

Mr. Jones submitted whether it was in order to amend this report, it being the report of a committee of conference?

The president said—"It is on the occasion of amendments between the two Houses that conferences are usually asked, but they may be asked in all cases of differences of opinion on matters depending between them. The object of a conference is manifestly to seek some common ground on which the two Houses may unite in cases where they agree in the main proposition but differ in regard to details. A committee of conference is supposed to be possessed of the views of the Houses respectively represented, and if it were permitted to amend or alter the report of such a committee, the Houses would be subjected to the delay and inconvenience of entertaining propositions which may have been settled as admissible or inadmissible in the one House or the other before the conference was asked, and thereby the object contemplated by the conference would be defeated. This point seems to have been settled in the Senate of the United States in 1796 on the bill for the relief and protection of American seamen. In looking into the history of that case it will be found that the two Houses had positively disagreed in relation to the details of the bill, each being desirous for the main proposition. It was ascertained that this disagreement could only be settled by means of a conference, which was asked for and had, and the reason for the decision against the modification of the report is obvious. If it had been otherwise, the conference would have been useless, because the same discrepancies of opinion would still remain, and neither House would be nearer a final decision than before the conference was had. The present case, however, is not one of difference of opinion between the two Houses. By reference to the messages it will be seen that the House of Delegates proposed a deputation from the General Assembly of Maryland to the State of Pennsylvania for certain purposes. The Senate in answer say, "we deem it important before a deputation is sent that the sense of the General Assembly should be expressed in the form of joint resolutions." There appears then not only to have been no disagreement upon the main proposition, but an implied acquiescence, and the conference was asked for the purpose of embodying the opinions of the General Assembly relative to certain important principles in the form of resolutions. These resolutions have not been, in fact no resolutions, having this object in view, had been depending in either House, and consequently the committee had no means of ascertaining or of expressing the opinions of the General Assembly. The chair is of opinion that this was not such a committee of conference as is referred to in the manual, and that the present case is by no means analagous to the case decided by the U. S. Senate in 1796. In the judgment of the chair the committee was but an ordinary joint committee, and its report may be amended at the pleasure of the Senate."

The amendment offered by Mr. Cottman was then read and adopted.