

relation to this matter, he had but little to add. It would be recollected that on a former occasion he had the honor to submit a rule by which a vote previously given should be reversed and rescinded by a smaller number than that by which the first vote passed. He read the rule proposed by him, to be found page 242 Debates. He had then agreed with those who had opposed his motion on the general ground of leaving open to the last moment every avenue by which we could escape error and arrive at just conclusions. It was proper that what was done should express the most deliberate opinions of this body, and after the maturest reflection. He had differed with those gentlemen who usually act with the gentleman from Frederick, as to the mode of carrying out the general principle. It had appeared to him that a principle of fairness and political propriety and integrity, required a minority to forbear over-ruling a majority—that in fact if a vote were to pass to day by a majority of a full house, and were reversed by a bare majority of a thin house some days hence, that this last vote could not properly be regarded as the sense and opinion of the Convention, and ought not to stand as the expression of that opinion.—His proposition however, was denounced, and in no very measured terms, as would appear from the debate which fortunately is now published. That debate would show that the most unlimited licence, and to the latest hour, to reconsider and view its action was claimed for the Convention. Some material change seems to have passed over the dreams of certain gentlemen: we are not longer to have the benefit of our last thoughts on matters before us. Well, sir, said Mr. C., I have only to say, I stand precisely where I did on the 18th March last. Only protect us against a surprise, by which a smaller number of votes may over-rule and defeat the action of a larger number, and I am contented to keep open the way to improve till the last hour of the session.

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DISTRICTING SYSTEM.

Remarks of Mr. CHAMBERS, Thursday, May 1, 1851.

Mr. CHAMBERS said he had been constantly expecting a movement on the part of the gentleman from Frederick, (Mr. Thomas,) in reference to this districting system. That gentleman had long since taken the necessary preliminary steps, had obtained an order to supply plots and estimates, which were now furnished, and for several days past, he [Mr. C.,] had anticipated some action pursuant to this preparation. There are a number of us, said Mr. C., who desire to test the sense of the house upon the proposition to district the city of Baltimore alone. What the opinion is, can only be determined by a deliberate vote. We have a right to ascertain that opinion, and desire to do so. If a majority of the Convention shall be found to entertain the opinion, it is but fair to allow an opportunity for its expression. Why the necessity for a reference? Surely every man here has by this time a fixed opinion as to the principle. If a major-

ity shall not favor the scheme of districting the city, it will be but a waste of time to employ a committee to report on digest details. Let us come fairly and boldly to the principal question, "shall the district system prevail or not," and show our hands, and if a majority shall determine in its favor, then it will be quite time enough to have a committee to arrange details.

Mr. C. thought it capable of demonstration that the theory of the gentleman from Frederick, [Mr. Thomas,] will not sustain his conclusions. His principle is that minorities should be represented, and that the system of districting will be the means of accomplishing this effect; his inference is, that there is the same propriety in respect to minorities in the counties as there is in the city.

The general proposition that minorities should be represented, like all other general propositions, is subject to some limitation. This is but another instance in which it is manifest how much danger there is in pursuing an abstract proposition as universally true, regardless of time, place or circumstance. To be usefully reduced to practice, all such general truths require modification. The doctrine is, that minorities ought to be represented; but it is certain all minorities cannot possibly be represented.—Let it be assumed that every county in the State shall be divided into districts, as the gentleman would have them to be, are there not minorities still unrepresented in each of these districts? You may go on and reduce the divisions to the size of the smallest election district, yet the case is the same, there will still be unrepresented minorities. There must then, of necessity, be some modification of the rule in its practical application. In other words, there must be some point, at which in estimating the amount or numbers of the particular minority, we must cease to apply the rule; that is to say, it is a question of expediency for the wise consideration of the Convention. We must either abandon the rule entirely, which it is admitted out not to be done, or we must apply it in some cases and not in all cases.

The question is where shall we stop? The city of Baltimore is distinguishable from any county in the State, in several particulars to justify us in applying the rule to her and not to the counties. She has a minority of nearly one half her entire population, a minority of more than eighty thousand. No county has any thing to compare to it in amount.

Again, her districts are already laid off. The same sense of justice to this large minority which ought to actuate us, has induced the city authorities to have these minorities represented in their local legislature. For these and other reasons which he had previously urged, he thought it wise to stop at districting the city.—Other gentlemen thought the largest counties might also be made subject to the same system, while the gentleman from Frederick thought all the counties should be in the same case.

Yet it must be perfectly obvious that it was utterly impracticable to represent all minorities,