

the free negro had no political rights whatever. Mr. Brent's amendment was rejected, and a provision was inserted in the Declaration of Rights, which permitted the legislature to pass laws for the government, and disposition of the free colored population.⁷³

A petition was presented to the convention from a number of citizens of Frederick county, praying that an article be inserted in the constitution, compelling all free negroes, annually to give bond, with responsible security to the State, for their good behavior; in default of bond they were to be compelled to leave the commonwealth.⁷⁴

Another question of interest that received the earnest consideration of the convention, but upon which no final decision was taken was the question of public education. Maryland at that time had no general system of public schools.⁷⁵ Each county and city maintained its own schools, except as to certain funds distributed by the State. These funds were derived from different sources. The first was called "The Free-School Fund." It was derived from the surplus revenue of the Federal Government distributed among the states.⁷⁶ The free-school fund amounted to nearly sixty-three thousand dollars in 1851.⁷⁷ This fund was distributed among the counties and Baltimore City as follows: one-half equally, and one-half according to the white population of each respectively.

The second fund was derived from certain taxes on banks.⁷⁸ It amounted to about twenty thousand dollars in 1851.⁷⁹ All fines collected from the violation of the laws

⁷³ Dec. of Rights, 1851, sec. 21.

⁷⁴ Debates, vol. i, p. 371.

⁷⁵ See Steiner's History of Education in Md., p. 66.

⁷⁶ An act of the legislature 1836, ch. 220, sec. i, provided that of the money received, and to be received from the Federal Government, \$274,451 should be set aside for the purpose of defraying the interest on the public debt already created. The residue was to be deposited with banks, with interest at 5 per cent or more; the interest accruing was to be distributed among the counties and Baltimore City for the support of common schools.

⁷⁷ Debates, vol. i, p. 431.

⁷⁸ Act 1821, ch. 113.

⁷⁹ Debates, vol. i, p. 431.