

lature in granting state aid to works of internal improvement, created a general demand for restriction on the power of the General Assembly to make appropriations.

The convention adopted a provision which prohibited the legislature from appropriating public money, or pledging the State's credit for the use of individuals, associations, or corporations, "except for purposes of education." The last clause was an amendment introduced by Mr. Davis, of Montgomery county, an ardent advocate for a general system of public education. This amendment of Mr. Davis was adopted by the convention by a vote of 43 to 24;⁸⁵ but on the motion of Mr. Thomas, of Frederick county, was reconsidered and rejected by a vote of 39 to 31.⁸⁶

The opposition to the establishing of a uniform system of public education within the State, came from Baltimore City and the larger counties. The cause of the opposition was due to the very unequal manner in which the existing school fund was distributed; and because many of the counties and Baltimore City had ample provisions for schools under their local systems. Several of the counties had their own funds specially devoted to educational purposes. There was a general feeling of disappointment in the convention at the failure to provide for a uniform system of public schools. One member advocated a poll-tax. No man, he said, would be so unworthy the name of an American citizen as to refuse the price of one day's labor, to maintain public schools.⁸⁷ It is noteworthy that the constitutional convention in 1864 provided for a uniform system of public schools along the line recommended by the committee on education in 1851.

Petitions were presented to the convention from citizens of thirteen counties, and from Baltimore City, praying that a provision might be made in the constitution which would prohibit the legislature from granting the privilege

⁸⁵ Debates, vol. i, p. 425.

⁸⁷ Debates, vol. ii, p. 808.

⁸⁶ Debates, vol. i, p. 433.