

report provided. Baltimore City embraced one district, and the counties of the Eastern Shore a second.

The convention found great difficulty in determining whether the future sessions of the General Assembly should be held annually or biennially. Prior to 1846 the legislature had held annual sessions. In that year the General Assembly referred the question of biennial sessions to the voters of the State. The referendum was held on the general election day in 1846. Each voter was asked by the judges of the election whether he was in favor of biennial or annual sessions. Biennial sessions were declared for by a majority of some five thousand voters.

The biennial bill had been passed as an anti-reform measure. Its object was to reduce the governmental expenses and to remove the agitation for a constitutional convention. The bill received its greatest support on the Eastern Shore. The Western Shore gave a majority of some twelve hundred against the change.<sup>38</sup>

The committee on the legislative department favored biennial sessions. When the report was read, an amendment was offered providing for annual sessions. Political considerations had great influence in the desire to return to the annual sessions. The change in the basis of representation would give the Democratic party the majority in future legislatures. "Democracy demanded that elections be free and frequent."

Mr. Dirickson, of Worcester county, referring to the vote of the people on the biennial bill in 1846, said, "It was wonderful that those who professed to drink from the very fount of Democracy—who worshiped at no other shrine, and bowed to no other political god—should have so soon not only scoffed at the mandates, but absolutely by their speeches rebuked the very wisdom of the people."<sup>39</sup>

The argument in favor of annual sessions was made on the ground that a greater amount of labor than usual

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<sup>38</sup> Debates, vol. i, p. 277.

<sup>39</sup> Debates, vol. i, p. 272.