

could no longer hope to retain if a convention, whose representation was based upon popular numbers, as was urged by Baltimore City, and the larger counties, assembled to frame a new constitution.

The distribution of slave property in Maryland was very unequal. The number of slaves was rapidly decreasing in the northern and western sections of the State, especially in those counties bordering on the free State of Pennsylvania. The proximity to a free State, and the consequent facilities for escape, rendered slavery almost impracticable, and slave property almost worthless. In southern Maryland, on the other hand, where agriculture was extensively carried on, and slave labor productive, the number of slaves was constantly increasing.

The southern planters had the greater part of their capital invested in this kind of property. This interest which they guarded with so much jealousy, and which formed so large a part of their wealth, might be destroyed and the wealth of the other part of the State scarcely feel the shock. These considerations led the people of the southern counties to believe it would be dangerous to them and to their interest to give the legislative authority into the hands of the people of the north and west, especially to those of Baltimore City, who were suspected of holding anti-slavery sentiments. This group considered that they were not concerned in sustaining the rights of the slave-owners. Though there were no public manifestations of a wish for the immediate abolition of slavery in the State, the tendency of the times and the action taken by the northern abolitionists were well calculated to increase the apprehensions of the slave-owners. This fear of agitating the question of slavery in the State was one of the principal causes for the legislature's resistance of the demands of the large majority of the people for a constitutional convention.

The financial embarrassment of the State, due to the failure of realizing the large returns which had been so confidently predicted from the works of internal improve-