleman had never entered his head until suggested by other gentlemen.