now precluded from altering that proposition by striking out any portion of it.

The PRESIDENT. The gentleman is correct.

Mr. HEBB. I wish to ask a question for information. If the proposition of the gentleman from Harford, by being adopted by the Convention, absorbs that of the gentleman from Cecil, why did not the proposition of my colleague, (Mr. Greene,) when adopted by the Convention, also absorb the proposition of the gentleman from Cecil?

The PRESIDENT. It did; but the Convention did not ask the opinion of the Chair upon that point.

Mr. PUGH. There has been a very general expression of views here in regard to this question of a poll tax, and as I have so far pursued a course in opposition to the provision in this article in relation to that subject, I wish to state my reasons for so doing. In the first place, I deny the statement that a poll tax is grievous and oppressive, and I have seen and heard nothing here which has any tendency to make me change that opinion. I stated yesterday that I had lived where there was such a tax in existence. By the way, I have nothing whatever to say about the reasons those who first incorporated that statement into the bill of rights had to do so; I know nothing about that. They stated in positive terms that a poll tax is grievous and oppressive. I do not know why they stated that. But as a fact I deny it.

But, my objection to having such a provision in the Constitution of Maryland is, as has been stated heretofore, that by such a provision we fetter the hands of the General Assembly, and deprive them of the right, which they have in all other respects, to raise revenue in any manner which to their judgment may seem the best for the general good. As has been very pertinently remarked here, I have just about as much confidence in any one hundred men of the State of Maryland assembled here to make laws, as I have in any other one hundred men in the State, and there has been nothing urged here to confirm the assertion that, unless this restriction is imposed, the Legislature, when it assembles here, will pass any law grievous and oppressive upon the people. If it shall appear to that Legislature, as it seems to appear to a majority of this body, that such a law will be grievous and oppressive, then they will not pass the law. I have just as much confidence in them as the majority of the people have to-day in us, and I object to this prohibition, this restriction upon the Legislature, because if in their judgment the people of the State of Maryland are sufficiently burthened with other systems of taxation, and the only way in which they can make a general system of school education self-sustaining, or if, in their judgment, the better course to adopt, is to impose a tax which may be styled a poll tax, all I desire is to leave them free to do so, and that is the only effect which the amendment originally proposed by my colleague, (Mr. Scott,) will have.

Now, although the question is not at present before this Convention, still I may as well state now why I am so earnest in favor of a school system, and why I am in favor of so framing this Constitution as not to fetter the Legislature in respect to providing the means for making such a system self-sustaining.

Mr. STIRLING. Is the gentleman in favor of so fettering the Legislature as to compel them to establish a school system?

Mr. PUGH. That question is not now before the House; when it comes up for decision I shall be ready to take my position upon it. All I wish is to leave this matter to the discretion of the Legislature. If, in their view, it is proper to establish a school system for the State of Maryland, then they must provide some way to make it self-sustaining, otherwise it will be of no account. Gentlemen say that there is already a school fund in this State; or, if there is not one provided it can be created. Now, having had some experience in that matter, I know that such a way of sustaining a school system will not work in this State. It has not worked in Virginia, it has not worked in Pennsylvania, and it will not work in any State, unless the fund is very large, which is not the case in this State; and the best school systems in the country are those supported by a system of direct taxation. Then they become self sustaining; everybody is interested in upholding the system; every man in the community has an opportunity to assist in maintaining it; or, it seems to me, it might be so provided as to impose an obligation on him to sustain it.

Now it is fair to suppose that the Legislature of Maryland, to assemble after we adjourn, will be actuated, to some extent, by the same views and sentiments which this Convention entertains; and if so, then they will know perfectly well that it would be but a farce to declare Maryland a free State, and not provide a free-school system for the State. I believe, as firmly as I believe anything, that the strongest safeguard which the institution of slavery has in any State where it exists is the deprivation of the mass of the people of a system of common school education. And I believe, also, that the greatest safeguard of the freedom of Maryland, provided she shall be made a free State, will be a system of popular education. And supposing as I do that those who may hereafter represent the people of the State of Maryland, as members of the General Assembly, will see this matter as we see it, will see that it is better for Maryland to be a free State, I believe they will also see that the only way of maintaining Maryland as a free State, will be to provide and