

I trust and believe, that such threats are confined to a very small class of our citizens. The intention of both the Constitution and the registry law, was simply, to protect the State against treason, and to show distrust of those who had been connected with it. Complaints have been made, that abuses have arisen in the execution of this law, and that qualified voters as well as others have been arbitrarily disfranchised, upon frivolous and irrelevant issues, growing out of mistaken views, of the purpose and meaning of that Act. I am sure that the Legislature designed no more, than that the provisions of the Constitution should be strictly complied with, without the remotest intention of interfering with any loyal citizen, entitled to the right of suffrage. The law, would have been less liable to abuse had it embodied the feature of appeal to some competent tribunal. The Registration Act was passed, as is well known, at a time when the ravages of civil war, were desolating our State. Large numbers of our citizens, variously estimated at from ten to fifteen thousand had left their homes—taken up arms against their State—and subscribed to the most stringent oath of allegiance, to the so-called “Confederate States.” I do not propose at this time to discuss events that have passed, farther than to refer to the acts of the Union men of that day, in their praiseworthy efforts, to save their State, from the threatened ruin which hovered over it. I would rather forget the past, than re-open afresh, these fruitful sources of irritation, which should now be permitted to sleep. If these acts were radical and ultra, much more so, was the attempt to revolutionize the State, and break up the Union. Maryland surely could not have disregarded the first duty of self-preservation. It has been alleged, that the dominant party, who now control the State, represents a *minority* of her aggregate population. If it be so, it is ~~the more to be~~ regretted, that so large a number of our citizens, should have identified themselves with the rebellion, as to suffer the power, which this majority controlled, to pass into other hands. Small, however, as the minority may be, it cannot be denied, that it is the fair and legitimate representative, of whatever there is of loyalty among our people. They are the men to whom you are indebted for the safety of your State, and the property which you now enjoy, and without whose uncompromising devotion to the Union, Maryland would have been handed over to indiscriminate destruction.

The elective franchise is a function of the State. To confer or withhold it, is the province of those who are entrusted with the formation of your organic law. Our citizens engaged in this Rebellion have been received with kindness and toleration; they come back, however, to be dealt with as the people in their wisdom may deem most expedient. Threats of