

amendment of the gentleman from Queen Anne. If it had been offered in a different form, as a separate provision, to be separately submitted to the people, and at a different time, he should have hesitated to oppose it, but as a part of the Constitution to be voted upon as an entirety, he could not go for it.

Mr. SPENCER was much surprised at the course of remarks made by the gentleman, (Mr. Ridgely,) from Baltimore county. What change was there in his proposition? And what in it, that the reform party of Maryland had ever opposed? Had they ever taken ground that it was dangerous to trust the Legislature with questions which were essential to the protection of the interests of the people? For what purpose was the Legislature created? Is it not intended to represent the people and to provide laws to promote their happiness, and to meet their necessities? The complaint of the reform party was, that the Legislature had heretofore failed to perform this duty. They would neither pass the necessary laws to reform the abuses of the Government, nor provide for a Convention, to enable the people to do it themselves. For years the people had invoked the Legislature to discharge their duty and to call a Convention. But it was for a long time in vain. The call was made—what reformer will venture to say that the Legislature is not to be trusted with a power, eminently protective of the rights of the people.

Mr. RIDGELY interposed. Under its existing basis, the Legislature would always be distrusted.

Mr. SPENCER replied that it was the basis which was distrusted and not the Legislature. Where did the gentleman from Baltimore county get his construction of the doctrine of the reform party? Now, he (Mr. S.) had always been identified with the reform party. If he had ever advocated a power in the Constitution to take away the rights of the people, then the gentleman might have taken exception to his course. Instead of doing this, his proposition enlarged the rights of the people. Was that anti-republican? If so, he would only say that he must have studied in the republican school in vain. He examined the construction put by the gentleman from Baltimore county on his amendment as authorising the Legislature to extend their sessions as they might see fit. The gentleman from Baltimore county said that no person acquainted with human nature would give this power to the Legislature, because he would know that the feelings of members would lead them to vacillate between annual, or alternate biennial and annual sessions. He could tell that gentleman, that any member who would take that course would commit political suicide.

Mr. RIDGELY said he had confined his views to the effect of the amendment. He intended nothing personal.

Mr. SPENCER did not suppose that there was any thing intended of a personal character. But his feelings were wounded when he heard a gentleman so respectable, as the gentleman from Baltimore, express himself so strongly with reference to his amendment. He then reiterated

what he had before said as to the fifty-ninth article.

Mr. BUCHANAN said:

He was heartily sick of the protracted discussion. He only desired to ask his friend from Queen Anne's, if he would modify his amendment so as to limit the duration of session to one half the time now occupied. Of the various arguments which had been made against annual sessions, he had never yet heard any man speak against them, either on the ground of their multiplying legislative business, or avoiding it. When the biennial bill was before the people, the discussion as to its propriety or impropriety turned, in a measure, on the question of finance. It was now brought forward as an argument against the annual system, that it led to so much legislation that the people would never return to it. That might serve for an argument, but it was his opinion that the people would prefer annual sessions, if they could have two annual sessions at no greater cost than one biennial session. This was the aim of his suggestion to his friend from Queen Anne's.

What had experience taught us? The expenses of a legislative session have been about \$56,000. He wished to divide this sum, so as to make it sufficient for two sessions, by reducing the duration of each session, one half. As much work could be done in thirty-five days, by an industrious legislature, as in twice that period by one of an opposite character. The people will be satisfied with annual sessions when they see the expenses so restricted, as that two of these sessions could be held at no greater expense than one biennial session.

Mr. SPENCER then (accepting the suggestion of Mr. BUCHANAN,) modified his amendment by adding the words, "which shall not continue in session longer than forty days."

The amendment as modified, read as follows:

"But the legislature shall have the right to provide by law, for annual elections of delegates to the General Assembly, and for annual sessions of the legislature, which shall not continue in session longer than forty days."

Mr. PHELPS would not have risen to say a word, but for what had fallen from the gentleman from Queen Anne's, as to the effect of the diminution of the term of the session.

Mr. SPENCER interposed and suggested, that, as he wished to have a full attendance when the vote on his amendment was taken, he would suggest to the gentleman from Dorchester, (Mr. Phelps,) to give way for a motion, that there be a call of the Convention. The gentleman could conclude his remarks after the call had been made.

Mr. PHELPS, acceding to the suggestion, yielded the floor.

Mr. SPENCER moved that there be a call of the Convention; and

It was ordered.

The roll was called.

On the motion of

Mr. SPENCER, the doorkeeper was sent to re-