

a convention assembled to form a new constitution to be submitted to the people for ratification, there is danger that the slavery question might be agitated to the prejudice of the quiet and happiness of the public, as altogether visionary; and as implying injurious and unfounded doubts of the good sense and sound principles of the people; that we believe the views of all classes of our citizens on the subject are sound, and that the State is more dishonored by the intimation of doubts with regard to it, than she could be by any agitation of the question that would be likely to take place in a convention."¹⁸

When the legislature assembled in December, 1845, a bill was introduced in the House which provided for taking the vote of the people of the State upon the question of calling a constitutional convention. Petitions were received from the several reform organizations of Maryland, praying for the passage of the bill. The majority of the committee to whom the petition and bill were referred, reported that under the present form of government the legislature had no power to call a convention, and that whatever amendments were necessary, could be made by the legislature in the manner prescribed by the constitution. The minority of the same committee reported that under the Declaration of Rights, and the constitution of the State, the legislature did have the power, and it was its duty to do so at the present session. After a violent debate between the members from the smaller counties on one side, and the representatives from the larger counties and from the city of Baltimore on the other, the bill was lost by a tie vote.¹⁹

When a new legislature was elected in 1847, the subject was again introduced in the House. The committee in their report deplored the idea of agitating a question of such moment when the State was involved in financial

¹⁸ Niles Register, 5th ser., vol. 68, p. 405.

¹⁹ House Journal, December session, 1845.