

Maryland demanded of their legislature the right of meeting in a convention, elected by the people, for the purpose of amending their constitution. The legislature, defending itself behind the phraseology of the fifty-ninth article of the constitution, which prescribed for its own amendment by the identical action of two successive legislatures, resisted for some twenty years every attempt of the friends of constitutional reform to secure the calling of a convention.

Maryland, since the framing of the Constitution of 1776, had become a government of the minority. Within this period of seventy-five years, the economic and social conditions of the people had undergone a complete change. The city of Baltimore, at that time scarcely more than a village, had expanded into a great commercial city, numbering a population of more than a hundred thousand, and possessing one-third of the entire wealth of the State.³ The center of population had shifted from the Eastern Shore and the southern counties to the northern and western sections. With these changes there had been no corresponding change effected in the constitution. The smaller counties, though so unequal to the city of Baltimore and the larger counties in respect to population, still had the majority of representatives in the legislature, and foreseeing what demands would be made, if a convention was called for the purpose of changing the constitution by which their ascendancy in the legislature was secured, were opposed to every project of calling such a body. In 1836, when the popular mind was agitated more, perhaps, on this question of constitutional reform than in any other period of the State's history, the legislature had instructed a select committee to inquire into the expediency of making it high treason for citizens to conspire against the constitution of the State.⁴

The question of constitutional reform by means of a con-

³ U. S. Census, 1850.

⁴ Niles Register, 5th series, vol. 52, p. 73.