

change the votes of several counties. He would not be understood as intimating that the mover, or those who advocated the proposition, intended or expected any such result, but that this seemed to him the natural and probable result.

He should oppose the proposition of the gentleman from Charles. [Mr. Merrick,] because that proposition sought to make the Legislature elect the President of the Chesapeake and Ohio canal company indirectly, by declaring that the agent elected by joint ballot should be President. He believed it was not competent for the Legislature to do this. All that the Legislature could do was to select the agents, and these agents could elect the President and Directors, voting as they did, a majority of the stock.

He should, therefore, oppose all of the propositions submitted, and should vote to leave the whole subject in the power of the Legislature, which was competent to mould and shape the system to the exigencies of the State, the work and the will of the people.

Mr. HARBINE said he was favorable to the proposition of the gentleman from Frederick. [Mr. Thomas.] There were several objections urged against it, but he was unable to see much force in any of them. No plan could be perfect that had an imperfect man for its author, but it might be so near perfect as to subserve well the purposes for which it was intended. That was all that could reasonably be expected, and that he thought would be effected by the proposition under consideration. As to its political tendency or effect, it was a matter of regret to hear any allusions made. This ought not to be, nor did he think that this was a matter which the people of the State connected with politics; certain it was that he was the last person to introduce political considerations into this discussion. He would not, however, omit to say, that in his opinion, our public works would always be controlled, more or less, by the party in the ascendancy. If the whigs had a majority, they would favor men of their own party, and so with the democrats. With the present system, that was certainly the case, and so it would, no doubt, be with any other. But certainly the proposition now under discussion was framed without any reference to party considerations, and one less liable to that charge could not be produced. It provided for four districts, each to elect one commissioner. Now, judging from the past and present political complexion of those districts, the eastern shore and southern district would each elect a whig, while Baltimore and the western district would each elect a democrat. There then would be an equal representation of each party—a tie. It was proposed to give the casting vote to the treasurer, whom the committee on that department recommended should be elected by the joint vote of both Houses of the General Assembly. Should that report be approved, parties will have an equal chance of electing that officer—nay, he thought the whigs would have a little the best chance. Such being the fact, could any thing be more fair—less partizan—less liable to objection on that ground?

But why talk of the politics of these several districts, when no man could tell what the politics of any portion of the State would be five or ten years hence. There are elements now at work, which might totally annihilate the present political parties in a very short time. At the north and the south, in the east and the west, the great Union question was absorbing old parties and creating new ones. As yet we are but little affected, but who shall say how long it will be thus? The storm of a presidential campaign, now rapidly approaching, may produce a total change, and why then speak or think of political considerations?

The proposed plan gives Baltimore city one commissioner out of the four, or one-fourth of the power. This certainly does not enable her to injure any portion of our public works, should she desire to do so. Thus situated the most timid need not fear her power.

There would be less to apprehend from that city's influence, under the proposed system of electing these commissioners in separate districts by the people, than if they were elected by the Legislature, for by the latter mode, all kinds of log-rolling, jubilees and jollifications would be brought to bear, and Baltimore would be able to effect more in proportion to her representation, than any other portion of the State. By the system proposed, her influence can only effect a single district; beyond that it will not and cannot extend so as to produce results. He would sooner trust the people, so far as the power of that city was concerned, than the Legislature, for with them there was much less danger of corruption, and of subserving local or private purposes, so that so far as any fears might exist of the power of our commercial emporium, the plan he advocated was free from objection.

As to the argument that the salary proposed was too small, it was entirely without foundation, for the proposition fixed no salary. That matter was left to the Legislature, which had fixed the salary of the present State agents at one hundred dollars each, and no doubt would do justice to those we proposed to elect by the people. The language of the proposition was, "shall each receive a salary to be fixed by law, which salary shall not be increased or diminished during their continuance in office." Now, he contended that inasmuch as the Legislature had given but a small compensation in one case, they would not be likely to increase it much, should the proposition of the gentleman from Frederick (Mr. Thomas) be adopted. Nor did he think it any thing more than right and proper, as the Legislature were authorized to prescribe duties for these commissioners, and might make much or but little labor for them, that it should have the right to say what would be a fair remuneration. It was a sound principle, that any person employed should be paid in proportion to the amount of service rendered. Now, as those services depended upon the will of another body, and we did not know what it would require, how could we name a proper salary? Thus situated, it would be impossible for us to judge, and we would be very likely to make it too much or too