

a reconsideration as often as the Convention might choose, whereas the amendment moved by Mr. Morton in the Massachusetts Convention, authorized a reconsideration once only.

Mr. McLANE replied that he did not object to that, but to the number required for reconsideration. The two rules were identical in that respect, and the present amendment was open to all the objections taken to the other. Mr. Webster, in speaking of the amendment moved by Mr. Morton, said that he "thought, of all the various positions which the occasion had elicited, that now before the Convention was the most extraordinary. It appeared to him to be in many respects objectionable. In the first place, what is meant by requiring as many votes to reconsider a motion, as were in favor of the original measure? Suppose the question were on the adoption of an amendment—a very small number, for example, five, might be in favor of it, and all the rest against it. Yet this case, by the proposed rule, the vote was necessarily to be reconsidered. The honorable gentleman had drawn his motion, as if affirmative votes only could be reconsidered and had made no provision at all for the reconsideration of negative votes. Again, according to this provision, a motion for reconsideration, might be made and discussed for a week; then put to the vote, and although carried affirmatively by a majority, have no effect, and be declared a nullity, because the majority was not large enough. He begged leave to dissent entirely and most widely from all such modes of proceeding. All rules respecting reconsideration, were intended and adopted for the purpose of ascertaining under what circumstances, and by whom a motion for reconsideration might be brought forward. But when once brought forward, it must of course, like all other motions, be decided by a majority. Nobody, he believed, ever before heard of a rule by which a motion to reconsider, when once regularly made, was not to be decided like other motions. It might well be doubted whether the Convention could prescribe any such rules—rules by which any thing, more than a majority of members, would be required for the decision of any question regularly before it."

Such was the language of Mr. Webster in the Massachusetts Convention, upon a question identical with that now under consideration. By making the change proposed, infinite confusion would result. It would be impossible to go back and reconsider, with no matter how strong motives, without rescinding the rule. It was tying up the hands of the Convention, and placing a matter once decided upon, beyond their reach. He did not question the evil effects of the rule as it now stood; but he disapproved of the remedy proposed. He would adopt Mr. Webster's suggestion, and re-enact the rule which was originally adopted by the Convention, rescinding the amendment by which a member voting in the minority was allowed to move to reconsider. He considered this one of the most important rules of the body; and especially important as it was their purpose and object to frame a Constitution to endure for many years unchanged; and not merely to legislate—their acts and the mischief-

ous effects resulting from them being capable of easy correction. He could not give the amendment his approbation.

Mr. BOWIE said, that it seemed to him that one of two things ought to be done; either to go back to the original rule which required that a member voting in the majority should move a reconsideration; or to adopt some such provision as that proposed by the gentleman from Kent. His own opinion was that the better way would be to adopt the original rule as reported by the committee on rules. He was not present when the motion was made by the gentleman from Frederick to amend the rules, by allowing a member who voted in the minority to move a reconsideration. If he had been present, he would have opposed it; foreseeing that it would lead to irreparable mischief. The whole evils which had occurred, grew entirely out of that rule. There was some restraint upon the power of reconsideration as long as it was confined to those voting in the majority; but the very moment any member was allowed, whether voting in the majority or in the minority, to move a reconsideration, all restriction was abandoned, and all the evils resulted, to which allusion had been made. What on one day was decided by a large majority of the members of the Convention, might be overthrown the next day by a mere minority.

He professed to be a reformer. He was as anxious as any gentleman in the Convention, to see great questions of reform carried in this body. He did not wish to see those measures jeopardized by a minority vote of the House. The effect of the rule as it stood was undoubtedly to allow a minority to undo what the majority had done. No matter how wholesome and judicious the law or regulation of reform might be, which should be adopted by the majority, if the friends of the reform would chance to be absent, on another day, the anti-reformers could repeal it. The Convention ought to be guarded and to take care not to allow any rule to place it in that position. This was the effect of the rule established upon the motion of the gentleman from Frederick; as it allowed a gentleman voting in the minority to move a reconsideration. It was not probable that a reconsideration could take place without sufficient grounds under the old rule; which was that prevailing in all deliberative bodies in all the States of the Union, everywhere, except in the Reform Convention of Maryland. He would undertake to say that there was no deliberative body upon the face of the globe, where such a rule had been adopted for a moment. Believing that the true plan was to go back to the original rule, he would propose as a substitute, if the gentleman from Kent, [Mr. Chambers,] would accept it, the following resolution:

"Resolved, That so much of the rule as allows a member voting in the minority to move a reconsideration of the question, shall be and the same is hereby rescinded."

Mr. JENIFER considered the question too simple to require a prolonged discussion. It was whether a minority should be allowed to adopt or reject measures which had previously been decided to the contrary by a larger vote. It had been