

since the period assigned by the gentleman, (Mr. Presstman.) Many years rolled on and many changes in parties occurred before ever a whisper was heard that a Convention could be called by a single act of the Legislature, and indeed before a Convention, called in any way, was heard of. As to the right of the people to administer, reform or alter their Constitution whenever they may think proper, he never doubted or denied it. No man in this age and country does or can doubt or deny it. He asked if that was not genuine democratic doctrine. But *how* was it to be done? When on this point they compared notes, it would be found he was a better democrat than the gentleman was. I, (said Mr. C.,) give more power to the people and say they can prescribe—the “*how*” they can “bind themselves,” while he says they have no power to do so. The gentleman admits the language of his proposition is cloudy, and he says let those that come after us find out for themselves its true construction. No, sir, let us make ourselves clearly understood—let every thing be plain, not a puzzle to those who are to come after us. The Constitution is not for lawyers and the courts only, but for all classes and descriptions of citizens.

The 1st article in the bill of rights is in these words, “all government originates from the people, is founded in compact, and instituted solely for the good of the whole.” What meant these words, “founded in compact?” Were they senseless? No—but full of meaning. Government was a compact and for the whole. Yet, says the gentleman, a part may, at their will and pleasure, violate its most solemn engagements. True it is, there is no judicial tribunal before which a breach may be prosecuted, but the moral and political obligation to observe its terms is none the less for that.

Mr. PRESSTMAN wished to hear the reasons on which this view was founded. The gentleman from Kent admitted the right of the people to make the compact. Had they not then an equal right to change the compact?

Mr. CHAMBERS replied, he had said so in “*totidem verbis*,” and he now repeated it. (Here, with a pause after every word, he said in a very slow and deliberate manner.) I admit the right of the sovereign people to change the Constitution whenever they think proper to do so. Was that emphatic enough? But yet they must do it legally.

When they have themselves declared the mode and manner, and the only mode and manner, they must pursue it. Here they divided. The gentleman says they may do it in despite of the compact without Constitution or law, against Constitution and law. Well, he should not argue against this doctrine. He would as soon enter into an elaborate logical argument with the most nervous, timid child, to persuade it to be alarmed when suddenly brought into the immediate presence of a hideous monster, as he would to persuade the people that they ought to dread this political monster; and he was free to say that of all the horrible monsters that ever presented

themselves to his political vision, the most horrible was a mob, and as he had before said, such a doctrine, if sanctioned, would ultimately lead to that—the exercise of this lawless power by a mob.

He had been asked, Why not provide for a Convention?

He would say it was not only proper, but it was our duty to do this. We represent the people—we are forming the compact. Now is the time to do it, and if no one else does, (Mr. C.) said, he pledged himself to offer a provision regulating the mode of calling a Convention. This mode of proceeding had lately become quite fashionable, and if the good people of Maryland chose to follow it, they must be indulged. Only let every thing be done “decently and in order.” Let it be done according to the form of law. Have a Convention once a year, if it be deemed proper—name a commission to call it at pleasure—give to the City Council of Baltimore, if it must be so, the power to convene a Convention; but let it be done “according to the Constitution and Laws of the land.” Never sanction the idea that an irresponsible self-created body of men, excited by the fiercest passions, wounded by defeat and disappointment, embittered by party collisions and animosities, and enflamed by selfish unprincipled demagogues to a state of madness as well as folly—never tolerate the idea that such an assemblage, itself the sole judge of its own numbers, of its own powers, its own mode of proceeding, without any rule to guide or any authority to restrain its action, but its own unbridled will—is the power competent to rule—to put down an existing government and found a new one. He described the proposition, with its “Gorgon head” as an alarming heresy which should be abjured by every wise and prudent man.

Mr. JOHNSON said, he was in favor of both these propositions, and that if he were in his seat when the question was taken, he should vote for both with infinite pleasure. The first [continued Mr. J.] is a self-evident proposition. I cannot see that it requires a moment’s discussion. In the nineteenth century, with thirty republican constitutions before our eyes in which it finds a place, it is an axiom—and it is too late for me, at least, to discuss it. The history of our own country and of France, demonstrates that oppression, intolerable oppression, may be thrown off by the people whenever they choose to rise up in their majesty and assert their rights. It is a power which cannot be taken away from the people, and of which they cannot even divest themselves. And if this Convention should form a Constitution, one of the provisions of which should declare it to be unalterable for ever—and if that Constitution, thus stamped with a perpetual existence, should be ratified by a unanimous vote of the people of the State of Maryland, it would be an absurdity so gross, that in fifty years hence or less, when its provisions might have ceased to be applicable to another, and a different condition of things, the people would cast it indignantly aside, and substitute for