

of the whole State, and every part of it. In discharging the high duties for which he was here, he felt himself above political parties and prejudices; he was nominated and elected to this body against his well-known desire upon the subject.

His design, in seeking the appointment of commissioners of public works, was not merely to confer on them the powers confided to the State's agents, by the acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, authorising the State's agents to attend the meetings of the stockholders of all joint stock companies in which the State of Maryland was a stockholder, and to withhold their assent, if they deemed it expedient, to any reduction of tolls on the Chesapeake and Ohio canal company, but he designed to impose on these commissioners, duties far more numerous, complicated and laborious. In addition to the duties heretofore required to be performed by the State's agents, of attending the meetings of the stockholders of the joint stock in companies which the State was a stockholder, and voting thereon for president and directors of such companies; in the language of the proposition before us of the gentleman from Frederick, the commissioners were required to "exercise a diligent and faithful supervision on all public works, in which the State may be interested as stockholder or creditor, and perform such other duties as may be required by law," by which requirements, as he, (Mr. D.,) interpreted them, the commissioners were expected to inform themselves by personal inspection and examination, (as far as the interests and powers of the State would enable them to do so,) of all the works, receipts and expenditures of those companies, that they might ascertain whether, by the judicious, and faithful administration of the affairs of these companies, the interests of the State had been, and were about to be, properly provided for and promoted; to suggest and urge to the extent of their power such changes in the operations of the companies, the construction of such new works, or completion or discontinuance of old ones, the appointment of other and better engineers and officers, if occasion required it, the reduction or increase in the number of officers or agents in the service of the companies, or of their salaries or compensation, and in fact, the commissioners are to do every thing to the extent of their influence and authority, to carry out the designs of the legislature in the creation of those companies, and to secure and promote by all just and honorable means, the immense interest, pecuniary and otherwise, which the State has therein. Their duty will be, as far as in them lies, to make the public works, as they are not inaptly called, as profitable to the State of Maryland, as they consistently can be made; that it may realise those advantages, and that income which were so liberally promised and anticipated at the time the immense treasure of the State was so lavishly bestowed upon them.

Were these the same powers conferred, the same duties imposed by the legislature, on the State's agents, (whose duties and powers existing only by the legislative enactments, I have fully

and fairly stated,) that are now proposed to be attached to the commissioners whose creation is now sought to be provided for? No, sir. They bear no more comparison to each other than does a molehill to a mountain. And, yet, those who oppose the measure now under consideration, have in their arguments treated it, as a mere substitution of a new board of State's agents in the place of that now existing, and that the powers and duties of both boards were one and the same.

Such arguments resting wholly on an unfounded and erroneous assumption of facts as their basis cannot be supported by this Convention.

He, (Mr. D.,) sincerely regretted that the fair and liberal proposition of the gentleman from Frederick was regarded by the whigs of this body as a political device, resorted to by the opposite party, for partizan purposes, that they might turn out of office five whigs and put in their places five democrats, who would use at elections, their influence on the public works in securing the ascendancy of the democratic party in the State. Such a suspicion, in his opinion is wholly unwarranted; and is disproved by the manner in which the State, for the election of commissioners, has been divided into districts.

According to all past experience at elections, and the known condition of parties at this time, should a party election for commissioners be held, (which he sincerely hoped might never take place,) two of the districts would certainly elect whigs, and the other two democrats; and thus the purity of the board, from all improper political influences, would certainly be secured. In the event of an equal division of the commissioners, which from the nature of their duties, he did not anticipate, the treasurer of the State was made the umpire between them; and he, from the nature of his office and his incessant occupation in the discharge of its duties, would be so far withdrawn from the politics of the day, that should any question of party politics ever arise between the commissioners, which he could not expect from the nature of their duties, it cannot but be apprehended that his umpirage will impartially and justly adjust the controversy between them.

It has been urged that these controversies will be of frequent occurrence, and that on every such occasion the treasurer must be sent for and withdrawn from his office to attend the commissioners. None but an excited imagination could conjure up such an oppression. In nineteen cases out of twenty, if not ninety-nine out of a hundred, any differences in opinion amongst themselves would be settled by amicable compromise without invoking the interposition of the treasurer. And should an occasion require the umpirage of the treasurer, it can be made by him, on the written statements of the dissentient parties; and to do so, it will be rarely, if ever, necessary for him to leave his office. Of the truth and sincerity of the declaration of the gentleman from Frederick, [Mr. Thomas,] that, in the plan proposed by him for the appointment of commissioners, he had no party political designs, I have the most perfect confidence.