

tution may have kept the people of the town, directly interested, in ignorance of this provision of the bill, and thus prevented any expression of opinion they might otherwise have been disposed to communicate to the General Assembly.

Second—The first and cardinal principle of Republican Government is, that every community shall be governed by officers of its own selection, and not by the selection of bodies who know nothing of their views or interests. The elective franchise is one of the dearest rights of American freemen, and will never be surrendered except by force of necessity.

The law incorporating the town of Salisbury defines the powers of the Commissioners, and provides that they shall be elected on the "first Monday of April, annually." The bill now returned, provides that instead of complying with this requirement of the Act of incorporation, the Town Commissioners elected one year ago, and whose term of office will expire by law within ten days from the present time, "shall be continued, be, and remain in office until the first Monday in April, *eighteen hundred and seventy-two*."

If the people of the town of Salisbury desire the present Commissioners to administer the affairs of the town for the next one or two years, they have, under the law, the opportunity to re-elect them on the first Monday of April next. If they wish others, others will be elected. In any event, they should be allowed a fair and free expression of their sentiments, and a majority should prevail.

I can imagine no necessity in the present, which would justify such a departure from proper and established usage, and foresee many evils likely to result in the future from the establishment of such a precedent, even were there any strong reason for it. If it is competent for the General Assembly to extend for the period of two years longer, the term which is about to expire of the Town Commissioners of Salisbury, it might be equally competent under sec. 9, Article 12, of the Constitution, to extend for ten years or longer, the terms of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore. What important interests might be affected, what serious responsibilities assumed, and what grave results ensue from such a course?

Expressing or entertaining no opinion as to the policy of the measure for the extension of the corporate limits of the town, I can imagine no more dangerous precedent than the power assumed to continue in office by legislative enactment for two years, after their term shall have expired, the Commissioners, even although I know them to be competent and representative men, and upright and honorable gentlemen.

The bill is herewith returned without my approval, for the further action of the General Assembly.

ODEN BOWIE.

Which was read.