

to enjoy that right, it is I think the more incumbent upon you not only to provide for submitting to them that question but to appoint such a time for the purpose as will ensure its early decision.

In regard to the particular changes required in our organic law, it might not, perhaps, under ordinary circumstances, be either necessary or proper to offer suggestions; these being considerations rather for the Convention than for the Legislature or the Executive; yet as bearing upon the enquiry of the expediency of a Convention at this time, there is one subject of such vital importance, engrossing such general attention, and apparently absorbing all other considerations connected with the call of that Convention that to omit allusion to it might appear like an indifference which I am far from feeling or a desire to avoid an expression of opinion that is quite as far from my purpose.

I have the less reason for withholding any such opinion, as it has undergone no change, and is such as I have frequently heretofore expressed. I believe to-day, as I have done for years, that if we had long ago provided for the gradual emancipation of the slaves of the State, we should now be, as regards all the material elements of public prosperity, far in advance of our present position.

The products of our State and its natural resources are not such as are adapted to or can be developed by slave labor. I am satisfied that the people of the State in their moments of calm and deliberate reflection long since came to the same conclusion, and that their convictions on that subject would have led them thirty years ago to such legislation as would have made us long since a free State, but for the unauthorized and officious interference of those outside the State who undertook to dictate a policy that properly belonged to ourselves alone. This foreign interposition not only checked our early attempts at emancipation, but by the reaction—always the certain result of ultraism of any kind—led to the introduction of that extraordinary restriction in our present Constitution, which, whilst we are free to act on all other subjects, forbids all attempts to abolish slavery. It was undoubtedly wrong to have suffered the mere feeling engendered by these fanatic efforts to influence our action upon a subject involving public interests of such magnitude and importance.

In legislating upon such questions we should be cautious at all times to allow no merely passional considerations to sway or shape our proceedings, and you will, I trust, guard yourselves against such influences now, and though you may doubtless still find in modern radicalism quite as much to