

inquest; and you bind it by its oath to support the constitution, to cause to be hunted up every child, and to bind it out if it can get anybody to accept the indentures. If not now, then eight or ten years hence, when the child shall have advanced in years, and shall have become able to take care of itself, and repay its decrepid parent some of the expense it has been, then you permit any one to come in and plunder that parent, who has thus reared the child during its years of infancy and dependence, of the succeeding years when it could be of some service, and you thus plunder the parent, without imposing any obligation whatever upon the master, during the years when the character of the child is to be formed, to teach it even so much as to know crooked from straight. That is the proposition before the convention. In all these cases, those who alone are to be benefited by the operation of this provision, are to judge for those who are to be despoiled by the operation. I do not say the individual; I mean the class. The class that is to be benefited, the very men who are interested in establishing the rule, are to judge that this, that, and the other is the proper form for enforcing this regulation.

Now I profess in all this to be actuated by but one principle. I do not recognize any special pledges as binding me to anything. I gave no pledges other than what are implied by my known regard for justice and for the obligations of right. But there are gentlemen in this convention who have given pledges, and I trust they will redeem them. I hold in my hand a resolution in these words:

*Resolved*, That the delegates to the constitutional convention, nominated by this convention, are hereby pledged to vote first, last, and all the time for the immediate abolition of slavery in Maryland, and against any system of apprenticeship to perpetuate its lingering existence in our midst, and against State compensation for slaves."

I suppose the gentlemen from Washington county who were elected on such a platform, are bound by its obligations, or they would not have been elected to come to this convention.

Mr. NEGLEY. Will the gentleman allow me a word?

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. Not now; I am nearly done. I say that upon this measure, as upon all others, I vote and act upon principle; from a sense of right and justice and not because I feel hampered or bound by any pledge. I am bound here and everywhere to do justice to my fellow-man, and to do right before God. And with that obligation resting upon me, I will not vote for any such atrocious measure as this, wholly depriving the parent of all rights over the child, and wholly depriving the child growing up to freedom hereafter of all right to receive at least the rudiments of an education.

Mr. NEGLEY. The gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stockbridge) has reference, I suppose, to myself. Now, sir, that resolution which he has read—

Mr. ECKER. I rise to a point of order. The gentlemen has already spoken twice.

Mr. NEGLEY. I rise to a personal explanation.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Daniell). The gentleman from Washington (Mr. Negley) is in order for the purpose of a personal explanation.

Mr. NEGLEY. I drew that resolution myself, and therefore it is to be presumed that I knew what I meant by it. The proposition offered by the gentleman from Caroline (Mr. Todd) in my judgment provides for no apprenticeship at all. It is making provision for the benefit of these poor, helpless and defenceless negroes, for a specified time. It has not the idea or the intention of an apprenticeship. Negro apprenticeship, as provided for in the West India Islands, is something entirely different from what this proposition contemplates. That is a species of slavery.

Mr. CUSHING. Will the gentleman allow me to ask him a question?

Mr. NEGLEY. I will vote for this proposition on the ground not of any benefit to anybody in particular except the negroes themselves. The laws in regard to the orphans' court now make provision for binding out poor defenceless white children. Is that slavery in the eye of the constitution, which we have abrogated? We have stricken the shackles from the slave, and this proposition contemplates a vastly different relation. It is not slavery in the least, any more than it is slavery for the orphans' court to bind out the child of a white person. What does this proposition say? "According to the rules and regulations now governing the orphans' court." It is not slavery any more than it is to bind out a white child. It is to prevent a great public calamity; it is for the benefit of the negro, and for the good of society.

I find upon examination that there ought to be some limitation to this proposition. I do not think the provisions of this section should be in operation more than a year. And I do not think the binding out should be without the consent of the parent first had and obtained, and when the proper time comes, I will offer an amendment to that effect.

Mr. PURNELL. I feel no disposition to prolong this discussion and should have contented myself with voting upon the proposition without adding a single remark, but for the remarks that have fallen from my worthy friend from Cecil (Mr. Pugh,) who was about as unfortunate in defining my position as he was in the interpretation of the law of the orphans' court yesterday; and I think that was fully answered by the gentleman from How-