

Granting the fact that they should lose their slaves, the owners naturally desired to obtain some sort of compensation, and the minority never abandoned one form or other of this idea. This might be effected in two ways—by the state, or else by the nation. As state action could be controlled by the Convention to a great extent, while any reliance on Congressional action would be fallacious, the minority insisted on this former measure. On the other hand, as already stated, the spring campaign had been fought on this very question, with the result that nearly all the Union delegates were pledged against it with the exception of those from Baltimore and Howard counties, but even these were merely instructed to procure national compensation if possible. Also a majority caucus held in Annapolis on April 28 at the beginning of the session unanimously decided that the Convention was bound by the popular verdict to emancipation without state compensation.⁶⁰

The minority nevertheless firmly maintained that slaves were or had been private property which should not be taken for public use without compensation.⁶¹ The majority either denied this *in toto* or else held that slavery was a “nuisance,” and no payment should be given for the abatement of it.⁶² Other arguments were brought forth by the latter, including the statement that they were unwilling to saddle the state with a large debt for this purpose,⁶³ the Baltimore delegates in particular objecting on account of the fact that while a large part of the consequent increase of taxation would fall on the city, it would receive a small portion of the compensation, owing to the comparatively few slaves within its bounds. The majority report of the Committee on the Legislative Department,

⁶⁰ “American,” Apr. 30, 1864.

⁶¹ Deb., i, 596-721.

⁶² Deb., i, 590-1.

⁶³ The slaves were valued at from thirty-five to forty million dollars in 1860. Mr. Clarke’s representative scheme of compensation involved a payment of about twenty-six millions (Deb., i, 656).