

great interests that require so much legislation? Put the trade, commerce, and navigation of Baltimore, against the trade, commerce and navigation of New Orleans, and the scale would preponderate vastly in favor of the latter. If then legislation every two years was sufficient there, it certainly ought to be here. But go to the new States, that have adopted the biennial system, Iowa, Texas, and Arkansas. There, to say the least, enterprise is as vigorous as here, and from the very nature of circumstances they must require more legislation than we, yet they get along very well, and prosper under biennial sessions. Nearly all the recently formed State Constitutions contain the same feature, while not one State that has given it a trial has manifested a desire to go back to annual sessions. The present was the age of "progress," and biennial sessions had become one of its great marks. A few months since, and the State of Kentucky made fit part of her system; then the Indiana Convention, which has recently adjourned, adopted the same doctrine, and last in this great march of "progress," came the populous and powerful State of Ohio, whose Convention, though yet in session, has made biennial sessions a part of her organic law. He hoped that Maryland would be the last State to renounce this system, the very last in the language of Webster, to "tread backward."

Another argument was, that after the adoption of our new Constitution, "a thousand and one" questions would require legislation, in order to make our laws conform to the new system, and, therefore, we should return to annual sessions. He did not doubt that much additional legislation would be required, but for how long? Certainly only for a few years, until things became settled under the new system, and then it would cease. Now, because a necessity for additional laws would exist for a short time, was to him, [Mr. H.,] not a sufficient cause to justify a provision for annual sessions *all the time*.

He hoped the organic law, that the Convention was now framing, would last for ages, until in the course of "progress," it would be found unfit for the changed circumstances of a future people; therefore, he could not agree to incorporate a provision for annual sessions, which at most, would only be required one or two years. But for this extra amount of legislation, which would only be required for a short time, he was reminded by his colleague, that the sixth section of the present report, made ample provision by authorizing the legislature during the first two sessions under the new Constitution, to sit as long as they might think the public interests required. Those two sessions would afford sufficient time, to harmonize the laws with the new system, and fully answered that argument.

Another reason for annual sessions had been urged with great ability, by the gentleman from Charles county, (Mr. Merrick.) It was that frequent elections were the bulwarks of civil liberty—that a frequent recurrence to the people was a fundamental right that ought to be exercised, else their wishes would be disregarded and evil consequences ensue. He agreed that elections

should be frequent—but how frequent? That was the question, and there they differed. He asserted that every two years was frequent enough for the happiness and prosperity of the people. On the other side, it was argued that "frequent" means annual, and that once a year is the proper time.

The gentleman from Dorchester, had ably argued that once in two years was often enough; and he would ask, if all proper and useful legislation could not be had by biennial sessions, why the great States that lived under that system, did not abandon it?

Mr. H. referred not to those States which had recently adopted it, but to those that had tried it during a long course of years. In Arkansas, the biennial system was introduced in the year 1836; in North Carolina in the year 1836; in Delaware in the year 1832; in Missouri in the year 1820. If all the evils predicted by the gentleman from Charles county, were to flow from this system, why had not these States abandoned it long, long ago? Does not the fact that they still adhere to it, prove these evils a mere chimera, and that argument naught but the "baseless fabric of a vision?" The position was not only incorrect, but that system must operate well, else the States that adopted it, would not be among the most prosperous and flourishing in the Union.

By another argument, it had been said, that biennial sessions in this State, had caused bad legislation, and under that system business would necessarily have to be pushed and hurried through at the end of the session, without sufficient or even any examination.

But had not this also been the case, when the sessions were annual? Without experience himself, Mr. H. had heard from others, that this evil was caused, not by the want of time to transact all the business, but because at the beginning of the sessions, too much time had been spent over champagne at dinner, and over oyster suppers. Now, if gentlemen could show him, that under the old system, this same waste of time did not or would not exist, he would concede the argument; but the facts were too well known to expect any such an attempt. There was an abundance of time under the system, as it now existed in this State, to do all the legislation required; yet, if we must have more time, he would rather extend the sessions a little, than have them annual. He would now come to the argument of the other gentleman from Anne Arundel county, (Mr. Donaldson.) It was that the financial affairs of the State, could not be so well regulated, and fraud upon the Treasury so well prevented or exposed, by biennial, as by annual sessions of the Legislature. All agree, that so far there has been no reason to complain of the present system on that score. But if an annual investigation of the finances be necessary to prevent abuses, could it not be done without incurring the expense of a session of the Legislature? Such a thing was certainly possible, and now, while engaged in framing the organic law, is "the day, now's the hour," to provide remedies for defects complained of, and the evils that might arise under the present system. The committee