

for ten years, and they are in most instances made re-eligible to the same offices. If these most important, and truly responsible offices, can be held in accordance with the spirit and genius of the Government, for these respective terms. If their terms of service are not in conflict with this cardinal principle in the Bill of Rights, with the doctrine of frequent elections, and frequent accountability to the people, he would respectfully, but earnestly inquire, where is the fearful, the awful danger, to be apprehended from the election of Delegates, to the General Assembly, for the term of two years? He must be permitted to say, that these dangers existed alone in the excited imaginations of gentlemen. Your Senators in Congress, as well as in your State, hold their positions for six years, without exciting the slightest apprehension of danger; without alarming the fears of any one. Yet, gentlemen are startled, absolutely horrified, at the momentous consequences, which will befall the State, because, members of the House of Delegates, are not returned each and every year. They would have us believe, that the safety and perpetuity of our republican institutions were put in absolute peril, by this amendment, and that our dearest rights, and brightest hopes would be endangered by its adoption, by this House. Mr. P. said for his part, he had no such apprehensions. He had no doubt the morrow's sun would shine quite as bright, and the sky would be quite as clear, if this provision be incorporated upon the Constitution, as if rejected. Yea, sir, our political horizon will be much brightened, by its adoption, and this Convention, in his opinion, elevated in public estimation. The people not only expect it, but they will demand it at our hands.

The great question at issue, Mr. President, and the only one, entitled to the grave consideration of this enlightened Assembly is, does the public interest require annual sessions of the Legislature? Is the condition of the State such, as to demand the presence of the General Assembly, at the seat of Government once in twelve months? Will the prosperity, and happiness of the people of Maryland be promoted, by the return to annual sessions of the Legislature? These are questions which this Convention is called upon to decide, and it is to be hoped, their decision will result in the good of the Commonwealth.

Mr. P. said he would now call upon honorable gentlemen around him, to calmly and dispassionately examine these propositions, and he called upon them to show the necessity of this constant and ever accumulating amount of legislation.

The great questions connected with the internal improvement policy of the State are now settled, and he hoped once and forever. Your Chesapeake and Ohio canal has already reached Cumberland. The Baltimore and Ohio rail road was stretching rapidly across the Alleghanies, and ere long is destined to tap the Ohio river. Your Tidewater canal and your Susquehanna rail road are already finished, to say nothing of your Washington and Annapolis and Elkridge rail roads. These great internal improvement schemes which for the time had so paralyzed the energies of the people of Maryland and so signally embarrassed

the public treasury, require no further legislation. But it is to be hoped they will soon be in a condition to make at least partial returns for the vast amount of the public treasure which they have cost. These subjects were, therefore, he hoped, not again to be agitated in these halls.

The financial condition of the State, at one time, was such as to require annual sessions of the Legislature. But a few years since there was an annual accumulation of interest upon the public debt of from three to four hundred thousand dollars. The public credit was dishonored. The faith and honor of Maryland was a by-word in other and distant lands, and repudiation even in these halls stood unrebuked. These dark and damning clouds, Mr. President, have passed away once and forever. A brighter and more glorious sun has dawned upon the people of Maryland. Our public faith is fully redeemed, and we stand at all times ready to meet our engagements. Not only so, but we have some three or four hundred thousand dollars surplus annually, to apply to the extinguishment of the principal of the public debt. From this truthful statement, it is evident that the finances of the State do not require an annual supervision by the Legislature.

Where then, is the necessity of returning to annual sessions of the General Assembly? What is the nature and character of the great and almost entire amount of our legislation? Why, sir, mere local enactments for local and private purposes, and in many instances, at least, are of no public or even private utility.

It has been alleged that at the last session of the Legislature, it being the first under the biennial bill, that more than five hundred bills and resolutions had passed the General Assembly. Be it so; and not unfrequently the number under annual sessions had at least approximated this amount of legislation.

Mr. P. said, he had carefully examined the nature and character of those enactments about which gentlemen talk so much, and he had ascertained that out of this number, there was one hundred and fifty-five acts of incorporation. Nearly one third of the entire legislation of the last year was taken up by enactments of this sort. He had had some experience upon this branch of the public service, having in the Senate of Maryland, been a member of the committee on corporations, and he could testify to the amount of trouble and vexation occasioned by this species of legislation. These bills were always exceedingly lengthy, requiring much time for their consideration, both in committee and before the legislature. There was a committee in this body raised upon this subject, and he felt confident that that committee would provide by a Constitutional enactment, that the legislature hereafter should part forever with the power of passing these laws, and that the power should devolve elsewhere. This could be done even by the passage of a general law, defining the manner and conditions upon which companies could incorporate themselves.

Again, there was out of this number twenty-one laws passed to dissolve that most holy and solemn obligations of the marriage agreement,