

would be realizing that idea of permanency, which Chief Justice Marshall said, should ever characterise such sacred instruments.

At present, the finances of our State were steadily and smoothly moving on to their consummation—the liquidation of the public debt long within the period contemplated, when that debt was contracted. We enjoy a clear sky and a stormless sea; but the aspect of things might change. Emergencies might arise, requiring the legislature to meet annually—war might be declared—a suspension of specie payments might take place. Having yet a debt of sixteen millions of dollars—the interest of which, had to be annually provided for, in this state of prosperity—how much more arduous would be the duty and more frequent the sessions of the legislature in any such disastrous event. Some sudden blight upon the prosperity of the State, such as a failure of crops, or other signal calamity, might fall upon the State which might imperatively require action upon the part of the legislature.

It was true, that, at present, we were paying off our public debt, and securing it by the sinking fund, even in anticipation of the terms of our contract, and by larger reductions than the exigencies of its present condition required.

He did not mean to intimate, that, in the present state of things, he would change one of the provisions by which this early blessing to our State, of freedom from debt, was being consummated. He hoped they all would be continued in their united influence, to bring about this glorious result.

But might not the emergency in any year arise which would demand a change of the system, perhaps a reduction of the taxes, and yet the faith of the State be preserved—nay, be the means of preserving it. An exigency of this kind or of any other kind might occur, demanding a session of the legislature, when it was inhibited by this clause in the Constitution, and where was the danger or the difficulty which could be apprehended? The legislature, the immediate representatives of the people, were to act on this subject—they best knew the wishes of the people, their wants and their views, and had the strongest motives of duty and interest, to execute them. You now confide that very power to the executive.

For one, he would never consent that the Governor exclusively ought or should exercise the power of calling the legislature together.

He was opposed to this mode of altering the Constitution by the legislature. He hoped there would be no such power given. He was opposed to giving the power to the legislature, of constantly tinkering with the Constitution. It has produced this piece of patch-work, to which gentlemen have referred. He preferred the Constitution should be altered at stated periods, by a Convention to be called in pursuance of a provision to be made in the Constitution, when a majority of the people so expressed their determination by their ballots.

This, he thought, should be the only means of changing it. As matters now stood, nearly one half of the time of the legislature was spent in

discussing propositions for changes of the Constitution, and the other half in the consideration of local laws. The result was, that these general laws of the State, which the liberties, interests and property of the people demanded, have been almost invariably overlooked, overshadowed and disregarded, to make way for petty acts of incorporation, and mere unimportant local laws. No stronger evidence of this truth was needed than the fact that, of the whole number of laws, passed at the last session of the legislature, (and to which the gentleman from Kent, Mr. CHAMBERS, had alluded,) about ten only were designed for the promotion of the general interests of the State. Last session, a new assessment law, which would have no doubt, from the increased wealth of the State, greatly enlarged the property to be taxed—bringing, in all probability, a large additional revenue into the Treasury, was laid over for want of time. Maryland was behind most of the States of the Union in her general legislation. The demand for a codification of our laws, is universal in this State, and yet it cannot be done. This general and important interest of the people at large, had been overlooked—whilst local matters and popular harangues, about alterations in the Constitution, by changing the times of their meeting, and whether the sessions of the legislature should be annual or biennial, occupied the time of the legislature. In this proposition of the gentleman from Queen Anne's, (Mr. Spencer,) he, [Mr. R.,] saw a prospect of diminishing the subjects of Constitutional discussion and amendment. Make no provision permanently in it at all, prescribing at what time, or how often the legislature should convene; leave that to the legislature itself, and place it within the control of the people, who can so change it from time to time, as suits their wants and wishes, and the exigencies of the State.

Another view of this matter, as suggested by the gentleman from Dorchester, (Mr. Hicks.) We should take care not to create a prejudice against this new Constitution. That gentleman had urged this view, as a reason why we should not, by the Constitution, make the sessions annual, after the vote of the people favorable to biennial sessions. This view is capable of another application. Do not cause those who favor annual sessions, to be able to make that objection to this Constitution. Nearly one-half of all who voted voted to retain annual sessions. Do you not run the risk of having this vote cast against a Constitution, having in it a provision for biennial sessions alone?

I believe (concluded Mr. R.) that if you place in the Constitution a provision making the sessions of the Legislature biennial, but at the same time leaving it to the people themselves to make them annual, if they should think proper to do so, you remove all objections on both sides, and to that extent increase the chances of the final ratification of the Constitution.

Mr. DIRICKSON said:

Regarded in any light, the principle of the amendment of the gentleman from Dorchester,