

which the States have parted. The original draft of the Constitution which was made, and which was the form in which the Constitution stood until the whole Constitution was framed and agreed upon, was to this effect; "we, the people of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations"—and so on, until the thirteen States were named—"do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." Afterwards, inasmuch as it was decided by the Convention that the Constitution was to go into effect only as between the nine States which should ratify it, and as it was possible that the preamble might contain the names of some State or States that might not ratify it, the committee of revision thought it best to strike out the name of the individual States—which was the form in which it was first adopted by the Convention—and put in the common phrase "the people of the United States"; which has force as being equivalent to the phrase originally adopted, and of course means "the people of the several States."

And lastly I am opposed to the adoption of this article, because it tends to the theory of consolidation; and because I think the theory of consolidation is the one great curse which has visited this country. I had intended to argue against this consolidation theory upon the construction of the relative powers of the Confederation and of the Union, in order to show that the powers which are regarded commonly as the most sovereign, were the very powers which the Confederation had, and were powers which were common to both. The Confederation could exclusively declare war, make treaties of peace, coin money, regulate commercial intercourse, fix the standard of weights and measures, establish post-offices and roads, make treaties of alliance, raise armies and support navies, or consent to its being done by States, and make rules and regulations for the government of land and naval forces, etc., etc., as will appear more fully by reference to Nos. 38 and 40 of the Federalist. The powers in which the Confederation was restricted will show that it was no more restricted in reference to all that is called sovereign power than in the present Federal Government.

Mr. CHAMBERS. I perceive that the time allowed to the gentleman from Prince George's, (Mr. Belt), according to the rule, is nearly out. I move that the rule be suspended, in order to allow him more time.

The PRESIDENT. If there is no objection, the gentleman will be allowed to go on.

Mr. ABBOTT. I object to the suspension of the rule. I withdrew my amendment to the hour rule which we adopted yesterday, with the express understanding that the rule would be adhered to, and not suspended on any ground.

The question being taken upon the motion

to suspend the rule limiting speeches of members to one hour each, upon a division, it was agreed to—ayes 48, noes not counted.

Mr. BELT. I am greatly indebted to the Convention for a courtesy which I had no right to expect. I will not abuse the confidence which it reposes in me, because I shall hurry over my argument so as to finish now in a very few minutes.

I was stating my last reason for opposing the introduction of this article into our bill of rights and our Constitution. I am opposed to it because it favors that consolidation theory which, as a practical proposition, I am opposed to. My objection to consolidation arises even from the word itself. I am opposed to the idea of having one common government—for this best expresses the idea—for all our varying and conflicting interests; the having one Legislature to control and regulate the local interests of the several States and communities in this country, and which I contend can only exist and contribute to our highest happiness by the very last degree of disintegration into which legislative powers can be divided. In my opinion no system of consolidation in the world can properly and practically meet the wants of the people.

Still, I am free to say, and I mean it, that if you want a consolidated government in this country, you may try it, with my assent. Change the form of government, if you will; let it, for the time being, cease to be a government of States; let there be one political community; let there be created, what does not exist now, a consolidated government. That was one point I omitted a while ago, and to which I wish now to recur; the impossibility of sovereignty being conceded by these States to the Federal Government, because there was no body to receive it. We cannot say in our system that there is any body in which sovereignty resides. It is not in the crown, as in England; in this country it is in the people; that is its only location. The people of Maryland possess the sovereignty of the Government of Maryland. Upon the theory that Maryland ever parted with any portion of her sovereignty, to whom did she give it? Not to the Federal Government, for no government is sovereign, or can accept sovereignty, or can ever possess sovereignty. Maryland did not give it to "the people of the United States," because, in fact and in law, there is no such aggregate political community known as "the people of the United States."

I defy any man to put his finger on any power or any function exercised by the Government of the United States, through the direct agency of the people of the United States. The people of the United States do not, as such, elect their President. Who vote for President? The people in each State who are entitled, by the laws thereof, to vote